

The Policy of Peace and Prosperity and South Korea-Russia Cooperation

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INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, Russia has a Eurocentric foreign policy. Despite Mikhail Gorbachev's efforts to expand cooperation with the Asia-Pacific region, this policy continued up to the late 1990s when Boris Yeltsin was in power. Of course, the Putin government has not been free from Eurocentrism, but there is a growing tendency to look East rather than West.¹⁾ Vladimir Putin's foreign policy differs from his predecessors in that his government understands that North Korea is the core factor affecting the political and security situation in Northeast Asia, and he is approaching the issue by establishing the foundation for an engagement policy towards the Korean peninsula through normalization of Russia-North Korea relations.

During the 1990s, Russia was either excluded or unaccounted for

1) Regarding Russia's Eurocentrism, see Ko Jae-nam, *Current Status and Prospects of Russia-Europe Relations under Putin Administration* (in Korean), (Seoul: Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security, 2003); Bobo Lo, *Vladimir Putin and the Evolution of Russian Foreign Policy* (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2002).

in various seminars and activities on the Northeast Asia political and security situation, as well as in the discussion process of multilateral cooperation.²⁾ However, it reappeared as a major actor in Northeast Asia, including the Korean peninsula, in the wake of diverse elements: the stabilization of the Russian domestic political situation and continued growth of the economy evident after the inauguration of the Putin government in 2000; the boost to of Russia's international standing due to successful summit diplomacy; increased legitimacy to speak on the Korean peninsula problem due to the normalization of relations with North Korea; and neighboring countries' growing interest in Russia's energy sources.

Taking into consideration Korea's geopolitical, geo-economic, and geo-strategical circumstances, the outcome of the Roh Moo-hyun government's policy of peace and prosperity inevitably depends on the success or failure of a very prudent, pragmatic policy toward the surrounding four countries and needless to say, toward North Korea. Although, from Korea's standpoint, policies toward the U.S., Japan, and China will be given more priority over those toward Russia, Russia, under President Putin, is certainly becoming an important part of Roh Moo-hyun's policy of peace and prosperity.

The objective of this paper is to map out a strategy for Korea-Russia cooperation that successfully promotes Roh Moo-hyun's

2) Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, there has been somewhat endless debate over whether Russia was still a great power or not. See, Hannes Adomeit, "Russian as a 'Great Power' in World Affairs: Image and Reality," *International Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (1995), pp. 35-68; Frank Umbach, "Russia as a 'Virtual Great Power': Implications for Its Declining Role," *European and Eurasian Security*, Vol. 9, No.3 (Autumn 2000), pp. 87-122; and Sherman Garnett, "Russia's Illusory Ambitions," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No.2 (March/April 1997). Regarding Russia's weakness in Asia, see, Stephen Blank and Alvin Z. Rubinstein, "Is Russia Still a Power in Asia?" *Problems of Post-Communism* (March/April 1997), pp. 37-46; Eugene B. Rumer and Celeste A. Wallander, "Russia: Power in Weakness?" *The Washington Quarterly* (Winter 2003-04), pp. 57-73; and Stephen Blank, "What is Russia to Asia?" *Orbis*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (Fall 2003), pp.569-585.

policy of peace and prosperity.

THE POLICY OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY OF THE ROH MOO-HYUN GOVERNMENT

The Roh government's Policy of Peace and Prosperity is a strategic vision to lay the foundation for peaceful unification, as well as a basis for developing the Northeast Asian economic center by bringing peace to the Korean peninsula and pursuing the mutual prosperity of both Koreas.³⁾ This policy is devoted to the enhancement of peace in keeping with the fundamentals of the Kim Dae-jung government's Policy of Reconciliation and Cooperation, and it is driven on the basis of a more widespread national agreement among the people.

Then, what are the objectives of the Policy of Peace and Prosperity?⁴⁾ The first objective is the promotion of peace on the Korean peninsula, which means peacefully resolving the pressing North Korean nuclear issue while at the same time, overcoming the useless conflict and antagonistic South-North Korea relations of the past. On this basis, the goal is to establish a peace regime on the Korean peninsula by enhancing inter-Korea cooperation and building military confidence.

