

INTER-KOREAN RELATIONS AFTER THE SUMMIT MEETING BETWEEN THE TWO KOREAS: A RUSSIAN VIEW

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Two years' period elapsed after the inter-Korean summit and signing of the Joint Declaration has confirmed that Korean settlement in the foreseeable future, too, will remain rather complex and inconsistent process which, apparently, will take rather long period of time. The positive tendencies which have appeared during this period have not yet got irreversible character. Moscow's position concerning the inter-Korean rapprochement and its possible results is determined by national interests of Russia which, certainly, will benefit from liquidation of the hot-spot right next to her Far Eastern region and from founding in the long term an unified Korea, capable to maintain relations of friendship, good neighbourhood and cooperation with Russia. At the same time there is no doubts, that Russia's priority task concerning realization of any unification scenarios remains maintenance of peace and stability on peninsula. The DPRK's unification formula which call for creation of a neutral non-aligned state on the peninsula looks, from the point of view of Russia's security interests, more attractive, rather than South Korean commitment to the American military presence even after unification of Korea. After the inter-Korean summit Russia

has shown with practical deeds that it is ready in every possible way to promote confidence, principles of peaceful co-existence, stable and all-round cooperation between the ROK and the DPRK on the basis of the Joint declaration and other inter-Korean agreements, and regularly, persistently works with all interested parties so that they act in the same way.

I. Introduction

“First time in history” - it looks like these words became the most frequently used when describing events on the Korean peninsula during the last two years. The central place among them belongs, no doubt about it, to the meeting of the highest authorities of the ROK and the DPRK in June of 2000, which was held for the first time since the both states made their appearance on the globe political map.

It seems that the decision to hold the summit was a product of realization, both in Seoul and in Pyongyang, of the fact that at the present stage all possibilities for achieving any tangible progress in inter-Korean relations by using the external factors - the U.S., China, Japan and Russia - had been exhausted. In these circumstances, Koreans tried to find their own way for a settlement of the Korean problems, utilizing for the purpose the growing Korean nationalism and understanding by both sides of the pan-Korean interests. In sum, the move was aimed to diminish the role of those “external factors” in the Korean affairs and to make the Great Powers to a greater degree to take into consideration the interests of Koreans.

The inter-Korean summit by upgrading the relations between the two Korean states on a qualitatively new level laid foundation for their normalization and for promoting a wide-range and sustainable bilateral cooperation between the ROK and the DPRK. A real perspective for

eradication of one of the oldest remnants of the “cold war” and a permanent “hot-spot” in the region has appeared.

At the same time, it was rather easy to note that the content of Joint Declaration signed by the leaders of the South and the North Korea, with the exception of acceptance of similarity of the unification programs of both sides and their agreement to continue the highest-level dialogue, looks like a abstract of agreements and understandings reached by two Koreas in one or another form during various inter-Korean contacts in 1970-1990s. Absolutely new and peculiar one was the only fact - this time the document was signed for the first time by supreme leaders of the ROK and the DPRK. That very circumstance, considering traditions of the Korean political culture, provided the following period of the inter-Korean dialogue with higher than ever dynamics and so far keeps it going.

II. Reasons for Rapprochement

There are still different views on the question whether Pyongyang's decision to agree to hold the summit was a result of a drastic reevaluation of its unification strategy or just a tactical maneuver caused by circumstances and aimed at resolving the current problems, without bringing any substantial changes in the DPRK's domestic and foreign policy. Just before and in the beginning of 2000, Pyongyang called the South Korean authorities “puppets” and “traitors which have no future.” North Korea refused a dialogue with the ROK under the pretext that the latter lacks independence because it was “occupied” by “the American imperialists' troops.”¹ Both the ROK President personally and his policy for rapprochement and cooperation with the North were also objects for bitter attacks in the DPRK's media.²

1 *Rodong Shinmun*, December 25, 1999.

That made some Russian scholars to suppose that “Pyongyang’s consent to held talks are not resulted from changes in the North’ policy towards the South.”³

Both the summit as well as the events happened after him testify that the DPRK’s steps towards the recognition of the peninsula realities were forced and dictated mainly by a difficult economic situation and complicated international conditions.

Especially, by 2000 it became evident that the DPRK was not capable on its own, without attracting external resources, to cope with a protracted economic crisis. In the situation when previous support from Russia and China was not available any more, possibilities of receiving economic assistance from the West were unclear, the only real source of such assistance remains South Korea with its “sunshine policy” pursued by Kim Dae-jung.

Adding to that, the resumption of a dialogue with Seoul authorities was among main conditions set forth by the West for normalization of its own relations with the DPRK. The latter’s possibilities for maneuvering on the “field” became much less after the U.S., Japan and the ROK established the trilateral mechanism for coordinating their North Korean policy.

The last impulse in favor of shifting diplomatic offensive to the South seemingly was given to the DPRK by Kim Dae-jung’s Berlin Declaration in which economic assistance to the North was upgraded to the level of a state policy while promising to abide with principles of peaceful coexistence and not trying to absorb the North.

