

**THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION**  
**CENTER FOR NORTHEAST ASIAN POLICY STUDIES**

**AN APPROACH TO MANAGING  
NORTH KOREA**

*by*

**GENERAL (RET.) LEE SANGHEE**

Nonresident Senior Fellow  
Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies  
The Brookings Institution  
Former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Republic of Korea

*The Brookings Institution  
Washington, D.C.  
November 20, 2007*

1. Introduction
2. The Internal Situation of the North Korean Regime, and Projected Change
3. North Korea's External Relations and Strategic Intents
4. ROK and Regional Countries' Perception and Position on North Korea
5. A Way for the ROK-U.S. Alliance to Manage North Korea
6. Conclusion

## **1. Introduction**

With the signing of the 'Initial Actions for Implementation of the September 19 Joint Statement' on February 13, it seems that much of the tensions on the Korean peninsula and in Northeast Asia that arose from North Korea's missile launch in July and nuclear test in October 2006 have subsided. In addition, the five working groups of the Six-Party Talks are continuing their discussions. And also on October 3, the Six-Party Talks released a joint statement on 'Second-Phase Actions for the Implementation of the September 19 Joint Statement.'<sup>1</sup> Involved nations, including the Republic of Korea, assess that the recent agreements would serve as the turning point in achieving peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue.

Moreover, with a joint declaration signed by the leaders of South and North Korea at their bilateral summit on October 4, expectations for peace and stability on the Korean peninsula are increasing. It may hint at a possibility for a fundamental shift in security structure on the Korean peninsula and in Northeast Asia.

Despite these positive developments, pessimistic views still remain on whether North Korea will abide by the agreements and entirely give up its nuclear program including its HEU program, and whether North Korea will follow the rules of the international community and implement reforms geared toward an open-market economy. Suspicion still lingers due to North Korea's repeated violation and ignorance of nuclear agreements, such as the 1994 Geneva Agreed Framework and the 1992 Declaration of Denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula.

---

<sup>1</sup> Six-Party Talks' 'Second-Phase Actions for the Implementation of the September 2005 Joint Statement' on October 3, 2007

1) The DPRK agreed to disable all existing nuclear facilities subject to abandonment under the September 2005 Joint Statement and the February 13 agreement.

2) The DPRK agreed to provide a complete and correct declaration of all its nuclear programs in accordance with the February 13 agreement by 31 December 2007.

3) The DPRK reaffirmed its commitment not to transfer nuclear materials, technology, or know-how.

Both optimistic and pessimistic views held by outsiders on the North Korean issue are fundamentally due to the reclusive nature of the regime in Pyongyang. North Korea is the world's most secluded and tightly veiled nation. Furthermore, the complex relationships between neighboring states - and different perceptions among them about North Korea's ideological tendencies, political interests and reliability of related intelligence - make it difficult to assess the future of North Korea.

Despite these facts, we are all at a general consensus on the following statements. First, North Korea is perceived as a dangerous state. The North Korean regime has enhanced its military strength after the Korean War in order to forcefully unify the peninsula under the communist control. The Kim Jong Il regime has raised the threat by declaring the "military-first" policy and endeavoring to develop weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. Furthermore, North Korea is consistently applying its strategy against the South to divide its public opinion and drive a wedge in the ROK-U.S. alliance by repeatedly demanding the withdrawal of USFK, cessation of ROK-U.S. combined military exercises, and nullification of the Armistice Agreement.

Second, North Korea is seen as a failed state. Not counting its military sector, North Korea has reached overall stagnation, and the view that unless it undertakes aggressive reforms and opens itself up it will not be able to maintain its system has already been suggested since the mid-1990s. This stagnation is evidenced by the gradual increase in the number of defectors from North Korea. There is a significant opposing view that even though North Korea is a failed state, it will not easily collapse because the adaptability of its people is well-developed, through a long period of internal difficulties, and because of the nation's strong monitoring and controlling system to its civilian population.

Both the Republic of Korea and the United States have had concerns for a long time about how to manage such a North Korea. However, there are few positive assessments that we are managing North Korea in an effective manner. The future fate and courses of action of North Korea will have a decisive influence on the Korean peninsula and all of Northeast Asia. There may be no differences of opinion that it is the obligation of this generation to rationally analyze North Korea and come up with an effective solution. It is worthwhile to suggest a proper strategy for the ROK-U.S. alliance to manage North Korea. An effective strategy first requires a review of the current situation and projected change of the North Korean regime, an assessment of its external relations and strategic intent, and an understanding of perceptions and positions on North Korea of the Republic of Korea and other regional states.

## **2. The Internal Situation of the North Korean Regime, and Projected Change**

### **A. Political Aspects**

North Korea's political system is based on 'juche ideology,' which doctrinally establishes the one-party dictatorship of the communist party. As a basic political ideology, 'juche' is applied to various facets of the daily life of North Koreans: the word 'juche' is officially used as a name for the era,<sup>2</sup> farmers cultivate based on 'juche' methods, and Special Forces units drill on 'juche' combat techniques. But the 'juche ideology,' according to which the people denounce any outside influence and resolve all problems on their own, is really meant for shutting the population in and controlling it by distorting information.