The second objective is the pursuit of mutual prosperity. If economic integration of South Korea and North Korea is realized, then there is a possibility that the Korean peninsula will unite, thus combining the continental economies with the Pacific economies and paving the way for the Korean peninsula to become the hub of Asia. The goal would be prosperity for all of North Asia after achieving

3) National Security Council, *Peace, Prosperity and National Security* (Seoul: National Security Council, 2003).

4) Ministry of Unification, *The Policy for Peace and Prosperity* (Seoul: Ministry of Unification, 2003), Chap. 3.

Table 1. Implementation Strategy by Stages for Establishment of a Peace Regime on the Korean Peninsula

Stage 1: Resolution of the North Korean Nuclear Issues and Promotion of Peace

- Endeavor to create a breakthrough for a peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue
- Continue to promote reconciliation and cooperation between South and North Korea and regularize inter-Korean military talks
- Provide a foundation for the firm establishment of peace through inter-Korean summits and other forums
- Create an environment for peace and cooperation in Northeast Asia on the basis of strengthened diplomatic capabilities
- Reach an agreement on the peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue and missile issues



Stage 2: Expansion of Inter-Korean Cooperation and Laying the Foundation for a Durable Peace Regime on the Korean Peninsula

- Undertake concrete measures for the implementation of matters agreed upon for the resolution of the North Korean nuclear and missile issues
- Deepen substantive cooperation and promote military confidence-building measures between the South and the North
- Propose and promote an initiative for a forum for peace and cooperation in Northeast Asia



Stage 3: Conclusion of an Inter-Korean Peace Agreement and Creation of a Durable Peace Regime

- Conclude a South-North Korea peace agreement and secure guarantees for it
- Take the various necessary steps following the transition to a peace regime
- Promote the formation of an inter-Korean economic community and the reinforcement of operational arms control
- Establish a forum for peace and cooperation in Northeast Asia

Source: Ministry of Unification, *Policy of Peace and Prosperity of the Participatory Government*, (March 2004), p. 15.

mutual prosperity of South and North Korea first.

In order to successfully accomplish the Policy of Peace and Prosperity, the Roh Moo-hyun government is promoting related policies based on the following principles:

The first is resolution of issues through dialogue. Because there remains the possibility of armed conflict on the Korean peninsula due to an unstable armistice regime and a military standoff, it is necessary that all conflicts be resolved peacefully through dialogue.

The second is mutual trust. In order to enhance relations and promote healthy mutual cooperation with North Korea and the surrounding countries, Korea must pursue mutual trust, eliminate unilateralism, and seek equal and cooperative relations.

The third principle is promotion of international cooperation based on the principle of the “parties directly concerned.” The establishment of a peace regime on the Korean peninsula and the creation of South-North Korea economic community, among other goals, will be promoted by the concerned parties of the Korean peninsula problem—South Korea and North Korea. On these grounds, they will naturally cooperate with the international community and contribute to peace and prosperity in the Northeast Asian region.

Finally, there is expansion of public participation. In the process of carrying out the Policy for Peace and Prosperity, Korea will ensure external transparency in the policy-making process. It will rise above party differences for the sake of cooperation, and will promote the legitimacy and popular support of the policies through wider public participation.

The Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has adopted Year 2004 Plan of Operation in order to realize the Policy of Peace and Prosperity. First, it aims to peacefully resolve the North Korean nuclear issue; second, it will endeavor to build an inclusive and dynamic ROK-U.S. alliance; third, it will create an international environment to establish a peace regime on the Korean peninsula; and fourth, it will expand diplomatic foundations in order to

promote the goal to become the economic center of Northeast Asia.

In conclusion, the Roh Moo-hyun government's Policy of Peace and Prosperity aims to establish a peace regime on the Korean peninsula and develop a South-North Korea economic community through dialogue and cooperation between both parties, and in that process, will gain cooperation and support from surrounding countries.

