

ONE YEAR AFTER THE SUMMIT: NORTH KOREA'S POLICY DIRECTIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR INTER-KOREAN RELATIONS

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With the dramatic inter-Korean summit in June of 2000, inter-Korean relations were expected to enter into a new era of reconciliation and cooperation. The summit was consequently followed by a number of events on the Korean peninsula. The two Koreas met for ministerial-level talks, reunions of separated family members, defense minister talks, and other events. North Korea actively expanded its foreign relations. It normalized diplomatic relations with 13 EU countries as well as Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Canada; it also joined the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). North Korea's vice marshal Jo Myong-rok visited Washington and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright paid a visit to Pyongyang.

North Korea's attitude seemed to be different from that of the past. It was generally agreed that the inter-Korean relationship is undergoing an irreversible change for the better. The prospects for inter-Korean relations seemed bright, at least in the short-run, although long-term prospects for inter-Korean relations are not yet so clear.

However, the rosy picture of inter-Korean relations began to be overshadowed by North Korea's boycott of inter-Korean

meetings such as the fifth round of ministerial-level talks and Red Cross talks, which took place following the inauguration of the Bush administration in the U.S. Now, inter-Korean relations appear to greatly depend on the relations between Washington and Pyongyang.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze North Korea's policy direction and prospects for inter-Korean relations in the post-summit era. First, this paper reviews North Korea's changing survival strategies in the 90's. Secondly, this paper will analyze North Korea's policy goals and hurdles that must be overcome to develop inter-Korean relations. Thirdly, this paper analyzes North Korea's foreign policy direction and prospects for inter-Korean relations.

North Korea's Strategy for Survival: Domestic and Foreign Policy

Domestic Policy

North Korea's foremost concern is to maintain its socialist system, and its internal and external policies are focused on this goal. Internally, North Korea consistently emphasizes the significance of ideology, party, and the military. North Korean leaders seem to believe that the demise of the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe was due to a failure of ideology. Thus, they emphasize the importance of ideology in maintaining the socialist system in North Korea.

The Party is responsible for strengthening ideology—North Korea's unique brand of socialism. The relationship between the Communist Party and the administrative organization is often likened to the captain of the boat and the rowers. Party workers in the back should steer

so that administrative and economic workers can follow the party line.¹ Article 11 of the new Constitution also states that, “the DPRK shall conduct all activities under the leadership of the Korea Workers’ Party.”

In North Korea, the leading role of the party has been strengthened to overcome the crisis that is facing the regime and to stabilize Kim Jong-il’s power.² Although the status of the Cabinet was elevated under the new constitution, this change does not seem to affect the guiding role of the party over the government. Particularly in the area of organization and ideology, party guidance could be firmer. However, if Kim Jong-il wants to directly control a department, control of the party inevitably becomes weaker. For example, the party’s International Department has less power to control the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, this control was weakened only in policy guidance, and guidance in organization and ideology is not affected.

One of the most significant characteristics of North Korean politics in recent years is its “Army-First Policy,” which is based on enhancing the status of the military. Since Kim Il-sung’s death, Kim Jong-il has ruled North Korea as commander-in-chief of the Korea People’s Army (KPA) and has maintained military rule. The status of the military has been enhanced, and the military has emerged as the center of the North Korean political system. All the social sectors have been forced to follow military spirit and military methods as a role model. Kim Jong-il’s public activities have heavily focused on his so-called “on-the-spot guidance” of places and events related to the military.

On October 5, 1998 Kim Jong-il officially ended the transitional period that followed the death of his father by resuming his post as chairman of the National Defence Commission (NDC), which was

1 Kim Il Sung, “Improving and strengthening the party’s works on organization and ideology,” *Kim Il Sung’s Works* (Pyongyang, KWP Press, 1982), p. 157.

