

Ingolf Kiesow

Perspectives on NORTH KOREA'S nuclear and missile programs



This picture is from central Pyongyang (© Ingolf Kiesow)

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Perspectives on North Korea's nuclear and missile programs

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Abstract (not more than 200 words) <p>The <i>Juche</i>- or self reliance philosophy is an obstacle for importation of sufficient quantities of food and energy raw material. In addition to that, North Korea cannot afford to acquire weapons to such an extent that a conventional weapons balance with the South can be maintained. Pyongyang is instead fearing an attack from USA and/or South Korea. In order to defend the country, North Korea has a nuclear weapon program, which caused a crisis in 1994. That crisis was only solved in a cosmetic way and North Korea is again threatening with acquiring nuclear weapons and has left the NPT. The new U.S. policy for non-proliferation in combination with North Korea's fears for an attack create a stalemate, which cannot be broken at present by the six-nations negotiations, which are carried on in Beijing. USA has a number of other non-proliferation issues to consider and is presently not likely to plan for an attack intended to force North Korea to an unconditional scrapping of its nuclear weapons program. Such vital interests are in the balance for China and such a considerable mutual understanding of the respective problems concerning North Korea and Taiwan is emerging between China and USA that certain hopes can be pinned to a negotiated settlement of the problem, but that is undermined by a North Korean wish to gain time and to put obstacles in the way for any deal that could diminish China's support for North Korea. In addition to that a number of other problems between neighbouring states probably will have to be solved in connection with these negotiations, if any deal shall become sustainable.</p>		
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Sammanfattning (högst 200 ord) <p>Nordkoreas Juche- eller självförsörjningsidé utgör ett hinder för import av tillräckliga mängder av livsmedel och energiråvaror. Dessutom har Nordkorea inte råd att skaffa vapen i sådan utsträckning att en konventionell vapenbalans med sydsidan kan uppnås. I stället fruktar man i Pyongyang ett anfall från USA och Sydkorea. För att kunna försvara sig bygger man upp ett kärnvapenprogram, vilket framkallade en kris 1994. Den löstes bara på det kosmetiska planet, och Nordkorea hotar ånyo med att skaffa kärnvapen och har utträtt ur icke-spridningsavtalet. USA:s nya politik för icke-spridning jämte Nordkoreas rädsla för angrepp skapar ett dödläge, som inte kan hävas av de förhandlingar som förs mellan sex nationer i Beijing. USA har en rad andra icke-spridningsfrågor att beakta och ser för närvarande inte ut att överväga ett anfall för att genomtvinga en villkorslös skrotning av Nordkoreas kärnvapenprogram. För Kina står så vitala intressen på spel och samtidigt håller Kina och USA på att uppnå ett sådant mått av ömsesidig förståelse för varandras problem med avseende på Nordkorea och Taiwan att vissa förhoppningar kan hysas om ett förhandlingsresultat, men de undermineras av en nordkoreansk strävan att vinna tid och förhindra en uppgörelse som minskar Kinas stöd för Nordkorea. Även en rad andra problem mellan angränsande stater behöver sannolikt lösas i samband med förhandlingarna för att en lösning skall bli hållbar.</p>		
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List of Acronyms

ABM	Anti-Ballistic Missile System
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CVID	Complete, Verifiable and Irrevocable Destruction (of North Korea's nuclear program)
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
KEDO	Korean Peninsula Energy Development Fund
KPA	Korean People's Army (of North Korea)
LWR	Light Water Reactor
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
PLA	People's Liberation Army (of China)
ROK	Republic of Korea
USFK	United States Forces Korea
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The North Korean nuclear program merits attention in a broader perspective. This report will try to see the issue in a historical, cultural and regional perspective, using history as a means to understand the present situation.

For both China and the Soviet Union, the end of the Korean War meant a limit to the extension of communist influence in Asia – and for China a limit for extension of its territorial ambitions. For USA it meant a need to stay in the Western Pacific with a military presence to protect its defence perimeter as defined during the war. For North Korea and South Korea it meant that the stalemate in their relations was made permanent, both sides aiming at the incorporation of the other part with its own territory.

North Korea's population has never in history been exposed to "modern" or "western" thinking, nor experienced freedom of expression. As in the South, but in a different way, much of Confucian mentality remains. Insisting on self sufficiency has been an obstacle for importing food, when the population grew larger than could be supported by the available arable land area, as well as for importing needed energy raw material. North Korea can not afford to maintain conventional forces strong enough to deter from possible attacks from the South or USA. Yet, one third of the population belong to the favoured sector of society and they are part of the system, which is in control of the country's resources. They are likely to be reluctant to give up these favoured positions. Looking at the examples from the former socialist countries in Europe, they are not likely to be equally successful in a country dominated by South Koreans.

In South Korea economic success was helped by a high degree of government intervention but aiming at creating a strong private sector and characterised by pragmatism, speed and flexibility. A combination of differences in economic standard and ways of thinking are likely to make any rapid process of reunification with North Korea costly and painful.

After the 1994 Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT) withdrawal crisis neither USA nor North Korea fulfilled their obligations under the Agreed Framework and both parties are blaming each other. Since the 11 September 2001 attack on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon, the American non-proliferation policy is one of zero tolerance as far as the States of "the Axis of evil" are concerned and North Korea has been labelled one. North Korea admits to having a plutonium program but refuses to discuss a uranium enrichment program, which it is also being suspected to have.

It is possible for North Korea to cause a great deal of damage on the South, especially in Seoul and possibly with weapons of mass destruction, but it is unlikely that an attack can result in victory. However, since it has been revealed after the 1994 NPT withdrawal crisis that a military attack upon North Korea was not excluded and the present U.S. administration has shown a wish to bring down the North Korean regime, it is likely that in the closed environment in Pyongyang there is real fear of being attacked.

The new American policy against the spread of weapons of mass destruction on one hand and on the other hand the U.S. increasingly overwhelming superiority in conventional weapons together create a mutual and absolute distrust between

USA and North Korea. USA has to consider its need for reserves in military capability and avoid overextending its military resources. USA is presently militarily engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan and must keep a contingency to deal with a potential regime collapse in Pakistan. This and other factors make a U.S. attack on North Korea unlikely for the time being.

The improved understanding between China and USA of their respective military obligations may help in the efforts to solve the North Korean problem. North Korea is trying to forestall any U.S. – Chinese understanding. Japan has its own problems with North Korea. Japan and Russia have territorial problems between them which ought to be solved before any comprehensive solution to the security problems in North East Asia can be arrived at. North Korea and South Korea continue getting closer to each other, both because of a certain economic integration and slowly improving contacts on a central level.

If and when serious six-nations negotiations can commence, they will have to be many-sided, aim at defining a working relationship between the two Koreas, and solving a number of outstanding issues in North East Asia between the other neighbouring countries and USA. They would have to consider North Korea's future nuclear status, the uranium issue and guarantees for North Korea's military security and give the regime enough help in its economic reform program. Only by adopting such a "holistic approach" are the negotiations likely to succeed in settling the matter of North Korea's nuclear program.

Non-proliferation policy seems to have come to a dead end in the case of North Korea. The attitude of insisting on Complete, Verifiable and Irrevocable Destruction (CVID) of North Korea's nuclear assets without compensation may consequently have to be abandoned and the non-proliferation policy as regards North Korea probably re-examined in an international context.

Of importance for European policy are the following considerations;

- how to avoid giving the impression that Europe has any wish to become a player in the Asian power game,
- how to avoid encouraging North Korea to engage in nuclear black-mail and illegal economic transactions,
- consider the fact that the six-nations talks in Beijing are an important process per se and take care to preserve and encourage that process and
- be prepared to offer a helping hand if any opportunity arises to contribute to making an offer to North Korea that could restart serious negotiations aiming at CVID.

INTRODUCTION

The competition between the four great powers, which have steered events in East Asia since the beginning of the 20th century, i.e. China, Japan, Russia and USA remains under the surface, at least potentially. In the South the capability and the will of the regional power India to further its own interests is steadily growing.

USA has no territory in Asia, but for historical reasons, it regards the Western Pacific as part of its own defence perimeter. The reason for this can best be illustrated by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941, which demonstrated the importance of maritime positions of strength for American security.¹ USA is trying to incorporate its allies in the Western Pacific into a common Anti-Ballistic Missile defence system. At the same time public opinion in South Korea and Japan are expressing sentiments critical of USA, and the formal alliances are being contested.

Today USA is the only superpower, but China's growing economic strength and future military potential may make it increasingly capable of challenging the U.S. dominance in its own neighbourhood. There is on the other hand an increasing mutual understanding between USA and China about the respective positions regarding the two most sensitive issues in the region, namely North Korea and Taiwan. This trend is still delicate, however, and the North Korean nuclear program is one factor, which can lead to a rupture in this process toward multilateral security arrangements in East Asia, as it is sometimes optimistically described.

This report is written as a part of the Asia project at FOI. The project aims at analysing the interaction of the Great Powers in Asia and their competition on the Eurasian Continent. At present, reports are being elaborated about the Korean issue, China's attitudes to the outside world and energy security as an issue for security policy making.

Purpose

The North Korean nuclear program merits attention in a broader perspective. The intention with this report is to see the issue in a historical, cultural and regional perspective, using history as a means to understand the present situation.

Method

The work on this report started with a power game perspective, following the interaction between the regional powers involved, basically USA, China, Japan, Russia and the two Koreas. These are the same countries, which form the so called six-nations process in Beijing, which tries to solve the problems caused by North Korea's nuclear program. This perspective dominates in the chapter about the nuclear dimension (No. 4) and to some extent also the chapter about the conventional weapons dimension (No. 5) as well as the whole chapter about the global dimension (No.6). The power game perspective is also used extensively in the final chapter about conclusions (No. 7).

¹ Lim, Robyn (2003) *The Geopolitics of East Asia; The Search for Equilibrium*, London, Routledge, p. 2.

It soon became evident, however, that the underlying economic and political trends had been so important for the process that a great deal of attention had to be paid to analysing the economic and political context in the two Koreas. This perspective dominates the chapter about the North Korean dimension (No. 2) and about the South Korean dimension (No. 3), but a political and ideological perspective had to be added there as well. It became necessary to paint a “holistic” picture, including historic and cultural elements. It also appeared to be important to describe the U.S. struggle for non-proliferation in a world-wide perspective, which is done inter alia in chapter No. 5 about the conventional weapons dimension.

Adding cultural and historic aspects to the “holistic picture” also added a problem of focusing. Unlike Europe, the countries of North East Asia show basic linguistic and important ethnic and religious differences between each other, in spite of having been exposed to influences from both Confucianism and Buddhism. The westerner as a “third party” may try to find a common formula for summarising but it takes time and effort and, more importantly, it takes focus away from the main subject.

The problem lies in writing in a way that is both clear and does not offend anybody of any nationality. History is a controversial subject in East Asia. There is a long-standing diplomatic conflict between Japan and South Korea about the way that the Japanese occupation of Korea is described in Japanese school books, and a similar problem exists for Japan with China. The role of the Chinese “volunteers” in the Korean War is sensitive in Korea, and so on.

I have had the privilege of living for several years during two periods in North Korea, and I have spent some time in South Korea and recently visited both countries. That gives me a perspective of both sides of the line, which is not so common in the west. Hopefully this may have helped in giving a balanced perspective to the report.

Sources

The tendency to use ideological filters has been a problem in choosing the sources. North Korean sources about South Korea are twisted by the state controlled propaganda machinery. South Korean sources, although being produced in a free media environment, are often of dubious value, when they are based on material from refugees and/or deserters from the North or built upon information from North Korean state-controlled media. Deserters are notoriously untrustworthy because they live under difficult conditions and are likely to wish to please their new masters. North Korean media often have a hidden agenda in selecting what may be published. South Korean media also sometimes have their hidden agendas. For that reason, I have avoided to use such sources as much as possible, the major exception being the use of some academic publications about systematically made interviews with North Korean refugees in the chapter about North Korea’s recent political and economic development.

I have also tried to avoid using my own observations in North Korea – and in South Korea - as a source. Only in one case have I used my own observations, and that is in the chapter where I describe the political and economic development in North Korea around 1980 and again, when I describe the situation today.

Terminology

It seems to be clear to two generations of Chinese that their country could be labelled "feudal" during parts of its history. The Korean state was for a long period in time organised after models of a Chinese origin. In Japan, it is an accepted use of terminology to call Japan "feudal" under its Medieval Age (the 12th to 16th Centuries).

Nevertheless there seems to be an ongoing debate in Korea about this subject.² Since I do not wish to become involved in a debate between North and South Korean scholars, I have used another term, namely "*Traditional East Asian agricultural type of society*" to describe the corresponding phenomenon in Korea.³

Similar problems arise with the use of "the Middle Ages" about Asia. This term is somewhat incorrect, since not all countries in Asia did undergo such developments as those which characterise the "Middle Ages" in Europe (and Japan) and certainly not at parallel periods in time. Here I have instead used more exact time indications.

There are a number of other aspects, like how Buddhism was brought to Japan from China via Korea, Japanese colonies on the Korean peninsula during a certain period etcetera, about which historians have differing opinions. In order not to take focus away from the main subject, I have kept short the historic sections.

² According to the Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary (1991) "a feudal system is a medieval European politico-economic system based on the relation of vassal and superior arising from the holding of lands on condition of homage and military service or labour. " Another question is whether it is correct to use the term "feudal" about other countries and, more specifically so, in Asia. An authority on feudal history, Marc Bloch, says that "It is a question of deepest interest whether there have been other societies, in other times and other parts of the world, whose social structures in their fundamental characteristics have sufficiently resembled that of our Western feudalism to justify us in applying the term "feudal" to them as well." (Bloch, Marc, 1961, *Volume I, The Growth of Ties of Dependence, Feudal Society*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p. xvii). He does not give us an answer, but other historians have thought that it is justified to do so.

