

The Kim Jong-Il Government's Policy Toward South Korea:

Analysis of the June 2005 Inter-Korean Agreement¹

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The Kim Jong-Il Government's policy toward South Korea is an extension not only of North-South Korea relations, especially since the historic June 2000 North-South summit meeting in Pyongyang, but also of the DPRK domestic politics of the Kim regime survival strategy. How are the domestic policy agenda of "Building the *Kangsong Taeguk* (Strong and Prosperous Great Power) and "the Military-First Politics," for instance, related to the Kim Government policy and strategy toward the South? What are the implications for Pyongyang's strategy of balancing against major powers' competing interests and driving a wedge between Seoul and its allies in Tokyo and Washington?²

This article will proceed in several steps: first, ascertaining the current phase of inter-Korean relations in its proper historical context and perspective; second, analyzing the legacy six years after the 2000 inter-Korean summit meeting, including the recent meeting of Seoul's Unification Minister Chung Dong-Young with Chairman Kim Jong-Il in Pyongyang; third, identifying the sources of the DPRK's long-standing strategy and tactical moves of implementing the reunification policy vis-à-vis the South; and, fourth, addressing the current problems and future prospects for promoting peaceful interaction between the two Koreas.

Inter-Korean Relations in Perspective

Inter-Korean relations are unique to the historical situation of Korea as a divided nation-state since 1945. As such, inter-Korean relations can best be regarded as a special type of foreign relations pursued by each half of a divided Korea toward its counterpart. The policy of each Korea toward the other half is, therefore, more than an extension of domestic politics and is not

exactly the same as foreign policy pursued by each respective Korean government vis-à-vis neighboring countries.³

The politics of inter-Korean relations has gone through several historical stages of ups and downs. Prior to 1972 the two Koreas were in violent contact, especially during the Korean War (1950-53) years. There followed a period of estrangement and internal consolidation punctured by occasional border clashes, including the 1968 North Korean commando raids across the DMZ of South Korea's Blue House.⁴ The major power détente in the 1970s, with the Sino-U.S. rapprochement of 1972, shifted inter-Korean relations away from an in-communicado phase to one of inter-Korean dialogue and negotiation. The July 4, 1972 joint communiqué of South-North dialogue and negotiation on Korean unification adopted the three-fold principles of "independence, peace, and great national unity." This phase of rapprochement did not last beyond 1974, however.⁵

The next phase of resumed inter-Korean dialogue was in 1984-85; that was also brief. The North Korean offer of humanitarian assistance to flood victims in central South Korea in 1984, and its surprising acceptance by the South Korean authority, led to an exchange of mutual visits by a few dispersed family members and artist troupes from both sides in 1985.⁶ The inter-Korean dialogue in the 1980s was however, short-lived, again with the familiar on and off pattern of a relationship that failed to be sustained or bear fruit.

Pyongyang's "basic position" (*kibon ipchang*) on Korean unification prior to the Cold War's ending in 1991 consisted of three principles: independence (*chaju*), democracy (*minju*), and peace (*pyonghwa*).⁷ These principles, although basically similar to those set forth in the South-North joint communiqué of July 4, 1972, differed slightly in nuance and emphasis. "Independent unification," first of all, meant that reunification had to be attained by the efforts of the Korean people themselves "without relying upon external forces." In this, North Korea's earlier and later stands were identical. They consistently held the view that Korean unification is an internal problem for the Korean people to solve and that the Korean people possess both the capability

and the determination to bring about reunification by their own efforts.

“Democratic unification” means that Korean reunification has to be attained through broader participation by the masses in the unification process, by seeking “a great national unity.” Unification, as North Korea sees it, is a “national issue” that affects the welfare of “the entire Korean people” rather than the interests of a particular stratum or class in society. Moreover, the Korean people as a whole truly desire to participate in unification and to involve themselves in the process. This means that the unification talks should not be confined to a dialogue between the “responsible authorities” of North and South Korea, but opened up to broader participation by representatives of all political parties and social organizations. This measure, the North Koreans insist, is the way to assure that democracy will prevail in the unification process.⁸ “Peaceful unification” means that Korean reunification must be attained by nonviolent means through inter-Korean dialogue and negotiation as an alternative to war.⁹

The new post-Cold War detente of 1991-92, with an exchange of mutual visits by the prime ministers from both Koreas, began with the realization by North Korea that mutual recognition and coexistence were necessary for maintaining peace and stability in the Korean peninsula. Both Koreas soon realized, however, that the reunification of Korea was not likely to come about by simply banning the use of force and violence without first establishing a new framework for peaceful coexistence and exchange between the two sides.

These efforts at overcoming mutual hostility in inter-Korean relations resulted in the signing of the two historical documents by both Koreas in December 1991: the Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression and Exchange and Cooperation signed by the two prime ministers on December 13, and the Joint Declaration for Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula on December 31.¹⁰ As a result the prospect for normalizing the inter-Korean dialogue had improved measurably, although North Korea’s subsequent change of mind with an ambitious nuclear weapons development program, raised the threshold of a new security tension and threat on the Korean peninsula.¹¹

An important benchmark was established by the historic summit meeting between the two Korean leaders, ROK President Kim Dae Jung and Chairman Kim Jong-Il, in Pyongyang on June 13-16, 2000, although an earlier summit planned in July 1994 between ROK President Kim Young Sam and DPRK President Kim Il Sung was stillborn due to Kim’s death on July 8 that year. The adoption of a 5-points joint statement on promoting mutual reconciliation and cooperation by the 2000 Korean summit led to a major breakthrough in inter-Korean relations.¹²

A number of bold initiatives were undertaken by Seoul to promote inter-Korean relations. These took the forms of (a) arranging for the reunions of a few separated families; (b) promoting an expansion of social and cultural exchanges; (c) regularizing economic exchanges and cooperation; (d) agreeing to reconnect the Seoul-Shinuiju railway system; (e) launching new joint venture, like developing the Kaesong Industrial Zone across the western corridor of the DMZ; and, (f) making official contacts between the two sides, like inter-Korean ministerial talks, a routine exchange.

Under these arrangements one of the latest inter-ministerial talks was held in Seoul on June 21-24, 2005. This inter-Korean dialogue, taking place four days after the Chung-Kim exchanges of June 17 was the 15th such ministerial meeting in the five years following 2000. Despite these cabinet-level talks and other initiatives, inter-Korean relations have not been smooth or successful in making the real progress beyond the first two years. The Kim Dae Jung government policy initiative of engagement was generally judged by many skeptics to be a failure in furthering its stated goals.¹³ The Roh Moo-hyun government inherited the Sunshine policy but decided to repackage it and promote its own policy of “peace and prosperity” toward North Korea.

The Legacy of the 2000 Summit Meeting Six Years Later

North Korea has a strong sense of national pride and self-righteousness that is associated, in part, with the official creed and ideology of Juche (self-reliance). Kim Jong-Il’s North Korea today is isolated from its neighbors and the rest of the world. This is both externally imposed and internally generated.

Basically, North Korea does not trust foreigners lest they take advantage of the weakness and vulnerability of the North. Some have compared the self-imposed isolation of North Korea today with the Choson dynasty practices of seclusion in the 18th–19th centuries.¹⁴ This sense of skepticism and distrust toward the outside world was also part of the North Korean attitude and policy toward South Korea until recently.

The June 2000 North-South Korean summit, however, restored a modicum of good will toward the Kim Dae Jung administration in the South, as well as his successor, the current Roh Moo-hyun administration, continuing the engagement policy toward North Korea. But the change of administrations in 2003 in the South also caused fluctuations over time in Pyongyang's policy toward the South, with both positive and negative messages emitted by Pyongyang's propaganda machine. For instance, in August 2004, the scheduled inter-ministerial talks were suspended by North Korea in protest of the Roh government's allowing the Korean airlines to airlift 468 North Korean refugees from Hanoi to Seoul on humanitarian grounds.

