

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Peter BREZÁNI The Kim Family Saga	3
Ralph A. COSSA North Korea Nuclear Stand-Off: (Still) Waiting for New Year's Eve	16
Leonid PETROV Russia's Power Politics and North Korea	27
Peter ĎURANA Hurdles of Japanese-North Korean Normalization.....	44
Axel BERKOFESKY EU-North Korea Relations – Engagement Course on Hold.....	63
REVIEWS	
The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives <i>By Shlomo Brom & Meir Elran (eds). Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2007.</i>	
Ivo SAMSON	78
Europe and the Recognition of New States in Yugoslavia <i>By Richard Caplan. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2005.</i>	
Zuzana LIŠIŇOVÁ	83
Európa a Turci. Úvahy nad zložitými vzťahmi (Europe and the Turks. Reflections on the Complicated Relations) <i>By Ingemar Karlsson. Bratislava: Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, 2008.</i>	
Igor ANDRĚ	86

Peter Brezáni

The Kim Family Saga

Summary: The very frequent downs of North Korean domestic socio-economic and political development determine the political and security situation, not only in the region of Northeast Asia, but also globally. Despite the effort of the international community, most of the issues regarding North Korea have not been solved and some have not even been addressed, largely due to the uncooperative and 'stubborn' attitude of DPRK leadership. This article argues that as long as the current leader, Kim Jong Il, is in power in North Korea promoting the ideology and realizing the policy that his late father imposed, the internal affairs and foreign policy of this isolated country will not mark any positive progress in the years to come.

There are still many countries around the world in which all – political, economic, social, cultural, or intellectual – activities are subordinated to the ideology, the policy and the free will of its leader/ruler. Such totalitarian regimes maintain their power by means of official ideology to which the general adherence is demanded. They are ruled by the single mass party that technically controls the state bureaucracy and is led by one man with absolute power. The regime exercises the monopoly over the control of the armed forces, the intelligence and the mass communication means. The state/party/leader possesses the central control of the entire economy and its direction. It also uses the surveillance and terror tactics to deter any opposition and usually deprives the citizens of the basic human rights.

There are certainly many examples of totalitarian regimes in the 20th century such as Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, Stalin's Soviet Union, Mao's China or Ceaușescu's Romania. However, it is very unlikely that nowadays

Peter Brezáni works as an analyst and editor at the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association.

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there is a country in the world, where the abovementioned characteristics would apply more to than to North Korea¹. It is perhaps the only country being so dependent on the character, nature and the free will of its leader. In North Korea, every single aspect of citizens' lives has been very strongly interconnected with their Great Leader (*Suryong*) Kim Il Sung and Dear Leader (*Yongdoya*) Kim Jong Il and their 'teachings'.

Thus, to understand North Korea, its policy and ideology one has to analyze, taking into the consideration also psychological and cultural aspects, the environment and historical context Kim Il Sung grew up in. The context that formed the personality and the character of the North Korean eternal president and later on his heir, Kim Jong Il. It is simply impossible to keep the life, experience and activities of both Kims apart from the past and present developments of North Korea.

This article aims to provide, the primarily Central European reader, with the basic facts and, due to the limited space, simplified contexts of the evolution of North Korea's unique political system. For better understanding, it chronologically deals with the Kim Il Sung's biographical path and its influence on North Korea's post-war developments, the establishment of absolute rule and the creation of a system that to a large extent is comparable to that of Stalin's. And yet, there is a very high probability that this system will be preserved in the foreseeable future. The article argues that as long as the current leader, Kim Jong Il, is in power in North Korea he will protect the strongly-rooted ideological legacy of his late father. Thus one should not expect any positive improvement in terms of political and socio-economic aspects of North Korean development, the recent progress in denuclearization process notwithstanding².

¹ North Korea is a short form of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or, in Korean, *Choson Minjujuui Inmin Konghwaguk*.

² As the article goes to print, North Korea handed over the declaration of its nuclear program to China. Thus the second phase of the denuclearization process was completed.

The Beginning

The person known throughout the world as Kim Il Sung (or Kim Ir Sen in the Central and Eastern Europe) was born Kim Song Ju on April 15, 1912 in Mangyongdae, southwest of downtown Pyongyang. As Don Oberdorfer did not forget to mention, it was the same day the *Titanic* sank.³ Very shortly after the *March First Movement*⁴ he followed his family to Manchuria⁵. Kim Song Ju, the eldest of three sons, was seven at the time. He returned to Pyongyang for a while and then returned to Manchuria at the age of thirteen. His formal schoolings ended in eighth grade, when he was expelled for alleged revolutionary activities.⁶ In the beginning of the 1930s he joined the so-called *Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army* and fought the Japanese in Manchuria until approximately 1941. It is important to note that he did so under Chinese command.⁷ (Kim Il Sung, however, became a commander of the *Second Directional Army* in the Jiandao province.) Since the Japanese army was overtaking Manchuria, in 1941, Kim and his fellow soldiers were forced to move to a Soviet army training camp near Khabarovsk.⁸ Kim stayed and fought in the Soviet Union Army until the end of the World War II.

There is a reason this part of Kim's life is mentioned here. These previous developments significantly formed the opinions and views of a young Kim

³ D. Oberdorfer *The Two Koreas. A Contemporary History*. (USA: Basic Books, 1997), p. 16.

⁴ March First Movement was the most visible display of the Korean independence movements during the early period of the Japanese occupation. The name refers to an March 1, 1919 when the core of the Korea independence movement gathered together and read the *Korean Declaration of Independence*.

⁵ His father was allegedly involved in the anti-Japanese activities, however, as some authors say, they were probably of little importance.

⁶ At the time, Japan was about to control Manchuria. Young Kim took part in anti-Japanese activities and he was imprisoned. More in the very comprehensive biography of Kim Il Sung: D.S. Suh *Kim Il Sung. The North Korean Leader*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

⁷ Official North Korean accounts claim that Kim Il Sung organized his first partisan group on April 25, 1932 and formed later on (1936) *Korean People's Revolutionary Army* – 'the predecessor' of the *Korean People's Army*. This information, however, was revealed not earlier than 1968. More in: D.S. Suh *Kim Il Sung. The North Korean Leader*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

⁸ At this time, he got married to Kim Jong Suk who on February 16, 1942 bore him his first son Kim Jong Il (he was also given a Russian name Yura) as well as his second son Kim Pyong Il (Shura) who died, however, in the swimming accident in 1947 in Pyongyang. The whereabouts of his daughter born in Pyongyang are not known. His wife died in 1949.

and laid very firm foundations to his style of leadership. Firstly, he left his homeland when he was seven and grew up in a rural environment without any intellectual impulses and contacts with Korea whatsoever. Secondly, in Manchuria, Kim was involved in anti-Japanese partisan activities. These are important for several other reasons. They certainly won him his first recognition (even though he was just one out of a number of other Korean partisans/fighters) and were successful enough for the Japanese to put the price on his head. These also were the activities of which the North Koreans trace their revolutionary traditions, and his partisan group as well as their ancestors or trainees of this group have constituted the core of the political leadership in DPRK until now.⁹ Thirdly, having experienced the life of the guerilla fighter/soldier, he became a self-confident, determined, persistent, cynical as well as a suspicious person trusting only very close associates; a person cherishing central leadership, requiring unconditional obedience, discipline and demanding respect. One has to also take into consideration the fact that he spent most of his time within a group of people who had no or very basic education, in forced isolation with no contact to the outside world. And finally, another impressive aspect that played a crucial role in North Korea's future, was the Soviet Union experience of young Kim where he witnessed the fast mobilization and post-revolutionary reconstruction.¹⁰

Usurping the Power

The surrender of Japan in Korea dates back to August 15, 1945 US troops entered Korea from the south and the Soviets from the north. As a matter of fact, the Soviets were supposed, in accordance with the *Yalta Agreement*, to accept the US idea for a five year long trusteeship for Korea¹¹. This concept appeared, however, to be in contradiction with the evident goal of 'Sovietizing' the northern part of the peninsula that followed. To achieve this goal, the Soviets needed to select a leader. As Suh Dae-Suk says, "the choice of Kim should not be understood as a complicated procedure. [...] The Soviet Union needed no Korean assistance for their objective of fighting the Japanese army. They needed

⁹ More on the issue in: D.S. Suh Kim Il Sung. *The North Korean Leader*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), Part I.

¹⁰ Read more in the one of the most complex books on North Korea: A. Buzo *Partyzánska dynastie. Politika a vedení Severní Koreje (The Guerilla Dynasty. Politics and Leadership in North Korea)*. (Prague: BB/Art, 2003).

¹¹ According to the agreement "in due course Korea shall become free and independent".

a Korean figurehead for the 'Sovietization' of North Korea. [...] Kim was a young Korean communist whom they trained, who wore their uniform of his own volition, and whose anti-Japanese guerilla record they knew"¹². Furthermore, he was known as a capable and experienced young officer having no political background in Korea. And yet, he showed he had been able to survive under severe conditions (out of all other leaders of the *First Route Army* he was the only one who did not surrender and was not killed).

Thus, on September 19, 1946 Kim Il Sung returned to North Korea, almost a month after the Japanese surrendered. He did not enter Korea as a nation-wide known and respected hero, but rather like the regular member of the Soviet army. However, he came already as the chosen one. Even though he had strong Soviet support, he faced the more-or-less strong pressure of the other three groups operating in Korea at the time: the so-called domestic group (Korean communist operating during the Japanese occupation in Korea and Japan); the so-called Yenan group (operating in China) and the Soviet Koreans (who returned to Korea with the Soviet Army). But Kim Il Sung managed to handle this 'awkward' situation. Besides having a strong Soviet PR, the other factors such as the different concepts of the Korean future of the afore-mentioned groups, the division of Korea which kept most of the 'popular' communists in the South and the control of the military forces played its positive part in this process, as well.¹³

At the beginning of 1946, the Soviets formed the so-called *North Korean Provisional People's Committee* and appointed Kim Il Sung to head it. In the same year, the *Korean Worker's Party* was founded and although Kim did not initially become the chairman, he gained this position in 1949¹⁴. On September 9, 1948, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was proclaimed.¹⁵ The Supreme People's Assembly adopted a constitution¹⁶, elected Kim Il Sung a Prime Minister and approved the state administration.

¹² D.S. Suh Kim Il Sung. *The North Korean Leader*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 63.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 73.

¹⁴ Kim Il Sung kept the position until his death in 1994.

¹⁵ Republic of Korea (South Korea) was established on August 13, 1948. Both Koreans claimed the jurisdiction over the entire territory of the peninsula.

¹⁶ To illustrate the Soviet influence one could not omit that fact that the DPRK constitution was originally written in Russian and then translated into Korean.

Impressive aspect that played a crucial role in North Korea's future, was the Soviet Union experience of young Kim.

The Absolute 'Ruler'

Very shortly after the aforementioned events Kim Il Sung decided to accomplish his goal of Korean unification. On June 25, 1950 he launched an attack on its southern neighbor and despite the initial success, Kim Il Sung's army was pushed back to the 38th parallel and then, even further to the Chinese border by the US-led UN forces. The North Korean regime was saved by the entry of almost a million Chinese soldiers who pushed the UN forces back to the 38th parallel. The war stagnated there for two years and ended with the *Korea War Armistice Agreement*¹⁷ signed by the USA, China and North Korea.¹⁸

As already mentioned, Kim Il Sung had faced opposition from mainly a group of 'domestic communists' and 'Yenan group' to his designated rule before the Korean War started. However,

the war fiasco made their pressure stronger. As known nowadays, Kim Il Sung managed to crush his opponents by employing more 'effective' measures and by 1958 with the withdrawal of Chinese forces from North Korea, he established himself in a central position of power. In other words, it took him only 13 years to disqualify, imprison, kill or just simply make his opponents disappear and declare his guerilla experience the only revolutionary tradition in Korea.

The years that followed just confirmed the previous development. Kim Il Sung tirelessly eliminated his 'opposition' or those who showed even the slightest sign of any 'dissent'. He appointed his guerilla comrades with the same past and similar skills to the prominent position in administration. And what is worse, almost no education. As Buzo says "his weaknesses (mainly his intellect) were far more significant than his strengths. As a result he could not frame effective policies to pursue economic development and modernization [...] nor was he able to accept advice from those who could."¹⁹

¹⁷ The *Armistice Agreement* was signed in July 1953, but it had been in negotiations for nearly two years before. The armistice was not a permanent peace treaty between nations.

¹⁸ More reading on Korean War: M. Hastings *The Korean War*. (London: Pan MacMillan, Ltd, 1987); B. Catchpole *The Korean War 1950-1953*. (London: Constable, 2000).

¹⁹ A. Buzo *Partyzánska dynastie. Politika a vedení Severní Koreje (The Guerilla Dynasty. Politics and Leadership in North Korea)*. (Prague: BB/Art, 2003).

Notwithstanding his shortcomings he was able to establish absolute power and by the end of the 1960s his political position became definitely unshakable. At the beginning of the 1970s he became the president²⁰, created new control bodies, and began the process of paying his son's way to the top when young Kim was named the head of the Organization and Guidance Department.²¹ Kim Il Sung gradually let his son take the responsibility of domestic affairs, mostly behind the scene, while he dealt mostly with foreign policy issues until his death on July 8, 1994. After his father's death, Kim Jong Il ruled Korea as the Chairman of the *National Defense Commission*²². In 1997, he became the chairman of the *Korean Workers Party*. It is important to mention that based on the constitution revision, the position of the president was abolished, Kim Il Sung was named eternal president and to the position of the nominal head of state the chairman of the presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly was named. However, there are no doubts about who is the real leader of the country.