In his "Investigation of Peasant movements in Hunan" Mao Tsetung has a section about "Overthrowing the Feudal Rule of the Local Tyrants and Evil Gentry", in which he gives a detailed description of the social system, which he believes constituted a feudal order. (Mao Tsetung, 1965, *Selected Works*, Foreign Language Press, Peking, p.40.) In addition to being the leader of the country, Mao Tsetung was known as a prominent historian.

Deng Xiaoping's daughter Deng Rong writes in her book about her father and the Cultural Revolution that "China had been a feudal society for 2,000 years. It had never passed through anything remotely resembling a democratic period, but had leaped directly into modern socialism." In the same book she repeats in one of the last pages that "for over 2,000 years China had been a feudal, autocratic monarchy." (Rong, Deng (2002) *Deng Xiaoping and the Cultural Revolution, A Daughter recalls the Critical Years*, Foreign Language Press, Beijing, p. 287 and 452) It seems to be clear to two generations of Chinese that their country could be labelled "feudal" during parts of its history.

The Korean state was for a long period in time organised after models of a Chinese origin. Kim Il Sung made a speech in 1946 about the need for eliminating the feudal relations that held back the social development in Korea (Kim Il Sung ,1976, *Selected Works*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Pyongyang, p. 35).

In Japan, it is an accepted use of terminology to call Japan "feudal" under its Medieval Age (the 12th to 16th Centuries. (Colcutt, Martin and Jansen, Marius and Kumakura, Isao, 1988, *Cultural Atlas of Japan*, Facts on File Publications, New York, p. 104.).

Nevertheless there seems to be an ongoing debate in Korea about this subject. "*Feudalism, according to the North Korean historians, had prevailed in Korea during most of historical time until the nineteenth century, when what is called "the capitalistic relations" in Korea gathered momentum.....*

In South Korea where pluralism prevails, historians maintain relatively divergent views on the question of periodisation and the debate is still going on.....South Korean views range from as early as the beginning of the three Kingdoms period to as late as the beginning of the Yi Dynasty in the late fourteenth century." (Yong-ho Choe in *Studies on Korea: A Scholar's guide*, 1980, edited by Han-Kyo Kim, The University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu, p. 37.)

³ The term "Confucian economic system" has been proposed, but this does not carry any meaning, since Confucius did not elaborate on his opinions about economic systems. The term "Pre-modern" has also been proposed but would be misleading, since it suggests that Korea would have reached a stage similar to the pre-modern stages in Europe or Japan after the renaissance respectively the Meiji restoration. No development of that kind had taken place in Korea before it was invaded by Japan.

The very existence of these problems of terminology illustrates well what the reader will find as an important conclusion in the following chapters. Korea has emerged from isolation relatively recently and ideological rivalry between North Korea and South Korea still create problems for westerners in communication with Koreans about matters related to history and political and social sciences.

I must apologise for the remaining cases, where I may be blamed for using western terms in describing Asian history, thereby making myself guilty of using "misnomers". After all, this is a report about security policy issues with sections about history and not a dissertation about history. I have to use a terminology which is familiar to western readers.

CHAPTER 1. KOREA DIVIDED

This chapter is intended to answer the following questions:

- What made the positions so locked between North Korea and South Korea as well as between USA and China after the Korean War?

Findings:

- For both China and the Soviet Union, the end of the war meant a limit to the extension of communist influence in Asia – and for China a limit for extension of its territorial ambitions. For USA it meant a need to stay in the Western Pacific with a military presence to protect its defence perimeter as defined during the war. The front line in the Cold War in Asia had been established and divided Korea became its symbol.

End of the Second World War

During World War II the war in the Pacific had basically been a struggle between America and Japan. It was not until the Yalta Conference in 1945 between the three great powers, USA, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom that a decision about Soviet participation in the war against Japan was taken – and then it was in the form of a secret protocol added to the general agreement. The Soviet Union should declare war upon Japan not later than three months after the capitulation of Germany.⁴

On the 10 August 1945, when the collapse of Japan was certain, Soviet troops entered Korea from the North.⁵ The U.S. forces were engaged in the Western Pacific and in Japan and did not enter Korea until the 8 September.⁶ The Soviet forces did not only introduce Kim Il Sung as a local political leader in Pyongyang, they also supported the installation of a “Korean People’s Republic” in Seoul, without having taken direct military control over that part of the country. That government however, was not recognised by the U.S. troops, when they later entered Seoul and took control over the city. According to a previously made plan, the forces from the North and the South should meet at the 38th parallel and accept the capitulation of the Japanese forces on their respective side of that line, which became a border line between them. The fact that both sides adhered strictly to the agreement made them avoid an armed conflict between them that otherwise easily might have taken place, due to the hardening attitudes between USA and the Soviet Union, which had already then become apparent.

Kim Il Sung became the leader of The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea after the Soviet troops had established order in the North. In the South, elections were held and brought to power the nationalist - minded Syngmahn Rhee as president of the newly founded Republic of Korea.

⁴ Svensk uppslagsbok (1955) Malmö, Förlagshuset Norden, Volume No 14 p. 998.

⁵ Vreeland, Nena, Shinn, Rinn-Sup, Just, Peter, Moeller, Philip W. ((1976) *Area Handbook for North Korea*, Washington D.C. U.S. Government Printing Office, p. 27

⁶ Fairbank, John K. (1975) *East Asia; Tradition and Transformation*, London, William Clowes & Sons, Limited, p. 882.

Efforts were soon conducted by Kim Il Sung to mobilise support from China and the Soviet Union for an attack on South Korea. He proposed the forcible unification of the Korean peninsula, but Stalin initially rebuffed him, only promising support and even a southward counter-attack, if North Korea were to be attacked by South Korea. There had actually been several threats and border provocations by the South at that time. Kim Il Sung had also made the same proposal to Mao Tse-tung, who had remained uncommitted but promised to release two divisions of Koreans in the Chinese army. He wanted first to finish the nationalist regime on Taiwan and did not want to become involved in a war in Korea before he had finished his No. 1 priority task.⁷

A statement by Secretary Acheson about the American defence perimeter, which seemed to exclude the Korean peninsula, gave new force to Kim Il Sung's arguments. On the 19 January 1946, he told the Soviet ambassador that it was time to take up the matter again, and this initiated a new series of messages. Soon arms and other aid was given from the Soviet Union, but it is somewhat unclear to what extent there was any really coordinated planning, when Kim Il Sung launched an attack on the 25 June, 1950. It seems clear from available sources that both Mao Tse-tung and Stalin were taken by surprise, when the attack was launched, not having been consulted about the timing.⁸

The Korean War

The surprise attack was initially completely successful. The South Korean forces fled, sometimes even without a fight, due to the overwhelming North Korean numbers and the rapidity of the attack.

However, the American response was an even greater surprise to Kim Il Sung and according to some sources even to Mao Tse-tung. Stalin seems to have been less surprised, although he may have been more bothered about the consequences.

The North Korean attack continued to be successful until the early days of September, when South Korean and American forces had been pushed back into a perimeter around the city of Pusan in the extreme south. The capital Seoul had fallen. In mid September, however, General Mac Arthur led a landing operation of American troops at Inchon, near the 38th parallel, and soon was able to push the North Korean forces north of the parallel and continued to push them back toward the border to China.⁹

This was taken as an effort to reunite Korea by force, which in fact it seems to have been. The shaken Kim Il Sung immediately requested help from Moscow, but Stalin was indecisive and referred the matter to Mao Tse-tung, who had been planning an intervention, if necessary, but who was unwilling to act, unless China was given full support from the Soviet Union. Stalin then went all the way and advised Kim Il Sung to withdraw into China and form an exile Government there. When Mao Tse-tung was informed about this message, he became upset and changed his mind and in principle accepted to help North Korea, but he still insisted on Soviet air cover for the operation – which at the end he was given by

⁷ Gaddis, John Lewis(1998)*We Now Know;Rethinking Cold War History*), Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 74.

⁸ Gaddis, John Lewis(1998)*We Now Know;Rethinking Cold War History*)Oxford, Oxford University Press, p.74
Mastny, Vojtech(1996)*The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p.98

Un, Lim, (1982)*The Founding of a Dynasty in North Korea*, Japan, Jiyu-sha p. 328.

⁹ Hoefler, Hans Johannes(1981)*Insight Guides;Korea*,Hong Kong, Apa Productions (HK)Ltd, p.57.

Stalin, albeit with many reservations; Soviet planes were not to appear over South Korean territory, and the pilots had to fly in Chinese uniforms, the planes had to carry North Korean markings etc. It was good enough for Mao Tse-tung, and on the 19 October the Chinese troops advanced across the Yalu river, which marks the border between China and Korea¹⁰.

Almost simultaneously, Chinese troops advanced into Tibet, which was made an autonomous region of China in 1951.

The strong Chinese army of “volunteers” took the Americans by surprise, and the UN forces had to withdraw to south of the 38th parallel. Counter-attacks were launched but did not succeed so that they could lead to greater advances. It took three years, before the two sides were able to agree on an armistice, signed on the 27 July, 1953. It left the border between the two countries almost where it had been before the war. South Korea did not sign the agreement, and Syngman Rhee continued to oppose a negotiated settlement.¹¹

It is almost impossible to calculate the losses on both sides of the war, but more so in the North, where these figures were a secret – and still remain secret. Generally accepted western estimates tell us that the Chinese troops suffered around 900,000 casualties, North Korea 520,000, South Korea 300,000 and USA 142,000. Around 4 million refugees are reported to have fled from the North.¹²

Both leaders remained in power, Kim Il Sung in North Korea and Syngman Rhee in South Korea. The political systems remained the same. USA and South Korea made an agreement on a defence alliance in October 1953.¹³ Mutual defence treaties were later signed between North Korea and the Soviet Union as well as between North Korea and China (both in 1961).¹⁴

China had lost its chances to take Taiwan for the foreseeable future, and while it had taken Tibet, it had also suffered great losses in lives and material needed for development. China continued to keep troops stationed in North Korea until 1958.

USA had started patrolling the straits of Taiwan which were henceforth in practice international water. For several years USA also provided Taiwan with military equipment under a defence treaty 1954.¹⁵ Even today USA is providing the weapons that are necessary for the defence of Taiwan under the “Taiwan Relations Act”.

USA also remained with strong troops on the Korean peninsula, today numbering about 37,000 men in both ground and air forces, and it remained in Japan, where the forces today number around 47,000. A peace treaty was signed between Japan and forty-seven other nations -- but not China and the Soviet Union – in 1951.¹⁶

¹⁰ Mastny, Vojtech(1996)*The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 106,

Gaddis, John Lewis(1998)*We Now Know; Rethinking Cold War History*(Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 80.

¹¹ Hoefler, Hans Johannes(1981)*Insight Guides; Korea, Hong Kong*, Apa Productions (HK)Ltd, p.57.

¹² For instance, Fairbank, John K. (1975) *East Asia; Tradition and Transformation*, London, William Clowes & Sons, Limited p.885; It should be noted that the term “casualty” means either wounded or killed in action. The number of killed is known officially to be 47,000 for South Korea and for USA 33,629, while the corresponding figure is not established for the other side.

¹³ Fairbank, John K. (1975) *East Asia; Tradition and Transformation*, London, William Clowes & Sons, Limited, p. 916.

¹⁴ Oberdorfer, Don (2001)*The two Koreas; a contemporary History*, Indianapolis, Basic Books, p. 11.

¹⁵ Fairbank, John K. (1975) *East Asia; Tradition and Transformation*, London, William Clowes & Sons, Limited, p.928.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 824.

CHAPTER 2. THE NORTH KOREAN DIMENSION

This chapter is intended to answer the following questions:

- Can cultural factors help to explain the often seemingly erratic North Korean behaviour toward the outside world?
- What are the main reasons for North Korea's economic situation?
- What are the most important factors behind North Korea's ability to resist pressure from the outside world?

Findings:

- North Korea's population has never in history been exposed to "modern" or "western" thinking, nor experienced freedom of expression. Confucian mentality remains.
- Insisting on self sufficiency has been an obstacle for importing food, when the population grew larger than what could be supported by available arable land. Importing sufficient amounts of needed energy raw material became impossible as well.
- North Korea can not afford to maintain conventional forces strong enough to deter possible attacks from the South or USA.
- One third of the population is in control of the country's resources and is not willing to give it up.
- The North Korean political establishment seems to react in a hostile way to pressure from abroad in order to make the country abandon its nuclear program, as long as the message does not include any prospects of improvements in the economic situation of the country. The result is likely to be a halt to economic reforms.

Limits for thinking

There has always been an enormous discrepancy between "truth" in the outside world and "truth" inside North Korea. To question the domestic truth goes against what the citizens of that country have been taught during half a century without having had any previous history of free thinking in the "western" sense of that word.¹⁷

Confucianism already came to Korea in the fourth century and during the 14th century it became a state religion and the basic principle for governing Korea until the end of the Yi dynasty. However, political decline set in soon after a second effort at Japanese invasion in 1597. The Confucian system was mishandled and decay and factionalism began to spread in the administration. In order to protect itself against new dangers from abroad, the kingdom closed its borders, giving it the name of "The Hermit Kingdom".¹⁸ When in 1910 Korea was annexed by Japan, the colonial rule became extremely harsh. The Korean language was suppressed and forbidden. In this way, Korea came to leave a traditional Asian

¹⁷ Vreeland, Nena, Shinn, Rinn-Sup, Just, Peter, Moeller, Philip W. (1976) *Area Handbook for North Korea*, Washington D.C. U.S. Government Printing Office, p.17-21

¹⁸ Fairbank, John K. (1975) *East Asia; Tradition and Transformation*, London, William Clowes & Sons, Limited, p 302, 316 and p. 322.

agricultural and Confucian political system that was completely isolated from the outside world and was thrown directly under a totalitarian colonial rule that did not make Korea less isolated than before.