A series of measures undertaken by Pyongyang toward Seoul's Sunshine policy of engagement will show that the North Korean regime has generally reinforced its own perception and hardened position toward South Korea, as part of its overall strategy of Korean reunification as stipulated in Kim Il Sung's ten-point policy platform.¹⁵

North Korea is also set to continue its policy and program of a socialist economy rather than adopting a new reform policy patterned after the Chinese model of market-socialism. North Korea's mindset on inter-Korean relations as shown by the Kim Jong-Il regime has been basically alien, until recently, to the notion of "give and take in diplomacy," the rule of reciprocity that constitutes the international norms and standards of diplomacy. This requires new thinking, piercing North Korea's mindset and developing a workable strategy toward the Socialist "Hermit Kingdom" by outside powers, including South Korea, that will go beyond the Sunshine policy of engagement.

The Pyongyang Festival for "National Unification" of June 15, 2005: Its Purpose and Accomplishments

In marking the fifth anniversary of the inter-Korean summit of 2000, the preparation was underway for the staging of a four-day "Grand Festival for National Reunification" in Pyongyang on June 15, 2005. A 40-member official delegation was headed by then ROK Unification Minister Chung Dong-young, whereas a 300-member civilian delegation was led by Baek Nak-cheong, a former Seoul National University professor, in his capacity as head of the South Korean group of civic organizations. They were joined by the overseas Korean delegation led by Mun Dong-hwan.

Both the official and civilian delegations attended an opening ceremony and martial arts festival at the Kim Il Sung Stadium. ROK Unification Minister Chung Dong-young made no address at the ceremony, but his official delegation was later invited to attend a welcoming dinner hosted by North Korean Prime Minister Pak Pong-ju at the Mansudae Art Theatre. Afterward Chung had a 20-minute closed-door one-on-one meeting with North Korea's Supreme People's Assembly President Kim Yong-nam, following an evening reception at Moran House on the first day. At this meeting Chung reportedly explained to Kim the outcome of the recently-held Seoul-Washington summit of June 10 and conveyed his government's position on the provision of contemplated economic aid to the North in the event the DPRK abandoned its nuclear weapons program. The North Korean reaction was not immediately known.

Kim Yong-nam was first scheduled to meet the South Korean official delegation at 9:00 a.m. the second day, but the itinerary was readjusted at the North's request to hold the meeting simultaneous with the welcoming dinner in the evening of the first day. Seoul's nine-man official delegation led by Chung also met Kim Yong-nam as the North Korean head of state for about 20 minutes. This was immediately followed by a 20 minute face-to-face Chung-Kim meeting.

On the second day Kim Yong-nam invited the South's civilian delegation to visit the Mansudae Assembly Hall. At the meeting, Kim said: "The United States' hostile policies have not

changed at all, and they are pressuring us politically, economically and militarily, including slandering us as an outpost of tyranny. But we are unflinchingly exerting ourselves on economic construction.”¹⁶ Following this meeting, the Southern civilian delegation leader Baek Nak-cheong was quoted as saying: “We, too, will firmly cope with policies of isolation that threaten the lives and impoverish our North Korean compatriots.”¹⁷ The civilian delegation soon returned to Seoul aboard a chartered aircraft, winding up its four-day visit.

“A Moment to Seize with North Korea” or Else?

The highlight of the Pyongyang festival came on the last day of the four-day planned activities when the official delegation was told by the host that North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il would meet the South Korean delegation by asking for a delay in their departure for Seoul. We turn next to examine what transpired in the private meeting between the ROK Unification Minister, as head of the official delegation, and Chairman Kim Jong-Il of North Korea.

While North Korea has remained intransigent diplomatically, by boycotting for more than a year the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks in Beijing, it has continued to play nuclear hardball by strengthening its WMD capability at home. The signs of a diplomatic opening arose, however, from the U.S.-ROK summit meetings on June 10, when the visiting South Korean president Roh Moo-hyun met with the U.S. president in the White House to reaffirm their determination “to pursue a peaceful settlement of the North Korean nuclear problem and denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.” The two leaders also reaffirmed the “constant and solid” U.S.-ROK alliance “of the past, present and future.”¹⁸

A week later North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il met with the ROK Unification Minister, as head of an official delegation and presidential special envoy, in Pyongyang. Kim was quoted as saying during this meeting that his country was ready “to resume the Six-Party Talks as early as July, provided the United States treated it with respect” and, if the nuclear crisis were resolved, “to rejoin the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and allow international inspectors inside his country.”¹⁹ A rare opportunity

presented itself to see if Pyongyang’s hardline stance on the nuclear issue would be reversed, and the Bush administration would “seize this moment, to move toward ending the nuclear standoff and proliferation crisis in Northeast Asia.”²⁰ This turn of events requires further analysis.

The ROK Unification Minister Meeting with Chairman Kim Jong-Il: An Overview and Analysis

ROK Unification Minister Chung Dong-young, appointed as special envoy by President Roh Moo-hyun, had held a private meeting alone for 2 hours and 30 minutes (from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.) with Chairman Kim Jong-Il of North Korea at Taedong River Honorary Guest House on June 17, 2005. Following this private meeting, Minister Chung and Chairman Kim had lunch together with several other members of the ROK government and civic delegations from the South also attending the Unification Festival in Pyongyang, thereby continuing their conversation from 1:30 p.m. to 3:50 p.m.

During the private meeting Minister Chung was reported to have delivered President Roh Moo-hyun’s message verbally and also to have consulted extensively not only on the North Korean nuclear issue but also on wide-ranging political, economic, military and humanitarian issues. Chung reportedly made “proactive and leading efforts” for the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue through frank exchanges of views on the North Korean nuclear issue. Both men reportedly agreed on “specific and practical measures” for the future development of inter-Korean relations, based on mutual understanding of the development plan for inter-Korean relations, according to the government press release.²¹

The two also agreed that, on the occasion of commemorating the 2005 August 15th National Liberation Day in Seoul, there would not only be a reunion of separated families but also a high-level governmental delegation to be dispatched by the North. Also, there would be immediate consultation on “specific measures for establishing peace on the West Sea,” including the resumption of general-level military talks as well as fishery-officials talks.²² The last point had broader significance, in terms

of promoting confidence-building measures in the Korean security theatre, which is a continuing Cold-War legacy.

The Substantive Points of the Chung-Kim Exchanges

In view of the historical value and significance of this rare opportunity in Pyongyang, the more specific details of what transpired during the Chung-Kim exchanges may be examined further, with a view to probing into the process of the DPRK policy-making and Kim Jong-Il's mindset on inter-Korean relations. According to the ROK press release, an extensive consultation took place between the two –as already noted-- not only on the North Korean nuclear issue but also on a wide range of political, economic, military and humanitarian issues.

On the nuclear issue Chairman Kim Jong-Il was reported as saying that the December 1991 Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula was "the dying wish of the late Kim Il Sung" and that it was still valid. He went on to state that North Korea had no reason to possess nuclear weapons, that North Korea did not renounce or reject the Six-Party Talks, and that if the United States was determined to recognize and respect its sovereignty, the North could return to the Six-Party Talks some time in July, while adding that it would have to consult further with the United States (as to the specific date).²³

Kim was also reported to have said that North Korea was "willing to rejoin the NPT and accept thorough inspection by the IAEA," while expressing "the North Korean understanding of the effectiveness of multilateral security guarantee." Kim promised that the North would seriously review the Seoul government's "important proposal." This "important proposal" had to do with Seoul's offer of providing electricity to the North, as subsequently reported by the media in Seoul. Finally, Chairman Kim Jong-Il was quoted as having referred to U.S. President Bush as "His Excellency," stating that he was "a good person to talk with." This alleged claim, however, will require further analysis and validation.²⁴

For the resolution of the nuclear issue, the press release stressed Pyongyang's improved understanding of the position of the Seoul government and the international community, while reducing its concerns about the United States, and creating a

favorable environment for the resumption of the Six-Party Talks.²⁵

Chung and Kim moved next to agree on "specific and practical measures" for the future development of inter-Korean relations based on mutual understanding of the development plan for inter-Korean relations. On the specific occasion of commemorating the 2005 August 15 National Liberation Day in the immediate future, for instance, they agreed to hold a reunion of separated families as well as a video reunion, and agreed to dispatch a high-level governmental delegation to Seoul.²⁶ Also agreed was the scheduling of consultations on measures for establishing peace on the West Sea, including the resumption of general-level military talks as well as fishery-officials' talks.