'His Will First' Policy

After the Korean War, Kim began the parallel process of the mass political and socio-economic reconstruction of North Korea and of building his personality cult. Kim Il Sung rewrote history by fabricating stories celebrating his alleged accomplishments and by making the other potential rivals and his own 'failures' vaporize from all available books. The activities of him and his guerilla comrades became the solely revolutionary anti-Japanese tradition in North Korea. He also erected statues in his own honor²³ as well in honor of his relatives and named the only North Korean University after himself. He created of himself the picture of the perfect supreme human being; the only hope for North Korea's future. In other words, Kim effectively took control over everything in the country's development. Everything happened how and because he wanted it to.

²⁰ The change was realized under the new constitution of 1972. Kim Il Sung previously served as the Prime Minister.

²¹ He was officially designated a successor in the 1980. More in: K.D. Oh, R.C. Hassing *North Korea Through the Looking Glass*. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000); A. Buzo *Partyzánska dynastie. Politika a vedení Severní Koreje (The Guerilla Dynasty. Politics and Leadership in North Korea)*. (Prague: BB/Art, 2003); M. Breen *Kim Jong Il: North Korea's Dear Leader*. (Singapore: John Wiley & Sons (Asia) Pte Ltd, 2004).

²² It is the position he appointed himself to in 1993 as the then Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army.

²³ The first one was erected in 1949.

Kim's political and ideological principals he ruled the people with became known as *Juche*. This idea is said to be developed by Kim Il Sung in the 1930s during his guerilla years. As a matter of fact, there does not exist any evidence of him promoting the idea at the time.²⁴ In fact it was first mentioned by Kim Il Sung in December 1955 in his speech *On Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism and Establishing Juche in Ideological Work*.

The *Juche* concept is not easy to understand for foreigners. *Juche*²⁵ means "subject" in English. The essence of this philosophy is man. Man is the master and decides everything. Masters of the revolution and the socialist construction are the masses of the people. They are also the motive of the revolution and the social construction. It means everybody is responsible for one's own destiny. Man is an independent social being, and the independence is achieved through individual creativity: people solving their problems on their own.

As Oh and Hasing add, the independence in North Korea means not individual freedom but a national independence that can only be achieved by people working together under the party's guidance.²⁶ The leader(s) is the sole interpreter of *Juche*.

The core idea of *Juche* is national self reliance and pride.²⁷ Under the principle of self-reliance, Kim Il Sung developed what became known as the monolithic ideological system which was based on the universal application of his ideology. *Juche* was thus adopted as the sole guiding principle for all actions. This ideology became a very effective tool for the leader to achieve his political and military objectives and preserve his power. His objectives, however, traced back to his revolutionary period and posed a serious threat to the future socio-economic development.

²⁴ According to Suh Dae Sook, there are at least 15 speeches Kim is supposed to deliver referring to *Juche* in 1930s which are fabrications. They were first published in 1970s. D.S. Suh *Kim Il Sung. The North Korean Leader*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 305.

²⁵ The North Korea use calendar with a *Juche* year based on 1912 A.D., the birthdate of Kim Il-sung, as year 1.

²⁶ K.D. Oh, R.C. Hasing *North Korea Through the Looking Glass*. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), pp. 20-21.

²⁷ It was developed along anti-Soviet and partly anti-Chinese lines and several times rewritten and adapted to the suitable conditions of the country.

In economic policy, Kim's lack of education, inability to manage the country's everyday problems, authoritarian leadership, militarization and mass mobilization campaigns caused more trouble than a positive effect. Kim's emphasis on fast and heavy industrialization and huge armament literally ate away the financial sources for further development despite the initial economic success²⁸. Military-style mobilization became the most prominent feature of civilian working life. Militarism became the pillar of society and economic development. Kim Il Sung 'taught' his fellow citizens to fight and told them they were under attack. He armed North Korea to the teeth and it paid a high price for it. According to Adrian Buzo, from 1962, North Korea was placed, under the slogan *Arms in one hand and hammer and sickle in the other!*, on a permanent semi-war footing. Military expenditures rose to 30% and such an unprecedented shift of the resources from the civilian economy laid the firm foundations to the sharp economic decline of North Korea.²⁹

Demanding Obedience and Respect

Gaining absolute power requires the leader to take measures to keep it. In a sense, the Kims have definitely succeeded in this matter. In the beginning, to avoid any diverse thoughts, the elder Kim took over the youth and education. He established compulsory classes of ideological education where students are forced to uncritically memorize the works and thoughts of both Kims and incorporated his name and his alleged accomplishment to each subject. Kim Il Sung revised history and fabricated the stories celebrating his 'great' guerilla and, as time passed by, the leadership accomplishments and qualities. He made the other than 'his' thoughts or ideas as well as his own 'failures' vaporize from all available materials. In other words, he launched an intensive campaign to make him, and later on, his son the objects of people's worship. However, as Oh and Hasing argue "the cult is Kim's greatest invention and his greatest weakness. If people believe in him as a demigod, he can exercise almost unquestioned authority; but if the lies [...] are revealed, Kim will be forced to rule entirely by coercion"³⁰. Kim was very well aware of the latter

²⁸ The positive economic growth was marked to a large extent thanks to the substantial Chinese and Soviet economic assistance.

²⁹ More in: A. Buzo *The Making of Modern Korea*. (London, New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), pp. 91-95.

³⁰ K.D. Oh, R.C. Hasing *North Korea Through the Looking Glass*. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), p. 100.

which probably prompted him to establish very effective social control measures. The state as well as the party security apparatus have been keeping monitoring any suspicious behavior and assembling detailed files not only on political 'enemies' but everybody in the country. A person who shows a sign of any illegal political action or a different opinion on any aspects of the North Korean development is thoroughly investigated and if *decided* guilty, moved to the so-called re-education camp. A very effective tool to deter people from being disloyal to a regime is the so-called family purges – for one's 'crime' the whole family, friends and close associates are punished. People have been under constant surveillance and were allowed to travel around North Korea only if permitted by respective authority.

Kim Il Sung was very well aware of the fact that the existence of other opinion streams might significantly affect his leadership style. Therefore, in the 1950s he organized the so-called 'resident registration groups' to check upon all residents' background. Based on these loyalty surveys he, at the end of the 1950s relocated the 'impure elements' from the capital, major cities and border areas to rural areas.³¹ The regular surveys resulted, in 1970, into the division of the entire population into the three main classes with 51 sub-classes.

The Core Class consists of slightly less than 30% of the population. This group comprised of 12 subgroups of the people with the high personal profiles – mostly anti-Japanese guerilla fighters and their descendants, soldiers, workers, farmers etc. Above them is only the elite, the group of 200 000 chosen ones from the Kims' surrounding.

The largest class is the Wavering Group divided into 18 subgroups. It is composed of 50% of the population. In some sort of sense, it is North Korean middle-class who has a very weak chance of getting a significant position within the state or in the party bodies.

Those who do not fit into Kim Il Sung's picture of North Korea make up approximately 25% of the population with no chance of living a 'standard' life. The most dangerous individuals – especially those committing the most

³¹ J. Becker *Rogue Regime. Kim Jong Il and the Looming Threat of North Korea*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 88.

serious crimes such as the disloyalty to the leader or his ideology – are placed into the concentration camps.³²

Internationally, Kim Il Sung's task was even more difficult. Since international respect is not freely given, Kim had to demand it. His nuclear program, which had been built with the strong support of the USSR since the 1960s, and additional effort to develop the nuclear weapon, seemed to be the right key to gain respect from the international community. The first time Kim Il Sung proved the effectiveness of its foreign policy tool was at the beginning of the 1990s when he refused to permit the *International Atomic Energy Agency* (IAEA) to conduct special inspections of two undeclared nuclear-related sites and announced the intention to withdraw from the *Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty* (NPT). After a period of high tension the US diplomacy and the death of Kim Il Sung helped to ease the tension and the US signed the *Agreed Framework* with North Korea promising the North Korea Light Water Reactor power plant, rich energy aid and normalization of US-DPRK relations. Just a part of the promised happened, mostly, due to the uncooperative attitude of the latter. About less than a decade later, the situation reappeared. While in the middle of the 90s everything happened at the rhetorical level, this time North Korea provided the international community with proof and made clear that it wants to be a respected nuclear power, at least on paper.

Concluding Remarks

The North Korea has reached an impasse. 'Dear Leader' Kim Jong Il now leads the highly underdeveloped country having not a pragmatic solutions to the problems DPRK faces. Yet, the prospects for any change are rather poor. The overall problem lies with the system that is not able to solve its economic problems by itself.

Kim Jong Il became the leader of the country in a period of very sharp economic decline and food shortage which occurred as a consequence of the series of natural disaster destroying almost 40% of the harvests and leading to the famine at the end of the 90s. Unlike his father, Kim Jong Il could not count on any heavy assistance from 'friends' coming in. In order to turn away the worst he was forced to realize at least some partial reforms while still preserving the basic characters of the North Korean economy – central

³² North Korea officially denies the existence of the camps. There is an estimate that at least 200,000 people are placed there. The more on the topic in C.H. Kang *The Aquariums of Pyongyang. Ten Years in North Korean Gulag*. (London: Bookmarque Ltd, 2001); or H. Kang *This Is Paradise. My North Korean Childhood*. (London: Little Brown, 2005).

control. Even though he pursued several new 'experiments' (establishing special economic and industrial zones, liberalizing prices, partial rationalizing of the exchange rates, partial tolerance of private agricultural enterprises etc.) most of them were very closely connected with the necessity to allow citizens to obtain the food on their own after government had cut the daily rations. Although some optimists say North Korea got on the right track and would pursue the Chinese style of reform, this is apparently not currently in the prospect. Such change would require complete transition of the economic system, which should go hand in hand with the political and, most importantly, ideological change, and that is currently out of question in North Korea. Kim Jong Il was appointed to his position based on the claim, that he is the only one who can successfully and effectively maintain the idea of *Juche* as a legacy of his late father. In other words, Kim Jong Il could not change/reform the economic system without rejecting the concept of *Juche* and thus his own legitimacy. Moreover, one has to bear in mind the fact that he was born into and grew up in this system and has not been exposed to any other. North Korea has thus found itself in the vicious circle. On one hand, it needs the economic reform to survive, but on the other hand, it could not reform without undermining the ideology, hence its very existence.³³

In this context, there is also a very low probability that North Korea will throw away its nuclear card in a foreseeable future for good as well. For the time being it has been played right by North Koreans and has brought results none of the foreign policy tools had brought before. More importantly, with nuclear program/weapons, DPRK can use this blackmail tool regularly. So why would they give up that possibility? It does not mean, however, that the international community should not try. The multilateral talks on North Korean denuclearization proved to be the most effective platform to discuss its nuclear issues. Additionally, it is probably the only forum which is able

³³ A. Buzo *The Making of Modern Korea*. (London, New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), pp. 182.

to achieve success in other fields which would make the further decline of North Korea impossible.

The past 14 years of Kim Jong Il's rule clearly showed, that a real change can only come with someone else, since ideology and policy of his father, Kim Jong Il pursuits, legitimized him in his position. Under his leadership, North Korea, notwithstanding the aspirations to be self-reliant, will stay one of the biggest trouble-makers and the largest recipients of international food and energy aid in the world.

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Ralph A. Cossa

North Korea Nuclear Stand-Off: (Still) Waiting for New Year's Eve

Summary: Almost six months late, North Korea has finally submitted to the Six-Party Talks participants a declaration of its nuclear activities. The absence of specific information on the contents of the declaration makes it difficult to determine if it is 'complete and correct' but has not prohibited U.S. (and other) critics of any negotiations with the North Korea from criticizing the presumed contents. The article reminds what has (and has not) actually been agreed upon by now, and what the going in position of the two main protagonists – Washington and Pyongyang – is and has been.

As this article goes to print, Pyongyang had just delivered its much anticipated and long overdue declaration of its nuclear activities to China, as chair of the Six-Party Talks (involving North and South Korea, China, Japan, Russia, and the United States), but had yet to release the document to the general public. As a result, it was still too soon to determine if it was the 'complete and correct declaration' of all North Korean nuclear activities that was initially promised by December 31, 2007.

The absence of specific information on the contents of the anticipated declaration has not prohibited U.S. (and other) critics of any negotiations with the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, North Korea's official name) from criticizing the presumed contents. But, as President George W. Bush has himself admonished, it is 'premature' to condemn the statement until one actually read it. In the interim, it is useful to remind ourselves about what has (and has not) actually been agreed upon, and what the going in position of the two main protagonists – Washington and Pyongyang – is and has been.

Ralph A. Cossa is President of the Pacific Forum CSIS in Honolulu, Hawaii. He is also senior Editor of the Forum's quarterly electronic journal, Comparative Connections.

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We Have It But...

The opening positions of both Washington and Pyongyang were pretty inflexible, as one would expect. Washington initially insisted that the declaration fully account for all nuclear programs

(plutonium and uranium-based) and also spelled out Pyongyang's suspected proliferation activities, specifically including suspected support to Syria's alleged clandestine nuclear weapons program. In response to an apparent Chinese-suggested compromise last fall, Washington maintained that neither separate declarations nor a partial declaration setting aside some issues (read: uranium enrichment and alleged support to Syria) was 'politically sustainable'. As chief U.S. negotiator Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia Christopher Hill warned: "We cannot pretend that activities don't exist when we know that the activities have existed."