This ideology has made North Korea lose motivation to develop with outside assistance, and has worsened the contradictions and backwardness of its regime. Such an exclusive self-reliance policy has fundamental limitations and has placed North Korea in a position of requiring continuous food and oil assistance from the outside. During the period of catastrophic famine in the mid-1990s, when approximately three million people perished, the North Korean regime spent \$900 million to build a luxurious structure to preserve the dead body of Kim Il Sung. The North Korean regime is brutally suppressing its people, covering their eyes and ears against the outside world. 150,000 to 200,000 political prisoners are estimated to be held captive in approximately 10 concentration camps throughout North Korea, in miserable living conditions. In order to justify the theory of rule by the few, the people armed with 'juche ideology' are living in terrible conditions

Another special characteristic of the North Korean political system can be seen in its 'military-first policy,' which places the military as the centerpiece in the administration of the country. The Bolshevik ideology that holds high the importance of the military has been reinforced under the Kim Jong Il regime to the point where the armed forces stand on an equal footing with the communist party. This system was established in the mid-1990s after Kim Il Sung died, during the period of the so-called 'difficult march,' and has been maintained to overcome the regime crisis and control its people. Kim Jong Il rules North Korea not under a normal governance structure and with a title of 'Head,' 'Chief,' or 'President' of the country, but rather as the 'Chairman of the National Defense Committee.' Because the military authority, which firmly believes in Kim Jong Il's theory, has expanded its sphere of influence, it can easily influence North Korea's international relations, and can significantly worsen a crisis if it chooses to. In reality, North Korean civilian administrators and diplomats have attempted to fulfill their objectives in negotiating with foreign countries by claiming that some problems exist in

---

<sup>2</sup> North Korea has set the year 1912, the year of Kim Il Sung's birth, as the first year of 'juche.'

‘getting the military leadership’s understanding and consent.’<sup>3</sup>

## **B. Economic Aspects**

For some time after the Korean War, the North Korean economy received attention as a success model for self-revival of a socialist economy, and was even considered to be more successful than the South Korean economy. However, as a result of long-term accumulation of excessive investment in military industries, and a series of contradictions in the centralized, closed and planned economy, even the basic industrial facilities of the society have collapsed at this point. In such a situation, North Korea has pursued illicit economic activities to sustain the Kim Jong Il regime, such as drug trafficking, currency counterfeit, and missile sales, and pushed itself into isolation and the worst level of credibility in international society.

It is believed that North Korea does recognize that it cannot fix the structural problem of its economy unless it reforms or opens up. Thus far, North Korea has taken measures such as enactment of cooperative management laws, establishment of the Najin special zone, attempting to establish the Shinuiju special zone and Kaesung Industrial Complex projects, but it’s difficult to detect that fundamental and structural changes have been made in its economy. This might be due to the hesitation to undertake reforms and opening-up which the regime fears would lead to the loss of the vested power of Kim Jong Il and his followers as well as to the downfall of the regime as a whole.

## **C. Social Aspects**

North Korea maintains a totalitarian social system in which principles of collectivism are higher than the value of individuals. While recent natural disasters - coupled with the fact that control of the population is not what it used to be - have led to a gradual increase in the number of defectors over the past several years, and while more information about the Republic of Korea and China is flowing into the northern area of North Korea, they have not been so decisively influential as to cause a regime change and collapse.

Such durability of the North Korea regime originates from the ‘socialist, patriarchal system,’ a grafting of North Korea's communist ideology and Confucian patriarchal authoritarianism. The common concept of a political leader is extended, and Chairman of the National Defense Committee Kim Jong Il, who is often called the ‘Chief Magistrate,’ ‘Unparalleled Hero,’ or the ‘Great Leader,’ is held to be not just a leader but a father figure of the same flesh and blood. The majority of North Korean people are indoctrinated to believe this and have established sentimental bonds with him. Therefore, treating a piece of newspaper with a picture of Kim Jong Il on it with great care or jumping into a blaze to save his portrait at a scene of fire is not at all

---

<sup>3</sup> North Korea made these claims when negotiating in 2006 over test operations and opening of the North-South railroad.

strange to North Korean people. The brutal watching agencies of the North Korean regime thoroughly control any leading spirit attempting to enlighten the people or any process of the people gaining consciousness as citizens.

The North Korean society is a gigantic military system. Currently, 1.17 million people, 5% of the total population of approximately 22 million people, are part of standing military force. If paramilitary organizations are added, 1/3 of the entire population is ready to be armed and execute combat missions. It is no exaggeration to say that anyone who is not a child, elderly, or weak has military duty. North Korea uses external threats as a pretext for maintaining such a system, but in reality utilizes that system as a way to organize and control its people through obedience to discipline. This is why the argument that North Korea is a collective that can sustain its system only with a total of 3 million people — with Kim Jong Il at the top, 1 million core party members, 1 million soldiers, and 1 million Pyongyang citizens — is persuasive. It is difficult to imagine a reality in which North Korean people could reform their social structure on their own, or conduct antiestablishment movements of the regime.

#### **D. Military Aspects**

No fact or situation about the North Korean regime can be explained properly if the military, its core organization, is excluded from the equation. Currently, the North Korean forces are assessed to have the world's fourth largest number of troops. North Korea's rationale for maintaining a large military is based on its belief that troops are relatively more important than firepower and barriers on the restricted terrain of the corridor-shaped peninsula, despite the many casualties that this philosophy would entail in the event of conflict. They can maintain high combat readiness thanks to the length of service of more than 10 years, and the way of their barracks life which allows less than 20% of the personnel to be on leave at one time.

In addition to the overall large number of troops, it is assessed that North Korea is the largest in number of special forces and second in number of artillery pieces in the world. Despite possessing such a large military, North Korea has concentrated on building WMD such as chemical and nuclear weapons, and ballistic missiles. Based on the lessons of the Korean War, North Korea has made advances in the operation of large-scale artillery, armor and mechanized units, infiltration tactics using underground tunnels and old-style biplane aircraft such as the AN-2, establishment of densely deployed air defense and coastline defense nets, as well as the deployment of a large number of mines in the sea.

