

Toward an Alliance of Moderates: The Nuclear Crisis and Trilateral Policy Coordination

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INTRODUCTION

The North Korean nuclear crisis holds significance that reaches far beyond the Korean peninsula: First of all, in terms of international security, a long-enduring Cold War structure characterizes the Korean peninsula. That structure was not created by North and South Korean officials, but was a product of international political decisions made by foreign powers during the Cold War. As a result, the North Korean nuclear crisis maintains the characteristic of the most critical international security agenda. The second reason has to do with the manner of the foreign policy it has pursued. The fundamental nature of nuclear development as a foreign policy option has symbolized a defiant attitude towards the U.S. world order, in that the United States believes it should have sole control of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) as a vital part of its national interest in the post-Cold War period. Since the early 1990's when the U.S.-based unipolar system replaced the Cold War bipolar system, there has been a tendency to identify U.S. national interests as international security interests.¹⁾ For this reason, the U.S. has started to put great effort into sustaining the

NPT regime, which secures operational efficiency. If North Korea's nuclear development project challenges NPT standards, its breach of key international security norms will certainly provoke the U.S.

The North Korean nuclear crisis is, without a doubt, one of the most critical security issues in the Northeast Asian region, and since October 2002, it has become America's most urgent security concern in the region.²⁾ Surprisingly, the U.S. government has struggled with somewhat ineffective strategies in dealing with this problem. Several causes are closely associated with the current stalemate. Although the Kim Jong-il regime has limited choices in policy options, the United States can do a great deal to remedy it. In particular, the Bush administration's foreign policy towards, not only the North Korean nuclear issue, but also towards the Middle East, requires a change in strategic thinking to resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis.

This paper suggests the establishment of a consolidated international coordination mechanism between Korea, the United States and Japan. In most cases, foreign policy decision makers are divided into two groups. One group believes in managing strong political institutions abroad and the other believes in keeping weaker political institutions abroad. This is also the case with regards to policy makers in Korea, the U.S. and Japan, who deal with the North Korean nuclear issue. Between hardliners and moderates in Korea, U.S. and Japan, there are constant confrontations and competition. In order to reach a peaceful agreement regarding the North Korean crisis, and therefore achieve a stable security structure on the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia, the moderate parties in the three

1) Samuel P. Huntington, "The Lonely Superpower," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 2 (1999); John G. Ikenberry, ed., *America Unrivaled: The Future of Balance of Power* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 2002); John Feffer, ed., *Power Trip: U.S. Unilateralism and Global Strategy After September 11* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003).

2) U.S. Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly visited North Korea from October 3-5, 2002 as a special envoy, and after his visit he started to emphasize U.S. concerns over the North Korea's nuclear and missile development programs, the development and exports of WMD, etc.

countries must cooperate in setting up initiatives for resolving the nuclear problem in North Korea.³⁾ To achieve this, there must be a foundation of international consensus that reflects a belief that peaceful resolution is necessary.

The four-part paper will first deal with the strategic interests of the United States and North Korea as part of the Northeast Asian security complex. In this section, the structure of North Korea-U.S. conflict will be examined and the strategic thinking and their respective national interests will be revealed. Second, international cooperation between South Korea, U.S. and Japan will be explored. Here, the importance of international aid organizations and the steps in terms of policy required to make such organizations will be discussed. In the third part, special considerations that may be required by Korea/U.S./Japan-based international aid organizations to peacefully resolve the North Korean problem will be presented. Finally, strategic prospects will be suggested as concluding remarks, which review the direction that international aid organizations will take.