On a more positive note, Hill did note during a speech at Amherst on January 30, 2008 that the U.S., after examining imported aluminum rods that were part of the evidence of a suspected uranium enrichment program, was "on the way toward ruling out that they have developed a uranium enrichment capacity such that they have developed fissile material from such a program". Of course, no one had ever accused Pyongyang of actually producing fissile material from their alleged clandestine uranium enrichment program.

This would have required building several thousand centrifuges – the two dozen or so reportedly purchased from Pakistan were for back-engineering purposes. Nor does Hill's statement rule out the existence of such a program or intention. It does open the door, however, for a DPRK acknowledgment of the centrifuge and aluminum rod purchases without publicly tying them to a nuclear weapons-related uranium enrichment program *per se*.

Responding to repeated calls by Washington (among others) for a complete and correct declaration, Pyongyang asserted that it had already provided everything it planned to provide in November 2007, stating unequivocally on March 28, 2008 that "the DPRK has never enriched uranium nor rendered nuclear cooperation to any other country. It has never dreamed of such things. Such things will not happen in the future either". Again, claiming to have 'never enriched uranium' is different from denying that a program existed to

Washington maintained that neither separate declarations nor a partial declaration setting aside some issues (read: uranium enrichment and alleged support to Syria) was 'politically sustainable'.

eventually accomplish this task or that enrichment equipment was acquired for other 'peaceful purposes' (i.e., reactor fuel fabrication) rather than to build weapons. As a result, Pyongyang still has the option of admitting that it purchased centrifuges and other uranium enrichment-related equipment without specifically acknowledging that this was done in violation of previous agreements. It remains to be seen if the Bush administration is prepared to settle for this type of possible compromise (but don't be surprised if Pyongyang offers to sell the now useless centrifuges and aluminum rods to the U.S. at a profit).

The second part of the above-cited March 28 *Korean Central News Agency (Pyongyang)* statement, claiming never to have "rendered nuclear cooperation to any other country" is more problematic, given U.S. insistence that such a link exists. Details regarding the 'smoking gun' have not been made public but unconfirmed reports indicate that Secretary Hill, at the time of the inauguration of the new Republic of Korea (ROK) President Lee Myung Bak in February 2008, showed incoming South Korean officials a video tape of the Israeli attack on the suspect Syrian nuclear facility that had a lot of very excited (North) Koreans exiting the premises. ROK press reports also claim that Hill gave Pyongyang a list of DPRK officials, including nuclear engineers, who were involved in the supply of nuclear technology to Syria, while Japanese officials claim that Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert briefed Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo about the attack during summit talks in Tokyo in late February, confirming that it was a nuclear-related facility that was under construction with technical assistance from the DPRK.

Despite this reported evidence, Pyongyang continues to accuse Washington of clinging to its 'incorrect' claims, further warning: "If the United States continues delaying the resolution of the nuclear problem by demanding what does not exist, this will have a serious impact on the desired disablement of the nuclear facilities." This seemed to leave little room for the type of 'confession' that Hill (and the U.S. Congress) are expecting.

It is hard to imagine how the process could proceed without some accounting for the centrifuges and other uranium enrichment equipment clandestinely provided to North Korea through the since exposed and confirmed A.Q. Khan nuclear suppliers network. Ambassador Hill has reportedly delivered this message, very specifically and most pointedly, to Pyongyang. The bigger question is whether or not Washington has made this point equally clear to the other parties and if they too are prepared to treat HEU as a 'pass-fail' issue. If not, we will be right back where we started, with Pyongyang once again playing Washington and its other negotiating partners against one another.

While uranium enrichment and Syrian proliferation are important issues politically, they are not the only or even the most important unresolved issue strategically. Another apparent remaining major point of contention deals with the amount of plutonium currently in North Korean hands. Secretary Hill has previously used the figure of "up to 50 kilograms", when speaking of what must be accounted for. This appears to be a worst case figure, adding what may have been extracted prior to the 1994 *Agreed Framework* with what could have possibly been reprocessed since 2003 (less what was consumed in the 2006 nuclear test). Unconfirmed reporting indicates that Pyongyang is only prepared to acknowledge or account for 37 kg, which leaves about two-plus bombs worth of plutonium unaccounted for. Somehow this gap needs to be closed.

The decision by Pyongyang in May 2008 to hand over some 18,882 documents detailing Yongbyon operations since 1986 is a major step in the right direction in this regard, provided it is followed by unrestricted access to spent fuel and the reprocessed fuel rods, so technical verification came be accomplished. Translating the documents, much less verifying them, will be a time-consuming process.

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'Breakthrough' Followed 'Breakthrough'

Given all of the above, it would not be hard for pessimists – or realists – to still pronounce the process doomed or almost dead. Nonetheless, cautious optimism continues to prevail within the Bush administration, with Secretary Hill continuing to claim (or at least hope) that "differences [between Washington and Pyongyang] are not getting bigger; they are getting smaller".

In the meantime, as we await details of the declaration – or to assist in properly assessing it once it is released – it is important to recall what was actually agreed upon, first during the landmark *September 2005 Joint Statement* and later during the two 'breakthrough' declarations that took place in February and October of 2007.

2005 Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks

The key phrases related to the denuclearization process in the September 19, 2005 joint Statement are:

- The six parties unanimously reaffirmed that the goal of the *Six-Party Talks* is the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner.
- The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) committed to abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and returning at an early date to the *Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (NPT) and to IAEA (*International Atomic Energy Agency*) safeguards.
- The DPRK stated that it has the right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The other parties expressed their respect and agreed to discuss *at an appropriate time* [emphasis added] the subject of the provision of light-water reactor to the DPRK.
- The six parties agreed to take coordinated steps to implement the aforementioned consensus in a phased manner in line with the principle of "commitment for commitment, action for action".
- The U.S. and ROK also agreed to keep the southern half of the Peninsula nuclear weapons free and it was agreed that "the directly related parties will negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula at an appropriate separate forum". What has not been agreed upon is the 'appropriate time' for discussion of Light Water Reactors (LWRs). Washington has made it clear that this can only come after complete denuclearization while Pyongyang continues to insist that LWRs must be provided in advance of or simultaneously with the final act of denuclearization.

For a variety of reasons, including a dispute over frozen North Korean funds in a Macau bank, the process then remained stalled from September 2005 until February 2007, when the first 'breakthrough' took place in the form of the *Joint Statement from the Third Session of the Fifth Round of the Six-Party Talks, Beijing, February 13, 2007*, where the six parties "reaffirmed their common goal and will to achieve early denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner and reiterated that they would earnestly fulfill their commitments in the [September 2005] Joint Statement."

February 13, 2007 Agreement

The main denuclearization actions scheduled for the initial phase (first 60 days) were:

- The DPRK will shut down and seal for the purpose of eventual abandonment the Yongbyon nuclear facility, including the reprocessing facility and

invite back IAEA personnel to conduct all necessary monitoring and verifications as agreed between IAEA and the DPRK.

- The DPRK will discuss with other parties a list of all its nuclear programs as described in the Joint Statement, including plutonium extracted from used fuel rods, that would be abandoned pursuant to the Joint Statement.

In return, the U.S. would "begin the process of removing the designation of the DPRK as a state-sponsor of terrorism and advance the process of terminating the application of the *Trading with the Enemy Act* with respect to the DPRK". The DPRK would also receive an "initial shipment of emergency energy assistance equivalent to 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil (HFO)" as the first installment on a total assistance package representing the equivalent of 1 million tons of HFO. Note that this does not mean that the United States will be providing a million tons of fuel oil, as many press reports have been stating. The other parties, combined, will provide 'the equivalent' of a million tons of HFO in 'economic, energy, and humanitarian assistance'.

For sure, symbolic shipments of fuel oil will be included. But other types of aid from the other parties (except Japan, absent some progress on the abductees issue) will also be counted. Moscow, for example, has already indicated that its assistance will likely come in the form of debt relief, with the amount being counted against the 'million tons equivalent'.

We can almost certainly predict future disputes over what types of aid and assistance are to be counted against the total goal and, here again, sequencing will be a major issue, to be worked out by the various working groups prescribed in the *February 13 Joint Agreement*. These include a working group on *Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula* to be chaired by the PRC, as well as working groups dealing with *Normalization of DPRK-U.S. Relations* (U.S.), *Normalization of DPRK-Japan Relations* (Japan), *Economy and Energy Cooperation* (ROK), and a *Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism* (Russia).

No time frame was established for implementation of the second phase, which was to include "provision by the DPRK of a complete declaration of all nuclear programs and disablement of all existing nuclear facilities, including graphite-moderated reactors and reprocessing plant", although Secretary Hill hoped that this could be accomplished by the end of 2007.

Of interest, when the North Koreans speak about the *February 13 Agreement*, they claim that it included the release of their frozen funds in *Macao's Banco Delta Asia* – the result of earlier U.S. Treasury action aimed at halting suspected money laundering activities regarding North Korean alleged counterfeiting operations, drug smuggling, and other illicit activities. Actually, there was no reference to frozen bank accounts in the *February*

Agreement. Nonetheless, implementation of the agreement was delayed due to a delay in the release of these funds – apparently promised at a side meeting between Hill and Kim in Berlin in January 2007 – and the 60-day phase ended up taking about four months to complete. This apparent secret handshake or side agreement also created anxiety among the Japanese and other six-party members, who now openly wonder what else may have been promised by Washington during continuing side meetings with Pyongyang.

True to form, the next *Six-Party Talks* plenary session, in July 2007, failed to achieve much forward movement and it took another bilateral Hill-Kim session, in Geneva in early September, to set the stage for the year's second 'breakthrough' agreement, the *Second-Phase Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement, Beijing, October 3, 2007*.

October 3, 2007 Agreement

In this agreement, participants "confirmed the implementation of the initial actions provided for in the *February 13 Agreement* ... and reached agreement on second-phase actions for the implementation of the *Joint Statement of September 19, 2005*, the goal of which is the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner".

Specifically, the DPRK "agreed to disable all existing nuclear facilities subject to abandonment under the *September 2005 Joint Statement* and the *February 13 Agreement* with disablement of the three main facilities at Yongbyon – the 5 MW *Experimental Reactor*, the *Reprocessing Plant*, and the *Nuclear Fuel Rod Fabrication Facility* – to be completed by December 31, 2007. Pyongyang also "agreed to provide a complete and correct declaration of all its nuclear programs in accordance with the *February 13 Agreement* by December 31, 2007" and "reaffirmed its commitment not to transfer nuclear materials, technology, or know-how". In return, Pyongyang would receive the already promised "economic, energy, and humanitarian assistance up to the equivalent of one million tons of HFO [heavy fuel oil]."

As regards the removal of North Korea from the state sponsors of terrorism list and *Trading with the Enemy Act* (TWEA) restrictions, "the United

States will fulfill its commitments to the DPRK in parallel with the DPRK's actions based on consensus reached at the meetings of the *Working Group on Normalization of DPRK-U.S. Relations*. While a date certain was not specified, Pyongyang has made it clear that it expected (was promised in Geneva?) that this would take place simultaneous with its nuclear declaration prior to December 31, 2007. The North says the declaration it apparently provided privately to Secretary Hill in November was sufficient to initiate the promised U.S. actions; Secretary Hill has stated unequivocally that it did not pass the 'complete and correct' credibility test. This led to another series of bilateral U.S.-DPRK bilateral meetings, beginning with an April 2008 Hill-Kim meeting in Singapore.

Talks' Fatigue?

Note that the above agreements specify that the million tons equivalent of aid is in compensation for the disablement of *all* nuclear-related facilities and material, including those yet to be identified but which are expected to be included in the anticipated declaration. This would include the facility where North Korea's bomb or bombs are actually produced (specialists say this did not take place at Yongbyon) plus the nuclear test site, etc. It should also include 'disablement' of Pyongyang's plutonium assets, presumably including any plutonium residing in actual weapons, although it is unclear if the authors' interpretation is shared by Pyongyang (or even by Washington).

Nonetheless, Pyongyang now claims (thus far without contradiction from Washington or the others) that the energy aid is related only to the disabling of the nuclear site in Yongbyon, with Hyun Hak Bong, the North's deputy negotiator to *Six-Party Talks*, further asserting: "While the [Yongbyon] disabling has been completed for more than 80%, overall energy cooperation business is going very slowly – at 30% to 36%." It would seem that Pyongyang has 'renegotiated' the *February* and *October Agreements* and now expects the full million ton equivalent of oil and assistance for the disablement of Yongbyon and nothing more. Most disturbingly, the U.S. and Seoul seem to be going along with this reinterpretation. Pyongyang has also made it clear that Washington must 'fulfill its commitments' regarding the North's removal from the *State Sponsors of Terrorism List* and the lifting of *Trading with the Enemy Act* restrictions prior to, or at best simultaneous with the release of the declaration, an action that will be politically uncomfortable (but probably not impossible) for the Bush administration to perform.

Note also that, President Bush's declarations and expectations to the contrary, neither the *February 13* nor *October 3 Agreement* compels Pyongyang

to list its past proliferation activities (since the DPRK claimed that it had never proliferated); it merely "reaffirmed its commitment not to transfer nuclear materials, technology, or know-how". Nonetheless, as Secretary Hill has argued, 'transparency' regarding the DPRK's proliferation-related activities is essential, especially with rumors surfacing that such activities may not be limited to Syria. However, should some sort of side declaration be made, including a U.S. declaration of North Korean activity that is not denied by Pyongyang, this could at least technically suffice. Whether it suffices politically in Washington (especially during a presidential campaign period) is, of course, another matter.

