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North Korea as a State Sponsor of Terrorism: Views from Tokyo and Pyongyang

Anthony DiFilippo

Abstract

This paper examines the interconnections between American, Japanese, and North Korean policies and perspectives, mainly as they have pertained to North Korea's inclusion on the US State Department's list of states that support terrorism. In this context, this paper pays especially close attention to the very troubled Japan-North Korean relationship. It shows that the recent movement by the Bush administration away from the hard-line policy that it maintained for several years, which had been tainted by Cold War politics, has proven effective in improving relations between Washington and Pyongyang. However, relations between Japan and North Korea have remained severely strained by historical problems and animosities, which stem from the Cold War and earlier. This paper concludes by providing practical approaches to bring Japan and North Korea to rapprochement.

Key Words: US terrorist list, Japan-North Korea relations, US North Korean policy, abduction issue, rapprochement

For the first time in its 1983 report on global terrorism, the US State Department named the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) a state sponsor of terrorism, maintaining that it was responsible for carrying out the bombing that occurred in Rangoon, Burma (Myanmar) in October. The State Department called the Rangoon bombing, which took the lives of a number of people, including a few South Korean officials, the "most vicious terrorist attack in Asia in 1983." For a few years after 1983, North Korea was on the State Department's watch list; the DPRK was not directly involved in terrorist activities, said the US government, but rather supplying funds, weapons, and training to terrorist organizations.¹ In July 1985, President Reagan declared that North Korea was one of a small number of states "involved in acts of war against the government and the people of the United States," a charge to which Pyongyang retorted was tantamount to – using what became a trite refrain – a "declaration of war."²

On January 20, 1988, the Reagan administration re-designated the DPRK as a state sponsor of terrorism. This was less than two months after the bombing of a KAL (Korean Air Lines) flight, which Seoul maintained had been perpetrated by North Korea. Calling the KAL bombing the "single most lethal international terrorist attack" that took place in 1987, the US State Department also indicated in its report that this event marked "the return of North Korea as an active agent of state terrorism."³ Around this time, the Reagan administration maintained that Pyongyang just does not "live up to the standards of civilized behavior."⁴

1-US Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 1983*, Washington, DC, September 1984; also see reports for 1984-1986, all accessed from the Lawson Terrorism Information Center at www.terrorisminfo.mipt.org/Patterns-of-Global-Terrorism.asp.

2-"North Korea, Iran and Libya Respond to Reagan Charges," *The Associated Press*, July 10, 1985, LexisNexis Academic (www.lexisnexis.com).

3-US Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 1987*, Washington, DC, August 1988, accessed from the Lawson Terrorism Information Center at www.terrorisminfo.mipt.org/Patterns-of-Global-Terrorism.asp; US Department of State, *State Sponsors of Terrorism*, Washington, DC, accessed from at www.state.gov/s/ct/c14151.

4-Daryl Plunk, "North Korea: Exporting Terrorism?" *Asian Studies Background*, No. 74,

The DPRK disavowed both the Rangoon and the KAL bombings. Pyongyang blamed the Rangoon bombing on the South's authoritarian president, the "traitor" Chun Doo-hwan. It maintained that the "South Korean puppets" were responsible for the KAL bombing.⁵

The cooperative efforts between Tokyo and Pyongyang that were required for a number of years to implement and sustain the relocation of tens of thousands of *zainichi* (permanent Korean residents of Japan) to North Korea beginning in 1959 notwithstanding, the DPRK and Japan were unable to garner enough mutual trust to establish diplomatic relations.⁶ The tensions associated with the Cold War, which included Washington's continuing abhorrence of communism, the failure to officially end to the Korean War, and Japan's security alliance with the United States prevented Tokyo and Pyongyang from engaging in serious discussions to resolve historical problems and establish normal diplomatic relations.

Thus, soon after the Burmese government announced that the DPRK was responsible for the bombing in Rangoon, Tokyo adopted "the position that such terrorism is impermissible in international society," and for a while imposed several (largely symbolic) sanctions on North Korea.⁷ At about the same time, Tokyo began providing munificent rice and financial assistance to Burma. Pyongyang charged that the "puppets" in Seoul "begged the US imperialists and the Japanese reactionaries to press Burmese authorities to

The Heritage Foundation, Washington, DC, February 25, 1988, accessed at www.heritage.org/research/asiaandthepacific/asb74.cfm on January 24, 2008.

5- See, "What Does the Japanese Reactionaries' Generosity Mean?" *Rodong Shinmun*, November 12, 1983; "Voice of the Revolutionary Party for Reunification," *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, December 2, 1983; "North Korea 'Solemnly' Denies Part in KAL Crash," *United Press International*, January 15, 1988; "N. Korea Denounces UN Debate on Plane Bombing," *United Press International*, February 17, 1988 (all from LexisNexis Academic); "Suspect in Korean Crash Recovers from Poisoning," *New York Times*, December 6, 1987.

6- Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Exodus to North Korea: Shadows from Japan's Cold War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

7- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Diplomatic Bluebook: 1984 Edition* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1984), chapter 3; "Japan Announced Action Against North Korea," *Japan Economic Newswire*, November 7, 1983 (LexisNexis Academic).

shift responsibility [for the bombing] onto us” and that the food and financial assistance from Tokyo was “a generous reward” for wrongly making the DPRK culpable for the Rangoon bombing.⁸ Tokyo also sanctioned the DPRK soon after the KAL bombing. In a statement issued by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in late January 1988, then Chief Cabinet Secretary Keizo Obuchi maintained that the government of Japan was “convinced that the incident was caused by organized terrorism from North Korea.” Because of this, his government decided to impose (effectively the same symbolic) sanctions as it did in the aftermath of the Rangoon bombing. Maintaining the DPRK’s innocence, a spokesperson for the foreign ministry stated that the sanctions “slander his country.”⁹ Aggravated by its place on the US State Department’s list of countries sponsoring terrorism and facing more serious sanctions from Washington, Pyongyang decided that it would do what it could to demonstrate its displeasure to the Reagan administration. Pyongyang announced in January 1988 that it would discontinue all associations with US diplomats, stop allowing Americans to enter the DPRK and end all discussions dealing with the return of the ashes of US soldiers killed in the Korean War.¹⁰

With the Cold War rapidly nearing an end, Japan and the DPRK held the first round of normalization talks in January 1991. Unlike South Korea, which was able to establish diplomatic relations with Japan in 1965, normalization talks between Tokyo and Pyongyang went nowhere. During the third round of normalization talks with the DPRK in May 1991, Tokyo brought up the case of Lee Un-hae. Tokyo suspected Lee was actually Yaeko Taguchi, a Japanese woman who had been abducted by North Korean

⁸ - “What Does the Japanese Reactionaries’ Generosity Mean?” *Rodong Shinmun*, November 12, 1983 (LexisNexis Academic).

⁹ - “Japan Announces Sanctions against N. Korea over KAL Bombing,” *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, January 27, 1988 (LexisNexis Academic).

¹⁰ - “North Korea Slaps US with Sanctions,” *United Press International*, January 25, 1988 (LexisNexis Academic).

agents in the late 1970s. By November 1992, Japan and the DPRK had held eight rounds of talks to normalize relations, all unsuccessful. The DPRK delegation left the eighth round of normalization talks after refusing to give the Japanese side satisfactory answers to questions about Lee Un-hae. Tokyo also believed that Lee (Taguchi) had instructed Kim Hyon-hui – the woman who had been convicted for her part in the 1987 KAL bombing and who had maintained that she was a DPRK agent – to speak Japanese and to behave like a Japanese person.¹¹

Onset: Japanese Abduction Issue

The abduction issue – the Japanese nationals who were abducted by North Korea during the 1970s and 1980s – first surfaced in January 1980 when the *Sankei Shimbun* published a front-page story about several Japanese citizens who had been missing since the late 1970s and supposedly had been kidnapped from coastal areas in Japan by unspecified foreign agents. However, Tokyo and most of the people of Japan paid little attention to these suspected abductions until a number of years later when Kim Hyon-hui divulged during the interrogation on the KAL bombing that her instructor in North Korea was a Japanese woman who very much resembled Yaeko Taguchi. That Taguchi had gone missing on the same beach as a Japanese man suspected of being kidnapped in the mid 1980s simultaneously pushed the abduction issue into the public eye and pointed an accusatory finger at North Korea.¹² The DPRK continued to insist for years

¹¹– Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Outline and Background of Abduction Cases of Japanese Nationals by North Korea*, Tokyo, April 2002, accessed at www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n_korea/abduct.html; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Abductions of Japanese Citizens by North Korea*, Tokyo, April 2006; Policy Research Council, Liberal Democratic Party of Japan, *Normalization of Diplomatic Relations between Japan North Korea Depends on Resolution of Abduction Issue*, Tokyo, 2001, accessed at www.jimin.jp/jimin/english/news/news00.html.

¹²– Eric Johnston, “The North Korea Abduction Issue and Its Effect on Japanese Domestic Policy,” Japan Policy Research Institute, Working Paper, No. 101, June 2004.

that it had no connection to the kidnapping of Japanese nationals. Pyongyang blamed the suspected abductions, including that of the highly publicized case of the young teen Megumi Yokota, on Seoul's Agency for National Security Planning (ANSP), formerly called the Korea Central Intelligence Agency, which it also said was responsible for the KAL bombing. However, Pyongyang's determination to bolster its position that the DPRK had not been involved in the abduction of Japanese nationals, and particularly in the kidnapping of Megumi Yokota, caused it to go way too far. Pyongyang stated that it was not much of a secret that Megumi Yokota had been "an agent of the 'ANSP.'"¹³

Surging nationalism in Japan beginning in the first half of the 1990s fit well with the Japanese right's efforts to politicize the abduction issue. When Japan-North Korean normalization talks recommenced in 2000 after more than a seven-year interruption, Tokyo stressed in each of the three rounds of discussions held during the year that Pyongyang must deal with the suspected abductions. While Pyongyang told Tokyo during the talks that the DPRK Red Cross would continue with the investigation of the suspected "missing persons," it also emphasized that the abduction issue should not be addressed during the normalization discussions.¹⁴ Hoping to create an environment politically conducive to rapprochement, Tokyo resumed food aid to North Korea in 2000, which had ended right after the DPRK launched a Taepodong 1 missile that flew over Japanese territory in August 1998. Japanese conservatives, however, did not support the government's decision, maintaining that food aid to North Korea should not be restarted until Pyongyang demonstrated its willingness to deal with the abduction issue, as well as address Japan's nuclear and missile concerns

¹³ - "Japanese Papers Used by S. Korea in Anti-DPRK Campaign," *Korean Central News Agency*, February 11, 1997; "Truth on 'Suspected Kidnapping of Japanese Girl,'" *Korean Central News Agency*, April 28, 1997.

¹⁴ - Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Outline and Background of Abduction Cases of Japanese Nationals by North Korea*, Tokyo, April 2002.

relating to the DPRK. The last round of the Japan-North Korean normalization talks held in 2000 ended without resolving any major problems and without agreeing to a time to resume discussions.¹⁵ As it turned out, this poor ending to the rapprochement effort gave Japanese nationalists and organizations pushing hard for the resolution of the kidnapping problem more time – two years – to promote and further politicize the abduction issue.

Thus, prior to Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's first one-day trip to Pyongyang in September 2002, Tokyo had already made an unambiguous commitment to resolve the abduction issue before rapprochement could occur between Japan and North Korea. About a week before Koizumi's trip to the DPRK, then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda reaffirmed the government's position by informing a Diet committee that Tokyo had given high priority to the kidnappings and that it would "be difficult to ensure a comprehensive resolution [of Japan-North Korea problems] without any progress being made on this issue."¹⁶

Kim Jong-il's admission to Koizumi during their September 2002 summit that DPRK agents had perpetrated the abductions, although without official authorization, became the impetus for the resumption, after a two-year lapse, of Japan-North Korean normalization talks at the end of October. However, by this time President Bush had already designated North Korea as part of the "axis of evil." Moreover, the Bush administration had made it clear to Koizumi that normalization of Japan-North Korea relations should not occur until there was a resolution of the nuclear issue – the problem that emerged in early October 2002 when a US delegation to the DPRK accused Pyongyang of having a clandestine uranium-

¹⁵ - Mark Manyin, *North Korea-Japan Relations: The Normalization Talks and the Compensation/Repatriations Issue*, Congressional Research Service, Washington, DC, June 13, 2001.

¹⁶ - "Abduction Issue Key to Resuming Normalization Talks: Fukuda," *Kyodo News*, September 12, 2002.

enrichment program to build nuclear weapons.¹⁷ In a meeting in Tokyo about two weeks before the 12th round of Japan-North Korean normalization talks began in late October 2002, US Ambassador to Japan Howard Baker advised Director-General of the Defense Agency Shigeru Ishiba that Japan should be circumspect in the upcoming discussions with the DPRK. To this the hawkish Ishiba responded that Tokyo had reaffirmed that the DPRK was a “heinous” terrorist state.¹⁸

Arbitrariness

Aside from Pyongyang claiming South Korean culpability for the Rangoon and KAL bombings and despite the popular view that Kim Jong-il planned and authorized both of them,¹⁹ there were lingering suspicions that Seoul had been less than forthright about the 1987 airline tragedy. In July 2004, the chief representative of the families of the victims of the KAL catastrophe published a book maintaining that the South Korean government’s report on the bombing that appeared in January 1988 “was all made up.” Among other things, the book also claimed that Kim Hyon-hui was a double agent working for both South and North Korea, a charge that dovetailed with continuing rumors that the military-controlled South Korean government engineered the November 1987 bombing so that it could influence the results of the upcoming presidential election.²⁰

The US State Department never again linked Pyongyang in its reports on global terrorism to the 1983 Rangoon bombing after its 1996

¹⁷ - Anthony DiFilippo, “Security Trials, Nuclear Tribulations and Rapprochement in Japan-North Korean Relations,” *The Journal of Pacific Asia*, Vol. 11, 2004, pp. 7-31.

¹⁸ - “Baker Calls for Caution,” *Daily Yomiuri*, October 13, 2002, NewsBank (www.newsbank.com).

¹⁹ - Michael Mazarr, “Kim Jong-il: Strategy and Psychology,” Korea Economic Institute, *Academic Paper Series*, Vol. 1, No. 1, December 2006, p. 3.

²⁰ - “Two Opposing Views Speak on Truth of KAL Case,” *Korea Times*, July 19, 2004 (LexisNexis Academic).

publication, although this document did assert that Seoul thought that DPRK agents had been connected to the killing of a South Korean official in Russia.²¹ In its 1997 report, the State Department added another new allegation, maintaining that Pyongyang “may have been responsible” for killing a DPRK defector in South Korea.²² Although the State Department’s 1998 report dropped the allegations of Pyongyang’s part in murdering the DPRK defector and the South Korean official in Moscow, it continued to mention the KAL bombing and that North Korea was still harboring members of the Japanese Red Army who commandeered a Japan Airlines flight in 1970, forcing it to land in North Korea.²³ Still well before Osama Bin Ladin gained his spot in infamy for his connection to the suicidal hijackers who killed thousands in New York City in September 2001, the State Department asserted in its 1999 report that North Korea retained “links” to him “and his network,” presumably by selling weapons to support terrorist activities. However, for the first time since 1988 when the Reagan administration redesignated the DPRK a state sponsor of terrorism, the 1999 report made no direct or indirect reference to the 1987 KAL bombing. The 1999 report also indicated that it was a good sign that North Korea had made statements during the year rejecting all types of terrorism.²⁴

Consistent with the improved relationship between the Clinton administration and Pyongyang during 2000, the political tone describing the reasons for North Korea remaining on the US State Department’s list of countries sponsoring terrorism was changing for the better. The 2000 report on global terrorism began by indicating that Pyongyang’s participation in

²¹- US State Department, *1996 Patterns of Global Terrorism Report*, Washington, DC, July 1997, accessed at www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/1996Report/1996index.html.

²²- US State Department, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 1997*, Washington, DC, April 1998, accessed at www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/1997Report/1997index.html.

²³- US State Department, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 1998*, Washington, DC, April 1999, accessed at www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/1998Report/1998index.html.

²⁴- US State Department, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 1999*, Washington, DC, April 2000, accessed at www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/1999report/1999index.html.

three rounds of bilateral discussions with Washington on international terrorism led to a joint statement on this matter between the United States and the DPRK.

Issued on October 6, 2000, the joint statement between Washington and Pyongyang stressed that both parties concurred that any kind of international terrorism was unacceptable and that it represented a threat to international security. The joint statement also emphasized the agreement between Washington and Pyongyang to cooperate in the difficult work to combat global terrorism. Significantly, the joint statement indicated that after Pyongyang satisfies the demands of US law, Washington “will work in cooperation with the DPRK with the aim of removing the DPRK from the list of state sponsors of terrorism.”²⁵ For Pyongyang, the Clinton administration’s willingness to remove the DPRK from the list of states sponsoring terrorism, first suggested in 1999, confirmed that Washington’s policy was no longer viable. Pyongyang maintained that the DPRK had been “unreasonably” connected to terrorism, that its continued appearance on the State Department’s list was a remnant of the Cold War, and that its removal would improve bilateral relations with the United States.²⁶

The State Department’s 2000 report on global terrorism also dropped the explicit mention of the linkage between Bin Ladin and the DPRK, saying only as it did the previous year and as it would continue to do in a similar fashion until the publication of its 2002 report that Pyongyang “may have sold” weapons to terrorist organizations.²⁷ But despite its relatively improved tone, because the 2000 report on global terrorism was not published until

²⁵ - US Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000*, Washington, DC, April 30, 2001, accessed at www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2000/2441.htm; US Department of State, *Statement by Richard Boucher, Spokesman, Joint US-DPRK Statement on International Terrorism*, October 6, 2000, accessed at GlobalSecurity.org, www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/dprk/2000/dprk-001006c.htm.

²⁶ - “US Expresses Political Will to De-list DPRK as ‘State Sponsor of Terrorism,’” *Korean Central News Agency*, October 7, 2000.

²⁷ - US State Department, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000*.

the end of April 2001, Pyongyang was paying much more attention to the hostile policy of the new Bush administration than to the particulars discussed in the document. Especially disturbing to Pyongyang was that the Clinton administration's apparent willingness to remove North Korea from the list of states sponsoring terrorism was incompatible with the "anti-DPRK diatribe" emanating from the Bush administration. Pyongyang stressed that Washington's decade-long bombing of Iraq and the new Bush administration's recent air attacks, which took the lives of numerous Iraqi civilians while injuring many others, served as a clear indication that the United States was practicing international terrorism.²⁸

Not too long after the Bush administration took office in 2001, it rejected its predecessor's engagement of Pyongyang and soon undertook a policy review of North Korea. In addition to a number of senior officials within the Bush administration having major doubts about the trustworthiness of North Korea, the president himself early on expressed his distrust of Kim Jong-il.²⁹ Although not all senior officials within the Bush administration wanted to abandon the engagement track adopted by its predecessor, the hard-line policy easily prevailed over continuity well before the completion of the policy review in June 2001.³⁰ The day before South Korean President Kim Dae-jung met with President Bush at the White House on March 7, Secretary of State Colin Powell said, "We do plan to engage North Korea to pick up where President Clinton left off." However, just a day later Bush

28. "KCNA Refutes US Report on Terrorism," *Korean Central News Agency*, May 3, 2001; "Foreign Ministry Spokesman Assails US Report on Terrorism," *Korean Central News Agency*, May 4, 2001.

29. Elise Vander Vennet and Marvin Ott, *Incorrect Assumptions: A Critical Review of US Policy Toward North Korea*, National Defense University, National War College, Washington, DC 2002; The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, *Remarks by President Bush and President Kim Dae-jung of South Korea*, March 7, 2001, accessed at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/03/20010307-6.html.

30. The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, *Statement by the President*, Washington, DC, June 13, 2001, accessed at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/06/20010611-4.html#.

clarified things by stating, “We will not be negotiating with North Korea.”³¹ Publicly the Bush administration continued to maintain that it accepted the reconciliation approach that was inherent to Kim Dae-jung’s “sunshine policy.”³² But Bush’s snubbing of Kim when he visited the White House together with the US president’s serious reservations about the practicality of the “sunshine policy” indicated to Seoul that Washington’s DPRK policy would be quite different from what it was just several months before.³³

Thus, the US State Department’s discussion of North Korea in its 2001 report on global terrorism unmistakably bore the full footprint of the Bush administration. Although Pyongyang had not been accused of any new terrorist act during 2001, the State Department’s discussion of North Korea in the report from the beginning made clear that the Bush administration’s interpretation of past events differed markedly from its predecessor. Calling the DPRK’s efforts to deal with global terrorism “disappointing,” the 2001 report also maintained that Pyongyang’s failure to discuss the advancement and execution of the 1994 Agreed Framework, the US-DPRK accord that froze North Korea’s plutonium reprocessing facilities, mostly in Yongbyon, was problematic. Specifically, the report made the manifestly selective quantum leap from the static status of the Agreed Framework, which the hard-liners in the administration despised, to Bush’s concern that after the attacks on the United States on September 11 there was a disturbing connection between weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and terrorism, particularly with regard to nuclear development and proliferation.³⁴

³¹-US Department of State, *Interview on NBC’s Meet the Press with Tim Russert*, Washington, DC, December 29, 2002, accessed at www.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2002/16240.htm.

³²-US Department of State, *Briefing on Policy Toward North Korea*, Honolulu, Hawaii, May 26, 2001, accessed at www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/m/2001/3114.htm.

³³-Charles Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy: The Tragic Story of How North Korea Got the Bomb* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2007), pp. 70-74.

³⁴-US Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001*, Washington, DC, May 21, 2002, accessed at www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2001/html/10249.htm.

North Korea reacted harshly to the 2001 report, calling it a “foolish attempt” by Bush to legitimate his accusation that the DPRK is part of an “axis of evil,” while lambasting Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld for claiming that Pyongyang had sold WMD to terrorist organizations with which it previously established ties. Significantly, Pyongyang questioned the Bush administration’s reasoning: it wanted cooperation from the DPRK to combat international terrorism and at the same time it had abandoned the joint statement on international terrorism between the United States and North Korea issued in October 2000.³⁵

The US State Department’s 2002 report again described Pyongyang’s responses in dealing with terrorism as “disappointing.” Although the report mentioned that after the September 11 attacks on the United States Pyongyang published a statement re-emphasizing its aversion to terrorism, signed the UN Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and joined the International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages, overall the document concluded that the DPRK did little to deal effectively with terrorism. Missing since the 1998 report, the 2002 document alluded to the 1987 KAL bombing, while also introducing the DPRK’s international sales of missile technology to Syria and Libya – two other nations designated as state sponsors of terrorism.³⁶

The week before the US State Department issued its 2002 global terrorism report on April 30, 2003, China hosted delegations from Washington and Pyongyang for three days of talks in Beijing intended to resolve the worsening DPRK nuclear crisis. Assessing the outcome of these unsuccessful talks, Pyongyang reasoned that Washington had to develop “a sincere will to make a bold switchover in its policy toward the DPRK.”³⁷

³⁵- “KCNA on US Remarks on ‘Sponsors of Terrorism,’” *Korean Central News Agency*, May 27, 2002.