North Korean military indoctrinates its troops that the ROK forces are inferior as they do not have the wartime operational control, that the southern way of thinking is not consistent between officers and the enlisted men, that the length of military service for the enlisted men is too short, and that military morale is low. They also assess that the

United States's technological superiority cannot be fully utilized on North Korea's mountainous terrain.<sup>4</sup>

## **E. Prospects**

In the 1990s, many experts were eager to make the first supposition that the North Korean regime would soon collapse because the dissolution of communism, Kim Il Sung's death, economic disaster, and food shortages all occurred at the same time. But the North Korean regime has remained in place. Based on existing analyses, North Korea's future course can be described in the following ways.

One school of thought believes that the status quo can be maintained. Currently, it appears that North Korea has overcome internal crises like the so-called 'difficult march' that it faced in the mid 1990s. Kim Jong Il has proven his leadership during the recent process of nuclear development, and the North Korean people's tolerance to extreme situations must have become stronger. Therefore, North Korea may, more or less, be able to maintain the current situation by earning concessions from the United States and international society through repetition of threats and compromises.

Second, there is a theory that North Korea will implement the September 19, February 13, and October 3 agreements by abandoning its nuclear program, and will engage in reform and opening up. This is what involved nations desire most but it is only possible through a strategic decision by the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Il. If it does happen, North Korea would maintain its socialist political system while pursuing reforms and opening up in the way of a market economy system, such as China and Vietnam have done.

Third, there is the possibility for a sudden internal crisis in North Korea. The dominant view is that when considering the Kim Jong Il dictatorship's brutal control, North Korea would not fall easily. However, such a possibility cannot be totally excluded, whether North Korea maintains its seclusion or pushes forward reforms and opening up,. For example, we can anticipate a large scale of defection, a coup-d'etat caused by Kim Jong Il's sudden death, an internal conflict, or a loss of control of its WMD. There would be high possibility that perhaps one of these scenarios, or perhaps a combination, would occur.

Fourth, a limited regional conflict could be possible. Such an armed provocation could be used as a means of threat during negotiations such as the Six-Party Talks, or to increase internal solidarity. If an internal crisis suddenly occurs, and if the survival of the North Korean regime's leadership were threatened due to the resistance movement of the enlightened people and anti-regime organizations, the leadership may commit a limited regional provocation in the form of an explosion as a way to shift the people's attention

---

<sup>4</sup> Suggested by Lee, Jeong Yun in his book "North Koreans do not have Guhn-Pang," published in February, 2007. Lee worked for a North Korean defense agency before escaping from North Korea in 1999.

away. A provocation on the northwestern islands close to the Northern Limit Line (NLL) in the West Sea might be expected.

### **3. North Korea's External Relations and Strategic Intent**

#### **A. South-North Relations**

Even though there is currently an increase in engagement between the two Koreas, South Korea is still an object of socialist revolution for the North Korean regime. The North Korean regime has claimed the 'completion of the tasks of the revolution,' and managed to justify the destitution and sacrifice of individual life of its people for the readiness and enhancement of its military forces.

North Korea is seeking to attain economic assistance in order to overcome its regime crisis, shrewdly utilizing South Korea's economic strength and nationalist sentiment for its own survival. To this end, North Korea has agreed to meetings of the separated families on an irregular basis as a way to induce South Korea and its people to assist the North. On the other hand, North Korea creates a sense of frustration among South Koreans by claiming 'nationalistic mutual assistance' when intentionally intervening in political issues of the Republic of Korea, thereby seeking to induce a desirable social atmosphere for the North. Such schemes by North Korea are expected to become more active as we near the ROK presidential election in December 2007.

North Korea fears most the thought of free democracy and human rights imported into the country and leading to the regime's collapse. Therefore, North Korea takes pains to keep its people hostile towards the United States and the Republic of Korea in order to block the influence that the South-North engagement could bring. North Korea propagandizes the possibility of a preemptive attack by the United States even during the negotiations on North Korea's nuclear program, thereby continuing to shape anti-American sentiment in the Republic of Korea, and demands the pullout of the United States Forces Korea (USFK). In reality, however, the North Korean leadership fears the United States's overwhelming technological and precision military capabilities witnessed in the Iraq War.

#### **B. North Korea-US Relations**

The North Korean perception of the United States as its most important enemy and an existential threat, is a collective perception that serves as a decisive factor of internal solidarity that helps the survival of the Kim Jong Il regime. In addition, North Korea sees the United States as such a threat that its survival can be guaranteed through normalization of relations with the U.S. In reality, the United States did once consider a preemptive attack against North Korean nuclear facility during the first nuclear crisis in 1990s. Furthermore, the United States searched for negotiated solution to the second nuclear crisis through the Six-Party Talks while pressuring North Korea by labeling it a

terror-sponsoring state, a member of the axis of evil, and a rogue state. The United States led the UN sanctions against North Korea after North Korea's missile launches and nuclear test, and froze its Banco Delta Asia (BDA) accounts.