If and when phase two is actually completed and all nuclear-related facilities have been 'disabled', then the phase three 'dismantlement' or 'abandonment' phase will begin. During Congressional testimony in February, Secretary Hill told Senator Lugar "we don't know what kind of money will be needed for phase three", but it will no doubt be considerable, even though the non-monetary rewards offered to Pyongyang – include eventual full diplomatic recognition, access to international financial institutions, and a full peace regime to replace the current Armistice – are considerable, if it completely, verifiably, and irreversibly gives up its nuclear weapons programs and ambitions.

Unpredictably Predictable

Intertwined in all of the above is the North Korea-Japan normalization process, which both are committed to making 'sincere efforts' to address. A dispute over 'full accounting' regarding Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea in the 1970s/80s has resulted in a bilateral stalemate. Pyongyang acknowledged the kidnappings in 2002 but then claimed the issue was 'settled' (with the return of five abductees and the announcement that eight others had died). Tokyo disagrees: it refutes both the accounting of how the eight died and believes there are more abductees still not acknowledged or accounted for. More importantly for Washington, Tokyo believes it has a commitment from President Bush that the U.S. will not remove North Korea from the terrorist sponsors list until there has been 'progress' in resolving this dispute. Suspicions in Japan about Washington's perceived over-eagerness to accommodate Pyongyang continue to make this a sensitive alliance issue.

The agreement in early June 2008 by Pyongyang to 'reinvestigate the abduction issue' is seen as a major step forward in this regard, even if it comes with no promise of actually providing more information, much less more abductees. The mere fact that Pyongyang has reopened discussions

constitutes some form of 'progress', thus allowing Japan to begrudgingly endorse the removal of Pyongyang from the state sponsors list, provided there really is a 'complete and correct declaration'.

Another lingering concern is the absence of any reference in the agreements to Pyongyang's current inventory of nuclear weapons. No one currently knows how many exist and where they might be. Of course, 'denuclearization' means giving up weapons as well as programs/facilities, but we should not be surprised if Pyongyang chooses to make a distinction between the two and tries to hold on to any actual weapons until all other milestones, including normalization of relations with the U.S. and Japan and the provision of LWRs, have been realized.

Finally, many speculate that Pyongyang is merely stalling for time, with an eye toward the November 2008 U.S. presidential elections; that it is waiting for 'regime change' in Washington. I disagree! I think it was initially stalling for time while keeping a watchful eye on the December 2007 ROK elections. Pyongyang realized that the *appearance of progress* was becoming more and more important as the South Korean presidential elections drew closer.

Meanwhile, it explored other ways to influence the outcome (with the October summit meeting between Kim Jong Il and then-ROK President Roh Moo Hyun being one example). The conservative victory in the South in 2007 has compelled the North once again to focus on Washington but, if past tactics (including those used during the first stand-off with the Clinton administration) are any guide, the North will likely wait until the 11th hour before making an offer it hopes the Bush administration, for legacy reasons, will not be able to refuse.

However things turn out, we have already learned one thing. Despite its reputation to the contrary, Pyongyang has turned out to be very predictable; all you have to do is listen to what it says. North Korea stated all along that it would not move forward until its money, ill-gotten though it may have been, was safely back in its hands, and it did not. It also promised to proceed with phase one implementation once this occurred and it did. Previously, Pyongyang claimed it was going to test a nuclear weapon if Washington was not more forthcoming. While the rest of us debated whether or not the North

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was bluffing (or even if it was capable of such an act), a nuclear detonation took place.

While the intelligence community now debates whether or not it was successful, Pyongyang is insisting that it must be recognized as a nuclear weapons state before it will discuss giving up its weapons. The other five parties must speak firmly and with one voice in disabusing Pyongyang of this notion. Current demonstrations of flexibility notwithstanding, Washington must continue to make it clear that it is impossible for any U.S. president, regardless of political party, to establish diplomatic relations with a nuclear weapons-equipped DPRK.

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Leonid Petrov

Russia's Power Politics and North Korea

Summary: The sharp rise of oil and gas prices has enabled Moscow to utilize its mammoth energy reserves to achieve domestic and foreign policy goals. The new Russian 'power politics' have already been tested on the Baltic States, Belarus, Ukraine, and recently the Czech Republic. Russia's Far Eastern frontier is now turning into the place where energy export becomes a political tool in shaping the country's relations with regional neighbours. China, the two Koreas, and Japan are hungry for energy, natural resources and, at the same time, strive for economic and political cooperation. In such circumstances, the opportunities offered by trans-national railroads and pipelines appear to be more powerful than weapons. Given this new leverage and understanding, can Russia exert its soft and hard power upon North Korea in promoting the goals set in the Six-Party Talks?

The second phase of North Korea's denuclearization process is completed. As part of the deal with the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, Russia, Japan and the United States, in June 2008 Pyongyang filed its nuclear activity declaration and even blew up a cooling tower of its defunct nuclear reactor in Yongbyon. For its part, the United States has officially pledged to remove the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea (DPRK) from the *State Sponsors of Terrorism List* and lifted the application of the *Trading with the Enemy Act* to this country. All five members of the *Six-Party Talks* are now expected to deliver to North Korea almost a million tons of heavy fuel oil to compensate for the lost energy production.

Leonid Petrov works at the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at Australian National University.

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The general expectation is that these actions will solve the North Korean nuclear dilemma by providing North Korea with the energy it is going to miss out on. Nevertheless, the third stage of North Korea's denuclearization does not seem to be showing a smooth start. The DPRK Foreign Ministry complains that it has disabled 80% of its main nuclear complex but has received only 40% of the promised energy shipments. Pyongyang now threatens that it will only move on to the next phase of the denuclearization process – to abandon and dismantle its nuclear weapons programs – only when it has been awarded all the energy aid and political benefits promised under the deal.¹

The nervousness of Pyongyang, which has been championing the motto of 'a strong and prosperous nation', is understandable. The January 2008 *Joint Editorial* promised that the government would focus on the economy. Nevertheless, the skyrocketing international prices on fuel and grain have already caused an unprecedented hike in the food prices in North Korea. The crop of the previous year was largely destroyed by the disastrous hurricane that in combination with the deportation of international aid agencies has created the danger of another famine. The new conservative administration in Seoul, which from the outset took a headline on inter-Korean agreements, has further complicated the picture. Despite the apparent progress on the international stage, the North Korean leadership is now likely to face a serious domestic problem.

In the mid-1990s, despite the universal predictions of imminent collapse, the DPRK managed to survive. Even the landslide of the Asian Financial Crisis (1997-1998) did not undermine the foundations of its centrally-planned economy. The country endured the 'Arduous March' (better known abroad as 'Silent Famine') which cost millions of North Korean lives. Their leadership assumed that one meal per day would keep the energy.

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majority of the population weak but loyal, as long as the state machinery and military-industrial complex has the ample supply of energy. Fortunately for Pyongyang, the 1990s were marked by the record low oil prices that can be attributed to the secret of DPRK's survival.

Whether or not Kim Jong Il will be able to rescue his nation again from the looming catastrophe depends on his ability to quickly find access to relatively cheap fuel and energy. In this connection the role of Russia as the largest depository of natural resources is difficult to underestimate. Russia holds one third of the world's natural gas (48 trillion cu m), possesses one of the world's largest oil reserves (approximately 50-100 billion barrels), and produces annually 1 trillion kWh of electricity. In the times of political collapse and economic recession these resources provided Russia with confidence and attracted foreign direct investment.

Recently, the sharp rise of oil and gas prices has enabled Moscow to utilize its mammoth energy reserves in achieving domestic and foreign policy goals. The nationalization of the largest Russian oil company *Yukos* in 2004, along with the consolidation of state-owned *Gazprom* and *RAO Unified Energy System* in 2005, have further empowered the Kremlin in making single-handed decisions on the directions and length of new pipelines, high-voltage power lines, and railways, literally forming the new geopolitical landscape in Northeast Asia.

The new Russian 'power politics' have already been tested on the Baltic States, Belarus, Ukraine, and recently the Czech Republic. Russia's Far Eastern frontier is also turning into the place where energy export becomes a political tool in shaping the country's relations with regional neighbors. China, the two Koreas, and Japan are hungry for energy, natural resources and, at the same time, strive for economic and political cooperation. In such circumstances, the opportunities offered by trans-national railroads and pipelines appear to be more powerful than weapons. Given this new leverage and understanding, can Russia exert its soft and hard power upon North Korea in promoting the goals set in the *Six-Party Talks*?

Although the shortage of food is a pressing issue, an industrialized nation like the DPRK would definitely benefit in the long run from access to affordable energy resources, which only Russia can provide. In this light, the nature of relations between Russia and North Korea will become a key to the ultimate solution of the regional security problem. However, can Russia help North Korea become a 'strong and prosperous nation' without itself entering into conflict with the rest of the Northeast Asian community? The effectiveness of Russia's new 'power politics' in Northeast Asia is now being tested through its relations with North Korea.

¹ The North Korean side insists on the principle of 'action for action' as a basic requirement. "DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesman on Implementation of Agreement Adopted by Six-Party Talks", KCNA (July 4, 2008); <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2008/200807/news07/05.htm#1>.

Besieged North Korea

No longer an 'enemy' or 'sponsor of terrorism' in the books of the US State Department, North Korea remains a subject to endless sanctions and restrictions which leave little hope for its access to international markets or bank credits. The recent removal of North Korea from the *State Sponsors of Terrorism List* and the termination of President Truman's 1950 imposition of *Trading with the Enemy Act* (TWEA) are not really enacting any change. Almost simultaneously with lifting the TWEA, the White House issued an Executive Order declaring a 'national emergency' which, as stated in the order, necessitates the continuance of certain restrictions on North Korea that would otherwise be lifted.²

Similarly, North Korea will not have restored access to the international banking system, from which it was largely cut off in 2005 amid the *Banco Delta Asia* money laundering and counterfeit allegations. Statements from the US Treasury further explain that no substantive actions with regard to lifting sanctions on North Korea have actually been taken. Sanctions aimed at ending North Korean money laundering, illicit financing activities and weapons proliferation will remain in effect, as well as sanctions that prohibit US companies from owning, leasing, operating, or insuring North Korean-flagged shipping vessels, and from registering vessels in the DPRK.

Another pressing issue that is being addressed by the *Six-Party Talks* partners is the acute shortage of food in North Korea. The United States has started the delivery of 500,000 metric tons of food, while China has committed another 150,000 tons. 3,000 tons of flour has already arrived from Russia. Generous humanitarian aid coming from elsewhere has enabled the Pyongyang leadership to turn down the modest offer of 50,000 tons of corn made by the new conservative government of South Korea. This shows that the food situation in the North is difficult but not catastrophic. The looming energy crisis is much more acute. With oil prices firmly over \$140 per barrel and heading further up, industrialized but the impoverished DPRK economy is trapped.

All imports of crude and refined oil traditionally would come from Russia or China at 'friendly' prices. With the end of Cold War confrontation and

the development of inter-Korean dialogue, occasional oil shipments were offered to Pyongyang by its sworn enemies, South Korea, Japan and the United States. The continuing shortage of energy forced Kim Jong Il to trade his treasured nuclear program for crude oil in 1994 as part of the *Framework Agreement* with the US. The new agreement reached through *Six-Party Talks* in Beijing on February 13, 2007 promised 1 million tons of fuel oil to North Korea in exchange for its nuclear programs. However, this amount will not be sufficient to cover the North's needs in energy for longer than a couple of years. After that Pyongyang has to be prepared either to reduce the amount of import or to invest considerably more in fuel importation.

Currently, most of North Korea's oil is imported from China. This is the reason why Pyongyang's trade deficit with this former communist patron is growing so quickly. In 2007, the DPRK imported 523,000 tons of crude oil from China that accounted approximately for 25% of its total imports, and North Korea's trade deficit with China is steadily growing.³ How much of this oil is sold and how much donated is a state secret, but given the poor economic standing of North Korea it is clear that this trend cannot continue indefinitely without causing tensions in relations between Beijing and Pyongyang.

The production of mineral fertilizer is also directly linked to the availability of cheap energy. During the last ten years, while South Korea was governed by the

liberal administrations that pursued the friendly *Sunshine Policy* towards the North, each spring Pyongyang would receive 300-400 thousand tons of fertilizer for free. Generous cash and rice donations from Seoul dried up in early 2008, when a new conservative president, Lee Myung Bak, was elected. Developmental projects, inked at the *Second Inter-Korean Summit* in Pyongyang, were designed to renovate the dilapidating North's infrastructure but became summarily scrapped by the new government in the South.

The new agreement reached through Six-Party Talks in Beijing on February 13, 2007 promised 1 million tons of fuel oil to North Korea in exchange for its nuclear programs. However, this amount will not be sufficient to cover the North's needs in energy for longer than a couple of years.

² N. Finnemann, "Explosive Progress in the Six Party Talks: What's Left To Do When It Is All Done?", *Korea Economic Institute* (July 1, 2008); <http://newsmanager.commpartners.com/kei/issues/2008-07-01/index.html>.

³ "World Oil and Grain Prices Up, DPRK Feels the Pinch", *Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars Report*; http://www.wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/mar_2.pdf.

