

The New U.S. North Korea Policy: A Comprehensive Approach to Pyongyang's Military Capabilities

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POST-SUMMIT INTER-KOREAN RELATIONS AND THE U.S.

In the wake of the historic June 2000 summit talks, there was initial euphoria amid signs of a political thaw. A series of epoch-making events have combined to raise hopes of a speedy reconciliation and cooperation of the two Koreas and evoke a resurgence of nationalism in the South. There has been a growing sense of self-confidence and the need to assert more independence and sovereignty in resolving Korean issues. Sometimes it took the form of anti-American protests by pro-unification civic groups. Along with this, whether or not North Korea has strategically or substantially changed has been the subject of heated debates in South Korea and, to a lesser degree, in Washington. Many of these dramatic events appear to have faded away in our memory.

Indeed, inter-Korean dialogues and contacts have come to a standstill, due largely to Pyongyang's condemnation of Washington's hard-line policy and its refusal to accept Seoul's demands for the

resumption of talks. Despite the ROK government's efforts to preserve the post-summit momentum, little progress has been made since March of this year. In South Korea a rift in public opinion has intensified on most major issues, and suspicion and skepticism appear to have grown about the utility of the existing North Korea policy. Even sympathizers of the Sunshine Policy have become disappointed by the North's lack of response and the breach of their promises.

On the other hand, Pyongyang has blamed the hardliners in Washington and Seoul for their stalled relations and rebuffed President Bush's policy guidelines that adopt a comprehensive approach. Maintaining its military-first policy, it recently even vowed to strengthen its armed forces. Kim Jong-il, in his own calculation, apparently sees diminishing returns in his pledged return visit to Seoul. He argues that a proper atmosphere has not been created for his visit. Pyongyang has instead put a higher priority on improving its relations with Beijing and Moscow, presumably to strengthen its negotiating leverage toward Seoul and Washington. It also has become noticeably less eager to improve relations with Washington and Tokyo. Thus, short-term prospects for a breakthrough in inter-Korean relations are not good at the moment. The second half of the year since the summit is in quite a contrast with the first half.

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S NORTH KOREA POLICY

It is widely known that U.S. President George W. Bush and his national security team have maintained a pessimistic view of and a hard-line posture toward the North Korean regime. President Bush came into office with a clearly defined attitude toward North Korea.¹⁾ He evaluated that previous U.S. diplomatic efforts had not induced a

1) Secretary of State Colin Powell said that "As North Korea opens its society it will collapse. That's why we are engaging with North Korea." A similar attitude can be

positive change in North Korea with respect to U.S. interests. Therefore, back in March of this year, during the ROK-U.S. summit in Washington, the Bush administration described North Korea as a failing economy and a “rogue state,” calling for a stricter reciprocity and verification.

It appears that Washington was also at odds with Seoul, which had promoted an engagement policy toward Pyongyang. This contradicted early expectations of some Korea experts that the new U.S. administration would basically maintain the framework of the Clinton administration’s North Korea policy.²⁾ However, the Washington summit dashed those hopes. Pointing to President Bush’s lack of understanding of Korean peninsula issues, many Korea-watchers in Washington voiced concern over his diplomatic gaffe during the summit talks with Kim Dae-jung and over what they called the “disconnect” that followed the summit. And they warned that it

found in Condoleezza Rice as she wrote on coping with North Korea: “The regime of Kim Jong-il is so opaque that it is difficult to know its motivations, other than that they are malign. But North Korea also lives outside of the international system. Like East Germany, North Korea is the evil twin of a successful regime just across its border. It must fear its eventual demise from the sheer power and pull of South Korea. Pyongyang, too, has little to gain and everything to lose from engagement in the international economy. The development of WMD thus provides the destructive way out for Kim Jong-il...One thing is clear: the United States must approach regimes like North Korea resolutely and decisively. The Clinton administration has failed here, sometimes threatening to use force and then backing down, as it often has with Iraq. These regimes are living as borrowed time, so there need be no sense of panic about them.” See Condoleezza Rice, “Campaign 2000—Promoting the National Interest,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 1 (January/February 2000), pp. 45-62.