The United States has shown the ability to attack North Korea through the Iraq War. North Korea must have recognized that it could share the fate of Iraq at any given time. Therefore, North Korea has used the nuclear card to secure 'decisive benefits' such as security of the regime and economic assistance, while aiming at external propaganda-effects that heighten its status and assure its internal solidarity. North Korea's lifeline would be its nuclear program. For North Korea, abandoning its nuclear program would be like abandoning its life. Therefore, if the United States toughens its sanctions and pressure on North Korea, North Korea will repeat the behavior of attempting to gain benefits and time through dialogue and negotiations. By advancing its nuclear program in 'brinkmanship' manner, it increases the value of negotiations, and returns to dialogue and negotiations if the United States increases the level of sanctions and pressure.

As one can see, it is an undeniable fact that a 'vicious cycle of agreement-infringement-sanction' has repeatedly occurred. Despite this, the February 13 agreement for resolution of North Korea's nuclear issues and the recent October 3 agreement on disablement of existing nuclear facilities and a complete and correct declaration of all its nuclear programs in this year are assessed as positive steps to ultimately terminate this vicious cycle.

### **C. North Korea-Japan Relations**

North Korea perceives Japan as an old evil that derived from the past colonial rule as well as a 'debtor' of sort. As shown on North Korea's insistence on 'military marches' to 'historical sacred sites' on the Baekdu Mountain related to anti-Japanese resistance, the entity of Japan is described as a way to incite hostility towards past affairs in order to emphasize the legitimacy of the regime and strengthen the spiritual armament of the people. In the North Korea-Japan working group discussion after the February 13 agreement, North Korea might have the hidden intention of ignoring or burying Japan's issue of kidnapped citizens in the criticism brought up against the backdrop of Japanese politicians remarks made recklessly about the comfort women. At the same time, North Korea demands economic assistance from Japan as compensation for damages of its imperial colonial rule.

The issue of kidnapped citizens put forth by Japan is not a small matter and has explosive potential. The moment North Korea accepts the Japanese position, the illegality and immorality of the North Korean regime would create havoc in international society. North Korea is known to be holding a total of 532 kidnapped citizens against their will from 12 nations, including 485 South Koreans and 16

Japanese.<sup>5</sup>

On September 6, 2007, North Korea and Japan held 'the Working Group Meeting for Normalization of North Korea-Japan Diplomatic Relations,' and at this meeting Japan demanded that North Korea return immediately the kidnapped Japanese citizens, examine closely the real truth, and hand over the suspects. However, North Korea has refused to budge, stating the incident had already been settled; no progress was made at the meeting. Thus, it appears that North Korea would expect to improve its relations, first with the United States, before resolving the issues of kidnapped citizens and normalizing relations with Japan.

#### **D. North Korea-China Relations**

China is the most important friend and blood-tied ally to North Korea. China recently criticized North Korea's nuclear test and agreed to the UN resolution to sanction North Korea, but by opposing a military response, it showed a commitment to its traditional friendly relationship with North Korea. China provides 30% of North Korea's food supplies and 60% of its fuel imports.

Keeping this in mind, North Korea held festivities for the Chinese embassy staff at the end of 2006, and recently Kim Jong Il visited the Chinese embassy himself to demonstrate friendship. From North Korea's perspective, China is viewed as an absolute presence. China plays the guardian role in North Korea's confrontation and negotiations with the United States, and the success of North Korea's reforms and opening up depends on the support and cooperation from China. As ROK-U.S.-Japan relations become closer, North Korea will join China in trying to check the expansion of the United States and Japan's influence in the Asia Pacific area. China will try to ensure North Korea's such interests while keeping North Korea and the Korean peninsula within its sphere of influence.

However, there are indications that North Korea-China relations are undergoing change. Keeping in mind a change in the Chinese behavior after the nuclear test, the possibility that North Korea might have decided on finding a way to survive without Chinese assistance cannot be excluded. After the February 13 agreement, at a working-level meeting in Washington, Kim Gye-Gwan stated his position that once North Korea-U.S. relations become normalized, North Korea can deal with China while keeping in mind the strategic relations with the United States. In the North Korean view, it might be conceivable that China would be something to be used depending on a given issue.

---

<sup>5</sup> In its 2006 report to the U.S. Congress, the Committee for Rescuing Japanese Citizens states that aside from Koreans and Japanese, 4 Lebanese, 4 Malaysians, 3 French, 3 Italians, 2 Chinese, 2 Dutch, 1 Thai, 1 Romanian, and 1 Singaporean are being held. The confessions of the American defector Jenkins also verify this truth.

## **E. North Korea-Russia Relations**

North Korea still depends on Russia for the maintenance of industrial facilities and military equipment. Russia has played the role of supporter in North Korea's construction of its industry and military since the Soviet days during which preparations were made for the Korean War. Recently, Kim Jong Il visited Russia in consecutive years, 2001 and 2002, in an attempt to fix the mutual assistance relationship between the two nations that had become estranged after the collapse of the Cold War system.

In response to the trilateral relationship between the United States, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, North Korea will try to protect its interests by maintaining its traditional friendships with China and Russia, even if North Korea-Russia relations do not reach the level once enjoyed right before and after 1950.

## **4. ROK and Regional Countries' Perceptions and Positions on North Korea**

### **A. Republic of Korea**

For the Republic of Korea, North Korea is both a part of its own 'Korean race,' which should be engaged and cooperated with, and an enemy that threatens its survival. Under the armistice regime on the peninsula, the North Korean regime and its military are enemies of the Republic of Korea, so engagement and cooperation take place in non-political and non-military areas. North Korean civilians are also targets of engagement, cooperation, and humanitarian assistance. The South-North relationship is special because of this dual perception of hostility and homogeneity.