North Korea has little to expect from Japan. The conservative *Liberal Democratic Party of Japan* made its mission to upset any accord with the Pyongyang which does not lead to the immediate return of surviving or deceased Japanese citizens kidnapped by the overly zealous North Korean spies in the 1970s and 1980s. Japan's Prime Ministers have been consistent in adopting the hard-line approach which included mentioning the abductees issue whenever possible and therefore delaying the normalization of bilateral relations with the DPRK. While other parties struggle to achieve a multilateral agreement, Japan assumes that sooner or later it will get what it wants because without Japanese money no successful conclusion of negotiations at the *Six-Party Talks* is conceivable.⁴

In other words, despite the official completion of the second phase of the nuclear disarmament deal on June 26, 2008, the prospects for self-reliant recovery for North Korea remain problematic. Although the food and energy issues are ostensibly being addressed, the denuclearized North Korea is going to be significantly weaker and vulnerable than before due to the changing international circumstances. The skyrocketing oil and food prices promise to aggravate the domestic situation in the DPRK much more effectively than any deliberate policy designed to achieve a regime change or economic system collapse in that country. To remedy this situation the North is facing the dilemma of either reneging on the *Six-Party Talks* agreements or changing its position on energy security.

Russia's Energy Policy

The most significant issue involving Russia in Northeast Asia is its abundant oil fields and natural gas reserves. The Asian Financial crisis of 1997-1998 that devaluated the Russian rouble and the dramatic rise in the price of crude oil and natural gas in the early 2000s has given Russia newfound economic muscle.⁵ The state-controlled *Gazprom* is the third largest corporation in the world in terms of market capitalization and it will grow even stronger, as many experts predict, while the industry is being swiftly renationalized. "Russia's economy is about oil" explains Natalia Orlova, chief economist

⁴ M. Okano-Heijmans, "Games Nations Play: Politics, Diplomacy and the North Korean Nuclear Crisis", *Australian National University*, unpublished research paper (May 2008).

⁵ P. F. Hueper, "The Energy Locomotive", J.H. Kalicki, E.K. Lawson (eds) *Russian-Eurasian Renaissance? U.S. Trade and Investment in Russia and Eurasia*. (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, 2003), p. 177.

at the Moscow-based Alfa-Bank.⁶ In 2006, oil and gas were estimated to account for 65% of Russia's exports and 60% of federal tax receipts, making it the world's largest gas exporter and second-largest oil exporter after Saudi Arabia. In 2007, Russia's foreign exchange reserves swelled to \$476.4 billion, more than in the entire Euro zone.⁷

Russia's energy holding provide Moscow with powerful leverage on the international stage, a status not seen since the end of the Cold War. Expectations about East Siberian energy reserves have risen especially after April 2006, when Russia started building the \$12.5 billion Taishet-Skovrodino-Kozmino oil pipeline. A series of disputes over what route the pipeline would take preceded the final decision.⁸ Initially, China's Daqing was considered as the destination for a shorter and cheaper private-owned pipeline. This plan was lobbied by the then powerful Yukos CEO, Mikhail Khordokovsky. Nevertheless, the Kremlin and state bureaucracy promptly interfered, sending the beleaguered oligarch to jail and reconfiguring the whole deal in favor of running the pipe to the Pacific coast of the Russian Maritime Province.

Russia's primary goal is to develop its sparsely populated Far Eastern region, which consists of nine territories that are extremely heterogeneous in political, social and economic terms. Each of the nine Far Eastern members of the Russian Federation essentially has its own political system, its own business elites, and enjoys a certain degree of autonomy, making the coordination of common goals for the region very difficult.⁹ Thus, development projects that would bring benefits to the greatest number of such provinces are currently in Moscow's interest. Still it was primarily the international policy factor that played a major role in influencing the final decision to end the oil pipe on the Russian coast of the Pacific Ocean.

In a sideline meeting at the 2005 *Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)* forum in Busan, Russia's President Vladimir Putin met with then Japanese

⁶ "Russians Mask Economy's Weakness with Shopping, Building Frenzy", *Bloomberg* (November 30, 2006).

⁷ "Russia", *CIA - The World Fact Book*; <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>.

⁸ N. Simonia, "Russian East Siberia and the Far East: A Basis for Co-operation with North-east Asia", *Global Asia* (September 2006); F.W. Engdahl, "The Emerging Russian Giant: the U.S. Eurasia and Global Geopolitics", *Japan Focus* (October 26, 2006).

⁹ A. Lukin, "Multilateral Cooperation in Northeast Asia and Prospects for Regional Community", conference "New Approaches to Peace and Stability in Northeast Asia", Moscow (May 26-28, 2005).

Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro and officially offered the Eastern Sea (Sea of Japan) as the destination for the pipeline in question. Koizumi reportedly reciprocated by saying that Japan would back Russia's bid to join the *World Trade Organization* (WTO).¹⁰ In order to keep China happy, it was also decided that the branch pipeline would extend from Skovorodino to Daqing. Although the pipeline's first stage (Taishet-Skovorodino) was due to be completed in 2008, a corruption scandal and environmental concerns postponed the estimated date of completion to 2009.¹¹ Construction of the 2,100 km-long second stage from Skovorodino to the Pacific Ocean would start after the launch of the first stage and, therefore, cannot be commissioned before 2015 or even 2017. In the meantime, extracted oil will be delivered to consumers by railway.

Russia's natural resources have already become a crucial factor for regional economic development. Along with the opening access to Siberian oil, China and Japan are vying for Russian natural gas reserves. Indeed, the mood at a September 2006 multinational energy conference in Seoul – *Toward Regional Energy Cooperation in Northeast Asia: Key Issues in the Development of Oil and Gas in Russia* – would testify to this.¹² Answering a multitude of questions from Chinese, Japanese, and South Koreans regarding where exactly its gas would be going in East Asia, Gazprom Counselor Alexey Mastepanov did not stop repeating – “Gas must be produced only after it is sold”. The problem, however, remains in negotiating the suitable price which until now stops the construction of the new gas pipeline from Russia and opens opportunities for competitors in Central Asia.¹³

Such a pragmatic approach to energy cooperation with neighbors also suggests that any cooperation between Russia and North Korea will also be based on a purely economic level. The Deputy Director of the Russian

¹⁰ “The Case Against Summits”, *The Economist* (November 24, 2005).

¹¹ “Траншефть: На ВСТО прощерает коррупция”, *Росбалт* (July 14, 2008); <http://www.rosbalt.ru/2008/7/14/499772.html>.

¹² “Toward Regional Energy Cooperation in Northeast Asia: Key Issues in the Development of Oil and Gas in Russia”, Korea Energy Economics Institute 2006 International Symposium; <http://www.ecoin.or.kr/zeroboard/view.php?id=eidb&siteink2=24&no=1295>.

¹³ On July 9, 2008 Kazakhstan joined the construction of a pan-Central Asia pipeline, a major project to link the Caspian Sea gas reserves with China. “Kazakhstan Building Gas Pipeline to China”, *China.Org.Cn* (July 10, 2008); http://www.china.org.cn/environment/news/2008-07/10/content_15988108.htm.

Ministry of Industry and Energy, Igor Scheulov, confirmed that Russia maintains regular contact with the DPRK concerning energy cooperation at both the corporate and government levels. A large pipeline project was supposed to send natural gas from Kovyktinskoye field in Irkutsk province through China to South Korea. One of the routes under consideration would have gone through North Korea and it was envisaged that Pyongyang would receive free natural gas as a pipeline transit fee.¹⁴

Nevertheless, despite enthusiasm for the idea, it seemed fairly clear that running a pipeline through impoverished and rapidly nuclearising North Korea was a risky business. Due to both cost and security concerns the DPRK was left out in the results of a November 2003 preliminary feasibility study conducted by Chinese, Russian and South Korean companies. A tentative agreement was reached on a pipeline route that would go from Irkutsk through China to the port of Dalian and under the Yellow Sea to South Korean Pyongtaek. North Korea would be bypassed out of fear that Pyongyang might have too much control over the supply of gas to the South.¹⁵

When the consolidating *Gazprom* Corporation took control over this project in 2005, it suddenly started changing the conditions of the proposed deal. Reserving the gas from Kovykta for domestic use, the Russian side offered China and South Korea the natural gas from the still underdeveloped Chayandinskoye field in Sakha. In that case the pipe route would pass through Khabarovsk and Nakhodka, approaching the Korean Peninsula from the east. Upon learning this news the South Korean *Kogas* corporation refused to sign the deal as it would have been much costlier and, ultimately, devoid of economic sense. The poor level of customer service by the state-owned *Gazprom* and the low demand for the liquefied natural gas in South Korea (only 13% of all energy consumption) were attributed to the failure of this project.¹⁶

The prospects for the export of Russian electrical power to the countries of Northeast Asia, as well, depend as much on political will and stability in the region as on the state of North Korea's power grid infrastructure. At present

¹⁴ Three prospective projects involving North Korea have been discussed so far: one that would bring natural gas from Irkutsk province, another from the northern Republic of Sakha, and a third from the island of Sakhalin.

¹⁵ P. Falkenheim Meyer, “Russo-North Korean Relations Under Kim Jong-il”, M.E. Sharpe, H.N. Kim, Y.H. Kihl (eds) *North Korea: The Politics of Regime Survival*. (New York: An East Gate Book, 2006), p. 209.

¹⁶ Д. Верхогуров, “Энергетическая политика России на Корейском полуострове”, *АПН-Кзахстан* (April-May 2006); <http://vestnik.tripod.com/articles/korea-russia-gas.html>.

the Far-Eastern division of the Russian government-controlled RAO *Unified Energy System* is considering several different projects, which are aimed at helping North and South Korea to satisfy their energy needs. According to one plan, Russia will direct electricity from Bureyskaya Hydropower Plant via the DPRK to the Republic of Korea (ROK). The high-voltage (500 kilovolt) electrical power transmission lines can be fixed very high above the ground to make any illegal tapping into or interruption of electricity by the North unlikely. Neither will South Korea be able to exert any pressure upon the DPRK: power allocated for the North will go along a separate line because the electrical grids in the two Koreas are technologically different. Another plan suggests that Russia will be able to provide 800 MW of electric power to North Korea in substitution of the energy promised by South Korea to that country.

Earlier projects which would have connected the Russian energy network with the two Koreas failed because South Korea did not want to be in a position of dependency on oil or gas being piped through the North.¹⁷ Tense international atmosphere surrounding North Korea's nuclear ambition, continues to badly affect the prospects of successful implementation of Russian energy in Northeast Asia. Certainly, a trilateral agreement would be needed to realize this. In the meantime, *RAO Unified Energy System* is exploring the more stable markets of north-eastern China and Japan.

Russia – North Korea Cooperation

Since the early 2000s, overall relations between Russia and DPRK have been improving. DPRK's importation of refined oil from Russia saw the first increase in 2002-2003 (from \$20 million to \$96 million USD) and was caused by the beginning of US-DPRK nuclear confrontation and the subsequent demise of international KEDO project. During 2004-2005, petroleum trade between Russia and North Korea grew from \$105 million to \$172.3 million. Until the *Six-Party Talks* produced first results, in the list of Russia's exports to

¹⁷ "Russia and Inter-Korean Relations", *The Gorbachev Foundation* (April 17, 2003).

the DPRK, oil products dominated with a strong 63%. The rampant corruption in both countries also let a trickle of Russian oil to be smuggled to North Korea unaccounted for¹⁸

In 2006, Russia was DPRK's third largest trading partner after China and South Korea and absorbed 9 percent of the total \$3.18 billion dollars spent by the North on imports (approx. \$286 million). The Kremlin's approval of international sanctions against the former communist ally was accompanied by the curtailment of trade with the North. At the time of North Korea's nuclear test in October 2006, Russia's trade statistics showed that the exports of petroleum had dropped 91.1 percent compared to the same period of the previous year.

The pragmatic mood in bilateral relations prevails, and these days Russia delivers oil and food to North Korea only in accordance with its obligations associated with the progress at the *Six-Party Talks*. This year, Russia has already delivered 100,000 tons of fuel oil to the DPRK in two batches and, according to the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexei Borodavkin, a top Russian envoy to the Six-Party Talks, will deliver another 100,000 tons by October 2008.¹⁹ In June 2008, the Russian government announced that it would provide 2,860 tons of flour to the DPRK. According to the official KCNA news agency report, this food aid arrived at the border city of Sinuiju in the DPRK's Northern Pyongan Province in early July 2008.²⁰

Recently, for the first time in the post-Soviet era, North Korea saw a major Russian investment. In the city of Pyeongseong the Russian auto plant KamAZ opened its first assembly line, specializing in the production of medium-size trucks named *Taebaeksan-96*. Although less than 50 trucks were assembled in 2007 this cooperation became an important milestone in the development of bilateral relations. While the project doesn't violate United Nations sanctions on North Korea, it shows Moscow's drive to expand its influence in the country. Ironically, the more trucks are assembled the heavier is North Korea's dependence on imported fuel, engine oils and other petrochemical products.

The importance of DPRK's *Rajin-Seonbong Special Economic Zone* to Russia's national interests is continuing to grow. The state-run monopoly OAO *Russian*

¹⁸ "N.Korea's Businesses Thriving in Russia", *Dong-A Ilbo* (April 4, 2008); <http://english.donga.com/srv/service.php3?bicode=060000&bitid=2008040448638>.

¹⁹ "Russia to Send More Fuel Oil to N.K. by October: Report", *Yonhap News Agency* (July 8, 2008).

²⁰ "Russian Food Aid Arrives in DPRK", *Xinhua* (July 8, 2008).

