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The North Korean Issue, Park Geun-hye's Presidency, and the Possibility of Trust-building on the Korean Peninsula

David C. Kang

For at least the past twenty years, the debate about how best to deal with North Korea has focused on whether pressure and isolation are more likely to change North Korean behavior, or whether inducements and engagement are more likely to produce results. This essay will explore the nuclear, economic, and humanitarian challenges that North Korea poses to the new South Korean President Park Geun-hye, arguing that a "mainstream" consensus has emerged in South Korea with a preference for selective engagement coupled with consistent and powerful responses to provocations and a strong military deterrent, and a willingness to ignore provocative North Korean rhetoric. Called "trustpolitik" by Park, this approach faces numerous obstacles in its implementation, and will require considerable diplomatic and political skill. Whether Park can be successful where so many South Korean leaders have previously failed will depend centrally on the policies she chooses, and the responses that come from the new regime in North Korea.

Key Words: trustpolitik, South and North Korea, deterrence, engagement

Introduction

In the winter of 2012-13, North Korea's third nuclear test, yet another long-range missile test, and increasingly provocative rhetoric threatened stability in Northeast Asia. Once again, North Korea engaged in bluster designed to project strength and resolve in the face of international disapproval. In the first few months of 2013 alone, the North threatened a nuclear attack on the United States, unilaterally withdrew from the 1953 Armistice, declared a 'state of war' existed on the Korean Peninsula, and cut the military hotline between the North and South. For their

part, the U.S. and South Korea signed a protocol for dealing with provocations from the North, flew B-2 Stealth bombers across South Korea as a show of force to deter the North, and conducted military exercises together in March 2013.

This latest round of tensions follows North Korea's sinking of the South Korean naval vessel *Cheonan* in March 2010, which was described as "South Korea's 9-11 moment." Eight months later, North Korean artillery fire killed two South Korean marines and two civilians, and wounded eighteen others in November 2010. That event was characterized as "the most serious incident since the Korean War."¹ Both incidents followed a November 2009 skirmish in which South Korean naval vessels opened fire on a North Korean patrol ship that had crossed the disputed Northern Limit Line, "damaging it badly," with suspected heavy casualties on the North Korean side, and to which North Korea vowed revenge.² Combined with revelations in November 2010 of a North Korean uranium nuclear program, nuclear tests of a plutonium-based weapon in 2006 and 2009, and continuing fears of missile and nuclear proliferation, the Peninsula is in a new Cold War.³ Deterrence, isolation, and symbolic shows of force and determination are the current strategies in place, and the "North Korea problem" remains as intractable as ever.

The North Korean nuclear issue has been the most important security issue in the region for at least two decades, and despite new

1. Donald Kirk, "Holed *Cheonan* Stern Ups the Ante," *Asia Times*, April 17, 2010, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Korea/LD17Dg01.html>; Tom A. Peter, "North and South Korea Clash across Tense Border," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 23, 2010, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/terrorism-security/2010/1123/North-and-South-Korea-clash-across-tense-border>.

2. Choe Sang-hun, "North Korea Warns South after Naval Clash," *The New York Times*, November 11, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/12/world/asia/12korea.html>.

3. This uranium facility opens up the possibility of a second pathway to nuclear weapons development, a revelation that in and of itself is not immediately indicative of a weapons program. Many observers in the United States and South Korea believe, however, that this facility raises the probability of many hidden uranium facilities.

developments, such as the rise of grandson Kim Jong Un as the new North Korean leader, the underlying issues remain depressingly the same: how to reign in North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, deter North Korea from starting a second Korean War, and limit North Korea's sale of its technology to other countries. The debate remains the same, as well: is pressure and isolation more likely to change North Korean behavior? Or are inducements and engagement more likely to produce results?⁴

Yet North Korea is a foreign policy problem for South Korea beyond the issues of nuclear proliferation and international security, and these same basic questions manifest themselves in the debates about North Korea's economy and its deplorable record of human rights abuses. Why and how can the country survive with an economy that is so poor, so backwards, and so isolated compared with its rapidly developing neighbors? Why has North Korea not pursued economic reforms and opening? Should foreign countries — and South Korea in particular — promote marketization, economic reforms, and capitalism in North Korea, or should they limit or prohibit foreign economic interactions altogether? Regarding human rights, profound ethical questions face both scholars and practitioners of international relations: how can we improve human rights in North Korea and the lives of its people? Should external actors — governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other groups — work with a regime that is repugnant in so many ways, if it can improve the lives of innocent citizens? Or should South Korea isolate the North Korean regime and subject it to external pressure and embarrassment over its human rights record until it decides to change?

As the country most directly affected by North Korean actions, South Korean leaders have tried a number of strategies over the years, from engagement to isolation, with limited success. Warmer or colder South Korean relations with North Korea over the years have not solved the North Korea problem, and the debates within South

4. Victor Cha and David Kang, *Nuclear North Korea: A Debate on Engagement Strategies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

Korea over how best to approach North Korea reflect the basic question about whether isolation or interaction is the most effective policy. Park Geun-hye's dramatic election as the first female head of state in Northeast Asia is epochal, but it also is emblematic of a larger process of Korea's globalization, evolution, and increasing confidence about Korea's place in the world. As for North Korea policy, Park Geun-hye vividly called for building "trustpolitik" with the North, vowing during her campaign to "break with this black-or-white, appeasement-or-antagonism approach and advance a more balanced North Korea policy."⁵

This essay will explore the nuclear, economic, and humanitarian challenges that North Korea poses to South Korea, arguing that a "mainstream" consensus has emerged in South Korea with a preference for selective engagement coupled with consistent and powerful responses to provocations and a strong military deterrent, and a willingness to ignore provocative North Korean rhetoric. Building trust with North Korea, however, faces numerous obstacles in its implementation, and will require considerable diplomatic and political skill. Whether Park can be successful where so many South Korean leaders have previously failed will depend centrally on the policies she chooses, and the responses that come from the new regime in North Korea.

North Korea under Kim Jong Un

North Korea is in the midst of a major transition as the North adjusts to only its third leader in almost seventy years, and Kim Jong Un's installation as leader of North Korea creates new opportunities and dangers. Whether Kim can be more than a figurehead, and whether he can actually lead the country, is yet to be determined. North Korea

5. Park Geun-hye, "A New Kind of Korea: Building Trust between Seoul and Pyongyang," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 5 (September/October 2011), pp. 13-18; Kang Tae-ho, "Park Geun-hye's North Korea Policy," *Hankyoreh Sinmun*, January 9, 2013.

may yet again find a way to muddle through, with its basic ruling regime and leadership intact. If there is continuity in the North for the time being, the underlying task will remain the same: how to draw North Korea into the world and away from its dangerous, confrontational stance.

North Korea in 2013 is not the same as North Korea in 2000 — the political institutions, economy, and society have all experienced major and possibly enduring changes since then.⁶ North Korea contains a greater diversity of opinion and people than is commonly thought. Kim Jong Un is the leader of a totalitarian regime, but identifiable institutional differences, and undoubtedly personal differences, do exist. Largely as a result of weakened state control, the economy has experienced an increase of commercialization and marketization in recent years.⁷ The economy is stronger than many outsiders believe, in that it has proven remarkably enduring and adaptable, and many people now operate in the black, or private markets. At the same time, the regime itself is weaker than it was a decade ago: the unplanned marketization has shriveled the central government's control over the periphery, despite episodes of retrenchment. Informal and sporadic information from traders or family members in South Korea or in China continues to trickle into North Korea.

None of these changes necessarily mean that North Korea is headed toward collapse or that its state institutions are close to failing. Outsiders have been predicting North Korea's collapse for twenty years, if not longer, and yet North Korea has managed to survive.⁸

6. Patrick McEachern, *Inside the Red Box: North Korea's Post-Totalitarian Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

7. John Park, "North Korea, Inc.: Gaining Insights into North Korean Regime Stability from Recent Commercial Activities," Working paper, United States Institute of Peace, 2009, <http://www.usip.org/publications/north-korea-inc-gaining-insights-north-korean-regime-stability-recent-commercial-activities>.

8. Nicholas Eberstadt, "The Coming Collapse of North Korea," *Wall Street Journal*, June 26, 1990; Byung-joon Ahn, "The Man Who Would Be Kim," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 6 (November/December 1994), pp. 94-108; Fareed Zakaria, "When North Korea Falls," *Washington Post*, October 18, 2010.

State officials benefit from marketization because it provides a measure of human security that lessens domestic resistance even while weakening officials' control. Corrupt officials benefit personally from marketization even as it undermines their position. Civil society is almost entirely absent in North Korea, and despite occasional reports of spontaneous "rice riots," there is little evidence that the North Korean people could engage in an Egyptian-style uprising of any sort.⁹ The society is too atomized; there are almost no "bottom-up" institutions around which political protests could cohere; and there are no social or civic leaders who could survive to become political leaders in protests against the government.

Authoritarian rulers do not long survive if they are truly out of touch with reality. They need to read palace politics, reward friends and punish enemies, and manage competing interests that are vying for power. Kim Jong Il lasted from 1994 until his death in December 2011 without any obvious internal challenge to his rule, a mark of his political acumen and mastery of factional politics. Although Kim Jong Un is inexperienced, he has held power for over a year and appears to have the acquiescence — at least for now — of the most powerful actors in Pyongyang.

In short, the North Korean regime and larger society in many ways are weaker, poorer, and more open to the outside world in 2013 than a decade earlier. Yet North Korea has also apparently managed a smooth transition of power to its third ruler and also has 8-12 nuclear weapons while continuing to move closer to successfully testing an intercontinental ballistic missile, and is thus more dangerous than ever before and shows few signs of collapsing. Indeed, the belligerence of the North Korean regime in 2013 was probably a signal to both domestic and international audiences that the new leader has no plans to change the basic contours of North Korea's foreign and domestic policies in any fundamental manner.

9. Scott Snyder, "Kim Jong-il's Successor Dilemmas," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (January 2010), pp. 35-46.

The limits to pressuring North Korea

Given the continuing threat that North Korea poses through its missile and nuclear programs, the nuclear issue remains the highest priority of both the South Korean and U.S. governments. In fact, most observers from across political spectrum agree on the goal: a denuclearized North Korea that opens to the world, pursues economic and social reforms, and increasingly respects human rights. Disagreement only occurs over the tactics — what policies will best prod North Korea on the path toward these outcomes. These debates over which strategy will best resolve the North Korea problem remain essentially the same as they were decades ago: is it best to engage North Korea and lure it into changing its actions and its relations with the outside world, or is it better to contain the problem and coerce North Korea into either changing or stopping its bad behavior?¹⁰

That is, some believe that coercion will eventually cause the North to capitulate, and that “just a little more” pressure on the regime will force it to submit. Unfortunately, past history reveals that this appears unlikely. North Korea has little history of giving something for nothing, and the leadership in Pyongyang has a consistent policy of meeting external pressure with pressure of its own.¹¹ There is little reason to think that applying even more pressure will finally result in North Korea meeting U.S. demands and a de-escalation of tension.

The sad fact is that the range of policy options available to both South Korea and other countries concerned about North Korea is quite thin. Few countries would consider military action to cause the regime to collapse, given that Seoul is vulnerable to their conventional weapons and that war or regime collapse could potentially unleash uncontrolled nuclear weapons and draw all the surrounding countries

10. e.g., Moon Young Park, “Lure North Korea,” *Foreign Policy*, Vol. 97 (Winter 1994-1995), pp. 97-105.

11. Leon Sigal, “Punishing North Korea Won’t Work,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, May 28, 2008, <http://www.thebulletin.org/web-edition/op-eds/punishing-north-korea-wont-work>; David C. Kang, “The Avoidable Crisis in North Korea,” *Orbis*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (Summer 2003).

into conflict with each other.

South Korea and other concerned countries have no realistic military option in dealing with North Korea's security challenges other than a clear deterrent strategy to respond if North Korea acts first. Indeed, when White House spokesman Jay Carney was asked in April 2013 whether the United States might preemptively strike North Korea, he responded "that is not a serious question."¹² The situation is actually quite stable, because despite their bluster, the North Korean rhetoric is also cast almost entirely in deterrent terms. For example, although widely reported as a threat to preemptively attack the U.S. with nuclear weapons, the full quote from the KCNA in March 2013 reads: "We will take second and third countermeasures of greater intensity against the reckless hostilities of the United States and all the other enemies.... Now that the U.S. imperialists seek to attack the DPRK with nuclear weapons, it will counter them with diversified precision nuclear strike means of Korean style.... The army and people of the DPRK have everything including lighter and smaller nukes unlike what they had in the past."¹³ As Stephan Haggard noted recently, North Korean rhetoric in 2013 has been "cast in deterrent terms: the hyperbole is about actions the North would take *in response* to ROK or U.S. 'provocations,' defined as actual military action against the North. By exercising restraint with respect to actual military actions, the regime can count on the fact that the U.S. and South Korea are not going to take the first step either."¹⁴ This is, indeed, the case, and significantly both United States and ROK rhetoric in early

12. White House Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jay Carney, April 1, 2013, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/04/01/press-briefing-press-secretary-jay-carney-412013>.

13. Choe Sang-hun, "North Korea Threatens to Attack U.S. With 'Lighter and Smaller Nukes,'" *The New York Times*, March 5, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/06/world/asia/north-korea-threatens-to-attack-us-with-lighter-and-smaller-nukes.html?_r=0.

14. Stephan Haggard, "What are the North Koreans Doing?" *Witness to Transformation blog*, Peterson IIE, April 1, 2013, <http://www.piiie.com/blogs/nk/?p=9889>.

2013 were also cast in deterrent terms. Thus, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said in April 2013: “the United States will do what is necessary to defend ourselves and defend our allies, Korea and Japan. We are fully prepared and capable of doing so, and I think the DPRK understands that.”¹⁵

War is unlikely because both sides believe the other’s rhetoric — both sides believe the other will respond if attacked. Seoul would be devastated, and the North Korean regime would cease to exist. Although the U.S. and ROK would eventually prevail in a war with the DPRK, the potential costs of a war are prohibitively high, and deter either side from realistically expecting to start and complete a major war without utter devastation to the Peninsula. Seoul and the surrounding environs hold almost 18 million people and lies less than 50 miles from the demilitarized zone that separates North and South Korea. The risk that North Korea would retaliate against Seoul is too great, given that North Korea has conventional artillery and short-range missiles within range of Seoul. Mike Chinoy quoted a Pentagon advisor close to Bush administration discussions about U.S. military options against North Korea as saying that, “The mainstream view was that if any kind of military strike starts against North Korea, the North Koreans would invade South Korea, and they will cause enormous destruction of Seoul. And we are not prepared to handle all this.”¹⁶

If outright military pressure is unlikely to be brought to bear on the Peninsula, economic sanctions have also been unsuccessful in changing the North Korean regime’s behavior in the past, and are unlikely to work in the future. There are two main obstacles that make economic sanctions unlikely to cause the North Korean regime to change its behavior. First, North Korea is already one of the most heavily sanctioned regimes in the world, and this has not changed

15. Jethro Mullen, “U.S. will not accept North Korea as a ‘nuclear state,’ Kerry says,” CNN.com, April 3, 2013, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/04/02/world/asia/koreas-tensions>.

16. Mike Chinoy, *Meltdown: The Inside Story of the North Korean Nuclear Crisis* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2009).

their behavior in the past.¹⁷ As Ruediger Frank concluded in his study of sanctions against North Korea, “in the long run, [sanctions] lose their impact and become a liability.”¹⁸ As Haggard and Noland conclude, “A coordinated strategy of cutting North Korea off from international assistance would increase the probability of regime change.... [But] that rests on a highly dubious utilitarian logic: that it is morally acceptable to sacrifice the innocent today in the uncertain probability that lives will be saved or improved at some future point.”¹⁹

The second difficulty with sanctions arises because neither Russia nor China is eager to push sanctions too hard on the North; and thus any U.N. sanctions are likely to be cosmetic in nature. In fact, Marcus Noland estimates that Chinese exports, and even exports of luxury goods, actually increased 140% since the imposition of the first round of sanctions in 2009.²⁰ The only country that could realistically impose severe enough sanctions on North Korea is China. Were China to impose draconian sanctions on North Korea, it could have a devastating effect. The Chinese appear to be fairly angered at North Korea’s latest moves, and the nuclear test in particular was a real insult to Chinese diplomatic efforts. The relationship might not be strong, but it remains. China is North Korea’s major trading partner and provides most of the North Korea’s energy needs; moreover, it has never seriously implemented any of the four rounds of sanctions the U.N. has passed targeting North Korea. Although it agreed to the most recent U.N. resolutions, China would actually have to substantially

17. Suk Hi Kim and Semoon Chang, eds., *Economic Sanctions Against a Nuclear North Korea: an analysis of United States and United Nations actions since 1950* (London: McFarland, 2007).

18. Ruediger Frank, “The Political Economy of Sanctions Against North Korea,” *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (2006), pp. 5-36.

19. Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, *Famine in North Korea: Markets, Aid, and Reform* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 230.

20. Russia defined “luxury goods” loosely — as watches costing over \$2,000 and coats over \$9,000. Marcus Noland, “The (Non)-Impact of UN Sanctions on North Korea,” *Asia Policy* 7 (January 2009), pp. 61-88.

change its approach to Pyongyang to make the sanctions work, and it probably won't. Indeed, Scott Snyder noted in April 2013 that, "there was absolutely no sign of change in China's goal of maintaining peace and stability and denuclearization or the shared goal of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through peaceful negotiations."²¹

China has more influence over North Korea than any other country, but less influence than outsiders think. Beijing-Pyongyang relations haven't been warm ever since China normalized relations with South Korea over twenty years ago, and both sides resent the other. But China has few options. Completely isolating North Korea and withdrawing economic and political support could lead to regime collapse, sending a flood of North Korean refugees across the border, and potentially drawing all the surrounding countries into conflict with each other — which could see the devastating use of nuclear weapons. Moreover, China fears that any conflict, or a collapse, could put South Korean or even U.S. troops on its eastern border. As a result, China — like the South Korea — is faced with the choices of rhetorical pressure, quiet diplomacy, and mild sanctions. Despite direct criticism of North Korea in spring 2013, there appeared to be no fundamental change in Chinese policy toward the North.²²

In sum, pressure in the form of military strikes or economic sanctions may be popular for domestic audiences in the ROK and United States, but in practice neither have been successful in changing regime behavior in North Korea. The ROK has severely limited policy options when dealing with its northern neighbor. It is within this context that Park's "trustpolitik" strategy needs to be assessed.

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21. Scott Snyder, "Secretary Kerry's First Visit to Northeast Asia: Rolling the North Korea Stone Back Up the Hill," *Asia Unbound* (Council on Foreign Relations blog), April 16, 2013, <http://blogs.cfr.org/asia/2013/04/16/secretary-kerrys-first-visit-to-northeast-asia-rolling-the-north-korea-stone-back-up-the-hill/>.
 22. Jane Perlez, "China Bluntly Tells North Korea to Enter Nuclear Talks," *The New York Times*, May 24, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/25/world/asia/china-tells-north-korea-to-return-to-nuclear-talks.html>.

North Korea policy under Park Geun-hye

Because there are few policy options available, Park Geun-hye will face a difficult series of decisions regarding North Korea during her tenure as president of the ROK. In an influential article written a year before her election as South Korean president, Park Geun-hye proposed a policy of “trustpolitik” toward the North. Arguing that “Precisely because trust is at a low point these days, South Korea has a chance to rebuild it,” Park proposed that rebuilding trust did not mean naïve hopefulness to the North, because “there must be assured consequences for actions that breach the peace.”²³ However, trustpolitik does mean exploring many possible options for finding ways to cooperate with the North when they arise. Park specifically mentioned the idea of rebuilding the Trans-Korean railway through the North that could benefit the entire region. Park’s concept of “trustpolitik” remains more a political phrase than a clearly-articulated policy vision, and the true test of Park’s vision will come in its implementation. Yet the concept of trustpolitik is significant in and of itself, signaling that Park is clearly open to interacting with the North on a broad range of issues, even if there is less progress on the nuclear weapons issue. This stance marks a clear move away from the principled isolationist stance of the previous South Korean government under Lee Myung-bak.

Park Geun-hye is the only senior South Korean political figure who has visited the North. Her election, and the mood of the South Korean people in general, gives an indication that South Korea is prepared to pursue a different course than her predecessor Lee Myung-bak, and to move back from the hard-line containment stance that he followed so assiduously. While Park is careful to distance herself from the “Sunshine Policy” of former South Korean Presidents Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun, it is also clear that her policy toward the North will involve the possibility of interaction with the North across a range of issues. Indeed, all three major candidates for the presidency in 2012 campaigned on platforms that were designed to

23. Park, “A New Kind of Korea,” p. 17.

move away from a containment position. Robert Kelly observed that among South Koreans:

By far the most common sentiment is to manage and help the North, not confront it, to draw it into the world in hopes of moderating it. The logic that unconditional aid to North might be seen as a bail-out of a bankrupt system is generally rejected. The outcomes of these trends are Lee's abysmal approval rating, and the consensus among the presidential candidates for re-engagement.²⁴

The issue of trust is more than simply rhetoric. North Korea does not trust the United States or South Korea any more than those countries trust the North. Decades of animosity and mistrust on both sides makes negotiation and communication difficult, and decades of failed promises on both sides have led to the stalemate in which we find ourselves in 2013. For example, the U.S. is hostile to Pyongyang, and it is not accurate to pretend that the U.S. only wants to be friends and that North Koreans are merely paranoid. This is not to argue about which side holds the moral high ground, nor to argue that the North Koreans are innocent; clearly America has reason to mistrust the North. But the North Korean leadership also mistrusts the U.S. — they know very well that the ultimate U.S. goal is the transformation or even the obliteration of their way of life — and North Korea has reason to be wary. Despite the reality that both South Korea and the U.S. have reason to fear North Korean provocations, sound policy-making will only occur when leaders realize that North Koreans, despite having an odious regime, have legitimate national concerns as well. In this context, Park's attempt to find a way to move beyond mutual vilification represents a step in the right direction, despite the widespread recognition that building any type of real trust between the two sides will be difficult. Trust is not given, it is earned. Trust is built slowly, over time, as two sides slowly come to believe the other side may live up to its word. Given the past history of interactions

24. Robert Kelly, "Is Korean Democracy Maturing?" *Newsweek Japan*, December 26, 2012, <http://www.newsweekjapan.jp/magazine/89906.php>.

with North Korea, building actual trust is probably far away. Yet given that the alternatives appear to offer little hope of success, it is probably prudent that Park is willing to begin this process once again.

Dealing with North Korea, then, will most likely require more than the coercive components of sanctions and potential military strikes. This will include engagement, inducements, and hard negotiating from the ROK. The willingness of the ROK and other countries to engage in consistent negotiations with North Korea has wavered, and talks have been sporadic at best. However, Park has an opportunity to affect the tone and substance of South-North relations, and such moves will require three key aspects to her policy: consistent deterrence, careful but principled negotiations, and a willingness to ignore North Korean rhetoric. Of these, the last will be most difficult.

Maintaining a deterrent to North Korean provocations has already begun. Indeed, the North is deterred from starting a second Korean War precisely because of the clear military alliance between the U.S. and ROK. Beyond deterring an all-out war, early in Park Geun-hye's administration, Seoul and Washington moved closer in deterring small-scale provocations along the border, through such measures as the "counter-provocation plan" agreed upon between Seoul and Washington in March 2013.²⁵ This closer coordination between the U.S. and South Korea is designed to prepare for and respond more competently to small-scale skirmishes such as the Yeonpyeong shelling that occurred in 2010. This will be harder than it appears, because South Korean defense budgets over the past decade have remained essentially flat as a percentage of GDP, and increased only marginally in real terms. In April 2013, for example, the new government announced its defense spending would increase 0.7 percent, from \$30.5 billion to \$30.7 billion, to better defend its western mar-

25. David Sanger and Thom Shanker, "U.S. Designs a Korea Response Proportional to the Provocation," *The New York Times*, April 7, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/08/world/asia/us-and-south-korea-devise-plan-to-counter-north.html?pagewanted=all>.

itime border against North Korean provocations.²⁶

Principled negotiations will be the second important aspect to Park's North Korea policy. A willingness to provide some incentives to the North, as well as negotiate over difficult issues, will be key in lowering the tensions that currently exist between the North and the outside world. This does not mean appeasement — what it means is to take North Korea's concerns seriously and be willing to show flexibility over some issues. Indeed, President Park has already begun to make small gestures indicating a willingness to interact with North Korea. For example, on March 22, 2013, the ROK government approved the shipment of \$600,000 worth of medical supplies to North Korea. It was the first shipment authorized under the new Park government, and may have signaled the willingness to move away from simple name-calling and muscle-flexing.²⁷

The Ministry of Unification also unveiled a proposal that provides a window on the government's emerging policy toward the North. Titled "Settling Peace and Establishing a Foundation for a Unified Korea," the document describes in some detail, a series of measures that the South is considering pursuing toward the North. The plan involves three-steps that entail ascending levels of reciprocity from the North. Initially humanitarian aid would be provided without any expectation of reciprocity. If successful, the next step would involve expanding economic relations with the North without linking it to the nuclear issue, and would entail limited reciprocity from the North. At the final stage, large-scale South Korean government assistance would be available to the North, but only if the North Korean regime took significant steps toward denuclearization. However, the Park government is also moving slowly toward interacting with North Korea. In May 2013, the Park government rejected "talks for

26. "S. Korea to increase defense spending by \$200 million this year," *Arirang News*, April 16, 2013, http://www.arirang.co.kr/News/News_View.asp?nseq=146064.

27. Chung Min-uck, "Will Seoul engage North Korea soon?" *CanKor*, March 27, 2013, <http://vtncankor.wordpress.com/2013/03/27/will-seoul-engage-north-korea-soon-by-chung-min-uck/>.

the sake of talking,"²⁸ arguing that North Korea needs to begin living up to the agreements it has already signed with the South, such as the freeze of its nuclear programs.

The hardest part of dealing with the North is seeing the reality behind their comical and often hysterical Communist rhetoric. Pyongyang's claims to turn Seoul into a "sea of fire" and to attack the U.S. mainland with nuclear weapons should be seen as the empty threats that they are. To respond to directly to North Korea's rhetoric is to allow the North to determine the pace and intensity of the relationship. In fact, North Korea's response to the limited proposals produced by the Park government in spring 2013, were quickly denounced as a "crafty trick" designed to cover up the current stalemate on the Peninsula.²⁹ Yet just as significantly, there was no denunciation of President Park herself, nor was there an outright rejection of talks with the South — usually an indication that the North is saving face for the moment, and providing a gap between the belligerent talk of early spring 2013 and perhaps serious discussions to follow. For President Park, the power of her position and the ability to frame debate and discussion about North Korea will be a critical component of her success: she will need to handle the inevitable problems that will arise from dealing with the North while also convincing a South Korean populace that both the goals and the tactics of her policy are worthwhile pursuing.

In fact, there are indications that the cycle is shifting away from confrontation and toward interaction among the countries involved in the Peninsula. China's leadership has publicly criticized North Korea's recent actions, and specifically called on North Korea to return to the bargaining table. The North has signaled such a willingness as well, with special envoy Choe Ryong-hae being quoted as telling the

28. Choe Sang-hun, "South Korea Urges North to Be Serious Before Talks," *The New York Times*, May 28, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/28/world/asia/north-korea-nuclear-program.html?_r=0.

29. "N Korea calls dialogue offer by S Korea a 'crafty trick'," *BBC News*, April 14, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-22146141>.

Chinese leadership in May 2013 that North Korea was willing to “take positive actions to solve problems through dialogue.”³⁰ Japanese Prime Minister Abe sent a secret envoy to Pyongyang in hopes of restarting dialogue about how to resolve the question of Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea a generation ago, and although no progress was forthcoming, such a step was indicative that the Japanese are also willing to consider moving beyond pure isolation of the North Korean regime.³¹ For South Korea, Park has indicated a willingness to discuss a range of issues, although at this point there are no direct talks between the North and the South. Although it is doubtful that any progress would occur quickly, the shifting tone on all sides does indicate that parties are seeking a way to move back from the tensions that marked early 2013.

Conclusion: the challenges of the future

The challenges that South Korea faces in dealing with North Korea are many and complex, and it appears unlikely that any breakthrough is imminent. There appears to be little hope of a negotiated solution involving its nuclear and missile programs. The United States, South Korean, and Japanese governments have chosen containment and isolation, pressuring the North Korean regime to make concessions before they make any moves. This policy has been fairly successful in the domestic politics of both the United States and South Korea, and there is little indication that either government plans to change its strategy.

Yet the larger North Korea problem involves more than the security issue, and a strategy of isolation and minimal interaction with North

30. “N. Korean envoy in China expresses willingness to engage in talks,” *Arirang News*, May 24, 2013, http://www.arirang.co.kr/News/News_View.asp?nseq=147445.

31. Martin Fackler, “Japanese Aide Makes Rare Trip to North Korea,” *The New York Times*, May 14, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/15/world/asia/japanese-aide-visits-north-korea.html?_r=0.

Korea means that the weakest and most vulnerable will continue to lead a hazardous existence, with near-famine conditions possible each year. The only way to solve the hunger issue is to bring North Korea into the world market and help it earn enough abroad through trade so that it can import adequate quantities of food. The North Korean government also continues to engage in horrific and systematic human rights abuses; international isolation has done little to curb those abuses and may in fact encourage them. Thus, dealing with the immediate economic and social issues in North Korea and interacting with the government and people of North Korea may work at cross-purposes to policies designed to pressure North Korea into making concessions on its nuclear and missile programs.

In the coming years, President Park Geun-hye will face enormous challenges in dealing with the North, and in particular her goal of building trust between the two sides. However, an approach that combines a clear deterrent, willingness to negotiate over certain issues, and an emphasis on as much economic and social matters as on military matters, is the path most likely to reduce tensions and stabilize the situation. This will take considerable political skill, diplomatic courage, and an ability to explain her actions to both her public and South Korea's neighbors and allies.