2 Kim Jong-il started his career as a party cadre and his succession to power has consistently taken place within the structure of the party. Moreover, most of his strong supporters are in the party and the party at large is his most loyal supporter.

strengthened in its role and status under the new constitution. The new constitution defines the role of the NDC as “the highest guiding organ of the military and the managing organ of military matters.” The NDC chairman holds the right to control all the armed forces. In a speech which endorsed Kim Jong-il as NDC chairman, Kim Young-nam made it clear that the NDC chairman is the highest leader of the country, in charge of all matters regarding the country’s politics, economics, and military. Thus Kim Jong-il is, in fact, the head of state, although, theoretically, the chairman of the SPA Presidium represents the state and is responsible for foreign affairs such as reception of foreign envoys and the signing of treaties with foreign countries. The new constitution can therefore be described as institutionalizing military rule.

The enhanced status of the military and a military-centered political system was demonstrated by the promotion of NDC members in the official power hierarchy.³ Kim Jong-il has treated the armed forces better than his father did by frequently visiting events and places related to the military, and by promoting military officials in the power hierarchy. The Central Military Committee appears to be independent of the Central Committee, and is in practice treated as equal to the Central Committee. Although the Central Military Committee has nothing to do with selecting the party’s secretary-general, it—together with the Central Committee—endorsed Kim Jong-il as secretary-general in October of 1997.⁴ This could be interpreted as a dual struc-

3 At the first session of the 10th SPA, all of the 10 NDC members were ranked within the top 20 on September 5, and again all but one occupied the top 20 at the 50th anniversary of National Foundation Day on September 9. The new ranking disturbs the traditional official hierarchy of North Korea. Traditionally the ranking was made in the order of Politburo full members, candidate members, and then secretaries, although some military officials were ranked higher than Politburo members after Kim Il Sung’s death. However, the September ranking is completely different from that of the past. Yon Hyong Mook and Hong Sung Nam, both members of the NDC but only candidate members of the Politburo, outrank some full Politburo members.

4 Kim Jong-il completely ignored the due process of election. This means that Kim Jong-il is above the party’s Central Committee.

ture of military and party rather than simply a reflection of the strengthened status of the military.

As the status of the military rises, the military may have a bigger voice in matters such as the defense industry and security issues. But the mechanisms of internal control are absolutely maintained by the party.⁵ That is, the enhanced status of the armed forces will be limited to their increased role in military affairs. Even this increased participation in decision-making is based upon the assumption that Kim Jong-il holds the ultimate authority. In North Korea, where the paramount leader plays the role of a final arbiter or enforcer, bureaucratic disputes or a military veto are quite inconceivable. The military is only allowed to respond to questions asked by Kim Jong-il. Thus the enhanced status of the military does not signify a fundamental change of party-military relations. Although Kim Jong-il trusts and relies on some military officials more than party officials, the military as an institution is unable to overwhelm the party. As long as the party controls the organization and ideology of the military, control by the party seems unaffected.

In sum, North Korea's internal policy is properly expressed in its slogan of "A Strong and Prosperous Nation," which first appeared on August 22, 1998. Although some people regard the slogan as North Korea's declaration of its intent to focus on economic development, it is more likely that the slogan emphasizes ideology, politics, and the military.

5 The military does not appear in diplomatic negotiations such as missile talks and Four-Party Talks. It is simply because the military does not have the people and organizations that can handle such tasks. It is sufficient that the officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs listen to the opinion of the military before they go to talks. In case of purely military talks, the military comes to the negotiation table, but the military delegates are supposed to read what they are told by the party or related organs. For example, North Korean delegates have to go through intensive training and education of the party's Department of Unified Front and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, when military talks are held between North and South Korea.

External Policy

While North Korea's internal policy has consistently focused on the significance of ideology, party, and the military, its external policy has been changeable, even flexible, in pursuing its goal of maintaining the system.