Sure, Pyongyang had no illusions about Seoul’s ulterior motives. Nevertheless, the DPRK decided to take the chance not only to receive economic benefits, but to achieve a political and diplomatic breakthrough at the “Western Front.” The point is, according to Pyongyang’s

2 *Rodong Shinmun*, December 24, 1999; January 31, 2000.

3 V. Tkachenko, “Possible Results of the North-South Korea summit: A View from Russia,” *Korus Forum*, No. 6, 2000, p. 73.

interpretation of the Joint Declaration (consolidation of Koreans in the North and in the South against “external forces”), that giving its consent to the summit, the DPRK counted on undermining the trilateral anti-North Korean alliance of Washington-Tokyo-Seoul.

North Korea also expected a drastic progress in normalization of the DPRK’s relations with the U.S. and with their allies. Besides that they planned to stir up competition among four Great Powers whose interests are directly intersected on the Korean peninsula. Pyongyang tried to obtain support from Russia and China in order to force the U.S. and Japan into giving additional concessions.

It is worth saying that North Korean maneuver proved to be rather precisely calculated. The very announcement on the forthcoming inter-Korean summit helped to create conditions for visits by Kim Jong-il to China in May 2000 and Russian President V. Putin to the DPRK in July 2000. Resumption of a political dialogue with two Great Powers - the DPRK’s neighbors brought about drastic strengthening not only Pyongyang’s standing vis-a-vis the U.S., Japan and the ROK, but Kim Jong-il personal position as a respectable statesman who are dealt with by the leaders of the world’s major powers.

Another foreign policy factor which prompted Pyongyang to resume a dialogue with Seoul was fear - proved to be not entirely ungrounded - of possible coming to power in the U.S. the Republicans who took much more tough attitude towards the DPRK than Clinton’s administration did.

Providing Kim Dae-jung with such a visible argument in favor of his “Sunshine Policy,” like the summit itself, Pyongyang expected that after the summit Seoul, in its turn, would begin to push the U.S. and Japan to make further steps towards the DPRK. In case of the Republican’s coming to power Kim Dae-jung’s personal involvement with engagement policy toward the DPRK, as it was foreseen by North Koreans, it happened to be a good counterbalance to Americans’ attempts to pursue a more tough policy towards the DPRK.

It is worth mentioning that these calculations proved to be exact to much degree. The Bush administration, in spite of continuation of the tough rhetoric against the DPRK and its leadership, was forced to adjust its hard-line approach taking into consideration of Kim Dae-jung's personal stakes in the "Sunshine Policy" as well as fears of cautious Japanese.

Inter-Korean summit obviously weakened the united anti-North Korean diplomatic alliance of the U.S.-Japan-South Korea. It actually, especially at an early stage, made Seoul to withdraw from the anti-North Korean triangle, moved to the background so-called "North Korean nuclear and missile problem" as the question of no real importance for normalization of relations between "compatriots" since Pyongyang always claimed that its missiles were entirely for deterrence of an aggression by the U.S. to prevent in Korea any scenario similar to those which took place in Iraq or Yugoslavia.⁴

Pyongyang's decision to resume the inter-Korean dialogue brought about for the DPRK a run of diplomatic recognition from the West. Since 2000, the DPRK established inter-state relations with 19 countries, and became a member of the ARF.

Chairman Kim Jong-il's active personal diplomacy which he began after the inter-Korean summit towards South Korea (meetings with politicians, business and media leaders, cultural figures) as well as the U.S. (meetings with M.Albright in Pyongyang which lasted altogether for 11 hours) was clearly aimed at "de-demonization" of his image both among South Koreans and world public opinion. One shouldn't exclude that this ad campaign had far more distant aim: to prevent in future in Korea repetition of the scenarios which were used by the West in Europe when dealing with some leaders of former socialist countries.

By the way, in the DPRK they gave the credit of holding the summit

4 *Rodong Shinmun*, September 18, 1999; *Minju Chosun*, January 31, 2001.

entirely to Kim Jong-il. And what is more, it is claimed, that by doing so he demonstrated his virtue as a pan-national leader therefore the country's unification can be achieved only under his guidance.⁵

III. Both Sides' Priorities and Tactics

The process of inter-Korean exchanges which started after the summit gave observers some ideas of priorities of both sides and tactics used by them to reach their goals.

For Pyongyang such priorities, as it had been expected, proved to be getting economic assistance and grants from the ROK. When it comes to other channels of inter-Korean relations, the North demonstrated far less interest in their development.

From the very start, the definite intention was visible in the North Korean tactics: that is to portray the North's consent to fulfill its obligations under the agreements with Seoul like some kind of concession to a partner and on that basis to demand each time in return for it a certain "present." On the day of signing the agreement on holding the summit (May 18, 2000), the ROK began deliveries to the DPRK of 200,000 tons of fertilizers. Generally, positive outcomes of the 3rd round of ministerial-level talks in September 2000 were determined mostly by Seoul's decision to provide the North with 600,000 tons of grain. North Koreans' consent for a visit in April 2002 to Pyongyang of a special presidential envoy Lim Dong-won was also related to Seoul's promise to provide Pyongyang with 300,000 tons of grain and 200,000 tons of fertilizer, especially needed in spring.