When North Korea was brought into the socialist system under Kim Il Sung by the Soviet forces after the Second World War, an economic planning system was introduced and first applied during a three-year plan 1954 to 1956. The Chollima cooperative farm movement (flying horse movement) was carried out as an equivalent to the Great Leap Forward in China. The Chollima movement was a work team movement meant to break as fast as possible away from the traditional ways of life and eradicate the remnants of old values, beliefs and institutions, “arousing revolutionary enthusiasm”.¹⁹

The de-Stalinisation process in Moscow put Kim Il Sung in a really exposed position, both on the international communist scene and in the domestic arena. At the 20th Congress of the Soviet communist party in 1956, Khrushchev failed to get the support of the Chinese delegates in denouncing Stalin and criticising his personality cult.²⁰ Several members of the North Korean leadership were disturbed by the discrepancies between the sufferings of the people and the way official statements dealt with the situation. Kim Il Sung succeeded in splitting his opponents. Using his powers over the security organs of the state he eliminated the opposition inside all three fractions of the party. The methods used seem to have been similar to those used by Stalin during his purges.²¹

A second plan for economic development was made a five-year plan from 1957 to 1961 and it abandoned the former mentioning of “learning from the Soviet Union”, replacing it with the new slogan of “Juche”.²²

That underlined the policy of self-sufficiency, but at the same time and together with the priority on heavy industry, it made the character of continued mass mobilisation and command economy more pronounced in the five-year plan for 1957-1961. Political indoctrination was intensified.

Around 1979, there was much talk about “Following the Chinese Example” and creating special zones for foreign trade and production. In China, Mao Tse-tung had died three years ago, and both the elimination of the Gang of Four and the gradual and cautious liberalisation of the Chinese economy had been initiated by such measures as special production and trade zones but also by allowing small private entrepreneurs to make their living like street peddlers and small restaurants owners. Some North Korean sources indicated that Kim Jong Il, the son of Kim Il Sung, was one person, who was in favour of following the Chinese example, while others said that this was not true.

At the Sixth party Congress, held in September 1980, Kim Il Sung gave a clear answer on some important questions. There would be no following the Chinese example, but mass mobilisation and “monolithic” party structure would be given a continued high priority. Heavy industry would also keep the highest priority. “De-Maosation” and liberalisation of the economic system would not come to North Korea. It never did until his son Kim Jong Il initiated economic reforms in the

¹⁹ Ilpyong, J. Kim (1975) *Communist Policies in North Korea*, New York, Praeger Publishers, p. 12.

²⁰ Gaddis, John Lewis (1998) *We Now Know; Rethinking Cold War History* Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 212.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 193-247.

²² Ibidem, p. 69

beginning of the new millennium, and the personality cult has continued even after Kim Il Sung himself passed away in 1994.

North Korea's economic predicament

During the first years after the Korean War it was relatively easy to mobilise the North Korean population and reach economic results, which were impressive. However, already during the second five-year plan the trend slowed down somewhat. Per capita growth was also slower; 16.6 per cent during the five year planning period, as compared to 26.0 per cent during the three-year period.²³ Another sign of growing problems with the command economy was the need for introduction in 1960 of the so-called Ch'ongsan-ni method applied to farm collectives and its counterpart in industry, the Taaen work system.²⁴ The third plan was made a seven-year plan for 1961-1967, but slow growth compelled North Korea to extend the plan for three additional years to 1970. The growth for this whole period was only 7.5 per cent (as compared to the 30.0 per cent during the three years 1954-1956).²⁵ It was now obvious that the planning system had failed. Agriculture did not grow as planned, and heavy industry demanded more investments than foreseen etcetera.

Severe disputes and policy conflicts engaged the North Korean leadership around 1966 between hardliners favouring priority for heavy industry and softliners favouring light industry and agriculture.²⁶ After a long and bitter debate within the leadership, the hardliners led by Kim Il Sung got the upper hand and in 1967 the defence expenditure jumped from between 3 and 8 per cent of the total to 21.3 per cent, and in 1968 it became 31.3 per cent of the total budget. This was too much for the already strained economy, and military expenditure was gradually reduced to 17 per cent of the official budget in 1969-70 – but there it remained for many years to come.²⁷ Naturally priority for military defence meant high priority for heavy industry and lower priority for agriculture and light industry. Electricity supply was obviously not meeting demand and emergency measures were designed.

It soon became clear that both the Soviet Union and China had become tired of North Korea's repeated non-fulfilment of its obligations under the annual trade agreements. The two great-power neighbours delivered the goods they had promised to deliver, especially oil, but the goods that North Korea was supposed to deliver in exchange did rarely materialise. This had gone on since the early 1960-ies, and both China and the Soviet Union had begun to react by stopping delivery that was not paid for by North Korean products under the barter trade agreements.

The hydroelectric plants, which had been built during the Japanese colonial period began to need replacement. Imported machinery and other equipment in factories built with Soviet and Chinese aid during the 1960-ies needed spare parts and replacement. This development hit North Korea severely. North Korea had become increasingly dependent upon thermo-electric power and when oil deliveries dried up, the transportation system suffered.

²³ Kim, Han-Kyo (1981) *Studies on Korea: A Scholar's Guide*, The University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu, p. 281.

²⁴ Kim, Ilpyong, J(1975) *Communist Politics in North Korea*, New York, Praeger Publishers, p. 84.

²⁵ Kim, Han-Kyo (1981) *Studies on Korea: A Scholar's Guide*, The University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu, p. 281.

²⁶ Kim, Ilpyong, J(1975) *Communist Politics in North Korea*, New York, Praeger Publishers, p. 73.

²⁷ Kim, Ilpyong, J. (1975) *Communist Politics in North Korea*, New York, Praeger Publishers, p. 76.

According to my own observations in North Korea 1979-82, bad harvests made the agriculture a real problem. It was decided to embark on an enormous land-reclamation program, whereby North Korea's arable area was to be increased by thirty per cent. Dams were to be built along the western coast-line and channels were to be built to save oil for transportation by using ship transport. This effort was costly in the form of both human resources and goods and means of transport.

Together with the drying up of Western credits, North Korea was forced into a reduction of its foreign trade, making "Juche" economy or self-reliance a necessity more than before. Still during this period China and the Soviet Union were at odds, even if the worst problems had been solved, and there remained some room for North Korea to play on their competition for further support in the contest about leadership in the communist camp.²⁸ China and to some extent the other socialist trading partners continued to send food supplies to North Korea when needed because of crop failures, but they gradually became more reluctant to make it on a grant basis.²⁹

Since then, population increase has been greater than production increase and less food has become available. The effects of this development have been aggravated by the self-sufficiency system, which has made it impossible to gain enough export income to pay for the needed food importation. The result has been severe malnutrition problems.

One third of the population in North Korea belong to the privileged class

In the beginning of the 1970-ies, the membership of the Korean Workers' Party had reached nearly 12 per cent of the total population of North Korea.³⁰ It has remained on that level, which means that 2.7 million North Koreans are members of the party. About 1.2 million North Koreans belong to the military and the government administration constitutes another large part of the population with a great vested interest in the preservation of the present system. With family members the above-mentioned figures mean that more than one third of the total population would be losers in any kind of dramatic regime change.

To this should be added the traditional strong Confucian influence, which was never totally banned and now is becoming gradually reintroduced in a discrete manner.³¹

Taken together these factors explain why so few signs are coming out of North Korea of social and political unrest, in spite of the harsh conditions under which the population has to live – also many in the privileged sector.³² Even a deeply anti-North Korean and emotionally engaged researcher such as Marcus Nolan does not exclude that Kim Jong Il's regime may "muddle through" a required minimum of economic reforms and remain in power.³³

²⁸ Kim, Samuel S. (Editor, 1998) *North Korean Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold-War Era*, Hong Kong, Oxford University Press, p. 78.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 107.

³⁰ Kim, Ilpyong, J. (1975) *Communist Politics in North Korea*, New York, Praeger Publishers, p. 33.

³¹ Kim, Hakjoon (2003) *North Korea since Kim Jong Il became general secretary of the Korean Workers' Party in 1997*, article in *Korea and World Affairs/Winter 2003*, Seoul, p. 523.

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ Nolan, Marcus (2000) *Avoiding the Apocalypse; The future of the two Koreas*, Washington D.C., Institute for International Economics, P. 348 and 370.

Kim Jong Il is having a problem in trying to introduce economic reforms in a completely closed country that has to open up for normal foreign relations if its population is going to survive. It was difficult in China, and it is much more difficult for North Korea. The natural resources do not allow for a population growth any more under the present system, and the conventional forces are too expensive to keep on the present level. The military have a great influence and they are the privileged class in the North Korean society. They are not likely to give up their position voluntarily, especially not as long as it is done without guarantees for the security and integrity of the country. It would be difficult for Kim Jong Il to try to introduce systematic and structural changes without having at least reasonably safe-looking guarantees to show to the military and the party that stands behind them and which is his power base.

Pyongyang revisited

In order to compare my conclusions with reality "on the ground" and to get some first hand impressions of the development since the 1980-ies, I made a study visit to that country in April 2004. Some updating and additions have been made in different chapters after that visit, but I would also like to add the following impressions.

Society is changing in North Korea. Today people are smiling to foreigners and communicate when asked to do so, something that only rarely happened before.

Opinions are being expressed, also in the presence of foreigners, which never used to happen before. People are concerned about the future of their country, basically regarding the production of food and electricity and the isolation of the country, the latter always described as the consequence of "American sanctions".

People had better cloths and the food shortage seemed to be a less serious problem, at least for people living in Pyongyang, than it had been in 1988.³⁴ Much more goods were available on the market, mostly because of the operation of the market places, where imported goods, especially from China were being sold. The sellers on the market places are persons, who get a license to operate for a few days upon application. Prices are said to be free on these markets and not subjected to any control.

The enormous project of land reclamation from the sea during the 1980-ies, which has been mentioned in this report, seems to have resulted in extensive fish farming instead of the originally intended rice production. I could observe from the air how the same reclaimed areas North West of Pyongyang, which I had inspected in 1981, now were covered by water, but the banks were clearly visible far out in the sea. I was told by representatives of international organisations that these areas are being used in a successful fish farming operation. This is of course positive, but it was not the originally intended purpose. To many North Koreans, who took part in the great efforts, which the reclamation project represented, it must be clear that a mistake had been made.

There are signs of a beginning erosion of political control as a result of the cautious changes in the economic system.

³⁴ *Special Report FAO/WFP crop and food supply assessment mission to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea 39 October 2003, p. 2.*

- Decisions were previously mostly taken at top level and then communicated down the ladders of different "pillars", like departments in the ministries or of the Party or the respective county administrations, mostly without any information to other agencies and authorities concerned. This was often the cause of problems of co-ordination and disputes on authority. Representatives of international organisations were now telling me that contacts are improving between local authorities and organs of the "pillars" on the central level, sometimes even resulting in subcultures, like when the opinion is being heard on local level that "why should we try to export, we don't need to do that".

- Formerly, decisions used to travel down the pillars of the state without allowing much room for influence from local conditions. Representatives of international organisations and diplomats now told me about a tendency toward more "cross-pillar contacts" at all levels. This facilitates adaptation to local conditions and it often promotes efficiency.

- Open differences appear about policy matters. A system of "parallel currency markets" has emerged, with retail shops accepting Euros at an exchange rate that is up to ten times lower than the official exchange rate for the local won-currency. One state-owned North Korean bank has bought a considerable amount of Euro coins in Europe and distributed it to the retail shops and local exchange operators across the country in order to facilitate the handling of currency on the parallel market. However, during a meeting with the President of the Foreign Trade Bank, he expressed his opposition against the existence of any parallel market at all, as well as against private persons having access to foreign currency, a clear example of open differences within the system.

There was no sign of a diminishing prestige of the "Great Leader and Eternal President" Kim Il Sung. The personality cult around him is at least as intense as ever. It now includes Kim Jong Il as well, and his name is always being mentioned, when the memory of his father is being honoured. It is impossible for a foreigner to get a clear picture of how much Kim Jong Il is in control of the policy decisions. There are signs of opposition against some parts of the economic reforms, and they are not talked about as "reforms". For the time being, they are obviously being (temporarily?) reversed and at the party congress in March 2004 only the mentioning of a need for more export industry looked like a reference to economic reforms. This may only be a result of the increased pressure from USA and may turn into more liberalisations, when the pressure is eased, but for the time being, North Korea seems to prepare itself for withstanding some further isolation, this time not a self-imposed one and possibly a temporary one.

Some observers in South Korea have found signs in official North Korean writing like editorials and commentaries that neo-Confucian references are becoming so common that North Korea "has become a neo-Confucian state at least on surface".³⁵ During my visit North Koreans were not willing to comment on this subject and foreign observers in Pyongyang were not willing to subscribe to such a far-reaching conclusion, but they had noticed that references to nationalistic, patriotic and Confucian values are rather common today.

³⁵ Kim, Hakjoon (2003) *North Korea since Kim Jong Il became general secretary of the Korean Workers' Party in 1997*, article in *Korea and World Affairs*/Winter 2003, Seoul P. 524.

CHAPTER 3. THE SOUTH KOREAN DIMENSION

This chapter is intended to answer the following questions:

- What can explain South Korea's economic success?
- Why is reunification not so prominent in South Korean thinking any more?

Findings:

- A high degree of Government intervention but aiming at creating a strong private sector and characterised by pragmatism, speed and flexibility has helped economic success.
- A combination of differences in economic standard and ways of thinking are likely to make any sudden reunification process costly and painful.

South Korea had a “miracle growth”

In South Korea, an export-import program was introduced in 1962, followed by a major devaluation of the won in 1964 as well as relaxation of import restrictions facilitating for entrepreneurs to provide materials and machinery needed for export production. Furthermore, tax exemption, access to low-cost credit, subsidies, foreign-loan guarantees and import-licensing were used by the government as instruments to stimulate exports. In order to stimulate import substitution, credit allocation policies and tariff adjustments were implemented. The foreign trade policy was one of import substitution and export promotion.³⁶ It emphasised light industry for domestic and foreign markets with increasing attention given to heavy industry in the 1970-ies.³⁷

A large inflow of private loans resulted from the import substitution and export promotion policy. Short-term suppliers' credits totalled 1,5 billion USD in 1967. The contribution to the total net saving from net borrowing and transfers from abroad was almost half of the total during the years 1953-55, rose to four-fifths by 1960-62 and then dropped to 36 per cent in 1970-72. Domestic saving, while equivalent to less than 2 per cent in 1960-62, rose to 10 per cent of GNP in 1970-72, displacing foreign saving as the largest category.³⁸ The development process had become one of self-sustained growth. At the beginning and the end of the period 1973 to 1979, the ratio of foreign debt to GNP was virtually unchanged.³⁹

The combination of first high levels of foreign aid and then a high domestic saving rate, due to a bank and interest rate reform in 1965, made possible a very high investment rate. Less than 10 per cent of the national product had been allocated to investment before 1962. A quarter of a much larger total was being invested after 1968.⁴⁰

The element of military costs also merits mentioning. Military spending as a percentage of total government consumption declined from 47.8 in 1954 to 22.5 in

³⁶ Ibidem , p. 69-75.