- 2) Samuel Sandy Berger, former security advisor to President Clinton, was quoted as saying, “Every new administration wants to review the existing policy, to refresh it, and to have independent assessment, but they ultimately face the reality that the national interest of the United States and policy constraints remain unchanged. Because of this, policymakers have far less room to maneuver than what appears.” *Chosun Ilbo*, March 13, 2001.

might jeopardize bilateral relations between the United States and the Republic of Korea.³⁾

In fact, there were reportedly bitter debates over whether to isolate North Korea or engage it China style, reflecting a deep split among President Bush's advisors.⁴⁾ President Bush appears to have sided with the hawks, most notably Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz. These and many other hard-liners think that they cannot rely on Kim Jong-Il's word and should deal with Pyongyang on what amounts to a "mistrust and verify" basis. Thus the Bush administration intentionally differentiated its North Korea policy from that of the Clinton administration, drawing much from what has been laid out in their criticisms of the Perry initiative. As a result, it is safe to say that the new Republican administration adopted a "hawk engagement" with North Korea, as Professor Victor Cha of Georgetown University aptly termed.⁵⁾

One important point here is that President Bush's policy did not emanate from the inexperience of a new administration—admittedly not fully informed on the reclusive communist state, as some observers in Seoul have initially argued. Rather, a fair number of loyal Republican Bush supporters, even before the presidential election last year, were well versed in matters concerning the Korean peninsula, and had been critical of the Clinton administration's policy toward North Korea.

Moreover, they seemed dissatisfied with the Seoul government, which, in their eyes, was being taken for a ride by Pyongyang. Their

3) Senator Joseph Biden of Delaware, who has strongly supported engagement with North Korea, said the U.S.-ROK summit was a total disaster that negatively affected the policy, criticizing the confusion within the Bush administration in diplomatic matters. *Chosun Ilbo*, March 22, 2001.

4) David E. Sanger, "Crash Course: A New President Bumps up against Asia," *The New York Times*, April 15, 2001.

5) Victor D. Cha, "Hawk Engagement: Bush Policy Toward North Korea," paper presented at the CSIS-KINU conference, "The Bush Administration and the Korean Peninsula," Washington D.C., June 21-22, 2001.

assessment was that North Korea, under a dictatorship led by Kim Jong-il, has not strategically or substantially changed, as can be witnessed by their military posture including new deployments of artillery along the DMZ, etc.⁶⁾

Some analysts in Washington believed that Pyongyang's conventional power is greater than previously assessed, with strong combat readiness in addition to North Korea's WMDs and their delivery vehicles. And, among other things, they viewed North Korea as a classic example of a "rogue state" and seemed to be convinced that neither peace nor stability could be achieved on the Korean peninsula without the elimination, or at least the reduction of threats posed by North Korea's conventional weapons, as well as its weapons of mass destruction.

On June 6, after completing its North Korea policy review, President Bush declared a resumption of dialogue and engagement with North Korea. While it cannot be interpreted as a significant departure from its tough stance toward North Korea, it was a demonstration of its intention to deal in earnest with security issues on the Korean peninsula, and in a broader context, so as to advance the U.S. national interest. Either way, the declaration of the resumption of Washington-Pyongyang talks marks a significant turning point for strained inter-Korean relations and U.S.-North Korea relations.