There is one more specific feature in North Korean tactics employed in the sphere of inter-Korean contacts, especially in economic ties. Pyongyang undoubtedly strives to make them as closed for the public

5 *Rodong Shinmun*, December 15, 2000.

as possible, trying to confront any particular South Korean firm with all might of the North Korean state machine. That explains such “incomprehensible,” from view of South Koreans, Pyongyang’s lack of interest in resumption of the inter-Korean Economic Cooperation Committee’s activity.

Pyongyang, in return for South Korean economic injections, began limited and strictly controlled humanitarian contacts, simultaneously trying to extract from the exchanges a maximum propagandistic effect. Judging by commentaries in North Korean media, performances staged in the South by North Korean symphonic orchestra, circus and children ensemble convinced South Koreans of “flowering national culture” in the North and of course, of “greatness and wisdom” of the DPRK’s leader.⁶

The most essential concession to Seoul on the part of Pyongyang was probably consent after a 15-years break to resume contacts between members of the divided families. However, because of fear of penetration into the country “alien” to a local sample of “socialism” ideas, information and a way of life these meetings still have irregular, incidental character (the latest, 4th took place in April-May 2002 and previous one, the 3rd - in February 2001). Though the format of these meetings was a little bit expanded, they still remain carefully orchestrated and taking place under the vigilant control of special services events with the extremely limited participation (about 200 persons from each side). Meanwhile, according to the ROK’s official data, there are about 10 million members of the separated families in both parts of the country.

In March 2001 in Panmunjom, representatives of Red Cross Societies of the North and the South have made an exchange of 300 letters which were sent by members of the separated families to their relatives accordingly in the North and the South. Here again it was limited to

6 *Minju Chosun*, August 24, 29, 2000.

the single act. For a half-century, authorities of both sides can not agree upon allowing the citizens to meet, call and write freely each other.

As an “initial payment “ for the consent to revive family reunions Seoul in September 2000 transferred to Pyongyang 68 persons who had served long terms of imprisonment in the ROK for activities in favor of the DPRK. Coming home of “unconverted” prisoners was used for unleashing the massed propaganda campaign supporting traditional theses of North Korean ideologists about “superiority” of the social order and the way of life existing in the DPRK comparing to those in the ROK.

At the same time, the DPRK categorically refuses to return to South Korea its POW, fishermen and other persons who, as Seoul asserts, forcibly are kept in the North.

There is an aspiration to use the agreements achieved by the parties in this or that area to impose one’s own will, to dictate to the partner, what he can do, and what - he shouldn’t. During trip to Pyongyang of heads of the ROK media (August, 5-12, 2000) an agreement which contains promises to abstain from mutual slander and to work for the benefit of consolidation and unification was signed. It was rather quickly found out, that North Koreans are inclined to use this document for punishment disagreeable to them press organs of the ROK by excluding them from covering of international events taking place in the DPRK (refusal to accredit correspondent of largest conservative newspaper “Chosun Ilbo” at negotiations of the Red Cross Societies at Mt. Geumgang and during M.Albright’s visit to the DPRK where besides Americans, over 20 Japanese and South Korean journalists, and also AFP correspondent have worked).

In North Korean tactics, the aspiration has appeared, evading from official contacts, to place emphasis on organizing formally rather amorphous conferences, symposiums, meetings of various representatives of the North and the South, who were selected, so to say, according to “professional” criteria.

Among such events of 2001 included the followings - meetings of religious believers (March) and workers of the North and the South for unification (May), conference of representatives of the public of the North, the South and from abroad on the occasion of first anniversary of signing of the Joint Declaration (June), a meeting of the public of two parts of the country on the occasion of Liberation Day (August).

The main contents of these forums - as it appears from coverage in North Korean media, became, as a rule, are three basic elements: the recognition and “glorification” of roles of the DPRK’s leader as the national leader, a natural “center of rallying” and unity of all Koreans, support for the DPRK’s initiatives for reunification of the country as most “fair and rational” proposals in this area, and at last, almost open appeal to nationalism, unity of overwhelming majority of all those in whose veins “the Korean blood” flows against “external forces” ostensibly “not wanting” unification, and “national traitors,” who came to terms with those forces.⁷

One more characteristic feature of such forums was organized them far away from eyes not only the Korean public, but also foreigners and world media. They are held, as a rule, in the Mt. Geumgang closed from an autumn of 1998 for foreign diplomats, delegations and journalists visiting this country.

Pyongyang regularly ostracizes the most irreconcilable South Korean critics of the DPRK and its policy: ministers, politicians and even press organs. In particular, for “inexcusable antinational” statements on questions of observance of human rights in the DPRK, tourism in Mt. Geumgang, etc. the leader of South Korea’s largest opposition party, the candidate at the forthcoming presidential elections Lee Hui-chang was listed in this category.⁸

Such attempts are quite often undertaken by North Koreans in

7 *Rodong Shinmun*, March 7, 25; May 7, 2001.

8 *Korea Central News Agency*, June 10, 2001.

order to take a pause at this or that direction of the inter-Korean dialogue.