Railways is currently upgrading its railway connections with North Korea in Khasan-Tumangang, investing at least 1.75 billion roubles (\$72 million) into this project, and plans to participate in an ambitious plan to rebuild a trans-Korean railway. By connecting Rajin (and the rest of northern Korea) to its Trans-Siberian Railroad, Russia is hoping to benefit from the transit of South Korean and Japanese cargo which can be sent via its territory to Central Asian and European markets. Pyongyang seems to endorse these plans and other Russian initiatives but does not commit any financial resources.²¹

80% of the overall bilateral economic trade between Russia and North Korea consists of cooperation, barter and investment-in-kind between the regional areas. The most active Russian regions trading with the DPRK are Eastern Siberia and the Far East. The Maritime Province (Primorsky Krai) itself exports to North Korea more than \$4 million worth of refined oil per year. There are no oil fields in the Russian Maritime Province and the oil has to be borrowed through the chain of federal bureaucratic structures from the oil-rich areas of Eastern Siberia. Instead of money, the local governments agree to receive the labor of North Korean workers.

North Korean laborers in Siberia and the Far East were common under the Soviet system and they are still visibly present. In 2004, the *Russian Federal Immigration Service*

issued 14,000 visas for foreign laborers, of whom North Korean laborers in Russia numbered 3,320 in 2005 and 5,000 in 2006. Since the DPRK has no other way to pay in goods or services its government accurately pays for oil imported from Russia by dispatching thousands of laborers at zero cost. Following the strong demand from local companies, just in 2006 regional authorities of Primorsky Krai agreed to issue extra 5,000 working visas to North Koreans.²² This openness is contrary to local government policy that normally restricts the entry of labor from China.

DPRK citizens sent to Russia work as woodcutters and builders but some have also managed to find work in the agricultural and marine industries.

²¹ "Russian Merchants Greatly Increasing in Pyongyang", *Daily NK* (April 5, 2007); <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?catId=nk00100&num=1871>.

²² "Pyongyang Offers Slaves in Exchange for Russian Oil"; <http://www.asianews.it/view.php?l=en&art=7651>.

Through the presence of these laborers, Russia has enjoyed a partial repayment of DPRK's post-Soviet debt through North Korean workers being contracted to work in mines and lumber mills in Russia's Far East.²³ The wages they are able to make in Russia are far greater than what they would make at home. However, the foreign worker quota is set not by provincial governments but by Moscow that often tries to put a stop to these programs due to the complexity of the matter, including the refugee issue. Part of this opposition stems from the fact that the North Korean workers in Russia still fall under DPRK laws and, therefore, are subjects to intrusive supervision.

Among the most difficult but negotiable issues in the way of Russia-North Korea cooperation remains the problem of external debt. During the Soviet era the DPRK incurred the debt of approximately \$8 billion dollars, which Pyongyang still owes to Moscow but cannot repay. This debt remains a stumbling block in most negotiations on the new aid and development programs. However, this debt can potentially make the trilateral Russian-Korean relations closer and stronger.

Back in January 1991, soon after the opening of diplomatic relations with Republic of Korea, Moscow received \$3 billion dollars from Seoul in the form of a three-year loan. The collapse of the Soviet Union left this loan largely unpaid. The new Russian government in the 1990s provided South Korea with armaments worth \$150 million dollars to be counted as payment-in-kind for the remaining debt. In 2003, after bilateral negotiations on this issue were completed, part of this Russian debt was cancelled and the remainder was rescheduled to be paid over the next 23 years.

Taking into account its own debts to the South, Russia could easily write off a significant portion of North Korean debt. To resolve this question a certain agreement between all three parties is needed. To engage in a mutual and reciprocal round of debt cancellation, Russia might choose to see the North and the South as one country. Such an agreement would have unblocked the road for a broader cooperation between Russia and the two Koreas, and simplified Russia's energy cooperation with China and Japan.

Conclusions

In the 1990s, DPRK leadership must have hoped that Russia's assistance would help them restore their economy in the same fashion as it used to be in the times of Soviet Union. However, the new market economy in Russia

²³ "Building Ties with North Korea", *The New York Times* (December 11, 2003).

provides little room for Soviet-type sponsorship, leaving North Korea in the state of energy and transportation crisis.²⁴ Disinterest among the Russian private sector in cooperation with North Korean companies has compounded this difficult situation.

Available statistics reflecting bilateral trade in the 2000s still show the sluggishness of Russo-North Korean economic links. Barter and trade-in-kind continue to play an important role in bilateral trade, while the possibility of workforce export remains vital for DPRK. The current system of exchange between North Korea and Russia is that the former exporting labor and agricultural goods and the latter exporting electrical energy, oil, and raw materials.

As it was in the last century, railway remains a symbol of Russia's power in the region. By extending its transportation network and pipeline infrastructure, Russia is trying to get back into the grand game in Northeast Asia, which it was forced to leave with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The only difference between then and now is that the main motivating factor these days is profit-making and economic reasoning, not ideological consideration.

For communist North Korea, whose reclusive leadership is bogged in cold-war mentality, this is a novel concept. This disparity in attitudes often creates misunderstanding and results in missed opportunities. Even the railway, which is Russia's most feasible infrastructure project in North Korea, may be endangered by the unpredictability of current leadership in Pyongyang. The risks are too high to start any other major capital investment without a serious change in regime's attitude.

Indeed, the position of reformed North Korea in the newly emerging map of economic interests can be surprisingly strong. The DPRK is located at the very centre of the world's most vibrant and dynamically developing region. By playing his cards shrewdly, Kim Jong II might create conditions for socio-

²⁴ G. Bulychev, "Korean Security Dilemmas: A Russian Perspective", H. Smith (ed) *Reconstituting Korean Security: a Policy Primer*. (United Nations University Press, 2007), p. 195.

economic revitalization of the North that will be a positive contribution to the eventual unification of the Korean peninsula.

Moscow is learning its lesson too. Russian strategists already realize that North Korea might play the important role of regional balancer if it managed to reconcile with its ideological enemies and rivals. The contiguous powers would probably agree with this as long as the balancer is genuinely neutral and independent. Such a pivotal role would perfectly satisfy the ambitious DPRK that already claims a status of nuclear power.

However, in building regional security the potential of Russian influence on North Korea must not be exaggerated. In fact, Russia's ability to project its economic power, especially through oil and gas pipelines, would be greatly enhanced if political tensions between the two Koreas declined and they finally moved to unification. Cooperation between Russia, North and South Korea in oil, gas and railway construction and exploitation projects can be a good start for reconciliation. No progress in Russian-DPRK relations is possible without close Russian-ROK cooperation.

The concept of three-party cooperation means the combination of Russian energy and resources, North Korean territory and labor, and South Korean capital and technology. The objectives of this policy – to revive and modernize the North Korean economy, to create income sources, and to promote inter-Korean cooperation and economic ties of both Koreas with Russia – would lead to the creation of economically integrated system of Northeast Asia.

Russian-Korean trilateral relations are based on a solid footing and replete with opportunities that can benefit each of them.

In this light, Russian-Korean relations can be seen as based on a solid footing and replete with opportunities that can benefit each of them. The new administrations in the Kremlin and Seoul's 'Blue House', together with the new generation of leaders in Pyongyang, can radically change the political climate in the region. A simple strengthening of economic and military relationships between the three countries will contribute to the peaceful solution of the 'Korean nuclear problem' and prepare the basis for durable peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia.

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Peter Ďurana

Hurdles of Japanese-North Korean Normalization

Summary: For Japan, the relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) are a remnant of both the Cold War and a Japanese pre-1945 imperial past. Bilateral relations today, 17 years after commencing of the first round of the so-far inconclusive negotiations on normalization, are in a deep deadlock over an issue of abductions of Japanese citizens by the DPRK in the 1970's and 1980's. It is however not the nature of the crimes itself that can sufficiently explain their significance for today's relations. Here, by placing the issue into its historical and Japanese domestic background, an analysis of the present state of this difficult bilateral relationship is attempted.

For Japan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea or DPRK hereinafter) is the only member of UN with which it does not have diplomatic relations.¹ This neighbor and former colony regularly scores as the least liked/most hated country in the world in Japanese public opinion polls² and at present Japan is placing extensive sanctions prohibiting any ships, any goods and as a rule any North Koreans entering Japan. As a former

¹ Monaco used to be another, until December 2006

² Japanese leading newspaper, *Asahi Shinbun* April 2005 poll: question about liking/disliking the DPRK: like 0%, hate 78%, neither 18%. In a question "what is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear about the DPRK, answers were: abductions of Japanese citizens 49%, nuclear weapons program 23%, spies 6%, refugees 6%, food crisis 6%, human rights problem 6%. *Asahi Shinbun* (April 27, 2005).

Peter Ďurana is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Integrated Arts and Sciences of the University of Tokyo. In his research he deals with the Japan-Korea Relations. He currently works at the Embassy of Slovakia in Japan.

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colony and *Cold War* adversary, there are numerous outstanding historical and security issues dividing the two. At present, however, there is one single problem which overshadowed all others and caused a deep stalemate – a history of DPRK having forcefully abducted (officially 17) Japanese citizens from either Japanese remote coastal areas or Europe between 1977 and 1983. DPRK kept denying the matter until the historical Japan-DPRK summit in September 2002 when its leader, Kim Jong Il suddenly acknowledged the crimes, apologized and agreed to let 5 victims return to Japan. But admitting the crimes did not help bring normalization closer, on the contrary it led both countries' relations to an eventual deadlock that persists until today. At its face value, the present conflict consists of a Japanese position that DPRK is insincere in saying that 8 abducted victims are already dead and requires further investigation, while DPRK considers the problem to be already solved and blames Japan for being too stubborn on the issue while marginalizing the fact that Japan brought incomparably worse suffering on Korea during its colonization.

A Piece of History

North Korea was established in 1948 on the ruins of the Japanese empire, whose part it had been since 1910. The leaders headed by Kim Il Sung that came to prominence in the newly formed state were former anti-Japanese partisan fighters; 'anti-Japaneseness' was therefore part of the DPRK's founding spirit. The *Korean War* (1950 – 1953) in which Japan extensively assisted the US/UN war effort against the DPRK further fueled mutual antipathy.

Neither North nor South Korea was invited to become signatories of the *Treaty of Peace with Japan* in 1951, because the principal occupying power, the USA, did not recognize the North and viewed the South only as a dependent former territory of surrendered Japan, not as a victorious nation in a war against Japan. This meant that both were thus deprived of an opportunity to establish diplomatic relations with their former suzerain at this point. The Republic of Korea (South Korea or ROK hereinafter) started to separately negotiate normalization with Japan already in 1951 under American auspices. The deep rooted animosity between the two caused the talks to last as long as 14 years until they finally established diplomatic relations with a *Treaty on Basic Relations* of 1965. Japan did not apologize for its colonial past in the treaty and refused to call what it was to give South Korea 'compensations', in favor of calling it 'economic aid'. Even if not satisfactory for the ROK, the basic historical question was settled and normal relations established. This was however different in the case of North Korea, whose state of abnormal

relations with Japan lasts until today. The main reason why they could not establish diplomatic relations during the *Cold War* was both Koreans' fierce legitimacy contest – South Korea would categorically oppose any contact of Japan with the North and the North would insist on Japan abrogating the *Treaty on Basic Relations* with the South if it was to normalize relations with it. RK finally retreated from its position in 1988, DPRK in 1990.³ This at last enabled Japan and North Korea to start their first intergovernmental negotiations ever. As was the case with the South, these negotiations on normalization proved to be very difficult and have not produced any result even up until now, 17 years after they have started.

It is important to note that even during the *Cold War* Japan kept acknowledging the practical reality of the existence of the North Korean state. This was a manifestation of Japan's interest not to get overly entrapped into the *Cold War* confrontation as much as it was a practical necessity stemming from the fact that as a remainder of its colonial rule, Japan possessed a minority of some 600 thousand Koreans. Although as much as 97% originally came from the south of Korea, the majority of them had been originally politically affiliated with the DPRK.⁴ In a major act of de-facto recognition, Japan agreed in 1958 to transport what finally amounted to be over 93,000 of these Japanese Koreans to DPRK, with the last group traveling as late as 1984.⁵ Taken together with existing bilateral trade, direct maritime connection and political and cultural exchanges that were taking place on a non-governmental basis there always has existed a certain flow of people between the two *Cold War* adversaries. This was supported by the fact, that DPRK had a powerful ally in Japanese politics – the major opposition party with about 30% of electoral support – the *Japanese Socialist Party* (JSP). As for

³ On July 7, 1988, ROK President Roh Tae Woo announced in a speech that he would support Japan's improving relations with the North. This was part of his *Nordpolitik* aimed at establishing relations with China and USSR and thus engaging North Korea in order to ease military tensions on the peninsula.

⁴ S. Ryang *North Koreans in Japan: Language, Ideology, and Identity*. (Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), p. 6. When Japan capitulated in 1945, the number of Koreans in Japan had been over 2 million.

⁵ More than 6,000 of them possessed Japanese citizenship and more than 1,800 of them were Japanese wives of Koreans meaning that that DPRK did have enough native Japanese languages – an intriguing fact when considering that DPRK would later abduct Japanese and use some of them as language teachers for spies. M. Okonogi, "Sengo Niccho kankein no tenkai: Kaishakuteki na kento" ("Post War Japan-DPRK Relations: An Interpretative Inquest"), 1945 nen iko no Nihon kankei (Japanese-Korean Relations after 1945), Nihon Rekishi Kyodo Kenkyu Inkai (Japan-South Korea Joint Committee for Research on History), 2005), p. 132; http://www.jkcf.or.jp/history/3/11-0j_okonogi_1.pdf.

the general public, DPRK being economically more successful than the ROK until 1970's and ROK having authoritarian regimes in power until 1987, it was both Koreans that were not popular, even though the majority Japanese' attitude can best be described as indifference.