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The Trust-building Process on the Korean Peninsula: A Paradigm Shift in Seoul's North Korea Policy

Jinwook Choi

The Trust-building Process on the Korean Peninsula can be seen as a shift in the North Korea policy paradigm. As to the North Korea policies in previous governments, discussions were mainly about policy measures, which included military force, negotiations, sanctions and strategic patience. However, the Trust-building Process emphasizes that it is upon trust where policy measures can have more stable and lasting effect, and inter-Korean relations can develop sustainably. Assertive retaliation against North Korea's provocations is not aimed at the North Korean political system, but its actions. There are three policy goals: to normalize inter-Korean relations through political and military confidence building, and through socioeconomic exchanges and cooperation; to realize a reliable peace on the Korean Peninsula, and thoroughly prepare for any uncertain political situations; and to establish a cornerstone for unification. Instead of moving too quickly or too slowly like in the past, the Trust-building Process would allow South Korea to deal with inter-Korean relations at a rate constant with the level of trust that is built with North Korea.

Key Words: Park Geun-hye government, Trust-building Process, trust, trustpolitik, alignment

Introduction

For the last six decades, two Koreas have been in a state of mutual mistrust and confrontation. As the Cold War had ended two decades ago, the optimistic view that an era of reconciliation and cooperation between the two Koreas seemed close at hand was hard to deny. However, inter-Korean relations developed quite differently from what many people had expected at the end of the Cold War. Amidst growing uncertainties in North Korea, such as food shortages, contin-

uation of the military-first policy, and the nuclear issue, debate over Seoul's policy toward North Korea has intensified. Although it is widely accepted that the strained inter-Korean relations mainly stems from the nature of the North Korean regime, and the ultimate goal of South Korea's North Korea policy is unification, there are significant differences in opinions when it comes to sharing the perceptions, policy tools, and short-term goals regarding North Korea.¹

The purpose of this paper is to theorize and systemize the Trust-building Process, which is the key element of the Park Geun-hye administration's policy toward North Korea. To that end, a series of Park Geun-hye's press interviews, remarks, speeches, her platform booklet during the presidential campaign, and the Ministry of Unification's 2013 report to the President were analyzed. According to the Saenuri Party's presidential platform booklet dubbed as "The promise that can change the world" (201 commitments in 20 areas — pledges related to the policy toward North Korea and unification (pp. 354-365) — are comprised of four parts as follows: 1) ensure the protection of the sovereignty of the Republic of Korea and national security; 2) resolve the North Korean nuclear issue through multilateral negotiation based on deterrence; 3) normalize inter-Korean relations through the Trust-building Process; and 4) start with "small unifications," then move on to a grand unification. In short, Korean unification is to be pursued through building mutual trust based on firm security.

Overall, the Trust-building Process aims to normalize inter-Korean relations by building political and military trust, developing social and economic exchanges and cooperation, and further solidifying the existing peace. Subsequently, the process of building an economic community founded on actual peace and, ultimately, achieving political unification is covered separately. In reality, however, the Trust-building Process and the post-peace-settlement stage are on a single continuum of policy execution. As the objective of all policies toward North Korea

1. Arguments of the progressive governments with regards to Seoul's North Korea policy can be found here: Korea Peace Forum, [Lost Five Years, Back to the Engagement Policy] (Seoul: Samin 2012) (in Korean).

is the peaceful management of division and eventual unification, policy toward North Korea and unification are interconnected by default.

The Trust-building Process proposes the major direction for Park Geun-hye administration's policy toward North Korea, but it will be greatly affected by North Korea's response and the political situation in Northeast Asia. Above all, public support will be the most influential variable in carrying out the policy.

This paper attempts to systemize the Trust-building Process in terms of its background, main concept, goal, basic structure, implementation strategy, and agenda. Among these, the definition, goal, and basic structure can be clearly understood by existing documents, and there would be no difficulty in interpreting the policy stance. However, the implementation strategies and specific tasks are to be perfected through more discussions and debates, and even those must be adequately modified in accordance with new developments.

Why does South Korea need the Trust-building Process?

Vicious Cycle of Mistrust and Confrontation in Inter-Korean Relations

Inter-Korean relations have been in a state of confrontation and animosity for more than six decades. Although at times there appeared to be some progress made, it was ultimately not sustainable, and was quickly set back. This is mainly due to the lack of trust, which explains why historical events such as the Joint Declaration on July 4, 1972, Basic Agreement in 1992, two North-South summit meetings in 2000 and 2007 all failed to make irreversible progress in the inter-Korean relations.

Seoul's unprecedented engagement policy from 1998 to 2007, known as the Sunshine Policy, has failed to change North Korea partially because North Korea was not confident in its regime stability and was concerned of possible "absorption" by the South. North Korea chose to implement the military-first policy instead of reforms and

opening, and to develop nuclear weapons for regime's survival. Therefore, even a dramatic increase in the inter-Korean economic cooperation under the Sunshine Policy was not able to ensure sustainable peace or irreversible progress in the inter-Korean relations. In other words, unilaterally seeking an active engagement policy such as large-scale inter-Korean economic cooperation, without enough inter-Korean trust, led to high levels of anxiety and fragility.

On the other hand, the Lee Myung-bak administration maintained "strategic patience" as its North Korea policy, and faced criticisms of being negligent toward North Korea without any sincere attempts to deal with the North Korean issue, especially in the face of growing insecurity and need for tension alleviation.

There are high expectations for the Park Geun-hye government to reach a breakthrough in inter-Korean relations. The need for sending a special envoy to Pyongyang and providing a large-scale of economic aid to North Korea is also being voiced. However, the current inter-Korean environment does not favor one silver-bullet approach to the North Korean issue. South Korea's negative perception toward the North has only been exacerbated by North Korea's third nuclear test. North Korea is also seeking bilateral talks with Washington first, rather than improving inter-Korean relations.

Economic cooperation with North Korea and providing economic support to the regime may temporarily ease the tension on the Peninsula. However, this would not necessarily guarantee a sustainable peace or improvement in inter-Korean relations. Without trust, any progress in the inter-Korean relations would be short-lived, and thus, rebuilding trust should be the top priority in setting any North Korea policy.

Inconsistent North Korea Policy

The Trust-building Process is also necessary in order to maintain a consistent North Korea policy. Frustrated by the faltering state of inter-Korean relations, incoming governments in South Korea often completely reversed their predecessors' North Korea policies. The swinging from one extreme to the other in Seoul's North Korea policy

tended to bring various negative impacts on inter-Korean relations.²

Any revision to Seoul's North Korea policy requires ample time and efforts to make the new policy understandable, and to garner domestic and international support. Moreover, those that supported previous policies are less likely to support the new policies, making it even more difficult to have a consensus on the new policy. The total negation of previous policies often brings about governmental reorganization and the reshuffling of personnel, which could hamper the decision-making process. Moreover, such repetition of sharp policy changes can encourage North Korea to influence South Korea's policy orientation toward those more favorable to the regime. In fact, the regime intervened in South Korea's recent presidential elections through threats of further provocations in trying to pressure the South Korean government. For example, during the 2012 presidential elections, North Korea was highly critical of presidential candidate, Park Geun-hye³ and went so far as to threaten South Korea by conducting a long-range missile test in December 12, 2012, the third nuclear test in February 12, 2013, and withdrawal of North Korean workers from Kaesung Industrial Complex in March 2013.⁴

Increasing Uncertainties in Northeast Asia and the Korean Peninsula

In the next five years, greater uncertainty and changes in the Northeast Asian order and the international community are expected. Thus, a

2. Korean Peninsula Forum. [Inter-Korean Relations 3.0: Peace and Cooperation Process on the Korean Peninsula], 2012 (in Korean).

3. After the presidential candidate, Park Geun-hye announced her policy direction for diplomacy, security and unification, on November 5, 2012, North Korea made a very critical statement saying, "it is an even more confrontational North Korea policy than the previous government . . . there were none before who explicitly expressed one's confrontational motivation and ambition for absorption unification." Spokesperson for North Korea's Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland, *Yonhap News*, November 9, 2012.

4. North Korea has declared that we are on the verge of War. National Defense Commission Spokesperson's statement. *Yonhap News*, January 2, 2013.

more proactive approach in dealing with North Korean problem is needed.

Uncertainties in North Korea⁵

Despite the rather quick hereditary succession of power from Kim Jong-il to Kim Jong-un, uncertainties in the stability of new regime have not yet been confirmed. There are no signs of overt in-fighting for power or public mass protest against the regime. China's support is also greatly enhancing the stability of Kim Jong-un regime.

However, uncertainties in the stability of Kim Jong-un regime are not yet totally resolved, mainly for two internal reasons. First, the sudden disappearance of a figure with absolute power causes a power vacuum in any political system, which may threaten the stability of the regime. Change of leader could be even more dangerous in countries like North Korea, where much of stability and leadership depend on an absolute leader. Second, the level of stability also depends on how well the new young leader, Kim Jong-un, can respond to challenges such as chronic economic hardship, social disorders, and external pressures.

The policy direction of the Kim Jong-un regime also reflects the dilemma it is faced with. First, the 'strong and prosperous nation' policy inherited from Kim Jong-il has self-contradicting aspects. While the utmost priority it proposes is building a strong economy, this directly clashes with building a strong military. Domestically, building nuclear weapons and missiles hinders the regime from prioritizing resource distribution to enhance the people's welfare, while externally it constrains any inflow of foreign investment.

Second, there is a paradox in the prospects of reform and opening. Unless the regime reforms and opens up, its legitimacy becomes even more precarious, and even if it does, the continuity of regime is not guaranteed as witnessed in the political transition in Eastern European countries since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In this

5. This subsection is based on Dr. Han ki-bum's unpublished thesis.

regard, although the Kim Jong-un regime talks about change, such change only extends to tactical and superficial aspects, while diversity and plurality of the society is even more suppressed by the extensive use of public security.

The third dilemma is the paradox of self-determination. Although North Korea asserts that nuclear weapons and satellites have made them safer in the midst of strong powers, it has in fact led to further isolation from the international community and greater dependence on China for its subsistence. While being cautious about China's rise and seeking improvement in relations with the U.S., South Korea, and Japan, its nuclear and long-range missiles serve to impede any fundamental breakthrough in their relationships. Thus ironically, the means for self-determination are effectively hampering North Korea's self-determination.

One will have to see whether North Korea can escape from its dilemmas. However, North Korea's current policies cast a worry in that the regime's dilemmas could become exacerbated, both in terms of socio-economic and political instability in the long run.

Uncertainties in Northeast Asia

Increasing competition among nations in Northeast Asia is a major challenge that South Korea must address and overcome rather than avoid. The rivalry between the U.S. and China, as well as the territorial disputes between China and Japan over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands are becoming more intense than ever.

Chinese military provocations in the South China and East China Seas in 2010 have made neighboring states become insecure, which brought them to align closer to the United States. China also had to pay for the costs of its ambivalent attitude in response to North Korea's provocations in 2010 — sinking of the Cheonan warship and shelling of Yeonpyeong Island — which caused a backlash from South Korea.

The alliance network under the Obama administration has become all the more important as the decline of U.S. power as a hegemonic

state is more likely than not.⁶ The U.S.-ROK alliance has become even more important under the “pivot” to Asia policy in the light of China’s rise. North Korea’s nuclear weapons program tends to strengthen the U.S.-ROK alliance and prevent South Korea from making closer bonds with China.

China, having experienced opposition from regional neighbors for its previous irresponsible wielding of power, is trying to show more responsibility in responding to North Korea’s third nuclear test in 2013.⁷ China has not only supported the UN Security Council Resolution 2094, but also placed sanctions on North Korean banks in China, and heightened the control on China-North Korea commodity trades by enforcing tighter border control, thereby sending a strong message to North Korea.⁸ However, it would be premature to assume a fundamental change in China’s overall policy toward North Korea.

Public opinion in South Korea

The Trust-building Process is also necessary in order to ease the tensions on Korean Peninsula and alleviate security concerns of South Koreans’, especially after the incidents of Cheonan warship and Yeonpyeong Island. According to a national survey conducted by KBS (Korea Broadcasting System) in August 2012, 79.3 percent of South Koreans expressed concerns about security, which may be caused by North Korea’s provocations. Therefore, they want the government to manage the current state of inter-Korean relations peacefully rather than raising tensions or putting the North Korean issue aside.

North Korea’s third nuclear test on February 12, 2013 and following provocative statements increased threat perceptions. Among the South

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6. Joseph S. Nye, “The Future of American Power: Dominance and Decline in Perspective,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 6 (November/December 2010).
 7. Jisi Wang, “China’s Search for a Grand Strategy: A Rising Great Power Finds its Way,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 2 (March/April 2011), p. 75.
 8. Chinese authorities have banned tourism to North Korea, and placed a 20kg limit on the commodities that each person can carry into North Korea, which used to be over 50kg per person.

Korean public, 68.5% expressed support for South Korea developing its own nuclear weapons program, and 67% expressed support for reintroducing U.S. tactical nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula.⁹ Public interests toward the right to peaceful use of reprocessed nuclear fuel and enriched uranium, which are prohibited by the Korea-U.S. Nuclear Cooperation Agreement, have also increased.

What is the Trust-building Process?

Definition of Trust

The importance of trust was also mentioned in the past inter-Korean relations. However, it is the Park Geun-hye government that has first brought the word “trust” to the forefront of the government’s North Korea policy. The Trust-building Process on the Korean Peninsula can be seen as a shift in the North Korea policy paradigm. As to the North Korea policies in previous governments, discussions were mainly about policy measures, which included military force, containment, negotiations and strategic patience. However, in the Trust-building Process, intangible infrastructure, trust, is being newly highlighted.¹⁰ The Process emphasizes that it is upon trust that policy measures can have more stable and lasting effect, and the inter-Korean relation can develop sustainably.¹¹

There are many things to be managed and dealt with in the inter-Korean relation; for example, North Korea’s denuclearization, South-North economic cooperation, humanitarian aid to the North, prisoners of war, and separated families. Trust alone would not solve all the

9. *Hankyung (Korean Economy Paper)*, February 22, 2013.

10. Francis Fukuyama, *TRUST: The Social Values and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: The Free Press, 1995).

11. The relation between policy measures and trust in the North Korea policy context is similar to the relation between skills and fitness in sports. Fitness (trust) alone can hardly guarantee winning, however, stronger the fitness easier it becomes to acquire and practice new skills (policy measures).

problems, nor would the absence of trust hinder making any progress. Even in antagonistic relations, project cooperation is possible as long as mutual benefits exist. However, the more trust there is, the quicker the inter-Korean problems will be resolved. For example, in regards to the humanitarian aid, as the trust builds up, there will be less pressure to establish a distribution monitoring system. This is similar to commercial transactions in that the more trust exists between the transacting parties the less is the need for lawyers, formal contracts, and collaterals.¹²

For the past 20 years, South Korean governments have employed diverse measures and postures like bilateral talks, the Six-Party Talks, sanctions, negotiations, and strategic patience to resolve North Korea's nuclear development, but without much fruition. Meanwhile, North Korea went on to stipulate itself as a nuclear power in its constitution. However, as trust increases, the need for thorough inspections in denuclearization process will become less, and hence, the denuclearization process can be accelerated, which, in turn, enhances the mutual trust — creating a virtuous circle. Thus, efforts to build trust must be continued, while demanding denuclearization as a precondition to any dealings with North Korea. Therefore, severing communications and dragging the North Korean problems cannot be the most sensible course of action.

Trust has the following characteristics. First, trust means gradually moving onto next phases, like stacking bricks, through series of verifiable conducts.¹³ Trust cannot be built by some dramatic events on a few occasions. Trust building requires time, and lower the existing trust is, the more we should guard against prompt and gasping build of trust. However, inter-Korean relation steadily built on trust would have a low chance of deteriorating.

Second, trust is an intangible infrastructure that promotes effectiveness in North Korea policies by, for example, reducing policy implementation costs while broadening the possible scope of policies.

12. Fukuyama, *TRUST*.

13. Korea News Editors' Association debate, *Yonhap News*, July 16, 2012.

Third, the degree of trust is an indicator of progress in inter-Korean relations. As the degree of trust increases, the size of inter-Korean economic cooperation can also grow, and vice versa, the lower the trust, the less is the chance for cooperation.

Fourth, trust does not mean unilateral or unconditional concessions without appropriate verifications, and it is even less about forgetting or compensating for North Korea's provocations in the past.¹⁴ Any further provocations by North Korea will further deteriorate the level of trust, which is already at a very low point. In such security-threatening incidents, firm responses must be shown.

Fifth, trust not only alludes to the inter-governmental trust between the South and North, but also to the trust manifested by the international community and the Korean people. It is difficult to expect great progress in inter-Korean relation if the inter-governmental trust, when it exists, is not accompanied by the trust of the international community and, especially, of the people.

Three Goals

Normalization of Inter-Korean Relations

In the current state of inter-Korean relations, most of the communication channels have been disconnected. The requests for a quick resolution of humanitarian issues, as well as the resumption of cooperative projects are increasingly being demanded. The normalization of inter-Korean relations by building trust through exchanges and cooperation on all levels of politics, military, and socio-economic areas is the top priority of the Trust-building Process on the Korean Peninsula.

Sustainable Peace

The second goal of the Trust-building Process is to make peace on the

14. Park Geun-hye, "A New Kind of Korea," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 5 (September/October 2011).

Korean Peninsula that is reliable and sustainable by thoroughly preparing for any uncertainties. Toward this end, North Korea must stop its provocations, become a responsible member of the international community, and raise its people's welfare by not developing nuclear weapons but by focusing on economic development. Meanwhile, South Korea's North Korea policy must also develop. Seoul must pursue an "aligned" North Korea policy that goes beyond the false dichotomy of seeing "dove" or "hawk" as an either-or choice. Through transparent policy making and execution, South Korea must garner the public's support for its North Korea policy.

Cornerstone for Unification

The third goal of the Trust-building Process is to lay the cornerstone for eventual unification. The process after building trust is to build economic cooperation that has political unification as the ultimate goal. However, it would be difficult to make a clear cut between the process of building trust and the process of forming an economic entity with political union as the ultimate goal.

Unification should not be pushed off to a far future. We must not wait for the unification, but must take steps toward the unification.... We will eventually achieve unification through building an economic community based on a sustainable peace.¹⁵

Unification means going beyond forming a community involving mutual recognition, exchanges and trade. It must be not only *de facto* unification, but also *de jure* unification ("legal unification") based on a liberal democracy. The management of division can be achieved with consistency under the clear goal of unification. The vision for unification is like a lighthouse that shines the direction for policy and unification. When the leader's will is focused on unification, he or she can also garner the people's efforts and international cooperation behind the vision.

15. Park, "Trustpolitik and a New Kind of Korea."

Policy Direction for the Trust-building Process

Irreversible Progress in inter-Korean Relations based on Firm Security and Mutual Recognition

The Trust-building Process is based on firm security. North Korea's nuclear and conventional threats should be deterred by a strong and reliable force. All policy means should be considered with consultation with the international community in case the deterrence fails. Assertive retaliation against North Korea's provocations is not aimed at the North Korean political system, but its actions.

I will take a firm grip on security issues. Furthermore, I will pursue a sustainable peace based on trust and cooperation. North Korea must give up provocations, and become a responsible member of the international community. It must improve its people's welfare not by building nuclear weapons but by developing its economy. We will persuade North Korea to make right decisions.¹⁶

South Korea wants to build trust with North Korea, and believes this is possible. Seoul does not seek to negate North Korea's political system, nor does it pursue the regime's collapse. It is impossible to build trust with North Korea while constantly and severely pressuring the regime.

The Trust-building Process was proposed to answer the fundamental question of how South Korea can stop the vicious cycle of confrontation and animosity with North Korea and make irreversible progress in inter-Korean relations.

In order to stop the vicious cycle of confrontation between the two Koreas, it is necessary to return to the basics, i.e., trust. The vicious cycle of confrontation between the two Koreas seems to be due to a lack of trust. Inter-Korean relations is at its lowest level of trust at the moment. Ironically, however, this is the best time to actually start building trust.

16. Park Geun-hye, "Trustpolitik and a New Kind of Korea" (speech on the policy direction for diplomacy, security, and unification, Seoul, November 5, 2012).

A Constant Approach in Improving Relations

During the Sunshine Policy, South Korea was too eager to improve inter-Korean relation, and unilaterally moved to provide large-scale economic aid to the North first, while expecting positive responses from the regime later. Despite this, the threat of provocations and the risk of political agreements being broken by North Korea remained because a reliable degree of trust was not successfully built. However, it was also not a sensible course of action to link North Korea's nuclear problem to all other inter-Korean issues and thereby remain stagnant on all levels of inter-Korean relations.

Hence, instead of moving too quickly or too slowly like in the past, it would be desirable for South Korea to deal with inter-Korean relations at a rate constant with the level of trust that is built with North Korea.

Harmony between Inter-Korean Trust, National Trust and International Trust

An effective North Korea policy can be pursued only when inter-Korean trust, national trust and international trust are all in harmony. The underlying problems rise from a lack of trust between North and South Korea. Thus, building trust must be the top priority. However, building trust in inter-Korean relations cannot be fulfilled only by one-sided effort; it can only be achieved through mutual efforts with North Korea's cooperative response. If North Korea does not positively respond to South Korea's endeavors to build trust, international support may be necessary while securing alternative strategies. Above all, South Korea needs support from the international community in the process of building trust.

In the past, the Sunshine Policy failed to win support from the U.S., whereas the Lee Myung-bak government had difficulties in gaining support for its North Korea policy from China. As China's GDP has increased by leaps and bounds such that the gap with the U.S. had narrowed by half, the strategic value of North and South

Korea has deflated, and China is worried about the powerful advent of the U.S.-ROK alliance in the case of a South Korea-led unification. Therefore, Beijing is actively supporting the stability of North Korea. South Korea is deemed as the chief ally of the U.S. in terms of its policies toward Asia. The most important factor in enforcing a North Korea policy is gaining cooperation from the U.S. and China.

Building inter-Korean trust will never be successful if it is not approved by national trust among the people. The belief that inter-Korean relations can be improved by actively providing aid to North Korea, as well as through inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation since the end of the Cold War, has withered in part due to North Korea's lack of positive response but also because of South Korea's excessive desire for improvements. In spite of North Korea's nuclear weapons development and military threat, the government's overestimation of inter-Korean trust and lack of trust from the international community led to such failure. Above all, a transparent implementation of policies is necessary so that efforts to build inter-Korean trust can be supported by the international community and gain the trust of the nation.

Harmony between the Management of Division and Preparation for Unification

An effective North Korea policy must align the peaceful management of division and preparation for unification. However, Seoul's North Korea policy has faced extreme conflict for the last 15 years due to fundamental differences in perceptions toward unification. The progressive governments in South Korea aimed at settling down the coexistence of the North and South while putting the issue of unification aside into the far-off future. Conversely, the conservative governments emphasized the necessity of unification, but the strained inter-Korean relations made unification unrealistic.

In fact, South Korea's unification policy since the end of the Cold War takes the functionalist approach of 1) unification toward a liberal democracy and market economy, and 2) gradually achieving unification stage-by-stage through reconciliation and cooperation. These include

both the division of management and preparation for unification.

Seoul's North Korea policy starts from the management of division, in terms of managing the status quo of inter-Korean relations, and ultimately aims to break the deadlock in inter-Korean relations, as well as promoting reconciliation and cooperation. However, pursuing the goal of management of division for its own sake should be avoided. Instead, South Korea should put forward the goal of unification and minimize any confusion in the process. Obviously, overemphasizing and raising the voice on the goal of unification would backfire against the management of division, but insisting on the goal of coexistence of the North and South while concealing the goal of unification would not be desirable either. Unification would be practically impossible, if North and South Korea did not share one common political system and ideology.

Lastly, contingency plans must be made thoroughly. It is not worthwhile to fight over the likelihood of North Korea's collapse. If such chance exists, needless to say, we must be prepared for it. The reason why the United States, Japan, Russia, and even China are all preparing for the collapse of North Korea is not necessarily because they believe such chance of happening is a lot higher than South Korea believes, but because the sudden change is expected to have a huge impact on us all.¹⁷

Comprehensive Approach with Alignment

Alignment is the core value of the Trust-building Process. Alignment does not necessarily mean a middle-ground between the soft-line and hard-line approaches. It means being flexible to situational needs in alignment with confrontational issues. It calls to go beyond the dichotomized thinking between 'hawk' and 'dove,' and objectively analyze the pros and cons of each approach and employ them in

17. Jinwook Choi, "New Paradigm in Unification Discussion: From Division Management to Unification Preparation," Jinwook Choi, ed., *Korean Peninsula and the Neighboring Powers* (Seoul: Neulpumpplus, 2010).

accordance with impending situations in optimizing the positive aspects.

South Korea's policy toward North Korea should be accomplished comprehensively with alignment between North Korea and its people, inter-Korean cooperation and international cooperation, as well as in the various fields such as politics, military, economy, and society, while running parallel with the formation of domestic social consensus.¹⁸ Exchanges and cooperation in those fields should not be bound by incidents, and should be fulfilled comprehensively with alignment. If security is overstressed, then exchanges and cooperation can be stunted in trying to fix the division of the two Koreas. Conversely, if exchanges and cooperation are hastily pushed forward, then security considerations may be held back. Moreover, overemphasis on inter-Korean relations may harm international cooperation, and there is a limit to improving inter-Korean relations merely by international cooperation.

In President Park Geun-hye's address to the Joint Meeting of U.S. Congress, she suggested the "Northeast Asia Peace Cooperation Plan" (Seoul Process), which pursues multilateral cooperation in Northeast Asia and improvement of inter-Korean relations. It will first concentrate on humanitarian and non-political areas such as disaster relief, environmental issues, and nuclear safety. As the level of trust gradually builds up, it will then focus on political and military problems such as denuclearization.¹⁹

Happiness of the People

During the Cold War, it was believed that Seoul's North Korea policy should take a state-centered approach or a politics-centered approach. After the end of the Cold War, however, Seoul's North Korea policy took a functional approach in which exchange and cooperation between the two Koreas could lead to building a socio-economic community, and ultimately a political community. However, South Korea's major concern

18. Korea News Editors' Association debate, *Yonhap News*, July 16, 2012.

19. *Dong-A Ilbo*, May 10, 2013.

was the North Korean regime rather than its people.²⁰ This basically arose from the absence of a civil society in North Korea, but efforts to increase bonds among the North and South Korean people were insufficient as well. Efforts to increase affinity included providing humanitarian aid to North Korea, supporting the improvement in shortages of food and daily necessities, and giving greater consideration for North Korean defectors.

Trust is a sort of intangible infrastructure between the North and South, which will contribute to the psychological integration between the people of the two Koreas, and thus, forming a trust-based society even after unification. “Laying the foundation for a happy unification,” which is one of the five government’s main policies, puts the people’s happiness rather than governmental interests as the main driver and concern in forming a North Korea policy.

Implementation Strategy and Tasks for the Trust-Building Process

Basic Structure

The sharp economic gap between North and South Korea has been the most important factor in determining how South Korea deals with North Korea. Whether conservative or progressive, South Korean governments regarded their economic superiority as the most important policy means. From a progressive perspective, economic aid and cooperation can lead North Korea to embrace reforms and opening. From a conservative perspective, economic pressure can help change North Korea’s

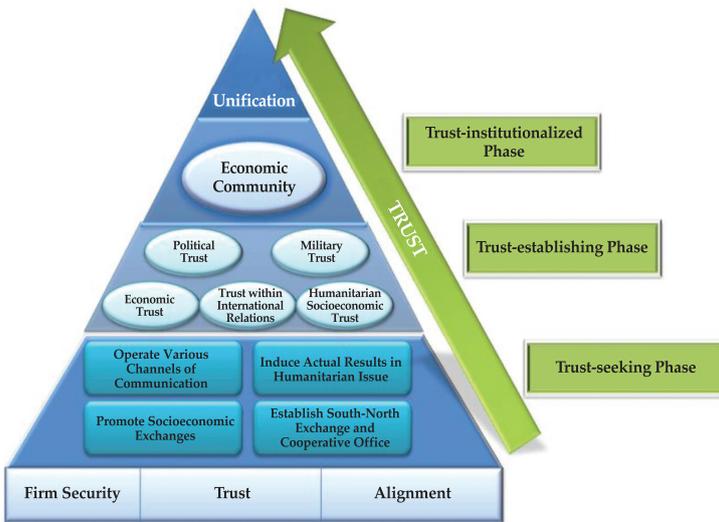
20. This is because in the past, political, social, and ideological movements were all state-centered, and the importance of the state and its sovereignty were emphasized as we went through the independence movement period. However, after the Cold War, idea of a social community-centered unification rather than a state-centered one became prevalent. In other words, this is a shift in the unification paradigm in that once the South and North form an economic entity and social community, then, eventually, political union will follow.

behavior. However, both conservative and progressive policies ultimately turned out to be ineffective. Economic superiority alone is not an effective policy means. However, it can be effective when it is combined with a significant degree of trust. It is desirable to combine economic cooperation between two Koreas together with a reliable degree of trust. It would not be appropriate to provide North Korea substantial economic aid without a reliable degree of trust.

The Trust-building Process can be implemented in three stages:

1. Ice-breaking efforts to make a breakthrough in inter-Korean relations should be de-linked to North Korea’s nuclear weapons program and other political situations like North Korea’s apology on the sinking of the Cheonan warship and shelling of Yeonpyeong Island. These include opening various channels of dialogue and providing humanitarian aid to the North. Above all, previous agreements between North and South Korea should be abided by.
2. Military and political confidence can be built, which can be reached as trust is built and North Korea denuclearizes.
3. An economic community between the two Koreas can be established based on mutual trust.

Figure 1. Trust Pyramid



The North and South are still in the first stage of trust-building. Efforts to reopen channels of communication can be initiated despite the absence of apologies for the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong incidents. Nutritional aid for North Korean infants could also begin right away. However, the persistent denial of the responsibilities over the two incidents without assurances that the provocations will not occur again will limit the scope of trust building.

In order to move onto the second stage of trust-building, some visible progress on denuclearization will be one of the important determining factors. The degree of trust can be built and enhanced separately and independently on different areas of trust, but all areas must constantly be worked on simultaneously.