³⁷ Kim, Han-Kyo (1981) *Studies on Korea: A Scholar's Guide*, The University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu, p. 284.

³⁸ Ibidem, p. 79.

³⁹ Amsden, Alice H. (1989) *Asia's Next Giant; South Korea and Late Industrialization*. Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, p.VI.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, p. 81.

1971. This was only possible due to the American forces taking over a great part of the burden.⁴¹

However, it seems to have been the basic change of policy at the end of the 1960-ies, with a focus on economic development, in combination with a new sense of confidence in the future, which gradually evolved and made private entrepreneurs follow the government's stubborn admonitions to invest in import substitution and export industry, which were the basic initiators of a self-sustained growth. It was a policy with a high degree of Government intervention but aiming at creating a strong private sector and characterised by pragmatism, speed and flexibility.⁴²

Then came the Asia Crisis

Economic development continued. South Korea managed to get and successfully hold the Olympic Games in 1988. However, foreign indebtedness had increased to 93 billion USD by July 1997 - and then came the so-called Asian crisis, which initially hit South Korea harder than most other countries in Asia.⁴³ As a result of the financial crisis, the government had to ask the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for help to stabilise the South Korean currency. A loan of 58 billion USD was granted, the largest in the IMF history. It was made under strict conditions, including a promise to strengthen the fiscal and monetary policies, to implement far-reaching fiscal reforms, to liberalise trade and capital-flow laws and to reform the structure of South Korean corporations. The result has been a partial success. Some restructuring has been recorded, but some remains to be done. The South Korean economy has picked up again and is now growing since a few years ago, albeit at a somewhat slower pace than before the Asian crisis.

The problem of thinking revisited

In South Korea, influences from abroad have gradually made inroads, beginning in the field of economics, where westernised production and business management methods soon became a generally accepted pattern, extending to other fields of activities. Political democracy was gradually introduced, and American way of life became known by the South Koreans through the presence of great numbers of troops, to a certain extent accompanied by their families. Today South Korea is a country with some clear traces of Confucian values remaining, like in family matters. The South Korean school system is still being used in the Confucian tradition to achieve political and social socialisation,⁴⁴ but basically it is a modern Asian country with a strong western influence.

North Korea on the other hand, has remained under the political and intellectual system introduced by Kim Il Sung for fifty years, when this is being written. It is probably hard to overestimate the difference in intellectual climate between the two Koreas today.

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 63

⁴² Rhee, Yung Whee and Ross-Larsson, Bruce and Pursell, Garry (1984) *Korea's Competitive Edge, a World Bank Research Publication*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, P. 35

⁴³ Kang, C.S. Eliot (2000) *Developmental State Reform in Korea's Globalisation*, edited by Kim, S. Samuel, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 86.

⁴⁴ Helgesen, Geir (1998) *Democracy and Authority in Korea*, Surrey, Curzon Press, p. 143.

This difference in ways of thinking is often overlooked in discussions about reunification, but political planners in South Korea are aware of it. East Germany was under a different system than West Germany for fifty years, but Germany had experienced the democratic Weimar Republic and had been one of the most modern countries in Europe when Adolf Hitler came to power. Yet, the two Germanies experienced considerable problems, when East Germans should be absorbed into the West German labour market.

Korea, on the other hand, emerged after the Second World War directly from a traditional East Asian agricultural type of society and a colonial rule that had been preceded by a Confucian system of government. After that, South Korea has been exposed to and been part of the modern world for almost half a century and become an industrialised country, while North Korea has remained isolated, with an economy which is heavily dominated by agricultural production, and it is intellectually dominated by the ideology created by Kim Il Sung. Reunification now without safeguards could result in complicated societal problems.

CHAPTER 4. THE NUCLEAR DIMENSION ⁴⁵

This chapter is intended to answer the following questions:

- What were the motivations for North Korea's nuclear program?
- Why was the Agreed Framework not successful?
- What made the second NPT withdrawal crisis into a stalemate?

Findings:

- Neither USA nor North Korea fulfilled their obligations under the Agreed Framework and both parties are blaming each other.
- Since the 11 September 2001 attack on the World Trade Center in New York, the American non-proliferation policy is one of zero tolerance as far as the members of the so-called axis of evil are concerned and North Korea has been labelled one.
- North Korea admits to having a plutonium program but refuses to discuss a uranium enrichment program, which it is also being suspected to have.

Background

North Korea got its first experience of the usefulness of nuclear weapons, when during the Korean War the then secretary of State John Foster Dulles hinted at the possible use of nuclear weapons, if the peace talks in Panmunjom would fail. Both he and President Eisenhower later claimed that this hint had been an important inducement for the Northern side to accept the armistice that finally was signed. In 1955 the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Arthur W. Radford announced a U.S. pledge to defend South Korea, if necessary, with nuclear weapons.⁴⁶ This was a clear threat to make use of the nuclear option, and USA already in 1958 followed up with the introduction of nuclear artillery shells and nuclear-tipped rockets into South Korea and then with cruise missiles, land mines and antiaircraft missiles with nuclear warheads. From that time North Korea would operate at a fatal disadvantage in war.⁴⁷

In 1961 North Korea managed to get a mutual defence treaty with both China and the Soviet Union, which in practice meant that a "nuclear umbrella" was likewise displayed over the northern part of the peninsula. However, the Cuban crisis showed that the Soviet Union could not be counted upon in all confrontations with USA, and the political relations soured with Moscow over many other matters. In addition to that, the Chinese nuclear force that was beginning to emerge after the Chinese first test explosion in 1964 was never very impressive as a deterrent against U.S. nuclear arms.

It was consequently natural for Kim Il Sung to pay attention to the possibility of a domestic development of nuclear weapons. During the 1950-ies agreements were made with both China and the Soviet Union about the training of North Korean nuclear scientists and in 1964 a Soviet-made nuclear research facility was

⁴⁵ Most of the facts and many of the comments in the following few pages have been taken from Michael J. Mazarr's excellent case study in non-proliferation;

Mazarr, J. Michael (1997) *North Korea and the Bomb, A Case Study in Nonproliferation*, London, Macmillan Press LTD.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, p.16

⁴⁷ Ibidem p.21

established at Yongbyong, near Pyongyang. It is believed to have begun functioning as a reactor in 1967 and ten years later North Korea, probably upon Soviet insistence, signed an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) "type 66" safeguards accord and opened the plant for inspection. The Agency soon began regular inspections. They continued into the 1990-ies.⁴⁸

During president Nixon's Administration, a reduction of all U.S. troops in Asia was initiated toward the end of the war in Vietnam, which included the withdrawal of 24,000 men from South Korea in 1973. The South Korean president, Park Chung Hee was greatly disturbed by the prospects of possible further American withdrawals of troops in view of the establishment of U.S.-Chinese relations and a perceived mellowing of the U.S. defence attitude in Asia in general. A secret nuclear weapons research program was initiated in South Korea, but in 1975 South Korea had to give in and ratified the Non-Proliferation Treaty after considerable pressure from Washington.

Park Chung Hee had, however, made some open remarks about the possibility to acquire nuclear technology, if the U.S. nuclear umbrella would be weakened in any respect. North Korean comments from this time seem to indicate that the perspective of the South possibly continuing its nuclear development in secrecy was one of the reasons why North Korea during this decade initiated negotiations with Moscow about the construction of a second, much larger reactor of the graphite type.⁴⁹

North Korea's nuclear response takes shape

As China gradually changed its attitude toward the United States and focused on its "Economy-First" - policy, including improved trade relations with the West, it became obvious that the nuclear Chinese umbrella that had never been totally convincing was lacking in perfection. At the same time, the Soviet Union started to dissolve and Moscow opened diplomatic relations with Seoul. It was not even clear that the mutual defence pact with North Korea was relevant any more – in fact it was not and it was later declared invalid (in February 1993⁵⁰). Thus North Korea was left without any nuclear umbrella. It began accelerating its own nuclear program.

During the late part of the 1980-ies North Korea began to evade its obligations under the IAEA treaty using as excuse that USA did not allow inspections of its military facilities in South Korea, which was said to have been a precondition for North Korea's adherence to the treaty.⁵¹ USA accepted to hold a "nuclear weapons conference" with North Korea, but it became a difficult meeting with little exchange of real information. However, North Korea finally accepted to sign a safeguards accord with IAEA in January 1992, covering all nuclear facilities. In May 1992, the director of IAEA, Hans Blix, was allowed to inspect a two hundred megawatts power plant construction site at Taechon, uranium ore plants in Pakchon and Pyongsan and research centres in Pyongyang. Suspicions about unauthorised handling and possibly production of weapons-grade plutonium then led to IAEA demands for special inspections, which were refuted.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, p. 25

⁴⁹ Ibidem p.26-29.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, p.96.

⁵¹ Ibidem,p.56.

The first NPT withdrawal crisis

On 12 March 1993, North Korea made a statement, claiming that U.S. nuclear weapons had not been withdrawn from the peninsula and that IAEA had “become a tool of American diplomacy”. It declared its withdrawal from the NPT.⁵² The withdrawal would become effective after ninety days, according to the provisions of the treaty.

There were also signs that North Korea was preparing for a fuel replacement of the Yongbyong reactor immediately after the 12 June (when its obligations according to the NPT would no longer be valid). That would amount to acquiring some fifty tons of spent uranium fuel ripe with plutonium by-products.⁵³ A sense of urgency was created.

The situation remained fluid during the autumn of 1993. North Korean forces were reported to build up military strength at the demarcation line. Serious planning for war was initiated in Washington and resulted inter alia in a report from a Pentagon computer simulation showing that North Korea could win a war too quickly for U.S. reinforcements to arrive to stop them.⁵⁴ It was not accepted as reliable, but certainly, it was taken seriously as an indication of how costly any war on the peninsula would become. Some circles in USA began to accept the idea of living with a North Korea that had one or two nuclear weapons.⁵⁵ There were some discussions about a pre-emptive strike to hit the Yongbyong facility and bring it out of action but it was regarded as too risky. Nuclear contamination could be carried by the winds to the neighbouring countries China and South Korea.

By the 1 June 1994, the IAEA reported that 60 per cent of the fuel rods of the Yongbyong reactor’s eight thousand fuel rods had been removed and that the defueling continued apace.⁵⁶ Both North Korea and South Korea began calling up their military reserves and president Clinton gathered officials at the White House for discussions about options for reinforcing the U.S. military presence in Northeast Asia.⁵⁷

Then an event interrupted the discussions in the White House. It was a call from ex-president Jimmy Carter, who had been able to get an invitation from Kim Il Sung to visit Pyongyang and had also been permitted to go by vice president Al Gore. Carter now reported over the telephone from Pyongyang that he had been offered by Kim Il Sung that North Korea would remain in the NPT, and that the North would freeze its nuclear weapons program in exchange for a package of benefits that was much similar to what had already been offered in different separate contexts.⁵⁸ The deal was made in principle and it was left to negotiators in Geneva to hammer out the details.⁵⁹

⁵² Ibidem, p.104.

⁵³ Ibidem, p.118.

⁵⁴ Ibidem, p.143

⁵⁵ Ibidem, p. 150

⁵⁶ Ibidem,p.158.

⁵⁷ Ibidem,p.161.

⁵⁸ Mazarr, J. Michael (1997) *North Korea and the Bomb, A Case Study in Nonproliferation*, London, Macmillan Press LTD., p. 163.

⁵⁹ Oberdorfer, Don (1997) *The Two Koreas*, Revised edition 2001, USA, Basic Books, p. 330.

The Agreed Framework

The negotiations in Geneva had only been initiated when Kim Il Sung suddenly died on the 8 July 1994 and there was much uncertainty as to whether his son and the others, who inherited his power, would feel bound by the agreement with Carter. It appeared that they did, and on the 16 October an “Agreed framework” between USA and North Korea could be initialled in Geneva by the two delegations.

The main elements have been summarised as follows by Don Oberdorfer (titles added):

Light water reactors

- The United States would organise an international consortium to provide light-water reactors, with a total generating capacity of 2,000 megawatts, by a target date of 2003.

Freezing of the nuclear program

- In return, North Korea would freeze all activity on its existing nuclear reactors and related facilities, and permit them to be continuously monitored by IAEA inspectors. The eight thousand fuel rods unloaded from the first reactor would be shipped out of the country.

IAEA special inspections

- North Korea would come into full compliance with the IAEA - which meant accepting the “special inspections”- before the delivery of key nuclear components of the LWR project estimated to be within five years. The DPRK’s existing nuclear facilities would be completely dismantled by the time the LWR project was completed, estimated in ten years.

Shipments of fuel oil

- The United States would arrange to supply 500,000 tons of heavy fuel annually to make up for energy forgone by North Korea before the LWRs came into operation.

Trade, relations and guarantees

- The two states would reduce existing barriers to trade and investment and open diplomatic liaison offices in each other’s capitals as initial steps toward full normalisation of relations. The United States would provide formal assurances against the threat or use of nuclear weapons against North Korea.

North-South Dialogue

- North Korea would implement the 1991 North-South joint declaration on the demilitarisation of the Korean peninsula and re-engage in the North-South dialogue.⁶⁰

A missile threat over Japan

On the 31 August 1998, North Korea launched its first multi-staged rocket, named Taepo Dong-1, in an unsuccessful attempt to place a satellite in orbit.⁶¹ It was a three-stage rocket⁶², meaning that North Korea on its own had been able to develop its earlier missile program into a more advanced long-range and possibly intercontinental program. The payload was heavy enough to be compared to a small nuclear device, and although the test-flight was unsuccessful in that the

⁶⁰ Oberdorfer, Don (1997) *The Two Koreas*, Revised edition 2001, USA, Basic Books, p.357.