During the last decade, North Korea has employed various tactics in its relations with the outside world.⁶ In the early 1990s North Korea tried to overcome its problems through inter-Korean contacts. North Korea signed "The Agreement between the North and the South on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, Exchange and Cooperation" (known as the Basic Agreement between the North and the South) in December of 1991. It also agreed on the "Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," and decided to join the UN together with South Korea.

However, North Korea, which appeared to be eager to continue a dialogue with the South at the time, dramatically changed its tactics. When the nuclear crisis occurred in 1993, North Korea began to negotiate only with the U.S., excluding South Korea entirely. The Basic Agreement failed to be implemented, and the inter-Korean dialogue was completely deadlocked.

In 1994, when North Korea's "Great Leader" Kim Il-sung died, the crisis the nation faced appeared to be fatal. It seemed that North Korea would not be able to exist without outside help. Therefore, North Korea desperately sought to obtain international aid. At that time, North Korea also seemed to lose its pride in having established a "paradise on earth."

The transitional period ended in 1998, when Kim Jong-il reassumed the NDC chairmanship and a number of progressive clauses were introduced to the amended Constitution. Since then, North Korea

6 Park Jong Chul, "Meaning of Inter-Korean Summit and its Future Prospects," a paper presented at the 36th Conference, KINU (May 30, 2000), pp. 9-11.

began to actively expand its foreign relations due to its newfound political stability. Through these new relationships with the outside world North Korea hopes to obtain security guarantees, diplomatic relations, and economic assistance. North Korea has tried to accelerate the process of improving relations with the U.S. and Japan. It also normalized diplomatic relations with 13 EU countries as well as Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Canada, and restored its close relationship with traditional allies such as China and Russia.

North Korea began to respond positively to government-level talks with the South for economic assistance. Improving relations with South Korea could also serve as a stimulus for breakthroughs in negotiations with the U.S. When North Korea encounters difficulties with the U.S., it tends to emphasize nationalism rather than class struggle and shows a conciliatory attitude toward South Korea. In 1989, when socialism in Eastern Europe was collapsing, Kim Jong-il presented a paper, "Let's First Enhance the Spirit of Korean Nationalism," and in an article in 1996 titled, "On maintaining Juche and Nationalism in Revolution and Construction," Kim said that class and nationalism are complementary. In summary, North Korea has explored a number of policy options to insure the survival of its system during the last decade, among which are the Inter-Korean summit talks and subsequent government-level talks.

North Korea's Policy Goals and Hurdles

North Korea's Policy Goals

North Korea's strategy to survive and maintain its system requires it to resolve its current problems: security, diplomatic isolation, and economic hardship. In order to overcome an economic hardship, North Korea has no other choice but to rely on South Korean assistance.

Above all else, North Korea's decision to accept the inter-Korean summit talks is attributed to its hope to gain economic assistance from South Korea. Indeed, the inter-Korean summit talks and the resulting government-level talks have provided North Korea with some economic benefits.

However, North Korea seems to be obsessed only with inter-Korean programs that promote its economic benefits, and does not seem to be interested in peace on the Korean peninsula. As for its security problem, North Korea believes it should conduct talks exclusively with the U.S. In order for North Korea to obtain security guarantees, it must sign a peace treaty with the U.S. Other items that North Korea would like to accomplish include its being removed from the U.S.'s list of nations that sponsor terrorism, the opening of liaison offices, and the lifting of economic sanctions.

The visit of Jo Myong-rok, vice marshal and first vice chairman of the National Defence Commission, to Washington shows that the security issue is North Korea's top priority. Other issues, such as its inclusion on the list of nations that sponsor terrorism, do not seem to be so important as to have compelled Jo Myong-rok's visit to the U.S. Those items may be left to Kang Suk-joo, the North's first vice foreign minister, to negotiate.

