chapter five

North Korea's Approaches to the United States and Japan

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North Korea's approach[1] to the United States is arguably one of the few success stories emanating from Pyongyang. While the story is still unfolding, what has transpired thus far has clearly benefited North Korea in both tangible and intangible ways. By contrast, North Korea's approach to Japan has produced but meager results thus far. Potentially, however, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) stands to profit immensely should its quest for diplomatic normalization with Japan bear fruit.

The DPRK's stakes in its approaches to the U.S. and Japan, therefore, are very high. To understand why the approaches have not been equally productive, one needs to compare their tactical and situational characteristics. To begin with an overview, we may first note several similarities in the two cases.

First, in both cases significant change has occurred during the past six or seven years, with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) reassessing the role of both Washington and Tokyo in its strategic framework. Second, more than any other factor, a sharp deterioration in Pyongyang's security environment appears to have contributed to such a reassessment. Third, it was change in the policies of the United States and Japan that enabled the DPRK to make headway in its new approaches to the two. Change in Washington's and Tokyo's policies, however, had been triggered by change in the Republic of Korea (ROK)'s policy. Fourth and last, North Korea needed bargaining chips to score a real breakthrough or, in the case of its approach to Japan, to attempt a breakthrough.

Eclipsing these similarities, however, are a number of crucial differences, which help to explain the divergent outcomes of the two cases. First, whereas North Korea possessed potent bargaining chips during its high-level talks with the U.S., it did not have any when it held normalization talks with Japan. Pyongyang had used its chips in order to induce Tokyo to come to a negotiating table. Second, whereas the DPRK resorted to brinkmanship in its negotiations with the U.S., always making pragmatic adjustment at the last minute, it staked high moral ground in its normalization talks with Japan, displaying a high degree of rigidity and self-righteousness. Third, the negotiating behaviors of the U.S. and Japan vis-à-vis North Korea diverged, with the U.S. displaying more flexibility and perhaps, empathy than Japan. North Korea's confrontational posture and refusal to abide by previous agreements led to a hardline response from Japan.

North Korea's Approach to the United States

The policies of the DPRK, both internal and external, are driven by the regime's need to bolster its legitimacy, enhance its security, and pursue its

economic agenda. These triple needs—legitimacy, security, and development—have been and continue to be pivotal factors in North Korea's policy toward the U.S. as well.

In terms of their relative weight, however, security appears to have been the foremost consideration in Pyongyang's U.S. policy, with legitimacy closely following it and development a distant third. The DPRK's tenacious pursuit of bilateral negotiations with the U.S. since 1974 with the aim of replacing the armistice agreement with a peace treaty was fueled by security and legitimacy needs. A negative security guarantee from the U.S. that a peace treaty would contain and a possible withdrawal of or a substantial reduction in U.S. troops and weapons deployed in the South would, in the North Korean view, go a long way toward allaying its sense of insecurity. Bilateral DPRK-U.S. negotiations per se, moreover, would, in Pyongyang's calculation, symbolically bolster its legitimacy at Seoul's expense.

Ironically, however, it was the ROK, not the U.S., that helped the DPRK achieve its long-sought goal of direct dialogue with the U.S. Had ROK President Roh Tae Woo not given the green light in July 1988, change in U.S. policy toward North Korea might not have materialized in October 1988. The change spawned the first-ever contacts between U.S. and DPRK diplomats, which began in Beijing two months later.

These contacts, which became routinized, occurring six or seven times a year, however, failed to measure up to North Korean expectations. Not only did they occur at a relatively low level—the embassy political counselor level—but they did not go much beyond "contacts," allowing no room for substantive negotiation. North Korea's efforts to have the contacts upgraded, their venue changed, and turn them into something more substantive were in vain due to U.S. insistence that Pyongyang meet a number of preconditions, notably "real progress in the North-South dialogue; conclusion and implementation of an IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] safeguard agreement; credible assurances opposing terrorism; confidence-building measures; and a regular process of returning Korean War remains."[2]

The signing of two inter-Korean agreements in December 1991—one dealing with "reconciliation, nonaggression, and economic exchanges and cooperation" (known as the North-South basic agreement) and the other dealing with denuclearization of the Korean peninsula—and the conclusion of negotiations between the DPRK and the IAEA for a safeguard agreement helped to set the stage for a temporary upgrading of DPRK-U.S. contacts. On 22 January 1992, a North Korean delegation headed by Kim Yong

Sun, the secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) in charge of international affairs, and a U.S. delegation led by Arnold Kanter, the undersecretary of state for political affairs, held talks in New York. According to *Nodong Shinmun* [Labor News], the daily organ of the WPK, "the two sides exchanged views on nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula, improvement of [North] Korea-U.S. relations, and other issues of mutual interest." The paper added that "the talks were conducted in a candid and constructive atmosphere and in a satisfactory way."[3]

North Korea's hope that the Kim-Kanter meeting would lead to a permanent upgrading of DPRK-U.S. contacts, however, was quickly dashed, for Washington showed no interest in such a move, preferring instead to rely on the Beijing contacts as the main channel of communication with Pyongyang. It was only after North Korea precipitated a crisis that high-level talks materialized again. What is more, they would continue intermittently for sixteen months, producing a number of documents to which the DPRK would attach enormous importance.