Implementation Strategy

Political and Military Trust-building and Complementary Development of Socioeconomic Exchanges and Cooperation

To keep one's promise is the most important aspect of building trust. Observing the agreements of the former governments is to practice the spirit of mutual respect. Yet, details can be adjusted to suit the reality. Specifically, for a more stable and predictable inter-Korean relationship, it is important to build trust by proceeding with realistic measures that are easily reachable. These must precede any grand discourse or large-scale projects.

By enhancing inter-Korean economic and socio-cultural exchanges, national homogeneity must be recovered and trust must be steadily established. Moreover, social exchanges need to be promoted in various fields including academics, religion, and more.

While economic cooperation and exchanges will be predominant during the early stages of trust-building, there are limits to them if they are not backed by political and military trust. The most important aspect of building political and military trust is North Korea's denuclearization. High-level strategic dialogues with China's new leadership must begin, and international opinion must be united by strengthening

the diplomacy toward the middle powers that share the same goal of the denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula.

North Korea's nuclear program cannot and will not ever be condoned. It is necessary to convince the North that it will have much more to lose and suffer if denuclearization is delayed, as well as to clearly convey the message that greater cooperation with the international community and South Korea will be possible so long as it abandons its nuclear weapons. Under close cooperation with the international community, the firm commitment to realize North Korea's denuclearization should be continued through "strong deterrence and multi-faceted negotiations."

The success or failure of the Trust-building Process on the Korean Peninsula will be decided based upon the firm will and leadership of the leader, as well as a consistent North Korea policy. Both North and South Korea should sincerely implement the Trust-building Process and forge a specific plan to effectively carry out the policy.

Improving the Living Standards of North Korean Residents

Public opinion polls showed that the biggest issue in the task of unification is enhancing the rights and welfare of North Korean residents. If the transparency in distribution of aid is guaranteed, humanitarian aid (nutritional aid) will continue to expand, regardless of the changing political circumstances.²¹ In addition, in order to redress the problem of separated families, reunion meetings will be held on a regular basis, and exchange of recorded videos will be actively promoted. Moreover, recovering prisoners of war and abducted individuals will be pursued as one of the top priorities. The North Korean Human Rights Act will be passed in the earliest opportunity, and if the government comes to an impasse in inter-Korean relation, the efforts of scholars, media, and civil rights group will be supported as side channels to promote the government's efforts.

21. It is important to specifically decide at an early stage when, what kind of items, how much, and how to monitor the humanitarian aid.

The unification that I envision will provide opportunities for North Korean residents to live happy lives. In order to enhance the quality of lives and universal rights for those in North Korea who will lead the Era of Unification along with us the North Korean Human Rights Act will be enacted, and cooperation with the United Nations as well as the international community will be strengthened.²²

Expanding the Values of a Peaceful Unification and Building its Foundation

Unification must be substantially prepared by concentrating the public's efforts, as well as cooperating with the international community.²³

Public interest and the will to bring about unification is the impetus needed to draw international cooperation and concentrate the public's efforts. The vision and values of unification must be widespread in order to overcome the negative image unification has, such as involving high costs and invoking social disorder. Unification is the surest means of eliminating threats on the Korean Peninsula, and it may also bring about economic prosperity and a rise in international status. In addition, unification will also contribute to the peace and prosperity of Northeast Asia.

The international community's awareness that the North and South were originally one country and therefore must be re-united should be continuously affirmed. A consensus on the notion that "the unification of the Korean Peninsula is pivotal to Northeast Asia's peace, stability and prosperity" must be reached and repeatedly emphasized in the South Korea-China-Japan Summits.

Furthermore, in order to lay a cornerstone for peaceful unification, educational, financial, legal, and institutional preparations must be accompanied.

22. Park, "Trustpolitik and a New Kind of Korea."

23. *Ibid.*

Establishing strategic flexibility

When setting North Korea policies, it is advisable to categorize the policies into three general parts in order to maximize strategic flexibility: humanitarian part, principled part, and strategic part.

First, humanitarian aid, which is provided regardless of the changing political circumstances, includes providing necessity goods, clothes, medical items, and nutritional aids for infants and pregnant mothers. Such nutritional aids include vitamins, biscuits, and powdered milk, and is distinguished from fertilizer and food provisions.

Second, the principled part includes issues of North Korea's human rights, denuclearization, and apologies for the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong incidents. It also includes refusing to give monetary profits to the North in return for their mere participation in governmental and non-governmental level inter-Korean talks, including inter-Korean summits. Although the failure to settle these issues does not necessarily mean a deadlock in inter-Korean relations, these areas should never be forgotten, but repeatedly raised.

Third, the strategic part involves responding to political situations with flexibility. Organizing and prioritizing the terms we demand of North Korea and distinguishing the terms we could concede depending on North Korea's stance is necessary. The terms agreed in the October 4th Inter-Korean Summit should be included, and the negotiations should proceed in light of the changing inter-Korean relationship.

Strengthening Infrastructure for North Korea Policies

It is difficult to produce immediate and visible results when it comes to North Korea policies. In particular, it is even more challenging if one attempts to persistently abide by one's principles. However, simply because the immediately visible results are absent, the efforts to build necessary infrastructure for North Korea policies and strategies should not fade.

Preparations must be made for future opportunities and threats by carefully establishing well-thought out strategies and by investing

in high quality aid, both material and humanitarian. A specific plan must be devised regarding the demands that will be made of North Korea, and provisions that will be granted during inter-Korean summits. In order to do this, experts in the field of North Korea policies, information, and inter-state communication must be maintained and reinforced, while efforts must be made to establish and expand the network of scholars, media, civil groups, as well as groups linked to the government. Above all, a close cooperative system must be maintained between North Korea policies control towers and respective governmental departments.

Tasks Ahead for Each Phase

Trust-seeking Phase

- ***Operate Various Channels of Communication***

In order to establish trust, it is necessary to operate various channels of communication, as well as express a positive view that the doors of communication are open for North Korea. Through non-governmental organization (NGO) visits and Red Cross conferences, strained relations will soothe and give way to more reunions of separated families and larger humanitarian aid, also allowing the suspension of operations needed for communications between governmental authorities. If North Korea changes its position regarding the Yeonpyeong incident and the death of a tourist at Mount Kumgang, a meeting can be arranged to resume tours on Mount Kumgang and economic cooperation.

It is unnecessary to rule out the possibility of a summit meeting. However, rather than trying to hold summit for its own sake as some kind of political event, which has had many disappointments, it is advisable to take a more gradual approach and establish strategies that can slowly but continuously improve inter-Korean relations throughout the five-year presidency.

- *Humanitarian Aid for North Korea*

The young, elderly, and vulnerable groups are to be prioritized, and for that end, cooperation with the UN, UNICEF and the international community should be strengthened. As inter-Korean relations develop, aid can be extended to reduce homelessness problems and lack of necessity goods. For example, projects that can be taken into consideration include: transferring agricultural technology through cooperation with local governments; inducing participation of local authorities to solve housing problems; and alleviating the shortage of necessity goods by building large distribution complexes in Chul-won or Dandong.

- *International Cooperation to bring about Changes in North Korea*

In order to bring changes in North Korea, it is without doubt that cooperation with China and Japan, as well as the international community is needed. For instance, providing aid to trigger the inflow of foreign technology and capital in the primary industries such as underground resources, forestry and fisheries, as well as aid to raise experts in the field of market economy by arranging overseas training can all be considered. Aid will be provided so that educational programs aimed at training North Korean experts in overseas can be expanded to countries like Indonesia and Vietnam, similar to the existing programs operated in Sweden and Australia. It is also possible to provide indirect aid to the North via giving economic support to international NGOs that focus their activities on North Korea. Out of the 46 international organizations of which both North Korea and South Korea are members, working bilateral or multilateral consultative groups will be promoted on those that focus on specialized and functional cooperation.

- *Promoting Social and Cultural Exchanges*

Systematized cooperation will be arranged in the fields of health, medicine, and green growth (agriculture, forest 'greenification,'

weather). To expand economic cooperation, the Kaesong Industrial Complex will be developed into the International Industrial Complex. In addition, the establishment and co-development of a South-North Joint Company will be promoted. To consistently develop and systematize inter-Korean economic cooperation and social exchanges, the establishment of a South-North Exchange and Cooperative office in Seoul and Pyongyang will also be promoted.

- *Public consensus*

It is necessary to build an infrastructure for North Korea policies based on public consensus. For example, a special committee for South-North communication can be established in the South Korean National Assembly, or the National Unification Advisory Council can be reorganized to be comprised of opinion leaders from all levels of society so that it is true to its purpose of listening to public opinion and expanding policies. The activities of a “Unification Jip-hyun-jun” (tentatively named after “research centers” built in the courts during the Choseon Dynasty) consisting of experts on North Korea, unification, and international politics acting as a political advisory body, will also be invigorated.

Trust-establishing phase

As trust builds up, and steps toward denuclearization are taken, the Vision Korea Project will be promoted to create even developments on the Korean Peninsula, as well as an economic community.

- *Expanding infrastructure in North Korea*

To enhance North Korea’s economic growth, aid will be provided in strengthening North Korea’s infrastructure, including electricity, transport, and communication. South Korea supports North Korea’s endorsement of international investment from major international financial organizations.

- *Strengthening Trilateral Cooperation between South-North-China, South-North-Russia, etc.*

Establishing special economic zones, distribution complexes in border regions, cross-border gas pipes, railways, and developing cross-border routes to the North Pole will be actively promoted.

- *Increasing the level of South-North communications*

With the progression of the denuclearization process, the level of talks will gradually increase, and discussions on implementing the established agreements will commence. Talks at the Prime Minister level will be held, and a South-North Military Joint Commission, South-North Reconciliatory Joint Commission, South-North Committee on Exchange and Cooperation will be launched. A summit meeting will also be considered at an appropriate time. A hot-line will be established to prevent accidental military confrontation.

Trust-institutionalization phase

As peace is already settled in this phase, a verification system to check North Korea's nuclear disarmament and arms control would have been established, and peaceful relations are further consolidated. Inter-Korean summits and working-level talks will be held on a regular basis. In this trust-institutionalization phase, political unification is to be brought forth based on a South-North economic community. A mutually complementary economic cooperation between the two Koreas and further development of the North's economy will be pursued.

Concluding Remarks

There are no fantastic slogans or dramatic visions in the Park Geun-hye government's North Korea policy. It is not looking for artificial differentiations from the previous governments, nor is it attempting

some dramatic events to attract people's interests. The Park Geun-hye government's North Korea policy was overshadowed by North Korea's provocations which started even before the government's inauguration. Security concerns dominated inter-Korean relations and, thus, it was not easy to speak out fresh attempts to build trust with the North. Moreover, there were few opportunities to intensively discuss what the Trust-building Process meant.

The Park Geun-hye government's North Korea policy is distinct from those of the previous governments.' The Trust-building Process seems to be a new paradigm for policies aimed at North Korea. Trust is a new concept in South Korea's North Korea policy. South Korea's economic superiority has been the major policy leverage against the North since the end of Cold War; for instance, weighing how much economic aid should be provided to the North, or whether economic pressure is necessary.

The Trust-building Process differs from previous North Korea policies by putting emphasis on the importance of individuals' happiness. The Park Geun-hye government's "Happy Unification" respects the quality of individual lives of a unified Korea as the top priority, while previous governments presented dramatic slogans on state-levels such as "Great Economic Power" or "First Class Country." For the Trust-building Process, it is important to cultivate relationships between peoples in the South and the North, support North Korean settlers in South Korea, and aid a psychological integration between the North and the South in prospect of future unification. The Trust-building Process can be a model for inter-Korean cooperation that establishes sentimental and cultural solidarities between the two parties.

Can the Trust-building Process operate regardless of North Korea's nuclear weapons and provocations? It is skeptical whether government-level inter-Korean relations would make remarkable progress in the near future.

However, the Trust-building Process is not impossible even without North Korea's positive responses. It has already achieved some affirmative results such as reducing disagreements within South Korea as to its North Korea policies, and the Process garnered support from

the United States and China as well.

Trust building efforts should continue, and opening various channels for communications with North Korea is what the Trust-building Process pursues. This is, in a way, a deviation from demanding denuclearization as a precondition to dealing with other inter-Korean issues. The real crisis of the Trust-building Process is not North Korea's provocations but an end of communications. It is very difficult to build trust without continuous mutual exchanges and conferences. As inter-Korean trust builds up, a number of formerly unthinkable breakthroughs may come about, such as North Korea's denuclearization, or even a peace treaty.

There is not much that South Korea can do, however, if North Korea is not really ready to talk, as it was the case for the first few months after the inauguration of the Park Geun-hye government. Holding inter-Korean talks for its own sake or providing a large-scale of economic aid to prompt visible results may in fact cause greater harm on trust building. Progress made by such artificial ad-hoc events would soon evaporate. Therefore, it is important to make gradual progress through verifiable ways that have long-lasting effects.

The Trust-building Process reserves commenting on the legitimacy of North Korea's regime, while firmly responding to North Korea's bad behaviors or provocations against South Korea. Needless to say, any North Korea policies would fail if the North persists to take a hostile position against the South.

Finally, the Park Geun-hye government is pursuing the normalization of inter-Korean relations through the Trust-building Process and, at the same time, "substantially preparing for Korean unification." Such approach hopes to end the long controversies overseeing the division management of the Korean Peninsula and the preparation for Korean unification as an either-or choice.²⁴

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The Park Geun-hye Government's Role in a Needed New Strategy toward North Korea

Larry Niksch

This paper places President Park Geun-hye's policy of building trust with North Korea in the difficult context of North Korea's threats against South Korea and the United States, and the prospect that North Korea soon will produce nuclear warheads for its Nodong missiles. Nuclear warheads on the Nodongs will give North Korea a new instrument to pursue provocative acts against South Korea. It signifies the death of denuclearization as a credible policy priority for South Korea and the United States. The paper contends that a new strategy is needed to replace denuclearization. South Korea must take the leading role in developing new issues in its diplomacy toward Pyongyang. President Park could propose multiple negotiations over at least six South-North issues that could yield outcomes favorable to South Korea. The paper also suggests ways for the Park Government to coordinate with the United States over strengthening deterrence against a North Korea with nuclear warheads.

Key Words: threats, warheads, death, lead, multiple

The Reality that President Park Faces

President Park Geun-hye has taken office facing a difficult situation in moving forward her stated intention of building trust between South Korea and North Korea. Allied diplomacy toward North Korea is frozen. North Korea acted with hostility toward President Lee Myung-bak's strategy of tying diplomatic initiatives toward North Korea with North Korean concessions on the nuclear weapons issue. Pyongyang suspended South-North talks and demanded that President Lee reaffirm the financial commitments and promises of food aid made by his predecessor, President Roh Moo-hyun. Then, in 2010,

North Korea sank a South Korean naval vessel, *Cheonan*, and shelled a South Korean island, Yeonpyeong. U.S. denuclearization diplomacy toward North Korea is equally stalemated. The collapse of the February 29, 2012 U.S.-North Korea Agreement is the latest U.S. diplomatic failure.¹

With diplomacy stalemated, North Korea moved both its missile and nuclear weapons programs forward with a relatively successful test of a long-range missile in December 2012 and an apparently successful test of a nuclear device in February 2013, on the eve of President Park's inauguration. In addition to the apparent success of the tests themselves, there are two particularly disturbing signs. One is the numerous reports of Iranian involvement in both the missile test and the nuclear test.² This indicates a growing Iranian stake in these North Korean programs and thus incentives (including financial incentives) for Pyongyang to move these programs forward as rapidly as possible.

Iran's reported priority interest in the February nuclear test also suggests that the tested warhead was a uranium warhead for North Korea's intermediate range Nodong missile (and thus potentially for Iran's Shahab 3 missile, which is a twin of the Nodong). If the *London Sunday Times* report is correct that Mohsen Fakhrizadeh-Mahabadi traveled to North Korea to observe the test, it then becomes certain that the test was indeed a uranium test and the warhead was probably designed for the Nodong. Dr. Mohsen reportedly heads Iran's program to develop a uranium warhead for the Shahab-3.

My article on North Korea's development of nuclear warheads, published by South Korea's Institute of National Security Strategy in

1. See my paper, "The Collapse of the February 29 Agreement: Is Denuclearization of North Korea Still a Credible Policy Objective?" Published by the Institute for Corean-American Studies, May 2012.

2. "N.Korea's nuke test 'funded by Iran'," *Chosun Ilbo*, February 20, 2013; "Iran 'paid millions for ringside seat at N.Korean Nuke test'," *Kyodo News*, February 15, 2013. The *Chosun Ilbo* report cited the report in the *London Sunday Times*, quoting western intelligence sources, that "Iran's leading nuclear scientist, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh-Mahabadi, is believed to have traveled to North Korea to observe its third nuclear test."

December 2011, detailed North Korea's intimate involvement with Pakistan's A.Q. Khan, in providing Nodong missiles to Khan that were re-named Ghauri, observing and receiving data from Khan's 1998 tests of uranium warheads, and having North Korean scientists in Khan's laboratory in the subsequent development of warheads for Ghauri missile.³ My article also described North Korea allowing U.S. nuclear scientist, Sigfried Hecker, to view what he described as a modern, sophisticated plant to enrich uranium in November 2010.

This was the background for the reports in 2013, stating that North Korea is developing nuclear warheads for its Nodong missile. Richard Engel, long time national security correspondent for NBC News, reported on April 3, 2013, that U.S. officials believe that North Korea has nuclear warheads on its missiles but only on missiles with a range of 1,000 miles.⁴ 1,000 miles is the range of Nodong. Dr. Ham Hyung-pil of the Korean Institute for Defense Analysis said three weeks later that North Korea may be able to place a nuclear warhead on the Nodong.⁵ In Washington, the knowledgeable *Nelson Report* stated that among U.S. Government officials, the likelihood that North Korea has nuclear warheads for its Nodongs "seems far more certain behind closed doors than in public."⁶ All of these warnings came amidst the intelligence report of the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, assessing "with moderate confidence, the North currently has nuclear weapons capable of delivery by ballistic missiles."⁷

North Korea's nuclear test was followed by an eruption of North Korea's threats against South Korea and the United States: threats to launch nuclear weapons against the United States and U.S. bases in the Western Pacific and declaration of a "state of war" against South

3. Larry Nicksch, "When North Korea Mounts Nuclear Warheads on Its Missiles," *The Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 2, Fall/Winter 2011.

4. NBC Nightly News broadcast, April 3, 2013.

5. "North Korea can make nuke-tipped missile able to hit South: expert," *Korea Herald*, April 24, 2013.

6. *The Nelson Report*, May 2, 2013.

7. Dion Nissenbaum and Jay Solomon, "Korean nuclear worries raised," *Wall Street Journal*, April 12, 2013.

Korea, the closing of the Kaesong industrial zone, and rejection of future negotiations on the nuclear issue.

The implications of this situation for the new Park administration contain few positive elements. First, denuclearization of North Korea as a total policy priority has lost its credibility. U.S. diplomacy has gained nothing in the last five years. The failed February 29, 2012, Agreement is the latest of several U.S.-North Korean negotiations in which North Korean negotiators out-negotiated and out-maneuvered the U.S. negotiators. North Korea's apparent progress toward producing weapons-grade uranium and nuclear warheads, and its successful long-range missile test make any scenario impossible in which the current government in Pyongyang would give these programs up. These programs are too close to achieving the fundamental North Korean military-strategic goals for the North Korean government to abandon.

Second, neither President Lee's policy of conditioning South Korea's initiatives on North Korea's denuclearization progress nor the earlier Sunshine Policy of providing unconditional food and financial aid to North Korea have changed North Korea's behavior toward either nuclear weapons development or toward provocations against South Korea.

Third, North Korea's new leader, Kim Jong-un, does not appear to be committed to changing the fundamental elements of North Korea policies as developed by his father. Reports of his decision to proceed with the nuclear test in February 2013 suggest that he is influenced heavily by the rigid North Korean military leadership.⁸

Fourth and most important, the new Park government faces the likely prospect that North Korea will mount nuclear warheads on its intermediate range Nodong missile in 2013. It seems to me that North Korea's threats to attack the United States with nuclear weapons have been a classic propaganda disinformation strategy to distract the United States, South Korea, and Japan from the immediate goal of

8. Chang Se-jeong and Kim Hee-jin, "Discord in Pyongyang over third nuclear test," *Joongang Daily*, March 15, 2013.

Pyongyang's nuclear program: nuclear warheads for Nodong. The Park government thus almost certainly will face a North Korean nuclear warhead with the capability to target sites throughout South Korea.⁹

This military reality also confronts President Park and her advisers with the likelihood of divergent diplomatic goals between South Korea and the United States in any future nuclear negotiations. The current Obama Administration's agenda, set forth in the failed February 29, 2012, Agreement with North Korea and in subsequent statements by current and former U.S. officials, emphasizes negotiating North Korean moratoriums on the testing of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. Those objectives would serve the U.S. interest in containing North Korea's progress over the next several years in developing long-range missiles and nuclear warheads for those missiles that could reach Alaska, Hawaii, and the U.S. West coast. But this U.S. agenda would have little benefit to South Korea (and Japan) as they face the current reality of nuclear warheads on the Nodong missiles.

Needed: A New ROK-Led Strategy

Thus, it seems that President Park's goal of building a more stable North-South relationship will require the development of a new strategy toward North Korea to replace the near total priority to denuclearization diplomacy of recent years, and to address the new situation facing South Korea regarding nuclear warheads on North Korea's Nodong missiles. She will have to separate some elements of ROK policy from the U.S. denuclearization policy and develop a strategy to deal with a more direct nuclear threat to South Korea. She

9. North Korea may not publicize immediately its warheading of Nodongs. Since Sigfried Hecker's visit to the North Korean uranium enrichment plant in November 2010, Iran reportedly has urged North Korea to keep secret its nuclear programs that have Iranian involvement. Thus, Iran may urge North Korea not to disclose nuclear warheads on the Nodongs until Iran is assured of acquiring these warheads for the Shahab-3 missile.

should not return to the Sunshine Policy, providing unconditional food and financial aid to the North Korean regime. She should coordinate a new strategy with the Obama administration in terms of gaining U.S. understanding that some new initiatives should not be conditional on the denuclearization issue. During her visit to Washington in May 2013, she apparently gained President Obama's support for her "trust building" policy.

It seems to me that a new strategy should have three elements: One is to develop and raise new issues in South Korea's diplomacy toward North Korea, ending the exclusive focus on denuclearization. The second element should strengthen deterrence against the heightened North Korea threats when North Korea develops nuclear warheads for its Nodong missiles. In the wake of Pyongyang's heightened threat rhetoric in 2013, strengthening deterrence has already begun. The third element is the need to establish a better means of communication with North Korea to deal with future "nuclear crises" that Pyongyang may instigate through provocations against South Korea.

Proposing Multiple Issues for South-North Negotiations

It is in the first element of the new strategy, developing and raising new issues in South Korea's diplomacy toward the North, that the Park Geun-hye government should have the lead role. Most of the issues that create tensions on the Korean Peninsula are issues between Seoul and Pyongyang. Even the issues that have a more multilateral nature are important to South Korea, and thus need South Korea's leadership role.

For President Park, a middle course between priority to denuclearization and the Sunshine Policy would be to propose to North Korea a series of negotiations on several issues. Challenge Kim Jong-un by proposing negotiations on multiple issues. State to Kim Jong-un that he could choose any of these issues on which he would be prepared to negotiate. By proposing talks on several issues, President Park would complicate the North Korean government's decision-making process.

Even the hard-liners in Pyongyang would find it more difficult to reject multiple proposals for negotiations than if they only had to reject a single proposal for negotiations.

An opportunity to influence the North Korean government's decision-making process is especially relevant in the view of recent reports of divisions within the North Korean leadership over conducting the February 2013 nuclear test and closing down the Kaesong industrial complex in April 2013. According to these reports, hard-line military leaders, who advocated these measures, were opposed by civilian leaders, including Jang Song-taek, Kim Jong-un's uncle and probably the most powerful official of the Korean Workers (Communist) Party.¹⁰ The military won these reported debates. However, one cannot discount the possibility that the views of these civilian officials influenced the receding of North Korea's campaign of threats and tirades and North Korean proposals about re-opening Kaesong. It seems to me that a multiple negotiations proposal from President Park likely would cause these divisions to resurface.

There also are several measures that South Korea and the United States could take to pressure the North Korean government into giving serious consideration toward South Korea's proposal for multiple negotiations. The most important of these would be for Seoul and Washington to set out a detailed agenda of requirements for the conclusion of a Korean Peace Treaty. This has not happened since the 1980s despite constant pressure from North Korea on the United States to accept Pyongyang's proposal for a bilateral North Korea-U.S. negotiation of a peace treaty. The ROK-U.S. counter-proposal would emphasize that settling issues between Seoul and Pyongyang constitutes a firm requirement for the negotiation of a peace treaty and that

10. "Discord in Pyongyang over third nuclear test," *Joongang Daily*, March 15, 2013; "North at odds over Kaesong: source," *Joongang Daily*, April 5, 2013; "N.K. replaces hawkish defense chief with younger, little-known General," *Korea Herald*, May 13, 2013. The *Korea Herald* cited a report in the Japanese newspaper, *Sankei Shimbun*, quoted "unnamed sources" that some Workers Party officials and senior party and cabinet officials opposed the closure of Kaesong.

South Korea must be a full participant in any peace treaty negotiations (See more discussions of the peace treaty issue).

Other tactics to pressure North Korea could include the U.S. position of withholding food and financial aid until North Korea shows a “positive response” to President Park’s proposal for negotiations. South Korea could signal that in the absence of a positive North Korean response, the ROK government would take an aggressive role in the forthcoming United Nations Commission of Inquiry into North Korean human rights abuses.

The issues that President Park could propose should be issues that would likely yield outcomes that are favorable to South Korea. The negotiated settlements of such issues would make a direct contribution to North-South reconciliation — a point that President Park could make when proposing multiple negotiations and advertising her proposal.

Advertising such a proposal would be important because President Park’s diplomacy toward North Korea should be intended to influence not only the North Korean leadership but also three other audiences. One is the South Korean public. President Park will need strong public support for her diplomacy and will need to neutralize expected criticism from advocates of the Sunshine Policy. The second audience is the U.S., — the Obama administration, the U.S. Congress, and informed U.S. experts and the public opinion. The third, with growing importance, are Chinese moderates, who favor China reducing its current support for North Korea. Since the December 2012 missile test and the February 2013 nuclear test, a number of prominent academics and other Chinese professionals have openly criticized North Korea. In the *Washington Post* on January 19, 2013, Professor Zhang Liangui of the Party School of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee was quoted that Chinese opinion on how to handle North Korea was divided. The Chinese Internet has been full of commentaries criticizing North Korea. There have been protests outside North Korean diplomatic missions.¹¹ Any ROK or U.S. strategy

11. Steven Mufson, “Chinese express scorn for longtime ally,” *Washington Post*,

should aim at influencing and strengthening the views of these Chinese critics of North Korea and adding to their numbers. Even the Chinese government's recent diplomatic coolness toward North Korea appears to reflect this shift in Chinese public opinion. Jang Song-taek's reported opposition to the February 2013 nuclear test was based on his fear that the test would alienate China from North Korea to a dangerous degree.

Thus, even if North Korea rejected President Park's proposal for multiple negotiations, her influence over these other audiences would be enhanced. North Korea would suffer a defeat in its constant propaganda campaign to turn South Korean and Chinese public opinion against the ROK and U.S. policies. Pyongyang would be isolated further, which is an important factor in the long term. As Evans Revere, former State Department official in charge of Korean affairs, stated at the Korean Economic Institute on May 13, 2013, creative diplomacy is sometimes needed to "remind people of North Korean intransigence."

In considering a strategy of proposing multiple negotiations, President Park and her advisers undoubtedly would discuss the timing of issuing proposals — the best time period to issue the proposal that would have the best results for South Korea. The shutting down of the Kaesong industrial complex complicates the decision on timing. There is no doubt that there is a strong view in South Korea that North Korea's actions to close down Kaesong would make new negotiating proposals by South Korea impractical. That view is justifiable. South Korea undoubtedly will make the restoration of Kaesong central to any diplomatic proposals. Nevertheless, the context for the proposal of multiple negotiations is a strategy for the long term — for President Park to appeal to multiple audiences, for President Park to create an agenda that she could utilize throughout her term of office, and for President Park or her successor to act upon if the Pyongyang regime should decide on a "yes" response to some of the issues that Park proposes. Restoring Kaesong will have to be one of those issues, but

April 14, 2013; Jenny Jun, "Dealing with a sore lip: Parsing China's 'recalculation' of North Korea policy, 38 North (internet)," March 29, 2013.

in the present circumstances and based on long term goals, it does not have to be the only issue.

Moreover, Pyongyang's recent feelers and semi-proposals for a "celebration" of the June 15, 2000 South-North Summit, allowing South Korean businessmen back into Kaesong, and accepting China's proposal to renew Six-Party Talks, are clearly intended to put President Park on the defensive and portray her as being inflexible. One should expect more "proposals" from North Korea with this motive. I have been negatively impressed by the optimism expressed by some people here, including the U.S. media, whenever North Korea makes negotiating proposals that contain past demands and clichés; these people usually view these North Korean proposals as a sign that the Pyongyang regime has moderated policies and seeks a genuine détente with the United States. President Park has an opportunity to neutralize this kind of reaction to North Korea's proposals with concrete proposals for substantive negotiations over real issues in inter-Korean relations.

What are the issues best suited for such a proposal? It seems to me that the following issues would be most conducive for South Korea's proposal of multiple South-North negotiations:

Negotiating a West Sea Boundary: North Korea's military provocations against South Korea could take place in the form of attacks on the South Korean islands in the West Sea, near the North Korean mainland. South Korea would be in a strong negotiating position that a negotiated North-South boundary would have to militarily separate the ROK islands from the North Korean mainland. Any such negotiated boundary would have to be identical to or close to the Northern Limit Line (NLL) proclaimed by the United Nations Command in 1953. There could no other outcome, given the geographical reality of the islands location in relation to the North Korean mainland. President Park could add "related maritime issues," such as fishing rights to such a proposal as an incentive to North Korea. Proposing the negotiation of a North-South maritime boundary would complicate North Korea's decision-making over launching future military provocations against the South Korean islands. It thus would reinforce deterrence.