Kim Jong-il, in his letter delivered by Jo to U.S. President Clinton, expressed his hope for a "dramatic change" in ties with the U.S. Kim Jong-il was quoted as saying that North Korea would turn the current bilateral confrontation and hostility to a new relationship of friendship, cooperation and good-will, if and when North Korea is given a strong and concrete guarantee from the United States of North Korea's sovereignty and territorial integrity.⁷ The U.S. and North Korea issued a joint statement in which the two countries agreed to take steps to fundamentally improve their bilateral relations in the interests of enhancing

7 *New York Times*, October 12, 2000.

peace and security in the Asia Pacific region.

Before the end of the Clinton administration, North Korea appeared to be in a rush to achieve a breakthrough on the security issue, removal from the terrorism list,⁸ an agreement on the North's missile and nuclear development program, and the establishment of liaison offices. Jo Myong-rok's visit provided both countries with an opportunity to comprehensively discuss those issues. In addition, by expanding relations with South Korea, North Korea may have hoped to press the U.S. in negotiations.

Although the U.S. may be able to provide security guarantees, Japan is viewed as the best source of substantial economic assistance. Thus, for North Korea, receiving war compensation from Japan is crucial for long-term economic recovery.

Hurdles to Cross

A favorable situation must be presented in both North and South Korea and in the international community, particularly the U.S., for inter-Korean relations to continue to develop. Indeed, for inter-Korean relations to continue to progress, all three situations should move in a positive direction.

Factors in South Korea

While most South Koreans welcomed the summit talks, many people experienced a feeling of uneasiness over the rapid development

8 The U.S. and North Korea had three meetings regarding the terrorism list three times this year, in March (New York), August (Pyongyang), and September, and one meeting on the missile issue in July (Kuala Lumpur). Ambassador Michael Sheehan, U.S. counter-terrorism coordinator, met with Kim Gye-gwan from September 27 to October 2. On October 8, North Korea and the U.S. issued a joint statement on international terrorism, in which the North expressed opposition to any kind of terrorism.

in inter-Korean relations.⁹ In the aftermath of the summit talks, they are carefully watching North Korea's behavior.

The ruling and opposition parties disagree on how fast inter-Korean dialogue should progress. The opposition Grand National Party (GNP), South Korea's largest political party, warns the Kim Dae-jung government against moving too hastily in inter-Korean relations. GNP leader Lee Hoi-chang made clear his opposition to any debate on national unification based on the proposal of the two Koreas forming a federation.¹⁰ He said that North Korea's idea ran counter to South Korea's national goals and interests because a lower stage of federation would inevitably lead to a higher level of federation. Former President Kim Young-sam is another fierce opponent of the Kim Dae-jung government's North Korea policy. He is even opposed to Kim Jong-il's visit to South Korea, denouncing him as a dictator and terrorist. Many politicians also point out that Joint Declaration failed to make any reference to security-related matters, ways to reduce tensions or the institutionalization of peaceful relations.¹¹ Those who feel uncomfortable with the current state of inter-Korean relations seem reluctant to trust North Korea's sincerity in making peace on the Korean peninsula. The trespass by North Korean Cargo ships into South Korean territorial waters in June only increased their concern and pessimism.

South Korea's economic capability is another important factor that can keep North Korea interested in contacts with the South. Since North Korea expects a huge amount of economic benefits from inter-Korean dialogue, South Korea should be able to provide what North

9 Not only conservative groups but also some progressive intellectuals think that inter-Korean relations are developing too fast. Professor Choi Jang Jip, former chairman of Presidential Commission on Policy and Planning, regarded as one of the most liberal scholars, said that the government must consider adjusting the pace of development in inter-Korean relations. *Korea Herald*, October 7, 2000.

10 *Korea Herald*, October 12, 2000.

11 Lee Dong-bok, "Inter-Korean Summitry: Another Indian Game of Elephant versus People?" *Korea and World Affairs* (Summer 2000), p. 223.