Major points of the Chung-Kim discussion, in short, had to do with (1) the delivery of President Roh Moo-hyun's message; (2) a frank exchange of views on Pyongyang's nuclear issue and proactive efforts for its resolution; and, (3) an agreement to take "practical and progressive" steps for normalizing inter-Korean relations. As for the last point, six specific terms were agreed upon, as Seoul reported it: first, strengthening momentum for normalizing inter-Korean relations through the June 15 and August 15 joint celebration; second, consulting on the establishment of peace through general-level military talks and talks by fishery officials; third, relieving suffering caused by national division through the resolution of the separated families issue; fourth, opening a direct air route between Seoul and Pyongyang; fifth, holding the second round of the inter-Korean summit talks; and, sixth, making improvements in the inter-Korean dialogue in the days ahead.²⁷

What are the Tangible Results and Significance of the Chung-Kim Meeting, as Perceived by the Seoul government?

The initial ROK press release claimed that Minister Chung Dong-young's "private and closed meeting alone with Chairman Kim Jong-Il" himself was "of significance with regard to the timing." The reason was that "the meeting took place after 10 months of impasse in inter-Korean relations and at a time when the North Korea nuclear issue was "entering an important phase." Considering Chairman Kim Jong-Il's position on an

overall agreement, the details of consultations with Chairman Kim were “important more than any other agreement for the North Korean nuclear issue and improving inter-Korean relation,” according to the ROK press release.

The meeting with Chairman Kim Jong-Il took place, Seoul claimed, as “one between him as a special envoy of President Roh,” thereby acquiring official legitimacy. Minister Chung delivered President Roh Moo-hyun’s verbal message and listened to Chairman Kim Jong-Il’s response to that message, and “thereby facilitated an indirect meeting between President Roh and Chairman Kim.” Frank exchanges of views on various issues through Chung as a Presidential Special Envoy are said to have “contributed to enhancing mutual understanding between President Roh and Chairman Kim.” Finally, Minister Chung’s meeting with Chairman Kim was noteworthy in that it was “realized after a 3-year lapse since Chairman Kim’s meeting with Mr. Lim Dong-won, then the Presidential Special Envoy to North Korea.”²⁸

The Seoul government took a special pride, as part of its overall efforts to play an active role for the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue, in persuading North Korea to return to the Six-Party Talks. Chung delivered directly to Chairman Kim the message of President Roh Moo-hyun’s firm determination to resolve the nuclear issue in a peaceful manner and focused on allaying North Korea’s concerns by explaining the positive results of the ROK-U.S. Summit meeting of June 10, 2005. If the Six-Party Talks were to resume, Seoul explained on several occasions that it was planning to make an “important proposal” for substantive progress. Seoul also claimed to have tried “to induce North Korea’s strategic decision by proposing its plan to pursue a comprehensive and detailed economic cooperation project once the nuclear issue was to be resolved.”

The significance of the June 17 meeting between the two sides, as Seoul saw it and as it was reported by a recent analysis, will consist of the following four major points: (1) contributing to the normalization of inter-Korean relations and an increase in mutual trust; (2) playing an active role in inducing North Korea to change its attitude on the nuclear issue; (3) preparing a springboard to the second take-off of inter-Korean relations; and,

(4) preparing a groundwork for developing substantive and future-oriented inter-Korean relations.²⁹

From this writer’s perspective the significance of the Chung-Kim exchanges boils down to the following three points. First, Seoul has provided the North, which was hesitant initially, a “face saving” device to climb down from the tree, so to speak, “with necessary justifications for its decision to return to the Six-Party Talks and contributed to the increasing possibility for the resumption of the Six-Party Talks.” Moreover, Seoul was able to enhance North Korea’s understanding of its “important proposal” and would expect that “it will serve as a turning point for the peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue.” The Roh Moo-hyun’s offer of good offices between Washington and Pyongyang, a controversial diplomatic gesture, has also come true in a way, as Seoul sees it.

Second, the Seoul government considers its success as enhancing the North’s understanding of the Roh’s “Participatory Government’s Policy for Peace and Prosperity” and using it as a leverage for further developing inter-Korean relations. It also claims to have laid a fresh foundation for full consultations on measures for easing military tension and establishing peace in the West Sea “by agreeing, in principle, to hold general-level military talks and talks by fishery-officials.” Also, by agreeing on holding video reunions of separated family members, Seoul claims to have created a new turning point for resolving the separated family issue.

Third, the Seoul government claims to have agreed “to improve the culture of inter-Korean dialogue” that is “based on principles and trust” and thereby “have begun to establish a new routine for inter-Korean relations.” As a result the Seoul policy, according to the press release, has been one of sharing an understanding for the need to upgrade inter-Korean relations.³⁰

The Challenges for Implementing Unification Strategy

It is one thing to have a set of inter-Korean agreements, which is often largely political in nature with a set of hidden agenda and motives, but it is an entirely separate matter to be able to live up to the promises by putting the agreements into a workable implementation plan of action. Apart from the

exchanges between Kim Jong-Il and the ex-ROK Unification Minister, as regards the ways of implementing the terms of agreement as already noted in the preceding discussion, Chung was on record as having explained to Kim that the Roh Moo-hyun Administration would take “practical and progressive steps” for normalizing inter-Korean relations.

Now that inter-Korean understanding and relations have been enhanced at the government level, as a result of the exchange of views between the two sides, the challenges for implementing a unification strategy by the respective Koreas will still need to be addressed squarely in the light of the past practices and future aspirations. We turn next to an analysis and discussion of the policy process and dynamics of North Korea’s unification strategy, as related to the South Korean unification politics and policies.

“Know Your Adversary and Know Yourself”

The Kim Jong-Il Government’s Policy toward South Korea, the primary focus of this article, has remained constant over the years, upholding consistently the policy guidelines laid out by his father in 1993 in terms of the ten-point platform on Korean reunification.³¹ The first two points emphasize, respectively, the “great unity of the whole nation” and “patriotism and the spirit of national independence,” as follows:

- A unified state, independent, peaceful and neutral, should be founded through the great unity of the whole nation (item 1).
- Unity should be based on patriotism and the spirit of national independence (item 2).

The Korean Central News Agency report on April 7, 1993, confirmed that Kim Il Sung’s ten-point program for reunification was subsequently adopted as the new law of the land by its parliament, during the fifth session of the ninth Supreme People’s Assembly, on April 7, 1993.

The DPRK Constitution says, in its preamble, that Kim Il Sung is “the eternal President of the Republic” and that “the DPRK and the entire Korean people . . . (will) defend and carry forward his ideas . . . and complete the Juche revolution under the leadership of the Workers’ Party of Korea.”³² The “Socialist

Constitution of DPRK,” as revised on September 5, 1998, is an elaborate set of documents, with a total of 166 separate articles organized into each of the seven individual chapters, ranging from politics, economy, culture, national defense, fundamental rights and duties of citizens, and the structure of the state, to specific provisions on the national emblem, flag, anthem, capital, etc. What is noteworthy in its preamble is an accent on Kim Il Sung’s alleged contribution toward the cause of Korean reunification, as follows:

Comrade Kim Il Sung, while turning the Republic into a mighty fortress for national reunification, indicated fundamental principles and methods for national reunification, developed the national reunification movement into a pan-national movement, and opened up a way for that cause, to be attained by the united strength of the entire nation.³³

North Korea has become a “Socialist Hermit Kingdom” where the father-son, through a hereditary succession, reign.³⁴ The people are indoctrinated and regimented; every home has the two portraits on the wall praising the Great Leader (deceased in July 1994) and the Dear Leader (as Kim is known today). The people listen to an audio speaker broadcasting propaganda, at six o’clock each morning, telling them how lucky they are. “A hermetic seal is the main reason (why) the Kim dynasty has survived for long,” as the *New York Times* columnist recently reported from Pyongyang. The “central paradox” of North Korea is that “No government in the world today is more brutal or has failed its people more abjectly, yet it appears to be in solid control, and may even have substantial popular support.”³⁵ Under these circumstances the outsiders, including the United States and ROK, should not be so “foolish” as to count on North Korea’s imminent “regime collapse.” Yet, they must be also aware not to be “sucked in” by Pyongyang’s ruthless strategy of regime survival, through an ambitious WMD program of nuclear blackmail and brinkmanship, with diplomatic offenses. They pursue lucrative “handouts” from the South and count on a “free ride” from the West.³⁶

Facing political changes in South Korea’s Sixth Republic in terms of democratization, with the new administrations of Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo-hyun pursuing their engagement policy

toward the North, the Kim Jong-II Government has naturally come to adopt a more flexible posture of tactical adjustments and forward-looking moves toward the South. But Pyongyang's policy toward the South has largely remained consistent without abandoning its fundamental strategic goals and policy objectives toward Korean reunification that Kim Il Sung laid down in 1993.