Therefore, the Republic of Korea on one hand maintains a strong military defense posture, embodied in the ROK-U.S. alliance against the existing North Korean threat, while on the other hand advancing South-North engagement and cooperation in order to deepen North Korea's dependence on the South as a way to deter war on the peninsula and maintain stability.

If denuclearization of the peninsula is achieved through North Korea's abandonment of its nuclear program, we could also expect establishment of a peace regime on the Korean peninsula. Then the situation will favor a peaceful unification beyond mere amelioration of the hostile relationship and a friendly peaceful co-existence phase of the two Koreas.

### **B. The United States**

The United States has defended the freedom and democracy of the Republic of Korea by discouraging the North Korean intent to communize the Korean peninsula by force as it ended the Korean War through the Armistice Agreement. North Korea was an enemy

of the United States, and is the most difficult enemy to deal with in the war against terror. The United States perceives North Korea as member of the 'axis of evil,' 'an outpost of tyranny,' 'regime without law,' and a 'rogue state.' The United States has the position that by eliminating and dismantling North Korea's long-range missiles and nuclear program, it can maintain the security and stability of Korean peninsula, Northeast Asia, and the United States.

After the second nuclear crisis occurred, the United States pushed forward diplomatic negotiations to resolve the North Korean nuclear problem in the Six-Party framework, and gradually increased the level of sanctions against North Korea after its 'brinkmanship' behavior such as its missile launches and the nuclear test. Washington labeled North Korea as a terror-sponsoring state, freezing the Macao Banco Delta Asia account, and pushing for United Nations resolutions regarding human rights and sanctions against North Korea.

Recently, the United States succeeded in securing the February 13 and October 3 agreements with North Korea. The United States will make all efforts to get North Korea abandon its entire nuclear program by pursuing a peaceful solution and dialogue under the 'action-to-action' principle, while implementing the agreement in phases and maintaining momentum. The United States believes that in order to fully stabilize the international relations of the Korean peninsula, a peace regime should be established after denuclearization has taken place. However, considering North Korea's past behavior, it appears that there is still a long way to go before North Korea completely abandons its nuclear program.

### **C. Japan**

For Japan, North Korea is a nuisance that blatantly expresses its anti-Japanese sentiment deeply rooted in its historical relationship. Until the 8th normalization talks in 1992, Japan tried to normalize its relationship with North Korea through a 'dialogue.' After the first nuclear crisis, and after North Korea's Taepodong missile test in 1998, Japan began to seriously recognize the North Korean threat and thus promoted its 'deterrence and dialogue' policy. Following this, we can assess that Japan in 2002 has changed its policy to 'dialogue and pressure' in response to the kidnapped Japanese citizens, the second nuclear crisis and the nuclear test. And Japan has implemented the strongest measures against North Korea among all of the six parties until the February 13 agreement was signed. As key examples, Japan enacted laws on North Korean human rights, prohibited North Korean vessels from entering Japanese ports, and played a key role in passing the UN Security Council Resolutions sanctioning North Korea.

Japan has shown a trend in strengthening its Self Defense Forces's (SDF) capabilities against the North Korean threat after North Korea's Taepodong missile launch test in 1998. It has accelerated the establishment of a missile defense system with the United States, while shifting the focus of deployment of SDF assets from the northeast to

northwest area in anticipating the potential threat of China and North Korea. Many Japanese politicians, including prime ministers, have repeated the mantra of no economic assistance for North Korea without progress on kidnapped citizens, and Japan persistently claims normalization would be possible only if the issue of the abducted Japanese citizens will be resolved.

#### **D. China**

Historically, China has viewed its relations with the two Koreas as 'one cannot be preserved without the other.' After China became a communist state, it viewed North Korea as a buffer region where the socialist system was to be protected from the U.S. hegemony. North Korea is a state 'fraternal' to China. The Chinese Communist Party received rear support from North Korea during its internal war with the Kuomintang, and during the Korean War, North Korea managed to survive thanks to Chinese assistance. For the survival of the newborn communist system of the Northeast Asia, North Korea is indebted to China and China is indebted to North Korea.

But China officially opposes North Korea's development of nuclear weapons. This is because it fears nuclearization by Japan and Taiwan. However, China is actively supporting North Korea to gain the 'decisive benefits' from using the nuclear card and advising North Korea to reform and open up based on its own success story of economic development. At the same time, China desires that the North Korean political system stay as a socialist state.

China will contribute to the North Korean regime's security based on their "Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance" of 1961. China is probably preparing contingency plans including deployment of troops to the North Korea-China border, in case of a sudden crisis in North Korea. In case of the replacement of the Kim Jong Il regime or a change in its political system would be inevitable, China will make efforts to put in power a pro-China government in North Korea.

#### **E. Russia**

Russia's view of North Korea is ambiguous. Russia may view North Korea as an entity with which to maintain 'symbolic goodwill.'<sup>6</sup> The North Korean press has on and off mentioned Russian assistance, but the level of Russian help is only about 1% of the assistance of the Republic of Korea and the United States. For Russia, the North Korean problem may be meaningful because it can serve as a reminder of its existence in the Northeast Asian region as well as a basis for containing U.S. influence with China. Such Russian intent can easily be read in cases such as Russia's demand for exclusion of Article 7 invocation against a strong position posed by the United States and Japan in adopting the UN Security Council Resolution sanctioning North Korea.

---

<sup>6</sup> Assessment of Prof. Andrei Lankov of Kookmin University.