⁶¹ Diamond, Howard (1998) *N. Korea Launches Staged Rocket That Overflies Japanese Territory*, <http://www.armscontrol.org/country/northkorea/> accessed 18 August 2003.

⁶² Wright, David C. (2003) *Assessment of the North Korean Missile Threat*, The Nautilus Institute, Policy Forum Online, http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/032A_%20Wright.html Accessed 25 May 2004.

satellite (which North Korea claimed was made for peaceful purposes) was not placed in orbit, it had overflowed the northern island of Japan and landed a little more than 1,000 miles away from its launching point. In Japan, this caused a revision of its defence policy. The Diet (or Parliament) requested the Government to initiate a project to send two reconnaissance satellites into orbit in order to provide Japan with an independent early warning system covering North Korea.

Non-implementation of the Agreed Framework

In August 2003 most of what had been promised in the “Framework” by the two sides had not happened. A consortium had been formed, called KEDO, between the United States, Japan and South Korea to provide North Korea with light water reactors, but North Korea refused – as it had said it would – to accept that the reactors explicitly were specified to be of South Korean design and produce. The target date for delivery had already passed. North Korea had not allowed full inspections – referring to non-fulfilment by the U.S. side. The fuel rods had been canned, but they had not been shipped out of North Korea, since no LWR had been delivered. Also for the same reason, North Korea’s nuclear facilities had not been dismantled.

Due to “financial difficulties” the KEDO rarely delivered the annual 500,000 tons of heavy fuel oil, most years only a minor fraction of that commitment and in 2003 no oil at all. USA had not reduced the trade barriers to trade with North Korea and had not issued any formal assurance against the use of nuclear weapons against North Korea. There was no diplomatic liaison office in any one of the capitals. There had been no demilitarisation on the Korean peninsula.

In October, 2000, U.S. Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright paid a visit to Pyongyang and met with Kim Jong Il. She later said that the discussions had been serious, constructive and in-depth." They had covered North Korea’s missile program, nuclear transparency, normalisation of relations and a possible trip to Pyongyang of President Clinton.⁶³ A formal invitation was later handed over to the president by a special envoy from Pyongyang. However, when it became clear that the Democratic candidate had not won the presidential elections for the next period, Clinton announced that he had cancelled his plans to visit North Korea.⁶⁴

A new U.S. North Korea policy

Soon after having taken office, the new president George W. Bush announced that his administration would not immediately resume missile negotiations with Pyongyang left unfinished by the Clinton Administration. He also expressed scepticism about Kim Jong Il and said that he had concerns about the ability to verify any agreement with a closed society like North Korea.⁶⁵ In June 2001, he announced that his administration would seek improved implementation of the

⁶³ Wagner, Alex (200) *Albright visits North Korea; Progress Made on Missile Front*, <http://www.armscontrol.org/country/northkorea/> accessed 18 August 2003.

⁶⁴ Arms Control Today, News Briefs January/February 2001, <http://www.armscontrol.org/country/northkorea/> accessed 18 August 2003.

⁶⁵ Wagner, Alex (2001) *Bush Puts N. Korea negotiations On Hold, Tresses verification*, <http://www.armscontrol.org/country/northkorea/> accessed 18 August 2003.

Agreed Framework as well as “verifiable constraints” on Pyongyang’s missile programs, a ban on its missile exports and a “less threatening” North Korean conventional military presence on the peninsula.

Relations continued to deteriorate, when president Bush in his January 29 state of the Union address 2002 – the first such address to be made after the 11 September 2001 attack on the World Trade Center in New York - characterised North Korea, Iran and Iraq as “an axis of evil, arming to threaten the rest of the world.”

In August 2002, a surprising announcement was made in Tokyo about a coming visit to Pyongyang by Prime Minister Koizumi. Now North Korea had succeeded in initiating normalisation processes with both Japan and South Korea. Since USA had declared many times that it would not stand in the way for any improvement, it was natural for the American administration to follow up with another explorative visit, to which it was invited by North Korea after the Koizumi visit.

An assistant secretary of state for east Asian-Pacific affairs by name of James Kelly made a visit to Pyongyang as the leader of a delegation during October 2002. During a press conference after his visit, Kelly revealed that North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kang Suk Ju had admitted that Pyongyang has a uranium enrichment program.

A North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman stated that past U.S. actions had already invalidated the Agreed Framework, citing reactor construction delays, U.S. economic sanctions and threats of a pre-emptive strike against North Korea.⁶⁶ (The Bush Administration had released a report in September which emphasises pre-emptively attacking countries developing weapons of mass destruction. It explicitly mentions North Korea. In addition, a leaked version of the Bush administration’s January 2002 classified Nuclear Posture Review lists North Korea as a country against which the United States should be prepared to use nuclear weapons.)⁶⁷

The second NPT withdrawal crisis

North Korea announced on the 12 December, 2002, that it was restarting nuclear facilities that had been frozen since 1994, and it ordered international monitors to leave the country. As a reason for the action it was said that compelling needs for electricity had made it necessary. This was followed up on the 10 January 2003 with an announcement that North Korea was immediately withdrawing from the NPT.

In a quick response from Washington, it was announced that it was now open to talks, but not formal negotiations. At this time a congressional Research Service report had stated that the reactor could produce a sufficient amount of plutonium for one bomb annually and the CIA had reported that the spent fuel rods, which had been packed but not sent out of North Korea, contain enough plutonium for

⁶⁶ Kerr, Paul (2002) *North Korea Admits Secret Nuclear Weapons Program*, <http://www.armscontrol.org/country/northkorea/> accessed 18 August 2003.

⁶⁷ Kerr, Paul, (2003) *North Korea Quits NPT, Says It Will Restart Nuclear Facilities*, <http://www.armscontrol.org/country/northkorea/> accessed 18 August 2003.

several more weapons.⁶⁸ In April 2003, when the ninety days period after the withdrawal announcement had expired, the withdrawal by North Korea from the NPT became effective, the first time that any country had withdrawn from that treaty. Formally, North Korea was now not any more bound by treaty obligations to refrain from production of nuclear weapons.

North Korea's nuclear assets and options for a U.S. military response

According to some sources, North Korea's nuclear weapons program was initiated already during the early 1960-ies, while the civil nuclear energy program was initiated during the 1950-ies. Although the nuclear weapons program did not attract much attention before the 1980-ies, a number of circumstances seem to indicate that a nuclear program may have been carried on parallel to the development of the civil nuclear energy program.

There were some indications during the 1980-ies that North Korea had contacts with Pakistan regarding questions about nuclear weapons technology. In 1985, intelligence began to emerge regarding the nuclear weapons program. In 1999 a high-ranking North Korean deserter revealed in an interview that North Korea had such a program.

It difficult to say whether North Korea has any ready and functioning nuclear weapon, something, which may not be confirmed, unless and when that country decides to make a test explosion. According to U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, North Korea is likely to have one to three such weapons, and others claim that it as well has a capability to install them into intercontinental missiles. Nothing is known about North Korean nuclear charge constructions.

Initially North Korea was thought only to be using plutonium as fissile material. Since 2002 some North Korean officials have declared that uranium has also been used, which would mean that two different methods are being tried at the same time. There are more indications that this may actually be the case.⁶⁹

An FOI study has been made about the options USA would have to try to eliminate North Korea's infrastructure for the production of nuclear weapons –which president George W. Bush has said to be an option that is being kept open.⁷⁰ According to the findings in the report, USA can knock out a substantial part of North Korea's nuclear infrastructure by launching a surprise attack. Some important components will, however, remain intact, most important being the nuclear weapons (or fissile material) and the carriers of these weapons.

South Korea's government has been refuting the idea of military operations to coerce North Korea to discontinue its nuclear program, and USA is likely to find it difficult to get support from its allies for such operations.

⁶⁸ Kerr, Paul, (2003) *North Korea Quits NPT, Says It Will Restart Nuclear Facilities*, <http://www.armscontrol.org/country/northkorea/> accessed 18 August 2003.

⁶⁹ Wigg, Lars and Rydqvist, John (2002) *PM angående Nordkoreas kärnvapenprogram*, Swedish Defence Research Agency, Stockholm.

⁷⁰ Wigg, Lars(2003)*USA:s möjligheter att bekämpa Nordkoreas nukleära infrastruktur*, FOI MEMO nr 03-2665 20 November, 2003.

If North Korea sees itself forced to undertake a military operation (for a pre-emptive purpose or as a response to an American attack on its infrastructure) it is most likely that this will happen as an artillery barrage on Seoul and its surroundings.

For political reasons a North Korean counter-offensive in the form of a nuclear attack against South Korea is rather improbable. It is, however, possible that American bases in Japan or American forces at sea may come under attack.

As long as there are prospects for making North Korea dismantle its nuclear program by way of negotiations, American military operations will encounter strong protests from an overwhelming majority of the members of the international community.

CHAPTER 5. THE CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS DIMENSION

This chapter is intended to answer the following questions:

- Is North Korea still posing a military threat to South Korea?
- Can there be any genuine fear in North Korea for being attacked?

Findings:

- It is possible for North Korea to cause a great deal of damage on the South, especially in Seoul and possibly with weapons of mass destruction, but it is unlikely that an attack can result in victory.
- Since it has been revealed after the 1994 NPT crisis that a U.S. military attack upon North Korea was being considered an option and the present administration has shown a wish to bring down the North Korean regime, it is not unlikely that in the closed environment in Pyongyang there is real fear for being attacked.

Background

Since there has never been a peace agreement between the two sides in the Korean War, there are theoretically two adversaries still remaining on the Korean peninsula, namely the Korean Peoples Army and the People's Liberation Army of China in the North and the United Nations Command in the South. In reality, the PLA has left North Korea since 1958, while the U.S. forces still remain. The commander of the U.S. Forces Korea is encharged with the United Nations Command as well. The armed forces of North Korea and South Korea have taken over all respectively most of the responsibilities for the defence of each side.⁷¹

The U.S. general in charge of the United Nations Command/Combined Forces Command also commands the U.S. Forces Korea. At present the troops number about 37,000. In case of a contingency on the Korean peninsula, the USFK commander is in control of the operations of the U.S. Seventh Fleet and the Seventh U.S. Air Force Command (with bases in Japan).

Growing Korean nationalism and the June 2000 inter-Korean summit have accelerated calls from within South Korea to reshape the structure of the unified command. In Washington discussions have accelerated after the September 11 2001 attack on the World Trade Center about reshaping much of the U.S. military to more effectively cope with changing global security imperatives. Therefore, a negotiating procedure has been initiated.

North Korea's armed forces

Probably because of its initial Soviet tutelage and the limited ground attack capability of the air force, emphasis is placed on using massive artillery firepower. North Korean ordnance factories produce a variety of self-propelled guns,

⁷¹ 2000 Report to Congress Military situation on the Korean Peninsula, available at <http://defenselink.mil/news/sep2000/korea09122000.html> accessed 19 October 2000.

howitzers, and gun-howitzers. Beginning in the late 1970s, North Korea began to produce a modified version of the 115 mm gunned T-62 tank, which was then the Soviet army's main battle tank. In the 1980s, in order to make the army more mobile and mechanised, there was a steady influx of new tanks, self-propelled artillery, armoured personnel carriers and trucks. The ground forces seldom retire old models of weapons and tend to maintain a large equipment stock, keeping old models along with upgraded ones in the active forces or in the reserve.

Over 90 per cent of all KPA personnel are in the ground forces, the North Korean army. Ground forces number approximately 1 million today, which is twice as many as in the U.S. Army. In 1993, one U.S. military estimate suggested that U.S. and South Korean forces would sustain large casualties in case of a conflict with North Korea, 300,000 to 500,000 within the first 90 days of fighting, in addition to hundreds of thousands of civilian casualties.⁷²

What is behind the numbers today?

The situation today is radically different from what it was after the Korean War. The Soviet Union has been dissolved. Russia as its inheritor is a much weaker power and it has cancelled the defence pact with North Korea and discontinued the almost free of charge deliveries of oil and technology. China has become an increasingly strong and rapidly modernising power, yet it has done the same as Russia, with the exception for a formal cancelling of the mutual defence pact. It does, however, not seem very likely that China would go to war to defend North Korea in case of an attack by USA provoked by continued North Korean efforts to produce nuclear weapons. China has started demanding cash payment in hard currency for deliveries since many years ago, albeit not discontinued entirely the grant deliveries of fuel oil and cereals. North Korea's economy has marched backward for almost a decade, its people is malnourished, its industry has been brought to an almost complete standstill because of fuel shortage and the GDP seems to have contracted by around one third between 1994 and 1998.⁷³ It is still not growing, only the contraction has stopped.

These developments have had an obvious effect on the military balance on the Korean peninsula. During the first four decades since the Korean war, North Korea had a clear lead in both numbers of different kinds of weapons and personnel prepared for a possible war with the South. That is still the case as far as numbers are concerned, but the economic squeeze in which the North Korean regime has found itself has made new acquisitions and replacement of outdated equipment and no more functioning material difficult or nearly impossible. Available information tells us that there has only been a short exception from this rule since around 1985. That was during the years immediately after the death of Kim Il Sung, when some new military aircraft and missiles were bought from Russia. Otherwise, purchases from abroad have been very few. Domestic weapons production also seems to have been rather limited with the exception for research and production of certain missiles. Yet, U.S. military planners quote estimates

⁷² Saunders, Philip C.(2003), *Military Options for Dealing with North Korea's Nuclear Program*, <http://cns.miis.edu/research/korea/dprkmil.htm> accessed 28 April 2003.