Korea desires. In this sense, the South Korean economy should be stable and prosperous. The recent crisis of the Hyundai Group is by no means helpful to inter-Korean relations. The capability of South Korea to keep the Mt. Geumkang project alive and to supply electricity to the North could be regarded by Pyongyang as a crucial impetus to improve inter-Korean relations.

Factors in North Korea

The South Korea factors are closely related to North Korea's policy of reform and openness. In order for inter-Korean relations to continue to develop, North Korea should keep its promise agreed upon at the summit and in later meetings with the South: the demining of the DMZ for the railroad project, the establishment of a permanent meeting place for separated families, and, most importantly of all, Kim Jong-il's return visit to Seoul.

Appropriate and major domestic changes in North Korea will also be required. In particular, the North's economic reform policy will be essential to attract outside resources. If North Korea simply tries to maximize economic assistance from South Korea and western countries without taking meaningful domestic reforms, inter-Korean relations may receive a setback. If North Korea sticks to the North Korean brand of socialism, South Korean public opinion will become impatient with continuing economic assistance.

It is not an easy task, however, for North Korea to abandon the domestic characteristics that it has maintained for several decades: the Juche ideology, a military-centered system, KWP control over the state, and class policy. North Korea has constructed its system from a political, military, and ideological standpoint rather than from the standpoint of effectiveness.

For example, North Korea has pursued a regional self-reliance system on the basis of a county unit. Each county has been designed to

attain economic and military self-reliance. Thus, North Korea introduced local public finances and fostered local industries for self-sufficiency. Freedom of relocation of labor beyond the county boundary has been strictly controlled. North Korea has also dispersed local factories all over the country so they would be able to survive without assistance from the central government in case of war. Each county has 20 local industrial factories on average, which account for 30-40% of North Korea's total industrial production. North Korea believes the dispersion of industrial facilities can minimize damage in case of war, which could be more serious when industrial facilities are concentrated in a few locations. Such a system may be good for self-defense, since each county can survive for a long period of isolation, however, the regional self-reliance system results in an ineffective economy. A regional self-reliance system discourages the development of infrastructure, particularly transportation, since production and consumption are supposed to take place very closely within the same county. To support changes and reform, North Korea also needs to establish a state bureaucracy based upon specialization rather than loyalty or ideology. However, this means the abandonment of privilege by North Korea's current ruling elite.

International Factors

North Korea's missile development program is the most important issue that North Korea has to resolve to improve relations with the U.S. and Japan. For the U.S., North Korea's missile program, including its missile exports, is a major concern, although such issues as terrorism, human rights, and tension reduction on the Korean peninsula are also significant.

During his visit to Washington, Jo Myong-rok reaffirmed the North's moratorium on testing long-range missiles for the duration of talks with Washington, and Kim Jong-il indicated the North might give

up its missile program in exchange for U.S. help in launching North Korean satellites into space. North Korea has reportedly expressed its willingness to suspend missile exports, if Washington pays \$3 billion in compensation. It is not clear how much North Korea is willing to open its nuclear program, however, which is the single most powerful leverage that it could use in negotiations with the U.S.

The U.S. has rejected North Korea's demand to pay cash in compensation for suspending missile exports, saying it would not reward a bad behavior,¹² although it was later known that the U.S. was flexible to offer additional easing of economic sanction. The U.S.-DPRK talks on North Korea's missile development program, held in Kuala Lumpur (November 1-3), covered the full range of missile issues under consideration. However, the talks ended without accord, although Robert Einhorn, chief U.S. negotiator, said that progress had been made. The U.S. reportedly proposed that North Korea suspend all research and development of missiles with a range of more than 1,000 kilometers in exchange for launching the DPRK's satellites into orbit. The U.S. also demanded removal of missiles with a range more than 300 kilometers. Regardless of its desperate efforts during the final weeks of the Clinton administration, North Korea failed to achieve a breakthrough on the missile issue.