³⁶- US Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2002*, Washington, DC, April 30, 2003, 2002, accessed at www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2002/html/19988.htm.

³⁷- “DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesman on the US Attitude toward DPRK-US Talks,” *Korean Central News Agency*, April 25, 2003.

Perceiving sustained hostility from Washington – that by this time involved the revelation that the Bush administration had developed plans to launch nuclear strikes against several countries, including North Korea – Pyongyang again voiced its strong objection to the 2002 terrorism report, calling the Bush administration’s DPRK policy “preposterous.”³⁸

Shortly before the publication of the 2002 report, Japan’s defense chief Shigeru Ishiba made hawkish remarks that quickly got Pyongyang’s attention. Similar to a position he first articulated about two months earlier, Ishiba stated in late March 2003 when he was visiting Seoul that Japan’s constitution did not prohibit it from carrying out a preemptive strike against the DPRK, should it believe there existed an imminent threat from North Korean missiles.³⁹ Although Pyongyang had conducted two short-range missile tests in February and March 2003, neither Tokyo nor Washington viewed them as threatening. Despite the DPRK’s continuing efforts to bolster its *songun* (military-first) policy, the worsening North Korean nuclear crisis caused Pyongyang to feel increasingly threatened by the United States and Japan. Reacting harshly to the threat of preemptive attack from Japan and its heightening military preparedness, including the launching of spy satellites, Pyongyang at the same time disapprovingly stressed that Tokyo completely endorsed the “state-sponsored terrorism” undertaken by the United States against Iraq and its people.⁴⁰ Concerned about the combined military power of the United States and Japan, Pyongyang maintained that Washington and Tokyo had been conspiring and colluding to launch a preemptive attack on the DPRK.⁴¹

³⁸- “US Hit for Pulling Up DPRK over Terrorism,” *Korean Central News Agency*, May 5, 2003.

³⁹- “Preemptive Strike against N. Korea won’t be Unconstitutional: Japan Defense Chief,” *Agence France Presse*, March 30, 2003; “Ishiba: Japan to ‘Counterattack’ if N. Korea Prepares to Attack,” *Daily Yomiuri*, January 25, 2003 (both from LexisNexis Academic).

⁴⁰- “KCNA Blasts Japan’s Reckless Call for ‘Preemptive Attack,’” *Korean Central News Agency*, April 1, 2003; “KCNA Urges Japan to Behave with Discretion,” *Korean Central News Agency*, April 9, 2003.

⁴¹- “North Korea Assails US-Japan ‘Collusion’ for Preemptive Attack,” *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, April 2, 2003 (source: Central Broadcasting Station, Pyongyang, LexisNexis Academic).

Japanese Abduction Issue Added to US Terrorism Report

Kim Jong-il's admission to Koizumi that North Korean agents had been responsible for the kidnappings of Japanese nationals added considerable thrust to the nationalists' efforts to keep public attention focused squarely on the abduction issue, something that the media in Japan eagerly obliged. Now, the abductions had become the most politicized issue in Japan. Sidestepping the myriad atrocities connected to Japan's colonization of the Korean peninsula and the "comfort women" issue, Japanese conservatives were quick to increase the criticism of North Korea in the wake of the Koizumi-Kim summit in September 2002. Meeting with members of the abductees' families just days after the Koizumi-Kim summit, soon-to-be-appointed Director-General of the Defense Agency Ishiba stated that Japan "should view North Korea as [a] terrorist state" and "shouldn't have diplomatic ties with" it until Pyongyang expresses contrition and makes restitution for the kidnappings.⁴²

Many months before Kim's admission to Koizumi in September 2002 Japanese nationalists and members of the abductees' families had sought the Bush administration's assistance in dealing with the abduction issue.⁴³ Having eventually secured a meeting with the second-ranking official in the US State Department, members of the abductees' families were told in Washington by Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage in March 2003 that the Bush administration would bring up the abduction issue every time it talks with Pyongyang. What is more, at this meeting Armitage fully agreed with Megumi's father, Shigeru Yokota, that because the abduction issue was still unresolved, it should be properly viewed as an enduring terrorism

⁴²- "Abductees' Kin Express Sorrow, Anger," *Daily Yomiuri*, September 18, 2002 (NewsBank).

⁴³- "Bush Arrives in Tokyo, Keeps Hard Line on "Axis,"" *The Japan Times Online*, February 18, 2002; "Kin Thank Koizumi for Raising Abduction Issue," *The Japan Times Online*, February 19, 2002.

matter.⁴⁴ Yokota's position on the abduction issue mirrored that of Japanese nationalists. Then Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe, one of the most committed nationalists pushing for a hard-line position to resolve the abduction issue, met with members of the abductees' families very soon after they returned to Japan from their trip to the United States. Abe, who had played a big part in arranging the meetings that the members of the abductees' families had with American officials, stated at this time, "It was fruitful in that the United States formally expressed its view that the abductions were terrorism."⁴⁵ In March 2003, another well-known nationalist, Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara, asked (and answered) a rhetorical question, "Why doesn't the Japanese government judge the abduction [issue] as terrorism? I think it is terrorism."⁴⁶ But at this time there was still some reluctance in Tokyo, particularly in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to equate the abductions to terrorism. Publicly unwilling to characterize the abduction issue as terrorism, Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoriko Kawaguchi created somewhat of political stir when she met with members of the abductees' families in March. However, during a subsequent meeting of the Liberal Democratic Party, Kawaguchi yielded, saying that she believed the abductions complied with the criteria to be classified as terrorism.⁴⁷

Because of the constant push coming from Japanese nationalists and the organizations representing the abductees and their families, Tokyo began to urge the Bush administration in 2003 to include the abduction issue as a reason for the DPRK being identified as a state sponsor of terrorism

⁴⁴ - "Armitage Says US Will Raise Abductee Issue," *Daily Yomiuri*, March 7, 2003 (LexisNexis Academic).

⁴⁵ - "Koizumi to Seek Convincing Resolution to Abduction Issue," *Japan Economic Newswire*, March 10, 2003 (LexisNexis Academic).

⁴⁶ - "Nationalist Keeps Eye on Japan's Top Job," *Washington Post*, March 24, 2003 (LexisNexis Academic).

⁴⁷ - "Ministry Slammed over Handling of Abductions," *Daily Yomiuri*, April 25, 2003 (NewsBank).

in the US State Department's report.⁴⁸ During a visit to Tokyo in February 2004, Armitage again met with members of the abductees' families, telling them that the abduction issue would be included as a reason for North Korea being designated as a country supporting terrorism in the US State Department's forthcoming report.⁴⁹ Armitage also told them that the United States would bring up Japan's concerns about the abduction issue at the six-party talks,⁵⁰ something that the other four participants, Russia, China, South Korea, and certainly the DPRK, did not support. Also in February 2004, John Bolton, then the hard-line Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, declared, "North Korea remains on the list of state sponsors of terrorism and I can't think of any other way to describe the abduction of innocent civilians from Japan... as something other than acts of terrorism."⁵¹ At about this same time, Tokyo assured Shigeru Yokota that the Japanese delegation would bring up the abduction issue during the upcoming second round of the six-party talks, which had not convened since August 2003, even if it creates a problem there.⁵²

The sustained pressure by Japanese nationalists and members of the abductees' families to keep the abduction issue alone at the top of Tokyo's foreign policy agenda, along with the media attention in Japan given to the kidnappings, which whetted the public's disdain for North Korea while maintaining high levels of popular sympathy, came to a head in spring 2004. The publication in late April 2004 of the US State Department's 2003 report on global terrorism for the first time mentioned the abduction issue as one of

⁴⁸-Mark Manyin, *Japan-North Korea: Selected Issues*, Congressional Research Service, Washington, DC, November 26, 2003.

⁴⁹- "Abduction Issue Key to N. Korea Removal from Terror List: US," *Japan Economic Newswire*, April 1, 2004 (LexisNexis Academic).

⁵⁰- "Armitage: Abductions on Agenda," *International Herald Tribune-Asahi Shimbun*, February 3, 2004 (NewsBank).

⁵¹- US Department of State, *International Security Issues, Arms Control Matters, and Non-proliferation*, Beijing, February 16, 2004, accessed at www.state.gov/t/us/rm/29723.htm.

⁵²- "N. Korea to Face Pressure over Abductees at Six-Nation Talks," *Mainichi Daily News*, February 3, 2004 (LexisNexis Academic).

the reasons for North Korea's designation as a country supporting terrorism.⁵³ Koizumi's close relationship with Bush, together with the push from the hard-liners within his administration who viewed the kidnappings as consistent with the roguish behavior of the DPRK, made the inclusion of the abduction issue in the US terrorist report that much easier, especially since Japan had already become part of the "coalition of the willing" in Afghanistan and Iraq.

However, Tokyo did not have to wait for the publication of the US State Department's 2003 report on international terrorism to get the final confirmation of the news. A few days before the report's publication, Armitage told visiting Japanese Minister of the Environment Yuriko Koike that the abduction issue would be cited as a reason for North Korea being designated as a country sponsoring terrorism.⁵⁴ Even before this, on April 1, 2004, the Bush administration strongly suggested that the abduction issue would be named in the US State Department's 2003 report on international terrorism. The State Department's Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Cofer Black, told the House Subcommittee on International Terrorism that the kidnapping of Japanese nationals by North Korea is "one of the most important" reasons for it being identified as a country that supports terrorism.⁵⁵

While Japan welcomed the initial appearance of the abduction issue as additional reason for North Korea being identified as a country that supports terrorism,⁵⁶ Pyongyang saw it as just another indication of the Bush administration's hard-line DPRK policy. The DPRK's position was that

⁵³- United States Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003*, Washington, DC, April 29, 2004, accessed at www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2003/31644.htm.

⁵⁴- "Armitage Confirms Inclusion of Abduction Issue in US Report," *Kyodo News*, April 26, 2004.

⁵⁵- "Abduction Issue Key to N. Korea Removal from Terror List: US," *Japan Economic Newswire*, April 1, 2004 (LexisNexis Academic).

⁵⁶- "US Mentions Abduction Issue for the first Time in Terrorism Report," *Kyodo News*, April 30, 2004; "US Report Gives Japan Leverage on Abductions," *Daily Yomiuri*, May 1, 2004 (both from NewsBank).

the Pyongyang Declaration, signed by Kim Jong-il and Koizumi when the latter visited North Korea in September 2002, had resolved the abduction issue. Pyongyang further maintained that, because the abduction issue was between Japan and the DPRK, it was “none of [Washington’s] business.”⁵⁷ Although Seoul had estimated that the DPRK had kidnapped 486 South Koreans from the Korean War to the end of 2004,⁵⁸ these abductions had not become politicized in South Korea as they had in Japan. Expressing frustration over President Kim Dae-jung’s failure to take meaningful steps to deal with the kidnappings, a leader of an organization representing the families of the South Korean abductees stated in September 2000, “We got nothing from the ‘sunshine policy.’ No warmth of the policy has reached us.”⁵⁹ In contrast to the Japanese abductees discussed in the US State Department’s 2003 report on global terrorism, the Bush administration did not mention the South Korean kidnappings until the publication of the 2005 document.⁶⁰

The policy differences on the abduction issue between the Clinton and the Bush administrations are worth noting. The Clinton administration had worked hard with Tokyo beginning in 1996 to strengthen the US-Japan security alliance, partly because of the perceived threat from the DPRK.⁶¹ Still, the Clinton administration had reconciled many of the problems it had with Pyongyang by late 2000; because it had moved away from the Cold War mindset, the prospects for rapprochement between the United States and

57- “US Accusations against DPRK over ‘Issue of Terrorism’ Denounced,” *Korean Central News Agency*, May 3, 2004.

58- Ministry of Unification, *The White Paper on Korean Unification 2005*, Seoul, 2005.

59- The Republic of Korea, *Korea.net*, “Lee HC [Hoi-chang] Pledges Best Efforts for Return of Abductees from North,” Seoul, September 7, 2000, accessed at www.korea.net/News/News/NewsView.asp?serial_no=20000906022.

60- US Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2005*, Washington, DC, April 28, 2006, accessed at <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2005/64337.htm>.

61- Anthony DiFilippo, *The Challenges of the US-Japan Security Arrangement: Competing Security Transitions in a Changing International Environment* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002).

the DPRK were then greater than they had ever been in the past. Although the Clinton administration understood the importance of the – then alleged – abduction issue to Japan, it made clear to Tokyo in late 2000 that the de-listing of North Korea as a terrorist state was not contingent on the resolution of the kidnapping problem.⁶² In contrast, early on the many neocons within the Bush administration quickly adopted a position on the abduction issue that closely paralleled that of the right in Japan and, in particular, that of Japanese nationalists. For more than a decade, Japanese conservatives and nationalists have visibly distanced themselves from nuclear disarmament as a practical international agenda item and have taken a noticeably assertive stance on military matters, prompting concerns in Northeast Asia about Japanese remilitarization. Japanese nationalists have been pushing very hard since the early 1990s to make Japan a “normal country” (*fusuu kokka*) with a strong military that will both actively participate in international security operations (that is, those supported by Washington) and impose sanctions on a state whose actions are viewed as threatening.⁶³ Thus, not surprisingly, a policy synergism quickly evolved on the abduction issue between the Bush neocons and Japanese nationalists. Because the kidnappings elicited a popular *ad hominem* reaction, it became easier for Tokyo to justify the hard-line approach that the Bush administration had adopted toward North Korea, which included the US president’s fitful reminder that all options are on the table. All this makes it much easier to appreciate the response that Cofer Black gave at a press conference announcing the publication of the US State Department’s 2003 report on global terrorism. Asked why, since it was hardly a new problem between Tokyo and Pyongyang, the abduction issue was only then being mentioned for the first time in the report, Black responded by saying “the Department of State

⁶² Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, p. 86.

⁶³ Anthony DiFilippo, *Japan’s Nuclear Disarmament Policy and the US Security Umbrella* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

thought it was important; it was a key issue.”⁶⁴

Increasing Momentum

In the eyes of many in Tokyo, the Bush administration had placed its imprimatur on the abduction issue by designating the kidnappings acts of terrorism. The inclusion of the Japanese kidnappings as one of reasons for the DPRK being identified as a state sponsor of terrorism thus created in Japan what then seemed to be the indelible belief that not until the abduction issue was resolved could North Korea be taken off of the State Department’s list.⁶⁵

By the time Koizumi made his second trip to Pyongyang in May 2004, Tokyo had become unalterably locked into prioritizing the abduction issue, even though the DPRK nuclear crisis was progressively worsening. The second Koizumi-Kim summit ended on a reasonably good note, with Tokyo promising to send food and humanitarian aid to North Korea and Pyongyang committing to the reinvestigation of the abductions. However, three rounds of Japanese-DPRK talks between August and November 2004 resolved nothing on the abduction issue. Because of the incessant politicizing of the kidnappings and the emotionalism associated with them, shortly after the first round of bilateral talks held in August the Japanese public had already become very dissatisfied with Pyongyang’s failure to resolve the abduction issue. A survey conducted by The *Yomiuri Shimbun* in September 2004 showed that over 70 percent of the respondents did not want Tokyo to provide additional aid to North Korea and more than 85 percent felt that Pyongyang was not committed to an enthusiastic rein-

⁶⁴- US Department of State, *Ambassador J. Cofer Black, Coordinator, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism*, Foreign Press Center Briefing, Washington, DC, April 29, 2004.

⁶⁵- “Abductees’ Kin Top Priority in Talks/Threat of Sanctions,” *Daily Yomiuri*, May 4, 2004 (NewsBank).

vestigation of the abduction issue.⁶⁶

Japanese-DPRK relations worsened when Tokyo announced in December 2004 that DNA tests showed that the remains that Pyongyang said belonged to Megumi Yokota, as well as another abductee, were not theirs. Tokyo's evaluation of Pyongyang's reinvestigation of the abduction issue concluded that "the information and physical evidence provided by the DPRK to date is not at all adequate" to explain the fate of the abductees.⁶⁷ But even before Tokyo made public its conclusions about the kidnappings based on the information provided by North Korea, Pyongyang had reasoned that Japanese nationalists were much less concerned with resolving the abduction issue than with using it for ulterior reasons. Insisting that the remains were Megumi Yokota's and that the abduction issue had already been settled with Pyongyang Declaration, the DPRK maintained that the Japanese "ultra-right" had two reasons for not wanting to resolve this matter. First, by leaving the abduction issue unresolved, Pyongyang maintained that Japanese nationalists could continue to cast the DPRK in an unfavorable light, a strategy that would allow Japan to avoid coming to terms with the history problem that remains unsettled with North Korea. Second, by sustaining an anti-DPRK sentiment in Japan, "the ultra-right" could pursue their real objective, which is to escalate Tokyo's hostile policy toward North Korea.⁶⁸

Whether or not Pyongyang has been veracious with Tokyo about the abductions is not yet evident. But it is clear that Tokyo, following Washington's lead, did adopt and has maintained a hard-line policy toward the DPRK. Pleased that the Bush administration had designated the

⁶⁶- "Few Support Provision of Aid to North Korea," *Daily Yomiuri*, September 17, 2004 (NewsBank).

⁶⁷- Government of Japan, *Reinvestigation Concerning the Abductees Whose Safety Remains Unknown*, Tokyo, December 24, 2004.

⁶⁸- "KCNA Takes Ultra-Right Forces of Japan Accountable," *Korean Central News Agency*, December 23, 2004.

kidnapping of Japanese nationals as terrorism, Tokyo felt comfortable reiterating its pledge that normalization of relations with North Korea could only take place after there has been a resolution to the abduction issue. In accordance with the joint statement issued in September 2005 that came out of the fourth round of the six-party talks,⁶⁹ Japan and the DPRK held normalization talks in Beijing. Angered because the Bush administration had previously indicated that it was freezing DPRK funds at the Banco Delta Asia (BDA) in the Macau area of China and never especially pleased that Japan was participating in the six-party talks, Pyongyang felt that there was no reason to return to these multilateral discussions, which ultimately did not resume until December 2006. With plenty of distrust on both sides, the normalization talks between Japan and the DPRK that took place February 2006 ended on no better of a note than they had begun on.

Although Koizumi worked hard to internationalize the abduction issue, it was noticeably ratcheted up when nationalist Shinzo Abe became prime minister in September 2006. Abe immediately created the Headquarters for the Abduction Issue, which he led, to further articulate policy. In November 2006, the Japanese government identified another abductee, bringing the total to 17 – five of whom have returned to Japan.

But Pyongyang's actions only exacerbated problems. Working hard to demonstrate the advancement of *songun*, Pyongyang announced in February 2005 that it had developed nuclear weapons. With the six-party talks on hold because of the DPRK's demand that Washington lift the financial sanctions imposed on its funds at the BDA, North Korea launched a series of missiles in July 2006 and detonated a plutonium-based nuclear device in October 2006. Easily interpreted as aggressive actions, Japan and the United States imposed sanctions on the DPRK, as did the UN Security Council.

⁶⁹–US Department of State, *Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks*, Beijing, September 19, 2005, accessed at www.state.gov/t/pa/prs/ps/2005/53490.htm.

The Unraveling

By the end of 2006, three important factors converged to convince the Bush administration that a policy change was necessary if it wanted to resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis. First, the mid-term congressional elections in November 2006 resulted in the republicans losing control of both the House and the Senate to the democrats, who had won office in large part because of the lack of public support for the war in Iraq. Second, by the end of 2006 a number of the neocons had left the administration, those who had provided the push for the hard-line DPRK policy. Third, the administration's policies had proven to be unsuccessful with the countries that the president had identified in 2002 as constituting the "axis of evil." Thus, concerned about the president's legacy and desiring to lessen the brunt of criticism directed at the administration's failed policies, the move from a hard-line to a somewhat conciliatory DPRK policy offered the best hope.

The February 2007 six-party talks, according to US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, produced a "breakthrough" that would permit significant movement on the September 2005 joint statement.⁷⁰ Designed in two phases, the February Agreement, in addition to requiring a complete accounting from the DPRK of all of its nuclear programs, would ultimately disable North Korea's capability to produce nuclear weapons in exchange for a significant amount of energy, economic, and humanitarian aid.⁷¹ Although the agreement called for the other five other parties in the six-way talks to work together to assist the DPRK during the initial phase, Prime Minister Abe stressed that Japan's position that it "cannot provide support without a resolution of the abduction issue remains unchanged."⁷²

⁷⁰-US Department of State, Secretary Condoleezza Rice, *Briefing on the Agreement Reached at the Six-Party Talks in Beijing*, Washington, DC, February 13, 2007, accessed at www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2007/feb/80496.htm.

⁷¹-US Department of State, *North Korea - Denuclearization Action Plan*, Washington, DC, February 13, 2007, accessed at <http://www.state.gov/t/pa/prs/ps/2007/february/80479.htm>.

⁷²- "Japan Nixes Energy Aid to North Korea under New Agreement, Cites Abduction Issue," *Mainichi Daily News*, February 13, 2007.

The February 2007 action plan also called for the creation of working groups that would attempt to normalize relations between the United States and the DPRK and between the latter and Japan. After the Japan-DPRK working-group talks held in March 2007 quickly ended because of serious disagreements on the abduction issue, Pyongyang berated Japan for its failure to directly address the crimes that it committed against the Korean people in the past, which it said “are more horrendous” than the kidnappings that Tokyo continues to give such high priority to. Attempting to stake out the political high ground, Pyongyang maintained that it is not that important whether or not Japan provides energy assistance to the DPRK, since this aid would not have too much of an impact on the development of its economy; however, it also demanded that Tokyo “sincerely implement the agreement reached at the six-party talks.”⁷³

The February 2007 action plan agreed to at the six-party talks specified that Washington would begin the necessary work to remove the DPRK from the US State Department’s list of countries sponsoring terrorism and to relieve it from the adverse effects of the Trading with the Enemy Act. These two offers, which strongly suggest the arbitrariness of the terrorist designation, were probably made in November 2006 and again in January 2007 during bilateral discussions in Berlin between US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Christopher Hill and the DPRK’s Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye-gwan. In Berlin, Hill and Kim are believed to have signed a memorandum of understanding that closely resembled the February action plan.⁷⁴

Suddenly, the Bush administration was willing to remove the terrorist

⁷³- “KCNA Blasts Japan’s Scheme to Scuttle Six-Party Talks,” *Korean Central News Agency*, March 20, 2007.