Russia has always recognized and showed attachment to the strategic value of North Korea's non-freezing ports since the days of Alexander II in 1860 throughout the period of occupation of North Korea since the end of WWII and the Cold War era. In the future, instead of the guardian role having played during the establishment of the North Korean regime and throughout the Korean War, Russia would focus on bringing real economic benefits by providing new military technologies, supporting maintenance of Russia-made equipments, promoting the Trans-Siberian Railroad (TSR) connection project, and writing off approximately \$8 billion worth of North Korean debt.

## **5. A Way for the ROK-U.S. Alliance to Manage North Korea**

As discussed above, it is difficult to understand the true nature and the real state of the North Korean regime through a lens of pure rationality and accept them as a reality. Considering the backdrop of the North Korean regime and the series of its past behaviors, the Kim Jong Il regime operates far from the universal values of morality and truth of humanity. Therefore a 'tailored solution' to manage effectively such an abnormal case is necessary. This is because the complicated North Korean problem cannot be resolved through the normal methods of cooperation and engagement between individuals, organizations and states in the international community.

The key approach to a 'tailored resolution' for North Korean issues is concurrent implementation of the 'diplomatic negotiations strategy' and 'pressure through a confinement strategy' to the 'Kim Jong Il regime' and the 'North Korean populace' through close ROK-U.S. coordination and timely sharing of roles. The Kim Jong Il regime would be the object of 'change from the top,' and the North Korean populace would be the object of 'change from the bottom.' And it is a way of approach to make the changes from both the top and bottom layers cause the reciprocal action and expand it to the whole society.<sup>7</sup>

Here, the Kim Jong Il regime and those in power supporting it are targets for diplomatic negotiations as well as confinement. As they are willing to guard the system of domination with their life, they will accept no change in the society that threatens their survival. There are limitations in resolving the problem through diplomatic negotiations. This is because implementation of the agreement depends on how the parties concerned to that mutual agreement understand it, as well as their will and inclination to carry it out.<sup>8</sup> The diplomatic approach to the North Korean problem clearly shows limitations when considering the true nature of the Kim Jong Il regime. Therefore, the diplomatic approach should be applied in parallel with 'pressure

---

<sup>7</sup> The enemy of the ROK-U.S. alliance is not the North Korean populace but the Kim Jong Il regime and the KPA followers. In this vein of thought, the subjects of North Korean management should be separately categorized into the Kim Jong Il regime and the North Korean populace.

<sup>8</sup> During the ROK-U.S. summit on June 10, 2006, there was a case of different interpretation of President Bush's comments on WMD as contained the OPLAN 5029.

through confinement,' and then we can enforce the North Korean regime to admit the agreements and resolve its own problems by itself or give itself up in despair.

The reasons for this measure can be seen in a series of behaviors that North Korea showed in the past, such as with the USS Pueblo incident. North Korea had actively engaged in dialogue and negotiations when it could not withstand the outside pressure and confinement. Immediately after its seizure of the Pueblo, North Korea was holding the ship and its crew, but returned them after the United States' massive military demonstration including deployment of its large electronic warfare forces. It is assessed that North Korea agreed to hold a senior-level South-North talks in early 1990s because of its fear that it could collapse like the Soviet Union and the communist nations of Eastern Europe. In the first nuclear crisis, North Korea agreed to negotiate and signed the 'Geneva Agreement' (Agreed Framework) after it perceived that U.S. military action was imminent. North Korea's past behaviors can also be verified through the process which the February 13 agreement was attained. Once the United States cut off the source for foreign currency by freezing the BDA account, and applied a strong pressure through a UN Security Council Resolution, North Korea agreed to the Initial Actions for Implementation agreement. Therefore we should continue to watch North Korea's future steps.

But the North Korean people are only objects of humanitarian assistance and enlightenment. We must enlighten the North Korean populace by introducing the wave of free democracy through humanitarian assistance, promoting the South-North cooperation and raising the human rights issue. Then North Korean citizens' critical thinking would be formed towards the value of human rights and freedom in the North Korean society, immorality and atrocity of the North Korean regime, and the fictitiousness of its propaganda, and could be served as energy for a bottom-up change in the system.

The ultimate goal of the ROK-U.S. alliance in such a 'tailored strategy' for North Korea should be a transformation of the North Korean regime. The regime should be transformed into a market economy system and be a normal member of the international community by conversing and engaging with the external world including the Republic of Korea and the United States based on international rules. And we could desire nothing more than North Korea becoming a free democracy society, but even if it adopts the China-like socialist political system, North Korea should guarantee basic human rights such as freedom of expression, freedom of travel in and out of the country, and free relocation of residence. Such an end state could be accomplished through successful reforms and opening-up of its system, or in a current state of seclusion, or after its collapse caused by its inability to overcome the contradictions of its system in the process of reforms and opening-up.

## A. Negotiations through Diplomacy: Maintaining Status Quo

The focus of diplomatic efforts on North Korea should be placed on preventing the proliferation of WMD such as its nuclear capabilities. Due to the facts that the February 13 and October 3 agreements do not mention the obligation to abandonment of the nuclear weapons and that the Republic of Korea has to take on a large cost burden<sup>9</sup>, the agreement could be problematic. But at this point, diplomatic efforts should be concentrated on properly implementing these agreements. Discussions of establishing a Korean peace regime should take place not in advance but in parallel to the discussions on the nuclear problem. This is because establishing a peace regime signifies the guarantee of North Korea totally abandoning its nuclear program while realizing peaceful co-existence of the two Koreas. As the Ukraine case shows, a Korean model of 'Cooperative Threat Reduction' that safely dismantled nuclear weapons should be designed.<sup>10</sup> And for the North Korea's nuclear capabilities not to grow any larger, the implementation of the agreements and the momentum of the Six-Party Talks should be maintained.