Normalization Politics

North Korea proposed negotiations on normalization to a visiting joint delegation of the ruling *Liberal Democratic Party* (LDP) and opposition JSP in Pyongyang in September 1990. The main reason was DPRK seeking Japanese capital in the form of compensations for the colonial past. The LDP-JSP delegation signed a conciliatory *Tripartite Declaration* with the *Korean Workers' Party* in which they apologized for the colonial past and even for '45 years' after WWII and promised to pay compensations; things looked liked rapprochement was near. The declaration did indeed provide the necessary impulse for the normalization negotiations, however, it also became an object of controversy in Japan as offering unnecessary concessions to DPRK. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement that the declaration, being an agreement between political parties, is unbinding for the Japanese government.⁶

A fierce opposition to the results of the Japanese joint mission to Pyongyang came from South Korea, despite its declared support for improvement in Japan-DPRK relations. In a reaction, it rebuked the declaration and forced Japan to accept its position that any progress in Japan-North relations has to be discussed beforehand with the South and has to be in line with progress in North-South relations.⁷ This cautious South Korean stance thus became one important major obstacle to Japan-DPRK normalization, until ROK President Kim Dae Jung announced his *Sunshine Policy* towards North Korea after his inauguration in 1998 and let Japan know that he welcomes and supports improvement in Japan's relations with DPRK even if they went ahead with the development of North-South relations. Yet another major structural obstacle

*Even during the
Cold War Japan kept
acknowledging the
practical reality of the
existence of the North
Korean state.*

⁶ C.W. Hughes *Japan's Economic Power and Security: Japan and North Korea*. (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 83.

⁷ *Ibid.*

to Japanese rapprochement with the DPRK was the USA's stance towards the country. The problem was its nuclear weapons development program to which North Korea resorted since the end of 1980's in an attempt to secure regime survival. The deepening rift over the problem made the USA cautious about possible Japan-DPRK normalization followed by a flow of Japanese capital to North Korea. It therefore pressed on Japan to make a satisfactory solution to the nuclear problem a precondition to normalization.⁸ And it is also the fact that DPRK's ultimate goal remains to achieve rapprochement with the USA – and relations with Japan are generally subordinated to this aim – which also makes Japan-DPRK negotiations difficult.⁹

Burdened with neglected historical issues, mutual animosity and facing the above mentioned structural barriers, the negotiation talks indeed were not easy. The two main rounds of talks took place in 1991 – 1992 and then in 2000 and 2002 and remain in a stalemate ever after. In February 2006 there has been a brief attempt for re-opening of the talks on normalization on the condition of parallel discussing of other security related issues, which ended up soon without any tangible results. Recently, the non-existence of official normalization talks has been partly substituted for by bilateral meetings in the *Six-Party Talks Working Group on Normalization of the Japanese-DPRK Relations*. After two meetings of the working group in 2007, the third and most recent one in June 2008 demonstrated a will for improvement on both sides, but turning this into concrete policy however remains still a difficult next step yet to come.

Taken altogether, all the above mentioned negotiations on normalization have not produced any significant progress, other than both parties presenting their divergent positions. As for the actual content of the negotiations, one important point of contention was the fact that Japan was willing to offer only a solution compatible with a key precedent – the *Treaty on Basic Relations* with South Korea from 1965. This concerned mainly all pre-1945 historical issues – such as the question of the validity of the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty from 1910 and related questions of compensations and apology and, as mentioned above, the way they had been handled in 1965 was not very satisfying for either Korea.

These historical problems actually are, on paper, already solved. In the *Pyongyang Declaration* signed during the historical Koizumi-Kim Jong

⁸ S. Takasaki *Kenisho Niccho koshu (Japanese-North Korean Negotiations: A Verification)*. (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2004), p. 50.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 64; Y. Fukushima, "Niccho Pyongyang Sengen he no michi" ("The Road to the Pyongyang Declaration"), *Ajia shakai bunka kenkyu* No. 5 (January 2004), p. 83.

II summit on September 17, 2002, Japan unambiguously apologized for colonizing Korea – which was more that it had offered South Korea in 1965 – and DPRK agreed to accept 'economic cooperation' from Japan – which was the same as what South Korea did. However, the relations have been complicated by other, security related matters which hindered the Pyongyang declaration to be implemented up until today. First of all it is the DPRK nuclear development program that peaked with a major crisis from 1993 – 1994 and again after 2002. Then it is DPRK missile tests, especially one from August 1998 that scared Japan by its testing, for the first time in Japanese post-war history, over Japanese islands and

landing into the *Pacific Ocean*,¹⁰ and other military provocations such as intrusions of DPRK vessels into Japanese territorial waters. In short, without even considering the abduction issue that came up in 1997, in the period between the first and second set of negotiations, that is between 1992 and 2000, DPRK moved up to become Japan's biggest security threat. Japan reacted by strengthening its defense posture and putting forth several legislative reforms aiming at preparing itself for security emergencies in the second half of the 1990's, that were all made having a conflict with DPRK in mind. This made normalization even more distant of an aim.

The Abduction Issue

There is however another security issue that proved to be an even bigger obstacle to normalization than the DPRK's missile or nuclear program – a problem called the 'abduction issue' in Japan.

The first time that the Japanese public had been informed that North Korea might be behind the disappearance of three young Japanese couples

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¹⁰ In May 1993 North Korea conducted a test of a medium-range missile (*Nodong*) that landed in the Sea of Japan. 5 years later, in August 1998, a missile with much longer flying range (*Taepondong-1*) flew over the Japanese island of Honshu and landed into the Pacific Ocean.

from coastal areas of Japan in previous years, was in an article in the right-leaning Japanese newspaper *Sankei Shinbun* in 1980.¹¹ This was regarded as sheer speculation at this time though. The first pieces of evidence came in the form of a North Korean agent being arrested in South Korea in 1985 on a false passport belonging to a Japanese person who had been missing after disappearing from a remote beach in Japan in 1980. Then, there was the testimony of a North Korean female agent who, in 1988 was arrested for bombing a civilian South Korean plane a year earlier, that she had been taught Japanese in Pyongyang by a Japanese woman whose description matched one Japanese woman who had been missing after disappearing from the same beach as the holder of the misused passport in the previous case.¹² This case had actually been raised during the normalization negotiations in 1991 – 1992; the Korean side responded with furious denial and used the case as a pretext for interrupting the talks. In the same year as this testimony, a family of a young Japanese man who had been missing after visiting Spain in 1980 received a letter written by their missing son, smuggled out of DPRK by a Polish visitor, informing his parents that he was living in Pyongyang together with some other Japanese.¹³ The parents did not make the letter public at this time. It was actually in the same year, in 1988 that the Japanese government responded to a question in the Japanese Diet that there was sufficient reason to believe that North Korea is responsible for the cases of the missing people, but this again remained largely unnoticed.

In 1996 a right-leaning magazine in Japan published an article by a Japanese television producer who interviewed a former North Korean spy who had defected to South Korea and gave a testimony that there were Japanese language teachers, kidnapped by North Korea, teaching in spy training centers in DPRK. By early 1997 it was confirmed that one woman of which the spy spoke matches the description of a girl who had been missing since she was 13-years old in Japan's Niigata prefecture. The story was soon covered by major Japanese media, causing a sensation and the girl – Yokota Megumi became the symbol of what at this point became the 'abduction issue'. The very last set of decisive evidence came about in the spring of 2002 when a Japanese ex-wife of a Japanese hijacker of a passenger plane from Japan to North Korea in 1970 testified before a Japanese court that she had

¹¹ S. Takasaki (2004), p. 115.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ E. Johnston, "The North Korea Abduction Issue and Its Effect on Japanese Domestic Politics", *JPRJ Working Paper No.101* (June 2004), p. 5; <http://www.jpri.org/publications/workingpapers/wp101.html>.

personally seduced a Japanese girl to travel with her to DPRK from England where she had studied and personally apologized to the girl's parents in a televised meeting soon thereafter.¹⁴

Shortly after the Yokota Megumi's story made a sensation in Japan in 1997, two organizations supporting the causes of the abductees were established and since then stand at the frontline of the movement to return the abductees back home. One, *Association of the Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea* (AFVKN) is formed solely by abductees' families and is headed by Megumi's father Yokota Shigeru. The other one, *National Association for the Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea* (NARKN) is headed by Katsumi Sato, president of right-leaning *Modern Korea Institute* that also published the magazine that first reported on Yokota's case. NARKN consists of 40 membership organizations, has a larger number of supporters nationwide and works closely with the *Parliamentary League for Early Repatriation of Japanese Citizens Kidnapped by North Korea* thus being able to exercise considerable influence over Japanese DPRK policy.¹⁵

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The overall pictures as it is known now is that there have been at least 17 people abducted by North Korean agents, most of them from remote Japanese coastal areas and some from Europe between the years 1978 and 1983. The possible reasons for the crimes was identity theft to be used by North Korean agents, Japanese language teaching, providing wives to Japanese plane hijackers of the 1970 incident or eliminating accidental witnesses of North Korean spy activities. As such they are a legacy of intensified espionage confrontation between North and South Korea at the end of 1970¹⁶ and were probably directed rather at South Korea, not Japan itself. And it is equally intriguing that there actually was a sufficient number of native Japanese language speakers in North Korea at the time that the abductions took place, which leads to a speculation present in Japan that the abductions in fact were only a 'by-product' of agents taking them home as a 'proof' that they really were in Japan.

¹⁴ *Asahi Shinbun* (March 12, 2002). DPRK's protecting of the criminals of the 1970 hijacking incident, usually referred to as 'Yodogo Incident' in Japan, is also one official reason for USA including DPRK on the state sponsors of terrorism list and remains a matter of contention between DPRK and Japan.

¹⁵ NARKN homepage; <http://www.sukuukai.jp/index.php?itemid=1102>.

¹⁶ M. Okonogi (2005), p. 150.

The Domestic Background of the Abduction Issue

As suggested so far, the problem of history perception is an important underlying factor behind the abduction issue and Japan-DPRK relations in general. And it is also quite an elusive one to be analyzed.

Even though personal material benefits are said to play a role too, there always have been those who strive for rapprochement with DPRK out of broader historical considerations and out of feeling of being indebted to their former colony. Related is the fact that in the 1990's the overall historical perception of the public as well as that of the government in Japan took a shift towards a more self-critical assessment of Japan's past handling of Asia's neighbors. The one symbol of this trend is the 1995 Prime Minister Murayama statement – the most sincere and explicit apology for the Japanese past from Japan's Prime Minister so far. This left-ward shift, however, is thought to have brought about a defensive counter-reaction on the part of the Japanese right, and it is this 'anti-wave' that in the end caused several history related problems complicating relations with the People's Republic of China and ROK in recent years.¹⁷ The incorporation of the abduction problem into the political program of a part of the right and ultra-right in Japan since the abductions became a matter of nationwide interest in 1997 coincides with this counter-wave of nationalist ideology and is arguably not unrelated.

It is the tragic character of the crimes and the fact that they are in essence a crude violation of Japanese sovereignty that gathers attention among the public. However, there is another dimension to the problem. Even when suspicions of North Korean involvement grew stronger, the cases had been in effect for long years overlooked by Japanese authorities partly because of the lack of conclusive evidence and partly because the issue had potential for disturbing relations with North Korea.¹⁸ This is also one reason why the issue is quite politically sensitive in Japan.

Again, it is probably this accumulated frustration of the families of the victims being overlooked for so long that turned into a driving force behind their effort to search for a solution by taking the matter to the top-politicians in and even out of the country. And as there were politicians and people of

¹⁷ W.D. Lee, "Kannichi kan no kako no rekishi katto no kozo to kokufuku hosaku" ("The Structure of Historical Disputes between Korea and Japan and Ways to Overcome it"), *Hokuto Ajia jidai ni okeru Nikkan Kankai (Japanese-South Korean Relations in the Age of North Asia)* (September 2005), p. 53. A Symposium Paper Collection.

¹⁸ E. Johnston, 2004, p.23.

influence that kept playing down the possibility of North Korean involvement, North Korean admission in 2002 has brought about their embarrassment for underestimating the DPRK and their subsequent partial loss of influence. Another outcome of this embarrassment is their hardening of attitudes towards the DPRK also as a shield towards possible attacks backed by united public opinion. The outcome of the 2002 admissions on the other hand boosted the legitimacy of those who for long kept advocating a hard-line policy towards North Korea. In short, this altogether resulted in a significant shift to the right of both general mood and the government's policy towards the DPRK.¹⁹

It is also no coincidence that many of those most active in the abduction issue have long established credentials for right-leaning policies. Many actually also share deep-rooted dislike for North Korea. Indeed, the organization supporting the victims, NARKN and its leaders do not conceal much that regime change in North Korea is their ultimate goal and it had been so even before they became involved in the abduction issue.²⁰ The character of the abductions being violations of Japanese sovereignty by a disliked North Korean state makes it an appealing issue. Moreover, the way the issue has been handled put many on the left and those favoring normalization on the defensive, the issue indeed in a sense is a powerful political tool. Conditioning things with 'solving' of the abduction issue therefore sometimes is self-serving in the sense that it is often not clear how far its definition extends.

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¹⁹ This shift and ultra-right involvement in the abduction issue was demonstrated when the chief architect of the 2002 September summit Tanaka Hitoshi from MOFA was bombarded at his home in September 2003, to which right-wing Tokyo mayor Ishihara Shin-taro openly commented that it is obvious that they would bomb him and that he actually deserves to die. *Asahi Shinbun* (September 10, 2002); <http://www.asahi.com/special/abductees/TKY200309100265.html>, retrieved on 2008/6/17.