STRATEGIC INTERESTS OF NORTH KOREA AND THE UNITED STATES

Regional Stability vs. Peninsular Stability

The United States and ROK established a strong military alliance during the Cold War period. With the fall of the Cold War structure, South Korea underwent political democratization based on its economic growth in the 70's and 80's, and this eventually resulted in a reevaluation of the alliance system. In particular, since Rho Moo-hyun took office, the discrepancy between the two countries' policy

3) For theoretical background of this approach see, Richard N. Haass and Meghan L. O'Sullivan, "Terms of Engagement: Alternatives to Punitive Policies," *Survival*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (2000).

approaches has grown wider, especially regarding North Korea policies in which the incumbent Korean government has largely adopted the former Kim Dae-jung government's "Sunshine Policy." Theoretically, alliance systems depend on international political circumstances.⁴⁾ Korea is no longer the same country it was when it signed the alliance treaty about 50 years ago. And the current status of South Korea is very different from that in 1953, in terms of economic development, political democratization, international status, general public self-esteem, etc.⁵⁾ Since 9.11, the Bush administration has been asking its traditional allies to commit themselves to the war on terrorism, but Korea has a different perspective on its responsibilities as a member of the alliance.⁶⁾

The U.S. has pursued Northeast Asian regional stability, which includes the Korean peninsula,⁷⁾ a regional stability based largely on the U.S. present military superiority. The U.S.-Japan alliance and the U.S.-ROK alliance are the primary ways in which the U.S. deals with security threats in the region. These alliances also act as defensive measures against any future possibility of Chinese regional hegemony. Within this context, a South Korean government that is sympathetic to U.S. interests needs to be in power. Thus, the unpredictable moves of the Kim Jong-il regime are detrimental to Northeast Asian security

4) For general introduction on "alliance theory" see, James D. Morrow, "Alliance and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 35 (1991); Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); for specific discussions on Korea-U.S. alliance see, Jong-Chun Baek and Sang-hyun Lee, eds., *Korea-U.S. Relations in Transition: Korea-U.S. Alliance in Retrospect and Prospects for a New Strategic Partnership* (Seongnam: The Sejong Institute, 2003).

5) Victor D. Cha, "America's Alliances in Asia: The Coming Identity Crisis with the Republic of Korea?" Paper presented at the 16th annual conference of the Council on U.S.-Korea Security Studies, Washington, D.C., October 18-20, 2001.

6) Nicholas Eberstadt, "American Security Relations with Northeast Asia After 9-11: The Doughnut and the Hole," *Korea and World Affairs*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (2002).

7) Robert Scalapino, "The United States and Asia: New Century, New Challenges," Pacific Forum CSIS, *Issues & Insights* (April 2002).

and only serve to destroy the U.S.-centered Northeast Asian order.

Although the South Korean government agrees with the U.S. in that there is a need for Northeast Asian regional stability, they differ in their ideas on how this should be achieved. For South Korea, the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue is one of its main goals because it directly concerns the security of the Korean peninsula. In order for stability to be achieved, North Korea's position must be considered and if such considerations are given weight, negotiations between North Korea and the U.S. must take place. This does not, in any way, mean that South Korea accepts North Korea's nuclear program, but the South believes that the actual motivation behind North Korea's nuclear development is based on its desire to be recognized by the international community as a normal state. Therefore, the best strategic response to North Korea is to begin by providing economic aid.⁸⁾

Since Korea and the United States are two independent sovereignties, they have different views in their understanding of the Northeast Asian regional security, which results in the pursuit of different policy solutions. This is not a question of moral justification. The main point is to focus on the correct strategy for stabilizing the Northeast Asian region. The most important characteristic of the 21st century's international security is the unipolarity enjoyed by the United States.⁹⁾ In other words, U.S. foreign policy holds a great deal of influence over the security of Northeast Asia. For the Korean peninsula, this means that the smooth resolution of the North Korean crisis and the ability to deal with unexpected difficulties will depend largely on the U.S. grand strategy in Northeast Asia and its strategy for North Korea.

8) Gary Samore, "The Korean Nuclear Crisis," *Survival*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (2003), pp. 19-22.

9) The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002 [<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf>].