⁷⁴- Larry Niksch, *North Korea: Terrorism List Removal?* Congressional Research Service, Washington, DC, December 11, 2007; “Washington, Pyongyang Signed Nuclear Memorandum Last Month,” *Asahi Shimbun*, February 8, 2007; “Hill Denies Signing Alleged Memorandum with DPRK,” *Xinhua Online*, February 8, 2007.

label from the DPRK in exchange for a resolution to the North Korean nuclear crisis. Had the Bush administration followed the conciliatory course adopted in 2000 by its predecessor, which included not connecting the abduction issue to the removal of North Korea from the US list of countries sponsoring terrorism, Pyongyang would not have been constantly assailing Washington for embracing a hostile policy, which it often maintained was a prelude to war. A genuine commitment to the continuation of a conciliatory approach by the Bush administration would have increased mutual trust and in all probability would have precluded Pyongyang from making the imprudent and provocative decision to detonate a nuclear device. By doing this, Pyongyang provided US hardliners, including those that left the Bush administration, with more political grist for the mill that many of them have used in their continuing efforts to derail the negotiating policy approach that has made progress in resolving the DPRK nuclear crisis.

At first, Tokyo was in a state of denial, not willing to believe that the Bush administration would actually remove North Korea from the State Department's list. The day after the February six-party talks concluded Prime Minister Abe and Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki did their best to try to make sense out of what happened in Beijing. Abe stated, "The process toward removing the designation and the actual removing of the designation after all conditions are fulfilled are separate things," stressing also that the United States "fully understands that the abduction issue is an extremely important issue for us." Referring to the action plan to denuclearize North Korea, Shiozaki similarly maintained, "The agreement was to begin the process of removing the designation, not of removing it."⁷⁵ That the Bush administration had declared its intention to start the process of de-listing the DPRK also appears not to have fully registered with the members of the abductees' families and their backers. In March 2007, they

⁷⁵- "N. Korea Stays on US Terrorist List Until Abduction Issue Solved: Japan," *Kyodo News*, February 14, 2007.

proposed that the Japanese government create legislation that would designate North Korea a state that sponsors terrorism, just as the United States had done.⁷⁶

The Bush administration continued to keep alive the idea that delisting would not occur until there was a resolution to the abduction issue. However, in reality it was steadily and subtly making the case that, while supporting Japan's efforts to resolve the abduction issue, this was not a prerequisite for removing the DPRK from the State Department's list of countries sponsoring terrorism. When Abe visited Bush at Camp David in April 2007, the president must have privately told the prime minister that his administration had not changed its position on the abduction issue. In a joint press briefing Abe stated, "With regard to the abduction issue, President Bush once again expresses unvarying commitment to support the government of Japan."⁷⁷ However, the Bush administration was now ready for the first time to clarify its new position on the kidnappings, since Secretary of State Rice later told Abe something much different at the presidential retreat. Rice informed Abe that the resolution of the abduction issue did not have to occur before Washington removes North Korea from the State Department's list of countries sponsoring terrorism.⁷⁸

Just a few days after Abe's visit to Camp David, the Bush administration dropped the second shoe on Tokyo. The US State Department's new report on global terrorism indicated that the Bush administration had both mollified and changed its position on the abduction issue. Significantly, this report stated that Washington and Pyongyang, as stipulated in the agreement reached at the six-party talks held in February 2007, would initiate

⁷⁶- "Abductees' Kin Want N. Korea Named as Sponsor of Terrorism," *The Japan Times Online*, March 12, 2007.

⁷⁷- The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, *President Bush and Prime Minister Abe of Japan Participate in Joint Press Availability*, Camp David, Maryland, April 27, 2007.

⁷⁸- "Rice Downplays Link between N. Korea Abductions and Terror Status Issues," *Jiji Press*, May 12, 2007 (NewsBank); "Abductions No Bar to US Delisting of North," *Asahi Shimbun*, May 14, 2007.

the process of taking the DPRK off of the State Department's list of countries supporting terrorism.⁷⁹ Attempting to check the process set in motion, Abe's special adviser on the abduction issue, Kyoko Nakayama, made a firm request to a senior official in the State Department during her visit to Washington in May not to remove North Korea from the list of countries sponsoring terrorism until there has been a satisfactory resolution to the kidnappings.⁸⁰

The resolution of the BDA row between Washington and Pyongyang was an unambiguous indication that the Bush administration had moved away from its hard-line DPRK policy. But this did nothing to assuage Tokyo's problem with North Korea. While resolving the nuclear and missile issues has always been important to Tokyo, policymakers had backed Japan into a corner by remaining unrelentingly obsessed with the kidnappings. For its part, Pyongyang has continued to insist that the abduction issue has already been resolved. Thus, when delegates from Japan and the DPRK met for two days in September 2007 to discuss the possibility of holding normalization talks, while the atmosphere was less acerbic than the March meetings, both sides remained deadlocked.⁸¹ The day after the talks ended the Abe government announced that it would extend for an additional six months the sanctions that Japan had imposed on North Korea following its nuclear test.⁸² In office just days, Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda's cabinet approved the extension of the sanctions in late September because, as Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura stated, "There is basically no progress" in settling the abduction issue and so "we are not in a situation in which we can

⁷⁹- US Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2006*, Washington, DC, April 30, 2007, accessed at www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2006/82736.htm; US Department of State, *Briefing on Release of 2006 Country Reports on Global Terrorism*, Washington, DC, April 30, 2007, accessed at www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/mm/07/83999.htm.

⁸⁰- "Nakayama Urges US not to Remove N. Korea from Terrorist List," *Kyodo News*, May 31, 2007.

⁸¹- "N. Korea Talks Less Bitter, But No Results," *Asahi Shimbun*, September 8, 2007.

⁸²- "Government to Extend N. Korea Sanctions," *Daily Yomiuri Online*, September 7, 2007.

stop or ease the sanctions.”⁸³ Calling them provocative, since they would only worsen DPRK-Japan relations, Pyongyang stated, “It does not make any sense to talk about normalizing relations while challenging the dialogue partner with sanctions.”⁸⁴

Meanwhile, working-group discussions between the United States and the DPRK held in Geneva in early September 2007 ended on a favorable note, clearing the way for more progress to be made at the six-party talks, which took place at the end of the month. Pyongyang indicated right after these working-group talks that there had been a consensus reached in Geneva to “neutralize” its nuclear facilities by the end of December and that in exchange Washington agreed to “de-listing the DPRK as a terrorism sponsor and lifting all sanctions that have been applied according to the Trading with the Enemy Act.”⁸⁵ Although Christopher Hill stated that the DPRK had agreed to disable its nuclear facilities and to give a complete accounting of its nuclear programs by the end of the December, in contrast to Pyongyang, he pointed out that North Korea still had work to do before it could be removed from the State Department’s terrorism list.⁸⁶

At the September six-party talks the DPRK formally agreed to disable its nuclear facilities at Yongbyon and to make a complete declaration of its nuclear programs, both by the end of the year. For its part, the United States reaffirmed its commitment to remove the DPRK from its list of states sponsoring terrorism and to end the restraints imposed on North Korea by the Trading with the Enemy Act in conjunction with actions taken by

⁸³- “Sanctions on North Korea to be Extended Six Months,” *The Japan Times Online*, October 1, 2007.

⁸⁴- “Japan’s Extension of Sanctions against DPRK Flailed,” *Korean Central News Agency*, October 24, 2007.

⁸⁵- “Foreign Ministry Spokesman on Recent DPRK-US Talks,” *Korean Central News Agency*, September 3, 2007.

⁸⁶- “North Korea Says US Will Lift Sanctions,” *New York Times*, September 4, 2007; “US Denies Accord to Remove N. Korea from Terrorism List,” *Kyodo News*, September 4, 2007.

Pyeongyang agreed to at working-group meetings between the two countries.⁸⁷ Realizing that time was not on its side, the Japanese went on the offensive. Prime Minister Fukuda's special advisor on the abduction issue Kyoko Nakayama stressed that not releasing people that it had kidnapped makes North Korea a terrorist state, adding that if Washington de-lists the DPRK and disregards the kidnappings, "You can expect that relations between Japan and the United States will not improve."⁸⁸ Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura similarly commented that the removal of North Korea from the list of states sponsoring terrorism "certainly would not have a good influence on the Japan-US relationship."⁸⁹

By the fall 2007, the Bush administration had become determined to resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis, despite Tokyo's position on the abduction issue. State Department Deputy Spokesman Tom Casey (unwittingly) confirmed that the Bush administration had adopted the policy of its predecessor when, in referring to the abduction issue and the removal of North Korea from the list of countries sponsoring terrorism, he indicated, "The two are not necessarily specifically linked."⁹⁰ When Prime Minister Fukuda visited Bush at the White House in November 2007, Bush thanked Japan for its support in the six-party talks, which he said are making progress in disabling North Korea's nuclear weapons program and in stemming its proliferation activities. When it came to the abduction issue, Bush reached deep into his emotional pocket, the one where just the right empathic words are kept for use, even though they have no bearing on US policy. With Fukuda by his side, Bush reminisced about his heartrending

⁸⁷- US Department of State, *Six-Party Talks: Second-Phase Actions for the Implementation of the September 2005 Joint Statement*, Washington, DC, October 3, 2007, accessed at www.state.gov/t/pa/prs/ps/2007/oct/93217.htm.

⁸⁸- "Japan Warns US over North Korea," *Agence France-Presse*, October 25, 2007.

⁸⁹- "N. Korea Removal from Blacklist May Hurt Japan-US Ties: Machimura," *Kyodo News*, November 12, 2007.

⁹⁰- "N. Korea's Terror Status not Linked to Abduction Issue: US," *Kyodo News*, November 13, 2007.

moments when he met with Megumi Yokota's mother at the White House in April 2006, saying to her, "and I'm going to tell the Japanese people once again, we will not forget this issue."⁹¹

With the disablement process underway in November 2007, Tokyo heard more bad news that seemingly brought closer the day when the Bush administration would de-list North Korea. Referring to North Korea's continuing provision of refuge to members of the Japanese Army, which had long been a reason why it has been designated as a country sponsoring terrorism, a high-ranking State Department official pointed out in late November, "I think that is something Japan and the DPRK have to sort out among themselves."⁹²

Although the disablement process at Yongbyon continued to make satisfactory progress, Pyongyang did not meet the agreed deadline of December 31. However, it was not the disablement process that bothered Washington; rather, it was that the declaration submitted by Pyongyang did not, according to the Bush administration, give a full accounting of the DPRK's nuclear facilities. The Bush administration has remained particularly concerned that two things be completely explained in the declaration: the DPRK's uranium-enrichment program, which precipitated the North Korean nuclear crisis in October 2002, and North Korea's nuclear proliferation activities in Syria.

In early January 2008 a spokesperson for the DPRK Foreign Ministry announced that, although the disablement process had previously moved along at a quick and steady pace, Pyongyang now "is compelled to adjust the disablement of some nuclear facilities [based] on the principle of 'action for action,'" which had been agreed to at the six-party talks held in September

⁹¹- The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, *President Bush and Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda of Japan in Joint Statements*, Washington, DC, November 16, 2007, accessed at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/11/20071116-8.html.

⁹²- "US De-links JAL Hijackers, North Korea Terror Status," *The Japan Times Online*, November 23, 2007.

2005. The foreign ministry justified the decision to slow down the disablement process by stating that the shipment of heavy fuel oil and other materials had not been arriving in the DPRK as per the agreement reached with the other countries involved in the six-party talks. The foreign ministry continued to deny the existence of a uranium-enrichment program and that the DPRK had provided nuclear assistance to Syria. The foreign ministry also indicated that it had informed Washington of its nuclear programs in November and stressed that the Bush administration has not kept its promises to remove the DPRK from the US terrorist list and to disassociate it from the Trading with the Enemy Act.⁹³

Although Japan remained steadfast in not contributing to the DPRK assistance package, which had been agreed to at the six-party talks, until satisfactory progress had been made on the abduction issue, this did not stop Tokyo from commenting on Pyongyang's failure to meet the deadline. On the last day of December 2007, a spokesperson for the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated, "It is unfortunate that this declaration has not been provided yet."⁹⁴ A month later Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura again called attention to the fact that "a complete declaration has not yet been made" and that Pyongyang "must take appropriate action" so that the goal of denuclearizing the Korean peninsula can be realized.

Recently, Pyongyang has continued to call on Japan to withdraw from the six-party talks, arguing that, unlike the other countries, it has not met its obligations. Pyongyang has maintained that Tokyo's intention is to infuse divisiveness into the six-party process, since its principal objective is not to resolve the nuclear crisis. Rather, what Tokyo wants first and foremost, says Pyongyang, is to bring increasing pressure on the DPRK to deal with the

⁹³- "DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesman on Issue of Implementation of October 3 Agreement," *Korean Central News Agency*, January 4, 2008.

⁹⁴- "Refiling: Japan Urges N. Korea to Declare All Nuclear Programs Immediately," *Kyodo News*, December 31, 2007; "Japan Reiterates Call on North Korea to Fulfill Nuclear Commitments," *Kyodo News*, January 29, 2008.

abduction issue; and failing this, to spoil the six-party talks.⁹⁵

Feelings of Abandonment

Despite Tokyo's warnings to Washington and its efforts intended to persuade the Bush administration to recommit to not de-listing North Korea until there has been progress made on the abduction issue, the best it could get has been generically weak political comments, such as the United States "will not abandon Japan's concerns over the abductees." Significantly departing from when it had maintained the hard-line policy that the abduction issue was unequivocally state sponsored terrorism, the Bush administration's position had morphed into oversimplified optimism: satisfactory movement on the nuclear issue will lead to normalization talks with Pyongyang, which in turn will give Washington a way to influence the DPRK to settle the abduction issue.⁹⁶

Tokyo's discontent with Washington's willingness to de-list North Korea, conditioned on what happens with regard to the nuclear issue, appears to have quickly spread to the Japanese public. In the wake of the six-party talks held in September 2007, the Japanese Cabinet Office's annual survey on public attitudes of foreign countries found that the percentage of respondents that believed that Japan's relationship with the United States was in trouble reached an all-time high of 20 percent, increasing sharply from 12 percent in 2006.⁹⁷ Although Tokyo appeared placid, even after Bush failed to refer to North Korea in his State of the Union Address that he gave in January 2008, by this time Japan had serious concerns that, should

⁹⁵- "Japan Accused of Standing in Way of Six-Party Talks," *Korean Central News Agency*, February 19, 2008.

⁹⁶- "De-listing N. Korea not to Hurt Ties with Japan: US Official," *Kyodo News*, December 13, 2007.

⁹⁷- "Record 20% of Japanese Say US-Japan Relations not Good," *Asahi Shimbun*, December 3, 2007.

there be more progress on the nuclear issue, North Korea would be removed from the US terrorist list.⁹⁸

Conclusion: From Divisiveness to Synthesis

Rather than try to move the United States completely out of the Cold War mire that had trapped and repressed its relationship with the DPRK for more than five decades, the Bush administration decided for several years that the best policy approach was to reject the conciliatory efforts adopted – albeit late – by the Clinton White House. For Japan, its imperial and militarist past, which involved the decades-long annexation of the Korean peninsula, created major problems with both Koreas from the time they came into existence in 1948 and for years thereafter. The eventual normalization of relations between Japan and South Korea mitigated some of their past problems. Moreover, that both remained strong allies of the United States and that all three were on the same side during the Cold War helped somewhat to dampen tensions between Seoul and Tokyo. However, Japan and North Korea remained on opposite sides of the political divide occasioned by the Cold War and this, when combined with their troubled history, resulted in an adversarial relationship that continues to the present day. Thus, not only did the politics of the Cold War create major and persistent problems in the relations between the United States and the DPRK and between the latter and Japan, they have continued through the post-Cold War years.

Since the State Department's terrorism reports have often indicated that North Korea is not known to have been involved in terrorist activities since 1987, whether its initial placement and reappearance on the US list for the Rangoon and KAL bombings were justified, the result of Cold War

⁹⁸ - "Japan Remains Calm over Bush not Mentioning N. Korea in Speech," *Japan Economic Newswire*, January 29, 2008 (LexisNexis Academic).

politics, or both became moot long ago. Indeed, there often is some amount of arbitrariness associated with being identified as, and retaining the designation of, a state supporting terrorism, as North Korea has been for many years. But North Korea is not the only country where this arbitrariness can be discerned.

For example, during the Cold War, the Soviet Union, some of its Eastern European allies, and Cuba were named as countries supporting terrorist activities. In early 1987, President Reagan proclaimed that there was a “conclusive” connection between the increase in global terrorism and the Soviet Union. Reagan maintained that, although Moscow did not have direct relations with terrorist groups, it provided military equipment, funds, and advice to revolutionary states, such as North Korea and Cuba, which in turn worked with terrorists and radicals.⁹⁹ Cuba’s continued designation as a state sponsor of terrorism in recent years has raised the question that its appearance on the list is more of a political matter than anything else.¹⁰⁰

Regarding the DPRK, although the members of the Japanese Red Army hijacked a Japanese airliner in 1970, this matter was not mentioned in the US State Department reports on global terrorism until the publication of its 1988 issue. Still more evidence of the arbitrary application of North Korea’s continued designation as a state sponsor of terrorism emerged after Kim Jong-il acknowledged in September 2002 the DPRK’s culpability for kidnapping Japanese nationals. These abductions were not mentioned in the US State Department’s 2002 report on global terrorism published in April 2003 but rather – 19 months later – for the first time, in its 2003 issue. Put differently, after the trilateral talks in April 2003 between the United

⁹⁹- “Reagan: ‘Conclusive’ Link between Soviet Union, Terrorism” *United Press International*, January 29, 1987 (LexisNexus Academic).

¹⁰⁰- Mark Sullivan, *Cuba and the State Sponsors of Terrorism List*, Congressional Research Service, Washington DC, May 13, 2005; Raphael Perl, *The Department of State’s Patterns of Global Terrorism Report: Trends, State Sponsors, and Related Issues*, Congressional Research Service, Washington, DC, June 1, 2004.

States, China, and the DPRK and two rounds of six-party talks in August 2003 and in February 2004 failed to resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis, Washington's hard-line policy accommodated Tokyo, which had been urging its ally to include the abduction issue in its report on global terrorism.

With somewhat less pressure from the far right, the Bush administration made evident in early 2007 its decision to abandon its hard-line DPRK policy and move away from the Cold War paradigm that had guided its relations with Pyongyang since 2001. Although the motivation for doing this has been self-serving and hardly pristine, since in the midst of policy failures scoring a political victory with an "axis of evil" country would certainly improve Bush's legacy, nonetheless the administration's efforts to free Washington from the Cold War constraints that have largely shaped its approach to the DPRK are significant progress. North Korea's desire to establish a permanent peace with the United States, so long as it does not feel threatened by Washington, has also helped to loosen the Cold War mold that has served to maintain confrontational relations.

However, Tokyo and Pyongyang have yet to deal with the problems that have caused their bilateral relationship to be characterized chiefly by distrust and enmity. Hard-liners in both Japan and the DPRK remain adamant, unwilling to demonstrate the flexibility needed to move toward rapprochement. That conditions in Japan have worsened for Chongryon Koreans since Kim Jong-il admitted to the abductions in 2002 provides a powerful testimony to the very troubled relationship between Tokyo and Pyongyang,¹⁰¹ as does the significant Japanese concern not only with the kidnappings but also with the DPRK nuclear and missile issues.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹-Anthony DiFilippo, "Targeting Chongryun?" *Policy Forum Online*, Nautilus Institute, Center for the Pacific Rim, University of San Francisco, October 11, 2007, www.nautilus.org/fora/security/07076DiFilippo.html.

¹⁰²- See survey results of Japanese attitudes on North Korean issues from Japan's Cabinet Office, December 2006, The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation, accessed at www.mansfieldfdn.org/polls/poll-06-17.htm.

Tokyo and Pyongyang must first develop a mindset of *détente*, which will be enormously helpful in their appreciating the advantages of working equitably to resolve the DPRK's concerns stemming from the history problem and Japan's connected to the abduction issue. Both sets of problems, as unfortunate as they are, happened in the distant past; to settle them, they must be viewed with historical lens and not those that distort the prospect of an improved present and future. Therefore, resolving these problems will require that Tokyo and Pyongyang fully recognize that concessions from both are necessary and that rapprochement offers far more to Japan and the DPRK than does the status quo, which has its roots deeply embedded in a past that has fossilized uncompromising and parochial perspectives on both sides.

Whether or not Washington removes the DPRK from the US State Department's list of countries sponsoring terrorism and frees it from the constraints imposed by the Trading with the Enemy Act is not nearly as important to Japan and North Korea as Tokyo and Pyongyang jettisoning the Cold War mentality that has crippled bilateral relations. However, should the United States remove the DPRK from its terrorist list and end the restrictions connected to the Trading with the Enemy Act, Tokyo and Pyongyang would then have the opportunity to make good use of the propitious political wake created by Washington and begin seriously working to establish normal diplomatic relations.

Moreover, significant and determined steps to normalize Japan-North Korean relations will markedly improve the security environment in Northeast Asia. Such an environment, ideally without the terrorist label being applied to North Korea, will add impetus to efforts to unify the Korean peninsula.

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South Korea's Paradigm Shift in North Korean Policy and Trilateral Cooperation among the US, Japan, and Korea

Sachio Nakato

Abstract

This paper analyzes problems of triangle cooperation among Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo, while a new optimism is rising especially in Japan with the birth of the conservative South Korean government along with the Fukuda government which emphasizes Asian diplomacy. First, the new approach of President Lee Myung-bak's foreign and security policies, called the MB Doctrine, is explored. Secondly, the paper analyzes several constraints for the Lee administration to pursue the MB doctrine. Thirdly, it tries to show that Japan has to face policy dilemma in dealing with North Korea since it has no choice but to depend on development of US-North Korea as well as inter-Korean relations when it negotiates with North Korea. Finally, the paper suggests that the new opportunity for possible US-Japan-Korea's new trilateral cooperation will also give uncertain challenges for Japan as well as South Korea.