The U.S. became even tougher in dealing with North Korea, after George W. Bush came into office. President Bush put aside the Clinton administration's two-year campaign for a missile deal and the eventual normalization of relations with North Korea, although he would continue the process of engagement with the North.¹³ He said that he has some skepticism about Kim Jong-il, and emphasized the need for complete verification on the terms of any future agreements with North Korea.¹⁴

12 It was later known that the U.S. was flexible to offer additional easing of economic sanctions in return for North Korea's suspending missile exports.

13 *The Korea Herald*, January 19, 2001.

President Bush announced the resumption of talks with North Korea on June 6 after the completion of a policy review towards North Korea. However, he made it clear that the U.S. will pursue its discussions with Pyongyang as part of a comprehensive approach, including improved implementation of the Agreed Framework, verifiable constraints on North Korea's missile programs, a ban on its missile exports, and a less threatening conventional military posture.

As for Japan, the development of inter-Korean relations faces limitations without Japan's active participation. Japan is the country that can provide the kind of large-scale assistance to North Korea that is essential for long-term economic recovery. Realizing that they have a great deal of influence, some Japanese believe that they might be able even to veto the development of inter-Korea relations. In normalization negotiations with North Korea, Japan is sticking to its demand for information regarding 'abducted' Japanese citizens and missile proliferation issues covering both the Daepodong and Rodong missiles.

Prospects for Inter-Korean Relations

Inter-Korean summit talks were followed by a number of significant contacts between the two Koreas: the Red Cross talks; four rounds of ministerial-level meetings; the visit of Kim Yong-sun, secretary of the Workers' Party Central Committee in charge of programs involving South Korea to Seoul; the meeting of defense ministers; and working-level economic contacts. During these meetings, Seoul and Pyongyang reached agreements to arrange frequent meetings between separated family members, to reconnect the railway systems of the South and North, to conclude inter-Korean treaties, to protect mutual investment, to prevent double-taxation, and to solve business disputes and settle

14 In the summit meeting with President Kim Dae-jung on March 7, 2001.

accounts.

However, inter-Korean relations came to a halt several months after the June summit, because North Korea violated several agreements without any explanation. North Korea postponed working-level economic talks, the visit of North Korean economic survey teams to South Korea, and the second round of defense minister talks. North Korea also threatened to “reconsider” the scheduled reunions of separated family members and expressed displeasure with remarks by the South Korean Red Cross chief, which it said disparaged the North.¹⁵ In many cases, the two Koreas have not yet put into action the agreements that they have signed.

Future inter-Korean relations will be affected by two major factors: U.S.-DPRK relations and South Korea’s economic assistance to the North. Inter-Korean relations stagnated after the Bush administration took office. North Korea cancelled the agreed ministerial talks, Red Cross talks, and the participation of a unified table tennis team in an international tournament. As North Korea argues,¹⁶ the stagnation is mainly attributed to the U.S.’s hard-line policy towards North Korea. North Korea’s strategy appears to be to freeze relations with South Korea and then to blame the resulting deadlock in inter-Korean relations on the U.S. as a way to press the U.S. to resume talks. For North Korea, normalization with the U.S. is still the most significant occurrence that could help the North escape from its diplomatic, economic, and security dilemma.

Although North Korea is trying to consolidate its relations with

15 Chang Choog-sik, in his interview with a local monthly magazine, *Wolgan Chosun*, said North Korean visitors to the South were wearing the same clothes for four days. He also said that North Koreans could not hide the looks on their faces, which were filled with hardships.

16 After his meeting with Kim Jong-il on May 3, Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson said that he received the impression that Kim Jong-il would likely shelve any actions concerning the DPRK rapprochement with the ROK and the U.S. until the U.S. administration formulates its policy toward the DPRK.

long-time allies such as China and Russia, the North will not try to return the relationship to the cold war era for fear of the negative impact this might have on its efforts to improve relations with the U.S. and other Western countries. Rather, North Korea may want to use Russia and China for leverage in improving relations with the U.S. and Western countries.