IMPORTANT ISSUES CONFRONTING THE POLICY OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY AND RUSSIA'S POSITION

Peaceful Resolution of the North Korean Nuclear Issue⁵⁾

Although Russia has furnished North Korea with the basis for nuclear development, its position is that the Korean peninsula must remain a non-nuclear zone. Therefore, Russia unequivocally disapproves of North Korea's development of nuclear weapons. Its position is that North Korea must faithfully observe the Geneva Agreed Framework, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), and the Safety Agreement with the IAEA. In particular, it maintains the position that the North Korean nuclear issue must be peacefully resolved through multilateral discussions (i.e., the Six-Party Talks, etc.) and that it must take part in these discussions. Therefore, while actively participating in the current Six-Party Talks, it has firmly maintained that the North Korea nuclear issue be resolved diplomatically and peacefully, and that it is imperative that North Korea not become a "second Iraq."

5) See, Ko Jae-nam, "Russia's Response to Recent North Korean Nuclear Crisis" (in Korean), Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security (May 13, 2003); Hong Wan-suk, "Russia's Policy and Role over the North Korean Nuclear Problems" (in Korean), *Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Summer 2003), pp. 153-183, and so forth.

At the same time, Russia asserts that it can play a significant role in the resolution process of the recent North Korean nuclear situation, one that is different from the past. That role would be based on the political trust between the leaders accumulated through three summit meetings with the Putin government, not to mention normalized ties between Russia and North Korea, unlike during the previous North Korean nuclear situation.

In the past, Russian intelligence and other experts had expressed the view that although North Korea possessed mid- and long-range missile development capacity and had possessed weapons-grade plutonium capable of manufacturing two or three nuclear bombs in the past, it did not have nuclear weapons for military means. However, after North Korea's recent declaration that it had plutonium-reprocessing and nuclear deterrence capabilities, Russia is now changed its position, and has exhibited concern over nuclear proliferation.

Mutual Exchange and Continuous Expansion of Cooperation Between South and North Korea

Russia hopes for quick progress in dialogues between South and North Korea. While maintaining the position that political and economic issues such as the unification of the Korean peninsula should be achieved by means of dialogue and mutual cooperation between the two Koreas, it believes outside powers should not actively take part in this process. In fact, the "Russia-North Korea Joint Declaration" that was adopted during Putin's visit to Pyongyang in July of 2000 and the "South Korea-Russia Joint Declaration" that was adopted during his visit to Seoul in February of 2001 both record Russia's support for the principle of independent resolution of the Korean peninsula problem.⁶⁾

6) Ko Jae-nam, "The Changes of Circumstances in Northeast Asia and Korea's Policy Towards Russia" (in Korean), a paper presented at the 15th APPRC-IFES

Likewise, Russia concludes that as long as a unified Korea does not become hostile toward Russia, unification would be beneficial to their national interests. In fact, Russia is more supportive of Korea's unification than any other surrounding country. Russia also understands that the unification of the Korean peninsula cannot be achieved in the short term, but rather, that it will require considerable time. Moreover, it seems confident that South Korea will take the initiative. It views that a unified Korea will be able to enhance their foreign policy autonomy in terms of international relations, in particular with the U.S., and that this can function as an important factor in the expansion of cooperation with Russia. Russia hopes for a gradual and peaceful unification through dialogue and cooperation between South and North Korea rather than unification through drastic means, such as the collapse of the Kim Jong-il regime.

In conclusion, while positively supporting the "Policy of Reconciliation and Cooperation" of the Kim Dae-jung government and the Policy of Peace and Prosperity of the Roh Moo-hyun government, Russia asserts that unification of South and North Korea must be peacefully accomplished through dialogue.

Conclusion of a Peace Agreement between South and North Korea and Establishment of a Peace Regime

Russia strongly adheres to the principle that military security issues, such as the establishment of a peace regime on the Korean peninsula, are not only relevant to the Koreas, but are also intimately related with the national security of the Northeast Asian region and therefore, such problems must be resolved through the format of a multilateral international conference (i.e., U.S., Russia, China, Japan, South and North Korea participating in the Six-Party Talks) in which the countries in the surrounding area, including Russia, take part.⁷⁾

Joint Conference held in Seoul on June 3-4, 2004, pp. 22-23.

Accordingly, Russia voiced strong dissatisfaction with being left out of the Korean Peninsula Four-Party Talks, which were proposed by Korean and U.S. leaders in April of 1996. Meanwhile, soon after North Korea's nullification of the armistice regime, Russia expressed its viewpoint: that the armistice agreement would continue to be valid until the conclusion of a peace agreement on the Korean peninsula.