ROK's Minister of National Defense Cho Song-tae was severely criticized in October 2000 for "powder-smelled" statements addressed toward the DPRK, increase of the military budget for 2001. In this connection, North Korea has openly called into question expediency of his arrival to the DPRK for participation in the 2-nd round of negotiations between heads of defense ministries scheduled for November 2000. Then, a stumbling-block for continuation of such meetings became definition the DPRK as South Korea's "main enemy" in the "White Paper" published by the ROK's defense ministry.

It looks like that Pyongyang is not going to hasten regular exchanges of people. Under pretext of presence ostensibly offensive for the DPRK and its political system attacks contained in interview of the President of the South's Red Cross Society to South Korean magazine *Volgan Chosun* the North's Red Cross has postponed the family reunion scheduled for November 2000 and threatened to boycott the Red Cross negotiations until the "perpetrator" of the incident keeps his position.⁹

The latest example of "punishment" of South Korean officials for objectionable to Pyongyang statements became suspension of some inter-Korean contacts scheduled for May 2002 after the "Washington Post" published the statements ostensibly made by the ROK Minister for Foreign Affairs about the DPRK (Seoul asserted that the American newspaper had distorted the minister's words).

One of the most evident relapses of Pyongyang's traditional policy of "united front" directed at legalization organizations and groups in the ROK sympathizing the DPRK was the invitation to the North for celebration of 55th anniversary of the WPK in October 2000 representatives of some political parties and organizations from the South which

9 *Pyongyang Radio*, November 3, 2000.

activity there officially is forbidden. In order not to give a pretext for a suspension of dialogue, Seoul had to allow a certain number of invited to go to the North, having forbidden them to be engaged there in political activity.

However, such bans proved to be ineffective. Active work by North Koreans with a number of members of the South Korean delegation invited to celebrate the 56th anniversary of Liberation of Korea in August 2001 has caused a political scandal in the ROK and even has resulted in resignation of the ROK's Minister of Unification.

South Korea's tactics are determined by the strong desire to open North Korean society and to persuade Pyongyang keep Kim Jong-il's promises to make a reciprocal trip to Seoul. The latter problem became some kind of an "idee - fixe" for the South Korean administration. It seems that realization of the second inter-Korean summit someone in Seoul would like to present as the main "fruit" and the culmination of Kim Dae-jung's rule in the field of inter-Korean relations, which would justify all costs of his "Sunshine Policy" for which he is criticized by opposition.

Pyongyang prefers to keep silence on the matter. From one side, North Korean media from time to time publishes enthusiastic "responses" by certain South Koreans who supposedly are ready to arrange the grand welcome to "commander Kim Jong-il" in Seoul. From another - North Koreans sharply criticized attempts of the forces "hostile to unification" to prevent this trip by filing judicial claims against Kim Jong-il and other "provocations."¹⁰

In June 2001, at a ceremonial meeting on the occasion of the first anniversary of signing of the Joint Declaration (the inter-Korean summit is mentioned much less often in the DPRK), Vice-Chairman of the Presidium of the SPA of the DPRK Jang Hyon-sob has declared that actions of opponents of unification in South Korea make it impos-

10 *Minju Chosun*, October 31, 2000; May 8, 2001.

sible to fulfill the provisions of the Declaration in time, thus letting know that under present conditions visit of the DPRK's leader to the ROK is impossible.¹¹

Nevertheless, the impression is created that North Koreans, from time to time, recover this theme and use it as a bait to provide complaisance of Seoul. Therefore, Kim Jong-il, despite numerous appeals from Kim Dae-jung to fix concrete date of the visit, so far has failed to do that, limiting his statements on the matter which he, from time to time, makes at meetings with foreign delegations (EU in May, 2001, with daughter Park Jong-hee - Park Guen-hae in May, 2002) by confirmation of his desire to make the trip.

Finally, in view of security problems and impossibility for the ROK government to prevent criticism of the North Korean leader and even probable protests in case of his arrival, the probability of such visit looks rather small. It seems that the only circumstance, preventing to hand over this theme "in archive," remains Kim Jong-il' signature under the promise to visit the South.

IV. Behind Disagreements

It looks like that behind these tactical maneuvers are hidden much more serious disagreements between the South and the North which one can list starting with an interpretation of the inter-Korean summit's Joint Declaration.

The DPRK, contrary to Seoul's statements that leaders of the South and the North have reached understanding as if the first item of the Declaration signed by them providing the independent decision of a problem of unification by joint efforts of the nation, does not exclude participation of " external forces" in settlement of this problem, and

11 *Rodong Shinmun*, June 15, 2001.

adheres to absolutely opposite point of view. Official statements and commentaries in media contain an appeal to repulse any attempts of intervention from the outside in process of reunification which represents an entirely “internal affair” of Korean nation. Pyongyang is sure that to solve all questions arising in this process by own forces, not leaning to anybody - this is a “nucleus” of the Joint Declaration.¹²

In the same formula, the demands to withdraw the US troops from South Korea have been hidden. On tactical reasons (“to make it more easier” for Kim Dae-jung right after the summit), North Koreans did not accent their position on the matter, though already on September 27, 2000. The ruling WPK’s newspaper “Rodong Shinmun” which South Koreans like so much to quote as an official North Korean media organ in the editorial commentary has confirmed that the DPRK still is going to realize this task.¹³

The summit has helped North Koreans to achieve what they without any particular success tried to achieve for many years: the problem of the U.S. military presence in the ROK and in Japan became a subject of hot discussions both in South Korea and in the U.S.