The crisis in question erupted in March 1993, when the DPRK announced that it would withdraw from the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).[4] Since North Korea's withdrawal from the NPT would compel the IAEA to terminate its monitoring of the North's nuclear activities, thereby facilitating Pyongyang's suspected program to develop nuclear weapons, the U.S., South Korea and Japan had a high stake in preventing such a withdrawal. Thanks to a three-month notice requirement in the NPT, the North's withdrawal would not take effect until June 12. There was still time to persuade Pyongyang to change its mind.

It was against this backdrop that what subsequently became known as the first round of U.S.-DPRK high-level talks occurred in New York in June 1993; the U.S. team was led by Robert L. Gallucci, the assistant secretary of state for political and military affairs, while the DPRK team was headed by Kang Sok Ju, the first vice-minister of foreign affairs. On June 11, nine days after the talks began and one day before North Korean withdrawal from the NPT was to take effect, the two sides reached a dramatic agreement. According to their joint statement: The Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States have agreed to principles of:

- assurances against the threat and use of force, including nuclear weapons;

- peace and security in a nuclear-free Korean peninsula, including impartial application of full-scope safeguards, mutual respect

for each other's sovereignty, and noninterference in each other's internal affairs; and

- support for the peaceful reunification of Korea.

In this context, the two governments have agreed to continue dialogue on an equal and unprejudiced basis. In this respect, the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has decided unilaterally to suspend as long as it considers necessary the effectuation of its withdrawal from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.[5]

Although all but one of the commitments North Korea obtained from the U.S. merely reiterated the obligations embodied in the United Nations Charter—the sole exception being the mutual commitment to "continue dialogue on an equal and unprejudiced basis,"—Pyongyang nonetheless regarded them as significant gains.[6]

The high-level talks, in and of themselves, represented a diplomatic coup of major proportions for North Korea. In Pyongyang's view, the talks simultaneously elevated the DPRK to a coequal status with the U.S. and relegated the ROK to a disgruntled spectator of a high-stakes negotiating game. Should they bear fruit, moreover, North Korea could reap benefits in the political and economic realm as well. All three strategic goals of the DPRK—security, legitimacy, and development—could receive a boost.

Notwithstanding or because of the high stakes involved, however, North Korea adhered to a hardline and resorted to brinkmanship in its tactical behavior. When its refusal to cooperate fully with an IAEA inspection team drove the U.S.-DPRK high-level talks into an impasse, prompting a move to seek sanctions, North Korea once again precipitated a crisis. In May 1994 it removed all of the 8,000 spent fuel rods from the five-megawatt experimental reactor in Yongbyon. With this bold move, Pyongyang not only undercut the ability of the IAEA to ascertain North Korea's past nuclear activity but also opened the door to a possible extraction of enough weapons-grade plutonium to make four or five atomic bombs.

In one stroke Pyongyang had raised the stakes of the game, leaving Washington little choice but to shift its priority from the past to the present. After former U.S. president Jimmy Carter visited Pyongyang in June 1994 with the approval of the Clinton administration, holding two long sessions with Kim Il Sung, the high-level talks resumed in Geneva, Switzerland. Washington had accepted Kim Il Sung's offer to freeze his government's nuclear program in exchange for the resumption of the talks

and assistance in replacing the North's graphite-moderated reactors with light-water reactors (LWRs).

The third round of the U.S.-DPRK high-level talks, which were briefly suspended due to Kim Il Sung's unexpected death on 8 July 1994, culminated in the publication of the U.S.-DPRK Agreed Framework on 21 October 1994. That, together with the "letter of assurance" U.S. President Clinton sent to Kim Il Sung's eldest son and heir apparent, Kim Jong Il, on October 20 at Pyongyang's request, marked the single most important achievement of the DPRK's diplomacy vis-à-vis the U.S.[7]

While the agreed framework entails costs and benefits for both sides, benefits clearly eclipse costs for North Korea. First, the North will gain two LWRs with a combined generating capacity of 2,000 megawatts. Not only are LWRs safer and technically superior to the graphite reactors they will replace, but the amount of electricity the two new reactors will generate will be eight times that of the three reactors the North will forego. The North, moreover, will pay an exceedingly low price for the LWRs, which will be financed by an interest-free loan with a grace period and a long repayment schedule.

Second, the agreed framework stipulates that the U.S. will provide the North with heavy oil for heating and electricity generation to the tune of 500,000 tons a year. Since this is in compensation for the energy foregone by the North in terminating its current graphite-moderated reactor project, it will not only be free of charge but continue until the first LWR unit becomes operational. The target date for the completion of the LWR project is the year 2003.