Structure of Conflict between U.S.-North Korea

While it is true that North Korea's Kim Jong-il poses a significant threat to the regional security of Northeast Asia, he cannot be regarded in the same light as Adolf Hitler or Saddam Hussein, leaders who tried to disrupt international stability. North Korea is not interested in destroying the U.S.-centered world system, but the U.S.-led world system and its political environment are far from North Korea-friendly, and it is seen as a threat to North Korean sovereignty. Just because the North considers the current world order to be a threat, it does not mean that it hopes to replace it with its own world order. What it does hope for is a U.S. global strategy and Northeast Asian strategy that recognizes North Korea's political autonomy and sovereignty. The crux of the conflict between North Korea and the U.S. is the existence of North Korea's political power. The North Korean nuclear development and its related security crises are directly related to allaying the psychological fears of both the U.S. and the international community.

The primary purpose of the U.S. policy toward North Korea is to ensure the nonproliferation of WMDs, which is also an international strategic interest. U.S. negotiations with North Korea in 1994 were linked to its global nonproliferation policy and the preservation of the NPT system. Moreover, as the U.S. undertook a global war on terrorism to deal with nontraditional and asymmetrical threats after 9.11, the elimination of North Korea's WMDs became directly linked to Washington's new-found security concerns. Nuclear weapons in the hands of the leadership in Pyongyang could escalate nuclear proliferation in Northeast Asia. Therefore, the United States is trying to deter North Korea's development of WMDs in order to maintain security in the region.¹⁰⁾

The United States has few options to change the system of North Korea. Moderates in Washington believe that eliminating North

10) Suh Ju Seok, "Prospects for U.S.-DPRK Relations after the North Korea Nuclear Sensation," *National Strategy*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2002), pp. 30-33.

Korea's WMDs and stopping its support of international terrorism can be achieved through negotiations. However, hardliners insist that inducement policies to change North Korea through negotiations like those of the Geneva Agreed Framework have failed and a more fundamental approach is needed. They believe that the threats Pyongyang poses can ultimately be removed through a change in the regime. However, because of opposition to regime change from surrounding countries, including South Korea, and North Korea's threat of conventional forces, regime change was not announced as an official objective of the U.S. policy toward North Korea.

On the other hand, North Korea's policy toward the United States is meant to ensure the political and economic means of its survival. North Korea has put great emphasis on the survival of its style of socialism despite international isolation, economic difficulties and loosened social control. Moreover, as the United States was preparing for its military campaign in Iraq, North Korea was concerned about the possibility of being the next target of attack. Through improvement of its relations with the United States, North Korea is trying to eliminate political and military threats from Washington to ensure the security of its regime. North Korea's continuous insistence on a non-aggression pact in return for its abandonment of nuclear weapons is being proposed in the face of these considerations.¹¹⁾

In addition, the Kim Jong-il regime expects more economic support and investment in North Korea through the improvement of relations with Washington. North Korea perceives that its economic difficulties and international isolation originated with U.S. economic sanctions toward it, and is seeking a way out of economic hardship by the removal of these sanctions. Furthermore, North Korea expects better relations with Japan and other western countries by improving relations with the United States.

11) Alan D. Romberg and Michael D. Swaine, "The North Korea Nuclear Crisis: A Strategy for Negotiation," *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (2003), pp. 4-7.

**INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
AMONG KOREA, THE UNITED STATES, AND JAPAN**

Hardliners vs. Moderates in Dealing with North Korea

In the United States, both hardliners and moderates are dealing with the North Korean nuclear problem, and these two groups disagree as to which policies should be taken, based on North Korea's attitude and situation. The hardliners advocate "benign neglect" and "tailored containment" in terms of North Korea.¹²⁾ The Bush administration can be included in this group. Conservatives believe that North Korea's nuclear development must not be tolerated, and until North Korea gives up its nuclear arsenal, they are not willing to respond or negotiate. They do not want to pursue any dialogue and will in fact, ignore North Korea's position until the North Koreans display a serious and sincere show of good faith. One group of hardliners actually advocates a policy of "tailored containment" towards North Korea, which includes the use of naval blockades, economic sanctions and other such measures. They believe that North Korea's nuclear development must be stopped even if it means a surgical strike. If President Bush succeeds in getting reelected and North Korea does not show any positive and concrete steps towards improving the present situation, the voices of such hardliners will most likely become stronger.