Another circumstance brings attention to itself in behavior of both Korean sides after the summit: visible absence of desire of both parties to work vigorously on expansion of a similarity of their unification programs fixed in the second item of the Joint Declaration. The success opens an opportunity for joint search of mutually acceptable forms of a united state. This recognition can be considered as one of the major political compromises reached by the sides since each of them till the moment had insisted on correctness of its own unification program and from a threshold rejected the partner’s proposals on the matter.

If there ever had been a mutual desire to look for the compromise, it was possible, for example, to create a joint working group which could

12 *Rodong Shinmun*, August 16, 2000; June 5, 2001

13 *Rodong Shinmun*, September 27, 2000.

make the similarity more detailed and eliminate the remaining differences, thus giving both sides the route and time-table to the common goal - reunification of the country. On the contrary, a little bit stopped during the summit, North Korean propaganda machine again convinces with the double force Koreans both in the North and in the South that “three charters of unification,” “program for a great national consolidation,” and an idea of confederation put forward by the DPRK are the “most realistic and fair proposals” to achieve reunification.¹⁴

In turn, Seoul does not get tired to repeat that unification is possible only on the basis of model of the liberal democracy and the market economy, existing in the ROK.

The South is suspicious of the fact that Pyongyang makes efforts to promote Kim Jong-il as the national leader and continues to convince South Koreans that only this figure can bring the nation’s unification and prosperity. Right after the summit, he was presented by the DPRK media with a title of “the president of unification.”¹⁵

It was not left unnoticed in Seoul that the stream of “responses,” especially from anonymous South Koreans in the DPRK media has appreciably increased. They amicably assure readers of North Korean newspapers, TV-viewers and radio listeners that all people in the South as one aspire to study *juche* ideas, trust “commander Kim Jong-il as to the sky,” and are ready to follow him “as sunflowers turn to the sun,” cannot wait to begin to live in the prospering fatherland under his guidance.¹⁶

One of the most important elements of Pyongyang’s strategy proved to be using of a nationalist card. For these purposes the North put forward unprecedentedly “courageous” theses for the North Korean ideologists as if Kim Jong-il “first of all is a patriot, and after that a communist,” that he thinks “first of all of the nation’s destiny,

14 *Rodong Shinmun*, October 9; December 14, 2000.

15 *Rodong Shinmun*, June 19, 2000.

16 See KCNA, May 11, 2000; *Rodong Shinmun*, October 16, 2000.

instead of ideas and ideals.”¹⁷

Pyongyang promotes strongly an idea that interests of the nation are more important than any class interests and ideas. Any class and social group cannot put their interests above national one. Simultaneously necessity is emphasized “to not ask about the past” those figures who, in opinion of Pyongyang, opposed unification earlier. The specified two postulates are declared to be basic principles on which it was offered to achieve national consolidation.¹⁸

Pyongyang came back to using the formulas about “the northern half of republic,” meaning that the ROK is still considered as part of the DPRK which was temporarily occupied by American troops. Certainly, from this point of view, the statements are quite “logical” that “unification in the essence means restoration of the sovereignty of the nation in the framework of the whole country” or otherwise liberation of South Korea from domination of “external forces.”¹⁹

North Korean politicians and the media still evade from comments and the concrete analysis of real processes in inter-Korean interaction. Publicly declaring aspiration to reconciliation and cooperation, the DPRK at the same time refrains from the publication of any positive information about South Korea (with exception of criticism by the ROK public of displays of the Japanese militarism), still keeps “an image of the enemy” for the South. North Korean media even have managed “to not notice” the fact of awarding President Kim Dae-jung with the Nobel Peace Prize.

The DPRK continues jamming South Korean TV and radio broadcasts both in Korean and foreign languages.

Among the most striking evidence on cooling the relations between the North and the South was resumption of criticism in South Korean foreign and internal policy in spring 2001, which practically had

17 *Rodong Shinmun*, October 26, 2000.

18 *Rodong Shinmun*, October 28, 2000.

19 *Rodong Shinmun*, October 25, 2000.

disappeared in the second half of 2000 after the inter-Korean summit.

Judging by statements of officials and the governmental media, the greatest irritation in Pyongyang is caused by the following elements of a course pursued by South Korean “rightist conservative forces” toward the DPRK:

- continuing coordination by Seoul in its policy toward the DPRK with USA and Japan, Pyongyang insists that, according to the Joint Declaration, Seoul is obliged to refuse support from “external forces” and to move to “rallying” Koreans, despite differences in ideology, ideals and social positions, on a nationalist basis of opposition to those forces which allegedly “are not interested” in unification of the country²⁰;
- anti-communism as the prevailing vector of South Korean political life, resulting in preserving the definition of the DPRK as the ROK’s “main enemy.” Under sharp criticisms are retaining of the State Security Law and a ban on activity in the ROK of any groups sympathizing with Pyongyang and left-wing organizations which North Korea often tries to use as its “fifth column” in the South;
- Seoul’s policy aimed at preservation of the US military presence in the South. Pyongyang considers such position as the main obstacle not only for unification, but also to “democratization” of South Korean society. The withdrawal of American troops from South Korea is also named a main condition for reduction of conventional armaments on the peninsula.²¹

V. September 11th attacks in the U.S. and the Korean Peninsula

September 11, 2001 events in the U.S. and American actions, which have followed them on international arena, inclusion by President

20 *Rodong Shinmun*, June 7, 2001.