South and North Korea ratified the fundamental written agreement and jointly stated denuclearization of the Korean peninsula in 1992, and in 2000 they held a summit meeting and announced the '6.15 Declaration' on reducing tensions in the peninsula and building economic cooperation. Especially, at the historical First South-North Korea Summit Meeting, the two Koreas implemented basic confidence-building measures such as prevention of an accidental confrontation in the West Sea, prohibition of propaganda activities at the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) and elimination of certain means of propaganda.<sup>11</sup> The declaration of the Second Summit Meeting in October 2007 should contribute to the mitigation of tensions in the military field based on the achievements made in non-military fields. For example, installation of a hotline between the South and North military authorities, exchanges of military personnel, regular ministerial-level and general-level talks, notification and observation of major exercises, and transformation of the DMZ into a region of peace should be conducted as basic trust-building measures. And a step-by-step implementation of redeploying heavy forces on either side of the MDL to the rear area to secure the safety of the Greater Metropolitan Seoul Area while reducing WMD as well as conventional weapons should be undertaken.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> The annual cost that the Republic of Korea has to bear is estimated at more than 1.28 trillion Won, which includes heavy fuel assistance.

<sup>10</sup> In accordance with the 1994 agreement, the United States and Russia provided technical and monetary assistance to safely dismantle and moved approximately 2,000 nuclear weapons, thereby successfully preventing WMD proliferation. Ukraine received international guarantees of its independence and sovereignty in return.

<sup>11</sup> Military confidence building between two Koreas should be in specific phases: 1st phase-openness and transparency of military; 2nd phase-restrictions in military activities to establish basis for arms control; 3rd phase- a low standard of balance in conventional military power and stability maintained (verifiable reduction commences); phase 4-establishment of a peace regime to support regional stability. MND-CFC Joint Study Report, June 21, 2002.

<sup>12</sup> 70% of NK forces, including 336 long-range artillery pieces of the 19 battalions that directly threaten the Greater Metropolitan Seoul area, are deployed below the Pyongyang-Wonsan Line.

The Republic of Korea and the United States should actively persuade and support North Korea to commit itself to reforms and opening-up. But the mere economic assistance not followed by the military confidence-building and the abandonment of nuclear weapons of North Korea would make it more difficult for the stable peace and reunification in the peninsula. Therefore the economic assistance should be given in rewards for the achievements in reforms and opening-up and nuclear issue. While such efforts being spread throughout the entire North Korea region, it is important to build trust and confidence in the minds of North Korean populace and to make free circulation system of the goods produced through the technology and capital of the South combined with the labor of the North. Linking the railroad and highway, as was done in East-West German relations, should become the artery of transporting essential goods as well as the idea of free democracy and culture to the North Korean people. While promoting economic cooperation of the two Koreas, engagement in cultural, academic, religious and sports areas should be institutionalized so that not only a peace regime but also a foundation for the South-North integration will be established.

Every time the issue of human rights is brought up, North Korea objects by decrying intervention in its internal affairs. Therefore, we need to approach the issue indirectly. The separated family reunions currently conducted on a limited basis should be increased to include more opportunities, and the personnel exchanges in various fields should be expanded. And we should induce the ruling class and populace of North Korea to change its own view on human rights by showing how human rights are treated in the Republic of Korea. To this end, we can take advantage of the rice, fertilizer, cement, medicines and other humanitarian assistance goods that North Korea demands.

## **B. Pressure through Confinement: Forcing Regime Change**

First of all, ‘pressure through confinement’ should be conducted in parallel with the diplomacy to resolve the nuclear problem. North Korea has disregarded international and inter-Korean agreements on several occasions. We should demand that North Korea earnestly implement previous agreements including the Armistice Agreement. In addition to the Armistice Agreement, North Korea has a history of tossing away other barely concluded agreements - such as the DPRK-ROK Basic Agreement, Annex to the Non-Aggression Agreement, and the Denuclearization Joint Statement - like an old pair of shoes. If we do not keep in mind North Korea's behavior of intentionally disregarding already negotiated agreements, the word ‘disablement’ may be applied to the September 19, February 13, and October 3 agreements, not to the North Korean nuclear program.

In basic terms, we should maintain firm ROK-U.S. combined defense readiness, enhance military capabilities through the ROK Defense Reform 2020 plan and the global transformation of the U.S. forces, while continuing to demonstrate the absolute superiority of our military power through exercises such as Ulchi Focus Lens and

RSOI. The deployment exercises of the U.S. carrier strike group, F-117s, and the Marine Expeditionary Forces are important. And if North Korea again leaves the Six-Party Talks and takes actions to extend its nuclear capabilities, we should make clear that the ROK-U.S. alliance, the UN, and the international community will impose more severe sanctions as well as all-out watch on it. The Republic of Korea and the United States should remind of nuclear umbrella periodically, assess the pressuring effects that the ROK-U.S. combined exercises and training would have on North Korea, and closely coordinate the scope of South-North cooperative engagement and the means of humanitarian assistance in North Korea.

Once denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is achieved, the issue of adjusting deployment and reduction of conventional forces could be brought up. At certain point, on the basis of the transformation of ROK military and the redeployment of USFK around two hubs, there could be proposed the issue of redeployment of North Korea forces to the rear area. As the gap in national powers widens in favor of South Korea, North Korea may recognize that in the long run it would be difficult to maintain superiority in conventional forces. In reality, North Korea's military policy has been focused on strengthening asymmetric military capabilities such as nuclear and missile development, and military reorganization mainly on large-scale special warfare units and light infantry units.