Third, the U.S. and the DPRK have pledged in the agreed framework to: 1) "move toward full normalization of political and economic relations" between them, including removal of "restrictions on telecommunications services and financial transactions;" 2) "Each side will open a liaison office in the other's capital following resolution of consular and other technical issues through expert-level discussions;" and 3) "As progress is made on issues of concern to each side," the two sides "will upgrade bilateral relations to the ambassadorial-level."

Fourth, although the North has agreed to freeze its nuclear program in exchange for the aforementioned benefits, it will not really give up its nuclear card *in toto*. It will, in fact, retain the card for five years or more, since it is not required to release the 8,000 spent fuel rods it removed from a five-megawatt reactor in mid-1994 until key components of the first LWR

unit are ready to be installed. Should things go wrong or should Pyongyang change its mind, it can resume its nuclear weapons program.

Finally, the agreed framework may well increase the chances for the resumption of the stalled DPRK-Japan negotiations for diplomatic normalization. Should that happen and should the negotiations succeed, the North will reap sizable economic benefits.

These benefits, of course, need to be arrayed against the costs incurred by the North. First, the DPRK has abandoned its opposition to special inspection of the two undeclared sites in Yongbyon. Such inspection, however, will be delayed for five years or so and will not be called "special inspection." Second, the North has also withdrawn its previous objection to the removal of the spent fuel rods to a third country. As noted, the rods will remain in the North, albeit under IAEA safeguard, for five years or so. Third, the North has agreed to dismantle its five-megawatt experimental reactor, reprocessing plant (which it calls a "radio-chemical laboratory"), and two reactors under construction. In other words, for all practical purposes, it will give up its ability to produce weapons-grade plutonium.

Finally, the North has grudgingly accepted, albeit not explicitly, the idea that the South will supply the LWRs. This tacit concession by the DPRK was made palatable by a novel procedure: an international consortium, of which the U.S., the ROK, and Japan will be charter members, with the U.S. playing the leading role, will take charge of the LWR project. The North nonetheless tried very hard to minimize the South's role in the LWR project in subsequent negotiations related to the implementation of the agreed framework.

The North's brinkmanship helped to produce a compromise in which substantive concessions by the North were balanced by symbolic gains. The compromise, unveiled in a joint U.S.-DPRK press statement issued in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 13 June 1995, called for a delegation of the right to choose LWRs to the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) but described the LWRs to be installed in the North as "the advanced version of U.S. origin, design, and technology currently under production."[8]

The joint press statement also made repeated references to the leading role of the U.S. in KEDO as well as in the LWR project. It noted, for example, that KEDO is "under U.S. leadership," that "the U.S. will serve as the principal point of contact with the DPRK for the LWR project," that "U.S. citizens will lead delegations and teams of KEDO as required to fulfill this

role," and that a U.S. firm will serve as the LWR project's "program coordinator." All this obscures the reality that the charter members of KEDO had already agreed on the South Korean model of LWRs and that the South will bear the bulk of the financial burden of the project and thus play a central role in it.

On 15 December 1995, KEDO and the DPRK signed an agreement on the scope of supply and terms of repayment in the LWR project. Not only was this the first agreement between the two, but for the first time the ROK was a full-fledged participant in negotiations with the DPRK on the LWR project. The North made further concessions in the agreement, withdrawing nearly all of its initial demands, including those for a "reimbursement" of what it had spent on its nuclear power project and for the construction of a power distribution system, a nuclear fuel-processing plant, and port facilities.[9]

KEDO agreed to provide only those facilities that are essential to the project. It will supply a reactor simulator to the North and build an "infrastructure [that is] integral to and exclusive for use in the construction of the reactor plants, which will consist of roads within the site boundary, access roads from the site to off-site roads, barge docking facilities and a road from there to the site, a waterway and water catchment facilities including weirs, and housing and related facilities for KEDO, its contractors and subcontractors."[10]

Although the North preferred a long repayment period for the loan it will get from KEDO for the LWRs—thirty years including a ten-year grace period—it settled for twenty years including a three-year grace period. The loan will be interest-free and the repayment clock will begin to tick after the provision of the first LWR unit.[11]

Following the conclusion of the supply agreement, KEDO and the DPRK signed several protocol agreements covering transportation, communication, privileges and immunities, the project site, labor and other issues related to the LWR project. An obstacle in the path of a smooth implementation of the agreements relating to the project materialized in the fall of 1996 when the submarine incident erupted—an incident in which a 325 ton North Korean submarine carrying 26 crew members and commandos ran aground off South Korea's east coast. Twenty-four North Korean infiltrators were killed, eleven of them apparently at their own hands, and one was captured. Several South Korean soldiers and civilians were killed, some of them by "friendly fire."