21 *Rodong Shinmun*, March 26, 2001.

Bush the DPRK into so-called “axis of evil “ exerted a negative effect on situation on the Korean peninsula.

The policy announced by Americans toward the DPRK and their practical actions demonstrated, both to the North and the South, that geopolitic ambitions of the U.S. are the main external factor destabilizing situations in Korea. It becomes more and more obvious that Washington’s aim is under any pretext to keep the dominant role on the peninsula, which is unique by its geo-political position being situated at the key strategic point bordering three world powers - Russia, China and Japan. The U.S. still considers all of them as main present or potential military-political or economic rivals. This explains the U.S. aspiration not to allow the inter-Korean dialogue make to much progress since normalization of situation on the peninsula and rapprochement of two Koreas inevitably would put under doubt expediency of the American military presence in the south of peninsula, and then in Northeast Asia.

Many Russians believe that American statements about “North Korean threat” are insolvent. Taking into consideration the existing balance of forces on the peninsula and in the world deliberate initiation of any large conflict by Pyongyang would be equivalent to an act of suicide. It is obvious that North Korea is not capable of waging a war without support from the outside. Such support is unthinkable now as well as for foreseeable future.

A particular indignation in Pyongyang, along with “axis of evil,” was caused by President Bush’s personal attacks against Kim Jong-il and by American president’s “slandering” the DPRK’s political system.²²

It looks like the Bush administration purposely provokes the DPRK’s leadership which announced a moratorium on missile tests for

22 The Statement of the DPRK Foreign Ministry Representative, KCNA, February 22, 2002.

the period of negotiations with the U.S. It is thought that existence of such plans cannot be dismissed, since, say, resumption of missile tests by the DPRK would create favorable conditions for the U.S. to resolve several major foreign policy problems at one stroke. The development used for the justification of military strikes against the DPRK would allow to speed up expansion American missile defense systems on national and regional levels to compel Japan to participate more actively in creation of such a system and in realization of other military-political plans of the U.S. in Northeast Asia, to muffle, even to remove at all, at least for a while, and provide disputes in South Korea and Japan concerning the American military presence in the region.

Under these circumstances, it is possible to expect that Pyongyang, despite its rigid rhetoric aimed at the US, will continue its tactics of maneuvering and even may try to restart negotiating process with Washington, mobilizing for the purpose of Russia and China's good services, with aim of winning time for fulfillment of those military programs which, as North Koreans believe, will make risk of use of force against the DPRK unacceptable for any probable enemy.

Condemning the US intention "to intrude" the DPRK, the ruling WPK's newspaper "Rodong Shinmun" noted that North Korea "produces rockets for self-defense" and has specified that under the circumstances Pyongyang "is compelled" to increase the efforts in this area.²³

In other words, the North has indicated clearly enough to Americans and to the rest of the world that it is out of question to expect from the DPRK suspension of a military component of its missile program for the time being. This "trump" will be reserved evidently for the future bargaining with the U.S.

If talks with Americans will not bring about desirable results, Pyongyang can try again, as trips to the North by Lim Dong-won and

23 *Rodong Shinmun*, February 27, 2002.

Park Guen-hae demonstrated, to revive the inter-Korean dialogue, thus driving the wedge between Seoul and Washington in their approaches to North Korea.

Lessons of events in Iraq, on the Balkan, and in Afghanistan are likely to influence very much Pyongyang's behavior. North Koreans believe that they testify to inability of the United Nations and its Security Council, and the world community as a whole to prevent or to stop aggression of the U.S. and their allies against the sovereign states with regimes which are not suiting Washington showed unpreparedness of certain countries and groups of the states to render effective help to a victim of aggression.

The DPRK practically does not hide its disappointment with Russia and - to a lesser extent - China's positions concerning ongoing "anti-terrorist operation," organized and led by the U.S. One may notice that in parallel with declarative maxims about "friendship" with Russia and China semi-official North Korean media writes with obvious condemnation about "the big powers" which "have succumbed to the US demand that they should make clear which side to take," about "former advocates of multipolarization, [who] are busy currying a favor with the dominationists."²⁴

It is possible to assume that the Pentagon's plans on use of the nuclear weapon against seven states including the DPRK, which became known in the beginning of March 2002, will only strengthen North Korea's determination to increase efforts to attain a stronger defense posture. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK has warned about possible revision by Pyongyang of all agreements reached with the US before, letting thus know that North Koreans do not exclude demonstrative renewal of the missile tests and the nuclear program.²⁵

24 *The Pyongyang Times*, December 15, 2001.

25 The Statement of the DPRK Foreign Ministry Representative, KCNA, March 13, 2002.

VI. The Basic Conclusions

Two years' period elapsed after the inter-Korean summit and signing of the Joint Declaration has confirmed that Korean settlement in the foreseeable future, too, will remain rather complex and inconsistent process which, apparently will take rather long period. The positive tendencies which have appeared during this period have not yet got irreversible character.