The Obama administration and the U.S. State Department would have to support such an ROK proposal (even if the reports of the State Department's reluctance to deal with the NLL issue diplomatically are correct). The Chinese government has constantly expressed on record to favor South-North negotiations. Such a proposal from President Park would gain strong support from Chinese moderates.¹²

Mutual Missile Constraints: Now that South Korea has announced a plan to remove its missiles from the limits on range set by the Missile Control Technology Regime (MCTR), President Park could propose that South and North Korea negotiate an agreement to place all missiles on the Korean Peninsula under the MCTR, subject to thorough inspections and verification. President Park could add that during negotiations, neither side would test missiles. This proposal is likely to draw a rejection from Pyongyang but such a rejection would leave a negative impression on the other audiences addressed by President Park's diplomacy. President Park would have added justification for proceeding with the plan to expand the range of ROK missiles. China and Japan would have less justification for their reported opposition to South Korea's missile range expansion. If North Korea accepted the offer to negotiate, South Korea should present a plan for an active and challenging inspection mechanism. South Korea also should put its long-standing agreement with the MCTR forward as the model for both Koreas. If North Korea shows signs of using the negotiations to stall and delay South Korea's plan to extend the missile ranges, President Park should proceed with implementing the plan.

Divided Family Reunions: President Park could recast this long-standing issue in a proposal to negotiate a detailed schedule for family reunions that sets the dates, locations, and numbers of divided family members to be involved. The proposed location could be the Kaesong special economic zone where North Korean family members would gain exposure to South Korea. President Park ought to make any proposal for family reunions public, including an announcement over

12. Larry Nicksch, "An agenda for North-South military talks: North Korean recognition of the Northern Limit Line," *Segye Times*, February 19, 2011.

television with South Korean divided family members seated behind President Park.

Food Aid Linked to North Korean Agricultural Reforms: President Park already has hinted that an offer of food aid to North Korea would be part of a three-stage trust-building strategy toward North Korea. ROK officials have described the first stage of this strategy as an offer of “humanitarian assistance” to North Korea. Humanitarian assistance could have several components, but given its recent history, her offer could undoubtedly include renewed food aid. According to these ROK officials, an offer of humanitarian assistance would be linked to a call for North Korea to promise to keep South-North agreements.¹³

However, I would critique such an offer on two accounts. First, it seems to me that any initial offer of food aid should be limited to specialized food for infants, small children, and possibly pregnant women. There should be no offer of bulk rice or corn. This is the Obama administration’s current policy. The North Korean government, over many years, has diverted sizeable portions of the bulk of rice and corn from the truly needy to the military and the communist elites in Pyongyang.¹⁴ Or, the regime has used donated rice and corn as a cushion to enable it to confiscate higher portions of rice and corn produced by the collective farms.

Second, the United States and South Korea already have tried to link food aid to North Korea adopting positive policies toward nuclear and North-South issues, including keeping previous agreements. Any successes have been short-lived, and all have collapsed when the North Korean government chose to renounce agreements or reinterpret them radically or when Pyongyang believed that slight increases in domestic food production gave it an option to restrict or terminate foreign food aid. After nearly twenty years of this stagnant cycle, it is time for a new approach that would aim to internally change North Korea — to condition large-scale food aid (bulk rice and corn) to a clear

13. The Nelson Report, March 28, 2013.

14. Victor Cha, *The Impossible State* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2012), pp. 125-126.

North Korean commitment to adopt “Chinese-style” agricultural reforms that would include dismantlement of collective farms, legal ownership or leaseholds of land by farm families, legal standing for private food-selling markets, and specified production and import targets for tractors and other modern agricultural equipment. The first installment of large-scale food aid would follow North Korea’s commitment to agricultural reforms. The second installment would follow the conclusion of a negotiated plan for the implementation of reforms. Subsequent installments would follow each stage of the implementation of reforms.

In her interview with the *Washington Post* during her May 2013 trip to the United States, President Park stressed that China’s economic successes “through reform and opening . . . offers a very good model for [North] Korea to follow.”¹⁵ After 18 years of food aid, a ROK-U.S. agenda for agricultural reforms is overdue. This proposal from President Park would test the new North Korean leader and challenge him to consider a fundamental change in the agricultural policies of his father and grandfather. If there are proponents of such reforms in the North Korean leadership, such a proposal might embolden them. Chinese moderates, who are critical of North Korea, would be attracted to President Park’s call for “Chinese-style, Deng Xiao-style agricultural reforms.” They likely would question why their government has not conditioned Chinese food aid on Chinese-style agricultural reforms. At a minimum, it would embarrass Chinese leaders that a South Korean leader, instead of themselves, was extolling Chinese-style agricultural reforms in diplomacy toward North Korea.

Other Aid Proposals: Proposals for South Korean aid to the North should have the objective of increasing access of South Korean technicians and other experts into North Korea and direct contact with North Koreans working on aid projects. One such proposal could be South Korea’s assistance to the reforestation of denuded North Korean hillsides — a major cause of the constant floods in North Korea. This

15. “The right path for North Korea: interview with President Park Geun-hye,” *Washington Post*, May 8, 2013.

proposal could be made in conjunction with a proposal of food aid. The *Korea Herald* reported on February 18, 2010, that the ROK government had developed plans for reforestation aid. The report quoted officials from the Ministry of Unification that South Korea would discuss reforestation with North Korea “under the right circumstances.” Another such proposal could be South Korea’s revitalization of North Korean hospitals and training of North Korean medical personnel. Both of these projects would involve the entrance of South Korean forestry experts, equipment operators, medical technicians and doctors and nurses into North Korea. South Korea’s aid proposals should emphasize this kind of South-North people-to-people contact in projects that would benefit the North Korean people.

In the context of North Korea’s closing of the Kaesong special economic zone, any new South Korean aid proposals would have to be conditional on Pyongyang withdrawing restrictions on Kaesong and the establishment of stronger guarantees that such restrictions will not be imposed again in the future.

“*Citizens Security*”: In her May 8, 2013, interview with the *Washington Post*, President Park stated that “North Korean human rights is a very important issue that we need to take up, that we cannot turn a blind eye to.” The idea of proposing negotiations on “citizens’ security” in reality would constitute an initiative to improve human rights. It would seek to take advantage of an element in the Korean human rights situation that is usually overlooked — that North Korea has its own “human rights” agenda of constant demands that the ROK government abolish the National Security Law, end restrictions on the South Korean political left, cease blocking pro-North Korean computer websites, stop prosecuting South Korean citizens from illegally visiting North Korea, and relax restrictions on left-leaning labor unions. President Park could offer to negotiate on these North Korean demands, but she would specify that negotiations would have to include North Korea’s concentration camp system, political prisoners, kidnapped South Koreans, restrictions on the practice of religion, electronic blocking of South Korean and foreign radio broadcasts into North Korea, and opening the Internet for North Korean citizens to

learn about the outside world.

Such a negotiation would enable the ROK government to exercise a strategy toward North Korea that puts greater emphasis on the issue of human rights. However, the proposal would place the issue as one of negotiating quid pro quos and tradeoffs between South Korea and North Korea. This would be a useful second initiative in relation to the special commission that the United Nations Human Rights Commission has set up to investigate North Korea, and would increase pressure on North Korea over its human rights status. North Korean leaders would be especially sensitive and concerned over responding to such a proposal from President Park. The quid pro quo nature of the Park proposal would educate many South Korean citizens about the human rights conditions in North Korea and prove attractive to the South Korean public. It would help end the division within South Korean society over whether the ROK government should pursue a human rights agenda with North Korea.

The Korean Peace Treaty: North Korea's proposal for a bilateral North Korea-U.S. bilateral peace treaty ending the Korean War has bedeviled the U.S. and ROK policy-makers since Pyongyang first proposed it in 1974. Since 2008, the North Korean government has pressed the issue when meeting with prominent Americans like Steve Bosworth, Jimmy Carter, and Bill Richardson. North Korean media organs constantly assert that real North Korea-U.S. negotiations will have to be over a peace treaty. Most recently, the North Korean National Defense Commission's rejection of any future denuclearization talks with the United States stipulated that future Pyongyang-Washington negotiations will have to be about "negotiations on ensuring peace" on the Korean Peninsula.¹⁶

Since 2008, the U.S. and ROK reactions to this North Korean pressure have been, for the most part, silence. The Obama administration does not want to dilute the long-standing U.S. commitment to denuclearization, and it does not wish to negotiate with North Korea over Pyongyang's position that a peace treaty must include the with-

16. Korea Central News Agency, January 24, 2013.

drawal of U.S. troops from South Korea. The ROK government has the same negative reaction to the demand for the withdrawal of U.S. troops but, more fundamentally, they fear that a negotiation of a peace treaty would be a bilateral U.S.-North Korea affair that would exclude South Korea.

These are legitimate concerns. However, the silence of the ROK and the U.S. gives North Korea the initiative on this issue. The silence may even encourage North Korea to believe that continued pressure on the United States will eventually weaken the United States' will to resist the bilateral peace treaty proposal.

It seems to me that there would be several advantages if Washington and Seoul ended their silence and put forth a detailed statement of their requirements for a Korean Peace Treaty. The ROK-U.S. requirements should have four components. First, a negotiation of a Korean Peace Treaty will not be bilateral. South Korea must be a full participant in the negotiation. Second, with regard to China's participation (as a signatory of the 1953 armistice), South Korea and the United States take no position on it. China's participation must be determined between North Korea and China. (Pyongyang opposes China's participation almost as much as it opposes South Korea's participation. Why not create a divisive issue between them?) Third, any Korean Peace Treaty must resolve major South-North issues and normalize the relationship between South Korea and North Korea. These would include the issues I have proposed in this paper for South Korea's negotiation proposals. Fourth, any negotiation over U.S. military forces in South Korea must include talks over North Korea's artillery on the demilitarized zone that threatens Seoul, and North Korean missiles that threaten South Korea.

A strong counter-proposal on the peace treaty issue would accomplish several things. Seoul and Washington would put Pyongyang on notice that South-North issues must be resolved before any peace treaty could be concluded. It would reinforce any initiative by President Park in proposing issues, like those discussed above, for negotiations with North Korea. And again, by taking a neutral position on Chinese participation in peace treaty negotiations, South Korea and the United

States are likely to create divisive issues between Pyongyang and Beijing, which would not necessarily be a bad outcome.

In my view, a counter-proposal of requirements for a peace treaty could be a tactic held in reserve while President Park makes her proposal for multiple South-North negotiations. If North Korea rejects her proposed negotiations, South Korea and the United States could issue the counter-proposal in response to Pyongyang's rejection, again to reinforce the U.S.-ROK demand that South-North issues must be resolved. If North Korea accepts some of President Park's negotiation proposals, Seoul and Washington should stipulate that a successful negotiation of these issues and other South-North issues would ultimately lead to a Korean Peace Treaty conference.

As laid out above, the advantages of South Korea taking the lead in formulating a new diplomatic agenda toward North Korea are clear. Proposing multiple negotiations would create an arsenal of diplomatic proposals that President Park could repeat throughout her term. It seems to me that Kim Jong-un could not indefinitely reject all of these proposals and, out of them, new forms of South-North talks would eventually be held. Even if North Korea rejects all the issues set forth by President Park, her proposal would no doubt be supported by the South Korean public. Current disagreements in South Korea over its North Korea policy would be narrowed. The growing number of Chinese critics of North Korea would also be attracted to the Park proposal and their calls for their own government to change its supportive policy toward North Korea would likely grow. The U.S. reaction would be positive, especially in the media and Congress; the Obama administration would have to support Park's initiative.

The advantages to the United States are also evident. Such an agenda put forth by President Park would inevitably draw the Obama administration away from the long-standing, total U.S. priority to denuclearization. A new priority to South-North issues would refocus the strategy to change North Korea from denuclearization to changing the North Korean government's internal policies. After 20 years of

futile denuclearization efforts, the target of our efforts needs to shift toward internal North Korea.

President Park's Role in Enhancing Deterrence

President Park's proposal for multiple South-North negotiations would not be a substitute for South Korea's role in enhancing deterrence against North Korea. Instead, it would complement this second element of a new strategy toward Pyongyang. For South Korea, enhancing deterrence is becoming even more important in the view of North Korea's development of nuclear warheads for its Nodong missiles, and the negative impact this will have on South Korea's interests in any future nuclear negotiations.

South Korea and the United States have been working on enhancing deterrence against North Korea since North Korea's provocations in 2010. What is deterrence? It is the creation of unacceptable consequences to an adversary if the adversary commits or contemplates committing aggressive acts against you. In the case of North Korea and South Korea, deterrence relates to three types of aggressive actions that North Korea has demonstrated that it is capable of carrying out. The first is an all-out North Korean invasion of South Korea — a repetition of 1950. The second is military provocation acts of a limited nature against the South Korean military and/or the U.S. military along the demilitarized zone or the Northern Limit Line. The third is terrorist acts against South Korea — for example, the murder of President Park's mother in 1974, the bombing of the South Korean delegation to Burma in 1983, and the blowing up of the South Korean airliner in 1987.

Deterrence has worked well in dissuading North Korea from launching a new invasion of South Korea. The prospects of a full-scale North Korean invasion in the future appear dim. The continued deterioration of North Korean conventional forces over more than 20 years, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, limits North Korea more each year. Nevertheless, Seoul, with its millions of people, is only 25 miles away from the demilitarized zone and is within the range of thousands

of North Korean artillery pieces and multiple rocket launchers. Detering North Korea from this geographical-strategic temptation has necessitated maintaining powerful ROK and U.S. military forces in and around the Korean Peninsula. It has depended on the U.S. capability to introduce military forces into Korea from outside in response to North Korea's attack. It also has required close coordination of ROK and U.S. military commands.

I would make two observations on the challenge for the future. One is that the role and visibility of U.S. airpower in deterrence will be even more important in the future than it has been in the past. Future U.S. defense budgets will likely make significant cuts in the size of the U.S. Army and Marine Corps. The availability of U.S. ground forces for a full-scale Korean conflict could be lessened. Thus, the U.S. airpower will no doubt be the paramount U.S. contribution to enhanced deterrence.

The second challenge is the scheduled change in the relationship between the ROK and U.S. military commands. The current 35-year Combined Forces Command is supposed to be split into separate U.S. and ROK commands in 2015. That year represents a three-year postponement from the original planned date of 2012. There has been much criticism of dividing the commands both in South Korea and the United States. However, I do not believe that another postponement will occur in 2015. I believe Secretary of Defense Hagel will want to proceed. I recommend that the Park government should not resist changing the command structure in 2015; however, that would require President Park to skillfully explain to skeptics why the status quo should not be retained.

It seems apparent, however, that there are two options for changing the command structure. One is to proceed with the plan to separate the commands. With the careful planning that has proceeded since 2009, a separation of commands should work. The second option would be to retain the Combined Forces Command (CFC) but with a rotation of CFC commanders between a South Korean and American General. That would change the current situation in which the commander of U.S. forces in South Korea permanently commands the CFC. In each

rotation, the deputy commander position would be held by the other side. South Korea would gain equality of command, and the long-effective, ROK-U.S. integrated CFC structure would remain in tact. Retaining the CFC structure would no doubt be a positive element in deterrence against future North Korean military threats to South Korea, including a direct nuclear threat. This second option is reportedly being explored between South Korea and the United States. President Park's judgment on the merits of these plans will be one of the most important decisions of her presidential term.

While deterrence has worked well in preventing North Korea's invasion, it has worked less well in dissuading Pyongyang from launching limited military provocations and terrorist attacks. This problem will remain and could grow. Four reasons explain this. One is that, from 1968 to November 2010, North Korea carried out numerous military provocations and terrorist acts against South Korea and the United States without suffering military retaliation from Seoul and Washington. No doubt North Korean leaders believed that they had a "free ride" in committing such acts.

Second, the deterioration of North Korea's conventional military forces and thus Pyongyang's decreasing prospects of launching a full-scale invasion mean that North Korean leaders are increasingly dependent on military provocations and terrorism. These have been the remaining tactics to inflict pain on South Korea.

Third, intimidation has been North Korea's chief tactic to gain food aid and financial benefits from South Korea, the United States, and even China. Military provocations, terrorist acts, and threatening rhetoric have been principle manifestations of North Korea's intimidation diplomacy.

Fourth, North Korea's acquisition of nuclear warheads on Nodong missiles will give North Korea a powerful and threatening instrument to pursue military provocations and terrorism. The danger is that North Korean leaders will view nuclear warheads as giving them a total guarantee that South Korea and the United States will not militarily retaliate. Imagine a provocation like the shelling of Yeonpyeong island, but after this provocation, North Korea threatened to use nuclear

weapons against South Korea if South Korea retaliated.

South Korea and the United States have recognized the need to enhance deterrence against these kinds of North Korean acts. Joint planning exercises reportedly have been conducted under the scenario of a North Korean nuclear threat to South Korea. In December 2010, President Lee Myung-bak's government adopted a policy of military retaliation if North Korea carried out another provocation like the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island. The Obama administration supported South Korea.¹⁷ The retaliation policy was formalized in a Counter-Provocation Agreement signed by South Korea and the United States in March 2013. The Agreement reportedly laid out anticipated North Korean military provocations, the targets and scope of South Korean military retaliation, and the timing of U.S. military forces entering the retaliation scenarios.¹⁸

The Counter-Provocation Agreement seems to recognize that deterrence will have two tasks in dealing with this kind of North Korean challenge. The first will be to deter the initial military provocation. The Counter-Provocation Agreement, itself, is a key to this first task. It signals North Korean leaders that their "free ride" to commit military provocations is over. If this element of deterrence fails and Pyongyang carries out another provocation, the second task will be to deter the North Koreans from escalating their military actions after South Korea retaliates. The entrance of U.S. forces into the provocation scenarios relates to this second task.

I have five observations regarding the Counter-Provocation Agreement and policy. One is that a major element of North Korea's recent threats is Pyongyang's recognition that the counter-provocation policy challenges the "free ride" situation it has enjoyed since the 1968 com-

17. Larry Niksch, "If South Korea Retaliates," *Asia Pacific Bulletin* (East-West Center), December 23, 2010; Chico Harlan, "Island attack toughened S. Korea's will," *Washington Post*, April 15, 2013.

18. Choe Sang-hun, "South Korea and U.S. make plans for defense," *New York Times*, March 25, 2013; David Sanger and Thom Shanker, "U.S. designs a Korea response proportional to the provocation," *New York Times*, April 7, 2013.

mando attack on the South Korean presidential residence and the seizure of the USS Pueblo. North Korea seeks through threats, to weaken ROK and the U.S. resolve to carry out the Counter-Provocation Agreement. As more information about planning under the Counter-Provocation Agreement becomes public, we can expect more outbursts of threats from North Korea. These threats are unnerving, but they show us that this element of deterrence is making an impression on North Korean leaders.

The second observation is that the display of military measures by both South Korea and the United States will be necessary to deter North Korea from thoughts of escalating military conflict beyond the initial provocation-retaliation scenario. Measures such as expanding the range of South Korean missiles, improving the strike capabilities of the ROK Air Force, and strengthening anti-missile defenses in South Korea would contribute to this.

But I contend that the United States' heavy bombers will need to be the central element in military measures to enhance deterrence, not only in the scenario of an invasion but also to successfully implement a counter-provocation response to the North's provocation. The U.S. commitment of several B-52 and B-2 bombers in the February-March 2013 ROK-U.S. military exercises drew an emotional tirade from North Korea. This is because North Korea is aware of the destructive power of heavy bombers. In the 1970s and 1980s, North Korea reacted with extreme emotion and outbursts of rhetoric when the U.S. Air Force exercised B-52s based in Guam near the Korean Peninsula. I remember reading the intense North Korean commentary concerning the B-52 exercises. I concluded then that nothing impressed North Koreans more about U.S. military power in the Western Pacific than the B-52s in Guam. In short, the B-52s were the apex of U.S. deterrence.

Nothing would impress North Korean leaders more about the United States' resolve to bring U.S. forces into a provocation-retaliation scenario than the visibility of the U.S. heavy bombers regularly in exercises over and near the Korean Peninsula. North Korean tirades of threats in March-April 2013 upon on seeing B-52s and B-2 bombers suggest their potential importance in both tasks of deterrence in

counter-provocation scenarios. It also seems to me that the display of heavy bombers influenced North Korean leaders in April to soften their threats. I would argue that the role of the U.S. heavy bombers will be even more necessary when North Korea mounts nuclear warheads on its Nodong missiles and can turn military provocations into nuclear threat crises.

The ROK government under President Park reportedly suggested to U.S. officials that the United States deploy heavy bombers to South Korea as a response to North Korea's threatening rhetoric in 2013.¹⁹ The affirmative U.S. reaction to the suggestion shows the utility of South Korea playing a high role in developing measures to heighten deterrence even when the measures mainly involve U.S. military forces. South Korea has a heightened interest in an expanded role for U.S. heavy bombers in deterrence. President Park and her military leaders should remind U.S. officials of the importance of heavy bombers in planning under the Counter-Provocation Agreement. I hope that such suggestions from either Seoul or Washington would include the stationing a squadron of heavy bombers permanently in Guam and run them up regularly to the Korean Peninsula for exercises. The B-52 squadron in Guam was withdrawn in 1991. Heavy bombers need to return.

Third, planning of South Korean military retaliation needs to stress the speed of South Korean action against known North Korean provocations. One reason is that delays in reacting could result in ROK and/or U.S. indecision, vacillation, and loss of resolve to act. In short, Seoul and Washington would find themselves back in the situation of 1968-2010. North Korea would be emboldened. The second reason is that a quick retaliation would give North Korea less time to consider further escalation in reaction to South Korea's retaliation. The swiftness of South Korea's action requires detailed ROK-U.S. planning. Hopefully, President Park will stress this in her policies toward the United States.

19. Jay Solomon and Julian E. Barnes, "North Korea warned," *Wall Street Journal*, March 29, 2013.

Fourth, the ROK-U.S. planning will have to give attention to the proportionality of South Korea's responses to provocations. ROK retaliation should inflict real damage on North Korea, but the scope should not exceed, by a huge degree, the North Korean action.

Fifth, there may be more questions and problems in applying the counter-provocation policy to North Korea's terrorist acts. The identity of perpetrators of terrorist acts is often hidden, at least initially. Even when the victim and its allies recognize the identity of the terrorist, they may need to show proof. This necessitates even more time. Thus, unlike an open North Korean military provocation, a quick South Korean military retaliation may not be possible. The sinking of *Cheonan*, though it was a military provocation, proved difficult for South Korea and the allies to assemble evidence, proving that North Korea carried out the attack.

In short, South Korean and American military planners of counter-provocation will have the difficult task of planning responses to North Korean terrorist acts, and even to certain kinds of military provocations, which have a somewhat delayed nature. This makes deterrence against the initial act of terrorism or military provocations even more important.

The message of deterrence to an adversary also involves the spoken word. This especially is important in the case of North Korea. Kim Jong-il gave special emphasis to propaganda in North Korean policies toward the other governments and their publics involved in the Six Party Talks (he was trained in the Agitation and Propaganda Department of the North Korean Workers' Party). My view that North Korean nuclear threats against the United States in early 2013 were a propaganda disinformation campaign is further evidence of the importance to Pyongyang of spoken, public words. It seems to mean that the spoken, public words of U.S. and South Korean officials have an important impact on the effectiveness of deterrence on North Korea. North Korea must understand the ROK and U.S. intentions in specific situations. North Korean leaders must also fully recognize the consequences if they commit provocations and aggressive acts and carry them too far.

Stating these consequences to North Korea will periodically require

publically stated tough and pointed warnings to North Korea. Thus, the recent pointed warnings by President Park and ROK Defense Minister Kim Kwan-jin about South Korea's retaliation seem appropriate in the face of North Korea's threats. It seems that North Korea's coming nuclear warhead capability will necessitate U.S. officials to reinforce deterrence with stronger pointed warnings to North Korea than they have issued in recent years. North Korea's nuclear warheads would make appropriate a new invocation of the Eisenhower administration's doctrine of "massive retaliation" against the states that used nuclear weapons against the United States or its allies. One model could be President Bill Clinton's warning that if North Korea used nuclear weapons against the United States or U.S. allies, it "would mean the end of the country as they knew it."²⁰

President Park appears committed to the Counter-Provocation Agreement and successfully implementing it if North Korea commits a major provocation. This will require detailed ROK-U.S. military planning. But with equal importance, it will require political resolve from President Park and Obama if Pyongyang decides on a full military test of that resolve.

Managing Future Nuclear Crises Created by North Korea

Stating intentions and deterrence messages to North Korea is also an issue of communication. This issue will no doubt be more important and dangerous when North Korea has nuclear warheads and can couple military provocations or terrorist acts with warnings of nuclear attack, if South Korea or the United States retaliates. Frankly, the current mechanisms used by the United States to communicate with North Korea are indirect and possibly unreliable. These are the so-called "New York channel" to North Korea's diplomats at the United Nations and passing messages to North Korea through China. North Korea's U.N. diplomats probably do not have a direct line to

20. Cha, *The Impossible State: North Korea, Past and Future*, p. 218.

North Korea's top leaders. Can the United States trust Chinese officials to pass unaltered U.S. messages to Pyongyang?

A more direct channel may require a permanent U.S. diplomatic mission in Pyongyang. This would be a difficult step for the Obama administration, which has continued the warnings of the Bush administration against "rewarding bad behavior." Clearly, Kim Jong-un would boast that U.S. diplomatic "recognition" signified recognition of North Korea as a nuclear weapons power. Thus, opposition from Congress and the U.S. media likely would delay a U.S. offer of diplomatic relations for several years. However, the creation of one or two nuclear threat crises by North Korea may strengthen advocacy of some forms of diplomatic relations. Moreover, North Korean propaganda gains from U.S. "recognition" would be short-lived when North Korean leaders realize that having a U.S. representative in Pyongyang would not necessarily be followed by material benefits from the United States.

The ROK government's attitude toward this question would have an important influence on U.S. opinion. Its view can also be affected by the existence or absence of North Korea's nuclear threat crises. When North Korea crosses the threshold of mounting nuclear warheads on missiles, President Park and her advisers will need to think carefully about the utility of a more direct diplomatic relationship between the United States and North Korea. The Obama administration will face the same problem. This should be a central issue in the U.S.-ROK planning for implementation of the Counter-Provocation Agreement and in high level discussions between South Korea and the United States.

Conclusion

The U.S.-led strategy of giving total priority to denuclearization has lasted over 20 years. It has had little success. Now North Korea is poised to cross the threshold of having nuclear warheads mounted on missiles. The realizable goals of denuclearization policy are narrowing

to protect only the United States, and the prospects of realizing even this goal are small. A new ROK strategy based on President Park's principle of trust-building should be the spearhead of a broader change of direction from total concentration on denuclearization.

The ideas presented here for elements of a new strategy are based on a belief that these ideas could further or even accomplish several objectives, the achievement of which will be necessary to change North Korea and to ultimately solve the nuclear issue. I believe these ideas would complicate the decision-making of North Korean leaders and might stimulate divisions and debate within it. The thrusts of many of the recommendations for negotiation proposals aim at influencing and changing North Korea's internal system toward reform and opening. They also aim at influencing and attracting key audiences with potential impacts on North Korea; the key audience is the growing body of critics of North Korea in China — within the Chinese government and within the broader public. The discussion of enhanced deterrence and managing future nuclear crises seeks to present ideas of how the United States can provide reassurance to South Korea and Japan as they deal with a more direct nuclear threat from North Korea.

The Obama administration and, possibly, its successor will no doubt continue to proclaim the denuclearization of North Korea as the supreme policy objective. But that should not preclude South Korea — and even Japan — from attempting new strategies and tactics to change North Korea in other ways. That is the opportunity available to President Park.

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Kim Jong Un's First 500 Days: Consolidating Power and Clearing Political Space for National Revival*

Alexandre Y. Mansourov

This article assesses the leadership changes in North Korea since Kim Jong Un assumed power after Kim Jong Il's death on December 17, 2011. The first part addresses three fundamental questions: who really governs the country, how stable is the current North Korean regime, and what lies over the horizon for the leadership transition? Part two analyzes key dynamics within the Kim family, including the rising influence of Kim Jong Un's uncle Jang Song Thaek and the emergence of Kim's wife, Ri Sol Ju as a factor in family politics, as well as the regime's efforts to preserve and modernize the Kim monarchy. The article will also discuss how the regime seeks to strengthen the socialist party-state, reinvigorate the party's central leadership institutions, tighten the party's control over mass public organizations, and watchfully manage the party's center-periphery relations. Part three analyzes the main drivers and direction behind Kim Jong Un's transformation of the legacy government he inherited from his father, focusing on his overhaul of the national security establishment and party-military relations, restructuring of the socio-economic team, and adjustment of the foreign policy team.

Key Words: North Korea, Kim Jong Un, leadership changes, policy adjustments, national revival

A Dynamically Stable Regime

A year and a half into Kim Jong Un's rule, the formal father-to-son succession is over. But the political transition from the Kim Jong Il-centered totalitarian one-man rule to a more complex authoritarian

* The research and analysis presented in this article are based solely on publicly available materials. The views presented here are my own, and do not reflect the official position of any government, departments, or agencies.

governing system — so far centered on the new leader — still continues. North Korean leadership politics has become as vibrant, hard to predict, and somewhat open-ended as it was during past political transitions in North Korea, especially in the late 1940s, early 1970s, and mid-1990s, leading some Western pundits to question the stability of the current regime.

Although the domestic political situation in Pyongyang is no longer static, I judge it to be dynamically stable and conducive to further develop into a more responsive and efficient government. Kim Jong Un and the forces behind him shattered the political status-quo inherited from his father in December 2011 with bold and speedy actions aimed at discarding the legacy-governing system, rejuvenating and revamping the country's national security establishment, restructuring its economic policy-making apparatus, re-adjusting the foreign policy team, and reshuffling local governance elites.

The political transition — still ongoing — has a lot of moving parts and is unfolding in fits and starts. Its key actors are not necessarily visible and their intentions are not always clear. It is still uncertain who will be left standing when the dust finally settles. Some personnel changes appear to be quite natural, especially where health and age offer helpful excuses. Others are unusual and even unprecedented, given the speed and manner with which they were reportedly implemented. Many personnel developments are the products of various players' jockeying for power. Personal loyalties command a special premium. Job performance and substantive knowledge rarely matter. Corruption is a double-edged sword; only those who have mastered it succeed.