This incident served to bolster a hardline in the Kim Young Sam government's policy and antagonize a large proportion of the South Korean populace. The ROK and its allies succeeded in having the United Nations Security Council adopt a unanimous resolution directing its president to issue a statement expressing concern over the situation on the Korean peninsula and calling upon the DPRK to abide by the Korean Armistice Agreement. It is noteworthy that, departing from its previous practice—which would have dictated an abstention—China supported this UN action. The relatively mild language of the statement, of course, played a key role in generating unanimous support in the Security Council.[12]

Perhaps more damaging to North Korea's interests, at least in the short run, was KEDO's decision to postpone a trip to the North by a site survey team. Even though KEDO would not halt the implementation of the LWR project, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord said in Seoul on October 15 that "there would be a pause in the pace of our [KEDO's] activities. The DPRK Foreign Ministry responded to Lord's statement by warning the U.S. against "trying to use the [submarine] incident for its sinister political purpose," saying that there might be serious consequences for the implementation of the Geneva accords.[13]

The North Korean warning is emblematic of its tactic of using and, if necessary, creating bargaining chips vis-à-vis the U.S. It reminded the U.S. that the nuclear deal is by no means irreversible. The arrest of a U.S. citizen, Evan Carl Hunziker, on espionage charge on October 6 may be related to Pyongyang's hope to enhance its bargaining position vis-à-vis Washington. Hunziker, however, was released on November 26 after U.S. Congressman Bill Richardson went to Pyongyang to negotiate his release. The North's abortive plan to test-fire a *Nodong*-1 Missile may also have reflected its desire to strengthen its hand in negotiations with Washington and Tokyo alike. The missile is believed to have a range of 600 miles and thus capable of hitting targets in much of Japan, including possibly Tokyo.[14] If, as previously noted, however, the North Korean gains eclipse its costs in the Geneva accords, then the North Korean tactic may no longer be as efficacious as it once was.

Some of what the North has already gained, however, may not be reversible. If the DPRK's overarching objective in its approach to the U.S. has been to ensure its security, what has already transpired cannot be minimized. It is plain that the U.S.-DPRK high-level talks have enhanced Pyongyang's sense of security. The joint statement of 11 June 1993 was particularly reassuring to the DPRK: it contains an explicit commitment by the U.S. to respect the DPRK's sovereignty, not to interfere in internal

affairs, and not to use force, including nuclear weapons. The reiteration of the foregoing in the subsequent documents, including the October 1994 agreed framework may have gone a long way toward allaying, if not totally banishing, North Korean apprehensions about threats to its security.

A major development that preceded the high-level talks but to which North Korean tactical behavior—of delaying the signing of a full-scope safeguards agreement with the IAEA—contributed was the removal of all U.S. nuclear weapons from the South. In a substantive sense, that may well be rated as Pyongyang's most notable gain insofar as its security needs are concerned.

Another goal the DPRK has officially articulated is to persuade the U.S. to end the latter's "hostile policy" toward the former. The developments noted above leave no doubt that this goal has been attained to a striking degree. The conduct of the high-level talks, the increasing frequency with which diplomats and other officials visit each other, the phased removal of "barriers to trade and investment, including restrictions on telecommunications" in accordance with the Geneva accords, the donation by the U.S. of a total of $8 million to the UN World Food Programme for relief of North Korea's flood victims, and Washington's decision to lift restrictions on humanitarian aid to Pyongyang—all these prove that U.S. policy toward the DPRK can no longer be characterized as "hostile."[15]

The DPRK may arguably have made some headway in its pursuit of a latent goal—undermining the legitimacy of the ROK and causing friction between Seoul and Washington. If Pyongyang has not really succeeded in undercutting the Kim Young Sam government's legitimacy, it has clearly caused political problems for the latter at home. Being totally excluded from the U.S.-DPRK high-level talks was a source not only of frustration for the Kim government but also of criticism from opposition politicians and the press alike.

The unprecedented public criticism by Kim Young Sam of the Clinton administration's conduct of negotiations with North Korea on 7 October 1994, two weeks before the publication of the Geneva Accords, showed that Pyongyang's goal was being attained to some degree.[16] In the first few months of 1996 Seoul and Washington were at odds over the issue of providing aid to the North; Seoul's continuing hardline, which included rejection of Pyongyang's overtures for the resumption of talks, also caused dismay in Washington. The latter's hope that Seoul would adopt a more conciliatory posture after the April 11 parliamentary election, however, was dashed by the eruption of the submarine incident.[17]

North Korea's Approach to Japan

The same three goals that undergird North Korea's U.S. policy are equally germane to North Korea's approach to Japan, even though economic needs may outweigh the other two considerations. The efficacy of the DPRK's approach, however, hinges on, among other things, Japan's policy toward the North, which remained more or less constant until the late 1980s—namely, separating politics from economics (*seikei bunri*). Change in Seoul's policy toward the North, signaled by President Roh Tae Woo's 7 July 1988 declaration outlining the key components of Nordpolitik (northern policy), however, provided an impetus for change in Tokyo's policy, just as it acted as a catalyst for a new U.S. policy toward the North.