The sides came to this date with rather limited number of sporadic official contacts, humanitarian and cultural exchanges, though growth of trade and economic cooperation is more formidable.

One of the reasons of such situation, perhaps is that political, economic and humanitarian exchanges revived and even a little bit promoted after the summit in comparison with 1980-1990s during the last century was not accompanied even by the minimal steps in the sphere of reduction of military confrontation between the North and the South, and by realization of confidence-building and arms control measures. Despite apparent diplomatic breakthrough, the ROK and the DPRK keep trying to increase the military potentials, doing so with ever-growing energy.

So far both sides failed to refrain from using tactics of sounding each other's positions by using force and getting on each other's nerves. Examples to that are continuation of practice of staging by the ROK together with the US the military maneuvers formally simulating "repelling of aggression" from the DPRK, and on the other hand - demonstrative passes of North Koreans ships through South Korean waters between the southern coast of the peninsula and Cheju island in June, 2001

Too high level of military threat (real or imagined), unacceptable for each of the sides, constitutes and will remain henceforth a serious brake for development of the inter-Korean relations.

Despite the North and the South's official statements in favor of uni-

fication, the facts testify that interests on preservation of the present ruling elite and political stability in both parts of Korea and also their military-political alliances with the third countries dominate and, in the foreseeable future, will keep a priority above Koreans' "unifying" aspirations.

Remaining distinctions in political systems, principles of functioning of the state bodies, subjects of economic activities and public organizations make apparently improbable development of wide-range cooperation, first of all exchanges of people between the DPRK and the ROK not only in the near future, but even in mid-term prospect.

The DPRK's approaches to unification, despite all their formal updating, keep all main principles laid down during Kim Il-sung's rule and still put as the ultimate goal achieving the country's reunification under Pyongyang's aegis.

The South Korean ruling class pursues similar purposes. Quite a lot of people in the ROK still dream of "awarding" Kim Jong-il and other members of North Korean leadership with the destiny of many members of the Political Bureau of the East Europe Communist Parties. The State Security Law, forbidding any non-authorized contacts with the DPRK and its citizens and even expression of sympathies to the North is still in force in the South. Certainly, does not promote establishment and expansion of mutual understanding and confidence.

In view of these circumstances, Pyongyang and Seoul can hardly avoid pauses and even steps back at various directions of dialogue. It is also unlikely that they will get rid of propaganda swoops against each other.

As recent developments in North Korea and the US relations have shown, the position of the great powers remains the essential factor influencing development of inter-Korean dialogue.

And even against this rather contradictory background more and more appreciable and significant, in my opinion the fact is that, despite relapses of mistrust and enmity, the relations between the South and

the North gradually find real material and institutional basis, get their own dynamics that eventually will prevent the ties from rolling back.²⁶

VII. Russia's Position

The Korean peninsula historically and geopolitically was always included into sphere of Russia's national interests which pursue maintenance of peace and stability in the areas located along the perimeter of her borders.

A Moscow's position concerning the inter-Korean rapprochement and its possible results is determined by national interests of Russia which certainly will benefit from liquidation of the hot-spot right next to her Far Eastern region and from founding in the long term an unified Korea, capable to maintain relations of friendship, good neighbourhood and cooperation with Russia.

At the same time, there is no doubts that Russia's priority task concerning realization of any unification scenarios remains maintenance of peace and stability on peninsula. The contents of Pyongyang 2000 and Moscow 2001 Declarations signed by President V. Putin and Chairman of National Defense Committee of the DPRK Kim Jong-il and also the Russian - Korean joint statement on results of V. Putin's visit to the Republic of Korea in February 2001 speak quite clearly to the effect.

It is also important for Moscow to ensure the maximal predictability of final results of unification process. High degree of uncertainty concerning character of foreign policy of the united Korea, its participation in the military-political alliances with other states and orientations of such alliances, compels Russia as well as other powers, while

26 See *Sunshine Policy for Peace & Cooperation*, Ministry of Unification, Republic of Korea, May 2002.

welcoming inter-Korean detente to take more cautious position toward prospects of unification.

For example, China is seemingly fears advancement of the US troops to almost 1400 kilometer-long Korean-Chinese border in a context of unresolved Taiwan problem, and Americans prospect to be compelled to put an end to the their military presence in Korea and Japan -occurrence of the strong competitor overwhelmed with aspiration to get a historical revenge for humiliations of the colonial past.

Russia hardly can welcome as a new neighbor a state with 70-million population which is under prevailing influence of the US and the more so with the American troops on its territory. It would be equivalent to occurrence near our east borders of Asian clone of the NATO under the cover of TMD. Some outstanding Russian experts consider that stationing of the US troops in South Korea is an anachronism of the period of "cold war."²⁷

The countries located next to the Korean peninsula are also worried of possible territorial claims by the united Korea to the neighboring states.