In contrast, the moderates advocate a policy of "conditional engagement." They agree with the hardliners that North Korea must give up their nuclear weapons first. They differ, however, on how to induce Pyongyang to give them up in a verifiable way, saying that the international community, led by the U.S. and Japan, should first allay North Korea's psychological uncertainty.¹³⁾ U.S. Secretary of

12) Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang, "The Korea Crisis," *Foreign Policy*, Issue 137 (2003).

State Colin Powell falls under this category. Proponents hold that if North Korea gives up its nuclear weapons, they should be included in the international community and offered support. Prior to the six-party talks, the U.S. approach towards North Korea vacillated between the hardliners and moderates. However, since North Korea officially admitted to having nuclear weapons last year, moderates seem to be losing ground. Recently, the upcoming American presidential election has taken center stage and it appears that the hardliners are less vocal, but it is not likely that the present administration has changed its policies in any meaningful way.

In Japan, the hardliners fall under the so-called “realist” school of thought. This group considers North Korea to be a serious security threat, and it cannot be trusted. They believe that the best way to resolve the issue is through strengthening military power, gaining more information and taking other precautionary measures.¹⁴⁾ In their view, the use of sanctions, blockades and other such “realist” responses are the best means to deal with North Korea. The issue of Japanese abductees is integral to Japan’s national interest and significant as a human rights issue. As such, they believe that North Korea is part of “the axis of evil.”

Japanese moderates insist that normalization of relations with North Korea is essential, and that eventually, it will prove to be the most effective way to negotiate with the North Koreans and to reduce hostilities between the two countries. Moderates also believe that open dialogue is the best way to resolve not only the North Korean nuclear issue, but other persisting problems in Northeast Asia. Consequently, strategies that include pressure on North Korea are not regarded highly. However, since 2003, the reality has been that Japan’s domestic perception of North Korea as a reliable dialogue partner is gradually disappearing, mostly because of the

13) Gary Samore, *op. cit.*

14) See Selig S. Harrison, *Korean Endgame: A Strategy for Reunification and U.S. Disengagement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 231-256.

Japanese government's general trend towards conservatism.

Japan's Prime Minister Koizumi has been pursuing two different strategies simultaneously. On the one hand, he has shown gradual support for the hardliner position, given the growing complexity of the abductee issue, and because of the persisting nuclear problem. On the other hand, he has not completely given up on the moderate policy of resolution through dialogue. Essentially, Japan desires peaceful resolution, but is willing to use strong measures depending on North Korea's actions. This accounts for the various measures that were recently taken to enhance Japan's military power.

In Korea, the differences between moderates and hardliners hinge on variables in domestic politics.¹⁵⁾ The hardliners claim "international assistance and pressure" are needed, but they believe that this nuclear development is not simply a bargaining chip, but a final strategy to ensure survival and to protect Kim Jong-il's political power amidst growing isolation and economic hardship. Therefore, even if a certain level of support is promised by the international community North Korea will have difficulty giving up its nuclear weapons, and it will most likely not be voluntary. Moreover, persuasion through bilateral dialogues will be insufficient. What is needed is cooperation between South Korea and the U.S. to pressure North Korea and a policy for further isolating North Korea. While hardliners do not believe war is inevitable, they believe that it will depend on North Korea's negotiating skills. This group usually has influence over conservatives and the older generation who experienced the Korean War.