The first clear-cut sign of change in Japanese policy appeared in January 1989. On January 20, the Japanese Foreign Ministry issued a statement outlining Japan's policy toward the Korean peninsula. It stressed that "Japan does not maintain a hostile policy toward North Korea, and we recognize that it will be appropriate . . . for us to move positively toward improved relations between Japan and North Korea, with all due regard for maintaining the international political balance as it affects the Korean Peninsula, if North Korea so desires." The statement also expressed hope that "a solution can be found soon to the Dai-18 Fujisan Maru problem . . . we are prepared to enter into discussions of any type with North Korea on the entire range of pending issues with no preconditions whatever."[18]

The Dai-18 Fujisan Maru problem refers to the detention of two Japanese citizens—the captain and the engineer, respectively, of a Japanese cargo ship—by North Korea. They were arrested and charged with espionage by the North after their ship re-entered Chongjin harbor on 15 November 1983 to pick up fresh cargo. Nine days earlier, the ship had inadvertently carried a North Korean soldier to Japan, who, upon arriving in Japan as a stowaway, requested political asylum. Japan subsequently rejected the North's demand for his immediate repatriation on humanitarian grounds. The two Japanese citizens in North Korean captivity would play a pivotal role in the evolution of Tokyo-Pyongyang relations in the 1990s.

Tokyo sent another signal to Pyongyang in March 1989. In a Budget Committee hearing in the House of Representatives of the Japanese Diet on March 30, Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru expressed his "remorse and regret" (*hansei to ikan no i*) to "all the people" of the Korean peninsula for the past Japanese actions inflicting great suffering and damage on them. He voiced the hope that Japan and the DPRK would be able to improve their relations, reiterating Japan's previously expressed desire for unconditional talks with North Korea on all bilateral issues.[19]

This was the first time that a Japanese prime minister or any government official had referred to the DPRK by its official name. By using the phrase "all the people" of the Korean peninsula, moreover, Takeshita had left no doubt that his "remorse and regret" were extended to the North Korean people. This set the stage for a new approach by Pyongyang toward Tokyo. After conducting two rounds of secret negotiations with Japan on the Dai-18 Fujisan Maru problem, North Korea indicated an interest in receiving a delegation of Japan's ruling party, the Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP), headed by a "man of real influence." This paved the way for a visit to the DPRK in September 1990 by two Japanese delegations, an LDP delegation led by Kanemaru Shin, former deputy prime minister and leader of the largest faction in the LDP, and a Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ) delegation headed by its vice chairman Tanabe Makoto.[20]

During preliminary negotiations preceding the Kanemaru-Tanabe visit, the North made plain what it was after: compensation from Japan. When Ishii Hajime, an LDP dietman, told his North Korean counterpart, Kim Yong Sun, the WPK secretary in charge of international affairs, that diplomatic normalization was prerequisite to any compensation, Kim insisted that normalizing relations with a country that had already established diplomatic relations with South Korea would be tantamount to a recognition of "two Koreas," which was unacceptable to the North. An abrupt change in Pyongyang's position on this issue after the two Japanese delegations landed in Pyongyang on September 24 appeared to reflect Pyongyang's need to compensate for the normalization of relations between the Soviet Union, its major ally and principal trading partner, and the ROK, its arch rival, which took effect on 1 September 1990.[21]

One aspect of North Korea's tactical behavior during the visit of the Japanese delegations was the conduct of one-on-one negotiations between Kim Il Sung and Kanemaru. Even though Tanabe, as head of the SDPJ delegation, not only had the same status as Kanemaru but also had been instrumental in bringing Kanemaru to the North, he was not included in the *tète-à-tète* that took place in Kim's villa on the scenic Myohayang Mountain on September 25 and 26. Kim and Kanemaru must have reached an understanding on a *quid pro quo*. In exchange for the release of the two Fujisan Maru crew members, Kanemaru would support the proposal for negotiations for diplomatic normalization.[22]

Although the two Japanese citizens were not released until October, Kanemaru nonetheless had achieved his principal objective. Kim Il Sung's reward was a three-party declaration, signed on September 28, that contained not only their commitment to urge their respective governments to

start negotiations for diplomatic normalization but also the clause that Japan owed compensation to the DPRK for colonial rule as well as for forty-five years of hostility to the North during the postwar period. It was Kanemaru who overruled the objections to the latter clause raised by Japanese Foreign Ministry officials who had accompanied the LDP and SDPJ delegations to the North.[23]

If this development signaled a breakthrough for the North, it owed primarily to the North's possession of bargaining chips, namely, the two Fujisan Maru crew members in captivity, and Japan's willingness to pay a price for their release and return. Once negotiations for diplomatic normalization began, however, the North lacked any real bargaining chips. During the normalization talks spanning two years—preliminary talks in Beijing in November and December 1990; eight rounds of full-fledged talks in Pyongyang, Tokyo, and Beijing from January 1991 to November 1992—the DPRK adhered to a hardline, displaying little flexibility.