Key Words: MB doctrine, reciprocity, US-Japan-Korea trilateral cooperation, North Korea's nuclear issue, Japan-North Korea relations

Beginning of a New Era

The birth of new conservative President Lee Myung-bak opens the door for resumption in trilateral cooperation among Seoul, Washington, and Tokyo in dealing with North Korea and more broadly with regional security in Northeast Asia.¹ President Lee has actually been eager to repair relations with the United States and Japan. As part of such efforts, South Korean President Lee Myung-bak made his five-day trip to the United States from April 15 with a pledge to open a new era of pragmatic diplomacy. President Lee also visited Japan on his way back from the United States. Under the liberal Roh Moo-hyun administration, relations with Washington were frayed over North Korean policy. Also, ties with Tokyo suffered from historical and territorial disputes including a Korean occupied island in the Sea of Japan or East Sea. These visits symbolized the importance of US-South Korea relations as well as South Korea-Japan relations in the Lee Myung-bak administration.

The summit meetings between President George W. Bush and President Lee Myung-bak successfully emphasized the value of the bilateral relationship between the United States and South Korea. First, South Korea and the United States made important progress toward repairing distrust in alliance that arose during the previous Roh Moo-hyun administration, especially regarding North Korea. Secondly, the United States and South Korea expanded the concept of alliance to “comprehensive strategic alliance” which purports to cope with comprehensive security threats of the 21st century such as terrorism, proliferation of WMD, and others. Thirdly, the two leaders also committed to passing free trade agreements between the countries. As a result of the summit meetings, the United States and South Korea to some extent recovered trust in each other.

¹- There are many arguments to expect effective policy coordination among Korea, the United States, and Japan with the change in government in Seoul. See “Restoring Korea-US-Japan ‘virtual alliance,’” *Korea Herald*, April 18, 2008.

In addition, the talks between Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and South Korean President Lee Myung-bak in Tokyo on April 21, 2008 marked a significant first step to repair Japan-Korea relations. President Lee has stated clearly his intention not to request Japan's apology for its wrongdoings in the past by saying that a forced apology is not a genuine apology. Rather, talks between Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and President Lee Myung-bak were devoted to "future-oriented discussion" without the prerequisite of a Japanese apology. The two leaders also agreed that a mature partnership involves expanded cooperation in the materials and parts industries, an increase in youth exchanges through such programs as working holidays, and frequent meetings between heads of the two governments.

In this paper, the author tries to analyze problems of triangle cooperation among Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo, while a new optimism is rising especially in Japan with the birth of the conservative South Korean government along with the Fukuda government which emphasizes Asian diplomacy. Prior to meeting with Prime Minister Fukuda, President Lee and President Bush confirmed that the two leaders would try to enhance the US-South Korea alliance and freeze a plan to reduce the number of US troops in South Korea. It is considered good news to deepen cooperation among the United States, South Korea, and Japan as well as between Japan and South Korea. In Japan, for example conservative newspapers such as *Sankei Shimbun* suggested in its April 22nd editorial that it is vital for US-Japan-South Korea to exert a certain measure of pressure on North Korea to give up nuclear weapons.² However, such optimism for better trilateral cooperation in dealing with North Korea needs to be explored in the context of inter-Korean relations as well as the likely prospect for US-South Korea-Japan policy coordination.

² - *Sankei Shimbun*, April 22, 2008. Also see *Yomiuri Shimbun*, April 22, 2008.

Paradigm Shift: Pragmatic North Korean Policy

President Lee Myung-bak proposed initiatives for Denuclearization and Opening up North Korea to achieve a per capita income of \$3,000, once North Korea abandons its nuclear program and chooses the path to openness. South Korea will provide assistance to North Korea, so that it can raise the per capita income of North Korea to \$3,000 within 10 years.³ The new approach of President Lee's foreign and security policies, called the MB Doctrine, comprises two pillars; engagement with North Korea, and a solid Korea-US alliance. While the details of the new approach remain unclear, the MB doctrine differs from the operating principle of the Sunshine Policy as well as from the Peace and Prosperity Policy during the previous liberal governments in at least the following three aspects.

Firstly, the MB doctrine emphasizes a "politics first, economy later" or "political-economic linkage" approach in dealing with North Korea. Previous liberal governments tried to separate politics and the economy when dealing with North Korea. According to Professor Moon Chung-in, considered one of the principal architects of the DJ doctrine or the Sunshine Policy, one of the major operating principles of the DJ doctrine is flexible dualism. The core aspect of this flexible dualism lies in the separation of politics and economy.⁴ The DJ doctrine noticed that past governments failed to overcome the inter-Korean stalemate because they were preoccupied with the primacy of politics and its linkage with economy. Nevertheless, the MB doctrine emphasizes political-economic linkage, pleading that it will help

³- Inauguration speech, February 25, 2008.

⁴- Flexible dualism can be summarized in the following four features: (1) Easy tasks first, difficult tasks later; (2) Economy first, politics later; (3) Non-governmental organization first, government later; and (4) give first, take later. Chung in Moon, "Understanding the DJ Doctrine," in Chung-in Moon and David I. Steinberg, eds., *Kim Dae-jung Government and Sunshine Policy: Promises and Challenges* (Yonsei University Press, 1999), p. 39. Also, see Chung-in Moon, "The Kim Dae-jung Government and Changes in Inter-Korean Relations - In Defense of the Sunshine Policy," *Korea and World Affairs*, Vol. XXV, No. 4 (Winter 2001), p. 519.

build up the North Korean economy on the condition of complete denuclearization. In this sense, the MB doctrine is different from those of the last two liberal governments.

Secondly, North Korea needs to move first, and get support from South Korea later. The MB doctrine demands that North Korea initiate the dismantling of nuclear weapons *before* it receives economic cooperation from South Korea. In other words, North Korea's denuclearization, opening up North Korea, and promoting joint economic projects are supposed to be promoted in that sequence. This is also a fundamental shift in order since former Unification Minister Jeong Se-Hyun argued in his interviews that South Korea should move first, then North Korea will respond to inter-Korean relations.⁵ Therefore, the "Denuclearization, Openness, 3000" initiative shows rather a different picture than the previous Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun governments. In a nutshell, it is North Korea that should move first (meaning denuclearization), then South Korea will respond with economic support.

Thirdly, the concept of reciprocity is emphasized in the Lee Myung-bak administration.⁶ President Lee's pragmatism is reflected in the fact that the principle of reciprocity is stated in his North Korean policy. Former President Kim Dae-jung as well as Roh Moo-hyun in the past administrations made excessive economic concessions to North Korea in return for inter-Korean summits in 2000 and 2007. The so-called Sunshine Policy and Peace and Prosperity Policy of the two predecessors have been criticized for unconditional economic assistance to the North, while it refuses to give up its nuclear ambitions. On the other hand, the Lee administration negates the

⁵- *Monthly Mal*, August 2006, p. 169.

⁶- Leon Sigal pointed out that critics correctly argue that engagement policy cannot be sustained for a long time either in Korea or the United States if it lacks reciprocity. The Lee Myung-bak government is fully aware of this point. Chon, Hyun-Joon, ed., *Pukhekmunaeui haepoekwa jeonmang* [Solutions and Prospect for North Korean Nuclear Issues], *Joongang M&B*, 2003, p. 223.

Sunshine and Peace and Prosperity Policies and establishes the stance of his North Korean policy based on reciprocity and conditionality.

When discussing reciprocity, in order to make a conceptual clarification, it is useful to differentiate the notion of reciprocity into at least two conceptual categories: specific reciprocity and diffuse reciprocity. Specific reciprocity requires simultaneous exchange and the exchange is balanced at every moment. On the other hand, a pattern of diffuse reciprocity can be maintained only by a widespread sense of obligation. The exchange based on diffuse reciprocity takes place sequentially rather than simultaneously. Diffuse reciprocity may reduce the chances of unnecessary conflicts but exposes its practitioners to the danger of exploitation. In contrast to the possibility of exploitation, specific reciprocity deters non-conformance by focusing on responses in its practitioners' counterparts, but thereby restricts the possible bargains that can be reached.⁷

In this sense, one could characterize the Sunshine Policy or the Peace and Prosperity Policy as based on the principle of diffuse reciprocity. The Sunshine Policy placed more emphasis on diffuse reciprocity than on specific reciprocity. The former Unification Minister Jeong Se-Hyun outlined the concept of reciprocity in inter-Korean relations during the Roh Moo-hyun government with the following three features: give first, take later; give more, take less; and give what the North needs and take what the North can give.⁸ In other words, reciprocity in inter-Korean relations cannot be simultaneous, equal, or symmetrical. Both positive and negative aspects of diffuse reciprocity were seen in the policies of the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun governments. The Sunshine Policy certainly promoted cooperation between North and South Korea, and succeeded in avoiding conflicts between them, but has been criticized for being exploited by North

⁷- Robert O. Keohane, *International Institutions and State Power: Essays in International Relations Theory* (Westview Press, 1989), pp. 146-147, p. 152.

⁸- *Monthly Mail*, *opt.cit.*, p. 169.

Korea.

In many cases, critics have pointed out the lack of reciprocity of the two preceding liberal governments. However, they often fail to grasp these two different kinds of reciprocity. When they criticize the previous liberal governments for their lack of reciprocity, they are usually referring to specific reciprocity. North Korea as well as liberal camps argue that inter-Korean relations have been promoted based on the concept of diffuse reciprocity. The Lee Myung-bak government has clearly rejected the approach of former governments based on diffuse reciprocity and seems to be moving toward adopting specific reciprocity. Although specific reciprocity could be applied to North Korea, a decade of experience of engagement policy shows us some lessons on how to think about the question of reciprocity.

Firstly, when reciprocity is applied to North Korean policy, as the United States is now doing, a step-by-step approach may be effective. The basic principle of the six-party talks is action for action. In principle, the United States and North Korea are required to move simultaneously while making sure that they each complete their own actions, respectively. Secondly, it is more plausible that North Korea's denuclearization and economic cooperation happens in parallel rather than in sequence. From the experience of the US-North Korea negotiations, when the US demanded that North Korea unilaterally take action, it has not worked well as shown in the case of the first Bush administration. Finally, a question still remains. Who shall initiate? It is usually the case that the United States moves first in the event of a US-North Korean stalemate. Possibly a combination of specific and diffuse reciprocity may prove to be the most effective. If simultaneous exchange alone were required, few agreements could be made.

Limits of the MB Doctrine

The MB doctrine paints a rather different picture than the Sunshine Policy or Peace and Prosperity Policy of the previous governments. While the Lee Myung-bak government emphasizes the differences between its policy and those of its predecessors, it will also have to face at least the following three constraints in order to pursue the so-called MB doctrine.

First of all, North Korea's negative responses to the MB doctrine would require the Lee administration to be more flexible in dealing with North Korea. Since North Korea is likely to reject almost all stated policies of the MB doctrine, inter-Korean relations are expected to remain chilly as long as President Lee Myung-bak insists on pursuing the course of a hard-line policy toward North Korea. Since President Lee took office on February 25, 2008, the South Korean government has taken a tougher approach toward North Korea. South Korea vows to improve the relationship with the United States and associates economic cooperation with progress in the so-called North Korean nuclear crisis. President Lee Myung-bak has also pledged to review every inter-Korean accord agreed during a summit meeting between President Roh Moo-hyun and Chairman Kim Jong-il in October 3 in 2007 in Pyongyang. In response to these South Korean attitudes, North Korea denounced President Lee Myung-bak for its pro-US and anti-North Korean policies. Also, North Korea responded by expelling Seoul officials from a joint industrial complex in Gaeseong and fired test missiles in the West Sea on March 28. The North Korean stance came in apparent protest over the current Lee Myung-bak administration's tough policy in dealing with North Korea.

Considering harsh backlash from North Korea, President Lee proposed installing a permanent diplomatic channel between South and North Korea during an interview with the *Washington Post* when he visited the United States.⁹ The liaison office proposal is designed to send a message

⁹ - *Washington Post*, April 18, 2008.

to the North that the South is ready to restart talks with the North. Therefore, the proposal to set up liaison offices in Seoul and Pyongyang is considered as an expression of President Lee's willingness to repair strained inter-Korean relations. However, the North has rejected the proposal, calling it "anti-unification garbage" through its main newspaper, the *Rodong Shinmun*.¹⁰ North Korea criticized President Lee's proposal on at least the following two grounds. One, the North is still suspicious about the intentions of President Lee. The proposal is seen to lack sincerity because it originally emerged during a US media interview, without any prior consultation with the North.¹¹ President Lee proposed opening liaison offices in each capital to facilitate communication as a means to achieve his objectives: denuclearization of North Korea. Two, the North has interpreted this proposal as a message that the Lee Myung-bak administration is trying to downgrade inter-Korean relations from "special relations" of the same Korean nations to "normal diplomatic" relations between states.¹² President Lee Myung-bak had even initially suggested breaking up the Ministry of Unification and merging it with the Foreign Ministry which had played a major role in promoting inter-Korean relations in the past decade.¹³

¹⁰- For North Korea's negative responses to President Lee's proposal, see *Korea Herald*, April 28, 2008; *Korea Times*, April 27, 2008.

¹¹- *Korea Herald*, April 22, 2008.

¹²- Interviews with North Korean officials in Pyongyang, North Korea, April 28, 2008.

¹³- The abolition of the Unification Ministry may be a demonstration of the Lee administration's pragmatism. President Lee seems to vow to integrate inter-Korean engagement into South Korea's broader foreign policy. International Relations experts and North Korean experts often tend to have different views in dealing with North Korea. While in the previous Roh government North Korean experts played an important role, it seems that so far in the Lee administration IR experts mostly educated in the US have more access to President Lee's North Korean policy. According to *The Korea Herald* dated for December 21, 2007, the ideas of "political realists" such as Nam Sung wook, professor of North Korean Studies at Korea University; Kim Woo sang, International Relations professor at Yonsei University; Kim Tae-hyo, International Politics professor at Sung Kyung kwan University; Hyun In-taek, professor of Political Relations at Korea University; and professor Nam Joo-hong, Dean of the Graduate School of Political Science at Kyonggi University are embodied in President Lee's foreign and security policies.

Although the administration withdrew this plan due to severe criticism from opposing parties, President Lee's perceptions on inter-Korean relations are questioned from North Korea's perspective.

In Japan, the initiative by President Lee for the establishment of liaison offices is generally interpreted as softening of his North Korean policy. Therefore, when Prime Minister Fukuda met President Lee, the former asked the latter to convey his message to North Korean leaders that Japan is willing to offer a bonus once Japan and North Korea normalize relations, based on the assumption that liaison offices would be established in the Koreas.¹⁴ However, considering North Korean responses and perceptions of President Lee's proposal, it is highly unlikely for both Koreas to move to establishing such liaison offices. As a result, Prime Minister Fukuda's message would not reach its destination through this channel and cannot be a gateway for the restarting of a Japan-North Korean dialogue.

Secondly, the crucial part of the "Denuclearization, Openness, 3000" initiative depends on US-North Korea nuclear negotiations as well as the obligations of the international agreements clearly stipulated in the September 19 and February 13 Joint Statement of the six-party talks. In other words, although South Korea is also one of the major players in the six-party talks, South Korea alone cannot pursue its own primary objectives such as denuclearization of North Korea. Although the MB doctrine clearly articulated its precondition of denuclearization of North Korea, in reality it is not in a primary position to deal with North Korean nuclear problems. Of course, the Lee Myung-bak government is fully aware of this reality, and therefore it clearly mentioned that South Korea strongly supports the progress between the United States and North Korean nuclear negotiations.

One of the major criticisms against an engagement policy during the last two administrations was that the Sunshine Policy or Peace and Prosperity Policy were not able to prevent North Korea from developing and

¹⁴ - *Sankei Shimbun*, April 22, 2008.

detonating nuclear bombs. Critics argue that the engagement policy only provided North Korea with huge amounts of assistance without any specific conditions, while North Korea responded to South Korean cooperation with nuclear experiments and missile tests. However, liberal scholars claim that there is no causal relation between engagement policy and North Korean nuclear explosions.¹⁵ In other words, North Korean nuclear possession is not a result of engagement policy but rather a response to a security threat from the US.¹⁶ If this logical reasoning is true, unless the United States guarantees North Korea's security, North Korea will never give up nuclear weapons regardless of South Korea's tough stance toward North Korea.

Thirdly, although the Lee Myung-bak government said that it will reassess the two agreements between former presidents of South Korea and North Korean leader Kim Jong-il in 2000 and 2007 respectively, it will not be as easy as it assumes.¹⁷ These agreements between South and North Korea were made by the then heads of state in both South and North Korea. If President Lee changes the course from the joint statement agreed during the liberal administrations, South Korea will lose trust from North Korea, and

¹⁵- See for example Jung Hyun-jung, ed., *10.9 Hanbando wa haek* [10.9 The Korean Peninsula and Nuclear] (Seoul: Erum, 2006), pp. 189-215.

¹⁶- Many South Koreans seem to recognize this point. 46 percent of the respondents to the *Korea Times* poll said it is necessary to review and modify Seoul's North Korea Policy, but said the policy's principle should remain untouched. Considering the research was conducted after North Korea's test of nuclear devices, one could conclude that the poll result was rather surprising, *Korea Times*, November 1, 2006.

¹⁷- Of course, President Lee Myung-bak has not mentioned that the Lee government will not follow the two agreements. Rather, according to Rep. Park Jin, Secretary of the Foreign Affairs and the Unification Division on the Transition Team of the Lee government, the transition team looked closely into the agreements reached at the follow-up talks. Mr. Park emphasized that since they mostly include South Korea's economic assistance to North Korea, the transition team showed its willingness to stick to the principle that dismantling the nuclear programs of North Korea is the most important factor for the agreements to be realized, *Korea Herald*, December 31, 2007. The Lee Myung-bak government has attached four conditions to economic assistance to North Korea: progress in the denuclearization of North Korea; feasibility of inter-Korean business projects; availability of financial resources; and public support.

future dialogue between South and North Korea will be negatively affected especially when North Korean is viewing the June 15 Joint Declaration and the October 4 Inter-Korean Summit Agreement as the most important thing. In addition, South Korean people generally support the two agreements as well as engagement policy toward North Korea.¹⁸

Actually, the number of voices criticizing the Lee administration is increasing. First of all, politicians from opposition parties including the United Democratic Party and other parties attacked President Lee Myung-bak, arguing that since the inauguration of his new government, relations between South and North Korea have been heading toward a breakdown. They called on the administration to observe the agreements made during the previous administrations with the North Korean regime.¹⁹ Secondly, Lim Dong Won, director of the Sejong Institute who served as unification minister during the Kim Dae-jung administration in 1999 and 2001 recently urged President Lee Myung-bak to clarify whether to implement two inter-Korean accords. Former Unification Minister Lim criticized President Lee of showing little interest in implementing the accord at a lecture in Seoul.²⁰ Furthermore, the statement adopted by dignitaries including former President Kim Dae-jung when commemorating the eighth anniversary of the adoption of the June 15 Joint Declaration on June 13, 2008 called on the Lee government to respect and inherit the June 15 Joint Declaration, pointing out that the historic documents should be adhered to.²¹ That

¹⁸ - According to the opinion poll, conducted by the Korea Research Center from September 22-23 upon the request of the Unification Ministry, 76.9 percent of respondents support for the Kim Dae jung administration's engagement policy, *Korea Herald*, September 28, 2000. Also, According to an opinion poll conducted by the *Hankook Ilbo*, 74 percent of respondents thought the second inter-Korean summit between President Roh Moo-hyun and North Korean leader Kim Jong-il was successful, *Korea Times*, October 7, 2007. For a more comprehensive survey, see for example *2005 nyeondo tongil munje kukmin yeoron josa* [National Opinion Survey for Unification Problems 2005] (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2005).

¹⁹ - *Korea Herald*, May 9, 2008.

²⁰ - *Korea Times*, May 28, 2008.

²¹ - *Korea Herald*, June 13, 2008.

means it would be difficult for President Lee Myung-bak not to follow the terms of the two joint declarations signed by the two former Presidents because such policies would not be politically accepted in the context of domestic politics in South Korea.

Recently, the Lee Myung-bak government seems to be showing signs of softening its North Korean policy. For example, initially there were no indications that the Lee Myung-bak government would be sending food aid to the North. Recently, however, the Lee Myung-bak government has changed its stance from its original one of no aid unless nuclear breakthrough to a willingness to send food aid to North Korea. Regarding humanitarian assistance in North Korea, food aid is urgent. The UN World Food Programme (WFP) estimated that North Korea has a shortfall of about 1.66 million tons in cereals for the year ending in October, which would be the largest deficit in seven years. The WFP has warned of the situation in North Korea. The government proposed inter-Korean dialogue on the provision of 50,000 tons of corn to North Korea.

The change in policy is apparently an attempt to begin to redefine inter-Korean relations under President Lee's pragmatic North Korean policy since it would require North Korea to hold talks with South Korea. However the Lee administration faces a dilemma regarding food aid for North Korea. First of all, Seoul has to wait for a positive response from Pyongyang. The Lee Myung-bak government has set two preconditions for resuming humanitarian aid to North Korea. One is North Korea's open request to South Korea for help and the other is a domestic consensus for humanitarian aid. Considering that Pyongyang has been making an anti-Lee Myung-bak campaign with all its propaganda apparatus, North Korea is unlikely to make a request from South Korea at least for the time being. Secondly, the United States has decided to provide food aid of 50,000 tons of rice to North Korea as a result of positive development on US-North Korean nuclear talks. Although Cheong Wa Dae dismissed speculation that the recent im-

provement in dialogue between Washington and Pyongyang would minimize Seoul's role in any discussion regarding the peace and security of the Korean peninsula, such comments reflect Seoul's anxiety about closer relations between the United States and North Korea. One analyst argues that the Seoul government is losing yet another card it has to play in dealing with Korea.²²

Dilemma for Japan's North Korean Policy

Improving relations between the United States and South Korea seems to have a positive effect on ties between South Korea and Japan. In this sense, it becomes easier to form a new trilateral cooperation among the United States, Japan, and South Korea in the wake of North Korea's conservative government. The basic objective of Japan's North Korean policy is to normalize relations between Japan and North Korea by solving the North Korean nuclear problem along with abduction issues through cooperation with the United States and South Korea. In this sense, restoring the South Korea-US-Japan virtual alliance is a positive sign for Japan's North Korean policy.