Moderates in Korea advocate the importance of North-South cooperation and communication over international cooperation, and they believe that North Korea's nuclear program is chiefly a means for gaining international support. In their view, if North Korea receives sufficient economic assistance, it will give up its nuclear ambitions. In other words, this group's approach to the nuclear issue depends on

15) Yu Suk Ryul, "Inter-Korean Relations: Issues and Prospects," *IFANS Review*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2002).

whether or not the Kim Jong-il regime is recognized as a “normal state” in the international community. Moreover, they believe that Washington’s unilateral, heavy-handed measures only aggravate the problem. For them, peaceful resolution depends on two things: cooperation between the citizens of the two Koreas and dialogue. Compared to the U.S. pressure-centered policy and Japan’s dialogue-and-pressure strategy, South Korea’s moderates emphasize dialogue a great deal more as a part of their policy towards North Korea.

Similarities of the Three Countries’ Hardliners and Moderates

The commonality among American, Japanese and South Korean hardliners is that they all oppose North Korea’s nuclear program and any export, development or possession of nuclear technology. Because there exists a degree of uncertainty as to whether the nuclear program is strictly a bargaining chip, hardliners believe North Korea must give up its nuclear weapons before international support can be given.¹⁶⁾ While there is concern over North Korea’s political structure of authoritarianism and disregard for human rights, it is generally accepted that the fundamental characteristics of this structure will definitely not change. In fact, hardliners do not agree with the idea that the Pyongyang regime and its citizens must be approached separately. They also regard the notion of a North Korea collapse or eventual implosion as extremely naïve. In other words, external pressures are crucial for eliciting a response and extracting concessions from North Korea.

A point on which all moderates agree is their criticism of U.S. unilateral policies towards North Korea. They are also united in their firm opposition to war on the Korean peninsula and in their refusal to accept the fact that North Korea has already developed nuclear weapons and possesses a great deal of nuclear capabilities. Even in

16) James T. Laney and Jason T. Shaplen, “How to Deal With North Korea,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 2 (2003).

their basic perception of North Korea, they stress the possibility for change in the country. In addition, the moderates in all three countries believe that North Korea can be integrated into the international community, and they have high hopes for resolving the present issues through discourse and diplomatic means.¹⁷⁾

In actuality, neither hardliners nor moderates hold mutually exclusive positions. At present, the U.S. gives greater weight to the hardliners' policy of pressure and Japan is pursuing a policy of both pressure and dialogue. However, at this stage, neither country shows signs of using military means. All three countries advocate the necessity of dialogue and have not completely given up on the idea of reaching a solution through negotiations.

To achieve a peaceful resolution, a structure for cooperation and long-term team effort is necessary for all moderates, and they must help lead North Korea policies in their respective countries. Although all three countries may pursue both "dialogue" and "pressure" strategies, differences arise in which they value more, and to what degree. It is neither desirable nor possible to have all three pursue an identical policy, but they must have an international agreement stating that only peaceful means will be pursued. Once a peaceful method is discussed or once momentum for discourse between North Korea and the international community is achieved, a new policy must be developed to continue the momentum. From this point of view, the outcome of the upcoming third round of six-party talks to be held in June or July holds great meaning.

International Coordination among Korea, U.S., and Japan

The first round of the six-party talks, held last August to resolve the North Korean nuclear problem, epitomizes the "pressure-

17) Philip W. Yun, "The Devil We Know in N. Korea May Be Better Than the Ones We Don't," *Los Angeles Times*, May 7, 2003; Joseph S. Nye, "Bush Faces a Tougher Test in North Korea," *Boston Globe*, May 7, 2003.

dialogue” policy: First, North Korea’s reasons for accepting the initial idea of Washington’s six-party talks must be considered. The first six-party talks, held in August of 2003, took place during the U.S.-led war in Iraq at a time when it was believed that the reconstruction of Iraq would not be terribly burdensome. With the war in Iraq, North Korea felt the threat of potential U.S. military action even more acutely. However, it was also realizing that regardless of whether or not the U.S. used military action against them, no country in the world would lend its support. Indeed, China only wanted to participate in the six-party talks because stability in the Northeast Asian region was critical for its continued economic growth and development.