The latest episode on the meeting of the ex-ROK Unification Minister with the North Korean leader in Pyongyang, on June 17, 2005, can be assessed from the broad historical perspectives and context of inter-Korean relations. It will illustrate both continuity and changes, if any, in the North Korean policy toward South Korea today.

“It Requires Two to Tango Diplomatically”

The above cliché is an apt metaphor applicable to the business of diplomacy in international relations as well as to inter-Korean relations. Hence, the successful execution of an inter-Korean agreement as shown in the Chung-Kim exchanges, including the resumption of the stalemated Six-Party Talks on the North Korean nuclear standoff as well as the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, will ultimately depend on what the DPRK will be prepared to do, and how sincerely and faithfully the North Korean leadership will be in implementing the terms of agreement.

Prior to the Pyongyang festival of June 15, 2005, inter-Korean relations had remained stalemated for almost eight months since August 2004. There were three reasons for the lull in inter-Korean relations. Seoul's refusal to allow South Korean civic group activists to visit Pyongyang to mark the tenth anniversary of the death of North Korea's former leader Kim Il Sung in early July; an airlift of 468 North Korean refugees to Seoul in late July; and the revelation in August by the Roh Government of two small-scale nuclear experiments undertaken by South Korea in the past years.³⁷

To ascertain Kim Jong-II's policy toward South Korea, a careful reading and analysis of the 2005 New Year's joint editorial provided an important clue as to the policy guidelines and future direction of the North Korean policy. A joint editorial was carried on New Year's Day in newspapers published by the

North's three key institutions, the Korean Workers' Party, the People's Army and the Kimilsung Socialist Youth League.³⁸ This practice of publishing a joint editorial came into vogue in 1995, replacing an earlier practice of Kim Il Sung's annual new year's message that he had personally delivered until he died in 1994.

It is no coincidence and not surprising that a parallel can be drawn between the Kim Jong-II's policy toward South Korea and the Kim Il Sung's own perception and perspectives on Korea's future and reunification that included his assessment of inter-Korean relations. In this regard the following proclamation by Kim Il Sung in 1993, as part of his ten-point platform on Korean unification, will be appropriate for grasping Kim Jong-II's own formulation of his policy toward South Korea today.³⁹

- Unity should be achieved on the principle of promoting coexistence, co-prosperity, and common interest and subordinating everything to the cause of national reunification (item 3).
- All manner of political disputes that foment division and confrontation between the fellow countrymen should be stopped and unity achieved (item 4).
- They should dispel fears of invasion from the south and from the north prevailing over communism and communization altogether and believe in and (have) unity with each other (item 5).
- They should set store by democracy and join hands on the road to national reunification, not rejecting each other for the difference in isms and principles (item 6).

From Pyongyang's perspective South Korea's turn to “democracy” is not only welcome but its new engagement policy toward the North is an act of “join(ing) hands on the road to national reunification, (and) not rejecting each other for difference in isms and principles,” as stipulated by item 6 above of Kim Il Sung's ten-point platform on Korean unification.⁴⁰

On New Year's Day in 2005, the editorial presented a slogan that would signal the direction of inter-Korean relations in 2005. The North stressed inter-Korean cooperation, saying the year 2005 marked the fifth anniversary of the inter-Korean summit,

and the joint declaration in June 2000. "Let's advance holding high the flag of cooperation for national independence, cooperation for peace against war and cooperation for reunification and patriotism." This theme of "cooperation for national independence and peace" can be interpreted as urging Seoul to cooperate with Pyongyang for the withdrawal of U.S. armed forces in the South.⁴¹

A joint editorial also emphasized a need to step up bilateral cooperation in economic fields and exchanges of civic groups in 2005, saying, "The organizations of people from all walks of life and figures in the North and the South and overseas should achieve solidarity and alliance on the principle of placing the common interests of the nation above anything else."⁴²

It is doubtful that North Korea's policy toward the South will change because of, or despite, what happened in the 2005 Chung-Kim exchanges on inter-Korean dialogue. The editorial said in this respect that "All the fellow countrymen in the North, the South and abroad should make a fresh advance in accomplishing the cause of national reunification this year under the uplifted banner of the joint declaration."⁴³ This stance of adhering to the Kim Il Sung line of "great national unity" and "national independence (items 1 and 2 respectively) were reflected and reinforced in the 2005 New Year's editorial.

The strategic moves made by Pyongyang have had advantages of two types. First, the economic incentives offered by the Roh Moo-hyun Government in the South, in terms of delivering economic aid like fertilizer and the promotion of inter-Korean economic exchanges, like the Kaesong industrial complex across the DMZ, will be used as valuable economic resources for strengthening domestic infrastructure building, thereby promoting its stated domestic agenda of "building the Kangsong Taeguk" via entrapment of the South economically.

Second, the diplomatic payoff of "face-saving" for the North to reverse its boycott and agree to resume the stalled Six-Party Talks will end up strengthening Pyongyang's bargaining and negotiation stance on the nuclear issue at the Six-Party Talks. The newly acquired inter-Korean agreement and understanding with South Korea's Roh Moo-hyun administration can be used as a tool of Pyongyang's balancing act and wedge driving

between Seoul and its allies in Washington and Tokyo, as well as pressuring Seoul to move closer toward Beijing and Moscow.

Confronted by the challenges posed by North Korea's steadfast and aggressive unification policy and strategy toward the South, the policymakers in Seoul will need to decide for themselves how to engage the North without appeasement and simply giving in to their demands. North Korea in a way is keeping the South on a leash in the name of upholding "great national unity" and "national independence."

The Mt. Kungang tourism project, started in 1998, provides an apt illustration of how and why South Korea is held on a leash by the North Korean strategy for survival. Set in a remote region, without allowing contact with the local residents, it is characterized by some critics as a "barbed wire guided tour." That North Korea collects from each South Korean tourist a US\$100 admission fee is an example of North Korean authorities' rent seeking and free rider behavior.

Will Seoul's "Forceful Persuasion" Bear Its Intended Fruits?

The answer to this important question will depend on what North Korea will be prepared to do next on denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and the peaceful resolution of the nuclear standoff with the United States. It will also depend on what the Seoul's policymakers will do next toward North Korea, which has been in a dire need of economic aid and food assistance from abroad. In a way Roh's Prime Minister Lee Hae-chan was correct when he was quoted as saying that "The inter-Korean relationship has never been so stable: loudspeakers have been removed from the DMZ and the number of South Koreans visiting the North has surpassed one million," compared with the two Koreas in the past using the speakers to blast propaganda across the no-man's land.⁴⁴

So long as Kim Jong-Il's policy toward South Korea is based on the strategy and tactics of upholding the principles of its own version of national reunification, however, the Seoul government must watch out for the unintended consequences for fostering the pro-North Korean regime sentiment in the South in the days ahead. There is a danger in the optimistic scenario of what may or may not happen to the Kim Jong-Il regime in the

North. Seoul's Prime Minister Lee has also been quoted as saying, "I think the North Korean regime should not collapse" because his administration was "watching over and managing all things in a democratic way, so that it doesn't follow the footsteps of previous governments. . ."⁴⁵ In this regard it is relevant to ascertain the mindset and perception of the ROK decision makers including the president and his aides on their views on the current status of inter-Korean relations.

In the light of these upbeat perspectives and perceptions shared by the ROK President and Prime Minister, it is no surprise that the ex-ROK unification minister who also serves as director of the national security council upholds a progressive and forwarding looking view toward inter-Korean relations in line with the so-called "proactive and leading efforts" for the resolution of the nuclear standoff on the Korean peninsula. Here is an analysis and self-appraisal by the Seoul government regarding the role performed by the Roh's "special envoy" toward Chairman Kim Jong-Il.