⁷³ Babson, Bradley O. (2003) *Economic Cooperation on the Korean Peninsula*, available at <http://www.Nautilus.org/DPRKbriefingbook/economy/issue.html> accessed 15 August, 2003

indicating that 25-33 per cent of the North Korean GDP is being used for military purposes.⁷⁴ The corresponding figure for South Korea is around 3 per cent.⁷⁵ One example may suffice to illustrate the nature of the problem. Reports are often quoted with estimates of the number of tanks at the disposal of North Korea's army. It is said to number one and a half times as many as the South Korean tanks. What is forgotten when such observations are made without qualification is that the North Korean tanks are outdated and to some extent possibly not even functioning any more. The North Korean leaders are not likely to have overlooked what happened to the Iraqi tank force in the deserts of Kuwait during the Gulf war. That action was often called "turkey shooting" by the allied forces, who could discover, target and hit the Iraqi tanks from the turrets of their own more modern and more sophisticatedly equipped tanks before the Iraqis even had realised that they were under attack. In the event that they did realise it, they did not have the firing range to shoot back from the distance that still separated them from their adversaries. The Iraqis sat in the same type of Soviet made tanks that still constitute the main stock of North Korea's tank force, actually mostly of a more modern variety than the tank types in the North Korean forces today. (The oldest ones are of WWII vintage). To this should be added the threat from South Korean attack helicopters.

Given these disadvantages, it seems unlikely that the North Korean leadership would consider an attack on South Korea by conventional means as a serious option, not even disregarding the presence of American troops. It may have been a completely serious option around 1980 and possibly not so unthinkable before the Gulf war in 1990, but today it seems to be unrealistic. It is still possible for North Korea to cause a great deal of damage on the South, especially in Seoul and possibly with weapons of mass destruction, but it is unlikely that an attack can result in victory. Defeat is likely to bring about the downfall of the North Korean regime.

North Korea has seen its own conventional advantage over the South slipping away under the pressure from economic constraints caused by its failed economic policy, especially in the agricultural sector. These structural problems began to become serious already around 1979-80. Decades of dedicated focusing on efforts in a military build-up were rendered less and less useful. At first, the hopes for a unification of the two Koreas with the help of military means had to be postponed. Then the continued success of South Korea's economic policy in combination with the democratisation process eliminated the hopes for social and political discontent in the South to be of much help in destabilising the regime in that part of the peninsula. Finally, the continuation of North Korea's economic woes diminished the resources needed for keeping up with the South in conventional weapons and even put it at a disadvantage in the competition – and to make matters worse signals came from America about a wish to create a change of regime in North Korea.

Today is not the first time that such intentions are heard of. During the crisis in 1993-94 about North Korea's nuclear weapons program, it was revealed that serious planning for an attack on North Korea had been carried on in the White

⁷⁴ Schwarz, Thomas A., General and C-inC, UN Command/Combined Forces Commander and Commander, U.S. Forces Korea, Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee 27 March 2001.

<http://www.korea.army.mil/pao/news/CINC%20Posture%20Statement%20-%20Mar%2001.htm>

Accessed 2 July 2003

⁷⁵ The Ministry of National Defense, The Republic of Korea, *Defense White Paper 1999*, published in Seoul in English by KIDA Research Cooperation Team, p. 135.

House at the same time as then ex-president Carter was on a free-lance negotiating visit in Pyongyang. Had Carter not been able to secure a package-deal that was accepted by president Clinton, the staff at the White House would have continued with the preparations for keeping open the option of a military solution to the problem.⁷⁶

When the nuclear issue presents itself again in very much the same form today, it is often observed that the administration of president Bush has shown a stronger inclination toward military solutions to the security policy problems, especially in the field of non-proliferation. It was after all the main officially announced reason for the action in Iraq. When that operation was initiated, it was often heard in the media that Bush had the intention "to kill the chicken in order to frighten the monkey", referring to the ongoing confrontation with North Korea. Such signals are likely to be taken seriously in a country that has isolated itself from the outside world and recently has seen its last allies turn away and stop giving military support.

⁷⁶ Oberdorfer, Don (2001) *The Two Koreas; A Contemporary History*, USA. Basic Books, p. 330.

CHAPTER 6. THE GLOBAL DIMENSION

This chapter is intended to answer the following questions:

- What does the pattern of the power game around the Korean peninsula look like today?
- Which factors are deciding the U.S.-North Korean relationship? Can China be helpful enough to succeed in making the parties come together and negotiate a solution to the problem?
- What are the problems, which have to be solved in the six-nations talks in Beijing?

Findings:

- The new American policy against the spread of weapons of mass destruction on one hand and on the other hand the U.S. increasingly overwhelming superiority in conventional weapons together create a mutual and absolute distrust between North Korea and USA.
- USA has to consider its need for reserves in military capability and avoid overextending its military resources. This and other factors make an attack on North Korea unlikely, at least for the time being.
- The improved understanding between China and USA of their respective military obligations may help in the efforts to solve the North Korean problem.
- North Korea is trying to forestall any U.S. – Chinese understanding.
- Japan and Russia have territorial problems between them which ought to be solved before any comprehensive solution to the security problems in North East Asia can be made.
- Japan has its own problems with North Korea. One of the few positive signs in the present development in the question about North Korea's nuclear program is that some of these problems are finding solutions.
- North Korea and South Korea are slowly getting closer to each other, in spite of mutual suspicions and ideological differences. Albeit a slow and gradual one, this is another positive movement in the otherwise locked pattern of positions.

A new American Strategy

The so called New American Strategy was published on 17 September 2002, after the 11 September attack on the World Trade Center in New York. It stresses the new threats from a combination of terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). Terrorists and tyrannic regimes supporting them can use such weapons against America, its friends and allies. Terrorists can not be deterred with such means by which states can be deterred from aggression, they are by definition willing to take great risks and act as soon as an opportunity offers itself. A different strategy has to be applied, and the answers are called pre-emption and prevention. Prevention is a series of strategies to prevent the possession of WMDs, including, under exceptional circumstances, the use of military force. Pre-emption means the use of military force, when the use of WMDs by an adversary is imminent. With this new priority, and with the news about nuclear cooperation between Pakistan and North Korea, the American strategy is naturally focusing

directly on the Korean peninsula and the threat from the North Korean nuclear weapon.⁷⁷

North Korea has previously exported missiles to Libya, Yemen and other nations, where terrorists are known to be hiding. Proliferation from North Korea to terrorists can easily be suspected.

The disappearance of “Conventional Balance” on the Korean peninsula

There is a complication with the effects of this strategy. It has another aspect, expressed by the security adviser of the U.S. President, Dr. Condolezza Rice:

“The United States has long affirmed the right to anticipatory self-defense -- from the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 to the crisis on the Korean Peninsula in 1994.To support all these means of defending the peace, the United States will build and maintain 21st century military forces that are beyond challenge. We will seek to dissuade any potential adversary from pursuing a military build-up in the hope of surpassing, or equalling, the power of the United States and our allies. Some have criticized this frankness as impolitic. But surely clarity is a virtue here. Dissuading military competition can prevent potential conflict and costly global arms races.”⁷⁸

USA is providing the necessary resources for this purpose. The military budget is now over 400 billion USD, almost as much as the total for the rest of the world. This policy was being shaped already during the first Gulf War and discussed in the early 1990-ies. For any medium or small sized country it has become a hopeless task to use conventional weapons to deter USA from an attack. A poor nation is tempted to draw the conclusion that nuclear weapons is the only possibly affordable means to deter USA which remains available – and a leaked version of the Bush administration’s January 2002 classified Nuclear Posture Review lists North Korea as a country against which the United States should be prepared to use nuclear weapons.⁷⁹ That must mean that America is considering an attack, or so seems to be the logic conclusion that must be drawn by the isolated leadership in Pyongyang.

North Korea has seen its own conventional advantage over the South slipping away under the pressure from economic constraints caused by its failed economic policy, especially in the agricultural sector. These structural problems began to become serious already around 1979-80. The whole population of North Korea has been brought up under the pressure of fears for the American enemy and his "evil intentions". The son of Kim Il Sung, the present leader of North Korea, is not likely to be an exception. The policy of trying to build a nuclear deterrent is logic, when seen from that perspective.

It may seem unrealistic in the Western world that North Korea should fear an unprovoked American attack, but the entire North Korean society has itself been

⁷⁷ Dörfer, Ingemar, and Winnerstig, Mike (2003) USA och världen; amerikansk utrikespolitik och dess drivkrafter, Försvar i nutid, Folk och försvar No. 3 2003, p. 12.

⁷⁸ *Dr. Condolezza Rice discusses President’s national Security Strategy*
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/10/20021001-6.html>
Accessed 9 March, 2004.

⁷⁹ Kerr, Paul, (2003) *North Korea Quits NPT, Says It Will Restart Nuclear Facilities*,
<http://www.armscontrol.org/country/northkorea/>
accessed 18 August 2003.

focusing on the task to reunite Korea by force if there should appear any possibility to do so. American discussions about how to achieve a regime change in Pyongyang are naturally taken seriously as a possible existential threat in a society like North Korea, with a perspective that has been shaped during fifty years of isolation from the outside world and dominated by the vehement anti-American propaganda which is carried on by the North Korean media.

Factors to consider; Iran, Uranium, Pakistan and U.S. Presidential elections

Iran is complicating the Korean question. If North Korea is not subjected to a resolute treatment as a result of its nuclear ambitions, this could lead to even greater problems with Iran that can be given the impression that USA will tolerate a similar acting by Iran. In general, Iran is considered a more significant threat than what is represented by North Korea to countries that are friends of USA or against U.S. interests. This reasoning leads to demands for a very tough attitude toward North Korea. Seen in this light, the American policy first to deal with the North Korean problem seems quite logical. It seems much more likely to succeed in reaching a deal with the economically strained North Korea without using military threats than in the case of Iran, and the evidence is so much clearer that there is no need for proving the case during the negotiations. If a solution can be found to the North Korean problem, it may be much easier to make the international community focus on the problem of Iran and possibly also to find a solution to that problem.

North Korea's uranium enrichment program must be addressed. Assistant secretary of state for east Asian-Pacific affairs, James Kelly made a visit to Pyongyang as the leader of a delegation during October 2002. During a press conference after his visit, Kelly revealed that North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kang Suk Ju had admitted that Pyongyang has a uranium-enrichment program. However, this was later denied, and during the second phase of the Beijing talks in March 2004, the North Korean side refused to even talk about its uranium enrichment program – in spite of overwhelming evidence from Pakistan, where “the father of the Pakistani bomb”, Dr Khan, had admitted that he had provided North Korea with technology in this field and documents indicated that also equipment had been transferred.⁸⁰ Today North Korea is only accepting to discuss its plutonium program. With the high priority, which is being given by USA – and the rest of the world as well -- to the non-proliferation efforts, it is not likely that the uranium enrichment program can go unaddressed. It has to be taken up seriously, if there shall be any solution to the Korean problem.

Pakistan is another problem to consider. If Al Qaeda would get some power position in Pakistan in connection with an overthrow of Musharaf, it also seems likely that Al Qaeda could get hold of nuclear weapons. USA must keep forces prepared for the event that Musharaf's regime can fall or some other emergency occurs, which requires an immediate American reaction with military means, either against terrorism or nuclear proliferation. This and the added necessity to maintain an occupation force in Iraq as well as some forces in Afghanistan for keeping Al Qaeda and Taliban down, creates a tendency toward over-extension of the U.S. resources, as compared to the ambitions. This factor speaks against the opening of any hostilities in North Korea for the time being.

⁸⁰ Jahn, George, Associated Press Writer (2004) *Pakistan knew of Nuclear Black Market*, AP Sun, Mar 07, 2004.

The most concerned countries, China, USA and Russia as well as South Korea and Japan are in agreement that North Korea's nuclear program must be dismantled. China and Russia agree that it must happen in a peaceful way, while USA has not excluded a military solution. The latest signals from the White House (in October 2003) indicate, however, that the threat about a military solution has been toned down and that some form of security guarantees may actually become the subject of negotiation. The opening of the Beijing talks indicate an emerging willingness, at least among one part of the present American administration, to discuss the matter. All the Democratic candidates in the race for the presidential elections in USA 2004 seemed to be less inclined to choose a military option.⁸¹ The North Korean side is likely to watch these signals carefully.

One American logic blocking -- and a North Korean one

America – and the rest of the world, especially North Korea's neighbours now involved in the six-nations talks in Beijing -- want to see both North Korea's openly admitted plutonium program and its secret uranium enrichment program dismantled. However, President George W. Bush has repeated many times⁸² that he can not reward North Korea for nuclear blackmail. That means that no treaty can be signed about abstaining from nuclear threats or providing fuel oil or power plants to North Korea in exchange for dismantling the nuclear program. Since USA insists on first seeing "CVID" (Complete, Verifiable and Irreversible Disarmament) of North Korea's nuclear assets and since North Korea insists on first being given reliable security guarantees, the talks can not produce any real result for the time being.

After having been forced to initiate far-reaching economic reforms, North Korea is in desperate need of help in the form of capital and expertise to help it from total economic and social collapse. However North Korea fears an American attack or nuclear blackmail and insists on security guarantees before it is willing to dismantle any facility which may help it to deter America. Since such guarantees are not forthcoming, the talks can not make progress for the time being.

China and America are locked by opposite military obligations

China's friendship pact with North Korea from 1961 has never been abrogated and is still formally valid. It means that China is obliged to intervene with military forces on behalf of North Korea if USA decides to attack North Korea in order to stop it from gaining nuclear capability. However, China is showing obvious signs that it wants to avoid any military confrontation and even wants to intensify and improve its own relations with USA.

America has undertaken to provide Taiwan with all what is needed to defend itself from a possible effort by China to reunite with military means. This is becoming an increasingly expensive undertaking. USA is also maintaining a "Strategic Ambiguity" about whether it will interfere and defend Taiwan if it is attacked,

⁸¹ COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, 20 October 2003, at <http://www.cfr.org/campaign/bio->
Accessed 20 October 2003.

⁸² For instance in an election speech reported by *The Chosun Ilbo*, 27 February, 2004, available at <http://english.chosun.com/w21data/html/news/200402/200402270013.html>
Accessed 29 February, 2004.

indicating that unless Taiwan has gone too far toward formal independence declarations, Taiwan can count upon U.S. military assistance. However, there is an increasing uneasiness on the American side to really get involved in a military confrontation with China.