Until now, North Korea has continued to emphasize its need for nuclear weapons, at the same time telling the world that it could give up its nuclear ambitions in exchange for an international support guarantee. Essentially, if all sanctions and other such measures were removed, North Korea would give up its nuclear weapons. This is a difficult position for the U.S. to accept, but any further pressure against North Korea would make the crisis worse. If that is the case, then it can be said that the momentum for dialogue is building amongst policy makers in Korea, the U.S. and Japan.

In retrospect, North Korea’s brinkmanship strategy has not borne significant results. Yet, North Korea continues to use the nuclear threat against the rest of world because the international community has failed to properly respond to North Korea.¹⁸⁾ Since the first round of six-party talks, North Korea has formally admitted to possessing nuclear weapons. Even if this admission proved false, it succeeded in strengthening the hardline position in all three countries. North Korea has surrendered the strategic ambiguity it had maintained

18) Michael O’Hanlon and Mike Mochizuki, “Toward a Grand Bargain with North Korea,” *The Washington Quarterly* (Autumn 2003); Ted Galen Carpenter, “A Hedging Strategy is Needed Toward North Korea,” *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (2004).

until recently. Within the three countries, hardliners have taken the lead in determining foreign policy towards North Korea but they have done little to help the situation. And by formally admitting to possessing nuclear weapons, North Korea showed the international community that it breaks promises easily. In fact, many promises such as the NPT agreement, the South-North Korean Joint Declaration for Denuclearization in 1992, the Geneva Agreed Framework between U.S. and North Korea in 1994 and the Japan-North Korea Pyongyang Joint Declaration in 2002 have been disregarded by North Korea.

South Korea, the U.S. and Japan have emphasized the use of institutionalized organizations for resolving the North Korean issue through the summits. All three hope to establish fundamental rules to achieve a peaceful resolution through a series of summits. At the U.S.-ROK Summit on May 14, 2003, South Korea and the U.S. confirmed that if North Korea increased its threat on the Korean peninsula, "further steps" would be taken. On May 23, 2003, during the U.S.-Japan Summit, it was declared that "tougher measures" would be taken if North Korea aggravated the situation. On June 7, 2003, at the South Korea-Japan Summit, although language such as "tougher measures" and "further steps" was avoided, the rules established at the previous summits were reconfirmed.

In this way, the three countries warned North Korea against exacerbating the situation and they sent a clear message that the nuclear weapons program was strongly opposed. North Korea now knows that if it worsens the situation, further steps will be taken and when it finds itself without options, it will be forced to the table for dialogue. Therefore, this can be viewed as a "dialogue through pressure" strategy. If that is the present situation, the Korean government will stress international policy coordination with the United States and Japan, which, in turn calls for a specific roadmap to achieve a resolution through negotiations. Two things that need to be made clear to the world is that non-military means of solving the North Korean nuclear problem are desirable and that procrastination

will only make things worse. The following is a possible outline for a negotiations strategy that could be pursued:

- 1st step** - Freeze all nuclear developments and missile test shots
- Either the U.S. Congress or the President officially confirms that it will not use any military means against North Korea
- 2nd step** - Reinstate the NPT and any related inspection of nuclear facilities
- International support to alleviate North Korean energy shortages, further expansion of inter-Korean economic cooperation, normalization process between North Korea and Japan
- 3rd step** - Elimination of North Korea's nuclear capabilities
- International/Multilateral approval to secure North Korea's sovereignty, massive economic assistance, negotiating of North Korea-U.S. formal foreign relations
- 4th step** - Destruction of all WMDs
- Finalizing normal relations with U.S. and Japan
- 5th step** - Negotiations on conventional weapons and reduction of armaments
- Peace Treaty between South and North Korea.