The unification Minister, Chung Dong-young, personally assessed the June 15 inter-Korean joint celebration and requested the dispatch of the North Korean government delegation on the meaningful occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the August 15 National Liberation Day. Chairman Kim Jong-Il responded that he would send a North Korean government delegation consisting of important officials. Conspicuously lacking in this exchange, however, was a request from Seoul for Pyongyang's delegation to be split, like Seoul's, between official and civilian groups.

The dual composition of the South Korean delegation at the June 15 "Pyongyang Festival for National Unification," split between the official and civilian groups, to be joined by an overseas contingency of the pro-Pyongyang compatriots abroad, was no accident but a carefully choreographed and deliberate arrangement made so as to uphold the North's principle of "great national unity."

In anticipation of further progress in inter-Korean relations, Kim Il Sung wanted to suggest a way of addressing the challenge of reunification at a future date. Included in the ten-point platform on Korean reunification proclaimed by Kim Il Sung in 1993, for instance, had been the following guidelines:⁴⁶

- They should protect material and spiritual wealth of individual persons and organizations and encourage them to be used favorably for the promotion of great national unity (item 7)
- The whole nation should understand, trust and unite with one another through contacts, travel, and dialogues (item 8).
- The whole nation in the North and the South and overseas should strengthen solidarity with one another on the way to national reunification (item 9).
- Those who have contributed to the great unity of the nation and to the cause of national reunification should be highly estimated (item 10).

This document of Kim Il Sung's ten-point platform on Korean reunification taken as a whole contains some of the familiar themes like "the unity of the whole nation," national independence, democracy, and solidarity. Appearing afresh are such eye-catching themes as to promote "coexistence, coprosperity, and common interests" (point 3), to "dispel fears of invasion from the South, and from the North" (point 5), "rejecting each other for the difference in isms and principles" (item 6), and to "trust and unite with one another through contacts, travels, and dialogue" (point 8). Conspicuously lacking in this document were an accent on "urgency" and the counsel on "immediate" moves and actions toward reunification of the country.⁴⁷ Pyongyang seems to have taken an intermediary and longer-term perspective on inter-Korean relations in lieu of an earlier stance of an "urgent" and "immediate" reunification of North and South Korea.

While sustaining its own unification policy of "peace and prosperity" with strategic visions, the Seoul government must put into effect its forwarding looking posture of coercive diplomacy, as articulated by the ex-ROK Unification Minister during his encounter with the North's Kim Jong-Il. Seoul has offered three kinds of sweeteners to Pyongyang so as to entice North Korea to come to the fourth round of the Six-Party Talks: 1) an immediate delivery of fertilizers to the North, increasing from 150,000 tons to 300,000 tons as agreed on at the 15th ministerial talks in Seoul, in June 2005 ; 2) the delivery of the

rice shipment to the North of up to 500,000 tons as government loans, by purchasing the rice from world marketplace, as agreed on the economic ministers talks in Seoul in July; and, 3) a promise to provide financial incentives and energy to the North including, electricity and heavy oils subsumed under Chung's "important proposal" to Kim Jong Il.

By June 2005, North Korea was clearly under mounting international pressures to reverse its stance on boycotting the Six-Party Talks and to make a strategic choice on whether to accept or reject the U.S./ROK demands on abandoning its nuclear weapons program. During the June summit meeting in Washington, U.S. President George W. Bush was quoted as stressing to President Roh Moo-hyun the need for both a carrot and stick in approach to revolving the North Korean nuclear dispute.⁴⁸

The success of coercive diplomacy exerted by the combined efforts of Washington and Seoul "may depend on whether the initial coercive action or threat stands alone or [is] part of a broader credible threat to escalate pressure further if necessary." The central task of coercive diplomacy, which the United States and ROK are jointly pursuing toward North Korea, is "to create in the opponent the expectation of costs of sufficient magnitude to erode his motivation to continue what he is doing."⁴⁹

The combination of the security threat posed by the Bush Administration's action of sending a B-1 bomber squadron to the U.S. Kunsan Air Force base in South Korea in May 2005, and the implied economic incentive package contained in the Seoul government's "important proposal," would have given enough signals to the North Korean leadership in Pyongyang, lest they misunderstood and misconstrued the serious intent of use of both stick and carrot to press on diplomatic and peaceful settlement of the nuclear dispute with the North.

Now, with the current status of inter-Korean relations six years after the 2000 historical inter-Korean summit, it remains to be seen what the future of North-South Korean relations will be six years from now on. Will tomorrow's inter-Korean relations (beyond the Six-Party Talks settlement of the North Korean nuclear standoff) break new ground, or will it remain essentially unchanged? Will it make progress smoothly, as anticipated by

the Seoul Government, in the remaining tenure of the Roh Moo-hyun administration? It remains to be seen, whether the Kim regime itself will be able to survive or even outlive the Roh administration, which will end in February 2008.

Following the June 15 joint celebration, the August 15, 2005 joint celebration was expected to serve as an opportunity for advancing North-South Korean relations, as well as for contributing to the establishment of a new model for exchanges and cooperation, in which both government officials and civilians were expected to participate jointly with Korean compatriots abroad. In this regard the June 17 Pyongyang exchange provides a useful bench mark in the annals of inter-Korean relations, in four specific ways.

First, Minister Chung proposed appropriately to resume general-level military talks and holding fishery talks which would contribute to the establishment of peace and stability in the West Sea as well as increasing mutual interests through cooperation in the field of fisheries. Chairman Kim, in response, reportedly mentioned the fact that consultations for easing military tensions and especially for establishing peace in the West Sea should be held through general-level military talks. It is expected that consultations on peace in the West Sea through general-level military talks and full-scale cooperation in the fishery field would contribute to the establishment of peace in the West Sea. The meeting of military generals was held on March 1, 2006 in Panmunjom, but no agreement on reducing tension was reached.

Second, the ex-Unification Minister Chung also proposed to resume the process of reuniting of separated families, which was stalled for one year, in commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the August 15 National Liberation Day. Considering the fact that there are approximately 120,000 separated families on the waiting list for reunions, and 5,000 family members die each year, the South proposed to hold a reunion by exchanging video tapes containing images of lost families.

Chairman Kim agreed on a reunion of separated families on the occasion of the August 15 National Liberation Day but at a remote location at Mt. Kumgang. Regarding the suggestion of a

video reunion, he said, "It is an interesting and fascinating suggestion," and "Let's have a first video reunion on this August 15." Video reunions, if conducted in full-swing, would open a new chapter for the reunion of separated families. The agreement to hold a reunion of separated families and a video reunion reflects one side pressing and the other side acquiescing. The separated family reunion meeting was held at Mt. Kumgang in March 2006, but the first of the two events proved to be controversial over the "abductee" issue and censorship by the North of the South Korean press coverage of it.

Third, Minister Chung, pointing out the inconvenience of the current indirect air route between Seoul and Pyongyang, proposed to open a direct air route. In response, Chairman Kim stated, "We don't have to use the indirect air route over the controversial West Sea. Let's consult on that matter and open a direct air route over the land." If a new direct air route crossing over the Military Demarcation Line opens between Seoul and Pyongyang, it will not only save time and cost but will also contribute to easing military tensions on the Korean Peninsula. In response to Minister Chung's mentioning of holding a second round of Inter-Korean Summit Talks, Chairman Kim said "it will be held when the time is ripe for it." Kim Jong Il was clearly seeking to be diplomatic, acting as an agreeable host.

Finally, Minister Chung suggested that the culture surrounding the inter-Korean dialogue should be improved so that it would be a forum for substantive consultations and not for exchanging inefficient, wasteful verbal disputes. Sharing Minister Chung's views, Chairman Kim also reportedly stated that the inter-Korean dialogue had so far been filled with empty well-wishing remarks and verbal disputes, and that the inter-Korean dialogue culture should therefore be improved.

Since Chairman Kim responded positively to the need to improve the manner in which inter-Korean talks have been held, we expect to see more efficient operation of the talks with an emphasis on substantive consultation. Such improvement in inter-Korean talks, however, remains to be seen. If true, this will serve as an opportunity for establishing new inter-Korean relations, thereby leaving behind the old-fashioned practice of inter-Korean relations of the past years.

Trust, But Verify?