In the guidelines for policy toward North Korea, President Bush promised the United States would help the North Korean people, ease sanctions, and take other political steps when North Korea responds positively and takes appropriate actions. However, the initiative, called for "verifiable assurances," of the new administration also

6) For a notional picture of the post-summit North Korea, see James J. Przystup, "The Bush Administration and Northeast Asia: Policies toward the Korean Peninsula, China and Japan," paper presented at the 4th KIDA-INSS Security Workshop held at the Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Fort McNair, Washington, DC, June 18-19, 2001.

stressed some serious agenda to be discussed with Pyongyang in the first place: Improved implementation of the Agreed Framework relating to North Korea's nuclear activities; verifiable constraints on North Korea's missile programs and a ban on its missile exports; and a less threatening conventional military posture. Indeed, unlike the Clinton administration, it placed a new emphasis on the reduction of conventional threat as an important objective in relations with North Korea.⁷⁾

RAISING THE CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS ISSUE

Up until early this year, the focal point of the U.S. administration's policy toward North Korea was the country's nuclear weapons and missiles. Recently, however, the Bush administration has included North Korea's conventional weapons as an agenda item for U.S.-North Korea talks. Let us examine the background of the U.S. decision to raise the issue of North Korea's conventional weapons and its implications.⁸⁾

The need to reduce North Korea's conventional weapons threat was already raised earlier. For instance, a March 1999 *Strategic Forum*, commonly known as the "The Armitage Report," issued by the Institute for National Strategic Studies of the National Defense University commented on the conventional weapons threat posed by North Korea. The Armitage Report argues "The United States should table a proposal for confidence building measures to begin a process aimed at reciprocal conventional force reductions. Any new peace

7) James Laney, former U.S. Ambassador to the ROK, argued that Mr. Bush made a mistake when he added a conventional threat reduction to the agenda for negotiations with North Korea. See his speech at a Peace Forum in Seoul, *Joongang Ilbo*, September 6, 2001.

8) Larry Nicksch, "The United States wants verification with North Korea," *Chosun Ilbo*, July 4, 2001.

mechanism should be linked to the reduction of the conventional threat.”⁹⁾ Also, in a July 2000 speech, Paul Wolfowitz stressed the need to reduce North Korea’s conventional military capabilities.

Indeed, annual ROK-U.S. Security Consultative Meetings (SCM) have continued to assess without exception that North Korea’s conventional weapons threat was real, stressing the urgent need for devising countermeasures, a prominent example of which was an anti-North Korean artillery project. Many research institutes, which are supported by the Pentagon and the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, have also made policy recommendations that North Korea’s conventional military capabilities should be greatly reduced.¹⁰⁾ Furthermore, General Thomas Schwartz, Commander in Chief of both the U.N. Command and U.S. Forces Korea, testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee in March that North Korea’s military forces are “bigger, better, closer and deadlier” than they were one year ago.

What is the intention of the Bush administration in proposing this comprehensive agenda for its negotiations with North Korea? There could be several motivations. The first would be to highlight North Korea’s huge conventional military capability as a major reason for tensions on the Korean peninsula, and to emphasize the need to ease North Korea’s conventional weapons threat directed at the 37,000 U.S. soldiers and their 100,000 family members, now residing in South Korea.

The second would be to propose comprehensive negotiations with

9) Richard L. Armitage, “A Comprehensive Approach to North Korea,” *Strategic Forum*, No. 159 (March 1999), p. 5. For a similar, cautiously pessimistic approach to North Korea, see Joel Wit, “The United States and North Korea,” Policy Brief #74, The Brookings Institution (March 2001). Mr. Wit argues that “The new administration should work closely with South Korea to help craft conventional arms control proposals. These should run the gamut from confidence-building measures to force reduction proposals.”

10) For example, see Henry D. Sokolski, ed., *Planning for a Peaceful Korea* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, February 2001).

North Korea, and, unlike the Clinton administration, to add the conventional weapons issue to the existing agenda, currently limited to nuclear weapons and missiles.

A third reason would be to lay the groundwork for a response to a possible breakthrough such as a peace declaration or a peace treaty between South and North Korea, even though the Bush administration is aware that an atmosphere conducive to a peace treaty on the Korean peninsula has not yet been established. Inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation in the fields of politics, economy, and culture would fulfill necessary conditions only.