CONCERNS AND PROBLEMS OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Key Premises of the Three Countries' Policy Coordination

In the first stage of the three countries' policy coordination it is necessary to recognize what rationales Korea, U.S., and Japanese policy makers share in their North Korea strategy. First, they are unequivocally opposed to North Korea's nuclear program and efforts to export nuclear technology to other rogue regimes. They exclude as much as possible, the military option as a possible way to solving North Korea's nuclear issue, and try to develop peaceful policy options. Since North Korea's nuclear crisis is an agenda of

international politics, it is necessary to solve the issue through multilateral international negotiations. If necessary, the current Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) should be upgraded to the ministerial level, to include foreign affairs and defense departments. To ensure that the three countries' policy coordination is more efficient, the South Korean government needs to pay special attention to cooperating with the Japanese government.

Internationalization of North Korea's Nuclear Issue

Some South Koreans have attempted to interpret North Korea's nuclear crisis as a domestic problem. Therefore, their main concern is not for international cooperation with the United States and Japan, but for normalization of South-North Korean relations. They have high hopes that the nuclear crisis will be easily settled once the two Koreas eventually establish peaceful relations. They also criticize the Korea-U.S. alliance because, to their understanding, the Korea-U.S. alliance structure is only a stumbling block to solving the nuclear crisis. Unfortunately, this approach shows that they do not understand the essence of the current North Korean nuclear crisis. As explained above, the final purpose of the Kim Jong-il regime is to establish permanent formal diplomatic relations with the U.S. and Japan.¹⁹⁾ Only then will North Korea take the initiative for reunification on the Korean peninsula since they believe they are morally superior, not only to the South Korean government but also to South Korean society as a whole.

Obviously North Korea's nuclear issue is a crisis of international security, and should be approached as a major international concern. Most importantly, many international parties are concerned about

19) Michael Armacost, Daniel I. Okimoto, and Gi-wook Shin, "Addressing the North Korea Nuclear Challenge," Asia/Pacific Research Center, Institute for International Studies, Stanford University, April 15, 2003.

the Cold War structure on the Korean peninsula. They see nuclear development and the spread of nuclear technology as the main threat to the 21st century's global security.²⁰⁾ Therefore, it is the international community and multilateral institutions that should take the initiative.

Strategic Clarity

The South Korean government needs to clarify its North Korea policy, both to North Korea and to the world to avoid any ambiguity or uncertainty. Especially regarding North Korea, South Korea must deliver a clear message that if North Korea continues to deceive the international community, South Korea will respond coercively. In other words, even though South Korea truly wants to normalize inter-Korean relations, it cannot attempt any normalization process at the cost of international peace or Northeast Asian regional stability.

It is also necessary to let the Kim Jong-il regime know that the South Korean government is ready to help North Korea to participate in the international arena as a normal member state. To that end, the North Korean government's priority should be addressing structural problems in its domestic political system. The United States and South Korea have to clearly declare that if North Korea accepts the U.S.' "CVID" (complete, verifiable and irreversible destruction) option, they will be compensated with substantial economic assistance. Finally, North Korea should realize that the international community can guarantee only tenuous security. To achieve permanent security, North Korea and the Kim Jong-il regime must cooperate in good faith with South Korea.

20) Brent Scowcroft and Daniel Poneman, "Korea Can't Wait," *Washington Post*, February 16, 2003; Samuel R. Berger and Robert L. Gallucci, "Two Crises, No Back Burner," *Washington Post*, December 31, 2002; William S. Cohen, "Huffing and Puffing Won't Do," *Washington Post*, January 7, 2003.

Reciprocity between North and South Korea

South Korea's policy towards North Korea must be neither "preemptive accommodation" nor "preemptive strike." As North Korea is led into international society through reform and openness, there will have to be a degree of mutual understanding because North Korea will gradually change, and may not always act as expected. However, South Korea has to show its resolution to continue a reciprocal policy toward North Korea, once North Korea is ready to cooperate with the rest of the world. If North Korea uses provocative language, illegal behavior and/or actions, there must be an instantaneous and concerted response. It must be clear to the North that its provocative intimidating strategy will incite the entire international community.