In their totality, these frequent reshuffles create the appearance of increasing uncertainty, tension, uneasiness, lack of firm direction, cracks, and disunity. But, in my judgment, they have not yet reached a level to potentially threaten the regime's stability, because they have little impact on its perceived legitimacy or performance. They are not yet fueled by factionalism nor do they meet internal elite resistance. They do not spill over into the broader society and do not agitate the general public, which is generally not aware of what is

going on at the top. But, they have created a new category of political losers among the former senior party and military officials and have generated some obvious hurtful feelings and bad memories, which could serve as a potent source of potential opposition in the future.

After Kim Jong Il's death, many analysts expressed great confidence that in the next few years North Korea would be led by the same people who had been leading it over the previous decade.¹ They believed that Kim Jong Un's young age and inexperience would make it easier for the time-tested party apparatchiks and *Songun* (military-first)-accustomed generals to manipulate the young ruler, to influence his decisions, and to control his policies from behind the scenes. These predictions proved to be close to the mark on the family side, only partially correct on the party side, largely wrong on the government side, and absolutely wrong on the military side.

Who Governs?

In April 2012, North Korea unveiled a new governing system presided over by Kim Jong Un, the third generation *Mangyongdae* dynasty ruler who declared the commencement of the second century of the *Juche* revolution and the Kim family rule. Depending on our assumptions on the degree of his control over the party, state, and military, one can come up with competing explanations of what may have been driving the long-overdue overhaul of the governing system.

If one assumes that Kim Jong Un is in full control, the periodic personnel reshuffles may mean that the succession is over,² and that he has arrived as the country's supreme leader in his own right. Kim feels secure and comfortable enough to speed up generational change and dismantle the legacy government he inherited from his father. Hence, he is surrounding himself with the people he can trust, pushing

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1. Andrei Lankov, "It's not All Change in Pyongyang," *Asia Times Online*, January 5, 2012, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Korea/NA05Dg01.html>.
 2. "Kim Jong-un Named 1st Secretary of the Workers Party," *Chosun Ilbo*, April 12, 2012, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2012/04/12/2012041200959.html.

aside his father's confidants. According to Cheong Seong-Chang from the Seoul-based Sejong Institute, "from now on, the old guard who had supported Kim Jong Il will stay in the backseat or gradually retire."³

Supporting this hypothesis, out of the original seven senior officials who walked alongside the hearse carrying the body of Kim Jong Il during the final funeral procession on December 28, 2011 — the so-called Gang of Seven, portrayed by the conservative ROK media as the most trusted aides of Kim Jong Un^{4,5} — four have already lost power (State Security Department, SSD Director U Tong Chuk, former Chief of General Staff Ri Yong Ho, and 75-year old Defense Ministers Kim Yong Chun and Kim Chong Gak were dismissed)^{6,7} while two others — Party Secretaries 86-year old Kim Ki Nam and 83-year old Choe Tae Bok — failed to make it to the inner circle. Only one man from the original Gang of Seven — Kim Jong Un's uncle Jang Song Thaek (66) — was able to gain more power and increase his party rankings during the past year and a half.

The second hypothesis is that Kim Jong Un is only partially in control and that someone else may be calling the shots or manipulating him.⁸ In that case, last year's inauguration of a new national security team may indicate that those officials who gained power in the recent

3. "N. Korea names new defence minister before launch," *Agence France Press*, April 11, 2012, <http://www.mysinchew.com/node/72392>.

4. "The 'Gang of 7' Behind Kim Jong-un," *Chosun Ilbo*, December 29, 2011, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2011/12/29/2011122901522.html.

5. Andrew Salmon, "Power behind Kim Jong-un's throne: the 'Gang of Seven' emerges from the shadows," *The Telegraph*, December 31, 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/northkorea/8986568/Power-behind-Kim-Jong-uns-throne-the-Gang-of-Seven-emerges-from-the-shadows.html>.

6. "N. Korea purged senior intelligence official," *The Korea Times*, April 17, 2012, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/04/113_109120.html.

7. "N. Korea names new defence minister before launch," *Agence France Press*, April 11, 2012, <http://www.mysinchew.com/node/72392>.

8. "Kim Jong-un's Aunt Seen as Power Behind the Throne," *Chosun Ilbo*, April 12, 2012, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2012/04/12/2012041201068.html.

reshuffles, including Jang Song Thaek and his longtime protégé Choe Ryong Hae,⁹ finally succeeded in dismantling the protections built into the successor support system by Kim Jong Il to prevent these potential rivals from staging a palace coup against his son. By gradually dismantling the guardianship system built by Kim Jong Il in the last two years of his life, Jang appears to have cleared the obstacles facing his own possible power takeover bid.

At the same time, I cannot exclude the possibility that the purged officials (U Tong Chuk, Ri Yong Ho, Kim Chong Gak, Chon Pyong Ho, and others) may have been accused of saying or doing something threatening Kim Jong Un's rule (disloyalty, arrogance and high-handedness, policy mistakes, coup plot, etc.). Kim's aunt and uncle may have convinced the young and easily impressionable ruler to remove them from power, which in turn, strengthened their own influence inside the palace.

One of Kim's new guardians once reportedly told Kim's uncle Jang, "If anyone were to stand in the way of Kim Jong Un, they would never be forgiven no matter who they were."¹⁰ Little did he know, and now he is gone, whereas Jang's power has grown unchecked.

The third hypothesis is that Kim Jong Un is a legacy figurehead leader symbolizing the continuity of regime and was elevated only temporarily for the sake of the preservation of internal political stability to preside over several elite groups competing for power and policy influence. If that is the case, then the ongoing personnel reshuffles may reflect the continued power rebalancing among competing groups of officials, especially between the party and the military, the military and security, the civilian economic bloc and defense industry, and the men in uniform.

The fourth possibility is that, in contrast to Kim Jong Il, whose

9. These officials were part of the original successor support group that was sidelined by Kim Jong Il after the Third Workers' Party Korea (WPK) Conference in September 2010.

10. Lee Young Hwa, "Cracks in Kim Jong Eun System," *Daily NK*, February 9, 2012, <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?cataId=nk03600&num=8787>.

“unified guidance system” (i.e., one man rule) was based on the principle of “single-hearted unity,” and thus banning party factionalism, Kim Jong Un may have decided to base his governance on the principle of checks and balances between emerging rival intra-party groups. This style is more similar to his grandfather Kim Il Sung’s governing system, which relied on intra-party faction competition to consolidate and maintain his personal authority and improve the overall performance of the party establishment. Kim Jong Un reportedly seeks to mimic his grandfather’s public image and leadership style, according to the South Korean media.^{11, 12}

Based on my evaluation of Kim’s first year and a half in power, I judge that he reigns supreme. He proved to be a formidable opponent to be discounted only at one’s own peril. He has different ropes for different folks. He demonstrated swift ruthlessness in eliminating his potential enemies inside the royal palace and military barracks. The successful satellite launch on December 12, 2012, and the third nuclear test on February 12, 2013, further boosted Kim Jong Un’s domestic legitimacy, increased his political capital, undermined potential critics, helped him silence military discontent, and increased his international stature and bargaining power.

Looking Over the Horizon

Kim Jong Un’s overhaul of the legacy government will not be complete until he replaces the nominal head of state and puts his own confidant into this important post. Hence, senior state leaders — President of the Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA) Kim Yong Nam, 84, and SPA Chairman Choe Tae Pok, 82, and Vice-President of SPA Presidium Yang Hyong Sop, 87 — may be next in line for replacement, possibly

11. Kim Kyu-won, “Kim Jong-un speaks his father’s words with his grandpa’s face,” *Hankyoreh Sinmun*, April 16, 2012, http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/528499.html.

12. “Kim Jong-un is out of mourning, out in public,” *JoongAng Ilbo*, February 6, 2012, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joinsmsn.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2947978&cloc=joongangdaily|home|newslst1>.

during the Eighth Session of the 12th SPA this fall or at the First Session of the 13th SPA in the coming year.

Who replaces Kim Yong Nam may tell us about the future direction of the restructuring of the political system. If Kim Yong Nam's replacement is someone like Kang Sok Ju (73) — a Politburo Member and Kim Jong Il's longtime confidant on foreign affairs, like Kim Yong Nam used to be prior to his elevation to the position of the nominal head of state — it will be a sign of regime continuity and a bit of evidence supporting the argument that Kim Jong Un, despite his growing political capital, is still beholden to the old elites and is not yet able or willing to fundamentally restructure the political system he inherited from his father. Appointment of Jang Song Thaek as the nominal head of state will be an indicator of Jang's rising political and foreign policy influence and his continued efforts to secure his grip on power beyond his wife Kim Kyong Hui. It will give more weight to the second hypothesis about Kim's power-sharing with the regime's heavyweights like Jang. If Kim Jong Un decides to assume the position himself, it will be an unexpected move, possibly indicating his ambition to eventually allow a popular election of the head of state to further boost his legitimacy so that he can become the first popularly elected president of the North sometime in the distant future (on par with the South Korean President). This course of action will be a good indicator that Kim is in full control because it will further concentrate power in his hands. Finally, the appointment of a dark horse would signal that the power of the President of the SPA Presidium may be downgraded or shifted to some other institution, perhaps to be created in the course of a possible constitutional reform in the future, especially if Kim Jong Un decides to rule like his grandfather did, relying on intra-party faction competition and re-establishing the institution of the presidency and its subordinate structures, similar to the now defunct central people's committee.

The Kim Family Reigns: Preserving the Monarchy and Strengthening the Party-State

Kim Jong Un Supreme

Since Kim Jong Il's death, the Kim family continues to rule North Korea for the seventh decade in a row. The system executed Kim Jong Il's October 8, 2011, will with little resistance from vested interest groups by promptly reaffirming Kim Jong Un as "the only successor to Kim Jong Il standing at the helm of the Korean revolution and the cause of *Juche* ideas"¹³ and as "the only center of unity, cohesion and leadership of the WPK and KPA,"¹⁴ thereby delegitimizing all other possible successors and contenders to the throne. On December 30, 2011, the Workers' Party Korea's (WPK) Central Committee (CC) Politburo appointed Kim Jong Un as the KPA Supreme Commander;¹⁵ the Fourth WPK representatives conference elected him as the First Secretary of WPK CC and Chairman of the WPK Central Military Commission (CMC) on April 11;¹⁶ the Fifth Session of the 12th Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) elected him as First Chairman of DPRK National Defense Commission (NDC) two days later;¹⁷ and, finally, the WPK CC, CMC, NDC, and SPA Presidium awarded him the land's highest military title of Marshal in a rare joint decision on July 18,¹⁸ completing the ceremonious process of placing Kim Jong Un at the top of the North's party, state, and military hierarchies.

Defying pundits' expectations,¹⁹ Kim Jong Un secured the formal

13. Report on Meeting of Political Bureau of WPK Central Committee, Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), December 31, 2011.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Rodong Sinmun*, April 12, 2012.

17. "Fifth Session of 12th SPA Held," Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), April 13, 2012.

18. "Kim Jong Un Awarded Title of Marshal of DPRK," Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), July 18, 2012.

19. Cho Jong Ik, "Kim Jong Un to Split Up Party-military to Secure Cadres," *Daily NK*, December 21, 2011.

trappings of power in just four months, in contrast to Kim Jong Il, who had mourned his father's death for three years before officially assuming the top leadership posts. On the one hand, such a rush to transfer power ensured that there would be no power vacuum at the top of the governing pyramid that could potentially upset the system's equilibrium, invite opportunists, and cause political instability. On the other hand, it prompted questions about the successor's filial piety and personal insecurities.

The Rise of Jang Song Thaek

At the time of Kim Jong Il's death, many North Korea watchers believed that Kim Jong Un's 66-year-old uncle Jang Song Thaek could emerge as a regent figure, exercising significant power at least during the new leader's early period in office.²⁰ These expectations proved to be correct: in less than a year, Jang emerged as the most dynamic and dominant power broker behind the throne,²¹ after systematically dismantling the successor support group put in place by Kim Jong Il before his death in 2011, and elevating a cohort of the party officials personally loyal to him to key power-wielding and policy-making positions.²²

Jang catapulted from the 19th place in the North's power hierarchy, as exemplified by his place in Kim Jong Il's state funeral committee membership list,²³ to the number four position right behind the remaining three WPK CC Politburo Standing Committee members

20. "Power Struggle Begins in N.Korea," *Chosun Ilbo*, December 22, 2011, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2011/12/22/2011122200865.html.

21. "Jang Song Thaek and Choi Ryong Hae solidify their positions of power," *Hankyoreh Sinmun*, July 19, 2012, http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/543297.html.

22. "Kim Jong Un's Uncle Gains Control of N.Korea," *Chosun Ilbo*, July 30, 2012, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2012/07/30/2012073001542.html.

23. "National Funeral Committee Formed," Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), December 19, 2011.

(Kim Jong Un, Kim Yong Nam, and Choe Ryong Hae) even ahead of his wife Kim Kyong Hui. This was evidenced by his fourth place in the official listing of the senior party, state, and military leaders who attended the military parade marking the 81st anniversary of the KPA's founding on April 25, 2013.²⁴

In a relentless drive to consolidate his power, Jang forced the surprise removal of four senior military officers from office. They had escorted Kim Jong Il's casket during his funeral in December 2011 and were widely assumed to be Kim Jong Un's guardians designated by his father to protect him from any possible rivals.²⁵ These were:

- Acting head of State Security Department (SSD) U Tong Chuk in March 2012;²⁶
- Defense minister Kim Yong Chun in April 2012;²⁷
- Chief of KPA General Staff Ri Yong Ho, formerly ranking 2nd place in the North's power hierarchy, in July 2012,²⁸ and
- Acting head of the KPA General Political Department (GPD) and later minister of defense Kim Jong Gak, in November 2012.²⁹

At the same time, Jang ensured the rapid promotion of the senior party

24. *Rodong Sinmun*, April 26, 2013.

25. "The 'Gang of 7' Behind Kim Jong Un," *Chosun Ilbo*, December 29, 2011, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2011/12/29/2011122901522.html.

26. "N. Korea purged senior intelligence official: source," *The Korea Times*, April 17, 2012, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/06/120_109120.html.

27. Choe Sang Hun, "Top North Korean Defense Official Replaced, South Korea Says," *The New York Times*, November 29, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/30/world/asia/top-north-korean-defense-official-replaced-seoul-says.html?_r=0.

28. "Ousted N.Korean Army Chief 'Defied Orders'," *Chosun Ilbo*, July 27, 2012, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2012/07/27/2012072700918.html.

29. Choe Sang Hun, "Top North Korean Defense Official Replaced, South Korea Says," *The New York Times*, November 29, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/30/world/asia/top-north-korean-defense-official-replaced-seoul-says.html?_r=0.

officials with whom he had worked together since his days at the Korean Socialist Youth League, including the new General Political Department Director Choe Ryong Hae, Pyongyang party boss Mun Kyong Dok, the party secretary responsible for South Korea Kim Yang Gon, his right-hand man at the WPK CC Administrative Department Ri Ryong Ha, director of WPK CC Mass Public Organizations Department Ri Yong Su, North Korea's Ambassador to China Ji Jae Ryong, and others. It remains to be seen whether these officials will stay loyal to Jang in the long run.

Despite Jang's steady rise in power and status, some skeptics still believe his ability to control the elites and the prospects for his grasp of absolute power are limited by the fact that he belongs to a different clan, albeit married into the Kim family.³⁰ They assert that Jang derives his power from his marriage to Kim Jong Il's younger sister Kim Kyong Hui, who is the reported official executor of his estate and last will. As a result, Jang's overwhelming influence as a power-brokering regent will last only as long as she is alive and well. But because her health is rumored to be deteriorating,³¹ these skeptics predict a rather short regency for Jang, too.³²

However, in my opinion, we should not underestimate Jang's ability to persist, given the fact that he outwitted and outlived those people who had purged him in the late 1970s, mid-1990s, and mid-2000s. I believe Jang is now busy removing his potential rivals and installing his loyalists to cement a power base of his own and make sure he will survive as one of the North's rulers even after his wife's departure from the political scene. It is clear that Jang has recently outgrown the narrow confines of his formal position as director of

30. Nick Miller, "Kim Kyong Hui's Health and the Fate of Jang Song Thaek," Korea Economic Institute, October 1, 2012, <http://blog.keia.org/2012/10/kim-kyong-huis-health-and-the-fate-of-jang-song-thaek/>.

31. Kim Yong-Jin, "N. Korean leader's aunt in ill health," *The Korea Times*, September 7, 2012, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/09/116_119396.html.

32. "Who Runs North Korea?" *Chosun Ilbo*, December 18, 2012, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2012/12/18/2012121800673.html.

WPK CC Administrative Department and NDC vice-chairman, even though it gives him enormous policy-making and supervisory powers over a very important segment of the country's power bloc.

The WPK CC Politburo's decision on November 4, 2012, to form the State Physical Culture and Sports Commission headed by Jang to spearhead Kim Jong Un's new drive to build up the North as a sports power, endowed him with an institutional platform to encompass and guide all party, government, and military organizations, at the central and local levels beyond the power bloc institutions. While his nephew remains at the helm of the National Defense Commission, Jang set up his own all-nation supra-Cabinet Commission subordinating many key Politburo, CMC, NDC, and Cabinet members and leaders of mass public organizations to his control, who previously had not been under his supervision. In doing so, he covered all important political and socio-economic constituencies, significantly extending his power base. Jang may be scheming to create an autonomous center of power on the basis of the Sports Commission as an alternative to the NDC in the long run.

Enter Kim's Wife

Kim Jong Un's marriage in June 2012, less than six months after his father's death, introduced a new wild card into the North's ruling clan politics. The emergence of the non-traditional Ri Sol Ju factor modernizes and complicates the political landscape. The first lady could be both an asset and a liability. On the positive side, she can boost the regime's continuity and vitality by delivering the long-expected fourth generation successor. She can also act as a strong advocate of high-level attention to important social issues, especially women's concerns, and can offer a public relations bonanza to a regime seeking to present a softer, gentler, and a more human face for the Kim monarchy. On the negative side, her alternative opinions may foment cracks in the inner circle, undermining political stability, especially if the new leader truly listens to her. In any case, the unfortunate fates of Kim Il Sung's and Kim Jong Il's former wives are

worth keeping in mind.³³

Key unknowns are Ri's relationship with Kim Jong Un's other relatives and his close advisors, particularly with his powerful aunt Kim Kyong Hui and sisters Kim Yo Jung and Kim Sol Song. Also unknown is Ri's parents bearing on her position and influence. I have no information on these relationships but recognize that they may have significant impacts on the first lady's position in the leadership hierarchy and her status and influence within the Kim clan as well as in Kim Jong Un's household.

In bringing Ri forward, the regime may have been motivated by Kim Jong Un's desire to distinguish himself from his father and grandfather, to demonstrate that he is a more modern ruler, to ease the legitimization process for his future successor, and, possibly, to show a different normative construct for husband-wife relations in North Korea. But, after her brief initial introduction, the regime may have reverted back to the traditional way its propaganda machine has treated first ladies, engulfing them in a veil of secrecy. Alternatively, the regime may have decided to scale back Ri's public profile either to accommodate her pregnancy at the time^{34,35} or in an effort to adapt to the reported international and possibly internal criticisms of her appearance and activities, while still grappling with the challenge of defining her public image and acceptable roles.

33. Kim Il Sung, at Kim Jong Il's urging, moved his second wife Kim Song Ae off the political stage because of her efforts to diminish the role and image of Kim Jong Il's biological mother Kim Jong Suk, and thereby presumably undermine Kim Jong Il's succession and elevate her own children's prospects. Kim Jong Il reportedly separated from his first wife Kim Yong Suk and exiled his second unofficial wife Song Hye Rim to Moscow where she died from health problems in 2002.

34. "Ri Sol Ju in Black Funeral Attire" [*Gumeunsangbokipeu Ri SolJu*], *JoongAng Ilbo*, December 17, 2012, <http://joongang.joinsmsn.com/article/225/10191225.html?ctg=1000%20%20&cloc=joongang|home|newslst1>.

35. "Images suggest North Korea leader's wife pregnant," *Agence France-Presse*, December 17, 2012, <http://www.scmp.com/news/asia/article/1107108/images-suggest-north-korea-leaders-wife-pregnant>.

The Party Rules

North Korea under Kim Jong Un continues to be the socialist party-state with all key decision-making authorities (national, provincial, and local) concentrated in the WPK offices rebuilt at the third party representatives' conference in September 2010, and strengthened at the fourth party representatives conference held in April 2012.³⁶ To reinforce political control over the party establishment, Kim Jong Un used its machinery to pack the WPK supreme leadership bodies — the Politburo,³⁷ Secretariat,³⁸ Central Military Commission,³⁹ and Central Committee departments⁴⁰ — with his loyalists.

In the past year, Kim revived the old forgotten practice of using the party Politburo platform to legitimize changes in the supreme leadership and strategic choices impacting the nation's survival and core interests. He did it five times, which underlined the paramount importance of the decisions made there. Three Politburo meetings concerned the fate of number one and number two persons in the country: the December 30 Politburo's extraordinary meeting appointed

36. *Rodong Sinmun*, April 12, 2012.

37. On January 1, 2012, the WPK CC Politburo had 27 members (3 standing committee members, 10 full members, and 14 alternate members). On April 11, 2012, the fourth party representatives' conference expanded the Politburo ranks to 34 (5, 15, 14, respectively). As of December 19, 2012, its membership apparently dropped back to 30 (4, 11, 15, respectively), losing those holdovers who failed to secure Kim's trust or demonstrate their value like Ri Yong Ho, Kim Rak Hui, Ri Thae Nam, and Pyon Yong Rip.

38. The WPK Secretariat stayed stable at ten members: last April, Kim Jong Il's sister Kim Kyong Hui replaced Choe Ryong Hae as the party secretary probably responsible for organizational affairs, and Kwak Pom Gi replaced Hong Sok Hyong as the party secretary in charge of economic policy, i.e. North Korea's equivalent of the economic policy czar.

39. The WPK Central Military Commission shrank from 19 last December to 16 a year later, which is expected given the high turnover of senior military officials.

40. The WPK CC department directors and their first deputies almost all remained in office and some even gained in political influence, especially department director Ri Yong Su and first vice-directors Han Kwang Sang, Ri Ryong Ha, and Ch'oe Hwi.

Kim as the KPA Supreme Commander;⁴¹ the July 15 extraordinary meeting removed number two strongman Ri Yong Ho from power;⁴² and the November 4 enlarged meeting appointed regent Jang Song Thaek as Chairman of Physical Culture and Sports Commission.⁴³ The fourth Politburo meeting held on January 23, 2013, approved important state measures to counter the punitive UN Security Council resolution 2087 in the aftermath of the North's satellite launch, whereas the fifth Politburo meeting held on February 11, 2013, probably gave the final green light to the DPRK's third nuclear test conducted the following day.

Control over Mass Public Organizations Unchallenged

The party's control over mass public organizations and their membership, which serve as "transmission belts" designed to spread the party ideology and influence across the North Korean society and to mobilize various social groups to implement party policy and appeals, remains unchallenged, despite some predictions of possible social unrest and breakdown of social controls in the wake of Kim Jong Il's death in December 2011.⁴⁴ Only one of the four leaders of mass public organizations — First Secretary of the Central Committee of Korean Socialist Youth League (KSYL) Ri Yong Chol- was replaced with Chon Yong Nam in March 2012.⁴⁵ That move probably reflected the party's growing concern over the so-called youth problem, the threat of the

41. "Communiqué on the Meeting of the Workers Party of Korea Central Committee Political Bureau," December 31, 2012, Pyongyang Korean Central Broadcasting Station via Satellite in Korean 2100 GMT, Dec 30, 2011 .

42. "Ri Yong Ho Relieved of All His Posts in DPRK," Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), July 16, 2012.

43. Report on Enlarged Meeting of Political Bureau of WPK Central Committee, Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), November 4, 2012.

44. "Kim Jong Il's Death Kept Secret for 2 Days Over Fears of Civil Unrest," *Yomiuri Simbun*, December 26, 2012.

45. Kang Mi Jin, "KIS Youth League Gets New Head," *Daily NK*, March 23, 2012, <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?cataId=nk01700&num=9018>.

Western-led “ideological and cultural poisoning” of the young generation, its declining fervor in defense of the *Juche* ideas, and subsequent loosening of the party’s grip over the hearts and minds of the young successors to the Korean revolution.⁴⁶

The leadership of the other three organizations — General Federation of Trade Unions of Korea (GFTUK), Korean Democratic Women’s Union (KDWU), and Union of Agricultural Workers of Korea (UAWK) — was left unchanged for the time being. After successfully arranging a nationwide celebration of the maiden Mother’s Day in November 2012, the first new national holiday established by Kim Jong Un,⁴⁷ the KDWU leadership appears to have been able to overcome the bad memories held by the Kim family of its past disloyalty when the KDWU provided a platform for anti-Kim Jong Il’s activities conducted by his stepmother while Kim Il Sung was still alive.

No Major Change in Party Center-Periphery Relations

With the exception of Pyongyang city politics, the new regime managed party center-periphery relations without any major innovation over the past year and a half. Noteworthy is the replacement of two out of three Pyongyang city leaders, which probably reflects the efforts of Pyongyang city party boss Mun Kyong Dok, one of Jang Song Thaek’s long-time loyalists, to help Jang consolidate his power base in the nation’s capital.⁴⁸

The new regime did replace four out of ten provincial party chief secretaries and three out of ten provincial people’s committee chairmen in the past eighteen months (see Table 1). But that fits the past pattern of provincial party and government personnel management practiced

46. “Capitalist Ideology and Culture and Youth Problem,” *Rodong Sinmun*, October 18, 2012.

47. “DPRK Marks First Mother Day,” Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), November 11, 2012.

48. Chairman of Pyongyang City Rural Economic Management Committee Ri Man Söng replaced Chang Kwang Hyök in April and Chairman of Pyongyang City People’s Committee Cha Hui Rim replaced Ryang Man Gil in September.

Table 1. Leadership Changes at the Provincial Level from 2012–June 2013

Date	Position	New Appointee	Predecessor
2013/03	Kangwŏn Provincial Party Committee Chief Secretary	Pak Jŏng Nam	Paek Kye Ryong
2012/09	Pyongyang City People's Committee Chairman	Cha Hui Rim	Ryang Man Gil
2012/07	North Hwanghae Provincial People's Committee Chairman	Kang Yŏng Su	Ri Wŏn Il
2012/07	South Hwanghae Provincial Party Committee Chief Secretary	Pak Yŏng Ho	Ro Bae Gwŏn
2012/04	South Hamgyŏng Provincial Party Committee Chief Secretary	Thae Jŏng Su	Kwak Pŏm Gi
2012/03	South Hwanghae Provincial People's Committee Chairman	Choe Jŏng Ryŏng	O Ung Chang
2012/02	Chagang Provincial Party Committee Chief Secretary	Ryu Yŏng Sŏp	Chu Yŏng Sik

by the WPK CC Organization and Guidance Department (OGD). What is striking, though, is that five out of six of their predecessors were appointed by Kim Jong Il in 2010, which probably reflects Kim Jong Un's dissatisfaction with his father's choices.

Overhauling the Legacy Government

Annus Horribilis for the North Korean Military

After Kim Jong Il suffered from a stroke in August 2008, many pundits asserted that the growing influence of the Korean People's Army (KPA) under Kim's military-first policy would inevitably lead to a military-centered collective leadership in the wake of Kim's death.⁴⁹ These

49. Choi Choel Hee, "The Relationship between the Party and the Army under

pundits proved to be wrong. In the past year and a half, the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) under Kim Jong Un's guidance strengthened its domination over North Korean politics, bringing the military's senior leadership under unquestionable party control, repeatedly purging and publicly subduing it, and dramatically curtailing the military's policy-making influence. There is no question that the Kim Jong Il-inspired military-first era is coming to an end. It took Kim Jong Un less than several months to begin to adjust his father's military-first policy — all in the name of Kim Jong Il's patriotism. Eventually, he replaced it with his own "strategic policy line on carrying out economic construction and building nuclear armed forces simultaneously" or the "*pyongjin* line" — at the March 2013 Plenum of the WPK Central Committee held in Pyongyang, on March 31, 2013.⁵⁰

The unprecedented appointment of the civilian party functionary Choe Ryong Hae, backed by Jang Song Thaek and Kim Kyong Hui, as director of the KPA's General Political Department (GPD) in April 2012, unleashed a far-reaching rebalancing in party-military relations and created much stress in the GPD-General Staff relations. It rolled back the major advances of the military-first revolution, which was exemplified by the dominant positions of the professional military leadership during Kim Jong Il's rule.⁵¹ Under Choe Ryong Hae, not only did the WPK Central Committee (CC) fully restore its influence over the military party organizations, but the KPA General Political Department also re-asserted its control over the General Staff, Ministry of People's Armed Forces, and Defense Security Command, enabling its political representatives to prevail over security officers, military

the Military-First Policy," *Daily NK*, October 21, 2008, <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?cataId=nk00400&num=4199>.

50. Report on WPK Central Committee Plenary Meeting, *Rodong Sinmun*, April 1, 2013, http://www.rodong.rep.kp/InterEn/index.php?strPageID=SF01_02_01&newsID=2013-04-01-0005.

51. "Pukhan Kunsu Ch'eje, P'yo'ngga-wa Cho'nmang" ("Evaluation of and Prospects for North Korea's Military System"), Chapter 4: "North Korean Military's Political Status and Role." Seoul: Korea Institute for Defense Analyses (KIDA) (in Korean), July 25, 2006, pp 81-97.

staff, and field officers.