Related to this, the fourth would be that it wants to guard against a sudden change in the ROK-U.S. alliance and the status of the U.S. Forces in Korea, taking into consideration the symbolic significance of U.S. involvement in a possible peace declaration. Finally, and equally important, the Bush administration appears to have seen the need to take pre-emptive action to prevent the United States from being marginalized in the process of conventional arms control between South and North Korea if Seoul takes the lead.

What are the implications of the recent U.S. statement? It is a foregone conclusion that, unless the North takes drastic action, there will be no change in the perception or posture of the Republican administration on North Korea. In addition, rapid inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation, arms control and reduction would be inevitable in order to replace the existing armistice agreement with a peace treaty.

And it is expected that Washington will ask for Seoul's cooperation in actively seeking specific measures to reduce North Korea's conventional military capabilities. At the same time the United States appears to be stressing the need to maintain and develop the ROK-U.S. alliance, and to create an environment in which the USFK can continue to be stationed in South Korea. Thus, a clear prerequisite would be close consultations with Washington in order to reach an agreement on a possible peace declaration in the expected second round of inter-Korean summit talks. It would also be desirable

to avoid actions that might raise misunderstandings and concerns on the part of the United States.

What is notable is that unlike South Korea, the United States forecasts that the reconciliation and cooperation phase between the two Koreas will be a very long, drawn-out process. This projection is based on the assumption that without inter-Korean arms control, the next phase of peaceful coexistence could not be established. The last implication of President Bush's statement is that while the role in conventional weapons control by the two Koreas should be shared by Seoul and Washington, the likelihood exists that the United States opposes the idea of South Korea taking the initiative leaving it with only a supporting role.¹¹⁾

There are several noteworthy characteristics in the North Korea policy of the Bush administration. First of all, it proposes dialogue not only on a freeze of North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile proliferation, but also on the reduction of Pyongyang's conventional weapons. In doing so, it reaffirms that Korean peninsula issues are primarily of a military nature. The Bush administration's North Korea policy is a by-product of the review of the U.S. national security strategies and defense policy, but in some ways, it is indicative of U.S. willingness to proactively resolve core issues.

On the other hand, however, the policy is aimed at preventing any great confusion and friction between South Korea and the United States that might stem from a peace declaration in the expected second round of inter-Korean summit talks—in the absence of substantial progress in the reduction of tension between the two Koreas as well as in the military sphere. And a further characteristic is the fact that tension reduction and a peaceful settlement are included in the agenda for the U.S.-DPRK and South-North Korea talks.

11) For Kim-Rumsfeld Talks in Washington in late June, 2001, see "Outcome of the U.S. Visit by the Minister of National Defense," *Gukbang Sosik* (Defense News), June 2001, pp. 3-5.

RELATED ISSUES AND THEIR PROSPECTS

The Effect of Establishing a Peace Regime on the Korean Peninsula

It is commonly agreed that Washington is deeply concerned about the possibility that South and North Korea might reach a peace agreement or adopt a peace declaration before any military tension reduction. The U.S. has maintained the position that it is opposed to any peace treaty or declaration which does not decrease the military capacity of the two Koreas at a time when military confidence-building is at a rudimentary level. Earlier, South Korea had maintained that it would continue to seek a peace declaration with North Korea in an effort to ease the strained inter-Korean relations, even at a price, but it shifted its position at the ROK-U.S. summit talks, so as to allay U.S. concerns.

Meanwhile, Pyongyang has long emphasized aspects of *juche*, or self-reliance and nationalism, and maintained the position that a peace declaration or a peace treaty would automatically result in substantial reconciliation and cooperation in other areas. In other words, approaches toward peace between the two Koreas, very different in the past, seem to have slowly converged since the inter-Korean summit talks.