In the absence of mutual trust and genuine reconciliation between the two sides, the Korean peninsula continues to remain the last Cold War frontier with its unsolved legacy. On the subject of Korea's future and reunification, what can be done and whether it will be done involve two separate questions. Whereas politics in theory relates to values, norms, and preferences, the question of practical politics also depends on facts, prejudices, and probabilities.⁵⁰

There is no indication, despite the June 2000 inter-Korean summit and its North-South declaration of June 15, that Kim Jong-II's North Korea has either modified or abandoned its reunification strategy and policy toward South Korea. Pyongyang's "revolutionary" reunification strategy, formulated in 1964, calls for the strengthening of the "three revolutionary capabilities: (1) creating a home base in the North to support all revolutionary activities in the South; (2) fostering strong revolutionary potential in the South, which is the mainstay of the Korean revolution; and (3) nurturing the world progressive potential as supportive forces for the Korean revolution."⁵¹ Since the presence of U.S. troops in South Korea poses an obstacle to its realization of this revolution-seeking strategy, Pyongyang continues to seek the withdrawal of U.S. ground troops from the South.

This strategy of Korean revolution, resorting to the use of force as necessary, has been upheld consistently as the KWP political line. This is counter balanced with a peaceful coexistence strategy of Korean reunification. Pyongyang's reunification policy has been based on the formula of establishing the Confederal Republic of Koryo, first presented by Kim Il Sung in August 1960, and formally proposed by him on October 10, 1980. This formula was designed to allow two different ideologies and governments to coexist in one state as a transitional process toward eventual unification.

Since there is a set of prerequisites that Pyongyang insists upon, the chance of this confederation or any others that North Korea harbors coming to fruition is rather low. Included in the list of North Korean demands are: the abolition of anti-

Communist laws in South Korea; the guarantee to protect all political activities by all political organizations, including Communist and pro-North Korean organizations in the South; the “democratization” (meaning social democracy) of South Korean society; and the conclusion of a DPRK-U.S. peace treaty with the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the South.

The North Korean state is often called *Yukyokdae Kukka* (or what Wada Haruki once called *Yugekitai Kokka*) or the Guerilla Band Dynasty as its founding leader Kim Il Sung had constituted it before he became the DPRK leader in 1948.⁵² As such, the North Koreans cannot relate to the norms and institutions of openness and reciprocal exchange. Instead, their rules and principles are based on a zero-sum game where only one-side can win. This is manifest in its brinkmanship strategy, a trademark of the DPRK’s diplomatic negotiation and bargaining.

A variance of what is called “United Front Strategy” of the communist movement has underscored the DPRK strategy toward South Korea on the reunification issue. The Committee on Reunification of the Fatherland (CRF), for instance, is the political arm of the KWP responsible for waging campaigns toward South Korea. Even if the KWP General Secretary Kim Jong-Il allegedly said that the preamble of the KWP, in reference to communization with the South, was to be rewritten, it is unclear whether such pledges made during the visit to Pyongyang by the ROK newspaper delegation in 2000 were ever to be carried out. Under this circumstance, South Korean domestic politics seem to be held hostage and placed on a leash by North Korea in the name of promoting reunification of the fatherland. The DPRK policies toward the outside, including South Korea, for instance, can be examined as an illustration of this strategy of deception and brinkmanship.

The “United Front,” according to the North Korean *Dictionary of Political Terminology* refers to “a political coalition of various political parties and social organizations as well as of individuals, formed for the purpose of opposing common enemies. . . . These tactics aim at isolating counter-revolutionary forces and nurturing auxiliary forces to assist the main revolutionary forces.”⁵³ Prudence requires that the ROK government be vigilant toward the security threat from the North

so long as these united front strategies and tactics continue to undermine the South and rally pro-North Korean elements in South Korea against the established forces.

Pyongyang’s grand strategy, in short, has been to prevail and to win the war over the South in the long run. The DPRK has been poised to launch a preemptive surprise attack on the South in a revolutionary war to unify the country by force, if necessary. This policy toward the South is something that was tried before but failed during the Korean War (1950–1953). For sometime thereafter combat troops have been deployed along the DMZ (demilitarized zone) facing the South.

Pyongyang’s military strategy has consistently been to create great turmoil in the South by launching simultaneous attacks on the front line and in the rear area in the early stages of a hypothetical war. The DPRK military operational strategy has been a quick strike to sweep the entire peninsula, with mechanized troops in tanks, armored vehicles, and self-propelled artillery. In addition to the regular forces, the North maintains the special forces of 100,000 men, which could be infiltrated by using underground tunnels, helicopters, speedboats and submarines.⁵⁴

The Past as Prologue: Will History Repeat Itself?

To tame the ambitious nuclear weapons program of the North Korean leader by turning the DPRK into a normal state through the Six-Party Talks settlement may take continued time and patience. Such a strategy may learn from the experience of trying to turn Libya and Iran toward the paths of adhering to international inspection. The official policies of the major powers are to support the process of inter-Korean dialogue and negotiation. But the major powers are also posturing to make sure that their respective security interests are not compromised as a result. The evolving balance of power in the region will, therefore, ultimately shape the form of Korea’s reunification and its future.⁵⁵ In this sense the past will be the prologue to the future of Korea.

Reunification of North and South Korea by peaceful means was the official policy line adopted by both Seoul and Pyongyang in their July 4, 1972, joint communiqué on North

South Korean dialogue. Inter-Korean dialogue and negotiation on reunification was held subsequently, on and off, on numerous occasions, but failed to achieve a breakthrough in establishing a *modus operandi* for overcoming the stalemate between the two sides.

The June 2000 North-South Korean summit in Pyongyang, and its adoption of a 5-points declaration, was no exception. Implementation of the North-South agreement terms, including family reunions and economic cooperation, has failed to materialize beyond the first six months following June 15, 2000.⁵⁶ Changes in external circumstances, such as the George W. Bush administration and the anti-terrorism war in the wake of the September 11 attack, were factors blamed by Pyongyang for a lack of progress, but a lack of trust and mutual confidence building measures were the basic obstacles to institutionalizing the peace process on the Korean peninsula. In this regard a framework of establishing new inter-Korean relations, as agreed in the June 17 Chung-Kim exchanges in Pyongyang, constitutes an important benchmark for peace-building on the Korean peninsula.

What challenges lie ahead for Korea's future and reunification? Instead of the scenario of Korean unification by peaceful means, through the modalities of inter-Korean dialogue, negotiation, and bargaining, the more likely scenario of Korean unification may be either by default (as in Germany) or by forceful means (as in Vietnam or the likely scenario of China over Taiwan). The security reality of the Korean peninsula, however, would dictate that the Korean people should avoid either one of these two alternative paths followed by their neighboring countries. This is because another Korean war is more likely to be an-all out war and, in all probability, a nuclear conflagration involving the major world powers of the United States and China.

Fortunately, the renewal of the Korean War today is less likely under the present circumstance of economic globalization. When and if crises arises, the conflict the next time around will not be so much a repeat of the Korean War of 1950–1953 as a new and unexpected format for political experimentation that may have to do with a domestic backlash against economic

globalization or a reversal in political democratization in the South as well as a military coup in the North or the death of the North Korean leader.

The issue of political succession of leadership in North Korea will also likely come to the fore again. Kim Jong-Il has become a senior citizen following the celebration of his sixty-first birthday on February 16, 2003. When his father became sixty-one years-old thirty years earlier, Kim Jong-Il dedicated Pyongyang's Arch of Triumph. Upon his father's seventieth birthday, Pyongyang's Juche Tower was also presented to honor his father. Whether Kim Jong-Il will embrace reunification by relinquishing his hold on power seems unlikely.