In the past year and a half, we observed several waves of senior military reshuffles and wide-ranging reorganizations within the KPA commands and corps-level units. Kim Jong Un now has the fourth defense minister (Kim Yong Chun, Kim Jong Gak, Kim Kyok Sik, and Chang Chong Nam), third chief of KPA General Staff (Ri Yong Ho, Hyon Yong Chol, and Kim Kyok Sik), and third director of General Staff Operations Bureau (Kim Myong Guk, Ch'oe Pu Il, and Ri Yong Kil) serving under his command. Such a high rate of rotation at the top echelon of the North Korean military is unprecedented and creates tremendous uncertainty within the ranks of the political-military leadership. Against the backdrop of deteriorating food supplies and cutbacks in weapons procurement, these personnel changes planted seeds of distrust in party-military relations, brewing discontent and perhaps even silent resistance, shaking the military's morale, and undermining traditional military values and military discipline within the ranks.⁵²

National Security Apparatus Reshuffled

In the past year and a half, Kim Jong Un overhauled various components of the legacy national security establishment he had inherited from Kim Jong Il, and installed his own key security aides. His moves served to strengthen his personal authority and the party's leadership over the key players and main security institutions.⁵³ The surprise

52. Kwon Yang Chu, "Weekly Defense Forum" [chugankukpangnondan]: "The Kim Jong Un Regime's Ruling System Over the Military and Prospects for the Military's Role" (in Korean) (Seoul: Center for Military Planning of Korea Institute for Defense Analyses, 2012).

53. To shore up support within the security establishment, Kim Jong Un visited the Ministry of People's Armed Forces and Kim Il Sung Military University on August 29 and October 29 respectively, and the State Security Department (SSD) headquarters on October 6 and November 20. He also arranged for the national meetings of chiefs of local people's security stations under the Ministry of People's Security (MPS) in late November 23, active judges and prosecutors (November 25), judicial functionaries (December 5).

replacement of former State Security Department acting director U Tong Chuk in March 2012 revived the questions about the loyalty and political reliability of the SSD leadership, which was still roiled by the early 2011 purge of its deputy director Ryu Kyong, who was accused of spying for South Korea.⁵⁴ But, new SSD director General Kim Won Hong quickly dispelled any doubts about the SSD loyalty and effectiveness, and secured an edge over the legacy people's security minister Ri Myong Su,⁵⁵ who was replaced in February 2013 with Jang Song Thaek's protégé Col.-General Choe Pu Il, who was promoted to the four-star general rank on June 11, 2013. Defense Security Commander Cho Kyong Chol and Guard Commander General Yun Jong Rin have been able to keep their jobs so far, although, in the wake of Kim Jong Il's death, both commands were reportedly reorganized to accommodate the requirements and wishes of the country's new leader.

Kim Jong Un also gave preferential treatment to senior party and state officials responsible for the country's missile and nuclear weapons programs. In February 2012, Chu Kyu Chang, director of WPK CC Machine Industry Department, and Paek Se Pong, chairman of the Second Economy Committee (SEC), were promoted from lieutenant generals to colonel generals. Pak To Chun, party secretary responsible for the munitions industry, was given the title of KPA General also in February and promoted from alternate to full member of the WPK CC Politburo in April 2012. The successful launch of *Unha-3* on December 12, 2012, and the third nuclear test on February 12, 2013, further enhanced their influence and status. In these events, at least on the weapons development issues, Kim Jong Un appears to increasingly heed Hong Sŭng Mu, in charge of the North's nuclear weapons pro-

54. *Buk Ryu Kyong Bowuibu Bubujang, '99bal chongsalhyunguiro jaeguh* [Execution of SSD Deputy Director Ryu Kyong by 99 gun shots], June 20, 2011, <http://blog.daum.net/9hyewan/13426380>.

55. Both are four-star generals and members of the WPK CC Politburo, Central Military Commission (CMC), and National Defense Commission (NDC), but, Kim Won Hong's power ranking (No. 18) and official listing are one notch above and ahead of Ri Myong Su's (No. 19).

gram, and Choe Chun Sik, the head of the North's Second Academy of Natural Sciences, which is in charge of developing both conventional weapons and strategic arms.⁵⁶

Socio-Economic Policy Team Revamped

Since his inauguration, Kim Jong Un has revamped the national economic team, reaffirming the central role of the Cabinet in policymaking. He has given more power to key officials known for their "reformist" views and their commitment to raising the people's living standards through "pro-market" policies. In his conversation with responsible party officials at the WPK CC on April 6, 2012, Kim reaffirmed the principle of the "Cabinet's primary responsibility" for the nation's economy and of the "Cabinet's centrality" in managing national economic affairs.⁵⁷ For all practical purposes, in contrast to his father, the new leader has so far refrained from hands-on guidance, empowering his first premier Choe Yong Rim and his successor Pak Pong Ju to lead the nation's economic development. The return of former premier and the then director of the WPK's Central Committee light industry department Pak Pong Ju, who was regarded as "reformist" and "pro-market" during his previous tenure (2003-07), as DPRK's new premier replacing Choe Yong Rim, is in line with Jang Song Thaek's rising influence reflecting Pak's longtime work under Jang's wife, and confirms Pyongyang's intent to solidify the government's focus on the people's well-being and consumer economy.

Furthermore, the Fourth WPK Conference promoted two economic officials: party secretary Kwak Pom Gi, and vice-premier and chairman of the State Planning Commission Ro Du Chol, to the rank of alternate members of the WPK CC Politburo, thereby strengthening the Politburo's economic team vis-à-vis its military, security, and ideology wings.

56. "Mystery man seen next to N. Korean leader likely to be arms development official," *Yonhap*, December 18, 2012, http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/north_korea/2012/12/18/62/0401000000AEN20121218007400315F.HTML.

57. *Rodong Sinmun*, April 18, 2012, p. 1.

Since January 2012, the regime has replaced almost two thirds of vice-premiers and Cabinet ministers, appointing five new vice-premiers, twenty-five ministers and commission chairmen (see Table 2 for details), scores of vice-ministers, and dozens of new ministerial department and bureau directors. The replacement of a third of provincial rural economy leaders, while not unusual, must reflect the regime's persistent concern about food security and rural development problems. These new officials will spearhead the long-expected agricultural reforms in the North's rural areas.

Table 2. New Vice-Premiers, Cabinet Ministers, and Provincial Rural Economy Leaders Appointed by Kim Jong Un from 2012–June 2013.

Date	Position	Name
2013/05/06	Minister of State Construction Control	Kwŏn Sŏng-ho
2013/04/01	Minister of Chemical Industry	Ri Mu-yŏng
2013/04/01	Minister of Higher Education and President of Kim Il Sung University	T'ae-Hyŏng-ch'ŏl
2013/04/01	Minister of State Resource Development	Ri Ch'un-sam
2013/04/01	Minister of Fisheries	Ri Hyŏk
2013/04/01	Minister of Public Health	Kang Ha-kuk
2013/04/01	Minister of Land and Environment Preservation	Kim Kyŏng-jun
2013/04/01	Minister of Crude Oil Industry	Pae Hak
2013/04/01	Minister of Agriculture	Ri Ch'ŏl-man
2013/04/01	Minister of City Management	Kang Yŏng-su
2012/12/24	Minister of Coal Industry	Rim Nam-su
2012/12	Chairman of Kangwon Provincial Rural Economic Management Committee	Pak Tu Phil
2012/10/31	Minister of Metal Industry	Han Hyo Yŏn
2012/10/16	Minister of Physical Culture and Sports	Ri Chong Mu
2012/10/15	Minister of Electronics Industry	Kim Chae Sŏng
2012/10/04	Minister of Agriculture	Hwang Min

Date	Position	Name
2012/10	Chairman of South Hamgyong Provincial Rural Economic Management Committee	Kim Song Bong
2012/08/27	Chairman of State Science and Education Commission	Choe Sang Gŏn
2012/08	Vice-Premier	Chŏn Sŏng Hun
2012/05/22	Minister of Metal Industry	Chŏn Sŏng Hun
2012/05/21	Minister of Electric Power	Kim Man Su
2012/05/04	Minister of Land and Marine Transport	Kang Chong Gwan
2012/04	Chairman of North P'yongan Provincial Rural Economic Management Committee	Kye Myŏng Chŏl
2012/04/13	Minister of Commerce	Ri Sŏng Ho
2012/04	Vice-Premier	Ri Sŏng Ho
2012/04	Vice-Premier	Ri Chŏl Man
2012/04	Vice-Premier	Kim In Sik
2012/03	Minister of Machine-Building Industry	Ri Chong Guk
2012/02/09	Minister of Posts and Telecommunications	Sim Chŏl Ho
2012/02	Minister of Finance	Choe Kwang Jin
2012/02/01	Chairman of Joint Venture and Investment Committee	Ri Kwang Gŏn
2012/01	Chairman of Education Commission	Kim Sŏng-tu
2012/01	Vice-Premier	Kim Yŏng-jin

Foreign Policy Line Adjusted

When Kim Jong Un assumed power in December 2011, the world saw him as a young new leader who, given his education in Europe, might be reform-minded. A year and a half later, he comes across more like a reckless bully. Under Kim's rule, North Korea has emerged as a revolutionary power that seeks to alter the regional balance of power in its favor, expand its resource base, and gain international recognition by building up strategic arms capabilities and using the

military alliance with its long-time benefactor China to frustrate and turn to its advantage the hostile policies⁵⁸ pursued by its enemy states. During his first year and a half in power, Kim Jong Un made some adjustments in the strategic foreign policy line he inherited from his father.

Since the beginning of 2013, the security situation on the Korean Peninsula has taken a dramatic turn for the worse, following North Korea's satellite launch in December 2012, its third nuclear test in February 2013, and the passage of the UN Security Council Resolutions 2087 and 2094, which condemned both tests and imposed new international sanctions on the North Korean regime. Pyongyang's nuclear breakout has emboldened its young and untested leader to set aside decades-old security commitments made by his predecessors and to issue repeated clear and present threats of preemptive nuclear strikes against the North's enemies — the U.S., South Korea, and Japan.

Kim Jong Un did his best to keep Beijing and Moscow on his side in international disputes without significant costs to Pyongyang's core national interests. But, he showed no desire to back off from the WPK's unification strategy and tough stance against Seoul. He capitalized on Washington's disengagement and took full advantage of President Obama's policy of strategic neglect to further advance his long-range missile and nuclear arms development programs. He repeatedly probed Tokyo's intentions through inter-governmental and behind-the-scenes contacts without relenting vociferous anti-Japanese propaganda. He continued to support his allies in the decades-long revolutionary fight against the world imperialism — Iran and Syria, while making some minor modifications in North Korea's Middle

58. In the North Korean perception, these "hostile" policies range from political isolation, diplomatic pressure, military containment, and proliferation security initiative to economic sanctions and trade embargoes. For a detailed official discussion of the US "hostile policy," see DPRK Terms U.S. Hostile Policy Main Obstacle in Resolving Nuclear Issue, Memorandum of DPRK Ministry of Foreign affairs, Pyongyang: Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), August 31, 2012.

Eastern policy to account for dramatic changes in the ruling regimes brought about by the Arab Spring in such former friendly countries as Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria.

Looking back at his first year and a half in power, I believe Kim Jong Un's leadership style is characterized by bold aggressive actions, bordering on brinkmanship, with two principal traits distinguishing him from Kim Jong Il. First, the son is very competitive, maximalist in his aspirations, and driven by machismo, in contrast to his father's time-induced cautiousness, minimalist desires, and pragmatism. Moderation and patience may be just a function of age and experience; time will tell. Second, Kim Jong Un is tenacious and even obdurate, and, therefore, he is rather unpredictable in terms of what he can do, how far and how hard he can push to achieve his goals, unlike his father who was prudent and far-sighted, and, therefore, fairly predictable in his maneuvering, despite his occasionally impulsive behavior.

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Beijing's Dilemma and Preference on the Korean Peninsula: Responses to the 2010 Korean Crises

Taewan Kim

The ROK is a major contributing partner to China's economic prosperity. The ROK is China's third largest trading partner and the fourth largest investor. The total amount of trade with China, including Hong Kong, is bigger than the sum of the next nine trading partners' all combined, including the United States and Japan, the second and third largest partners, respectively. However, despite the deep economic ties between the two countries, Seoul was frustrated with Beijing's support for Pyongyang during the 2010 Korean crises. China faces a dilemma in the 2010 Korean crises in its efforts to maintain equidistant between Seoul and Pyongyang. However, Beijing is likely to lean toward Pyongyang because doing so will contribute to China's inherent national goals: continue the CCP's political rule, preserve national integrity, and strengthen its global power status. In addition, due to the 1961 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Pyongyang, Beijing's support for Pyongyang is likely to persist. However, there is a limit; Pyongyang should not step beyond Beijing's level of tolerance. The degree of tolerance is the dilemma that Beijing faces, and at the moment, it prefers to maintain equidistant between Seoul and Pyongyang. However, if Pyongyang adopts a Chinese style of reform, the dilemma could disappear. Beijing should persuade Pyongyang to follow China's reform and open policy. Whether this will succeed or not depends on the self-confidence of Pyongyang's inner circle in both the domestic and international environments.

Key Words: The 2010 Korean crises, politico-economic linkage model, China's dilemma, China's preference, China's national goals

Introduction

The Korean Peninsula has faced many crises in the international community since its liberation from the Japanese colonial rule. The

liberation from the distressful colonial rule was an undeniable bliss for Korea; however, for the people, it was also the beginning of unbearable pain that bore little comparison to the thirty five years of colonial rule. Since the liberation, Korea was divided into two states, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and suffered under the innate confrontation that resulted from the global Cold War structure. The legacy of the Cold War still remains on the Korean Peninsula.

Along with the U.S., China has been, and will continue to play a crucial role on the Korean Peninsula. From Seoul's perspective, Beijing's behaviors appear equivocal compared to Washington's stance. This is especially because China seems to be maintaining an equidistant policy toward the two Koreas; economically leaning toward Seoul, and politically toward Pyongyang. During the 2010 Korean crises, Seoul recognized that its close economic friend was actually politically distant.

Initially, the Cold War structure emerged from the then two superpowers, the U.S. and the former Soviet Union. The two urged the separation of Korea and in 1948 established their separated governments in Seoul and Pyongyang. China saved Pyongyang from their desperate situation during the Korean War (1950-53). After the disintegration of the former Soviet Union in 1991, China, along with the U.S., exercised a more decisive influence over the Korean Peninsula. Moreover, unlike Moscow, Beijing's role and influence over Seoul and Pyongyang has been much more instrumental since it has diplomatic relations with both countries. Beijing is crucial for Pyongyang's national and regime security while at the same time, is Seoul's biggest trading partner.

The cooperation between Beijing and Seoul in the economic realm is undeniable. Since the normalization of relations in 1992, economic and business exchanges between the two have dramatically increased. At present, China is the ROK's largest trading partner. For China, Seoul is its third largest trading partner and fourth largest investor.

Nevertheless, by supporting Pyongyang, Beijing's responses to the 2010 Korean crises had strained Seoul-Beijing relations. The question

remains, why had Beijing supported Pyongyang, ignoring the hopes of the international community and its friendly neighbor, the ROK?

Beijing wants to grow into a global power, but this requires support from the international community, its neighboring countries, and the U.S. The international community generally agreed on imposing sanctions on Pyongyang's brutal behavior; China, however, seemed unmindful of the consensus. China agreed with the UN Security Council's statement to tighten sanctions on Pyongyang after the regime's rocket launch on April 12, 2012.¹ However, the leadership in Beijing did not strictly condemn Pyongyang with direct words but rather requested all concerned parties to exercise prudence in order to maintain stability in the region and the Korean Peninsula.

In this paper, I neither handle the chronicle of the 2010 Korean crises and specific theories nor the relations of the concerned states and the third image² of international relations. Instead, I intend to examine the interrelations between domestic politics and China's responses to the 2010 Korean crises; specifically, the reasons behind Beijing's decision to politically support Pyongyang, receiving all the political criticisms from Seoul, Washington, and even from the rest of the international community during the 2010 Korean crises.³ By achieving this research goal, one can understand the reason behind Beijing's

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1. Most states in the international community regard the launch as a long-range missile test and violation of UN Security Council resolution 1874, which was adopted on June 12, 2009. Just three days after the rocket launch, the UN Security Council including China concluded a Presidential statement on April 16, 2012. See the statement on the website, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N12/295/91/PDF/N1229591.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed April 25, 2012). However, it is also true that Beijing changed its policy toward Pyongyang after the most recent rocket launch in December, 2012 and the third nuclear test in February, 2013 although the change is not substantial but superficial; Beijing and Pyongyang still share major strategic interests against the U.S. and its allies in Northeast Asia.
 2. Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1959).
 3. China's opposite position from the international community on the DPRK's provocation might infringe her national dignity pursuing a global leader.

favorable behaviors toward Pyongyang, as well as its limitations.

This paper will first provide a general theoretical explanation that is useful in understanding China's response to the 2010 Korean crises. Then it will go over the Beijing leadership's innate priority in domestic and external policies and its response to the Crises. Finally, Beijing's possible responses and preferences regarding Pyongyang's future behavior will be discussed.

Politico-economic Linkage Model

The bottom line of the politico-economic linkage model is that each factor never functions independently. Therefore, emphasizing one factor and ignoring the others leads to a misunderstanding of the targets of analysis. Rather, all factors interact with one another despite their independent importance. The interlinked relationship between politics and economy fluctuates according to the urgency of the situation. In times of urgency, political logic takes precedence over the economic one in the decision-making process.

In his edited book, *Linkage Politics: Essays on the Convergence of National and International Systems*, James Rosenau⁴ affirms the necessity of a linkage approach to analyze a country's foreign policy. Robert Putnam⁵ also argues that the foreign policy-making process can be understood as a 'two-level game.' In other words, policy-makers play at the politics of both the domestic and the international arena. Sociologist James Coleman⁶ argues that individuals behave in accordance with their own interests and also with the society in which they live and have been socialized. That is, each factor at the micro level (individual level) transfers to the social or collective behavior at the macro level

4. James Rosenau, *Linkage Politics: Essays on the Convergence of National and International Systems* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1969).

5. Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization*, Vol 42, No. 3 (summer, 1988): 427-460.

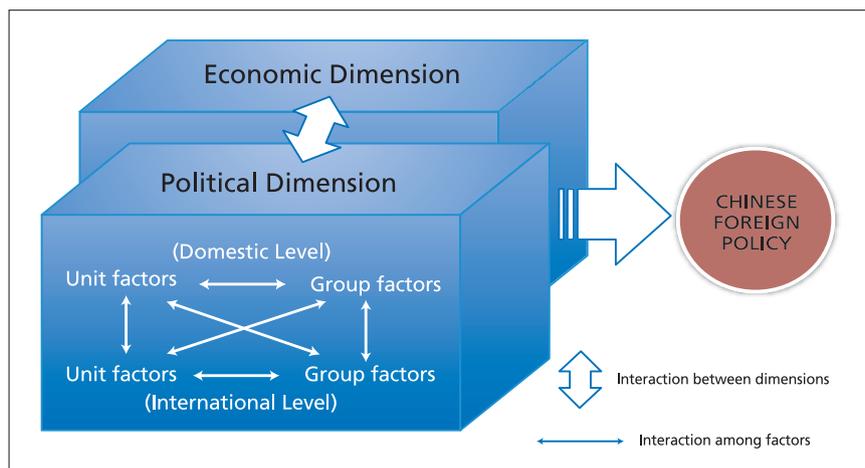
6. James Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990).

(domestic and international system level), and the factors at the micro and the macro levels interact with each other. More recently, Quansheng Zhao⁷ has analyzed Chinese foreign policy with a modified 'micro-macro linkage approach.' He analyzes Chinese foreign policy by assessing the interaction of diverse factors at the micro and macro levels.

Although these authors are primarily concerned with foreign policy issues, I believe that one is able to gain important implications from their analytical frameworks. In other words, the Chinese response to the 2010 Korean crises can be better explained with a politico-economic linkage model. Modifying the aforementioned scholars' linkage ideas, I devised a 'politico-economic linkage model' to explain and understand China's responses to the Crises.

The following figure summarizes the 'politico-economic linkage model.' I analyzed China's responses to the 2010 Korean crises in two different dimensions: political and economic. In addition, the factors affecting China's responses are divided into two levels: domestic and

Figure 1. Politico-economic Linkage Model



7. Quansheng Zhao, *Interpreting Chinese Foreign Policy: The Micro-Macro Linkage Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

international.

The domestic level has two kinds of factors: unit factors and group factors. The 'unit' refers to individual decision-makers who are the subjects of behavior in the groups. Decision-makers do not behave independently. They interact with one another within the groups, such as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), governmental branches, and the informal *guanxi*⁸ system. Groups and individual decision-makers are also interdependent on one another.

The international level implies sovereign states as unit factors, and international organizations and structures as group factors. A sovereign state is the main unit of behavior in the international community. They behave independently and sometimes form groups, such as international organizations, through which they play in the international arena. These unit and group factors independently interact with counterparts of the domestic level in addition to interacting with each other. At the same time, as an international system they also influence domestic factors. This interacting mechanism should be taken into account with consideration to two different dimensions: the political and economic dimensions.

In a general situation, the political dimension is dependent on the economic dimension and the economic dimension has greater influence on the political dimension.

However, in moments of national urgency, the relations between the two dimensions are reversed. Most notably, the will and choices of decision-makers come to be crucial. Figures 2 and 3 contrast the interactive relationship between the political and economic dimensions in different situations.

Then, why does the priority between the economic and political affairs differ in situations of national urgency? This is because of their characteristic variance. Matters relating to the economy follow interests and efficiency, while politics tends to act as a force that manages them. If one accepts David Easton's definition of politics, which is the authoritative allocation of value, the economy pursues these values while

8. In Chinese, *guanxi* literally means relationship.

Figure 2. Relationship between political and economic dimensions under long-term normal situation

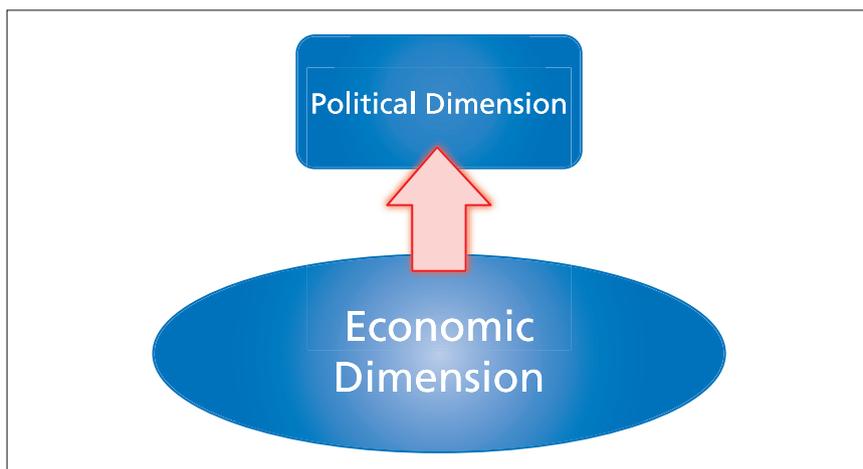
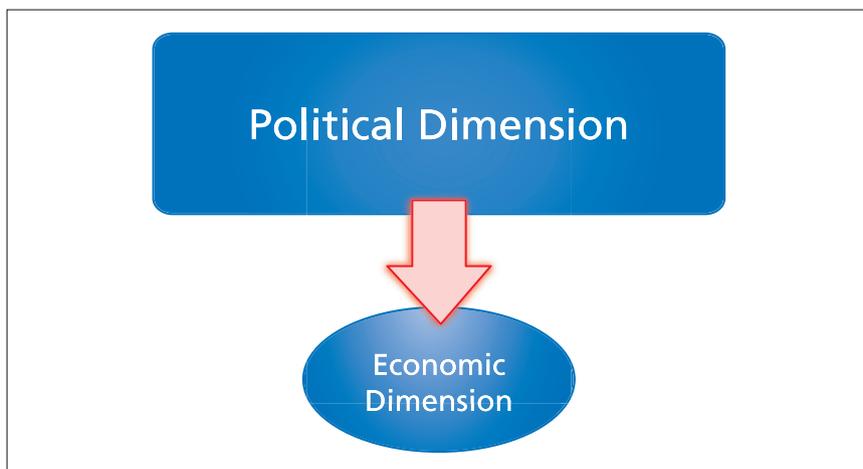


Figure 3. Relationship between political and economic dimensions under short-term critical situation



politics is concerned with how these values should be distributed in society. In most cases, the economy contributes to the expected allocation through the market, but it takes time; that is why in times of

urgency, politics is given more importance than the economy.

Meanwhile, China is a planned economy. In other words, the CCP leadership designs its specific strategies for economic development. At the same time, it has adopted traits of the capitalist market economy. Moreover, it wishes to modify it into a Chinese style. The result is a model that is relatively heavily intervened and managed by the state compared to other market oriented countries. This means that in China, a political logic likely goes prior to the economic one.

The 2010 Korean crises urged Beijing to choose its position between the two Koreas in a short period of time. It seemed that Beijing was at a loss by facing the pressure of Seoul and the international community. In fact, on December 15, 2010, Zhu Feng, a Korean Peninsula specialist at Peking University, defended Beijing's Pyongyang-tilted behavior in the Korean crises and the *Senkaku/Diayudao* incident at the Korea National Diplomatic Academy.⁹ He claimed that the Chinese authorities were not yet well prepared for the rapidly changing situations in both the domestic and international arenas. Professor Zhu's comments imply that the Crises did not give Beijing enough time to decide its position. John Hamre, president of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), mentioned at a media interview that during the 2010 Korean crises, Pyongyang had urged China to choose sides between the two Koreas, a situation China was dreading.¹⁰

In any case, China finally chose to stand by Pyongyang despite international criticism, infringing China's national dignity as a responsible stakeholder of the international community.

9. Professor Zhu's keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the Center for Chinese Studies, Korea National Diplomacy Academy (former Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security).

10. See, <http://sunday.joins.com/article/view.asp?aid=30277> (accessed May 26, 2013).

China's Innate National Goals

In order to understand the reason behind China's specific behaviors including its responses to the 2010 Korean crises, one should pay attention to China's national goals. China has innate national goals behind its internal and external policies. They result from the authoritarian attributes of Chinese domestic politics. The Bo Xilai scandal¹¹ shows that the Beijing leadership severely limits diverse opinions, as well as different behavioral styles in domestic politics.

The inalienable goals of the CCP's inner circle can be analyzed on three levels.¹² First, at the individual level, the Chinese leadership's proximate goal is to continue the CCP's hold on power. This goal is superior to the others.

At the state level, the proximate goal is to preserve national integrity. The concerns in Beijing result in a democratic lethargy in China's domestic politics. The CCP leadership believes that the Western pluralistic democracy model does not fit with China's reality and could even erode its national integrity.

Finally, at the international level, the innate goal is to be a global power. To achieve these three national goals, Beijing's policy preference is focused on economic development. China's successful and continuously rapid economic growth has provided the CCP with the legitimacy of continuing its domestic rule for national integrity and the desire to be a global power. Therefore, rapid economic growth is an undeniable priority for the Beijing leadership; through economic success they can show its people the capability of the CCP regime.

However, it is not possible for countries such as China to continuously sustain high economic growth rates. China needs to prepare

11. For the Bo Xilai scandal, see the website, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-17673505> (accessed August 21, 2012).

12. Regarding three major Chinese national goals, see the following article and Table-3. Taewan Kim, "China between the Two Koreas: Dilemma of the Korean Peninsula Policy," *Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 16, No.2, 2011, pp. 37-73.

for an era of impending low growth. According to Ruchir Sharma,¹³ for instance, although an approximate six percent of national economic growth is enviable to most countries, for China, it might cause serious instability in domestic politics. Maintaining the CCP's political rule and national integrity requires a high economic growth rate. Therefore, domestic factors such as preparing for an era of low economic growth and maintaining stable politics have emerged as major challenges. These appear to be the primary concerns in the foreign policy decision-making of the newly launched Xi Jinping regime.

China's Responses to the 2010 Korean Crises

China's responses to the sinking of the ROK Navy corvette *Cheonan* (PCC-772) and the bombing of Yeonpyeong Island are different in terms of its promptness and clear position. Beijing reluctantly presented its position on the *Cheonan* (PCC-772) sinking incident in public at the correspondent briefing room on April 20, 2010, twenty five days after the incident. Compared to the prompt condolences of the other neighboring countries and the international community, Beijing's late response was enough to irk Seoul.

However, eight months later, when the DPRK fired at *Yeonpyeong* Island, Beijing's response was different. Unlike the *Cheonan* (PCC-772) incident,¹⁴ China responded quickly; the day after the incident, the Chinese Foreign Ministry expressed its concern and suggested immediate talks between the two Koreas. Chinese State Councilor, Dai Bingguo visited Seoul on November 27 to discuss the incident

13. Ruchir Sharma, *Breakout Nations: In Pursuit of the Next Economic Miracles* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2012).

14. Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu mentioned on April 20 that the ROK Navy corvette *Cheonan* (PCC-772) sinking was a tragedy only twenty five days after the incident. China's condolence was late enough for Koreans to be disappointed compared to deep condolences from many other countries issued just after the incident.

only four days after the deadly artillery shelling incident, and flew to Pyongyang on December 8.

Although Beijing's swift response to the latter incident appeared to be a more responsible reaction, its contents deteriorated Seoul's views on China. Dai Bingguo suggested the resumption of the Six-Party Talks to resolve the Crises, which was already argued by Pyongyang. The bottom line for Seoul was that unless the talks discussed the issue of Pyongyang's responsibility for its actions, the resumption of the talks would be unacceptable.

Wu Dawei, Chinese Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Affairs, continuously requested for the Six-Party Talks to deal with the 2010 Korean crises. The Beijing leadership clearly intended to separate the Crises from Pyongyang's nuclear issue. However the Six-Party Talks were organized to essentially resolve the DPRK nuclear problem, not to handle the Crises. Therefore, China's request for the Six-Party Talks without holding Pyongyang's responsible was ignored by Seoul and Washington, because in their eyes, the request seemed to be exceptionally favorable to Pyongyang. Such turn of events would more likely entice Pyongyang to carry out further provocations. China is likely to have received criticism for spoiling the DPRK.¹⁵

In sum, the worst scenario that could happen from Beijing's perspective is the collapse of the newly launched Kim Jong-un regime¹⁶ due to Beijing's unfavorable decisions. The contingency from such a collapse may stimulate instability in China's northeast region. It is no wonder China seemed to be at a loss for words after the sinking of the ROK Navy corvette *Cheonan* (PCC-772).