The Republic of Korea needs to be strategically wise in linking government-level as well as civilian-level cooperation and support. Humanitarian assistance like rice and fertilizers, and enlarged benefits of North Korea in South-North economic cooperation should be linked with free movement of separated families, improvement in North Korean human rights, and military confidence-building measures. We should also demand that North Korea transparently distribute the humanitarian aid provided by the outside world. We should utilize North Korea's growing dependence on the Republic of Korea, the United States, and international society as time goes on.

Physical pressure on North Korea may lead to its defiance and even to a crisis. To prevent such an incident, a variety of soft power should be utilized. An expert on the North Korea problem<sup>13</sup> described the existing state of North Korea with weakened control system as 'secret revolution,' and claimed that by utilizing radio broadcasts, increasing cultural exchanges and assisting defectors, we should induce internal changes in North Korea and ultimately prompt its collapse.

Radio broadcasts, a medium relatively secretive and usable nearby, are especially appropriate for widely influencing North Korean population. The most representative is Korea Broadcasting System's (KBS) social education broadcast and internet broadcasts operated by defector organizations and religious circles in the civilian sector. Such broadcasts should make the North Korean people disenchanted by objectively reminding

---

<sup>13</sup> Andrei Lankov, *Foreign Policy*, April 2007.

them that the tragic reality in which they live originates from the Kim Jong Il regime's incompetence, violent repression, unlawfulness and isolation. As shown in defectors' confessions that they came to yearn for free and manlike life by listening to pop songs of the South, the contents of popular culture are assessed to be largely effective in changing the consciousness of the North Korean people. The tide of South Korean popular culture known as the 'Korean wave' should be spread not only to China, Japan, and Southeast Asia, but also North Korea, 'the land of frozen soil.'

As of January this year, 10,000 North Korean defectors reside in the South, and more than 100,000 defectors are in China living the insecure lives of escapees. If this trend continues, the North Korean people's march toward defection would grow more aggressively as we had seen in the exodus of the Eastern Europeans before and after 1990. The Republic of Korea and the United States should double their efforts to prepare for the re-settlement of defectors. Our care and generosity toward them would be a facilitator in changing the North Korean society.

Respect and protection of human rights are of universal human value. As long as the North Korean regime does not change fundamentally, North Koreans' basic human rights cannot be improved. In step with the United Nations and the United States, we should assertively and continuously raise the issue of human rights in North Korea, so it would make North Korea at least feel a sense of burden and be conscious of the outside world. It is common knowledge that the issue of human rights served as a decisive factor in bringing down the socialist systems of former Soviet Union and Eastern European states. The Western countries of free democracy should remember the past example of raising issues of human rights—such as the right to criticize oppression, the freedom of religion and the freedom of relocation of residence—on the basis of the 'Helsinki Accord' between the Eastern and Western Europe in 1975.

In conjunction with such efforts, we should harness the positive role of China, as it has absolute influence on the survival of North Korea. There are recent cases that allow us to detect a change in the behavior of China toward North Korea. For example, China expressed disappointment with North Korea's missile launches and nuclear test, froze the illegal BDA account by working with the United States, and then denied Bank of China transactions of \$2.5 million unfrozen by the February 13 agreement, based on a concern that its credit would be injured in the international financial world. If the demand by the Republic of Korea and the international community is strong, then China's determination to protect North Korea could be weakened.

## 6. Conclusion

North Korea is like a shameless hoodlum. It can be compared to an immoral child that blames the parents for all of its wrong deeds, compels the parents to incur expenses for pleasure in return for his home-coming and then threatens their lives. If it was a child that could be taught reasonably, then it could be turned to be loved in the process of education. To transform this child and bring peace in the family, not only conversation but severe punishment may be necessary. Thus, the two strategic pillars to manage North Korea for the ROK-U.S. alliance are 'diplomatic negotiations' and 'pressure through confinement.'

The goal of 'diplomatic negotiations' aimed at North Korea is maintaining the current state, while the goal of 'pressure through confinement' is the replacement or collapse of the Kim Jong Il regime, and thereafter its transformation. As discussed above, actions restraining North Korea from further proliferating nuclear materials should be taken in parallel with shaping conditions to abandon the nuclear program on its own. North Korea's reforms and opening-up must be supported, but we should guide the North Korean regime to self-reform and open itself up in pursuit of market economy and free democracy, or to collapse. Agreements and implementations on military confidence-building between the two Koreas should be advanced on the principle of reciprocity. We should demand the Kim Jong Il regime to restore human rights of North Korean people as a compensation for humanitarian and economic assistance.

North Korean people should be enlightened so that they recognize that the problems in their society originate from the North Korean regime and become aware of the importance of human rights. It goes without saying that in this process, solid trust and close coordination between the Republic of Korea and the United States should come first and should share analyses on the situation and intent of North Korea, information about South-North relations, and the planning-implementation-assessment of the common strategy. The Republic of Korea and the United States should not form a superficial relationship on an issue-by-issue basis that is therefore susceptible to mutual neglect. We should not ignore North Korea's previous strategy and let it lead by its intent to make new agreements with similar content at the South-North Korea meetings including the First and Second Summit.

In conjunction, we should be prepared for sudden instability in North Korea. North Korea's unstable situation should be managed, so it would not be spread to the whole of the peninsula. And to deter North Korea's intent to draw the North Korean people's attention away and control its internal situation by way of provocation to the South, strong ROK-U.S. combined intelligence surveillance, crisis management, and operational readiness should be maintained.