The basic idea behind Japan's policy toward North Korea is "dialogue and pressure."²³ While dialogue has been exchanged between Japan and North Korea through governmental contacts, Japan has also been taking measures to apply pressure on North Korea as a means to accomplish the above objectives. As for dialogue, Japan has had contacts with North Korea

²² Paik Hak-soon of Sejong Institute commented that Seoul's attempt to show the North that it will discuss with the United States the matter of rice aid only tells the North that even the humanitarian aid from Seoul needs discussion with Washington on the questions that a team of officials from the Foreign and Unification Ministries visits Washington to discuss the food aid from the United States to North Korea, *Korea Herald*, May 14, 2008.

²³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan, *Diplomatic Blue Book*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Various Issues.

through multiple channels such as the Japan-North Korea bilateral negotiations and the six-party talks. As for pressure, Japan has participated in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) to cope with North Korean illegal activities including the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Furthermore, the “Law Amending in Part the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Control Law” legislation introduced by the Diet and passed in 2004, allowing the Japanese government to regulate at its own discretion the transmittance of money, imports, and exports when determined necessary in order to maintain the peace and security of Japan. Such policy measures are considered one of the ways in which Japan is able to adopt pressure on North Korea.

However, according to Victor D. Cha, Japan has three dilemmas in its policy toward North Korea. Firstly, Japan has fewer chances than the United States and South Korea to distinguish the DPRK tactical behavior from the intentions that underlie it. Secondly, historical reconciliation remains an almost immovable obstacle. Thirdly, the strategic priorities that inform the United States and South Korea’s engagement policy are not necessarily in tune with those that inform Japan. Consequently this could isolate Japan even in a best-case scenario.²⁴ Dr. Cha argues the more US-ROK-Japan engagement is successful at achieving progress vis-à-vis US-DPRK and DPRK-ROK, the less likely there will be parallel progress on the Japan-DPRK dyad.

Due to the above restraints on Japan’s North Korean policy especially at the system level, Japan’s North Korean Policy tends to respond to newly emerging international environment as given rather than take initiatives for its own policy. The author once conceptualized Japan’s North Korean policy as a responsive engagement policy under the Koizumi administration.²⁵

²⁴-Victor D. Cha, “Japan’s Engagement Dilemmas with North Korea,” *Asian Survey* 41, No. 4, 2001, pp. 549-563.

²⁵-Sachio Nakato, “Japan’s Shifting North Korean Policy under Koizumi Administration: Toward Responsive Engagement,” Institute of International Relations and Area Studies, Ritsumeikan University, *Ritsumeikan International Affairs*, Vol. 2, 2004, pp. 141-157.

Since a whole range of issues, including the abduction of Japanese citizens and the missile and nuclear development program, needs to be addressed when Japan negotiates with North Korea, it has no choice but to depend on development of US-North Korea relations as well as inter-Korean relations. Such dependence gives Japan a policy dilemma in the following two ways.

Firstly, Japan must proceed with negotiations in solidarity with the United States and South Korea even when it pursues Japan's own agenda such as normalization between Japan and North Korea as well as the abduction issues, because especially when security concerns such as nuclear development, missile development are the issues, Japan alone cannot deal with these security issues. In addition, although Japan would provide economic cooperation to North Korea after normalization, which is clearly stated in Provision 2 of the Pyongyang Declaration, unless all these security concerns are resolved, economic cooperation with North Korea may hurt not only its own national interests, but also those of the international community including the United States and South Korea, and therefore, Japan cannot proceed with normalization talks with North Korea with its own judgment.

Secondly, although Japan has adopted "Dialogue and Pressure" as a means to ratchet up pressure through tough measures on North Korea, unless it abandons its nuclear weapons program and solves the kidnapping issues while avenues for dialogue remain open, such pressure from Japan is limited both in scope and effectiveness. Japan has imposed economic sanctions on North Korea due to its missile tests and nuclear experiments, in July 2007 and in October 2007 respectively. However, its effectiveness remains unclear especially when China and South Korea continue economic and humanitarian assistance to North Korea.²⁶ In actuality, economic sanctions may be more symbolic than anything else, to show Japan's

²⁶-David C. Kang, "Japan: US Partner or Focused on Abductees?" *The Washington Quarterly* (Autumn 2005), p. 113.

political will to tackle issues, especially the abduction problems. Also, the approach of Dialogue and Pressure was adopted when President Bush and Prime Minister Koizumi held a summit in Crawford, Texas in May 2003. The Bush administration is now heading toward a more conciliatory approach with North Korea. As a result, Japan is behind in promoting negotiations with North Korea.

A New Era, but More Challenges for Japan

As a result of the birth of the new conservative government in South Korea, the possibility of US-Japan-South Korea's new trilateral cooperation is now open. At the same time, however, the new opportunity will also give uncertain challenges for Japan in dealing with North Korea. First of all, it may not necessarily be easy for the United States, South Korea, and Japan, with their common values (democracy, freedom of speech, etc.), to exert a sufficient pressure on North Korea to solve the nuclear problems and kidnapping issues in Japan. While the Lee Myung-bak administration in South Korea has taken a sterner stance toward North Korea, the Fukuda administration in Japan has renewed its economic sanctions on North Korea for the next six months in April 11, 2008 despite recent progress in US-North Korea talks over North Korea's denuclearization.²⁷ However, the Bush administration began to show more flexibility and willingness in seeking peaceful solutions to the North Korean nuclear problem. The United States and North Korea are now taking a step-by-step approach in the second stage of the nuclear resolution articulated in the agreement of February 13. There are certainly policy differences between the United States and Japan as well as South Korea.

Secondly, if the United States and North Korea are moving toward

²⁷ - *The Japan Times*, April 12, 2008.

denuclearization of North Korea along with initiating the process of removing the designation of North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism and advancing the process of terminating invocation of the Trading with the Enemy Act with respect to North Korea, policy coordination between South Korea and Japan would face major challenges. While the Lee Myung-bak administration will be providing huge economic assistance to North Korea contingent on the progress of US-North Korea nuclear negotiations, it will still be difficult for Japan, with its abduction issues with North Korea, to coordinate policy with the United States and South Korea. Japan has made it clear that unless the North Korean nuclear problems and missile issues as well as abduction issues are all solved, Japan will not normalize with North Korea.

Thirdly, along with development on the bilateral talks between the United States and North Korea, Japan and North Korea have just started to move forward. However, Japan will have to carefully coordinate its respective policies with the United States. North Korea agreed on June 13, 2008 that it would reinvestigate abductions of Japanese citizens which reversed its longstanding position that the issue had been settled. In return, Japan responded that it had agreed to lift economic sanctions imposed on North Korea for its nuclear program including the ban on travel between the two countries. Obviously the recent development at least partly seems to reflect North Korea's improving relations with the United States. North Korea wants its name to be taken off the United States' list of state sponsors of terrorism, while Japan has opposed to it unless the abductions issue was resolved. Some observers claim Pyongyang is just pretending to make progress in Japan-North Korea relations since it wants rewards from the international community such as removal from the US list of terrorism-sponsoring states and energy assistance under the six-party talks. It is not clear if Japan-North Korea relations have moved one step further at this point. Japan will have to ask the United States to take North Korea off its list

of state sponsors of terrorism based on the progress of abduction issues.

Fourthly, as related to the above issues, the policy of “Dialogue and Pressure” from Japan will have to face the following dilemma. In reality, it seems that Japan-North Korea relations have not proceeded when pressure such as economic sanctions (and unilateral demands) were adopted. Dialogue between Japan and North Korea has occurred infrequently after Japan imposed economic sanctions. Needless to say, Japan can never solve the various issues it is concerned with without dialogue. However, on the other hand, if Japan does not exercise pressure, and proceeds with negotiations with North Korea with no prominent progress especially on abduction issues, it may have to face severe criticism within the country. For example, families of abduction victims expressed dissatisfaction with the government’s decision to ease part of its sanctions against Pyongyang despite no clear prospects of missing abductees returning to Japan. Also, according to a poll conducted by *Mainichi Shimbun*, 55 percent of respondents do not support partial ease of sanctions on North Korea.²⁸ At this moment, Japan has to wait to see how North Korea actually conducts this reinvestigation.

Inter-Korean relations may be chilled in the meantime under the Lee Myung-bak administration or may dramatically improve following the possible development of US-DPRK negotiations and following the implementation of terms agreed in the summit meetings between South and North Korea. Also, with recent subtle progress between Japan-North Korea relations following improving US-North Korea relations, *JoonAng Ilbo* in its editorial on June 13, 2008 warned that South Korea needs to revise its North Korean policy otherwise South Korea might end up isolated.²⁹ Although Japan-North Korea relations may not be expected to proceed easily due to the several restraints discussed in the above section such developments

²⁸ - *Mainichi Shimbun*, June 15, 2008.

²⁹ - *JoongAng Ilbo*, June 13, 2008.

might urge South Korea to rethink its North Korean policy based on its pragmatism. Although uncertainty continues even after the new conservative President has taken office in South Korea, what does seem to be certain is that the birth of the Lee Myung-bak government does not mean South Korea will join with Japan to apply further pressure on North Korea, as Japan currently does or originally hoped.

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“A Turn to the Right?” A Russian Comment on the North Korean Policy of ROK Conservative Government

Georgy Toloraya

Abstract

Since the election of a conservative government in Seoul in 2008, the situation on the Korean peninsula has deteriorated considerably. President Lee Myung-bak's hard-line policy toward the North provoked a Northern backlash and inter-Korean relations have nosedived. As a result, the ROK has sidelined itself from the diplomatic process of searching for a solution to the North Korean security problem which does not bring such a solution any closer, which in turn causes concern. The ROK international position and its leverage in North Korea seem to have deteriorated. Russia supports North-South Korean reconciliation and cooperation as a prerequisite for promoting peace and security in the neighboring area, which is the chief goal of Russian strategy on the Korean peninsula. A deterioration in the situation is not in line with Russian policies on Korea and Russian concepts of the desired state of affairs in this region. The US conservative administration similarly started with a hard-line policy toward Pyongyang but had to turn to dialogue and search for a compromise. In line with policy coordination with the US, the Lee Myung-bak's government should study this lesson and hopefully turn to more pragmatic policy sooner than the former did. That would create the necessary prerequisites for a broader degree of cooperation between Moscow and Seoul in Korean affairs and would benefit Russia, South and North Korea alike.

Key Words: inter-Korean relations, President Lee Myung-bak's North Korean policy, Korean policy of Russia, Russia-ROK strategic cooperation, policy coordination

Quite unexpectedly, after a decade of North-South Korean rapprochement and cooperation, the current situation on the peninsula suddenly reminds one of the worst of the 'Cold War' period. There are several reasons for this state of affairs, the basic being Pyongyang's desire to refrain from concessions in any area that concerns its system, but, regretfully, it was the advent of the new government of President Lee Myung-bak that symbolized the return to an increase in tensions. These tensions will hopefully be of a temporary nature. Although the basic intentions of the new ROK leadership might have been pragmatic and positive (denuclearization, assisting North Koreans to develop and join the international community on a reciprocal basis, etc.¹), their current achievements in these areas so far remind one of the old sayings about the road to hell being paved by good intentions.

This article tries to highlight the Lee government policy measures toward North Korea in the initial stages of the administration to reconstruct their possible interpretation by Pyongyang and to explain the motivations behind North Korean reactions to these policies. These observations are based on the author's experience of dealing with North Korea. An ancillary aim is to draw some lessons from the previous decade's policy. The article further provides a personalized analysis of the Russian position toward the Korean issue, inter-Korean relations, and the possibilities of Russian-Korean cooperation, without reflecting any official position of the government of Russia.

¹- The Lee Myung-bak government spoke about the plans to earmark US\$40 billion for an international cooperative fund to support DPRK economic growth in line with President Lee's plan to help increase the DPRK's per capita income to \$3,000 within a decade if it makes the decision to abandon its nuclear program and open its market. *Yonhap News Agency*, January 4, 2008.

An Initial Picture of North-South Korea Relations in 2008: An attempt to Explain Pyongyang’s Reaction

For Russian experts, it is no secret that North Koreans expected nothing good from the incoming conservative government²: North Koreans openly supported the liberal candidate and harshly criticized the Grand National Party before the elections, choosing Lee Hoi Chang as their target but actually warning the president-to-be Lee Myung-bak that tougher policies would not be welcomed by Pyongyang. However they took notice of the more or less positive pre-inauguration statements of President Lee and were carefully watching the new leadership’s initial actions with a hope that the real policy would be more pragmatic and result-oriented. Perhaps they took President Lee’s harsh rhetoric as a sort of a public relations exercise to appease conservatives and South Korean electorates, tired of the previous decade’s “liberal” concessions to North Korea.

It is worth noting that President Lee’s declarations and statements were and still are conciliatory. For example, speaking in New York in April 2008 he pointed out, “We have deep affection for our compatriots in the North, and have no intention of threatening its political system. Our goal is to help the North Korean economy stand on its own feet and assure its people a respectable life. Despite challenges and difficulties, we will persevere in the effort to persuade the North of our sincerity and good will.”³

President Lee also seems to publicly advance quite a rational position on North Korea’s possible social and economic future development, pointing out, “Many socialist nations have adopted a market economy and openness and are all successful and better off now. South Korea is ready to assist North Korea in change and openness. We have to move from confrontation to co-existence and from hostility to reconciliation. We’re always

²- The author’s interviews in Pyongyang, December 2007.

³- *The Nelson Report*, April 15, 2008.

open-minded toward the North,”⁴

However, in reality – at least for the first few months of Lee Myung-bak’s presidency – the implementation of the policy was controversial and the initial outcome in fact exceeded the worst expectations of North Koreans. It was almost as if most of the results of the “sunshine” decade have been re-evaluated and in many cases discarded.⁵

At the moment of writing, the milestones in President Lee’s formulation of North Korean policy have included the following stages (the author has simultaneously tried to explain how Pyongyang has perceived them and why it was so displeased):

- Even before inauguration President Lee, unexpectedly to many observers, attempted to eliminate the Ministry of Unification which allegedly took a far too pro-North Korean stance, sending a pretty controversial signal to Pyongyang. Predictably, North Koreans immediately became very suspicious about the true intentions of the incoming government even before its formal launch – the prejudice was there from the start.

- The position of President Lee that human rights issue will be at the forefront of relations with the North was for North Koreans like a red cloth to a bull. North Koreans view human rights issues not as discussions limited to this topic per se, but as an attempt to undermine their system and predictably are not prepared to openly give any concessions in this area. Horrendous as the human rights situation in North Korea is, it can only be improved by cautious, behind the scenes diplomatic work and concealed linkages, not by a straightforward approach and public declarations.

4- “Lee urges North Korea to Move toward Openness,” Seoul, *Yonhap*, May 18, 2008.

5- Kim Ha-Joong, the candidate Minister of Unification, said in the National Assembly in March that the ROK “must completely part with the sunshine policy,” <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?catald=nk00300&num=3376>.

For example, making the return of the POWs from North Korea⁶ a condition of humanitarian aid predictably caused Pyongyang to be outraged; anyone with the slightest acquaintance with the North Korean mentality had no doubt that such a condition won't lead to any solution of the issue but at the same time would mean cessation of all assistance. North Koreans could not but regard this as a highly hostile act, especially at a moment when the country faces the worst problems since mid 1990s famine because of the 2007 natural disasters and due to the growing global food crisis. Pyongyang refrained from asking for food assistance from the South and the absence of ROK aid would undoubtedly worsen the humanitarian problems in the North, so Seoul's real adherence to improving the human rights situation becomes questionable.⁷ It is small wonder that the Government is under public pressure to be more flexible in providing humanitarian aid, making it less conditional.

- In general North Koreans feel deep uneasiness with any “advice” concerning “reforms and opening,” especially on an official level, seeing it as a plot to “undermine our system.”⁸ President Kim Dae-jung, fully committed to the aim of changing North Korea, has refrained from public declarations to this effect, and therefore was successful in really opening North Korea, at least to the extent possible. Public linkage of “opening” with large-scale aid by President Lee also affected the pride of

6 - President Lee Myung-bak has asked the DPRK to consider sending home prisoners of war and captured civilians in return for receiving humanitarian aid, “since we are sending humanitarian aid, the North should consider humanitarian measures, without any conditions, on the pending issue of South Korean POWs and 400 kidnapped fishermen.” “South Korea Wants its POWs in Exchange for Aid,” *Associated Press*, Seoul, March 24, 2008.

7 - Such a policy caused international concern. “Goodfriends” wrote, “The principle of ROK humanitarian aid to the DPRK is to unconditionally support the DPRK when it is in a dire situation. Why does the ROK government try to relate this to the nuclear problem or other political cases? Crop Costs Skyrocket,” *Napsnet Daily Report*, April 18, 2008.

8 - Kim Jong-il himself said that the then President Roh Moo-hyun in October 2007, *Chosun Ilbo*, October 4, 2007.

North Korean leaders, so they had no choice but to rebuff them as a public attempt to ‘bribe’ them. At the same time the fearful hardliners received “proof” that the goal of the assistance is to undermine the North Korean system by imploding it from within and got the pretext to ‘tighten the screws’ and put a cap on developing their markets and cooperation with the “South Korean puppets.”

Re-evaluation of the results of the October 2007 inter-Korean summit and declaration that not all of the North-South Korean agreements could be carried out was seen in Pyongyang as a reflection of a basically counter-productive and hostile stance, undermining the trust in such commitments. The newly-emerged ‘pragmatic’ approach in Seoul to these commitments provided for the suspension of North-South Korean cooperation projects requiring significant financial investment, among them reconstruction of the dilapidated North Korean infrastructure and the creation of a special “peace and cooperation zone” in the West (Yellow) Sea.⁹ North Koreans regarded it as a breach of trust and proof of hostile intentions. In their eyes, talk of “reciprocity” is just a pretext to avoid carrying out these burdensome obligations.

- Equally, the attempts to refer to an obscure 1991 agreement instead of two summit documents signed by Kim Jong-il were taken as an offense. It should be understood that the “Dear Leader’s” (as North Koreans call Kim Jong-il) personal signing of an international document is not

⁹ - Leonid Petrov writes in a recent article, “Almost everything that Kim Jong-il and Roh Moo-hyun agreed upon at the October 2007 inter-Korean Summit falls into this “third category.”” The key development plan aimed at the construction of an economic center in and around Haeju, the North Korean port city about 75 kilometers west of Kaesong. A delay or cancellation will certainly prompt protests from Pyongyang, which is probably expecting the earliest implementation of the 2007 Summit, and will leave a deep scar of mistrust on inter-Korean relations in the future,” <http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/08025Petrov.html>.

something routine and is reserved for special occasions – actually as a manifestation of trust and a “special relationship” (that was clearly explained to Russians when Kim Jong-il signed the first-ever international declaration with President Putin). So something that can be interpreted by North Korean as revision of such a commitment is seen in the North as an act of treachery, that would inevitable undermine all other agreements reached so far in every sphere.

- North Koreans were especially upset by a declaration that denuclearization should come before any meaningful cooperation between South and North Korea. North Koreans consider that this is the issue to be negotiated with the US and resent Seoul’s meddling into the matter as they are waging a difficult tug of war with the US on the modalities of the process. The progress in this lengthy exercise is obvious, and I doubt Seoul’s pressure will speed it up; maybe the opposite is true. It is obvious that success depends mostly on normalization of the DPRK’s relations with the US, not any actions or declarations by the ROK. In fact, pressure-based policies by Seoul might become counterproductive. For example, denuclearization: Pyongyang might perceive the changed geopolitical situation as less favorable, which would make it feel weaker and therefore more time will be needed to arrive at a compromise with its opponents. Pyongyang cannot be pressured or “convinced” (as President Lee put it) to denuclearize; denuclearization might only be achieved in exchange for certain actions by opponents – like giving security guarantees and aid.

Such a position by the ROK government was also taken in Pyongyang as an open declaration of intent to stop all inter-Korean cooperation, as it was clear that at the time being no one could expect the denuclearization to happen in a short time. It is a mistake to think that cessation of assistance

could become a stimulus for Pyongyang to give more concessions or to ask for help; North Korean pride and the basic underlying principles of the *Juche* ideology would not allow that. On the contrary, it gives the Pyongyang hardiners much needed evidence to explain to the population the “hostile nature of South Korean regime” and put the blame on it for the hardships of the North.

- President Lee’s policy of closer cooperation with the United States has raised the fear in Pyongyang that this could lead to new coordinated attempts of pressure and isolation politics.¹⁰ North Koreans suspect that President Lee may try to get closer to the US by denouncing the past liberal ‘North Korean policy’ and therefore try to reach out not only to the current US government, but to conservative forces, inclined to change the Pyongyang regime. Every action by Seoul is seen in this context: Pyongyang became extremely concerned about Seoul’s desire to consider joining PSI, Missile Defense (MD), postpone wartime operational control transfer, and the general increase in military exercises.¹¹ The outcome of President Lee’s visit to Washington, which demonstrated President Bush’s support of President Lee’s policy of reciprocity, the accent on human rights, and the calm reaction to North Korean rhetoric in the hope that the North would just “get used to it” (and rumored discussion between the two Presidents of how North Korea should change “after Kim Jong-il”), hardly encouraged Pyongyang.
- Pyongyang became extremely wary about Seoul’s renewed cooperation with Japan wherein the ROK now is recognized as sharing a tough stance toward North Korea.¹² It is especially unhappy with Seoul’s stress on

¹⁰- [North] Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) wrote, “No matter how important the “improved alliance” with the US may be, the interests of the nation can never be sacrificed for the sake of the “alliance,”” *KCNA*, April 21, 2008.

¹¹- *KCNA*, April 18-19, 2008.

¹²- South Korean position was seen in Tokyo to become as tough as Japanese (which is fully

trilateral cooperation with Japan and the US to try to pressure Pyongyang into unconditional termination of their nuclear programs. Pyongyang was indignant that President Lee agreed to cooperate with Tokyo to resolve the abductions of Japanese citizens - this issue is seen as a bilateral one by North Koreans.¹³

- North Korea also views with suspiciousness Seoul's basic notion that relations with the North are just a part of DPRK foreign relations. Pyongyang wants 'special treatment.' A 'liaison office' suggested by President Lee in this context seems a questionable concept, as it downgrades the North to a 'just another partner.'¹⁴ Moreover, timing-wise, the proposal came just after Pyongyang had evicted South Korean government officials and therefore it would be hardly logical to take such a proposal seriously. So, therefore, it was clear from the start such a proposal would be rejected.¹⁵ Moreover, it makes one wonder what was the cause and purpose of this proposal in the first place.