It is generally believed that North Korea's approach to the U.S. does not necessarily conflict with the development of inter-Korean relations. In fact, it may appear that inter-Korean relations cannot move forward without rapprochement between North Korea and both Japan and the U.S.¹⁷ This seems to be true from a long-term perspective. In the short-term, however, the priority that North Korea places on rapprochement with the U.S. may have a negative impact on inter-Korean relations. North Korea may be obsessed with solving the question of a mechanism for peace on the Korean Peninsula in dealing with the U.S., while it wants to limit the inter-Korean programs to promote its economic benefits.

Inter-Korean relations will be able to make progress, when South Korea can continue to provide the North with economic assistance. North Korea's dissatisfaction with meager economic assistance from the South has a negative impact on inter-Korean relations. Just as the North thought it could get everything from the U.S. after the Agreed Framework of 1994, so the expectations of North Korea have been very high since the summit talks. In fact, the inter-Korean summit was made possible by South Korea's commitment to large-scale economic cooperation projects, including those involving the North's basic infrastructure, announced in Berlin Declaration, wherein President Kim Dae-jung predicted a North Korea-related economic boom. However, South Korea faces limitations providing as much economic assistance as the North expected. In their meetings with the North after the summit

17 *Yonhapnews*, Oct. 28, 2000.

talks, South Korean delegates had difficulty making concrete commitments to North Korea regarding economic assistance. Rather, South Korea tended to urge North Korea to speed up preparations for more family reunions and tension reduction measures.

If North Korea believes economic assistance from the South is not as large as it expected and contacts with the South only increase the danger of political instability, it may rapidly lose its interest in exchanges and cooperation with the South. Nevertheless, it is still necessary for North Korea to maintain inter-Korean relations in order to create an atmosphere that will attract Western investment. North Korea's efforts to expand its relations with Western countries may also be aimed improving inter-Korean relations.

Concluding Remarks

By accepting the summit talks, Kim Jong-il could depict himself as a leader of a unified Korea and provide new hopes and expectations of economic recovery in the North. As a result, he could consolidate his power and enhance his status. The summit talks also gave North Korea a chance to negotiate with the U.S. and Japan on issues of security and normalization. However, North Korea continues to stress the reunification of Korea through the unity of all Koreans behind the "Great Leader" Kim Jong-il and still holds to its long-standing demand for a peace treaty with the U.S., not the South.

Coordination between the ROK, the U.S. and Japan played a crucial role in making North Korea change its policy and accept the inter-Korean summit. Therefore, the future development of inter-Korean relations is greatly dependent upon the continued close coordination among the three countries. Nobody should feel left behind, although improving relations with the U.S. is the most immediate agenda for North Korea. The North will change, only if the U.S. will be constant in

its position that closer ties between Washington and Pyongyang require an inter-Korean dialogue. Seoul and Washington should also remain attuned to Japanese concerns about its own security in dealing with the North Korean missile issue.

The most immediate item on the agenda for North Korea still seems to be receiving security guarantees from the U.S. Until then, North Korea will rely on its military capabilities as a means of extracting aid for its short-term survival without making fundamental reforms. Thus, it may be too soon to expect full-fledged inter-Korean relations to develop in the near future.

Although President Bush's announcement that the U.S. will resume talks with North Korea can be regarded as a positive signal for inter-Korean relations, prospects for U.S.-DPRK relations are not expected to be so bright and promising because of the Bush administration's negative perception towards Kim Jong-il's North Korea. Paradoxically, however, the stagnation in relations between the U.S. and North Korea may increase the significance of inter-Korean relations. The U.S. recognition of South Korea's central role in dealing with North Korea's conventional forces also increases the significance of inter-Korean relations. Once again, the prospects for inter-Korean relations seem to be up to North Korea's sincerity in improving inter-Korean relations.