Based on the outcome of the Four-Party Talks and Korea's emphasis on the principle of the "parties directly concerned," and through the July 1997 Joint Statement by South Korean and Russian foreign ministers, Russia changed its earlier attitude, expressing hope that the Four-Party Talks would succeed and thus, contribute to the preservation of peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. However, it also continues to firmly maintain that stability and peace in the Northeast Asian region, including the Korean peninsula, must be settled through a multilateral approach, and that it wishes to play a substantial role in this process.

Problems of North Korea's Missile Development and Exportation

In August 1998, after North Korea launched a missile in the wake of the revision of their Constitution,⁸⁾ Russia stated that "The missile programs of all countries must not threaten any country and must not be a factor in an arms race." Russia claimed that the increased volatility in the Northeast Asian security environment that followed North Korea's missile launch enhanced the need for a multilateral confidence-building meeting within the area as well as the need to establish a Northeast Asian multilateral security body.

However, early in the Putin administration, Russia exhibited a

7) Akiko Fukushima, "Multilateral Confidence Building Measures in Northeast Asia: Receding or Emerging?" [<http://www.stimson.org/japan/pubs.cfm?ID=31>].

8) For the details of North Korean missile capability, see, [http://www.nti.org/db/pprofiles/dprk/msl/cap/NKM_CcCd.html].

lack of concern towards North Korea's missile development problem. For example, the joint statements adopted after respective summit meetings between Putin and Kim Jong-il (Pyongyang in July of 2000 and Moscow in August of 2001), clearly stated the North's claim that "North Korea's missile development has a genuinely peaceful character." The joint statement adopted after the Moscow summit meeting stated that North Korea's missiles "are not a threat to any country that respects the sovereign rights of North Korea."

On one hand, the Putin government's implied support for North Korea's missile development at the time was intended to boost its influence on North Korea by taking sides with it. On the other hand, the hidden agenda was to stress the peaceful character of North Korea's missile development, thus negating the U.S. rationale for an MD system. As for the present situation, in which Russia has accepted the U.S. establishment of an MD system, there is no doubt it understands that North Korea's missile development and export will not contribute to the strategic stability of the Northeast Asian region under any circumstances. In fact, its North Korea policy strongly advises against North Korean missile launching. Certainly, North Korea's recent resumption missile development is a threat to Russia. Therefore, it will have no choice but to actively participate in international efforts to restrain North Korea's missile development, deployment, and export policy.

Establishment of a Northeast Asian Peace Cooperation Body

In reality, the governments of the Northeast Asian region have no multilateral security framework or free trade agreement (FTA). In the past, beginning in Brezhnev's era, Russia proposed an "Asian collective security system" that included Northeast Asia. For example, Leonid Brezhnev proposed an "Asian Collective Security Pact" in 1969, and Gorbachev proposed an "Asian-style Helsinki Conference" in July of 1986 and an "All Asian Process" in May of 1989.⁹⁾

In his speech to the National Assembly during his November 1992 visit to Korea, Yeltsin proposed the establishment of an “Asia-Pacific Dispute Prevention Center” and an “Asia-Pacific Strategic Problem Research Center” to manage critical situations, while emphasizing the necessity for a multilateral discussion mechanism within the Asia-Pacific region. Former Minister of Defense Pavel Grachev also proposed the organization of a “Northeast Asian Multilateral Security Council” in April and May of 1994.

Meanwhile, the “Shanghai Group” was inaugurated in 1996 to settle border disputes between China and former Soviet republics, and to build military confidence in the border regions. Putin played a leading role in developing the Shanghai Group into the “Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO),” a multilateral security cooperation institution, in June 2001. Russia has continuously promoted this pro-multilateral internationalism in order to maintain its voice and to justify its engagement within the region while overcoming domestic, economic and military vulnerabilities.

Other Issues: U.S. and Japan’s Normalization Efforts and U.S. Forces Korea

Russia recognizes that isolating North Korea from the international community will not help stability and peace on the Korean peninsula. At the same time, it positively supports the early resolution of North Korea-U.S. and North Korea-Japan normalization issue, and the participation of North Korea in international organizations.