All the experts are aware of the history of inter-Korean relations and, broadly, the history of North Korean relations with the world (views of which, it seems, are in short supply in the current ROK current government) and most experts had no great doubts as to what will follow as a response

uncompromised). During President Lee's visit to Japanese Prime Minister Fukuda noted, "(South Korea's) policy is basically similar to our country's stance of providing economic aid only after the resolution of the nuclear, abduction, and missile issues and the establishment of diplomatic relations, and I feel assured," http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2008/4/21/worldupdates/20080421T124452Z_01_NOOTR_RTRMDNC_0_331492-1&sec=Worldupdates.

¹³ - <http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/200280,japan-south-korea-pledge-to-work-together-on-north-korea.html>.

¹⁴ - South Korean experts also rightfully argue that the suggestion lacks sincerity as it came at a time where all working-level dialogue has been suspended. "To make such a proposal without any prior consultation or discussion with the North but through a third-party media interview shows it lacks sincerity," *Korea Herald*, April 21, 2008.

¹⁵ - "N. Korea Reject Inter-Korean Liaison Office," *Dong-A Ilbo*, April 28, 2008.

to President Lee's new approach. No one can hope to change the nature of the North Korean regime by a few declarations or a tougher approach - it has been tried many times and has never worked. Predictably, North Koreans would only toughen their own positions and answer in kind, and it should be noted that they have restrained themselves for a long time. It was only two months after the actual start of Lee government that they openly displayed their displeasure.

The last straw came with the words of the newly-designated ROK chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Kim Tae-Young that the ROK military is prepared to launch a preemptive attack on the DPRK's nuclear installations if they become a military threat.¹⁶ Such dangerous statements, even as the bluster that they might be, were taken by Pyongyang in the context of previous hard-line policies. The next day, the DPRK test-fired missiles on its East coast as a demonstration of military power.¹⁷ Pyongyang also has sent jet fighters to test the ROK's air defenses and threatened to reduce Seoul to ashes as a response to any hard-line policy.¹⁸ Following this, North Koreans deported South Korean officials, virtually suspended all North-South contacts and lashed out with offensive, detailed criticism of President Lee Myung-bak, unprecedented in terms of its highly personal nature.

The April 1st article in the *Rodong Shinmun* using nearly obscene language, outperforming even the peculiar standards of North Korean abusive propaganda clichés, called President Lee "a political charlatan" and voiced the strongest possible discontent, counting all his "sins": giving "priority to South Korea-US relations," "nuclear racket," "purge against the

¹⁶ - Kim Min-seok and Jung Ha-won, "North's Nukes on Attack Radar," *JoongAng Ilbo*, March 26, 2008.

¹⁷ - Burt Herman, "North Korea Tests Short-Range Missiles," *Associated Press*, April 28, 2008.

¹⁸ - Jon Herskovitz, "North Korea Snarls As South's Sunshine Policy Fades," *Reuters*, March 31, 2008.

progressive pro-unification forces," "war exercises," "participating in dangerous PSI and MD," utterances of "opening," "accusations over 'human rights,'" and reputed "generosity" in aid. It looks as if, as was the case with President Kim Young Sam in 1994, that Pyongyang, having watched President Lee's initial policies, has finally made the strategic decision not to deal with his administration. The only passage that gives some hope is that "*should... [Seoul] opt for confrontation (italics by the author)...* The DPRK will have no option but to change its approach toward the South,"¹⁹ implying that should Seoul abstain from pressure, relations could be normalized.

The South's demonstratively calm reaction to the signals sent by the North has also gone a bit too far - ignoring one's opponent (especially such a nervous and insecure one as North Korea) might carry the risk of more articulated actions in their desire to be heard. For example, new conflicts in the disputed area of the Yellow Sea cannot be excluded. North Koreans would be hardly willing to put up with so called "benign neglect" in terms of their actions and could try to force Seoul to pay more attention to their needs. President Lee's remarks, that North Koreans "are using military rhetoric to threaten us, but that is all,"²⁰ could prompt Pyongyang to take more malicious actions.

President Lee's rhetoric about North Korea has become a bit more subdued after his visit to the US - probably as a reflection of the US administration's desire to get a deal on the nuclear issue with North Korea as soon as possible, for which Seoul's hard-line policies might be not very helpful.²¹ President Lee indirectly admitted that the initial policy responses of Seoul need some correction: "Both North and South Korea must change

¹⁹ - *Rodong Shinmun*, April 1, 2008.

²⁰ - *Korea Herald*, April 17, 2008.

²¹ - http://www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/04/19/us.skorea.ap/index.html?section=cnn_latest.

their ways,” quoted as saying by the *Washington Post*.²² He also confirmed that he was open to a summit with Kim Jong-il if the talks would generate results: “I will agree to it when the need is real and I have already said publicly that I am willing to meet with him not just once, but many times, if such a meeting will yield substantial and real results.”²³

However, President Lee still holds a more radical position even in comparison with that of Washington on the nuclear issue: he has stressed the need for verification and has said (indirectly arguing with the US) that any softening of Pyongyang’s obligations under a six-country deal to fully declare its nuclear program could lead to “a lot more serious problems.” As a result of the visits to the US and Japan, South Korean experts predict, “inter-Korean relations will aggravate. These summit talks were considered to be a point to adjust Seoul’s North Korean policies. President Lee made sure of his decision to connect his North Korean policies with fortified trilateral coordination with Washington and Tokyo.”²⁴

The result of the deterioration of North-South Korea relations in the first months of 2008 was that South Korea – clearly unintentionally – sidelined itself from the diplomatic process of searching for a solution to the North Korean security problem.²⁵ North Korea also tries to minimize the ROK role in the diplomatic process on the nuclear problem that could lead to a decrease of its influence to the DPRK at a period when South Korean businesses will have to compete with China for control over Northern resources and future markets.²⁶ ROK international positions and its leverage

²² - *Korea Herald*, April 18, 2008.

²³ - http://www.spacewar.com/reports/US_not_scaling_back_demands_on_North_Korea_Bush_999.html.

²⁴ - *Korea Herald*, April 21, 2008.

²⁵ - This is recognized even by South Korean own experts. See Jung Chang-Hyun, “ROK Government Loses Influence Even In The Six-Party Talks,” *Pressian*, April 23, 2008.

²⁶ - *Kyunghyang Shinmun* wrote, “Once the ROK loses its leverage in inter-Korean relations, the ROK government’s intervention power will steeply decrease not only in the six-party talks and the DPRK nuclear issue but also in the political situation of the Korean peninsula... The realization [by DPRK] of so-called “open to US, isolate ROK”

in North Korea seem to deteriorate.

A Russian Retrospective View on the Sunshine Policy

All that is happening is a sharp contrast to the tendencies of the last 10 or even more years, however, many defects of the “sunshine policy” (especially the not-so-sophisticated policy of President Roh Moo-hyun) might have had. Russia generally supported the last decade’s policies precisely because they were aimed at reconciliation and assisting the North to set the basis for cooperation and would have led therefore to increased security in Korean peninsula.²⁷ Many Russians fully share the evaluation by President Kim Dae-jung, who, criticizing the current policy in April 2008, noted, “The June 15 inter-Korean summit held in 2000 broke down the wall of the Cold War and animosity between the two Koreas, which had lasted for more than a half century, and opened the road of exchange and collaboration... Tensions on the Korean peninsula have dramatically had eased, and economic, cultural, and tourism exchanges were progressing. These developments are playing a significant role in promoting inter-Korean peace and ending the Cold War.”²⁸

During this period, despite periodical resurgence of tensions, it looked as if North and South Korea had tacitly come to a basic understanding of the need to coexist and cooperate for the foreseeable future.

is feared, Kim Keun-sik, “Time For ‘Practical’ Inter-Korean Conversation To Step Forward,” *Kyungnyang Shinmun*, April 30, 2008.

²⁷ -An expert in South Korea wrote in 2005, “In general, this Russian vision of the ideal outcome is closer to the basic assumptions of Seoul’s ‘sunshine policy’ than that of any other state. Even if the present author harbors much skepticism about the viability of such a ‘reformed’ North Korean state, these expectations might to some extent unite Seoul and Moscow in their dealing with the North.” Andrei Lankov, “Russia’s “New Engagement” with North Korea and the Future of Northeast Asia,” http://64.233.169.104/search?q=cache:jYTjtuE1TZsJ:ifes.kyungnam.ac.kr/study/ifes_forum_view.asp%3FifeforumNO%3D152%26page%3D12+Georgy+Bulychev&hl=ko&ct=clnk&cd=15&gl=us.

²⁸ - *Korea Times*, April 18, 2008.

What is important is that it was unlike the unfortunate past without attempts to impose one side's values on the other. Having left the shell of relations determined by global superpower rivalry at the end of the 20th century, North and South Korea had the unique opportunity to use a common legacy and ethnic identity for settling historic animosity – and this has implications not only for Korea. At the same time, these “liberal winds” helped change both South and – even to a greater extent – North Korea. It is not accurate to say, as South Korean conservatives do, that the last decade's policies did not bring any change at all to the North.

These signs of changes are difficult to trace and it is hard to point out exactly what was the direct result of South Korean policies and what was spontaneous. It should be understood how difficult it was for Kim Jong-il to introduce any changes, because he could not risk bringing chaos into the existing power structure in the midst of a crisis (a Russian proverb says, “You don't change horses in mid-stream.”). He also could not risk undermining his legitimacy by any attempts to openly revise the heritage of his father. His actual attempts to do it – for example, when he apologized to the Japanese for abductions (this happened soon after the first inter-Korean summit, which gave Kim Jong-il hope that he could find compromises with his opponents) had unintended consequences and worked against any new concessions.

The relaxation of tensions between two Kereas brought about a little noticed but fundamental change: if Kim Il Sung had dreamed of the unification of Korea through communizing South Korea, Kim Jong-il's basic value is survival, which makes peaceful coexistence with the South the imperative. Kim Jong-il (who now cannot but think about his successor) is neither Nero, nor Louis XIY – he wants to keep the state in place. The decade of relaxation of tensions with the South (if only it could have coincided with détente with the US) prompted the North Korean leadership to look for variants, not just holding on to communist dogmas. In fact, continuing

paying lip service to the “our brand of socialism,” they tried to undertake a pragmatic search for a national idea, which would make the state sustainable and explain to the population why it should make all efforts and endure hardships and sufferings, while the promised socialist paradise is nowhere on the horizon. This search was not very obvious for an outsider and probably met harsh opposition from hard-line ideologues and the military alike, but it was slowly changing the ideological ‘landscape’ in parallel with changes occurring with the generations. The most important thing is that it is moving toward more reliance on Korean nationalism, the major factor for which was reconciliation with South Korea, drifting away from a mostly communist ideology (Marxism-Leninism plus *Juche*) to that of a national-egalitarian one. The thesis “uri minjok kiri” became the basis of new ideological approaches. This was the direct result of the ‘sunshine policy.’ South Korean popular culture won a foothold in North Korea, and the North started to consider the idea that bridging the gap with the South could eventually legitimize the regime, as it would become possible for North and South Korea to act together and consolidate to eventually win a worthy place in the world for itself. This would perfectly fit the North Korean *Juche* (self-reliance) ideology, which incidentally was invented in North Korea long before the import of any Communist theories.

Kim Jong-il’s system, relying on the military to carry on state directives and act as a power basis, is declining, but actually has many parallels with the South Korean experience of the 1960-1970s, which Kim Jong-il is known to attentively study (he is also quite respectful to President Park Jung Hee - that is why he chose to personally meet his daughter Park Geun Hye, although at the time she was an opposition leader challenging the ‘sunshine policy’). It is important that a military dictatorship system, unlike a Communist one, which is untransformable and can only be dismantled, can evolve into a less rigid and less authoritarian one.

Due to reconciliation with the South and ensuing prospects for normalization of relations with the West, the foreign policy priorities changed in the beginning of the decade from supporting the ‘national-liberation struggle’ to more pragmatic goals of bridging the gap between North Korea and the world. Especially North Korean efforts to improve relations with the US and the EU in 2000-2003 – right after and as a consequence of the first inter-Korean summit – are highly symbolic.

Changes in the economic sphere, partly prompted by increased cooperation with the South, were most noticeable and promising for the possible evolution of the DPRK, as similar changes had led to system transformation in other socialist countries. Improvement of relations with the South made room for the DPRK leaders’ economic “experiments.” Remember, all through the 1990s, these changes were spontaneous, and it was hunger that forced North Koreans to barter and gave birth to spontaneous development of market relations. Only after the inter-Korean summit did the authorities resort to concessions, embarking on economic “measures” in July 2002 – much as a result of a hope for an increase in assistance and investment thanks to cooperation with the South.

South Korean aid largely helped to develop the market sector – its “diversion” was a major source of market supply as the products wound up in the markets.²⁹ “Shuttle merchants” deliver merchandise from abroad (mostly from China), many of them originating in South Korea, in addition to official exchanges. Marketization is already wide spread and probably cannot be curtailed by any repressive measures of the “socialist neo-conservatives.”³⁰

²⁹- In the course of reconciliation with the South markets greatly increased in numbers and size and now number approximately 500 around the country and about 20 in Pyongyang alone.

³⁰-Andrei Lankov, “North Korea: De-Stalinization from Below and the Advent of New Social Forces,” *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Fall 2005), www.asiaquarterly.com/content/category/5/28/43.

Meaningful processes are also in the international market-oriented sector of the economy. This could not have happened without South Korean involvement. Attempts by pragmatic elements of the DPRK leadership to create joint ventures and establish numerous free economic zones as testing grounds for new policies. The most significant was the attempt to start the Rajin-Sonbong special economic zone in 1997 through the “testament” of the late Kim Il Sung, and these were largely unsuccessful because of the lack of politically motivated investors and partners. Pure commercial motivation was not enough due to North Korea’s isolation, the closed character of its economy and the lack of trust in it, the insufficient experience, and poor decision-making capabilities of North Korean “businesspeople.” Therefore, cooperation with South Korea turned out to be the possibly single most important channel through which capitalist management could be introduced. This is more important than just profit-oriented policies, which seem to be favored by President Lee Myung-bak. South Korea in fact invests in its future. According to the summit agreements of October 2007 which are the greatest achievement of the Roh Moo-hyun government – the new projects included Mt. Paektu tourism, developing of Haeju, cargo traffic, communications in the Kaesong zone, and shipbuilding facilities in the DPRK with the ROK’s assistance. Implementation of all these projects would have substantially broadened the area of the non-communist management system in the North and would have raised the degree of marketization of the economy.

As a result largely of a decade of ‘sunshine’ policies, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea can no longer be accurately described, as is often the case, as a Stalinist country. The economy had actually changed from a centrally-planned one to a multi-sectoral one, combining the state sector (largely unoperational), the capitalist sector (joint ventures, South Korean and Chinese in the forefront, and trading companies, free economic zones), the semi-private sector (especially in agriculture and services), and the

shadow (criminalized) sector.³¹ There is growing dissatisfaction among the people and an increasing external influence. This is a natural result of a withdrawal from self-isolation and the improvement of relations with the outside world, especially South Korea. Cooperation with the South became one of the important factors strengthening the position of those quarters in Pyongyang that want change (therefore recently there was such a backlash against those who were dealing with South Koreans, from the hard-line factions). Russia fully supported the above-mentioned positive tendencies and saw inter-Korean cooperation as a major factor for the promotion of peace and development in Korea.³²

Attempts to “turn back the clock” and curtail the reforms have been periodically undertaken by the Pyongyang old guard leaders, being especially visible since 2004. A new wave, probably stronger than the previous, is recorded since the end of 2007. This tendency was aptly named “socialist neo-conservatism.”³³ Pyongyang undertook anti-market measures, and ordered that “any elements that undermine our system and corrode our socialist morality and culture and our way of life” would not be tolerated. The government has been instructed to strengthen centralized control by “concentrating all economic work in the Cabinet and organizing and carrying it out under its unified command.”³⁴ Looking back, we can suspect that these moves were triggered by the anticipated advent of the conservative administration in the South, so the authorities decided to “tighten the screws” in advance.

³¹- For a detailed analysis see Georgy Toloraya, “The Economic Future of North Korea: Will the Market Rule?” Korea Economic Institute, *Academic Paper Series*, Vol. 2, No 10, 2007, pp. 22-40.

³²- Russian President Putin’s interview to KBS and MBC, January 26, 2001; Russian Deputy Minister Alexander Losukov’s interview, *Vreamy Novostei*, Moscow, July 23, 2003.

³³- <http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/08032.Frank.html>.

³⁴- *Rodong Shinmun*, January 8, 2008.

Russia’s Korean Policy Concept: How Does It Correlate With Seoul’s Current Approach?

Developments since the end of 2007 constitute a major change in the security situation on the Korean peninsula and cause concern in other capitals, including Moscow. A deteriorating situation is not in compliance with Russian policies in Korea and Russian concepts of the desired forms of development here.

In evaluating President Lee Myung-bak’s North Korean policy, Russia bases its analysis on the general principles of its Korean strategy. How can they be summarized and how do they match the Lee government policy?

- The number one Russian priority in Northeast Asia is stability and regional development in order to create the conditions for its own deeper involvement in international cooperation (especially of its Far East) and to achieve economic prosperity under secure conditions. Moscow wants to avoid any scenario which could lead to a crisis of any kind on the Korean peninsula. The current tendencies of North-South Korean tensions are not very helpful.

- Russia obviously does not want to see an unchecked increase of any foreign domination in Korea, which would endanger its interests. At the same time, it does not see the international process, comprising major powers here, as a “zero-sum game.” Therefore, it advocates a cooperative approach, based both on the balance of power and the concert of power cooperation models. The idea of a regional cold-war era like division on Korean affairs (3+3) is of no appeal to Moscow. However, Seoul’s intent to increase trilateral cooperation with the US and Japan would raise the possibility of just such a development.

- Russia wants its say in the decision-making process in Korean affairs in order to protect its national interests. Russia, therefore, is interested in cooperation with a more independent South Korea. Meaningful security cooperation between Russia and the two Koreas would help make the geopolitical situation in the area more balanced and predictable, because of the increase of the number of “responsible shareholders.”
- Preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, promotion of democracy, and observation of human rights, no matter how important they are declared to be to some of Russia’s partners, frankly, cannot be listed as primary goals as compared to peaceful development. Of course, Russia admits these important goals should be aspired to, but concentrating solely on them would only make their attainment more distant. These goals can be achieved only through enhancing security and peace preservation, which would help North Korea liberalize, and Seoul’s overemphasis on these aims could become counterproductive. An accent on human rights and prior denuclearization as a prerequisite for cooperation with North Korea, therefore, is not what Russia sees as constituting productive policy on the Korean peninsula.
- Many Russians consider the provision of security and the creation of conditions for development for North Korea as having the basic purpose of assisting it to change its internal and external policies. Russia believes in doing this to the extent that it would no longer be regarded as a threat or the “odd man out” as the key to an eventual solution of a vast spectrum of the problems of Korean peninsula.³⁵ That could in turn lead to liberalization of the North Korean system and more economic freedom.

³⁵-For detailed proposals see Georgi Bulychev and Alexander Vorontsov, “Korean Peninsula: Russia’s Priorities,” *Russian Analytica*, Vol. 3, December 2004, pp.58-59 (English edition).

Russia is worried that a South Korean hard-line policy could prompt the North Korean conservatives to “tighten the screws.”

- Russia has always supported North-South Korean reconciliation and cooperation with the distant goal in mind of eventual reunification in some form, agreed upon by both Koreas. Such a development would not contradict Russian interests if it would result in the creation of a united, peaceful, and prosperous Korea that is friendly to Russia. Such a country would be one of the most important partners for Russia in Asia, helping to build a more balanced system of international relations in the Far East. However, Russia is against “overnight” unification and attempts to alienate and pressure North Korea, the danger of which has increased as a result of current Seoul’s policy.
- Russia successfully avoided being drawn into the inter-Korean confrontation on either side in the 1990s. Current tensions between North and South Korea could encourage both Koreas to seek Russian support for their respective positions, which would make diplomacy more difficult. At the same time, Russia’s aspirations to become a “Eurasian bridge,” which will speed up the development of its Far Eastern regions and facilitate its deeper integration in the Asian economic space, would wane as the prospects of trilateral projects (in railway transportation and energy sector) would dim. Other economic projects, first and foremost trilateral ones, would have to be shelved. Russia is worried that the investments already made into some of these projects (like building the railroad between the Russian border and port of Rajin and of a container terminal in Rajin) may suffer.³⁶

³⁶ - The project of reconstructing the Trans-Korean railroad (TKR) with a linkage to the Russian Trans-Siberian Railway (TSR or Transsib) in the interest of smooth rail transit from the East Asian tip to Europe can be, without exaggeration, called epochal for Russia and the Korean peninsula countries, turned into an Asia-Europe transit corridor

- Russia is interested in smooth multiparty cooperation between the major powers on Korea. Korean problems became an important item on the Russian global agenda and also in the field of Russian international relations. Russia also thinks that the eventual creation of a regional (sub-regional) system of security and cooperation in Northeast Asia would benefit Russia, as it would create more opportunities for promotion of its interests and raise the degree of predictability in this area. Institutionalization of the Northeast Asian security and cooperation mechanism might play an important role in a changeover from contentions based on mutual deterrence to a system of cooperation/ competition grounded in the balance of interests, i.e., in a 'concert of powers.' However, the effectiveness of the six-party talks as a mechanism for change could be endangered with the current resurgence of tensions in Korean peninsula.

In the Kim Young Sam government era, Moscow was not happy with the casual disregard paid to the Russian role in Korean affairs and general neglect for its interests. Russian government and experts alike were deeply upset by being excluded both from the KEDO in 1990s and the four-party talks. In 1996, they learned (actually by chance) that Russian economic and political positions have strengthened since that time and resurgence of a similar situation would be hardly welcomed.

competitive with the freight way by sea with the same destination through the Suez Canal, Russian transport experts argue. One of its advantages is the chance to transport cargoes over more than 10,000 km under a unified transport legislation without actually crossing state borders. The Trans-Korean railroad would carry Russian, DPRK's, and South Korean freight, and transit cargoes from the Republic of Korea to European countries and back. A part of container cargoes from Japan handled in the port of Pusan could also be redirected to the Trans-Korean railroad. In 2008 a joint venture was established for modernization of the railway section from the crossing point of Khasan to the North Korean port of Rajin (worth about 1.75 bln rubles according to Russian estimates), the construction of a container terminal in Rajin on a joint basis – as a new significant transit section for transshipping goods proceeding from Northeast Asian countries to Russia by Transsib connection and further to Europe. "The Trans-Korean Railroad," A. B. Bardal, *Problems of the Far East*, No. 4, 2007 (in Russian), www.rzd.ru.