The North's negotiating posture may have reflected its genuine conviction that as an aggressor and wrong-doer, Japan was duty-bound to take measures to atone for its crimes and compensate its victims. The issue of "comfort women"—Korean women and girls who had been forced to serve as sex slaves for the Japanese Imperial Army during World War II—gave the North an inexhaustible supply of ammunition with which to condemn Japan. When the North tried to justify its demand for reparations, in addition to compensation, on grounds that Korea had fought a guerrilla war against Japan under the leadership of Kim Il Sung, Japan pointedly reminded the North that Kim's guerrilla force had been but a "unit of the Northeast People's Revolutionary Army under the Chinese Communist party." This was a shocking response, which undermined the basis of Kim Il Sung's legitimacy. All the North could do was to dismiss the Japanese argument as unworthy of discussion on the ground that it was based on flimsy evidence.[24]

The North repeatedly criticized Japan for introducing issues not directly related to normalization. Japan had linked progress in the talks to progress in inter-Korean relations and the resolution of the nuclear problem. Some of the conditions Japan had set were met while the normalization talks were under way; the North's decision to seek admission to the UN as a separate member, the conclusion of two inter-Korean agreements, and the North's signing of a nuclear safeguards agreement with the IAEA belonged to this category.

The issue that proved to be most divisive was the so-called "Yi Un Hye" issue—an alleged kidnapping by the North of a Japanese woman who was

said to have served as a tutor to Kim Hyon Hui, the former North Korean agent who blew up a Korean Air passenger plane with 115 persons on board in mid-air near Burma in November 1987. After the two sides worked out a compromise under which the issue would be discussed in a separate "working-level" session ahead of regular negotiating sessions, the North refused to honor its commitment. It was this breach that led to the breakdown of the talks in November 1992.[25]

The signing of the Geneva accords in October 1994, however, raised the hope that both the DPRK and Japan might have fresh incentive to resume negotiations. In March 1995, the three political parties participating in Japan's coalition government—the LDP, the SDPJ, and Shinto Sakigake [the New Party Forerunner]—visited Pyongyang and signed a four-party agreement with the WPK. It pledged that the four parties would strive to achieve a resumption of the DPRK-Japan normalization talks, stressing that the talks must not have any preconditions and must be conducted on a strictly independent and autonomous basis.[26]

The references to preconditions and independence were concessions made by the North, which wanted to prevent a recurrence of what it regarded as bitter experience during the 1991-1992 negotiations. Japan had attached preconditions that for the most part reflected the policies of the U.S. and the ROK. The North's attempt to include a clause affirming the validity and binding effects of the 1990 three-party declaration, however, failed due to Japanese opposition.

Shortly after the signing of the four-party agreement, the North approached Japan with a request for assistance. Pyongyang asked for substantial amounts of rice in order to deal with a serious food shortage. At Seoul's request, however, Tokyo told Pyongyang that the latter should seek Seoul's help first. An inter-Korean agreement on the issue, under which the South would provide 150,000 tons of rice free of charge to the North, was followed immediately by a Japan-DPRK agreement providing for a supply of 300,000 tons of rice, of which half would be free and the remainder would be on a deferred payment basis. When torrential rains wiped out most of the North's agricultural crops in July and August, the North approached Japan again for further assistance. With Japan's agreement to supply 200,000 additional tons of rice on a deferred payment basis, the total amount of Japan's rice aid to the North reached 500,000 tons, more than three times the South's aid.[27] Japan subsequently decided to donate about $6 million to the World Food Programme (WFP) to alleviate the sufferings of the North's flood victims. The U.S. donated about $8 million to the WFP on two occasions, and South Korea decided to donate $2 million to the same organization.

Compared to what it has gained from the U.S., the DPRK's achievements in its approach to Japan thus far are meager. Pyongyang's main objective of diplomatic normalization has proved to be elusive. What Pyongyang hoped to get was an infusion of sizable Japanese funds into its troubled economy in the form of "economic cooperation," a term that is most likely to be used to characterize what the North will consider compensation. As of this writing, the probability that the normalization talks will resume sooner or later appeared high. Whether it will be sooner or later, however, is hard to predict.

Conclusion

Four sets of variables help to explain the divergent outcomes of North Korea's approaches to the U.S. and Japan: (1) North Korea's goals, needs, tactics, and resources; (2) U.S. policy and behavior; (3) Japanese policy and behavior; and (4) South Korea's ability to influence the preceding two.