A possible deal between China and America?

There have been secret but publicly announced talks between China and USA about the situation on the Korean peninsula on several occasions, and much uneasiness in Taiwan about the possibility of a deal between them about their respective obligations toward North Korea and Taiwan. Chinese spokesmen have indicated a desire to reach some kind of a multilateral security arrangement for North East Asia, something, which has been advocated by previous American administrations but not much by the present one.

North Korea throws a spanner into the works of U.S. -- Chinese understanding

North Korea is also likely to see such ideas with suspicion, since it could weaken even more the traditional support that North Korea is getting from China in its relations with USA. Possibly to forestall any too far-reaching understanding, the North Korean official newspaper Rodon Sinmun has declared that before North Korea can accept any demands from the U.S. side all American troops must be withdrawn from the peninsula "Completely and in a verifiable and irreversible manner" and a peace treaty be signed between Washington and Pyongyang.⁸³

It remains to be seen whether this will become official policy of North Korea. That would darken the prospects of reaching any meaningful result from the next six-nations round of negotiations in Beijing. Seen from a North Korean perspective it could postpone any serious move on the U.S. side until after the presidential elections in USA in November 2004, which may very well be the intention in Pyongyang.

Japan

Japan has full diplomatic relations with South Korea since 1965 but has not yet normalised its relations with North Korea. As Prime Minister Koizumi made a visit to Pyongyang in September 2002 he intended to reach an agreement on normalisation. However, he also intended to solve two outstanding issues, namely the issue of abduction of Japanese nationals and security issues. By the latter he meant the nuclear development and missiles.⁸⁴ The visit resulted in a North Korean admission that abductions had taken place and an excuse for these abductions as well as in a promise by Kim Jong Il that North Korea would maintain the moratorium on missile launching "in and after 2003."⁸⁵ Koizumi also made an

⁸³ BBC NEWS

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/hi/asia-pacific/3541941.stm>
accessed 9 March, 2004.

⁸⁴ Opening Statement by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi
http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n_korea/pmv0209/press/.html
accessed 20 August 2003

⁸⁵ Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration
http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n_korea/pmv0209/pyongyang.html

apology for the colonial past of Japan and expressed intention to discuss economic cooperation when the bilateral relationship had been normalised, which was not achieved.

The reason was inter alia that it was revealed that eleven Japanese had been kidnapped by North Korea for use as trainers of spies and that five of those were still alive. This caused uproar in Japan, which was not diminished when the five abductees had been repatriated. One reason was that their families in North Korea were not allowed to join them. Japan expressed intentions before the six-nations talks in Beijing to bring up the matter of the abductees, which the North Korean side said was going to refuse.⁸⁶

The two first meetings in Beijing did not bring Japan and North Korea closer to a solution of the problem of the abductees. It remained an additional obstacle to success for the six-nation talks.

On the 22 May, 2004, however, Prime Minister Koizumi visited North Korea for a second time, met Kim Jong Il and brought back with him to Japan four children of the abductees, who had already been freed during his first visit. One American-borne husband of an abductee and their children did not wish to go to Japan, since he would have to face extradition to USA and prosecution for desertation if he did. Kim Jong Il promised to reopen the investigation of the cases of the abductees to make sure that none remained in North Korea.

With this, an obstacle for further Japanese contacts with North Korea has been eliminated. Koizumi also promised to provide North Korea with 250,000 tonnes of food aid (representing about half of this year's FAO/WFP recommended food aid by the international community) as well as medical supplies. He stated that some recently introduced legislation about sanctions against North Korea would not be implemented.⁸⁷

The stage now seems to have been set for further initiatives by Japan within the framework of the six-nations process.

Russia

Already the Soviet Union established diplomatic relations with South Korea in September 1990.⁸⁸ The mutual defence pact that had existed with North Korea was declared invalid by Russia in February 1993.⁸⁹ It was later replaced by a Treaty of friendship and cooperation in 2000.

Since the establishment of relations with South Korea, Russia is trying to maintain balanced relations with South Korea and North Korea. This can be seen in efforts to restore the Trans-Siberian Railway with the Trans-Korean Railway that North

accessed 20 August 2003

⁸⁶ Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network 25 August 2003-08-27

<http://www.Nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0308/AUG18-03.html#15>

Accessed 26 August 2003

⁸⁷ *The Digital Choson Ilbo*, 25 May 2004-05-25

<http://english.chosun.com/w21data/html/news/200405/200405240005.html>

accessed 25 May 2004.

⁸⁸ Oberdorfer, Don (2001) *The two Koreas; a contemporary History*, Indianapolis, Basic Books, p. 217.

⁸⁹ Mazarr, J. Michael (1997) *North Korea and the Bomb, A Case Study in Nonproliferation*, London, Macmillan Press LTD, p.

Korea and South Korea are preparing to open. Discussions have also been held on building a gas pipeline from Siberia through North Korea to the South.⁹⁰

With Japan, Russia has not been able to agree about a peace agreement, despite many years of efforts to do so. The main remaining problem is the so called northern territories, i.e. four islands north of Hokkaido, which are claimed by Japan but which are possessed by Russia since the end of WWII.⁹¹

Europe

Czechoslovakia, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland became the four members of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission that was established in 1953 to oversee the implementation of the armistice agreement. Two of them, Sweden and Switzerland, still are pursuing this function. Since the early 1970-ies, several European countries began trade relations and took up diplomatic relations with North Korea. Sweden established an Embassy, which has functioned since then and Finland and Austria established trade offices in Pyongyang.

On the 2-4 May 2001 the Chairman of the EU, Sweden's Prime Minister Göran Persson visited North Korea together with Dr. Xavier Solana, High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Relations and Chris Patten, Commissioner for External Relations of the Union. On the 14 May the EU commission decided to establish diplomatic relations with North Korea.

Today the EU is ranking as North Korea's third trading partner.⁹² In 1997, the EU, represented by the European Atomic Energy Community entered KEDO as an Executive Board Member, joining USA, Japan and South Korea. The EU has provided aid to North Korea in the form of humanitarian support since the floods in 1995 and the subsequent North Korean Appeal for international aid, in 2001 totalling 295 million Euro.

Although EU is not a player in the Asian power game and does not have any direct interests beyond trade, the matter of North Korea's nuclear weapon program and North Korea's international isolation is a matter of international concern. (And, of course, regional stability in North East Asia per se is a matter of great concern for Europe.) The EU has already proven, through the engagement in the KEDO-project, that it is willing and able to assist projects aiming at promoting change in North Korea. There is an EU Commission Country Strategy Paper for 2001-2004. In the absence of a North Korean demonstration of its commitment to finding a peaceful solution to the present crisis caused by the North Korean nuclear program, there cannot be any implementation of that strategy.

However, the EU has made it clear that as soon as such a commitment has been made, the union stands ready to enhance cooperation with North Korea, for instance in the economic field and through technical assistance. That will only be

⁹⁰ *The Choson Ilbo*, 2 April 2003.

⁹¹ "Q and A"

http://www.mofago.jp/policy/q_A/FAQ11.HTML

Accessed 27 August 2003

⁹² Ruediger, Frank (2004) *EU-North Korean Relations.No Effort Without Reason*,

DPRKbriefingbook@nautilus.org

Accessed 29 March, 2004.

possible, however, when CVID has been agreed to and North Korea has returned to full compliance with international non-proliferation programs.

North Korea and South Korea

There is a deep ideological rift between North and South Korea and widening differences of attitudes between the peoples of the two countries. Confucianism is probably the most important element of their common spiritual heritage. Yet, ever since the so-called Chollima movement in North Korea tried to “do away with old thinking” the remains of Confucianism in North Korea tends not to be acknowledged as such in any one of the two countries. While South Korea has been part of the modern community of nations and its society open for foreign influences for half a century, North Korea remains as isolated and its society as controlled as during the centuries before Japan occupied Korea in 1911.

It is often said that the “Korean people” is one and the same on both sides of the line of and that differences created during half a century mean nothing compared to 1,300 years of common history. It is also said, on the other hand, that Confucianism has been eliminated from North Korea, but if the Confucian element is the most generally distinguished element of the Korean cultural heritage, how can the peoples of the two Koreas be one and the same after that? The truth seems to be that the regime in North Korea is built on a strong Confucian tradition⁹³ but of a very different kind compared to the traditions, which constitute the South Korean Confucian heritage. In the North, the former class order has been replaced by the equally strict *songbun* or “socio-economic” or “Class background” system.⁹⁴ In the South, the Korean school system is still being used in the Confucian tradition to achieve Political and Social Socialisation,⁹⁵ etcetera.

Many Koreans on both sides of the line of demarcation are much aware of the fact that two (and soon three) generations of Koreans have been brought up under different political and social systems, been instructed under different curricula at school and taught different ideologies. Others, however, seem to disregard the importance of this problem.

A remark on Ideological Filters may be necessary here; The Korean War 1950-53 was a cruel civil war, which came to involve many nations and it was costly both in terms of losses of human life and in terms of material losses. It reinforced already existing ideological rivalry between the two sides of the demarcation line to an extreme that still today makes it difficult to see things on the other side as they are. Ideology becomes a filter, through which the truth is sifted, and what emerges is a twisted picture of life on the other side of the line.

The ideological filters have been reinforced by the two Koreas being a symbol of the border-line between “the Communist world” and “the free world” during the Cold War in Asia. What little information came out from North Korea and reached the western world was treated with suspicion and looked upon as propaganda. The North Korean society is highly centralised and controlled by the state, without a free press or competing news media.⁹⁶

⁹³ Oh, Kongdan and Hassig, Ralph(2000) *North Korea through the Looking Glass*, Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, p.143.

⁹⁴ Hunter, Helen-Louise (1999) *Kim Il-Song's North Korea*, London, Preager, p.3

⁹⁵ Helgesen, Geir (1998) *Democracy and Authority in Korea*, Surrey, Curzon Press, p. 143.

⁹⁶ Ibidem, p.140.

This situation makes it impossible for unrestrained transmittance of information to take place across the borders to North Korea. The picture that North Koreans have of the outside world is very much a manipulated one, and the outside world only knows little about the real situation in North Korea. The ensuing problems are many-sided. Inter alia, they cause mutual wishful thinking, unfounded fears and unrealistic beliefs about the other side.

There have been real acts of terrorism, which have reinforced the suspicions of South Koreans about the regime in the North. In 1976, two American soldiers were killed with axes and one Korean interpreter and four U.S. soldiers were injured at Panmunjom in the demilitarised zone between the two Koreas.⁹⁷ A powerful bomb was detonated in Rangoon, where the South Korean president Chung Doo Hwan was due to appear a few minutes later. A number of high officials and four members of his government were killed.⁹⁸ In 1987, a Korean Air Lines flight, flying from Abu Dhabi to Seoul, exploded on 29 November, 1987, killing all 115 persons on board. Criminal investigations and the capture of a young North Korean woman, trained as an agent, revealed that it had again been an act of planned terrorism.⁹⁹

There were a number of minor but similar incidents during the decades until 1990, and they led in combination to a renewed hostile attitude to the North Korean regime in South Korea. Especially the Rangoon incident had wide-ranging repercussions on South Korean security policy thinking. It seems to have resulted in efforts to better understand the North Korean situation, but also to make the South Korean Government more cautious in planning for any possible new reunification initiative from the North and also for the possibility of an “implosion” of the North Korean regime.

During the year of 2000, the North Korean leader Kim Jong Il seemed to focus on improving conditions for his country to obtain foreign investments and normalise foreign relations. Inter alia he invited South Korean president Kim Dae-jung to visit Pyongyang, which was accepted. The summit meeting in June 2000 was successful and a number of agreements were made. It initiated an inter-Korean trade that made South Korea's share of North Korea's trade to one quarter of the total in 2002 from not having existed at all.¹⁰⁰ Kim Dae Jung's policy of taking seriously the North Korean invitations to improvements of relations was called the “Sunshine policy” and was both criticised and applauded, in South Korea as well as abroad. It should be seen as a continuation of the growing insight in South Korean think-tanks, which had emerged already after the Rangoon-incident, about the dangers caused by any continuation of a confrontation type of policy.

“Sun-shine policy” is not a popular concept in the South any more, since a number of scandals have tainted the reputation of its most influential promoters, including the former founder of the Hyundai business group, who not only had illicit transfers of funds made to North Korea but also invested heavily in tourism projects in the Diamond Mountains north of the demarcation line, which became highly unprofitable. The latter is especially problematic for North Korea, because lack of cooperation from local authorities and obstacles from bureaucracy were to blame.

⁹⁷ Oberdorfer, Don (2001) *The two Koreas; a contemporary History*, Indianapolis, Basic Books. p.75.

⁹⁸ Oberdorfer, Don (2001) *The two Koreas; a contemporary History*, Indianapolis, Basic Books. p. 142.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 183.

¹⁰⁰ Chung, Chien-peng, (2003) *Democratisation in South Korea and Inter-Korean Relations*, in *Pacific Affairs*, University of Colombia, Volume 76, No 1 Spring 2003, p28.

However, the South Korean government has continued to have a consistent policy of aid and trade toward North Korea. In 2000, 300,000 tonnes of fertiliser was sent to the North as well as 300,000 tonnes of Thai rice and 200,000 tonnes of Chinese corn. More important was an agreement between the Hyundai group and the North to build a multibillion-dollar industrial complex in Kaesong, just north of the line of demarcation, a project which is partly being stalled amid concerns over North Korea's nuclear program.¹⁰¹

Meetings on a ministerial level of a North-South Committee for the Promotion of Economic Cooperation are held at regular intervals. Important negotiations are being held about a rail and road link, as well as about a rail link connecting South Korea with the Transsiberian railway,¹⁰² an electric power supply line from Russia through North Korea and a pipeline for oil in the same direction. Until the uncertainty about North Korea's nuclear program has been eliminated, however, these negotiations cannot lead to any concrete results.