In the initial stages of Lee Myung-bak administration, Russia tried to make it clear its desire to seriously discuss the possibilities for improving the situation on the Korean peninsula by promoting peaceful dialogue and policies of taking into account North Korean's concerns. However, South Koreans insisted that peace and security could only be achieved with prior denuclearization of North Korea and shied away from accepting Russian logic of the promotion of cooperation with North Korea. Rep. Lee Jae-oh, President Lee's envoy to Russia, noted in January 2008 that "Russian officials expressed support for the president-elect's plan to forge a prosperous Northeast Asian economic community, especially as it will help in persuading North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons."³⁷

The Lee Myung-bak administration has so far failed to deepen cooperation with Russia on the North Korean issue: South Korean experts admit that "while the triangular alliance of the US-ROK-Japan has been strengthened with the inauguration of the Lee Myung-bak administration, diplomacy with Russia is restricted to only the field of energy and natural resources discussions."³⁸ Russia, in the meantime, suggested that a committee as a communication channel between Seoul and Moscow to closely cooperate on the development of the Far East region be formed.³⁹ However, initiatives to that effect remain distant. In the same way, the creation of and implementation of a trilateral committee (Russia-North Korea-South Korea) for discussions of issues related to economic cooperation⁴⁰ seem to be an equally distant prospect.

Russia is concerned that the ROK conservative government might pay less attention to Moscow's interests, and, because of a deepening cooperation with the US conservative-minded policy circles, may share a logic that sees

³⁷ - *Korea Herald*, January 28, 2008.

³⁸ - Ryu Jin-sook, "Putin and Lee Myung-Bak Sharing One Bed with Two Different Dreams?" *Korean Institute for Future Strategies Bulletin*, March 18, 2008.

³⁹ - *Korea Herald*, January 28, 2008.

⁴⁰ - <http://www.nr2.ru/policy/159873.html>.

the Russian role as that of merely an "interested observer," or merely supporting China on principal issues in Korean affairs, not playing an independent role.⁴¹ Washington is not happy with Russian statements that North Korea and the US share the fault for the 2008 stalling of the six-party talks⁴² and that cannot but influence the ROK position and limit the possibilities for cooperation.

Hopefully these views won't prevail. A joint study of the US and South Korean experts came to more balanced conclusions: "Russia has pursued fairly non-controversial policy objectives toward the Korean peninsula: nuclear non-proliferation and the maintenance of peace and stability on the peninsula; support for inter-Korean dialogues and interactions contributing to a peaceful reunification; expansion of mutually beneficial economic cooperation; and trying to obtain greater Korean involvement in developing Siberia and the Russian Far East... Moscow has attempted to enhance its role as a serious "broker" with North Korea..."⁴³

Are there still possibilities for Moscow-Seoul cooperation vis-à-vis the North Korean problem?

For one thing, Russia would not welcome a repetition of the situation seen in the 1990s, when South Korean representatives kept on urging the Russian government to exert pressure on Pyongyang and demanded information on Pyongyang's possible reactions and plans. At the same time, Russia would welcome a relaxation of tensions and deepening cooperation

⁴¹ - Russia is already being blamed by the US to be inactive in responding to the new Lee Myung-bak administration's initiatives in economic (especially energy and transportation) sphere, and said to do little to help North Korea overcome its isolation. Ambassador Vershbow's presentation in Korea Economic Institute, January 31, 2008.

⁴² - In February 2008, Deputy Minister Alexander Losukov blamed not only "lack of information about the DPRK's nuclear programs" but also "US failure to perform its obligations to exclude the DPRK from the list of the countries that sponsor terrorism" for the halt in the six-party talks. "Russian Diplomat Names Reasons For Halt In Six-Sided N. Korean Nuclear Talks," *Itar-Tass*, Tokyo, February 2, 2008.

⁴³ - The Search for a Common Strategic Vision: Charting the Future of the US-ROK Security Partnership, *A Report of the US-ROK Strategic Forum*, February 2008, sponsored by the SK group and the East Asia Foundation, <http://www.wm.edu/news/?id=8681>.

between North and South Korea and could render assistance to these efforts from both sides of the 38th parallel if needed.

- Russia is interested in a denuclearized Korean peninsula as much as the ROK. The most important practical task now is to promote the six-party diplomatic process, and the implementation of commitments from all the parties. Even if the most optimistic expectations were not fully realized, the process should be patiently continued. Any progress in dismantling North Korean nuclear programs is welcome and should be supported, not the least by assuring North Koreans that this would not constitute a lessening in their security. The South Korean role in this is indispensable and Seoul could always count on Russian support of such intentions and on bringing the message home to North Koreans.

- Russia would like to solicit the ROK's support and expertise (both within and outside the working group created in the framework of the six-party talks) in promotion of the creation of the regional peace and cooperation architecture. The ROK, as a 'middle power,' could greatly benefit from institutionalization of a regional Northeast Asian security mechanism (I would even dare propose that its headquarters should be located in Seoul, as a 'neutral' place). The ROK has already presented various considerations and valuable ideas about these prospects - such activity should be brought to the attention of the political leadership and promoted in every possible way.

- Coordination of economic issues related to economic assistance and development of North Korea between Moscow and Seoul also appears promising. Russia has vested economic interests in the Korean peninsula and especially in the field of trilateral cooperation, such as the transportation and energy sectors. Russian experts note with satisfaction that

ROK government representatives recently stress the importance of three-party cooperation in developing the resources of the Russian Far East and in other areas.⁴⁴ A pragmatic approach by President Lee Myung-bak could be very useful for starting meaningful cooperation. The pilot project to be supported by both the Russian and Korean governments is the Rajin-Khasan railroad project with participation of the three countries. In the future, other trilateral projects – a railroad connection to Transsib, Russian corporate participation in the reconstruction of North Korean energy and parts of the industrial sector and supply of energy, as well as South and North Korean participation (including the use of North Korean labor)⁴⁵ in developing Far Eastern mineral resources are to be promoted.

- Therefore, it is obvious that increased policy coordination through political, diplomatic, and track II channels is needed and the momentum should not be lost with the change of administration. The change of government in Seoul brought about confusion as to expectations within the Russian community of experts as to what the developments in South Korea under the new government will be. It looks like Russian Korean policy is not fully understood by the current South Korean government, and at the same time, Russian experts cannot fully grasp the rationale behind Seoul's current policy line. There is still a need to build trust as to the intentions of both parties and plans in the Korean peninsula, which, for Russia, remains an important neighboring area.

⁴⁴-Adress of Former Foreign Minister Yoo Chong Ha to the 9th Korea-Russian Forum, Moscow, May 29, 2008.

⁴⁵- Lee Sung Kyu, Energy Security in Northeast Asia and Trilateral Russia-South Korea-North Korea Energy Cooperation, presented at the 9th Korea-Russian Forum, Moscow, May 29, 2008.

We hope that pragmatism will help the Lee Myung-bak government overcome their initial “childishly” radical and overly ideologically rigid approach, taking into account not just ideals and desires but practical realities. There are already signs that the ROK government is taking a more flexible and responsible stance with regard to its North Korean policy, for example, on the issue of providing humanitarian food aid unconditionally, and trying to sustain the working-level dialogue with Pyongyang. It is worth noting that some South Korean experts suggested that the Lee Myung-bak administration, just as the Bush administration followed an “Anything But Clinton” policy in its early days, is doing exactly the same regarding the policy of Roh Moo-hyun and continued: “I believe that, sooner or later, the Lee Myung-bak administration can go back to the Sunshine Policy.”⁴⁶ Let us hope the US conservative administration’s experience in the years from 2000 to 2006 can serve as a lesson to President Lee Myung-bak and that he can return to a more pragmatic policy much sooner than the former did. Such a move would create the prerequisites needed for a broader level of cooperation between Moscow and Seoul in Korean affairs and would benefit Russia, South and North Korea alike.

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⁴⁶- Jeong Se-Hyun, “Lee Myung-Bak Administration Can Also Go Back To Sunshine Policy,” *Tongil News*, April 23, 2008.

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US Security Challenges in Northeast Asia After Bush

Richard Weitz

Abstract

The next US administration will need to pursue a vigorous shaping and hedging strategy to manage several adverse security challenges in Northeast Asia. First, many people in the region perceive the George W. Bush administration as excessively preoccupied with the Middle East at the expense of its East Asian interests. Second, North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs remain unconstrained by a formal six-party agreement. Third, China has taken advantage of these trends to bolster its position in East Asia, sometimes at Washington's expense. Finally, developments in North Korea and China have stimulated concerns that Japan might eventually loosen its tight security ties with the United States. American policymakers urgently need to rebalance their energies between the Middle East and East Asia. ASEAN in particular warrants much more attention in Washington. In addition, US officials must reaffirm their commitment and capacity to protect Japan and South Korea. Managing China's rise also requires a more vigorous American engagement with Beijing's neighbors. Finally, the United States should employ more creative strategies to affirm its unique security role in Northeast Asia.

Key Words: Bush administration, China, Japan, six-party, ASEAN

As a new US presidential administration prepares to assume office in Washington in less than a year, one of their most urgent challenges will be to reverse recent security trends in Northeast Asia that have harmed American goals and interests. First, many influential people in the region believe that the United States has become excessively preoccupied with the Middle East and other parts of the world at the expense of American interests in East Asia. Second, the wars in Afghanistan and especially Iraq have diverted Washington from devoting adequate attention to Korean security issues until recently, especially North Korea's resumption of ballistic missile testing and its acquisition of nuclear weapons. Third, China has taken advantage of these trends to bolster its position in East Asia, sometimes at Washington's expense. Finally, developments in North Korea and China have stimulated concerns that Japan might eventually loosen its tight security ties with the United States. The next US administration will need to pursue a vigorous shaping and hedging strategy to manage these new challenges.

Perceived Strategic Myopia

The protracted conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan, the tensions within Israel and between Israel and its neighbors, and Iran's unyielding challenge to the nuclear non-proliferation regime have naturally preoccupied American officials and politicians. Many of America's closest allies, however, fear this concentration has resulted in a myopic and self-defeating US strategic vision. In East Asia, public officials and other opinion leaders have openly expressed discontent about the perceived lack of American interest in their region's affairs, except for issues seen as related to the global war on terrorism. Recent US policies have failed to overcome such concerns—and in many cases have inadvertently strengthened these apprehensions.

Throughout East Asia, the September 11 attacks induced widespread support for the US-declared Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and the American military intervention in Afghanistan. Governments, opinion leaders, and many average citizens generally considered these measures a necessary and natural response. Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi called the attacks “extremely vicious and unforgivable” and the South Korean government declared: “we stand ready, as a close US ally, to provide all necessary assistance.”¹ South Korea sent several hundred troops to Afghanistan after the coalition defeated the Taliban government. On November 5, 2001, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) issued a formal declaration expressing solidarity with the United States in the GWOT.² Regional analysts expected that East Asia’s large Muslim populations would guarantee its importance for American strategies aimed at curbing Islamic extremism.

The subsequent US-led invasion of Iraq made it difficult to realize many of these opportunities for enhanced transpacific cooperation, although a number of East Asian countries—including Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand—participated in the “coalition of the willing” that invaded Iraq, only a few of these governments contributed meaningful military resources. Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad warned that the attack on Iraq would be seen as “being anti-Muslim rather than being anti-terror.”³ Other regional leaders less vocally complained about the folly of the intervention. The governments of Malaysia and Indonesia repeatedly declined American offers, made regularly

1- For official reactions and media reports on the crisis throughout Asia, see UCLA Asia Institute, “A Small Sampling of Asian Comment on the Sept. 11 2001 Terrorist Attacks on the United States,” September 13, 2001, <http://www.international.ucla.edu/eas/web/sept112001.htm>.

2- ASEAN Secretariat, “2001 ASEAN Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism,” November 5, 2001, <http://www.aseansec.org/529.htm>.

3- Cited in Hannah Beech, “Why Asia Fears Bush’s War,” *Time International*, March 24, 2003, p. 24.

since 2004, to have the US Navy help protect the Malaccan Straits from pirates, terrorists, and other threats.⁴ In combination with local factors, the war in Iraq and the failure to make more progress toward an Israeli-Palestinian peace accord encouraged regional terrorist movements in East Asia.⁵ Polls showed a sharp drop, with only a temporary rebound later, in favorable elite and popular opinion throughout East Asia of the United States after the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom.⁶

Many influential Asian and American security experts have subsequently complained that Washington has neglected Northeast Asia during the last few years. At a summer 2006 senior policy seminar at the East-West Center, Asian and American participants jointly criticized the Bush administration for neglecting Asia.⁷ A January 2007 Congressional Research Service report of Asian perceptions of the United States concluded that, in the face of China's growing power and other region-wide security developments, some Asian countries "are beginning to hedge against what they perceive as an increasingly distracted and insufficiently engaged American power."⁸ Evidence of Washington's Asia neglect was visible when Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice missed the August 2007 meeting of the Asian Regional Forum (ARF) in Manila.⁹ They became quite vocal when President Bush cut-short his visit to Sydney during last September's Asia-Pacific

4- Sheldon W. Simon, "US Strengthens Ties to Southeast Asian Regionalism," *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (October 2006), pp. 63-73.

5- Swati Parashar and Arabinda Acharya, *Terrorism in Southeast Asia: The Threat and Response* (Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies and Nanyang Technological University, April 2006), pp. 9-10, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/pubs/ph/details.cfm?lng=en&tid=26564>.

6- Robert G. Sutter, *China's Rise: Implications for US Leadership in Asia* (Washington, DC: East-West Center, 2006), pp. 30-31.

7- Brad Glosserman (rapporteur), *The United States and Asia: Assessing Problems and Prospects* (Honolulu: East-West Center, 2006).

8- Bruce Vaughn, *US Strategic and Defense Relationships in the Asia-Pacific Region* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, January 22, 2007), p. 2.

9- Philip Bowring, "Neglecting East-Asia," *International Herald Tribune*, August 3, 2007, <http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/08/03/opinion/edbrowning.php>.

Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit.¹⁰ The new ASEAN Secretary-General, Surin Pitsuwan, has complained that, despite ASEAN's increased importance in Asia, "the US was absent and absent conspicuously." Pitsuwan argued that Washington instead "needs to be present more and needs to be consistent."¹¹

North Korean Neglect

North Korea's authoritarian dictator, Kim Jong-il, has long sought to transform his impoverished country into an internationally recognized regional power, directly engaged with Washington. For over a decade, he maneuvered between policies of nuclear brinksmanship and diplomatic negotiations, exploiting weaknesses in the nuclear non-proliferation regime while extracting humanitarian rewards from the international community. As a result, North Korea edged ever-closer to developing a functional nuclear weapon. American policies appear to have inadvertently contributed to this process.

The initial US-led invasion of Iraq prompted a security clampdown in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), as Kim feared that North Korea would become the Bush administration's next target for regime change. As US problems in Iraq multiplied, however, Pyongyang became emboldened. North Koreans proceeded first to break their moratorium on launching long-range ballistic missiles, which they had maintained since September 1999. Then Kim Jong-il seized the opportunity presented by a

¹⁰- Caren Bohan, "Shortened Bush Trip to APEC Fuels Criticism," *Reuters*, August 31, 2007, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUKN3020340320070831?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews>.

¹¹- Mely Caballero-Anthony, "Repositioning US Engagement in Southeast Asia," *International Security News*, March 27, 2008, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?ID=18794>.

distracted and weakened Washington to conduct a nuclear weapons test on October 9, 2006.

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the United States adopted a “forward” national security strategy that had preempting threats rather than reacting to them as its core premise. In his 2002 State of the Union Address, President Bush categorized North Korea, along with Iraq and Iran, as a core component of the “axis of evil” whose members threatened American interests and values. Although these three “rogue states” possessed few commonalities, they did share one crucial attribute: they all had reasons to seek weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, to compensate for the overwhelming US advantage in conventional military power. The President defined the crux of his preemption strategy when he warned, “the United States will not permit the world’s most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world’s most destructive weapons.”¹²

North Koreans initially responded to Bush’s warnings with their own threats. The DPRK demonstrated its resolve by removing the seals on its nuclear reactor at Yongbyon placed earlier by technicians from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which oversees the safeguard system embodied in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). On January 10, 2003, North Korea became the first state to withdraw officially from the NPT. Contemporary observers warned that “North Korea has decided nuclear weapons are the best guarantee of security and, with the US preoccupied with Iraq, now is the best opportunity to get them.”¹³ In early March 2003, on the eve of the US invasion of Iraq, North Korea elevated tensions by launching missiles into international waters between the Korean peninsula and Japan. South Korean Defense Minister Cho Young-kil

¹²- George W. Bush, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” September 20, 2001, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.

¹³- Charles Scanlon, “N. Korea Withdraws from Nuclear Pact,” *BBC News*, January 10, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2644593.stm>.

correctly interpreted the behavior as a “‘brinkmanship tactic’ aimed at pressing for two-way security negotiations with the United States.”¹⁴

At first, North Korea’s history of nuclear provocations, which included a previous effort to withdraw from the NPT, mitigated concerns in Washington about how far Pyongyang was willing to proceed.¹⁵ In any case, the Bush administration largely ignored North Korean actions and proceeded to invade Iraq. The initial effect, at least in Pyongyang, may have been positive. The US invasion apparently shocked the DPRK regime into realizing the potentially disastrous consequences of its nuclear posturing. A terrified Kim Jong-il went into hiding for nearly six weeks after the commencement of Operation Iraqi Freedom.¹⁶ The long-term effect of the Iraq invasion, however, was to solidify Kim Jong-il’s commitment to pursue nuclear weapons. Witnessing the rapid collapse of the Saddam Hussein regime before the Anglo-American onslaught, the North Korean leader evidently reached the same conclusion as many other potential American adversaries: Do not confront the United States militarily without a nuclear deterrent.

North Korea’s growing confidence as America’s Iraq troubles mounted severely hampered international mediation efforts. For months, the six-party talks between the United States, North Korea, China, Russia, Japan, and South Korea, which began in August 2003, failed to produce any meaningful solutions. DPRK representatives initially insisted on steep concessions and objected to America’s “hostile policy” toward North Korea. At the end of 2003, Pyongyang demanded a formal bilateral security treaty before returning to talks. Vice President Richard Cheney responded: “we don’t negotiate with evil; we defeat it.”¹⁷

14 - “North Korea Fires Land-to-Ship Missile,” March 10, 2003, <http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2003/3/10/102016.shtml>.

15 - John Feffer, “When the Stick Waves, the Hornet Sings,” *Asia Times Online*, October 12, 2006, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Korea/HJ12Dg02.html>.

16 - Ralph Cossa, “Assessing Blame, Examining Motives,” *Korea Times*, October 23, 2006.

17 - Hamish McDonald, “Cheney’s tough talking derails negotiations with North Korea,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 22, 2003.

As the US position in Iraq deteriorated and administration officials increasingly recognized their weak hand, American negotiators stopped speaking about North Korea in terms of preemption and focused instead on de-escalation and dialogue. James Kelly, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, outlined this new approach, stating: “President Bush is committed to a diplomatic solution and is convinced that multilateral talks are the appropriate diplomatic forum... we will take the time necessary to achieve a fundamental and permanent solution.”¹⁸ After an unproductive second round of six-party talks, the United States returned to the bargaining table in June with an offer of fuel aid to North Korea in exchange for an initial freeze and eventual dismantling of the country’s nuclear program. Weeks later, Secretary of State Colin Powell discussed the nuclear issue directly with the North Korean foreign minister, the highest-level meeting between both governments in two years.¹⁹

The US and South Korean governments soon made considerable concessions in an attempt to entice Pyongyang into accepting a negotiated settlement. The two countries promised large quantities of food, fertilizer, and electricity—as well as a general end to Pyongyang’s isolation—in return for renewed North Korean participation in the six-party talks. Following Chinese mediation, on September 19, 2005, the DPRK said that in principle it was prepared to abandon its nuclear weapons program and rejoin the NPT (with its obligatory IAEA safeguards) in return for substantial foreign economic and energy assistance. The US government affirmed that it had no intention to attack the DPRK or redeploy nuclear weapons on the peninsula.²⁰ The administration hailed the declaration as a major diplomatic victory. US

¹⁸- James A. Kelley, “Ensuring a Korean Peninsula Free of Nuclear Weapons,” February 13, 2004, <http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2004/29396.htm>.

¹⁹- Christopher Marquis, “Powell Meets Foreign Minister of North Korea to Discuss Arms,” *New York Times*, July 2, 2004.

²⁰- “Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks,” September 19, 2005, www.state.gov/t/pa/prs/ps/2005/53490.htm.

officials recognized that the failed Iraq War had deprived the United States of any credible military option (or political will) to attack the DPRK. Nevertheless, the talks failed to produce a lasting settlement.

One reason the deal may have collapsed is that North Korean leaders appear to have overplayed their hand in subsequent negotiations by making several new demands. Another cause, however, was the lack of effective interagency consultations within the US government. At the same time that the State Department was trying to entice North Korea to negotiate away its nuclear weapons program, the Treasury Department was imposing severe financial sanctions on the Bank Delta Asia in Macau for allegedly helping North Korea launder counterfeit American currency. The bank responded by freezing millions of dollars in its DPRK account.

Furthermore, various American statements could easily have confirmed the perception of North Korean leaders that the Bush administration still envisioned changing the DPRK regime. During her January 2005 confirmation hearings, Secretary of State-designee Rice rebranded North Korea as one of the world's "outposts of tyranny."²¹ This phrase, reminiscent of President Bush's "axis of evil," enflamed tensions and led the DPRK Foreign Ministry to distribute a statement justifying his country's need for nuclear weapons for purposes of "self-defense to cope with the Bush administration's undisguised policy to isolate and stifle" North Korea. The statement also declared that the DPRK had indefinitely suspended its participation in the six-party talks. The White House made a concerted effort to downplay the announcement. Spokesperson Scott McClellan dismissed the revelation as "rhetoric we've heard before."²²

In addition, administration officials, perhaps to highlight perceived inadequacies in the Clinton-era 1994 Agreed Framework, kept insisting that

²¹ - "Opening Remarks by Secretary of State-Designate Dr. Condoleezza Rice," January 18, 2005, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/40991.htm>.

²² - James Brooke, "North Korea Says it Has Nuclear Weapons and Rejects Talks," *New York Times*, February 10, 2005.