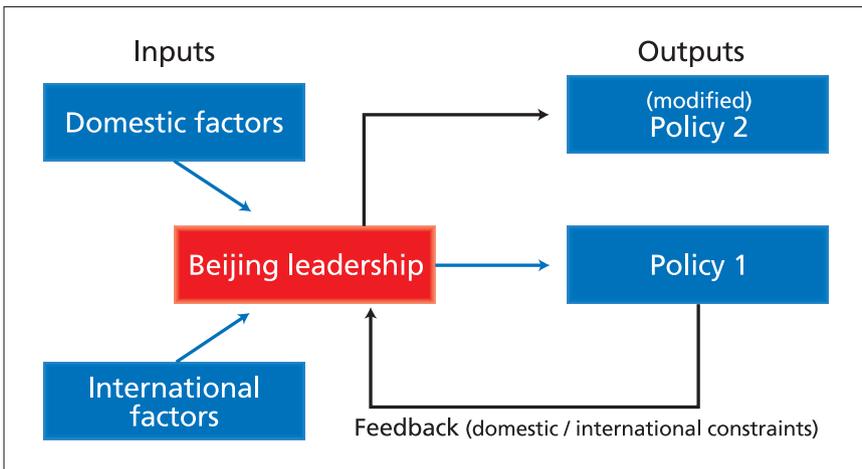
15. The rocket launch in December 2012 and the third nuclear test in February 2013 are the results of the tainted Pyongyang under the shelter of China.

16. *Yonhap*, December 15, 2010, <http://www.yonhapnews.co.kr/politics/2010/12/15/0503000000AKR20101215056351043.HTML> (accessed July 4, 2012).

China's Preferences of the 2010 Korean Crises

As illustrated in Figure 1, Chinese external policies result from the interactions among diverse factors in both domestic and international levels under the political and economic dimensions. These interactions occurred inside the 'Beijing leadership' in the following Figure 4.

Figure 4. The structure of policy-making toward the Korean Peninsula¹⁷



China still preserves an authoritarian political system. The will of the CCP leadership is decisive in most foreign policies. The 2010 Korean crises puzzled Beijing in what to do because China had always pursued and wished for regional stability for its economic development. The Crises forced Beijing to decide in a limited time frame, whether it should support Pyongyang or join Seoul and the international community in condemning Pyongyang's inhumane provocations.¹⁸

17. Based on the Figure 1 from Taewan Kim, "An International Perspective on China's Northeast Project," *Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 13, No. 2, p. 10.

18. We do not know how much Pyongyang communicated with Beijing beforehand on the *Cheonan* (PCC-772) sinking and *Yeonpyeong* Island artillery bombardment. However, at least, it is hard to say that the both incidents were what Beijing wanted.

This was clearly an urgent situation for Beijing; therefore, the short-term critical situation displayed in Figure 3 accurately explains the situation facing Beijing. In other words, the Chinese leadership considered the political dimension more than the economic one. That is why Beijing supported Pyongyang despite its deep economic interdependence with Seoul. In addition, it is unlikely that China will change its position in the short term until Pyongyang's domestic stability becomes secured.

Then what factors did China consider? The aforementioned three national goals functioned as the 'inputs' shown in Figure 4. The Beijing leadership must have contemplated how to react to the Crises for twenty-five days until it officially commented on the *Cheonan* (PCC-772) sinking incident on April 20, 2010.

First of all, the Chinese leadership's top priority in policy preferences is to continue its economic development because doing so will guarantee the three major goals of the CCP: continue CCP reign, maintain national integrity, and become a global power. Sustainable economic development provides the Beijing leadership with the authority to govern mainland China, which is one of the above-mentioned national goals. During the Mao Zedong period (1949-1976), the communist ideology provided the legitimacy to rule over China. However, since Deng Xiaoping adopted the Open and Reform Policy, pragmatic economic development has gradually replaced the ideology's position as the state's top priority.¹⁹

To achieve economic development, the Beijing leadership adopted the capitalist market system. Although Beijing refers to it as the 'Chinese-style market economy,' it can be regarded merely as a political rhetoric. Entrepreneurs, who were once the CCP's targets to overthrow, have become welcome members of the CCP. In 2007, a new property law came into effect,²⁰ allowing the possession of private property.

19. Quansheng Zhao, *Interpreting Chinese Foreign Policy*, Chapter 3.

20. Angela Wang, "Property Rights in China under the New Property Law," <http://www.worldlawdirect.com/article/3149/property-rights-china-new-property-law-2007.html> (accessed May 4, 2013).

Even the CCP is no longer based on the orthodox communist ideology. In a nutshell, sustained economic development is an apparent top priority of the Beijing regime.

In addition, China's sound economic growth also contributes to the national integrity by fueling *Zhonghua* nationalism.²¹ China consists of fifty-six different ethnic groups. Although the *Han* majority (*Hanzu* in Chinese) occupied more than ninety percent of the total population in 2005, the minorities were distributed in more than sixty percent of China's territory within five autonomous districts. Among the regions, Tibet and Xinjiang are the areas which display the most active anti-Beijing sentiments and movements, and even attempt to establish their own independent government separate from the Beijing regime. To assimilate the minority into the *Han* majority, the Beijing leadership utilizes the *Zhonghua* national ideology. Such nationalism would gradually come to replace the outdated communist ideology.²²

Besides the chronic ethnic minority issue, China also has serious obstacles in maintaining its domestic integrity. Inefficient state-owned companies, growing economic inequality, and corruption provide the Beijing regime with urgent puzzles to resolve in order to consolidate the unity of the country despite rapid economic development. All of these problems, coined with inadequate social safety and institutions, incubate potential instability in China's domestic politics and undermine national integrity; all are reasons why Beijing cannot give up its high economic growth. In fact, it is also true that the reform of the Chinese economic constitution is one of major problems that the new Xi leadership must resolve.

21. *Zhonghua* nationalism was initially Han Chinese centered nationalism, which began during the late nineteenth century on the brink of the Qing dynasty's ruin. The so-called neo-*Zhonghua* nationalism contains all of fifty six peoples within Chinese territory. Current Beijing's political efforts to build a new nation, *Zhonghuaminzu*, are causing political and academic conflicts with China's peripheral countries, Korea, Vietnam, Mongolia, and so on.

22. Taewan Kim, "China's Identity Transformation," *Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2010, pp. 163-191.

In conclusion, considering these domestic factors, Beijing's CCP leaders must have seriously considered how to respond to the 2010 Korean crises. First of all, any turn of events that would destabilize the Korean Peninsula is exactly the opposite of what the Beijing leadership wants. Not only a full-scale war on the Korean Peninsula but also relatively mild and unexpected situations such as a mass influx of refugees from the DPRK border may harm China's economic development, which could eventually undermine the CCP's stable domestic rule and infringe on domestic integration. That is why Beijing authorities still do not officially acknowledge and accept any DPRK refugees. They fear that caring for the DPRK refugees would stimulate a mass exodus to the northeast region of China.²³ In short, China is concerned that banding with Seoul might induce Pyongyang's contingency, threatening China's national interests.²⁴

23. Of course, there are some exceptions. For instance, Hwang Jang-yup, who is a famous *Juche* ideologue and once ranked in the thirteenth highest position of the North Korean Labor Party, defected to Seoul via Beijing in 1997. Despite the strong objection of Pyongyang, Beijing allowed him to take refuge in Seoul. This was definitely a political decision intended to deepen economic relations with Seoul.

24. As for China's changed behavior after the 2012 rocket launch and the third nuclear test, one can explain that the domestic and international feedback worked within the inner circle of the Beijing leadership. China's public opinion on Pyongyang has deteriorated since late 2012 and early 2013. Pyongyang conducted its third nuclear test when the citizens were celebrating and enjoying the Chinese New Year holidays. Having caused a major crisis during such a time, the DPRK greatly disturbed the Chinese public. Regarding international feedback, China recognized the concerns of neighboring countries and the international community. The military alliance between Seoul and Washington became stronger. From China's perspective, Washington utilized Pyongyang's provocations to increase its military influence on the Korean Peninsula; Japan also used the unstable regional situation for building up its military capability. Moreover, the possibility of closer military ties among Seoul, Washington, and Tokyo increased. All of these domestic and international factors functioned as feedback shown in Figure 4.

Prospect of China's Future Behavior

China's future position and behavior on issues regarding the Korean Peninsula will be determined by the combination of its relations with the U.S, the DPRK, and the ROK. The U.S.-China relationship is the most crucial. This is because China is becoming a global power. It harbors global interests in the global arena and is Washington's preferred national counterpart in the global economy and strategy. Although issues concerning the Korean Peninsula such as the 2010 Crises are of crucial importance to the two Koreas, for China, they are only a few out of many of its major interests.

Beijing-Washington Relations

The 2010 Korean crises were a series of attacks on the ROK by the DPRK. It is in essence, an inter-Korean issue that has lasted since the division of the Peninsula in 1948. Since then, Seoul and Pyongyang have competed for legitimate authority over the entire Peninsula.

The U.S. and China have shown that they perform important roles as the respective agents of Seoul and Pyongyang. They have even exchanged severe political rhetoric during the U.S.-ROK joint naval exercise in the Yellow Sea where the crises occurred. China is concerned that the U.S. may utilize the crises to recover and increase American influence in the East Asian region. In fact, many say Washington's military influence on the Korean Peninsula had increased during the Crises. However, it is also true that no one can tame Pyongyang without China's assistance. The Crises proved once again that China is the key in handling the DPRK.

Meanwhile, the international community including the ROK fears that Beijing's support might embolden Pyongyang to carry out further military provocations.²⁵ Consequently, the ROK is likely to

25. This apprehension has been realized after the third nuclear test. Pyongyang continuously provokes military tension on the Korean Peninsula and does not seem likely to give up the nuclear capability. China shows intolerance of Pyongyang's nuclear provocation.

build up its military capacity and reluctantly lean toward the U.S, and even toward Japan. Seoul tried to sign the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) with Japan, although it was postponed due to severe domestic public opposition in June, 2012.²⁶

In international relations, great powers share similar characteristics. They tend to avoid direct conflicts. Instead, when their client states clash against one another, they fully support their clients and try to utilize their clients' troubles to further their own national and global interests. China is expanding its influence around the globe. It is natural that the first targeted region is Northeast Asia, the area surrounding the Peninsula.

The U.S. seems to have lost its former dominance over the region. Washington has used its rivalry with China and Japan to effectively manage the region. However, China has been increasing power at a dazzling speed, and Japan does not have enough power to check it. The U.S. now directly competes against, and conflicts with China without having Japan as a mediator.

Fortunately, both states also have reasons to cooperate. Beijing requires Washington's support to achieve sustainable economic development,²⁷ which is instrumental in maintaining the CCP leadership's rule and national integrity in China. Similarly, Washington needs Beijing's assistance. The U.S. can stabilize its domestic prices by importing cheap Chinese products and China's economic development requires the U.S. market as well.

In a nutshell, Beijing is concerned more about Washington's will and response to the 2010 Korean crises than the Crises themselves, and vice versa. Both states need to maintain amicable relations. They

26. Adam Westlake, "South Korea postpones signing Japan's military agreement." *The Japan Daily Press*, June 29, 2012, <http://japandailynews.com/south-korea-postpones-signing-japans-military-agreement-295618> (accessed July 15, 2012).

27. China's main tasks in foreign policy are not offensive but defensive; thus Beijing likely tends to cooperate with Washington. See Andrew J. Nathan and Andrew Scobell, "How China Sees America: the Sum of Beijing's Fears," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2012, pp. 32-47.

also require a stable and calm Korean Peninsula; consequently, in most cases, they want to persuade Pyongyang and Seoul to be friendly toward each other. It is well known that President Obama made several phone calls to President Hu in urging him to check Pyongyang. Hu also admits the necessity of U.S.-China cooperation in order to resolve the 2010 Korean crises.²⁸

From Seoul's perspective, President Hu's January 2011 visit to Washington can be compared to Nixon's February 1972 visit to Beijing in that both meetings discussed issues regarding the Korean Peninsula. After both of the visits, the two Koreas showed some conciliatory behaviors. This time, even before Hu's visit, the two Koreas agreed to hold their first high-level military talks after the Crises; although those talks did not produce any fruitful results. Likewise, four decades ago in 1972, the two Koreas concluded the July Fourth Joint Communiqué after Nixon's Beijing visit, but the sudden reconciliation was aborted.

Forty years ago, both Washington and Beijing ceaselessly persuaded and threatened Seoul and Pyongyang to reconcile their hostile relations since the Sino-American rapprochement. The bottom line was to make a stable environment on the Korean Peninsula through the two Koreas' détente so that Washington and Beijing could cooperate against the former Soviet Union.

From China's perspective, the Six-Party Talks are the only feasible option to ease the nuclear tension on the Korean Peninsula. Through the talks, all the concerned parties would have no choice but to be tolerant and cooperative in order to pursue a plausible and peaceful resolution to the security cooperation problem involving Pyongyang's nuclear weapons in Northeast Asia. Therefore, Beijing will show a more tolerant attitude in response to Pyongyang's provocation than

28. The new Xi Jinping leadership of China and the second term of the Obama administration will become closer in resolving the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula, *The New York Times*, December 6, 2010; *The LA Times*, December 6, 2010, <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/washington/2010/12/obama-china-hu-jintao.html> (accessed March 20, 2013); <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/12/06/world/main7121957.shtml> (accessed March 20, 2013)

any other participants of the Six-Party Talks unless Pyongyang completely breaks down the Talks.

Beijing-Pyongyang Relations

First, China and the DPRK are bound together by the 1961 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. Article 3 of the treaty declares that both states shall not conclude any alliance against each other, and shall not participate in any actions and measures against each side. In other words, both states cannot officially blame or act against each other. This is one clear legal reason why Beijing did not blame Pyongyang and support Seoul and the international community in condemning the Crises.

Secondly, China fears that the worst scenario might materialize. That is, the Kim regime may collapse and the DPRK may go out of control, creating a great influx of refugees into China's northeast region. If Pyongyang collapses, Seoul will likely intervene in the DPRK to achieve unification of the Peninsula. Likewise, other great powers such as the U.S., Russia, and Japan will involve themselves with the country to fulfill their own interests. That situation would force China to involve itself in the maze-like Korean Peninsula and would likely lead to a reluctant competition with the other big powers.

Beijing was extremely sensitive to Pyongyang-related information, especially those of the late leader, Kim Jong-il. In 2008, information about Kim Jong-il's health problems were exposed. The person responsible for the leak, a well-known Chinese scholar at the Chinese Academy of Social Science, Jin Xi-de, was arrested and jailed.²⁹ This shows how sensitive the Beijing leadership is regarding information about Pyongyang, especially about Pyongyang's leadership. It is likely that Beijing has been seriously contemplating any possible contingencies in the DPRK since then.

29. <http://baike.baidu.com/view/1229752.htm> (accessed February 4, 2012).
<http://www.epochtimes.com/b5/11/2/26/n3182007.htm> (accessed February 4, 2012).

In October 2009, Premier Wen Jiabao visited Pyongyang. Even when Pyongyang still had been under suspicion in May 2010, China, in return, invited Kim Jong-il. This was before the official investigation was released on the sinking of the ROK Navy corvette *Cheonan* (PCC-772). Moreover, Kim visited China again only three months later in October 2010. Beijing's efforts to prevent such contingencies are evident when observing the exchanges between the two states.

Since the 1992 normalization between Beijing and Seoul, the friendly relations between Beijing and Pyongyang had been estranged; however, the relations between the two countries improved following in the aftermath of two events: Kim Jong-il's health problem in late 2008 and the failed currency reform in late 2009. China changed its policy toward the DPRK to support the Kim Jong-il regime; Beijing was seriously concerned about Pyongyang's contingency, which was regarded as the worst possible scenario.

If the worst scenario happens, this will be because of Pyongyang's domestic economic failure.³⁰ In the modern international system based on national sovereignty, no state can collapse or disappear unless it domestically collapses on its own, just like the former Soviet Union. That is to say Pyongyang shall not be forced by any external body to give up its national sovereignty.

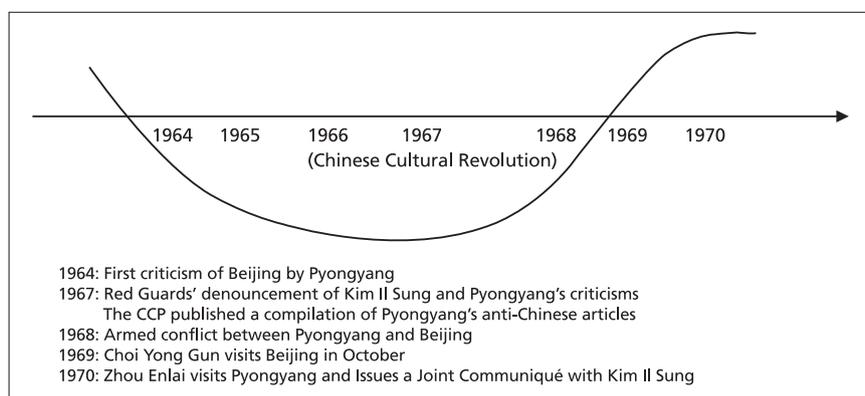
China will continue to support the DPRK economically unless any unexpected situations arise. The two countries' economic cooperation will contribute to the Chinese economic enhancement policy in the northeast region of China. Thus, economic sanctions on the DPRK are unlikely to be successful unless China sincerely cooperates. China's economic support for Pyongyang, while all other states are applying

30. Successful economic achievement is crucial for most authoritarian regimes such as the DPRK to maintain their rein. As already mentioned, rapid and continuous economic growth is currently contributing to maintaining the rein of the CCP. Zhao Jing, an influential Chinese blogger, comments that the CCP authoritarian regime will likely collapse, if at all, only because of an economic failure and not because of the democratic demand from the people. See, http://article.joinmsn.com/news/article/article.asp?total_id=11554470&ctg=1300&cloc=joongang|home|newslst1 (accessed May 20, 2013).

sanctions, will solidify the fact that China exercises strong political and strategic control over the DPRK.

In 2010, relations between Beijing and Pyongyang were still favorable. In general, however, relations among nations are never always amicable or quarrelsome. Likewise, the friendship between Beijing and Pyongyang has a pendulum cycle, ranging from friendly relations to frosty ones. As shown in Figure 5,³¹ the relations have not always been steady and friendly.

Figure 5. The China-DPRK Friendship Trend



During China's Cultural Revolution, their relations deteriorated to the extent that guns were pointed at each other at the border area in 1968.³² Later in 1969, their relations improved through the visit of high-ranking officials: Choi Yong-gun of Pyongyang and Zhou Enlai

31. Taewan Kim, "The Korean Paradox of the 1972 Sino-American Rapprochement: An East Asian Perspective," (Ph.D. Diss., University of Colorado at Boulder, 2005), p.121.

32. Jae-jin Lee, *China and Korea: Dynamic Relations* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Press, 1996), p. 101; Bernd Schaefer, "Weathering the Sino-Soviet Conflict: The GDR and North Korea, 1949-1989," *Could War International History Project Bulletin*, Issue 14/15, pp. 25-38; "North Korean 'adventurism' and China's Long Shadow, 1966-1972," *Could War International History Project*, Working Paper #44, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/swp44.pdf> (accessed November 19, 2004).

of Beijing.

Similarly, in 2009, Beijing and Pyongyang began to have frosty relations since the 1992 Beijing-Seoul normalization. The former Foreign Minister Chen Qichen reflected that he was the most poorly treated Chinese official visitor ever by Pyongyang when he visited Pyongyang to excuse the normalization of Beijing and Seoul.³³

That mood changed when Wen Jiabao visited Pyongyang to celebrate the 2009 China-DPRK Friendship Year and discussed how to improve their economic cooperation. After Wen's visit to Pyongyang, the Chinese media praised the DPRK in an unprecedented manner. In 2010, Kim Jong-il visited China twice, amidst the sensitive political environment following the *Cheonan* (PCC-772) sinking incident.

In sum, Beijing and Pyongyang's friendly relations will likely continue for the time being;³⁴ consequently, at the very least, Beijing will continue to provide economic support to Pyongyang. However, this is because of the Chinese leaders' fear of the DPRK collapsing, and not particularly because they support Kim Jong-il (now Kim Jong-un) or his system. Rather, they have serious discussions in their closed inner circle about whether they should abandon the Kim Jong-il regime that has been a burden to Beijing's image as a responsible stakeholder. Therefore, if Pyongyang's contingency occurs and the Kim regime fails to bring down any potential rebels, Beijing is likely to support the potential rebels unless the rebels turn against Beijing. Great powers in international relations show similar behaviors; Washington abandoned its longtime friend Mubarak in Egypt when the anti-Mubarak rebels seemed to be successful. Likewise, China would, in theory, cooperate with any political entity in the DPRK as long as it is friendly to Beijing; it is not necessarily the Kim regime that Beijing

33. Chen Qichen, *Wai Jiao Shi Ji* (Beijing: shijiezhishichubanshe, 2003), pp. 154-161.

34. After the death of Kim Jong-il and his son Kim Jong-un's succession, the DPRK is still struggling to consolidate the new leader's rule and domestic stability. It is a very sensitive transit period in Pyongyang's position. The series of provocations including the third nuclear test in February 2013 challenges the tolerance of China. However, the existence itself of the DPRK provides China substantial strategic advantage in Northeast Asia.

supports.

In other words, Beijing most likely acknowledged and accepted the three generation patrimonial succession in Pyongyang because it was concerned about the aftermath of its collapse. Beijing was probably persuaded by Pyongyang's insistence that the dynastic succession of power was indispensable to DPRK's unique domestic reality.

Meanwhile, Kim Jong-un will likely adopt the Chinese style economic reform if Beijing successfully persuades him and his inner circle on the condition of economic cooperation and support toward Pyongyang. In fact, Pyongyang does not seem to dislike the Chinese style economic reform; it only fears the side effects of the reform such as domestic instability or people's demand for political reform. Unlike Beijing, which has well managed the domestic political demand, Pyongyang has not been strongly convinced of its grasp of its domestic politics. Kim Jong-un and his inner circle fear the people's political demands, which would result from the Chinese-style economic reform. Therefore, if they perceive there is no other option to break through the recent stalemate, they may decide to follow the Chinese direction.

Pyongyang has many other puzzles to solve, such as accomplishing a successful patrimonial succession of power, economic enhancement, and so on. Although all the puzzles cannot be solved at once, it is also true that maintaining only nuclear weapons and long-range ballistic missiles can never be useful in solving these problems, especially without the cooperation of neighboring countries and the international community.

Beijing- Seoul Relations

China will try to separate any potential inter-Korean conflicts from regional security issues. Unless the neighboring major powers involve themselves in any potential conflicts between the two Koreas, Beijing will step aside and manage the two countries while making sure that no harm is done to China's national goal of continuing economic development and maintaining the stability of China's northeast region.

The ROK is clearly a major contributing partner to China's recent

economic prosperity. Since the normalization of Beijing-Seoul relations, the amount of trade has continuously increased, and in 2002, it had already bypassed the total amount of trade conducted with the U.S., the previous top trading partner of the ROK. Various economic data show that both countries' economic ties have become closer at a tremendous speed following the normalization of relations. Even during the 2010 Korean crises, Beijing and Seoul broke the record of the largest trade volume, despite their political estrangement. According to data from the Korea International Trade Association,³⁵ the two countries' total amount of trade in 2010 was larger than Korea's second (the U.S.), the third (Japan), and the fourth (Hong Kong) trading partners combined. When Hong Kong is included as part of China, the amount of trade is much bigger than the sum of the trades with the second to ninth (Vietnam) countries combined.³⁶

As for China, Korea is its third largest trading partner and the fourth largest investor. It is undeniable that Beijing and Seoul are already a common economic community.³⁷ Sino-Korean relations are very friendly, and the top leaders of Beijing and Seoul have held summit talks more frequently than any previous leader. Moreover, the two countries' degree of cooperation has expanded, encompassing the military and defense arena. In August 2008, the top leaders of the two countries concluded a so-called 'strategic cooperation partnership relation.' In addition to their economic ties, their similarities in culture and historical experience allow them to easily cooperate against Japan in social and political levels. They tend to cooperate against Japan, criticizing many historical issues involving Japan including the issues of Japanese history textbooks, the Nanjing massacre, comfort women,

35. http://stat.kita.net/top/state/n_submain_stat_kita.jsp?menuId=01&subUr1=n_default-test_kita.jsp?lang_gbn=kor^statid=kts&top_menu_id=db11&lang_gbn=kor (accessed July 3, 2011).

36. Singapore was the fifth largest, Taiwan was the sixth largest, India was the seventh largest, and Indonesia was the eighth largest trading partner of Korea in 2010.

37. Ji Pei-ding, "Development of China and Sino-Korea Relations," *Foreign Relations*, Vol. 98. (Seoul: Korean Council on Foreign Relations, July 2011), pp. 49-59.

visits to the *Yasukuni Shrine*, and so on.³⁸ Nevertheless, Beijing's support for Pyongyang after the 2010 Korean crises has made Seoul uncomfortable and even frustrated.

Although Seoul failed to earn Beijing's support after the 2010 Korean crises, it did not publically blame Beijing. Seoul seemed to have understood Beijing's position, and its fear of Pyongyang's collapse. Moreover, Seoul also does not want the so-called 'hard landing,' or contingency, or any other unexpected situations to arise. Although the 'Sunshine Policy' of the late president Kim Dae-jung did not succeed, Seoul would like to support and contribute to Pyongyang's economic improvement. The Lee Myung-bak administration continuously expressed that Seoul is ready to fully support Pyongyang if the regime abandons its nuclear ambitions; Pyongyang's nuclear capability will never be tolerable to Seoul as well as Beijing. As a result, Beijing and Seoul have the same intention to restore North Korea's economy and invite it as a responsible actor in the international community; the two countries could cooperate and find means that both would agree on.

In fact, the newly-launched leaderships in China and the ROK appear to be warming up to each other. Beijing welcomes and expects Park to understand China much better than any other Korean leaders did, and the Park administration also respects Xi's posture in the recent deadlock caused by Pyongyang's third nuclear test and its continuing provocations. The two countries are likely to cooperate in breaking through the 2013 stalemate. Moreover, the recent incorrect historical consciousness shown by the new Japanese leaders³⁹ ironically provide Xi and Park even more reasons to work together to address regional issues.

38. Recently many chauvinistic behaviors and rhetoric of political leaders in the newly launched Abe administration brought about strong criticism of China and Korea as well as the international community.

39. Japan's new Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's expressions of the lack of Japan's war responsibility, including many ultra-nationalistic mentions of domestic leader, result in strong criticism not only from China and Korea, but also in the U.S. and the international community.

Conclusion

Pyongyang has been a troublemaker in Northeast Asia's regional security. Unlike China, its rigid political and domestic economic system results in desperate economic failure and the suffering of its people. To resolve such problems, Pyongyang tends to provoke its neighbors rather than cooperate with them.

Since China pursues to become a great power as a responsible stakeholder, it has been facing a dilemma ever since the 2010 Korean crises, which resulted from Pyongyang's military attacks. Nevertheless, Beijing is likely to ultimately stand by Pyongyang despite international criticism. This is because it fears Pyongyang's collapse and its aftermath. In addition, both are bonded to the 1961 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. Article 3 declares that both shall not conclude any alliance against each other, and shall not participate in any action and measures against each other. Beijing does not support Pyongyang because it supports the Kim dynasty, but because it fears the possibility of Pyongyang's collapse. Therefore, if the DPRK collapses and the Kim regime fails to quell potential rebels, Beijing will likely support the rebels, unless the rebels turn against Beijing. Similarly, because of its national interests, Beijing will at present attempt to urge the two Koreas to reconcile.

Seoul should understand China's decision to maintain an equidistant position between the two Koreas. Beijing's top national priority is to continue its economic development, and that requires having a stable periphery, including the Korean Peninsula. Of course, that stability does not necessarily refer to a status quo on the Peninsula. It could just as easily be the unification of the two Koreas, or a permanent division. Either way is acceptable for China unless it harms China's top national priority.

The status quo of the divided Korean Peninsula has clearly provided a good circumstance for Beijing's domestic national goals so far. On the other hand, it has not been verified whether reunification of the Peninsula will contribute to or damage China's national priorities. If the Beijing leadership is rational, there is no doubt that it would

prefer the maintenance of the status quo of the two Koreas. This has always been proved to be China's national interest. It does not matter who initiates the reunification because, from China's perspective, once the two Koreas become one, it will become more independent from China's influence. Beijing's leaders remember that North Vietnam, which was heavily aided by China, even engaged in war against China after the unification of the two Vietnams.

Therefore, Seoul should actively convince Beijing that Seoul's initiation of unification shall not harm, but rather will contribute to China's national interests. This is possible through continuous feedback from the ROK and the international community. For instance, that the division of the Korean Peninsula would cost more than the costs of unification. Emerging as a rational united Korea, or at least creating an open and reformed North Korea will contribute more to the economic cooperation and regional security in Northeast Asia.

China expressed its relatively ambiguous position on the two Koreas, but clearly criticized the U.S.-Korea military exercises in the Yellow Sea. Although Seoul and Washington clarified that the joint military drill is carried out against Pyongyang and not against Beijing, Beijing's leadership did not trust Washington's rhetoric. This shows that China is more concerned about the U.S. responses to the 2010 Korean crises than the Crises themselves.

In fact, Beijing de-emphasized the seriousness of the 2010 Korea crises. Rather, it was seriously concerned about the U.S.-ROK joint naval military exercises and irrationally supported Pyongyang's position. However, the more Beijing supports Pyongyang's reckless behaviors, the more Seoul will tilt militarily toward Washington, including its own military buildup. Korea has even sought military intelligence cooperation with Japan after the *Yeonpyeong* Island artillery bombardment, although Korea's public opinion did not support it.⁴⁰

Sustained feedback from the U.S. and the international community

40. Seoul and Tokyo tried to sign the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) to deepen military cooperation, but it was aborted due to the severe opposition of the ROK domestic public opinion in June, 2012.

is also a factor that is crucially taken into account by China. This is because Beijing's leadership knows well that American support is instrumental in continuing its economic development, and the international community's acknowledgement as a responsible stakeholder is important for China to grow as a global power.