North Korea's goals and needs can be summed up in three words: security, legitimacy, and development. With a sharp deterioration in its economic situation, coupled with changes in its external environment, the very survival of the DPRK has emerged as the overarching priority. This has compelled Pyongyang to undertake an agonizing reassessment of its strategic orientation, leading to the conclusion that the U.S. needs to be treated not as a threat but a lifeline to the DPRK's security. The principal resource—or "card"—the North would utilize in its approach to the U.S. would be its nuclear weapons program, whether real or imagined. Since Japan, too, could serve as a lifeline, the North would seek diplomatic normalization with it. The "card" the North had vis-à-vis Japan, however, was nowhere as potent as the nuclear card; what is more, once it was used, the North would have very little leverage over Tokyo. Notwithstanding such a pronounced asymmetry in negotiating power, the North failed to display a sufficient degree of pragmatism in the normalization talks.

Had the U.S. not elevated non-proliferation to a top priority foreign policy goal, North Korea's tactics would not have been as productive as they turned out to be. The willingness of the U.S. to make concessions, both large and small and substantive and symbolic, also played a major role in the U.S.-DPRK high-level talks.

Unfortunately for North Korea, diplomatic normalization was not really a high priority goal on Japan's foreign policy agenda. While it would allow Japan to settle one of the two unresolved problems in the postwar period and would contribute to the stabilization of Northeast Asia, it was not

something Japan needed to accomplish at great cost. This does not mean that Japan was, and is, not willing to pay the requisite price; just as it had paid a price, albeit, in the view of the South Korean people, an exceedingly low price, for normalizing relations with the ROK in 1965, Japan is prepared to provide an appropriate amount of "economic cooperation" to the DPRK. Although, contrary to widely held impressions, no specific amount was mentioned during the 1991-1992 normalization talks, the amount is most likely to be in the billions of dollars (or their equivalents in Japanese *yen*)—most probably in the low single digits. North Korea also displayed its lack of understanding of the Japanese political system by equating the three-party declaration with a binding commitment by the Japanese government. The de facto participation of Japanese government officials in the negotiations leading up to the declaration notwithstanding, the signatories to the document were party leaders, not government officials.

Finally, South Korea was and continues to be a major factor in the equation. Even though, to its chagrin, the Kim Young Sam government was excluded from the Geneva negotiations, it was nonetheless consulted continuously. Trilateral consultations among the U.S., the ROK, and Japan, in fact, became routinized during the negotiations and may well prove to be one of the most significant by-products of the nuclear crisis precipitated by the DPRK. To be sure, Seoul sometimes went along with Washington grudgingly, but on key issues Seoul clearly had the power of veto. From a strictly substantive standpoint, the Geneva accords and the manner in which it is being implemented are wholly consistent with Seoul's interests. On balance, Seoul has gained and will gain more than it will lose.

It is plain that the ROK factor was a major element in Japan-DPRK negotiations. Not only did Japan repeatedly raise the preconditions favoring Seoul, but the rock on which the negotiations foundered—the Yi Un Hye issue—was provided by the South. From Japan's perspective, South Korea is far more valuable than anything North Korea will ever offer; hence Japan has taken pains to heed Seoul's requests in dealing with Pyongyang. What is more, close and frequent consultations have occurred and will continue to occur on any notable moves in Japan's North Korea policy.

In sum, whether North Korea's approaches to the U.S. and Japan will prove to be efficacious will hinge, to a striking degree, on the policies and behaviors of the U.S., Japan, and South Korea. Pyongyang's own rhetoric and behavior, however, will be the single most important variable in the equation, for it will help determine whether and to what extent Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul will accommodate Pyongyang's needs and requests.

notes for chapter five

1. The word "approach" can be construed in a dual sense: whereas in its broad meaning it is synonymous with "policy," in a narrow sense it connotes an act of drawing closer to an object. It is with this dual meaning in mind that I use the term in this paper.

2. U.S. Information Service, "House Subcommittee Holds Hearings on Korean Peninsula (Transcript: Excerpts from Solarz Hearing," 26 July 1990): p. 5. Distributed by the USIS in Seoul, Korea.

3. *Nodong sinmun* [Pyongyang], 24 January 1992.

4. North Korea stated that it was taking this action "in order to safeguard our supreme national interest." Recalling that the U.S. had fought North Korea during the Korean War, the North declared that it would never allow the IAEA to "legitimize the reconnaissance activities" of its "belligerent" against itself. This was in reference to the fact that an IAEA demand for "special inspection" of two undeclared sites in Yongbyon nuclear complex, which was the direct impetus for the North's decision, had been based on data obtained by U.S. satellite reconnaissance. *Nodong sinmun*, 13 March 1993.

5. *Korea Times* [Seoul], 14 June 1993.

6. Emblematic of the importance North Korea attached to the U.S.-DPRK joint statement of 11 June 1993 were Kim Il Sung's references to it in his new year's message for 1994 and in his interviews with the foreign press. See *Nodong sinmun*, 1 January 1994; *Washington Times*, 19 April 1994; "Answers of President Kim Il Sung to Questions Put by Director General of Prensa Latina News Agency of Cuba," *The People's Korea* [Tokyo], 28 May 1994, p. 2.