9) Regarding Russia’s policy towards multilateral cooperation in Northeast Asia, see Hong Hyun-ik, “Russia and Multilateral Security Cooperation in Northeast Asia,” in Hong Hyun-ik and Lee Dae-woo, eds., *Multilateral Security Cooperation in Northeast Asia and Surrounding Four Powers* (in Korean), (Seoul: The Sejong Institute, 2001); Alla Kassianova, “Russian Diplomacy in the 21st Century: Multilateralism Put to Work,” *PONARS Policy Memo* No. 262 (2002).

Regarding U.S. forces in Korea, Russia has recognized that U.S. armed forces not only contribute to the peace and stability of the Korean peninsula, they also restrain North Korea's military provocations against South Korea. Moreover, the forces also contribute to the balance of power in Northeast Asia while mitigating the arms race between China and Japan. On the other hand, with the eastward expansion of NATO some Russian scholars and bureaucrats increasingly regard the alliance between Korea, the U.S., and Japan as a "NATO-like military deterrence against Russia." As a result, somewhat negative opinions have also been expressed about the stationing of U.S. troops in Korea after unification. In the meantime, Russia hopes that the recent strategic relocation of U.S. armed forces will not negatively impact developments in the Northeast Asian political situation.

CONCLUSION: DIRECTIONS OF KOREA-RUSSIA COOPERATION

As stated above, Russia's policy on pending security issues in Northeast Asia, including the Korean peninsula, is similar to the policy for a successful Policy of Peace and Prosperity, promoted by the Roh Moo-hyun government. Therefore, to encourage the continuation of that policy, the Roh administration needs to expand various cooperative relations between government and non-government, and expand diplomatic channels, such as summit meetings and high-level talks, which can induce closer cooperation with Russia.

The normalization of Russia-North Korea relations will also positively affect North Korea's emergence from international isolation, and will be conducive to a friendly international environment, which is important in overcoming North Korea's economic crisis. In that vein, the Roh Moo-hyun government must ensure that Russia's policy toward the Korean peninsula is not

inclined toward North Korea. On the other hand, the government needs to promote Russia-North Korea relations by being supportive in projects such as the activation of “Trilateral Cooperation of South Korea, North Korea, and Russia” (i.e., the TKR-TSR Connection Project).

Russia is voicing concern that if the North Korean nuclear issue is not peacefully resolved through the Six-Party Talks, U.S.-led Security Council sanctions may be imposed on North Korea, and that if these were ever violated, military measures would follow, leading to the next Iraq situation. It believes that a military attack on North Korea would spread war across the entire Korean peninsula and cause severe instability in surrounding areas including Russia’s far eastern region. However, even if the U.S. does take decisive military measures against North Korea, Russia does not have the appropriate means to deter the situation right now. And if the North Korea situation evolves into the next Iraq, it would lead to irreversible harm to the Korean people. Therefore, the Roh Moo-hyun government must promote active cooperative diplomacy among the participants of the Six-Party Talks, in order to avoid the worst scenario. It must take into account the fact that Russia is on good terms with both North Korea and the U.S., and must take all diplomatic means to expand Russia’s role as a mediator.

South Korea must strengthen economic cooperation diplomacy with Russia, considering the fact that the Policy of Peace and Prosperity promoted by the Roh Moo-hyun government, especially the creation of a Northeast Asia Economic Community, will have no effect without the cooperation and participation of Russia, a neighboring country possessing unlimited natural resources. Hence, it is fortuitous that South Korea was able to agree on the long-term readjustment of Russia’s debt last September, an issue that has hampered the substantial economic cooperation of South Korea and Russia since the establishment of diplomatic relations.¹⁰⁾ In addition, the South must take into account the fact that the surrounding countries are strengthening energy diplomacy and venturing into

joint projects with Russia. Therefore, it is necessary that South Korea, also actively support energy cooperation diplomacy and promote joint venture projects with Russia as well.

10) See Jae-nam Ko, "Korea/Paris Club's Claims Collection Negotiations With Russia: Comparative Assessment and Prospects," *Policy Brief*, No. 2003-5 (December 2003), pp. 1-25.