In conclusion, Beijing's support for Pyongyang is not necessarily a threat against Seoul, just as Seoul's close ties with Washington is not a threat against Beijing. However, China's continued support for Pyongyang is not desirable in the realm of regional security. In cooperating with other neighboring countries, Beijing should continuously encourage Pyongyang to stop its military adventurism and adopt a Chinese-style reform. It should also be emphasized that no country is planning to invade or plotting to destroy Pyongyang unless it collapses on its own and by its leaders' wrong decisions.

Pyongyang matters. If one cannot expel an outrageous fellow from one's own town; there is no other way to appease or punish the outlawry. What one must do is to cooperate with the other villagers to find out which means are the best for the town's peace and security. As most people know, the town's peace and security requires a strong sheriff who executes consistent principles to the outlaws, whether they be carrots or sticks.

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Korea and Australia in the New Asian Century

Jin Park

South Korea and Australia have been close partners sharing the values of liberal democracy and free market economy in the Asia-Pacific region for more than six decades. The changing geopolitical environment, however, requires that the two countries forge a multi-faceted strategic partnership to exercise middle power diplomacy and promote peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific. The two countries have the common task of dealing with an assertive China as the rising superpower in Asia, while maintaining the alliance partnership with the U.S. It is in the interest of the two countries to ensure that the U.S.-China relations do not turn into a confrontational zero-sum game. As like-minded middle powers, the two countries should play greater roles to expand the bilateral partnership in the regional and global stages. The growing non-traditional security threats, such as human rights violations and cyber terrorism also pose common challenges to South Korea and Australia in maintaining regional order and stability. Finally, the two countries should collaborate in preparing for the eventual peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula. These common efforts should include peace-keeping and post-conflict stabilization activities under situation of contingencies. In conclusion, South Korea and Australia must proactively step up their preventive middle power diplomacy and bridge the gap between China, U.S., and the rest of the region.

Key Words: Korea-Australia partnership, middle power diplomacy, dealing with China, non-traditional security threats, Korean unification

Introduction

South Korea and Australia are located far away from each other in the northern and southern parts of the Pacific Ocean. But their growing strategic partnership based on common interests has defied the geographical distance. The two countries possess comparable economic power and share the values of liberal democracy and free market

economy. The number of South Koreans visiting Australia and vice versa is rapidly growing and the volume of mutual trade and investment is also continuing to increase.

The two countries also maintain close alliance partnerships with the United States, while trying to deal with China, a rising superpower in Asia. South Korea and Australia perceive each other as important like-minded middle powers that can contribute to the peace and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region.

The history of cooperation between the Republic of Korea and Australia goes a long way back. Australia was the second nation after the United States to come to the aid of South Korea when North Korea invaded the South more than six decades ago. During the Korean War, more than 17,000 young Australians fought on the Korean Peninsula, and no fewer than 1,585 were injured or killed in action. It was thanks to those who courageously shed their blood for freedom and democracy that an unshakeable friendship between South Korea and Australia was born.

Today's challenges in the Asia-Pacific, however, demand much more than just a friendship. From the security tension on the Korean Peninsula to the territorial disputes among Asian states and pockets of instability around the region, the changing geopolitical environment requires South Korea and Australia closely cooperate to meet these challenges and to promote peace and prosperity in the region.

Hence, it is imperative for the future of the Asia-Pacific that South Korea and Australia — two of the most successful and stable democracies in the region — form strategic ties vertically across the Pacific. The two nations must think beyond their traditional friendship and take proactive steps toward building a multi-faceted strategic partnership for the Asian century. As the United States' key allies, the two countries have the common task of dealing with an increasingly assertive China. They should also cooperate to activate middle power diplomacy for regional peace and security. Failing to do so may jeopardize their own future. South Korea and Australia are called upon to respond to non-traditional security threats. Finally the two countries should collaborate to prepare for eventual Korean unification. This

article highlights a number of key areas which require much closer and smarter cooperation between South Korea and Australia while suggesting policy directions that can guide such cooperation.

Dealing with China in the Asian Century

As the global and regional security environment continues to evolve, the growing importance of the Asia-Pacific cannot be overemphasized. In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the coming decades will be shaped and led by the development of the Asia-Pacific. The so-called “Asian Century” is not some distant vision of the future, but is already a reality. As the Asia-Pacific region becomes the new ground of the global power game, a stronger partnership between Australia and South Korea will contribute to the continued prosperity not only of the region, but also of the international community as a whole.

On the one hand, there is a renewed strategic focus on the Asia-Pacific by the United States. The second Obama administration put forward the notion of “Pivot to Asia” to re-engage itself in the region. The U.S. will seek to reinforce its alliance network with South Korea, Japan, and Australia to maintain its strategic posture against China’s rapidly growing influence. It will also try to strengthen existing ties with Southeast Asia, especially with Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, and even Vietnam.¹ The Pentagon is expected to have about 60% of the U.S. naval assets deployed to Asia by 2020: a significant 50% increase.

The Korea-U.S. alliance structure has been working exceptionally well during the last six decades in deterring North Korean aggression and maintaining peace and stability in Northeast Asia. The ROK-US Combined Forces Command is regarded as the most successful joint security arrangement in the history of the U.S. military alliance net-

1. William Tow, “The eagle returns: resurgent U.S. strategy in Southeast Asia and its Implications,” *Policy Analysis*, ASPI, 2012.

work. The scheduled transfer of the wartime operational control from the U.S. to South Korea, however, depends on the results of a renewed assessment of North Korean security threats such as nuclear and missile proliferation.

It is clear that the United States' shift in focus can only increase Australia's strategic importance. The U.S. military has already sent its first rotation of U.S. Marines for training in Australia,² and the Chief of U.S. Pacific Command, Admiral Samuel Locklear, publicly stated that Australia is a "critical pillar" of the U.S. strategy³ — a comment which clearly echoes the former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's description of Australia's alliance with the U.S. as the "central pillar" of Australian national security policy.⁴ Most recently, it has been reported that the Australian guided-missile frigate HMAS Sydney will join the U.S. 7th Fleet in Japan amidst heightened tensions on the Korean Peninsula.⁵ As the U.S. expands its presence in the Asia-Pacific, the value of Australia's cooperation as a key ally in such a strategic location will be greater than ever.

On the other hand, the rise of China as a leading power in the Asia-Pacific and in the global arena, creates a complex yet volatile dynamic. Currently, the relationship between the U.S. and China is far from the simple dichotomy that existed between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union. The two giant powers are much more interdependent on each other in many aspects and such interdependence is well recognized by both sides. It is clear to the U.S. and its allies that China is not an outright adversary to be contained, but a practical partner with whom they must work in order to ensure the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region.

2. Robertson Barracks, a major Australian Army base in Darwin, is reported to host the United States Pacific Command's Marine deployment, beginning with six-month rotation of 250 U.S. Marines. The U.S. and Australian militaries are expected to increase the size of U.S. Marine Air Ground Task Force which tours Robertson Barracks to 2,500 by 2016-17.

3. "U.S. says Australia 'critical pillar' in Asia pivot," *AFP*, Jan 31, 2013.

4. "Australia PM returns to regionalist approach," *Reuters*, Dec 4, 2008.

5. "Warship to join U.S. fleet in hot zone," *The Australian*, April 26, 2013.

South Korea and Australia have the common task of having to deal with China's rising power and influence in the Asia-Pacific region. There are diverse theories about the "China threat," "power shift," and "politics of accommodation." China, the world's second largest economic power, has emerged as the largest trade partner for both South Korea and Australia, while its constant military modernization is posing a growing challenge to the security interests of both countries, not to mention the U.S. The intellectual debate on the strategic implications of the rise of China vis-à-vis American primacy in the region will develop more or less acutely in the future depending on China's own behavior.

However, the undeniable aspect of the changing strategic environment is that China itself, is increasingly aware of its evolving status as a major stake holder in the management of the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region as well.

Regarding the Korean Peninsula, China's official position of keeping the "status quo" has not visibly changed. Nevertheless, the growing concern and skepticism of the new Chinese leadership under Xi Jinping, as well as the Chinese public, especially their vocal netizens, with regard to North Korea's dangerous nuclear brinkmanship against the national security interests of China, have become more palpable. China is apparently recalibrating the growing asymmetry of its prosperous partnership with South Korea in comparison to its deteriorating comradeship with North Korea. China would have to decide, for the sake of its own national interests, whether or not to accommodate a visibly changing strategic environment on the Korean Peninsula.

Regarding Australia, China has been attempting to counter-balance the Australia-U.S. alliance and maintain China's strategic interests in the South China Sea, a critical region for China's sea line of communication. China has tried to strengthen its anti-access and area denial capabilities in the Western Pacific against the Air-Sea Battle concept of the U.S. which requires the support of its Asian allies, including Australia. China, however, is also very conscious of Australia's strategic importance as a key energy supplier for the sustainable

growth of the Chinese economy. China may need to refrain from causing further tensions in the South China Sea and instead, develop a productive and interdependent relationship with Australia, while taking advantage of Australia's strategic dilemma in facing both the U.S. and China.

It is in this light that successive Australian governments have tried to manage their relationship with Beijing. For example, the former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd was the first western head of state to deliver a speech in fluent Mandarin when he visited Beijing University in April 2008. The incumbent Prime Minister Julia Gillard also showed that her predecessor's reaching-out to China and the Asia-Pacific was more than symbolic gesture with the publication of a White Paper titled "*Australia in the Asian Century*;" the publication sets out 25 national objectives across social, economic and foreign policy areas.⁶ These objectives represent a proactive initiative from the Australian government designed to establish and expand Australia's role in Asia. Chapter 8 of the White Paper specifically emphasizes that Australia will have stronger and more comprehensive relationships with key regional nations – China, India, Indonesia, Japan and South Korea.

What is particularly impressive about the White Paper is its whole-of-government approach compared to the overwhelmingly military tone of the United States' rebalance toward Asia. For instance, Prime Minister Gillard's plan aims to give all Australian students access to at least one Asian language at school and to have one-third of all Australian senior civil servants and directors of leading public companies possess "deep knowledge" of Asia by 2025 (The Korean language should be included in the core Asian language program). Such a comprehensive strategy for building closer relations with Asia will allow Australia to transcend differences in ideology and political system, and to utilize a wide and diverse range of channels to work with China.

Thus, in an Asia-Pacific region shaped by two superpowers, defense and security cooperation between South Korea and Australia

6. *Australia in the Asian Century*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2012.

should serve as an axis of strategic partnership that underpins the subtle balance of power in the region. South Korea, which is at the very heart of the most intense confrontation around the world today, is one of the United States' closest allies; but it must also work with China to manage the threats from North Korea.

Similarly, Australia perceives the strategic benefits of engaging with China while deepening and strengthening its alliance with the U.S.⁷ It must leverage its unique geopolitical position between the United States and Asia so as to be able to establish its place in the Asia-Pacific power balance.

What is clear is that it is in the strategic interests of both South Korea and Australia to make sure that the U.S. and China do not enter into a hostile engagement in a kind of zero-sum game; the two middle powers, it may be argued, need the two superpowers to get along with one another. The best way for South Korea and Australia to do so is to actively engage in building a "strategic bridge" of peaceful yet formidable security cooperation through which the U.S. and China may interact comfortably. Neither Australia nor South Korea can afford to sit on the fence or stretch their resources to play up to two opposing superpowers.

Activating Middle Power Diplomacy for Regional Peace and Security

Despite the remarkable growth of the Four Asian Tigers (Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan), explosive development of the Chinese economy and the dynamic potential of some Southeast Asian countries, a significant portion of the Asia-Pacific is still trapped in poverty. For example, the Asia Development Bank estimates that 1.7

7. Michael Heazles and Michael Clarke, "Old Problems in a New Century?," *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 66, No.5, 2012; Linda Jakobson, "Australia's Strategy toward China," in Jung-ho Bae and Jae H. Ku (eds), *China's Domestic Politics and Foreign Policies and Major Countries' Strategies toward China* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2012).

billion people in the region are still living on less than \$2 a day.⁸ In addition to such wide disparity in income and wealth, the wide spectrum of political and cultural diversity among Asian countries has meant that there is a divisive gap between developed economies with established democracy and developing nations which are struggling through the process of democratization. The absence of an organized security architecture in the Asia-Pacific can be attributed to the continued existence of this, arguably widening, socio-economic gap.

As like-minded “middle powers,” with shared membership in the G20, South Korea and Australia are well positioned for cooperation in bridging the gap between superpowers such as the U.S. or China, with the developing nations in the Asia-Pacific.⁹ Both South Korea and Australia possess comparable economic power and share common values of liberal democracy, market economy, and human rights, which must form the basis of their security and defense cooperation in pursuit of common objectives in middle power diplomacy. Capitalizing on the geopolitical and socio-economic middle grounds that the two nations hold in the region, South Korea and Australia should work together to establish themselves as mediators in the region; channeling those shared values to the rest of the Asia-Pacific, and thereby enhancing the security prospect of the region as a whole. This would be much more effective when led by middle powers rather than superpowers.

The first steps in middle power diplomacy have been to bolster bilateral security cooperation between South Korea and Australia. The Joint Statement on Enhanced Global and Security Cooperation, announced in March 2009, and the on-going Korea-Australia Strategic Dialogue have opened a new chapter in bilateral defense cooperation between the two countries. In particular, the 2009 Joint Statement included a comprehensive Action Plan which covered a whole range

8. <http://www.adb.org/themes/poverty/overview> (April 29, 2013).

9. Andrew O’Neil, “China’s Rise and the Korean Peninsula,” in Jung-ho Bae and Jae H. Ku (eds), *China’s Domestic Politics and Foreign Policies and Major Countries’ Strategies toward China* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2012).

of security issues from immediate concerns like law enforcement to combat transnational crime, border security, counter-terrorism and maritime security to much longer-term agendas for cooperation including development cooperation and peacekeeping operations. In March 2010, when North Korea torpedoed and sank the ROK Navy vessel *Cheonan*, the Australian government was quick to lend its expertise by dispatching five military experts to join the official investigation team; when the investigators announced their findings, Australia voiced cross-party support for the South Korean government and strongly condemned North Korea.

Military cooperation between the two countries has also shown significant development as the South Korean and Australian militaries joined forces in exchange and training. The General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) was signed in 2009 to facilitate better exchange of information and shared understanding of security challenges. In October 2010, Australian RAAF P-3 Orion aircraft and an interagency team of officials joined the South Korean and U.S. forces in a maritime interdiction exercise in Busan called Exercise Eastern Endeavour, which was hosted by South Korea and conducted as a part of Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). South Korea has enjoyed further cooperation with Australia since joining the PSI in 2009. Australia also participated in the recent Key Resolve exercise on the Korean Peninsula as a member of the United Nations Command together with the U.K., Canada, Denmark, and Colombia.

To further expand bilateral defense cooperation, a more concrete framework for cooperation needs to be set through the bilateral “2+2 meeting” between the foreign and defense ministers of both countries, as former President Lee Myung-bak and the Prime Minister Julia Gillard agreed in 2011.¹⁰ A clearly set-out agenda will facilitate more frequent and effective interactions, thereby allowing the two nations to send coordinated strategic messages to those who threaten the stability of the region. As was the case in the aforementioned sinking of

10. Julia Gillard, “Korea and Australia in the Asian Century,” *Joong-ang Daily*, March 5, 2013.

Cheonan in 2010 and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island in the same year, established channels of communication and coordination are prerequisites to ensure concerted efforts in addressing various threats and challenges in a timely manner.

Furthermore, systematic cooperation is needed to develop a proactive agenda for future cooperation. For instance, maritime security is an area where close cooperation between the navies of South Korea and Australia is especially needed, as both countries have high stakes in maritime affairs and ensuring the freedom of navigation. This can be done by joint naval exercises, military information-sharing, exchange of personnel, and protecting sea lines of communication. This will require better interoperability between the South Korean and Australian militaries.

Along with bilateral cooperation, South Korea and Australia should also combine efforts in developing regional security arrangements. As mentioned earlier, an established mechanism for multilateral security cooperation like the NATO does not yet exist in Asia.¹¹ While the diverse characters and interests of Asian states are thought to have contributed to Asia's struggle in building a strong regional security institution, it is also the case that such diversity in policy goals and interests make a permanent forum for dialogue and coordination an even greater necessity.

There certainly are a number of initiatives that have the potential, if given due support for development, to provide the region with much-needed political dialogues and security architecture. These include the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting-Plus (ADMM+), and 1.5 track dialogues such as: the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP): on the bilateral level, perhaps the newly inaugurated KINU-ASPI Strategic Dialogue should also be added to the list. The annual East Asia Summit meeting (EAS) also plays an important role as the highest-level forum of

11. Christopher Hemmer and Peter Katzenstein, "Why Is There No NATO in Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origins of Multilateralism," *International Organization*, Vol. 56, No. 3, 2002.

regional multilateral dialogue. In particular, the member states of the EAS account for more than half of the world's output and population; and now with the inclusion of the United States and Russia, the EAS may very well have the required membership and mandate to make real impact. More issue-specific cooperation may also aid such development, as was the case with the 2012 Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul.

In the military realm, joint naval exercises and joint participation in the RIMPAC exercise are good examples of a security partnership that will facilitate a regional security cooperation involving South Korea, Australia, U.S., and Japan. This is in contrast to attempts at pursuing direct South Korea-Japan military cooperation, which has proved to be much more difficult due to historical and political reasons. For example, in 2012, after much public and diplomatic embarrassment, the South Korean government had to postpone the signing of a General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) with Japan when it was met with public outrage. Meanwhile, the prospects of U.S.-South Korea-Australia trilateral security cooperation in a "mini-lateral" Asia-Pacific setting seems to be much brighter. PSI-related activities to inspect and interdict the transfer of weapons of mass destruction on the sea, including those of North Korea, also provide an important arena to expand security cooperation between South Korea and Australia.

Furthermore, South Korea and Australia also have been cooperating closely in both the APEC and ASEM meetings to bring Asia closer to America and Europe in expanding the regional economic partnership. On the global level, South Korea and Australia can strengthen cooperation in the United Nations Security Council where both are serving as non-permanent members. Australia, as the incumbent chair of the UN Security Council Sanctions Committee, has an especially important role to play in containing rogue states and organizations. As Australia prepares to chair the G20 meeting in 2014, its middle power partnership with South Korea will be a valuable aid in presenting global leadership with a full and clear agenda for a productive dialogue.

What is important is that the two nations must establish trust, and make cooperation a norm and a habit in the region. By creating more opportunities for Asian countries to interact with one another through both bilateral and multilateral institutions, South Korea and Australia will be able to cement mutual trust and reduce unnecessary conflicts in the region — the two middle powers must take initiative and lead that process.

Responding to Non-Traditional Security Threats

An overarching concern throughout such development will be how we respond to the radical changes in our security environment. Today, there is no great archenemy as was the case during most of the last century. Moreover, the singularly military state-to-state conflict of the Cold War era has become a rarity. Instead, threats to our safety and stability are less visible, more diverse, and more multi-faceted. Thus, the notion of non-traditional security threats cuts across all aspects of human life and new issues, and in fact, the risks, challenge our very concept of security.

For example, the notion of human security presents an inherently people-centered view of security which provides an enlightening framework. The United Nations defines human security as “freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom to live in dignity for all.”¹² It goes without saying that one of the worst violations of human security is taking place in North Korea where the people are starving and suffering from totalitarian oppression, while the regime toys with a nuclear arsenal.

In particular, the issue of North Korean refugees merits further attention. Despite Kim Jong-un regime’s tightening of border control, thousands of desperate North Koreans, many of whom are young women, still risk their lives to escape from oppression and starvation.¹³

12. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/ga10942.doc.htm>.

13. Kim Soo-am and others, *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2012* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2012).

Most of these refugees choose to cross the northern border into China in search of food, freedom, and fundamental human rights. Nearly 25,000 North Korean refugees have made it to South Korea where they are automatically granted South Korean citizenship, yet there are still hundreds of thousands of North Korean refugees in China and other countries, constantly on the run and hiding in fear and poverty.

If those defectors are caught while trying to escape North Korea or forcibly sent back to North Korea from China, it is almost certain that they will be put in concentration camps, where brutal torture, forced labor, forced abortion, and unlawful killing are routinely practiced. Those who are suspect to having had contact with South Koreans or Christian missionaries are subject to even more severe treatment.

North Korean refugees' well-founded fear of persecution if repatriated means that North Koreans hiding in China ought to be recognized as refugees under the definition given by the United Nations.¹⁴ However, the Chinese government prioritizes its political and strategic relationship with Pyongyang and does not recognize the defectors as refugees in accordance with international law. Beijing prefers to label them as 'illegal economic migrants' in an attempt to justify their repatriation of North Korean refugees.

Such a large scale flow of refugee, left so vulnerable due to China's conspicuously rigid stance on what is foremost a humanitarian issue, undoubtedly poses a significant threat to regional stability. China is obviously worried about the prospect of a mass-exodus of refugees when the floodgate opens.

There are many other sources of threats which all go beyond the traditional notion of security. Tackling transnational crimes should be a high-priority item on the agenda for regional cooperation as the most vulnerable victims are found in developing countries — still a

14. 2nd KINU Chaillot Human Rights Forum: International Cooperation to Improve North Korean Human Rights Conditions under the Kim Jong-Un Regime, February 2012.

large part of the Asia-Pacific. The Bali Process, which Australia co-chairs with Indonesia, is a great example of transnational efforts to fight transnational crimes. As many Asian countries have a large and fluid population without a sound administration system, loose border security, while in itself a significant cause of concern, can attract a whole range of criminals and terrorists.

Where transnational crime becomes truly international in its destructive scope is in the cyber domain. As more and more of our economic and social infrastructures become digital and as we manage more of our daily activities online, hackers and criminals can get access to almost whatever they want from the comfort of their hiding places thousands of miles away. What is most worrying is that it is not just a matter of robbing a bank or stealing sought-after crown jewels, but that the hackers can and will play with the global network system of the entire governments and industries.

This is an enormously powerful weapon when put in the hands of rogue states and terrorist groups; we now live in an age when cyber terrorism can paralyze the entire country within seconds. North Korea, for example, has been suspected of conducting cyber-attacks on South Korean organizations almost every year since 2009. The latest attack took place only recently in late March, damaging some 32,000 computers and servers of major broadcasting companies and banks. Combined with terrorism in the more conventional sense, we are faced with a real and immediate risk to our sovereignty and safety.

At the same time, we must also bring about fundamental changes in how we live our lives to ensure our long-term survival. The sustainable supply of water, food, energy, and even air is not something we can take for granted, especially as climate change and demographic transition further constrains our already limited resources. It goes without saying that such global challenges can never be addressed by one nation alone. As the nature of our security challenges becomes more and more complex and interconnected, we must work together across international borders and across boundaries between governments and academia, as well as among various disciplines.

Preparing for Korean Unification

Many experts, commentators, and political leaders both inside and outside the Korean Peninsula wonder what is really going on in North Korea under the leadership of Kim Jong-un. That we know so little of the new leader's and his elites' decision calculus is perhaps the most challenging and destabilizing factor, more so than what the reclusive regime actually holds in its arsenal of weapons of mass destruction.

Indeed, the bewildering puzzle of North Korea presents a unique challenge to those who try to make sense of its irrational decisions and unpredictable behavior. Comparing North Korea to historical cases has its limitations. Unlike the former East Germany which was supported by a declining superpower, the Soviet Union, North Korea has a rising superpower, China, as its economic and political patron. Again, unlike former East Germany, North Korea now claims to possess a game-changer in the form of nuclear weapons. These factors all make an acceptable power-sharing arrangement between the two Koreas look like an impossible dream.

The memory of the bitter internecine Korean War still lingers on the Korea Peninsula. Despite overwhelming economic prosperity of South Korea and the softened language in which inter-Korean relations are conducted, the fundamental challenges facing the Korean Peninsula have not yet been truly resolved.

The German model of instantaneous peaceful unification in the form of the collapse of the Berlin Wall will not work in Korea. There are, however, three lessons for South Korea to learn from the German unification case.

First, Germany's unification was the final product of consistent dialogues, contacts, and exchanges between the two Germans. South Korea should try to engage the North with consistency, patience, and principle. Second, Germany's unification took place by the voluntary decision of East German people themselves, not by the coercion from outside. South Korea should continue to provide outside information, humanitarian assistance, and human rights protection toward the North so that North Korean people themselves can decide to

choose peaceful unification. Third, Germany's unification erupted at the most unexpected time in Europe. A window of opportunity for Korean unification can be opened at the most unlikely time in Asia.

The recent closing of the Kaesong Industrial Complex by the abrupt decision of the North represents another irrational course of action: abandonment of economic opportunities, prolonged period of frustrating uncertainty, and hopeless self-isolation. The military-first policy ruthlessly superseded whatever economic pragmatism was left in North Korea. What is of utmost importance is whether the South Korean and U.S. governments will be able to take initiatives in encouraging North Korea to embrace opening-up and reform, and managing that painstakingly slow and arduous process of 'normalization.' The routine is nothing new, but North Korea seldom failed to lead the game in the past.

Thus, it is necessary that we must see right through the current turbulent wave of tension and blackmailing and prepare for what will transpire when the storm passes.

The new President of the Republic of Korea, Park Geun-hye, proposed a Korean Peninsula Trust-Building Process as her key prescription for healing the troubled inter-Korean relations.¹⁵ Her government has vowed to pursue a principled line of deterrence against Kim Jong-un's belligerent posture while offering dialogue and diplomacy, should Kim choose to renounce his confrontational approach. Coupled with President Park's Northeast Asian Peace and Cooperation Initiative, which is designed to establish a regional framework for cooperation on a wide range of issues, ultimately including North Korea, the Trust-Building Process is expected to defuse the crisis and facilitate an exchange of small gestures of goodwill which will eventually bring about a fully-fledged cooperative mechanism on the Peninsula.

There can be three scenarios for Korean unification. The first and ideal scenario aims to achieve a peaceful unification through negotiation. This is a soft-landing scenario which envisions a gradual, step-by-step integration of the two Koreas beginning with economic and

15. <http://www.president.go.kr/kr/policy/assignment04.php>.

cultural areas; followed by political and military negotiations and then economic and cultural rapprochement. Reducing the gap between the South and the North through a process of assimilation will hopefully bring the two sides closer together. The creation of a single Korean Economic Community is a necessary condition for such peaceful unification and the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement could serve as a key document for implementing the process of gradual integration. However, this will take some time, perhaps a couple of decades, to transpire.

The second one is a hard-landing scenario wherein a contingency situation brings about unification. This scenario considers a potentially turbulent situation where effective crisis management is crucial.

This scenario can perhaps be said to be based on a pragmatic assessment of reality. For even under the relatively peaceful circumstances, a fundamental question remains: will the North Korean regime under Kim Jong-un manage to sustain itself with its self-defeating Military-First Policy, chronic failure of its economic system, and ever-hardening international sanctions including those imposed by the United Nations Security Council? It is not merely wishful thinking to raise the possibility of an unexpected internal change that may transform the political structure of North Korea and initiate a process of opening-up and reform. The probability of such a contingency situation occurring within North Korea, be it through internal power conflict or serious economic breakdown, remains uncertain. Yet, the situation, if and when it takes place, should be effectively managed to avoid chaos such as major warfare, mass exodus of refugees, nuclear accident or terrorism, and to engineer an orderly transition to an eventually unified Korea.

Thus, while what will happen in North Korea is largely beyond our control, careful and well-resourced contingency planning based on international collaboration will do much to stabilize the Korean Peninsula in the event of an unexpected crisis erupting in the North. South Korea's alliance with the U.S. and strategic dialogue with China will play an important part in the process of crisis management. International cooperation for the stabilization and denuclearization

of North Korea will be crucial during this transitional stage of political transformation. This intermediate scenario will turn back to a peaceful longer-term scenario or, in worst case, degenerate into the next scenario.

The third one is a violent scenario which sees the outbreak of war, eventually leading to unification. This is an extreme case of crash-landing which will cause catastrophic damages and significant casualties on both sides. This scenario will be sparked by a major attack by North Korea on the South which will then be immediately followed by a devastating counter-attack operation conducted by the combined forces of the ROK-US Alliance. The United Nations Command will move to mobilize international support for the alliance to secure and protect the peace and security of the Korean Peninsula. Of course, given that an all-out military aggression by North Korea would be a suicidal decision, an all-out war is not likely to be initiated by the North; the possibility of a limited-scale provocation, on the other hand, is a very real one. It is also imperative to avoid strategic misunderstanding and direct military confrontation between the U.S. and China on the Korean Peninsula.

Ironically, this worst-case scenario serves as a strong psychological deterrence against the outbreak of a general war on the Korean Peninsula. Nevertheless, we must think through the unthinkable and make sure that thorough preparations are in place.

In both the second and the third scenarios, peacekeeping and post-conflict stabilization makes for yet another important area in which South Korea and Australia, a contributing state of the UN Command in Korea, must work together.

Conclusion

The Asia-Pacific region currently suffers from the so-called 'Asian Paradox.' Despite the growing interdependence among Asian states as a result of increasing trade and economic development, political and security cooperation between them remains premature and disorganized; territorial disputes and historical controversies continue to

impair the prospect of systematic security cooperation in the region.

It would be a grave mistake to think that Asian states will be able to continue with their socio-economic growth without resolving this great paradox. The costs of tension, instability and, even worse, uncertainty in the region most certainly will jeopardize sustainable growth. The prospect of the 'Asian Century' will not materialize without an effective and lasting solution for the Asian Paradox.

The Republic of Korea and Australia share common economic, political, and strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region, and there is much the two partners can and should do together to be a part of that solution. The fact that the Asia-Pacific has the world's two superpowers or G2 within its geopolitical scope may, without a proactive role played by able middle powers, work to the region's disadvantage. The Republic of Korea and Australia, for their own interest and for that of the Asia-Pacific as a whole, must step up to their mandate of facilitating preventive middle power diplomacy and bridging the gap between China, the U.S., and the rest of the region. Korean unification will take place somewhere along the road.

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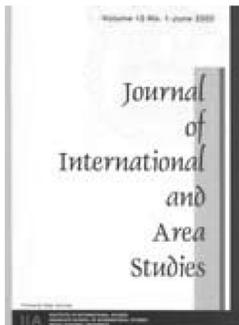
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