When Kim Jong-il visits Seoul for the second round of inter-Korean summit, agenda items such as the non-aggression principle, arms reduction and the opening of a military hotline should be addressed. Dealing with these points, which were omitted in the joint declaration announced after the inter-Korean summit in June 2000, would serve as the starting point for the implementation of military confidence-building measures and guarantees of military transparency, which were pledged in the 1992 Basic Agreement between the two Koreas.

All in all, it is necessary that the second inter-Korean summit be preceded by preparations for tension reduction and a peaceful

settlement on the Korean peninsula, and by consensus between Seoul and Washington. A hollow declaration that merely states a need to actively pursue tension reduction and a peaceful settlement will not satisfy the expectations of those who long for peace on the peninsula. Rather, it will likely give rise to some unwelcome side effects.

Resumption and Regularization of Defense Ministers' Talks

It is necessary to resume and regularize the inter-Korean defense ministers' talks as soon as possible as a follow-up to the first meeting. The second round of defense ministers' talks could come either before or after the second inter-Korean summit, but either case, Seoul wants them to take place with the least possible delay. Any progress in the military, made toward military confidence-building for tension-reduction and a peace settlement on the Korean peninsula, is indispensable for creating an environment conducive to a second inter-Korean summit.

If and when ROK Minister of National Defense and minister of the People's Armed Forces of the DPRK meet in the future, they should focus on the following six urgent topics: establishment and operation of a military hotline; institutionalization of military talks; exchanges of military personnel; a ban on denunciation and propaganda activities on both sides; measures to cope with North Korea's violation of the armistice agreement; and measures to deal with violations of inter-Korean agreements.

They should also discuss the following four major tasks: peaceful use of the Demilitarized Zone; prior notification and observation of major military exercises of both sides; resolution of disputes over military issues; and realization of arms reduction and systematic verification. In particular, the South and the North should take the lead not only in the negotiations, but also in the implementation of the issues pertaining to arms reduction, in close consultation with the United States.

Changes in Assessment of the North Korea Threat

It is increasingly possible to perceive in the period of inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation that the North Korea threat—and in particular the military threat—has significantly decreased. However, some differences are bound to arise. As mentioned earlier, General Schwartz testified before the U.S. Congress on the North Korea threat from a somewhat different perspective than that of the ROK Defense Minister. Because of the discrepancy, mainly the different timeframes and levels of field exercises in question for assessing the degree of the threat posed by North Korea, the South Korean media predictably took issue with this seeming divergence in the respective views of Seoul and Washington.

As the military confidence-building process relating to North Korea's conventional weapons capabilities and weapons of mass destruction has just begun, the absence of any agreement on arms control is highly likely to create a chasm between Seoul and Washington, and among the general public of both nations as well. In the joint communique issued in Moscow recently, North Korea condemned U.S. policy toward it, also calling for the withdrawal of U.S. forces in Korea. At the same time, Pyongyang is modernizing and reinforcing its sagging military capacity. The question of how dangerous North Korea really is could be the issue with the potential to trigger conflicts between progressives and conservatives in South Korea in the future.

Prospects for U.S.-North Korea Relations

There is increasing speculation over whether the June 6 statement by President Bush will have a positive or negative impact on Washington-Pyongyang relations in the future. The Bush administration stresses that it is different from the previous administration, and therefore needed to undertake a comprehensive review of U.S.-North Korea policy. Yet, some recent negative feedback

indicates the Bush policy to delay is more than simply the need for time to review. In particular, as previously mentioned, Secretary of State Colin Powell remarked to the effect that the United States engagement with North Korea was aimed at inducing it to open its doors and institute reforms in order to lead it to an eventual collapse. Moreover, President Bush's openly negative perception of Kim Jong-il has caused considerable irritation in North Korea.