Generally for Russia, in view of its present capabilities, the real task is not to get prevailing positions in Korea, but to prevent such a situation when Korea would be placed under influence of another, especially unfriendly to Russia.²⁸

Since under present balance of forces in Northeast Asia and our economic power, one could not exclude development of events according to such scenario completely, existence of the DPRK as the friendly sovereign state which is carrying out a role of a certain buffer for geopolitic ambitions of the US in this region is favorable to Moscow in short and mid-term perspective.

27 V. I. Denisov, "Inter-Korean Settlement and Russia's Interests," Moscow, *International Affairs*, 2002, # 1, p. 59.

28 V. P. Tkachenko, *Korean Peninsula and Russia's Interests* (Moscow: Orient Literature Publishing House, 2000), p. 165.

In view of the factors specified above, the DPRK's unification formula which calls for creation of a neutral non-aligned state on the peninsula looks from the point of view of Russia's security interests more attractive rather than South Korean commitment to the American military presence even after unification of Korea.

“Russia understands that the Korean problem - one of the acute problems of the Asian region which demands unrelenting attention. The incident occurred on June 29 this year between military vessels of the DPRK and the ROK has resulted in lost lives from both sides, in particular, which testifies to it.

Recently, positive influence of the Russian policy on development of a situation on the Korean peninsula has appreciably increased. The Russian side is not imposing itself as an intermediary between Seoul and Pyongyang, but uses all opportunities to promote peace and dialogue between the North and the South. Moscow aspires to play on the peninsula a constructive, stabilizing role contradicting to nobody's interests.

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Russia Igor Ivanov's visits to Seoul and Pyongyang in July 2002 did not begin yet, but the world had already received news that Pyongyang had expressed readiness to renew contacts to Seoul and hold the next seventh inter-Korean ministerial-level meeting. Thus, a representative from the DPRK has expressed a regret concerning recent incident between naval boats of the North and the South in Yellow sea.

It is difficult to tell by what reason Pyongyang was guided more, having declared about its readiness to resume contacts with the South directly ahead of Ivanov's visit to Seoul and then to Pyongyang - aspiration to speed up process of normalization with the South or unwillingness to listen to the Russian minister's advice on this account. But, the fact remains that the conciliatory move was made before I. Ivanov's arrival to the Korean peninsula. In this connection, it is necessary to note that the Russian diplomacy managed to achieve a tangible success

in the settlement of one of problems facing to it - to promote actively removal of tension between the North and the South Korea and to renew contacts between the both sides for the sake of stabilization of situation on the peninsula.

While discussing the situation on the Korean peninsula I. Ivanov, both in Seoul and Pyongyang expressed Russia's firm conviction that there are no alternative to the inter-Korean dialogue and cooperation which became more active after signing the Joint declaration of the South and the North on June 15, 2000. Our South and North Korean partners have expressed interests in that Russia further plays an active role in assisting this dialogue. The letter of the Russian President V. Putin, which I. Ivanov transferred to the President of the Republic of Korea Kim Dae-jung, confirms readiness of Russia to fulfill this important and crucial role. In Russia's interests, the Korean peninsula becomes the "peninsula of peace, stability and prosperity." Russia is ready to render all assistance necessary to creation of favorable conditions for direct dialogue between Seoul and Pyongyang.²⁹

Stabilization of situation on the Korean peninsula completely suits interests of the Russian Federation. And in particular, a tension arising from time to time between Pyongyang and Seoul obviously does not promote realization of such joint economic projects as joining Russian Trans-Siberian Mainline with the Trans-Korean railways. As soon as the South and the North really will settle the problems related to joining the railways, the Russian side immediately will renew the efforts within the framework of the project. This project is important as well because, as V. Putin remarked, its "realization not only will open new opportunities for business cooperation and economic integration on the Euroasian continent but also will serve strengthening of trust, peace and security in the Asian - Pacific region."³⁰

29 On Russian President Vladimir Putin's Message to President Kim Dae-jung of the Republic of Korea, Publication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, July 26, 2002, <http://president.kremlin.ru>.

Objectively, normalization of relations between the ROK and the DPRK can work in favor of development of trade and economic cooperation between the Russian Federation and both parts of Korea. It undoubtedly would create new favorable opportunities for economic development of the Russian Far East and for linking its economy to integration processes in the Asia-Pacific region. Besides, if this will be the case, a material basis will be upheld for strengthening Russian national interests including those in sphere of security on the Korean peninsula.

Russia also believes that a renewal of dialogue between the DPRK on one side, and the US and Japan on the other, suits interests of the inter-Korean settlement and therefore, Russia's own interests as well. One can hardly deny the fact that the meeting between North Korean foreign minister Baek Nam-sun and the US secretary of State Colin Powell during ASEAN conference in Brunei happened to be a reality thanks, not in the last turn, to Ivanov's mission to Seoul and Pyongyang."

During two years which have elapsed after the inter-Korean summit Russia has shown with practical deeds that it is ready in every possible way to promote confidence, principles of peaceful co-existence, stable and all-round cooperation between the ROK and the DPRK on the basis of the Joint declaration, and other inter-Korean agreements regularly with persistence and to work with all interested parties so that they act in the same way.

30 On Russian President Vladimir Putin's Welcome Address to Participants of "Korean-Russian Friendship Train-2002," Publication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, July 29, 2002, <http://president.kremlin.ru>.