7. In his letter to Kim Jong Il, who, at North Korea's request, was addressed as "Your Excellency Kim Jong Il, the Supreme Leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," Clinton assured the DPRK that he would do everything within his power, subject to Congressional approval, to ensure a faithful implementation of the agreed framework. For the text of the Clinton letter, see *Korea Report* [Tokyo] no. 291 (October 1994): p. 5; for the text of the agreed framework, see ibid., pp. 2-5. This is a monthly publication of *Ch'ongnyon* (*Chosen Soren* in Japanese), the federation of Korean residents in Japan who profess allegiance to the DPRK.

8. Ibid., no. 299 (June 1995): p. 2.

9. *Korea Newsreview* [Seoul], 23 December 1995, pp. 11-12.

10. Ibid., p. 11.

11. *Han'guk ilbo* (Korea Daily) [Seoul], 14 December 1995.

12. North Korea brushed aside the UN Security Council action, ridiculing South Korea's claim that it was a diplomatic victory and citing criticisms aired in the ROK National Assembly to the effect that the statement issued by the Council president was "meaningless." Reiterating its long-standing claim that it is the U.S. and South Korea "that have systematically violated [the armistice agreement], introducing a large quantity of military equipment into south Korea and ceaselessly staging the frantic war exercises," Pyongyang called on Washington to agree to the North's proposal for the establishment of a new peace mechanism and on Seoul to stop its "anti-DPRK confrontation campaign," "return the north's dead soldiers and submarine and apologize for [its] atrocities." *Korean Central News Agency* [Pyongyang], 25 October 1996.

13. "N. Korea Issues Veiled Threat Over Nuclear Accord," *C-reuters@clari.net* (Reuters), 15 October 1996.

14. "U.S. Urges North Korea Not to Test Missile," ibid., 18 October 1996.

15. For an articulation of U.S. policy toward the DPRK, see "U.S. Policy Toward the Korean Peninsula," (address by Winston Lord, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, to the Korea/United States 21st Century Council, Grand Hotel, Washington, D.C., 8 February 1996.)

16. In an interview with James Sterngold of the *New York Times*, Kim Young Sam lashed out against the Clinton administration, accusing the latter not only of an "overeagerness to compromise" but also of ignorance about North Korea. See *New York Times*, 8 October 1994.

17. For signs that Seoul-Washington discord continues, see "[Hanmi] 'taebuk yogu' sujun igyon...4-ja hoedam yon'gye tung kaltung yesang," [Disagreements Between the ROK and the U.S. Over the Level of Demands from the North...Linkage to the Four-party Talks and Other Cleavage Expected], *The Internet Hankyoreh Shinmun* [Seoul], 11 October 1996.

18. Gaimusho, Ajia-kyoku, Hokuto Ajia-ka, *Chosen hanto to Nihon* [The Korean Peninsula and Japan], 1 August 1988 [Tokyo], pp. 5-1 through 5-4. The quoted passages are from the Japanese Foreign Ministry's own translation on pp. 5-3 and 5-4.

19. Ibid., appendix. Takeshita said: "Based on the basic position that the problems of the Korean Peninsula should be resolved through dialogue between the authorities of South and North, the [Japanese] government hopes to pursue diplomacy toward the Korean Peninsula with a *new determination.*" Emphasis added.

20. Kanemaru Shin and Tanabe Makoto, "Taidan: ima issono hakusha o" (Conversation: Now, More Efforts Than Ever), *Sekai* (The World) [Tokyo], temporary, extra issue (April 1992): p. 44.

21. Ishii Hajime, *Chikazuite kita toi kuni* (A Distant Country Getting Closer) (Tokyo: Nihon Seisanhonbu, 1991): pp. 14-37; 103-154. The English translation of the book's title is Ishii's own. During the first negotiating session among the WPK, the LDP, and the SDPJ on September 25, Kim Yong Sun reiterated his previous argument; he asserted that Japan should pay some form of compensation ahead of everything else as a token of its sincerity. Two days later, however, the North reversed its position and proposed government-to-government negotiations on diplomatic normalization.

22. Ibid., pp. 113-133.

23. Ibid., pp. 159-166. For the Korean-language version of the three-party declaration, see *Nodong sinmun,* 29 September 1990.

24. *Nihon keizai shinbun* (Japan Economic News) [Tokyo], 12 March 1991.

25. On the eighth round of the normalization talks, which ended in their breakdown, consult *Asahi shinbun* (Morning Sun News) [Tokyo], 6 November 1992; *Nodong sinmun,* 7 November 1992.

26. *Wolgan pukhan tonghyang* (Monthly Trends in North Korea) (Seoul: T'ong'il-won Chongbo Punsoksil, March 1995): pp. 216-217.

27. Oemubu, *Ilbon chongguk kwa Han'il kwan'gye* (Japan's Political Situation and ROK-Japan Relations) [Seoul] (April 1996): pp. 19-20.