Based on this understanding, the South Korean government needs to shift its policy emphasis from "asymmetric" modified reciprocity to "symmetric" and "comprehensive" traditional reciprocity. If that is not implemented, then any long-term friendly relations will be threatened. Support to North Korea should be for the purpose of raising the living standards of its citizens and be limited to humanitarian aid. It is possible to pressure North Korea without handing over hard currency to support the Kim Jong-il regime.

Korea's Place in the U.S. Policy Option

If trust between South Korean and American policy makers doesn't develop, South Korea's expressed independence may cause a drift in the alliance. Therefore, in order to ensure effective relations between the two countries, there must be consistency in their policy towards North Korea. South Korea should confer with the U.S. on basic rules for solving the North Korea issue and take care to promote it in a manner that fosters trust. As a leading member, involved in this critical issue, it is important that South Korea explicitly state its national interests. With regards to measures for

pressuring North Korea, both the U.S. and South Korea must jointly recognize the need to mobilize such pressure tactics, and if a policy of pressure and dialogue is pursued, resolution through dialogue must be a priority. The South Korean government should be recognized by the international community as a leader in the North Korea problem, and therefore Seoul's position cannot be easily dismissed. In the upcoming multilateral discussions, South Korea's participation must be defined accordingly.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: STRATEGIC PROSPECTS

South Korea's first policy priority is given to eliminating possible punitive actions against North Korea by the United States, Japan or even China. Most importantly, any coercive actions toward North Korea could change its mind about international negotiations and participation in international organizations on the nuclear crisis. As explained in this paper, it is critical for policy makers of the three countries—South Korea, U.S., and Japan, to realize the importance of resolving the North Korean problem through dialogue and maintaining the momentum of unified resolve to accomplish this. To do so, the South Korean government should persuade its American and Japanese partners that coercive measures that force North Korea to have dialogues will only succeed in isolating the country further.

Therefore, coercive policies must be seen only as secondary measures if dialogue fails. At the same time, international coordination mechanisms between Korea, U.S. and Japan must clearly emphasize the peaceful means in their policies. North Korea, for its part, must cooperate with the international community, and must accept fully that the continuation of its drug trafficking, the exporting of its WMD technology and the breach of commitments will be met with coercive diplomatic measures. The South Korean government, in particular, must stress this position because it prefers

a peaceful strategy and wishes to make it known to the world that its efforts are in line with international standards and norms. In particular, it is important that in this type of diplomatic strategy, the U.S. and Japan are in agreement with South Korea's position.

From the United States' standpoint a successful solution to the North Korean nuclear issue will be a litmus test of its global leadership in the new world order of the 21st century. In contrast to Iraq, waging a war against North Korea is not an easy option. So, the U.S. must try to react to North Korea's deviant actions as peacefully as possible, and maintain the Northeast Asian regional security. There is little chance that the nuclear issue will be resolved before the U.S. presidential elections in 2004. Before the election, the U.S. will keep a small window open for dialogue with North Korea, but if George W. Bush succeeds in getting reelected, the U.S. will probably push for a much more offensive policy than it has in the past. With the possibility of the relaxation of North Korea-Japan relations, the situation in Iraq, President Bush's need for a peaceful image for reelection and China's efforts, it is possible that the future six-party talks will bear some meaningful results. In order for the talks to continue as a tool for resolving this issue, policy coordination between South Korea, the U.S. and Japan will be imperative, yet North Korea must not perceive the coordination structure as a threat to its sovereignty. While opinions differ, the South Korea-U.S.-Japan security cooperation framework will always be critical in sustaining the Northeast Asian security. In the years since World War II, this security has led to Northeast Asia's economic prosperity and political stabilization. The North Korean nuclear crisis will have to be approached with this in mind.