Yet, the preparatory work for an eventual Korean reunification "by default" can and must continue. This will take place not only as part of a bilateral agenda between Seoul and Pyongyang, as the 2000 Korean summit has proven, but also as part of a multilateral agenda of cooperation and coordination between the two Koreas and the major powers with active interests in the Korean peninsula. The first three sessions of the Six-Party Talks did not succeed. The second and third sessions of the Six-Party Talks on North Korea's nuclear standoff met in Beijing, on February 25 and on June 22, 2004, respectively. The fourth round of the talks, after a lengthy recess, was held July 26 to August 7 and September 13 to 19, 2005, which produced a 6-points statement on the principle that reaffirms North Korea "abandon all nuclear weapons and programs" in exchange for the U.S. stating "it has no intention of attacking" the North. The subsequent fifth round of talks so as to implement the agreed September 19 statement on the principle, however, has not been called into session at the time of this writing.⁵⁷

North Korea's pursuit of ambitious nuclear weapons program, and its diplomatic standoff with the United States and South Korea, makes it a primary focus of international politics and inter-Korean relations. Ironically, this high stakes nuclear policy dispute reflects a determination by the Kim Jong-Il government of North Korea to address both perceived security threats and worsening economic crises. A type of nuclear brinkmanship and blackmail was intended by the Kim regime to

assure the regime survival and to generate much needed funding through international trade in armaments.

Conclusion

The Kim Jong-II Government of North Korea has set “the Building of the Kangsong Taeguk” and “the Military First Politics” as the twin policy goals and strategies for addressing the challenges confronting the DPRK’s overcoming both the security threat from abroad and the economic shortfalls and food shortages at home. Therefore, the latest inter-Korean agreement in Pyongyang between ROK Unification Minister and Chairman Kim Jong-II, so as to bring about a diplomatic breakthrough on the stalled Six-Party Talks in Beijing – in terms of enticing North Korea to return to the Fifth Round of the Beijing talks – may be taken as another strategic move undertaken by Pyongyang for “regime survival.” At a subsequent news conference in Seoul, July 12, Chung revealed that one of his offers to Kim Jong-II included an idea of “stringing power lines across the border to points in North Korea and supply up to 2,000 megawatts of electricity – helping to alleviate a desperate energy shortage” of the North.

Likewise, the Kim government diplomacy is aimed at not only balancing the major powers’ competing interests against each other, such as between Beijing and Moscow in favor of Pyongyang, but also fostering a favorable security environment for the North by wedge driving between Seoul and its allies of Washington and Tokyo.

Seoul’s “important proposal” to North Korea, an offer to provide 2 million kilowatts of electricity per year, requires an explanation. Code-named as “Plan Ahn Jung-kun,” this proposal has been in the pipeline of Seoul’s National Security Council since January, 2005 until it was made known during the ROK Unification Minister meeting with Kim Jong-II on June 17, 2005 and to U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill the following day, but made public to the press on July 12. This plan was made easy for South Korea because Pyongyang had already asked Seoul in 2000 to provide power directly and the KEDO had already spent US\$1.12 billion before the plan of building the light-water reactors in the North was aborted in 2003. The plan

calls for using the unspent funds earmarked for the reactors for paying for the transmission equipment and power grids.⁵⁸

Once committing itself to supplying electric power to the North, Minister Chung stated that it would be difficult to cut it off unilaterally, because the problem of suspending power supplies would be decided primarily within the framework of the Six-Party Talks as he sees it.⁵⁹ This plan, from the United States’ perspective, is actually an extension of the offer already on the table for which “everybody deserves a good deal of credit for convincing the North Koreans.”⁶⁰ It is clear, however, that the Kim Jong-II Government will continue to defend its “self-righteous” stance and action based on the North Korean grand strategy on Korea’s future and reunification, as laid down by his father under the ten-point platform on Korean reunification, under the banner of upholding “great national unity.”⁶¹

Postscript

Since this paper was written, three major events have taken place with bearing on inter-Korean relations. First, the ROK Unification Minister Chung Dong-Young resigned in December 2005, and a new Unification Minister --Lee Jong-Seok-- was inaugurated on February 10, 2006. Lee, as former deputy director of Roh’s National Security Council director, is expected to continue his “policy of peace and prosperity” toward North Korea.

Second, the Six-Party Talks on North Korea’s nuclear program continues to remain stalemated, primarily due to Pyongyang’s boycott of returning to the Fifth Round of talks in Beijing. A benchmark breakthrough Agreement on Principles was attained, however, on September 19, 2005 during the Fourth Round of talks. This is intended to keep the Korean peninsula nuclear-free by giving security assurance to North Korea and economic payoffs in exchange for its agreeing to abandon an on-going nuclear weapons program. Pyongyang’s demand for the Bush Administration lifting of financial sanctions imposed early in September 2005 on China’s Macao-based Banco Delta Asia, on an alleged counterfeiting of the U.S. currency (the so-called supernotes) by the North and its money laundering activities, has

led to this deadlock and possible breakdown of the Six-Party Talks.

Third, the North Korea's test-firing of seven missiles into the East Sea (or the Sea of Japan) on July 5, 2006 was met by hostile international reactions, including the UN Security Council's unanimous Resolution 1695, of imposing sanctions on the North's act of provocation. An immediate casualty of the missile controversy is the rupture of Inter-Korean Ministerial Talks.

The 19th meeting of Inter-Korean Ministerial talks met in Busan, on July 11, and was attended by chief delegates Lee Jong-seok from Seoul and Kwon Ho-ung from Pyongyang. Three day scheduled talks was cut short when the Northern delegation left one day earlier after realizing that Seoul's offer to deliver rice and fertilizer to the North on humanitarian ground, an initial agenda of the talk, was not likely to materialize. The Seoul side asked for a quid-pro-quo offer from the North, in the form of restoring a missile test moratorium and returning to the six-party without further delay. Pyongyang rejected both by insisting that the two issues are separate and unrelated to the purpose of this talk.

Endnotes

¹This is a revised version of the paper presented at the International Council on Korean Studies (ICKS) Annual Conference 2005, "Korea and Major Powers: The Quest for a Nuclear-Free Korea," Sheraton Crystal City Hotel, Arlington, VA, USA, August 5-6, 2005.

²See: Young Whan Kihl and Hong Nack Kim, eds, *North Korea: The Politics of Regime Survival*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2005. The contributing authors to this volume take upon themselves the research task of validating some of these and related hypotheses regarding the North Korean regime survival strategy in domestic politics and foreign relations.

³Relations between North and South Korea are sometimes called intra-Korean rather than inter-Korean relations. However, the latter designation is used here to keep up with the common practice. For a recent, interesting and perceptive, analysis on inter-Korean relations, see: Aidian Foster-Carter, "Inter-Korean Relations," in B. C. Koh, ed, *North Korea and the World: Explaining Pyongyang's Foreign Policy*. Seoul: Kyungnam University Press, 2004: 285-326. Also see a

collection of essays in Samuel S. Kim, ed., *Inter-Korean Relations: Problems and Prospects*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

⁴This dramatic episode of an abortive assassination attempt of the ROK President Park Chung Hee, on January 21, 1968, involved 31 armed infiltrators across the DMZ, with 29 killed, one killing himself, and one captured.

⁵For the text of the joint communiqué, see, Young Whan Kihl, ed., *Korea and the World: Beyond the Cold War*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994: 341-42. Also, for my analysis of the Korean response to major-power rapprochement, see: Young Whan Kihl, *Politics and Policies in Divided Korea*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984: 55-59.

⁶Two years earlier, on October 9, 1983, the ROK President Chun Doo Hwan was subject to an assassination attempt in Rangoon. He survived but 17 high officials of his visiting delegation to Burma did not.

⁷Interviews with North Korean officials and scholars in Pyongyang, July 1981. On the report of this trip to North Korea, see Young Whan Kihl, "The Issue of Korean Unification," in C. I. Eugene Kim and B.C. Koh, eds., *Journey to North Korea: Personal Perceptions*. Research Papers and Policy Studies 8, Berkeley, University of California Institute of East Asian Studies, 1983: 99-117 . Also see Young Whan Kihl, "North Korea: A Reevaluation," *Current History* 81, 474 (April 1982): pp. 155-159, 180-182.

⁸It is no accident that the underground movement in South Korea, which was actively supported and controlled by North Korea, was called the Revolutionary Party for Reunification.

⁹For further details on North Korea's unification policy, see Kihl, 1984: 209-216.

¹⁰For the texts of these two agreements, see Kihl, 1994: 343-348.

¹¹For my analysis of these episodes of inter-Korean diplomacy, see Kihl, 1994: 134-35. Also see Young Whan Kihl and Peter Hayes, eds, *Peace and Security in Northeast Asia: The Nuclear Issue and the Korean Peninsula*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997.