Clearly dissatisfied with the hard-line position of the United States, and after close observation of the South's domestic politics and economic situation, North Korea seems to have put on hold the improvement of its relations with South Korea and the United States. Thus, it is unlikely that North Korea will actively engage in negotiations to improve bilateral relations with the United States in the foreseeable future. Rather, it will likely reaffirm its traditional friendly relations with China and Russia in a bid to apply pressure on South Korea and the United States. North Korea is expected to concentrate on increasing its negotiating leverage over the U.S. until the Bush administration softens its position, at the same time closely observing policy coordination between the ROK and the United States,

Meanwhile, the United States is likely to adopt an attrition tactic in its relations with North Korea and will not establish diplomatic ties as long as it assesses North Korea as a serious threat to it and its ally, South Korea. If the United States were to delay improvement of relations with North Korea, the new point of contention between the United States and North Korea and between the ROK and the United States will be how to respond to that delay.

Negotiations on North Korea's Conventional Weapons

To lessen tension on the Korean peninsula, military confidence-building and operational arms reduction are required first. In addition, negotiations on the reduction of North Korea's conventional weapons and comparable reduction of the ROK Armed Forces will also be necessary. Arms control talks between the United States and

North Korea and between South and North Korea will be an intractable issue requiring close policy coordination between the ROK and the United States.

In this regard, potential hot issues are expected to be as follows: our assessment of, and response to the policy shift of the Bush administration which proposes the North Korea's conventional weapons reduction as an agenda item for the U.S.-North Korea negotiations; the possibility that North Korea may try to use the different positions of the United States and the ROK either to avoid any reduction of its conventional weapons or as a delaying tactic; the degree of reciprocity to be discussed in negotiations to deal with conventional weapons, verification and monitoring; an asymmetrical arms reduction; and finally, the possible co-existence and practical compromise of a strict reciprocity and a flexible one.

The Issue of the ROK-U.S. Alliance and U.S. Forces in Korea

It is essential to coordinate and develop the existing ROK-U.S. alliance in order to reduce tension and bring permanent peace to the Korean peninsula. However, an adjustment or "restructuring" of the U.S. forces in Korea (change in its roles and missions, reduction in size, etc.) should also be undertaken. In the process, a unilateral reduction of the size of the U.S. forces and adjustment in its role should be averted. Rather, arms control of North and South Korea should be conducted in conjunction with any reduction of U.S. forces in Korea. If the North Korea threat decreases meaningfully or disappears, it is highly likely that changes in the ROK-U.S. alliance as well as in the U.S. forces in Korea will be called for, not only in South Korean society but also in the United States. Therefore, the ROK and the United States need to prepare now for closer consultations to come up with a proper response. Also, it is necessary to confirm whether the Bush administration has the intention to make appropriate preparations for arms control between South and North Korea and a reduction in the U.S. forces in Korea, seeing that the administration is

calling for a “less threatening North Korean conventional military posture.” Under these circumstances, the Seoul government needs to come up with the necessary measures while focusing on the Bush administration’s national security strategy, defense strategy review, and a new defense policy—particularly, its policy on overseas stationing of troops.

As North-South Korean reconciliation and cooperation proceed in the future, the major tasks of the ROK-U.S. security alliance should be centered on supporting and securing a peaceful unification of the two Korea. Given the conflicting views of Washington and Seoul regarding a new peace regime on the Korean peninsula, closer policy coordination is absolutely required in this period of uncertainty and instability. For this reason, the two nations should consult each other and prepare a mid- to long-term strategic blueprint for building a new peace regime on the Korean peninsula and for maintaining a security alliance that best befits the changing North-South Korean relations and the new security dynamics in Northeast Asia.

Role-sharing Between the ROK and the United States

In his talks with ROK Minister of National Defense Kim Dong-shin at the end of June, U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld expressed understanding of the ROK government’s position that Seoul should take the lead in the negotiations for reducing conventional weapons on the peninsula, saying, “South Korea’s taking the lead is the efficient way of resolving the issue.”¹²⁾ Indeed, if the

12) See “Outcome of the U.S. visit by the Minister of National Defense,” *Gukbang Sosik* (Defense News), June, 2001, pp. 3-5. In the meantime, the Defense Minister Kim proposed fifteen core tasks of the new defense management concept, “New defense in the 21st century.” The sixth task is to pro-actively manage inter-Korean relations and devise preparatory measures. Also, see “Direction and core tasks of ‘The New Defense in the 21st century,’” *Gukbang Sosik* (Defense News), June, 2001, pp. 13-20.