North Korea disclose its alleged efforts to develop an atomic bomb through uranium enrichment. DPRK leaders denied having such a program, and the other parties to the talks expressed growing doubts about the credibility of the American accusations. (The US intelligence community has recently revealed its own reservations on this issue.²³)

By the end of 2005, Kim Jong-il had evidently resolved to consummate his nuclear weapons program. After the DPRK launched a half dozen missiles over the American July 4th holiday, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed a resolution denouncing the tests and imposing limited sanctions. But China's threatened veto of any punitive measures adopted under Chapter 7, which could allow for military force, meant that the resulting tepid UN resolution did little to dissuade Pyongyang from proceeding to develop nuclear weapons. Events were proving the disadvantages of the administration's tactic of outsourcing its North Korean policy to Beijing while the White House focused on other regions. On October 9, 2006, North Korea demonstrated unequivocally that it had the will and capacity to develop nuclear weapons by detonating an underground nuclear explosive device.

Although Secretary Rice and other Bush administration officials proclaimed that Beijing and Washington saw eye-to-eye on the issue of North Korean nuclear weapons, the Chinese delegation to the UN successfully insisted that any UN-approved action should aim less to punish North Korea retroactively than to modify its future policies. Chinese leaders were clearly angered by Kim Jong-il's defiance of Beijing's warnings against testing a nuclear weapon. Nevertheless, the Chinese government remains more concerned about the potential collapse of the North Korean state, which could induce a massive influx of refugees into northeast China, than

²³- Glenn Kessler, "New Doubts on Nuclear Efforts by North Korea," *Washington Post*, March 1, 2007; David E. Sanger and William J. Broad, "US Concedes Uncertainty on North Korean Uranium Effort," *New York Times*, March 1, 2007.

about the North Korean leader's intransigence on nuclear weapons or other issues. Beijing wanted a change in Pyongyang's behavior but not a change in its regime.

Although the Chinese government did pressure North Korea to moderate its stance, the change in US negotiation strategy following the detonation appears to have had an equal if not greater impact in achieving an agreement at the conclusion of the fifth round of the six-party talks, which ended on February 13, 2007.²⁴ Abandoning its longstanding and fruitless policy of refusing to negotiate directly with the DPRK government, the administration arranged to hold talks with the North Korean delegation at a mid-January 2007 bilateral meeting in Berlin between US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill and DPRK Vice Minister Kim Kye-gwan. The administration also backtracked on achieving an absolute North Korean commitment to the "complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement" of their country's nuclear program. Finally, it retreated on the Banco Delta Asia money-laundering dispute and offered to release millions of dollars in frozen funds. These decisions, long advocated by regional security experts—who saw them as self-defeating and self-imposed barriers to progress—proved instrumental in advancing the negotiating process.²⁵

Unfortunately, the parties could probably have achieved a similar agreement five years—and 4-10 North Korean atomic bombs—earlier. In addition, US officials also have yet to address the issue of Pyongyang's testing and sale of ballistic missiles. The Clinton administration had achieved some progress on this question—including securing a DPRK testing moratorium during its last year in office. The Bush administration abandoned these talks but then failed to pursue any initiative of its own, contributing to a renewal of North Korean missile testing. The next administration will need both to

²⁴ Edward Cody, "Tentative Nuclear Deal Struck with North Korea," *Washington Post*, February 13, 2007.

²⁵ Glenn Kessler and Edward Cody, "US Flexibility Credited in Nuclear Deal with N. Korea," *Washington Post*, February 14, 2007.

build on the recent if limited achievements regarding the nuclear weapons issue while also expanding the US-DPRK-Six-Party dialogue to address non-nuclear security issues such as ballistic missile proliferation.

The China Challenge

When they first assumed office, senior members of the Bush administration made clear that they considered China's growing economic and military strength a major strategic issue. Even before Bush's election, his then chief foreign policy adviser, Condoleezza Rice, characterized China as a "strategic competitor" that aspired to weaken US influence in Asia.²⁶ These expressions of concern persisted in several of the administration's early national security documents and were reinforced by the April 2001 collision of a Chinese warplane with a US Navy EP-3 surveillance aircraft in international airspace near China's Hainan Island.

The September 2001 terrorist attacks and the ensuing wars on terrorism and in Iraq derailed this necessary process of reassessing US policies toward China. After 9/11, attention in Washington focused almost exclusively on exposing and extirpating terrorist networks in Asia and elsewhere, and on ending their state sponsorship. Administration representatives ceased characterizing China as a potential adversary or the United States as a balancing power in East Asia. They also professed unconcern about the possible implications for American interests of China's ongoing economic growth, military modernization, and diplomatic initiatives (except in the case of North Korea, where Washington pressed Beijing to assume a *larger* role in resolving the nuclear weapons crisis).²⁷ Beijing readily

²⁶-Condoleezza Rice, "Promoting the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 1 (January/February 2000).

²⁷-Morton Abramowitz and Stephen Bosworth, "Adjusting to the New Asia," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (July/August 2003), pp. 120, 125-127.

exploited the opportunity to expand its influence in the Asia-Pacific region²⁸—continuing their subtle, multifaceted, and long-term grand strategy to accumulate the economic wherewithal, military strength, and soft power resources to secure China’s position as a regional great power.²⁹

China’s economic successes over the past two decades have helped stimulate global commerce and improve the lives of millions of Chinese citizens. Unfortunately, these developments also have disturbing implications for the global balance of political and military power. As China’s economy expands, so do the resources available to its leaders for pursuing diplomatic and military policies that will frequently conflict with American preferences.

With average annual increases of 15% during the past five years, China’s military spending is one of the few sectors to outpace the country’s economic growth.³⁰ Since the late 1990s, the Chinese government has accelerated efforts to modernize and upgrade the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). China’s lack of transparency regarding defense expenditures obscures matters, but most foreign analysts estimate that, since the official Chinese budget figure excludes spending on military R&D, nuclear weapons, and major foreign weapons imports, the PRC probably spends \$90-\$140 billion annually on defense.³¹ The latest Chinese Defense White Paper outlines plans for an ambitious multi-decade effort to modernize all the branches of the PLA, from the Army, Navy, and Air Force to the Second Artillery Forces, which manage the country’s strategic missile forces.³² In

²⁸—Gideon Rachman, “As America Looks the Other Way, China’s Rise Accelerates,” *Financial Times*, February 12, 2007.

²⁹—Chong-Pin Lin, “Beijing’s New Grand Strategy: An Offensive with Extra-Military Instruments,” *China Brief*, Vol. 6, No. 24 (December 6, 2006), pp. 3-5.

³⁰—An extensive description of China’s growing military capabilities appears in the annual US Department of Defense reports to Congress on Chinese military power.

³¹—See for example US Department of Defense, “Military Power of the People’s Republic of China, 2008,” p. 33, http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/pdfs/China_Military_Report_08.pdf.

³²—Information Office of the State Council, People’s Republic of China, *China’s National*

early March 2008, the Chinese government announced one of its largest military spending increases in years, an almost 18% rise in its declared defense budget.³³

Whatever the true sum of China's defense expenditures, the success of the US-led military operations in the former Yugoslavia and in Iraq during the 1990s clearly prompted the Chinese government to pursue improved capacities for power projection and precision strikes.³⁴ For example, the PLA has emphasized developing Rapid Reaction Forces capable of deploying beyond China's borders. Similarly, the PLA Navy has been acquiring longer-range offensive and defensive systems, including a more effective submarine force capable of threatening US aircraft carriers.³⁵ Chinese strategists have also sought to develop an "assassin's mace" (*shashoujian*) collection of niche weapons that the PLA can use to exploit asymmetrical vulnerabilities in US military defenses.³⁶ Besides allowing the PRC to improve its traditionally weak indigenous defense industry, rapid economic growth has enabled China to become the world's largest arms importer. Russia has been an especially eager seller. China is also devoting additional resources to manufacturing advanced indigenous weapons systems. As a result of these trends, China's massive defense spending is shifting the balance of power against Taiwan, making a coercive solution increasingly attractive to Beijing.

Since the mid 1990s, Chinese authorities have pursued a comprehensive "peaceful rise" public relations strategy designed to assuage

Defense in 2006, December 29, 2006, <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/china/doctrine/wp2006.html>.

33- "China to Raise Military Spending," *BBC News*, March 4, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7276277.stm>.

34- Chinese ambitions to use a RMA to amplify their military power are documented in Michael Pillsbury, *China: Debates the Future Security Environment* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2000), pp. 278-304.

35- Lyle Goldstein and William Murray, "Undersea Dragons: China's Maturing Submarine Force," *International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Spring 2004), pp. 161-196.

36- The Editors, "The Assassin's Mace," *The New Atlantis*, No. 6 (Summer 2004), pp. 107-110.

international anxieties about China's growing power and influence by downplaying territorial disputes, offering trade concessions, broadening cooperative dialogues, and promoting student and other cultural exchanges.³⁷ China's influence within the United Nations has increased considerably due to Beijing's newfound commitment to multilateralism, its consistent pro-UN pronouncements, and its substantial contribution to UN-authorized peacekeeping missions.³⁸ China's quest to reassure its Asian neighbors that its ascent does not threaten them, despite historical reasons to fear otherwise, has proven surprisingly successful. Many Asian leaders profess to see China's rise as more of an economic opportunity than a military threat. They maintain that their own countries' economic health depends heavily on continued Chinese prosperity. Due to Japan's protracted economic stagnation, the PRC has become the leading growth engine for many countries. China's commercial ties with every Southeast Asian country are growing. Few East Asian officials openly call for containing China or taking other overtly defensive measures to prepare for its emerging regional ascendancy. East Asian governments have eagerly embraced Beijing's proposals to reduce trade barriers through arrangements that often bypass Washington.

Japan: New Threats, New Options

Thus far, the situation in Iraq has not resulted in a crisis of confidence over the credibility of US security guarantees or other major harm to the Japanese-American alliance. If anything, ties between Tokyo and Washington have strengthened during the last decade despite Japan's continuous

³⁷-A good example of the public relations themes can be found in Zheng Bijian, "China's 'Peaceful Rise' to Great-Power Status," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 5 (September/October 2005).

³⁸-Michael Fullilove, "Ban's Debut is Chance for Asia to Step into Spotlight," *Financial Times*, December 18, 2006.

redefinition of its appropriate foreign and defense policies. Nevertheless, worrisome developments have occurred in Japan's environs—especially regarding China and North Korea—whose effects are still manifesting themselves on Japan's security environment and, eventually, could lead to unwelcome changes in Tokyo's response.

For over a decade, Japanese security managers have had to consider a potential nuclear attack from the DPRK. In 1994, the US intelligence community concluded that North Korea possessed a secret nuclear weapons program. The issue became less pressing after American threats, South Korean inducements, and Japanese financial assistance convinced Pyongyang to suspend its program under the October 1994 Agreed Framework. The launch of a North Korean long-range Taepodong 1 ballistic missile over Japanese territory in August 1998, however, produced a Sputnik-like shock effect. Japanese people and policymakers alike were now forced to consider the devastation that even a single North Korean missile, if armed with a nuclear warhead, could inflict on their country. Despite Japanese threats and pleading, North Korea resumed test launching ballistic missiles over the Pacific Ocean in July 2006 and tested a nuclear device in October 2006. North Korea's actions prompted the Japanese government to discuss more openly their country's longstanding decision to refrain from developing an independent nuclear deterrent. Although the Cabinet reaffirmed the government's policy of abstention, its members insisted on their responsibility to debate—and periodically reassess—the nuclear question in light of Japan's changing security environment.

Despite the February 2007 Six-Party Agreement, Japanese leaders have expressed widespread skepticism that North Korea will ever eliminate its nuclear weapons program. In addition, they have made clear that Tokyo will continue to view the DPRK as a rogue regime for its past kidnapping of Japanese citizens. Since it arose in 2002, the abduction issue has impeded substantial progress in the bilateral negotiations aimed at establishing

diplomatic relations and resolving mutual disagreements between the two countries. The depth of these differences became apparent in early March 2007, when the bilateral Japanese-DPRK talks in Vietnam deadlocked after only one brief session. The new Japanese government led by Yasuo Fukuda has continued this hard-line stance on the abduction issue. On April 11, 2008, it renewed its economic sanctions against the DPRK. Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura said Japan would only lift the sanctions when North Korea eliminated its nuclear weapons programs and returned all abductees to Japan.³⁹ The next US administration will need to work closely with Tokyo to manage the growing differences between Washington and Tokyo on North Korean issues.⁴⁰

In addition to the threat from North Korea, the Japanese have become increasingly concerned about China's intentions and capabilities, especially in the maritime domain. Japan adheres to the UN Law of the Sea when claiming that its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) extends 200 miles from its shore. China asserts that its EEZ begins not at its coast but from the edge of its submerged continental shelf. Chinese drilling at the Chunxiao/Shirakaba gas fields and Japan's response have highlighted the dangers of these conflicting claims. In May 2004, Beijing authorized Chinese firms to commence exploratory drilling at Chunxiao/Shirakaba. Following a year of futile protests, Tokyo decided to permit Japanese firms to conduct their own explorations in the disputed region. After Chinese warships provocatively patrolled the area, the Japanese Coast Guard boldly assumed formal control over the contested Senkaku Islands south of Japan.⁴¹ Although the fields lie

³⁹ "Japan Extends Sanctions against N. Korea for Six More Months," *Associated Press*, April 11, 2008, <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/04/11/asia/AS-GEN-Japan-NKorea-Sanctions.php>.

⁴⁰ Blaine Harden, "Japan Feeling Left Out as US Talks to Pyongyang," *Washington Post*, May 17, 2008, A14, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/05/16/AR2008051603920.html>.

⁴¹ For a summary of the dispute see Kent E. Calder, "China and Japan's Simmering Rivalry," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 2 (March/April 2006), pp. 130-131.

just inside China's side of the meridian line separating the two countries, Japanese experts believe that exploiting Chunxiao/Shirakaba would siphon gas from fields that extend under waters claimed by Japan—a situation disturbingly similar to that which Saddam Hussein cited to justify his invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

Until now, Japan's close military cooperation with the United States has made exploring alternative security strategies, such as developing an independent nuclear deterrent seems unnecessary. Despite Japan's latent nuclear capacity and the perceived worsening of its security environment, Japanese leaders have until now refrained from developing a nuclear arsenal because of their confidence in American pledges to defend Japan against external threats—with US nuclear weapons, if necessary. Japan's December 2004 National Defense Program Guideline affirms, "To protect its territory and people against the threat of nuclear weapons, Japan will continue to rely on the US nuclear deterrent. At the same time, Japan will play an active role in creating a world free of nuclear weapons by taking realistic step-by-step measures for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation."⁴² The continued deployment of substantial US military forces on Japanese territory reinforces the credibility of US security guarantees.

Even so, the US decision to revise America's global military posture has already engendered anxieties in Japan and other East Asian countries about US staying power.⁴³ If American forces were to withdraw from the Korean peninsula as a result of a decision by the government of either South Korea or a newly reunified Korea, the Japanese government would find it hard to justify Japan's position as the sole Asian country hosting American

⁴² Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, "National Defense Program Guideline, FY 2005," December 10, 2004, http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/policy/2004/1210taikou_e.html.

⁴³ The rationale for the deployments is presented in "Testimony As Prepared for Delivery by Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld," Senate Armed Service Committee, Washington, DC, September 23, 2004, <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2004/sp20040923-secdef0783.html>.

military bases. But a major reduction in the US military presence in Japan could leave that country vulnerable and stimulate Japanese interest in developing nuclear weapons.

Conclusion: New Directions

The next US administration will need to adopt new policies to limit the adverse repercussions of recent developments for American interests in Northeast Asia. First, US officials urgently need to re-balance their energies and devote more attention to East Asia. American stakes in Asia are already enormous and will likely increase in coming decades. To take only one example, projections show that, in 2020, approximately 56% of the world's population will reside in Asia (with some 19% in China and 17% in India) while only 3% will live in the Middle East.⁴⁴

The growing importance of the US-Japan security relationship represents another reason American policymakers should consider devoting more attention to East Asia. Japanese leaders' continued confidence in Washington's pledges to defend Japan against external threats—with US nuclear weapons if necessary—explains why Tokyo continues to decline to acquire nuclear weapons. Sustaining a strong bilateral alliance will require US policymakers to reaffirm their commitment and capacity to protect Japan. In the near term, American reassurances will likely focus on the perceived threat from North Korea. Over the long term, managing the China challenge will probably assume priority. The deployment of substantial American military forces on Japanese territory should continue as a very visible and effective demonstration of the credibility of US security guarantees.

Any American strategy for managing Beijing will require the support

⁴⁴ National Intelligence Council, *Mapping the Global Future* (Washington, DC: December 2004), p. 48, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/2020/2020.pdf>.

of most of China's neighbors to be effective. The United States will continue to benefit from underlying regional anxieties about the implications of China's rise. At a minimum, Asians would want to sustain ties with Americans to provide them with negotiating leverage with Beijing. Some Asians also worry that China's growing capabilities could provide it with a kind of "existential hegemony," with Beijing dominating Asian affairs even in the absence of a deliberate policy objective. Concerns about the longer-term growth of Chinese military power, as well as Beijing's stubborn commitment to an authoritarian political system, sustain broad Asian support for retaining a robust US military presence in the region, as well as a grudging tolerance for Japan's more activist security policies.⁴⁵

Sino-American relations will continue to entail a complex mix of cooperation and competition. For example, Beijing and Washington share an interest in countering terrorism in Southeast Asia, which has become a major battleground for hearts and minds between moderate Muslims and Islamic extremists. The accelerated development of the undersea energy resources in the East China Sea would also enhance the ability of both countries to hedge against further disruptions in Persian Gulf oil supplies. The persistent dispute between China and Japan over their contested maritime claims has impeded progress on this issue. American policies can help moderate tensions in this and other areas by encouraging Chinese and Japanese leaders to focus on current opportunities rather than past differences.

In addition, the need to respond to the DPRK's nuclear program has created opportunities for improved relations between China and both Japan and the United States. Perhaps the most important difference between the 1994 Agreed Framework and the February 2007 Denuclearization Accord

⁴⁵ - Michael J. Green, "America's Quiet Victories in Asia," *Washington Post*, February 13, 2007; Sheng Lijun, "Beijing's Soft Power in Southeast Asia," *International Herald Tribune*, January 17, 2007.

is that the Chinese government has been considerably more involved in supporting the more recent negotiations. From Beijing's perspective, a successful outcome to the six-party process would both eliminate the problems that a North Korean nuclear arsenal presents for China (for example, by stimulating Japanese interest in developing missile defenses and perhaps nuclear weapons) and help reinforce perceptions of Beijing as a committed and influential regional security stakeholder.

In addition, any sustained effort to integrate North Korea into the region's security and economic structures—an essential step in the short term for preventing Pyongyang's nuclear recidivism and in the long term for transforming its regime into a less threatening foreign policy actor—will require effective multinational burden-sharing. No single country can provide North Korea with unilateral security assurances sufficient to induce the DPRK leadership to halt its ballistic missile and nuclear weapons development programs. Similarly, the costs of reforming the North Korean economy are so great as to require a comprehensive multinational rescue effort. In the absence of integration and reconstruction, an impoverished and isolated North Korea would likely seek nuclear weapons again—and engage in other disruptive and illicit activities—to gain international attention and money as well as deter foreign threats against it. US intelligence analysts recently claimed that monetary considerations likely motivated Pyongyang to help Syria build the nuclear reactor that Israeli warplanes destroyed in September 2007.⁴⁶

More generally, the Asia Pacific countries appreciate that their economic development requires a stable regional security environment, with as few disruptive crises over disputed territories or commercial activities as possible. The level of commercial interdependence between

⁴⁶-Office of the Director of National Intelligence, "Background Briefing with Senior US Officials on Syria's Covert Nuclear Reactor and North Korea's Involvement," April 24, 2008, http://dni.gov/interviews/20080424_interview.pdf.

South Korea, China, Japan, and the United States has become so great that any security-induced disruptions would seriously damage the global economy. All four governments appreciate in principle that achieving regional peace and prosperity requires tolerably good relations among them, but clashing views on specific issues sometimes distract them from this goal.

Looking beyond the six-party talks and the North Korean nuclear issue, the most fruitful mode of promoting security cooperation in East Asia during the next few years will probably consist of less formal coordinating mechanisms involving only the most interested and influential governments. The six-party talks, as presently organized, demonstrate the value of minimally formalized, moderately inclusive structures created to address discrete issues. For example, the six-party mechanism has proved sufficiently flexible to enable the United States to deal with North Korea bilaterally (meeting a key DPRK demand) within a multilateral framework that encouraged compromises among governments whose representatives feared being outnumbered or seen as an obstacle to progress.

Rather than attempt to extend the existing six-party talks to encompass new issues, however, it would probably prove easier in most cases to organize a new structure tailored to the specific subject at hand—whether curbing nuclear non-proliferation, promoting energy cooperation, or some other issue area warranting multilateral attention. The institutional mechanism should include only those countries most interested in—or important for—addressing the specific issue. Their exclusive nature should accelerate progress since they would require the consent of only a limited number of governments to act. South Korea, with one of the world's most powerful economies and expanding regional security interests, would likely be a member of many of these “institutions of the willing and able.” The DPRK, except when its behavior itself constituted to the problem, would probably not.

Finally, the United States can use more creative strategies to re-establish its security credentials in East Asia. For example, the substantial support provided by the American military to the international humanitarian relief and recovery operations following the December 2004 Asian Tsunami generated widespread popular approval for the United States in the region. In Indonesia, polls showed a sharp drop in public support for Al Qaeda and violent terrorist attacks. In contrast, Chinese government representatives were visibly defensive when asked about their own miserly financial assistance to the devastated regions. American policymakers should seek out other opportunities and mechanisms to demonstrate how the United States can make unique, meaningful contributions to the security and welfare of the Asian Pacific community.

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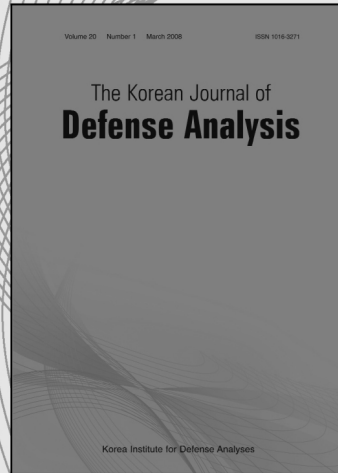
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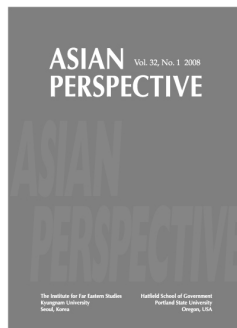
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