In spite of the stalemate caused by the uncertainty about North Korea's nuclear program, military officials from North Korea and South Korea met in North Korea in May 2004 to discuss confidence building measures on Korea's West Coast. Some measures were agreed upon and new meetings are intended to take place as well.

¹⁰¹ Kim, Hakjoon (2003) *North Korea since Kim Jong Il became general secretary of the Korean Workers' Party in 1997*, article in *Korea and World Affairs*/Winter 2003, Seoul, p. 528.

BBC NEWS Friday, 5 March, 2004-05-19, available at

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/3535153.stm>

¹⁰² KCNA 5 March, 2004, *North-South Economic Meeting held*, available at

<http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2004/200403/news03/06.htm>

accessed 7 March, 2004.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS

The missile and nuclear programs

When, in 1955, the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff announced a U.S. pledge to defend South Korea, if necessary, with nuclear weapons, this was a clear threat to make use of the nuclear option. North Korea would operate at a fatal disadvantage in war. As a consequence North Korea managed to get a mutual defence treaty with both China and the Soviet Union, which in practice meant that a "nuclear umbrella" was likewise displayed over the northern part of the peninsula. However, the Cuban crisis showed that the Soviet Union could not be counted upon in all confrontations with USA, and the political relations soured with Moscow over many other matters. Today it does not seem very likely that even China under all circumstances would go to war to defend North Korea in case of an attack from USA .

During the first four decades since the Korean War, North Korea had a clear lead in both numbers of different kinds of weapons and personnel prepared for a possible war with the South. That is still the case as far as numbers are concerned, but the economic squeeze in which the North Korean regime has found itself has made new acquisitions and replacement of outdated equipment and no more functioning material difficult or nearly impossible. The continuation of North Korea's economic woes diminished the resources needed for keeping up with the South in conventional weapons and even put it at a disadvantage in the competition – and to make matters worse, signals came from America about a wish to create a change of regime in North Korea.

In this perspective, providing itself with a nuclear deterrent can be seen as the only option for a poor country like North Korea to deter a possible adversary power against which it cannot afford to maintain a conventional military balance.

The Region

The effects of North Korea's nuclear and missile programs on the region have been dramatic. America's reactions to the perceived threat from North Korean proliferation (of nuclear technology or weapons to terrorists) have greatly upset the leaders in China, because of

- the risks involved in North Korea's leaders making desperate decisions,
- the risk for a military conflict near China's borders, possible waves of refugees into China and requests to honour the mutual defence pact with North Korea,
- the negative consequences for China's increasingly important economic ties to USA and the sensitive relations about Taiwan and
- the risks involved in a possible collapse of the North Korean regime as a result of pressure from USA in the form of threats, economic sanctions and diminished food aid from the international community.

In addition to these risks, there are also the effects that the North Korean test-firing of the Taepo Dong missile had upon the U.S. anti-ballistic missile system planning in 1998. It is a fact that these plans were accelerated after the Taepo Dong missile test.

There is also the effect that the test-firing had upon Japan. The Diet (or Parliament) almost immediately decided that Japan should have its own observation and early forewarning satellite system and also confirmed previous decisions about common development of a new ABM system together with USA: That has now matured into a common sea- and land based ABM system for USA and Japan. Australia will also become directly involved with its radar-warning stations. Taiwan will be indirectly involved, because of certain radar and missile purchases from USA in order to build up a new limited system for defence against China's short range missiles based near the coast to the Taiwan straits.

China naturally sees itself becoming encircled militarily by these developments but acts with self-restraint because of its increasing dependence on export to America and its import of capital and technology from USA.

Since September 2002 North Korea has added considerable impetus to the effect of the Taepo Dong launching on the regional balances by revealing its nuclear program, including the uranium part of it, which later was denied, and by leaving the NPT.

China is anxious to maintain good relations with USA and does not want to be seen as avoiding its responsibilities as a great power and a nuclear power in the struggle against nuclear proliferation. It also wants to avoid a further U.S. involvement in defence of Taiwan's position toward the mainland. Therefore it is natural that China has sought to play the role of a broker between USA and North Korea.

It is also clear that China has become worried by the effects of its role as a supposed (but unwilling) protector of North Korea. China has seen its own position being damaged by North Korea's actions, and there are signs of a growing impatience with the costs for the traditional bonds with that country, both the economic costs for continued deliveries of grain and fuel on beneficial terms and the complications in the strategic relations between the countries of the region.

The efforts to make the six-nations talks in Beijing a success mean more than just mending fences between USA and North Korea in order to avoid becoming involved in a conflict between the two. The talks are seen as a possible beginning of a regional cooperation system for common security in the Western Pacific. China and USA, China and Japan, South Korea and North Korea, Japan and Russia all have bilateral problems to solve, which may otherwise spill over into problems of concern to the entire region. They may not be solved by the Beijing talks, but a beginning of a mechanism may be created. Chinese think-tank members at an Asia-Europe Foundation meeting in Beijing in April 2004 praised the procedure and talked highly of its merits, which go beyond the immediate problem at hand, namely how to make the Korean peninsula free from nuclear weapons.

Meanwhile, the whole situation in East Asia has become one of waiting for things to happen. China is waiting for the result of the presidential elections in USA and the formulation of a new China policy, a possible change in the U.S. Taiwan policy and a North Korea policy.

USA finds it hard to formulate any policy toward North Korea until the presidential elections are over. It is still uncertain who will be the president, who will have the responsibility to make that decision.

The strategy toward North Korea will have to bear the whole situation in the Western Pacific in mind. Shall USA continue with its military presence and count this area as part of its "Defence Perimeter"? What consequences will that have for decisions concerning issues of importance to China and North Korea?

North Korea seems to be preparing itself to withstand further isolation

North Korea is suffering from two chronic and structural problems because of lack of arable land areas large enough to make the country self-sufficient in food production as well as by a lack of suitable energy raw materials. A simple response to that situation would be to make products in light industry suitable for export and thereby gain foreign currency for paying the necessary importation of food and energy raw material. However, this has been impossible because of the conflict with South Korea, which made it mandatory (in the minds of the leaders) to focus on heavy industry and production of arms. This policy of priorities was made into a propaganda platform by introducing the so-called Juche idea.

Today's situation was already beginning to emerge during the early 1980-ies, when the Soviet Union and China began to refuse to continue in their roles as main suppliers of food and fuel to North Korea without receiving proper payment. It has been intensified by the effects of the vicious circle, by which lack of energy decreases the production of fertilisers and electricity necessary for the pumping stations in the irrigation network, thus damaging agricultural production, which increases the need for import of food, which decreases the amount of foreign currency available for fuel import and so on. The situation became an emergency, when natural calamities worsened the situation every year during the late 1990-ies, and great parts of the population had to suffer from starvation or near starvation.

In general terms, the economic situation has stopped deteriorating, but it has also not improved during the years 2000 to 2004. Any meteorological calamity of the type which is regularly occurring in Korea is bound to have a great impact on the economy, which still is heavily dependent on the agricultural sector. While having been in need of about one million tonnes of cereals in aid from the international community every year, North Korea seems to be able to manage with 540,000 tonnes in 2004, but any disaster can easily push this figure up to and far beyond the one million tonnes mark again. The average North Korean is still not receiving a daily amount of calories per day that is regarded as a minimum healthy consumption, not even with the international community paying for about one fourth of the total needs every year.

The recently introduced economic reforms aim at the roots of this problem, but they meet resistance from the adherents of the Juche Idea. They also collide with the wishes of the military to continue to receive the production from heavy industry. Some of the military establishment may understand that a richer country would produce more and better arms, but the more common reaction seems to be that heavy industry must get the highest priority with little regard for the need for light industry or agriculture. Since Kim Jong Il is more dependent on the support from the military than his father, he must be facing a dilemma, but of this there is little evidence, which is obvious to the outside world.

North Korea will not see any reason to negotiate seriously with the other countries in the six-nations process until it knows if it still will have to deal with the same

U.S. president who has dismantled the North Korea policy of his predecessor and so far only replaced it with an ultimatum, which is apparently impossible for North Korea to accept with the present set-up of elements in power in Pyongyang.

The political struggle between the different camps inside the North Korean leadership has made it necessary at the party congress in March 2004 to declare a reversal of the economic policy. The Party is now stressing planning, self-sufficiency in agriculture and central guidance and priority for heavy industry, only paying lip service to the need for finding new markets and fields of production for export industry. In this way, North Korea is preparing itself for a continuation of its policy of isolation from the outside world.

North Korea “does not buy” CVID without compensation

As long as USA continues to insist on unconditional Complete, Verifiable and Irreversible Destruction (CVID) of all nuclear weapons in North Korea without giving any binding reassurance of security guarantees, promise of energy aid or trade, North Korea seems to be planning for further isolation (and possibly continuation of its nuclear program). That would most likely mean a further deterioration of the economic situation and worse sufferings for the North Korean population.

It seems probable, however, that it will not be difficult to engage North Korea in serious negotiations (aiming at CVID) again, as soon as it sees that it can lead to meaningful results, including security guarantees, aid etcetera. Meanwhile, it is likely to attend working group meetings and other efforts to keep the process alive, but without really making any substantial offers.

The U.S. administration has acted upon North Korea's nuclear and missile programs with pressures and it tries to make its allies unite in sanctions against North Korea. Japan has for instance introduced a new system of sanctions, which can make it impossible for the associations of “friends of North Korea”, mainly ethnic Koreans living in Japan since WWII, to send money to North Korea, a source of income that has become quite important to the regime in Pyongyang. Other efforts have been made to stop all North Korean economic activities, which are not in conformity with internationally accepted rules.

Options for non-proliferation efforts

North Korea is near to having a nuclear device or may already have produced one or several such devices. It may also have made one or several such devices into weapons. This is impossible to know, but the longer the present stalemate continues, the more likely will it be that North Korea will possess such devices or weapons.

Before deciding on options for non-proliferation efforts in this situation, the objectives for the international community have to be clarified. What costs are acceptable for eliminating something that may already be there?

USA has made clear that Complete, Verifiable and Irreversible Destruction is an unconditional objective for its North Korea policy.

Most other concerned countries are leaving the door open for negotiations about security guarantees, energy aid and trade in order to engage North Korea and seek some measure of arms control or even CVID, but pressure from USA is stopping them from engaging in any separate talks.

The first military option that would be open for USA to obtain CVID is basically trying to eliminate North Korea's nuclear assets with air attacks, either using nuclear or conventional warheads. At present this is avoided because of the collateral damage that may result on the neighbouring countries, the risk for nuclear retaliation and lack of political and moral support both at home and abroad.

A conventional war against North Korea is another military option. This is also avoided at present because of the great costs in human lives and material losses, which may result from using that option. The U.S. forces are engaged in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan and it would be difficult for the administration to get support in Congress and among the voters for a new war in North Korea. An attack on North Korea is likely to be dangerous, if not overwhelming military resources are engaged from the beginning of the campaign. Such resources are difficult to mobilise under the present circumstances.

Public opinion in South Korea is increasingly negative to any military attack on North Korea, and USA would have to make the entire operation with its own forces and even face negative reactions in South Korea.

North Korea seems to have seen the danger of an attack becoming less probable and tries to accommodate to a situation of no war, no real negotiation and just talks.

USA is trying to put pressure on North Korea with international sanctions, but they do not seem have the desired effect. They rather help the regime to explain away the economic woes as a result of "American sanctions" and take attention away from North Korea's structural economic problems.

The only way to make sanctions meaningful seems to be to stop all humanitarian aid that is now contributing with about one fourth of North Korea's annual food supply and to make the objectives for that policy understandable to the North Korean public opinion. This would hardly be accepted for humanitarian reasons, and the problem of communicating the purpose of the action seems impossible to solve.

Europe should be cautious about its role in Korea

From a European perspective, it is important to maintain the attitude of not being a player in the East Asian power game, while showing a preparedness to play a helping role in any solution that may emerge as possible and sustainable.

One serious problem for USA is its commitment to the principle of not rewarding nuclear black-mailing. Japan and South Korea seem eager to and may even find it possible to help USA in a face-saving operation in order to keep the process in Beijing alive. One element in that effort may be to make commitments to North Korea about helping in solving its energy supply problem in exchange for CVID.

European support to such a commitment can mean an important contribution to getting the Beijing process revitalised. The wide-ranging consequences of a positive nature that such a revitalising could have upon an entire region would be of great importance to Europe and the world. It could well justify the costs for that commitment, costs that no doubt can become substantial. It could mean great good-will gains for Europe, not only in China and Korea, but certainly in Japan and Russia as well, Russia being especially interested in and concerned with possible solutions of the North Korean energy problem. Elements of such a solution may also become part of a solution to South Korea's own problem with supply of safe energy.

Last but not least, it must be in the interest of transatlantic relations to facilitate for USA to find a solution to the stalemate. Washington must not be given the impression that EU is entering the Asian power game. Close but sincere contact should be maintained with Washington about any new policy move regarding North Korea.

Recommendations

Non-proliferation policy seems to have come to a dead end in the case of North Korea, and the existence of a nuclear device in yet another state seems to be a fait accompli. CVID does not seem to work and consequently has to be reconsidered. The non-proliferation efforts as regards North Korea consequently also seem to require a re-examination in an international perspective.

The six-nations talks are important for other reasons than non-proliferation policy making. They should not be allowed to break down because of a lack of non-proliferation success. The process has a value in itself, and it could at least lead to some measure of weapons control.

It does not seem very probable that the outside world will be in a position to convince the majority of North Koreans that their economic situation is the result of their own failed economic policy. They possibly realise to some extent that mistakes have been made and definitely that there are structural problems, but they seem to be genuinely convinced that "American sanctions" are to blame for their inability to overcome the problems at hand. This represents an important problem of communication, since North Koreans are both nationalistic and tend to react strongly and united against outside pressure. If sanctions shall work, they will have to be explained, otherwise they tend to have unintended consequences.

The aim should be to get control over North Korea's possible nuclear programs, including the possible uranium program and the trade in missiles. Even more important is how to open up North Korea and, in the long run, to make it an integrated part of the international community.

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