United States were to lead the process of arms control on the Korean peninsula, North Korea would probably demand the pullout of the U.S. forces. Thus, the United States estimates that it is better not to deal with North Korea directly. Yet, role-sharing is more of a conceptual issue and cannot be defined easily. Therefore, the United States and the ROK should discuss the matter thoroughly, and in advance, to decide which will take the leading and the supporting roles. To date, it has been widely agreed that South Korea should take the lead in military tension reduction and conventional weapons control since these are the issues mainly affecting the Korean peninsula, while the United States should play a primary role in North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile issues because these are the matters affecting Northeast Asia as a whole.

Issues which may emerge as points of contention include the following: whether and how South Korea will lead negotiations with North Korea for conventional weapons reduction; whether and how the United States will continue to play a predominant role in negotiations with North Korea regarding its nuclear weapons and missile issues; whether the United States has a willingness and ability to play a leading role in negotiations with North Korea for conventional weapons reduction; policy coordination between the ROK and the United States; and the principle of resolving Korean peninsula issues by the parties concerned. (North Korea has demanded no external intervention in its internal issues.)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the first quarter of this year we have seen inter-Korean relations at a stalemate, with some apparent divisions of opinion within South Korea and some frictions in ROK-U.S. relations over how to engage North Korea. As I have observed, the Bush administration's hard-line, comprehensive approach toward North Korea will likely continue throughout the year and into the next. The North Korean

leadership will likely continue their resistance and a cautious approach toward South Korea and the United States. Moreover, the conventional threat issue will probably become more weight in discussions to engage North Korea.

Therefore, the ROK government should recognize that threat reduction, namely, resolution of military confrontation by arms reduction is inseparable from the establishment of peace on the Korean peninsula. It should also closely examine the statement by President Bush to come up with a proper response. South Korea must not take a passive attitude toward the U.S. proposal out of mere concern that it would be a stumbling block in further improvement in inter-Korean relations. What is called for is a shift in thinking, to a progressive attitude rather than a passive one, for that will be more helpful in easing tension and establishing a lasting peace on the Korean peninsula. Expanding reconciliation and cooperation with North Korea will not automatically bring tension reduction, arms control, and ultimately peace to the Korean peninsula. Just believing and expecting that it will materialize someday will not solve inter-Korean issues, so complex in nature. While seeking more complementarities of the slightly different approaches to North Korea of our two countries, we need to lend weight to reciprocity and verification in our dealings with Pyongyang.

To be more specific, the government needs to consider pro-actively supporting cooperation between the South and North Korean militaries in order to build mutual confidence in the military field, notably with regard to the conventional weapons reduction issue. (For example, it can support joint training and a workshop for arms control.) It can also utilize the experience and know-how of the United States and Europe in its effort to build military trust with North Korea. Patience is the key to success and, without it, substantial progress cannot be achieved in the complex, time-consuming matter of arms control. Thus, although it will take time, the promotion of inter-Korean military cooperation can contribute to creating an atmosphere favorable to military confidence-building and arms control on the

Korean peninsula.

Finally, while making efforts to ease tension, reduce the military threat and bring about peace on the Korean peninsula, South Korea should consider gradually expanding the scope of information release and increasing transparency in the military. It is necessary to put the Defense White Paper to better use, and to find ways to encourage North Korea to take similar actions. By doing so, South and North Korea alike will be able to declare, at home and abroad, that they place top priority on lessening, as well as carefully managing, the military threat on the Korean peninsula.