¹²For my analysis of each of the five-points, see Young Whan Kihl, "Overcoming the Cold War Legacy in Korea? The Inter-Korean Summit One Year Later." *International Journal of Korean Studies* 5, no. 3 (Fall-Winter, 2001): 1-24.

¹³See, for instance, Aidan Foster-Carter, “Sunshine Sunk?” *Comparative Connections*, vol. 4, No. 2 (2002).

¹⁴On the late 19th century major power rivalry over the Korean peninsula, see Key Hiuk Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order: Korea, Japan, and the Chinese Empire, 1860-1882*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980. For my own perspective on Kim Jong-Il’s North Korea today, see “The Staying Power of the Socialist Hermit Kingdom,” in Kihl and Kim, *North Korea*, 2005, Op. Cit.

¹⁵“DPRK President Proposes 10-Point Platform for Great Unity of Korean Nation,” *Korean Report* (Tokyo), No. 272 (April 1993): 1-6; *North Korea News* (Seoul), No. 679 (April 19, 1993): 1-2. On the text of this ten-point platform on Korean reunification, see Kihl, 1994: 149.

¹⁶“Unification Minister Meets North Korean Head of State.” *Digital Chosunilbo.Com*, June 16, 2005.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸“The Meaning and Results of the ROK-U.S. Summit,” Newsletter Service, Korea.Net, June 16, 2005. Also see “Significance of Presidential Special Envoy Chung Dong-young’s Visit to North Korea,” *Korea Policy Review*, July 2006. Seoul: Korea.Net: 10-12,

¹⁹Norimitsu Onish, “North Korea’s Leader Says He’s Ready to Resume Talks to End Nuclear Standoff.” *The New York Times*, June 18, 2005. A5; Sohn Jie-ae, “Kim Meets South Korean Official,” CNN.Com, June 17, 2003; “Hopes Raised Over Korean Détente,” CNN.Com, June 15, 2005.

²⁰Donald Gregg and Don Oberdorfer, “A Moment to Seize with North Korea,” *The Washington Post*, June 22, 2005.

²¹The ROK Press Release, “Results and Significance of Presidential Special Envoy Chung Dong-young’s visit to North Korea,” June 19, 2005. Seoul: Ministry of Unification. http://www.korea.net/news/news/newsView.asp?serial_no=200506190 15 Also, see: “Significance of Presidential Special Envoy Chung Dong-young’s Visit to North Korea,” *Korea Policy Review* July 2005. Seoul: The Korea Overseas Information Service, 2005.

²²The ROK Press Release, Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴These and related statements attributed to Kim Jong-Il must be taken with a grain of salt because they were context specific. One source

indicates that alleged reference to Bush was made by Kim Jong-Il in reference to his previous meetings in Pyongyang with the Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and their characterization of George W. Bush as such. If their judgment on Bush is true, “Should I call him His Excellency?” Kim was quoted as asking.

²⁵These are self-serving statements only action, not verbal rhetoric, can substantiate. In this regard the ROK Unification Minister was reportedly on a trip to Washington to give his briefing to the Bush administration officials including Vice President Dick Cheney.

²⁶Interestingly, there was no mention of Kim Jong-Il’s possible return visit to Seoul, as a quid-pro-quo, as was promised in the June 2000 inter-Korean summit. Instead, former ROK President Kim Dae Jung was reportedly to be invited to revisit Pyongyang, scheduled as a train ride to the North summer of 2006..

²⁷“Significance of Presidential Envoy Chung Dong-young’s Visit to North Korea,” *Korea Policy Review* July 2005, Seoul: The Korea Overseas Information Service: 11-12.

²⁸Lim Dong-won was an architect of Kim Dae Jung’s Sunshine policy. He and Park Jae-kyu, both of them as former Unification Ministers, were included in the luncheon hosted by Kim Jong-Il.

²⁹The reference to the 4-point significance of Minister Chung’s visit to North Korea has been added subsequently to the ROK Press Release of June 19, 2005. See *Korea Policy Review*, Op. Cit., 12.

³⁰ROK Press Release, Ibid.

³¹See endnote 14 above. For the text of Kim’s ten-point platform on Korean unification, see Kihl, 1994: 149.

³²For the text of the new “Socialist Constitution of DPRK,” as revised on September 5, 1998, see *A Handbook on North Korea*, 1st Revision, Seoul: Naewoe Press, 1998, 166-190.

³³Ibid., 167.

³⁴Kihl, *The Staying Power of the ‘Socialist Hermit Kingdom.’* Op. Cit.

³⁵Nicholas D. Kristof, “A Sucker Bet,” *New York Times*, July 17, 2005, WK-13.

³⁶“We’ll have regime change in America before we have regime change in North Korea,” according to Han S. Park. He is also quoted as

estimating that “30 percent of North Koreans have a stake in the system, and that most of the rest know so little about the outside world that they don’t realize how badly off they are.” Kristof, *Ibid.*

³⁷Steven Kim, “ROK’s Nuclear Experiments: A Successful Case of Alliance,” *International Journal of Korean Studies* 9-1 (Spring/Summer 2005), 127-142.

³⁸“Gists of Joint Editorial on New Year’s Day,” *Vantage Point*, 28-1 (January 2005): 24-28, 28; Nam Kwang-sik, “Inter-Korean Relations in 2005,” *Vantage Point*, 28-2 (February 2005): 8-9.

³⁹As for the remainder of Kim Il Sung’s ten-point platform on Korean reunification, in addition to the first two points as mentioned above in endnote 14, see Kihl, 1994: 149.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹Chong Bong-uk, “Key Policies for 2005,” *Vantage Point*, 28-1 (January 2005): 2-7, 8.

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³*Ibid.*

⁴⁴“Inter-Korean Ties Better Than Ever, Says PM,” *Digital Chosunilbo.Com*, June 8, 2005.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶See: Kihl, 1994: 149.

⁴⁷Kihl, 1994: 149.

⁴⁸“Bush Urged Carrot-and-Stick Approach to N. Korea,” *Digital Chosunilbo.Com*, June 17, 2005.

⁴⁹George, 1991: 11.

⁵⁰For my analysis of North Korea’s earlier strategy toward the South, see: “The Staying Power of the Socialist Hermit Kingdom,” in Kihl and Kim, eds., *North Korea: The Politics of Regime Survival*, passim, Op. Cit.

⁵¹*A Handbook on North Korea*, Op. Cit: 45.

⁵²Buzo, Adrian. *The Guerilla Dynasty: Politics and Leadership in North Korea*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999.

⁵³Pyongyang: the Social Science Printing House, October 1, 1970, as cited in *A Handbook on North Korea*, 128.

⁵⁴Bermudez, Joseph S., *Shield of the Great Leader: The Armed Forces of North Korea*. Canberra, Australia: Allen and Unwin, 2001; Bermudez, *North Korean Special Forces*, 2nd edition. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1998.

⁵⁵Young Whan Kihl, “Security on the Korean Peninsula: Continuity and Change,” *Security Dialogue* Volume 33, Number 1 (March 2002) 59-72; “The DPRK and Its Relations with the ROK.” in K. D. Oh, ed., *Korea Briefing 1997-1999* New York: The Asia Society and M. E. Sharpe, 2000: 123-145.

⁵⁶Kihl, “Overcoming the Cold War Legacy,” 1-24.

⁵⁷The bone of contention, that delays the resumption of the fifth round of Six-Party talks, has to do with Pyongyang’s demand that Washington lift the U.S. imposed financial sanction against an alleged counterfeiting of the U.S. currency and money laundering by North Korea.

⁵⁸“How They Came Up With the ‘Important Proposal,’” *Digital Chosunilbo.Com*, July 13, 2005.

⁵⁹“Seoul Can’t Cutoff Energy Aid to North: Minister,” *Digital Chosunilbo. Com*, July 13, 2005.

⁶⁰Joel Brinkley, “Rice Claims U.S. Role in Korean About-Face,” *New York Times*, July 14, 2005, A-8.

⁶¹Kim Jong-Il now defends his about-face on the nuclear standoff by saying that “the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula was the behest of (his father) President Kim Il Sung” and telling a visiting Chinese envoy that he was committed to a nuclear-free Korean peninsula. “Kim: I Want Nuclear-Free Peninsula,” *CNN.Com*, July 14, 2005.