²⁰ E. Johnston, (2004), p. 25.

It has also been suggested that one more reason why the issue is attractive to right-leaning activists is that it has the capacity to project Japan into a victimized position vis-à-vis its Asian neighbor. This is related to the rather 'ahistorical' way that the issue is often being handled. In the media coverage, the geopolitical and historical context is often being left out. The official government PR campaigns handle the issue as a problem that directly concerns the security of Japan and every of its citizens, implicitly also at the present. From the perspective of the DPRK and also the Korean minority in Japan, this is unsettling in the fact, that the portion of history where Japan was the victimizer is being marginalized in the process as being only distant and unrelated history. It has also been argued in Japan that the discourse on the abduction issue has been influenced by a prevailing post-9/11 black-and-white value judgment in foreign policy matters; the *Axis of Evil* concept being its demonstration in relation to the DPRK. In Japan, traditionally hesitant about definite yes-or-no's, also in foreign policy matters, this tended to foster today's uncompromising view towards the DPRK.

The 2002 Summit and its Aftermath

As suggested already, the structure of international relations in East Asia is one of major factors influencing Japan-DPRK relations. And it was in 2001 that one of the most favorable constellations for a breakthrough in bilateral relations came about. RK propagated its Sunshine policy, materialized the North-South historical summit in June 2000 and encouraged Japan to improve relations with DPRK. The USA, after having pursued an exceptionally conciliatory engagement policy at the end of Clinton's administration launched its complete reversal with the advent of Bush's administration in 2001, epitomized by the above mentioned 'Axis of Evil' speech of January 2002. With acutely risen security concerns in DPRK fearing military confrontation with the USA and with a sympathetic government in ROK, the time for Japan-DPRK negotiations and possible concessions from DPRK was ripe. While pressing on the abduction issue a summit meeting was secretly hammered out by the Japanese MOFA and on the September 17, 2002 a historical summit between Koizumi Junichiro and Kim Jong Il took place in Pyongyang. Along with the signing of the promising Pyongyang Declaration, Kim acknowledged the abduction cases and the two parties agreed on letting the 5 officially remaining victims to travel to Japan for around 2 weeks, then return to their families in DPRK and together decide on their future.

It is probable that DPRK considered this admission by its head of state in a matter that had not been known even to its own public to be the ultimate

concession in order to bring a quick solution to the problem of abductions and achieve top-politics lead breakthrough in bilateral relations. And it is highly probable that Japan's MOFA negotiators and the Prime Minister office shared this perception.²¹ In an interview with major Japanese newspapers two days after the Pyongyang summit, Koizumi unambiguously states that he considers the fact that Kim Jong Il apologized as important, makes it clear that the dialogue in the form of further negotiation is the way to face the problem and criticizes those who call for interrupting any dialogue solely out of anger.²² However, the psychological effect of this sudden confirmation of past crimes after years of stubborn denial turned decisively against the DPRK and Koizumi eventually had to adjust his original intention for quick progress on normalization. The families, their supporters and general public put greatest attention on the fact that 8 are dead and the explanation being insufficient. The media has run the most intensive coverage of the issue so far and partly under pressure from NARKN activists and under the leadership of future Prime Minister, Abe Shinzo – who has gained a large portion of his popularity through the issue – and decided to break the agreement and not to return the 5 victims after visiting Japan. Japan adopted a policy of considering all claimed dead to be alive and demanded further investigation into the matter and their eventual return, which DPRK consistently denies, considering the matter to be already solved. The following 12th official round of normalization talks held in October 2002 in Malaysia was indeed completely overshadowed by the abduction issue and the issue has kept its decisive hampering influence over any progress in bilateral relations ever since.

In an effort to break the impasse, Koizumi visited Pyongyang for the second time in May 2004 – and brought with him back the families of the previously returned 5 abductees and gained a promise of further investigation into the fates of the 8 proclaimed dead. Koizumi stated at a press conference in Pyongyang that he still favors solving the issue through dialogue and hopes for eventual normalization.²³ Throughout the investigation that followed,

²¹ The chief negotiator and architect of the Pyongyang Summit of 2002, Tanaka Hitoshi from MOFA claims that contrary to most of analysts' opinion, the Korean side had been aware of the possible repercussions that the admission would bring to Japanese public opinion and were also aware that relations will temporarily worsen as a result. He explains that the fact, that DPRK did not admit anything during preparatory negotiations for fear that the word would leak out and make even the summit impossible. H. Tanaka, S. Tahara *Kokka to Gāiko (The State and Diplomacy)*. (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2005), p. 66.

²² *Asahi Shinbun* (September 20, 2002).

²³ Prime Minister Office homepage; <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/koizumispeech/2004/05/22press.html>.

DPRK made available materials which were supposed to confirm the 8 deaths including supposed remains of Yokota Megumi, her medical record and enabling Japanese government officials to interview 16 crucial witnesses. This intended attempt for a concession on the part of DPRK however only resulted in throwing more gas on the fire – the Japanese government analyzed this evidence as being insufficient and/or fabricated and the public has been left even more enraged at North Korea.

As suggested already, the admission in 2002 and subsequent course of events has turned public opinion decisively against the DPRK. Immediately after the 2002 summit, 81% said they evaluate the summit positively.²⁴ Even though 76% said that they can not accept DPRK's handling of the abduction issue, at the same time, 59% were still for normalization, 29% against. In July 2003, the number of people opposing normalization exceeded the number of its supporters (46 to 44%)²⁵ and in December 2004, 63% said they prefer sanctions to only 25% preferring dialogue.²⁶ 79% of respondents say that they hate the DPRK, 0% likes the country and 18 responded neither in April 2005, compared to a 57-2-37 ratio in December 2000²⁷.

This change in public mood after the abduction admission can be interpreted to be, first, a sharp drop in the image of DPRK but with negotiation being still the preferred way of solving the problem. Later, this preference for negotiations changed to supporting hard-line policy and opposing normalization altogether. During the term of Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, who earned a large part of his initial popularity on his tough stance towards the DPRK, 81% of respondents in a poll in February 2007 agreed with the basic Japanese government policy that there will be no normalization of diplomatic relations unless North Korea offers a "solution" to the abduction problem, only 11% disagreed.²⁸ Public opinion in Japan has been beyond doubt unified on the issue.

²⁴ *Asahi Shinbun* (September 2002). Out of 81%, 37% 'very positively' and 44% 'positively'.
²⁵ *Asahi Shinbun* (July 29, 2003).

²⁶ *Asahi Shinbun* (December 21, 2004). When questioned by the same newspaper whether they prefer embargo or diplomacy in handling the DPRK, diplomacy supporters kept decreasing from 40 to 25% and hard-line approach supporters increasing from 45 to 63 between July 2003 and December 2004.

²⁷ *Asahi Shinbun* (December 5, 2004), (April 27, 2005).

²⁸ *Asahi Shinbun* (February 20, 2007).

The Impasse

The level of domestic unity on the issue is also well demonstrated by the fact that major opposition party – the *Democratic Party* completely shares the government's policy on the issue. The party includes many of the former members of the *Japanese Socialist Party*, the party that maintained friendly relations with DPRK during the *Cold War*²⁹. This makes the DPRK policy of the *Democratic Party* an easily attackable weak-point and is one reason why the party can hardly afford offering anything short of the government's hard-line policy.

With a solid consensus having been created among the public and policy-makers, Japan embarked on a series of legislative and diplomatic offensives against the DPRK that put both countries relations in the present deadlock. In 2004 the Diet passed laws putting limits on money transfers to DPRK and maritime connection between the countries. In June 2006 it passed the *North Korean Human Rights Law* where other than calling for a solution to the abduction, it also states that the Japanese hold the responsibility for assisting refugees from North Korea. Soon thereafter, in line with long-time demands by abduction issue activists, economic sanctions on DPRK were introduced as a reaction to the missile and nuclear tests that the DPRK resorted to in 2006. On October 11, 2006 Japan prohibited all ships from DPRK to enter Japan, prohibited all imports from the DPRK and generally prohibited all DPRK citizens from entering Japan.³⁰ The sanctions are being evaluated every 6 months, the last extension so far being in April 2008.

At the same time a concentrated diplomatic effort to raise the awareness of the international community has been underway and the abduction issue has made its way into G8 final statements every year starting in 2003, into *UN General Assembly Resolution on Human Rights in North Korea* adopted for three consecutive years after 2005, into *The North Korean Human Rights Act* passed unanimously by US Congress in October 2004, into ASEAN+3 final statement on June 2003 and into numerous bilateral statements to which Japan is a party. It is probable that one goal of these international PR

²⁹ *The Japan Socialist Party* – i.e. its successor, the *Social Democratic Party* (SDP) had to apologize to the victims' families for not being able to do enough on the abduction issue. The reason of the party becoming marginalized in the second half of 1990's is also the abduction issue; the chairwomen of the party, Doi Takako has been defeated in elections in 2003 by a rather unknown candidate who has been active on the abduction issue.

³⁰ *Yomiuri Shinbun* (October 12, 2006). Korean residents of Japan who re-enter Japan after visiting the DPRK are granted exception to the non-entry rule.

activities is accommodating domestic public opinion and demands from the abduction issue, active activists and politicians. The support from the USA has been demonstrated most vividly in April 2006, when President Bush invited the mother and brother of one abducted girl, Yokota Megumi, to a 30 minute meeting at the White House and later called the encounter “one of the most moving meetings since I’ve been the president”³¹. The support for the abduction issue on the part of the USA has been in line with its hard-line policy towards DPRK and its overall foreign policy goals. The war on terror, high priority on human rights and pressing DPRK on the abduction issue are compatible and mutually supportive. On the other hand, it is South Korea that has not

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been overly enthusiastic about making the abduction a major issue even though itself is a victim of abductions; there are supposed to be officially more than 480 people abducted by North Korea from the South – compared to Japanese seventeen.³² The reason for ROK’s position lies in the fact that it was North-South mutual spying activities that brought about the abductions – which might

make it a sensitive issue if investigated into detail – while caution about lending support to the right wing activists and politicians who propagate the issue in Japan might be another reason. The described balance of interests between Japan and the USA seems to have been impaired by the USA’s decision to push for a denuclearization deal in the *Six-Party Talks* in early 2007. This was well demonstrated by Tokyo’s reaction, which although being a party to the February 2007 *Joint Statement*, decided to refuse funding of the energy assistance agreed on in it unless the abduction issue is ‘solved’. North Korea reacted by demanding Japan to be excluded from the talks altogether. At the same time Japan exerts pressure on the USA to prevent North Korea from being de-listed from the state

³¹ www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/04/20060428-1.html.

³² ROK’s Minister for Unification made public for the first time in August 1994 a list of suspected abductees by North Korea after the end of the Korean War numbering 438 people. As of 2006, the statistics of the Ministry for Unification listed 485 abducted people which has been confirmed when the documents of the ROK’s National Intelligence Service released in June 2006 showed the number to be 489. *Yomiuri Shinbun* (June 5, 2006); <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/feature/fe4200/news/20060605i114.htm>. T. Akihiko *A Database of the 20th and 21st Century*. www page, <http://www.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~worldjpn/>.

sponsors on the terrorism list. The *Parliamentary League for Early Repatriation of Japanese Citizens Kidnapped by North Korea* composed of about 200 members of the Diet issued a statement on May 27, 2008 warning the USA against de-listing specifically stating that “if the USA de-lists [North Korea] Japanese-USA relations will come to a grave crisis”³³. There is a notion in Japan that an eventual progress on the nuclear issue might leave Japan behind.

There is therefore a situation where Japan outpaces all other countries in its hard-line policy towards the North while pressing for a ‘solution’ to an issue which North Korea claims to be solved. Other parties to the *Six-Party Talks*, China, Russia and South Korea do officially voice understanding for the Japanese position but naturally consider the nuclear issue and its solution to be a priority. The USA’s drive for a quick settlement of the nuclear issue puts it to a position similar to that of the other three. It was under former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, in 2006, that Japan set up *Headquarters for the Abduction Issue* with the Prime Minister serving as chairman and all cabinet ministers as its members, putting forward a stance that ‘abductions are the most important issue that Japan faces’³⁴. Today’s Prime Minister Fukuda retains the *Headquarters*. Putting so much on one card means that it certainly will not be easy to back from the situation in a political culture mindful of ‘saving faces’.

The Way Out

As discussed so far, Japanese-North Korean relations have always been sensitive to the outside environment. A look at the international constellation in East Asia today might therefore be revealing what development there is to be expected in the near future. The normalization of diplomatic relations between the two countries has been incorporated into the 6-party talks, as one of the ‘rewards’ to be given to the DPRK. Within the talks, the USA, by far the most powerful member, seems to be devoted to the progress of the talks. On the other hand, the Republic of Korea under its new President Lee Myung-Bak inaugurated in February 2008 set out to harden the generous policies of the previous administrations. It however supports unconditional progress of the talks on the nuclear issue, which it let Japan know when its new ambassador to Japan appealed to the Japanese government to start providing energy assistance to DPRK as part of the *Six-Party Talks* deal, which Japan had been refusing due to the abduction issue.³⁵ This means that

³³ *Mainichi Shinbun* (May 28, 2008).

³⁴ “A PR leaflet of the Headquarters for the Abduction Issue”, 2006.

³⁵ *Asahi Shinbun* (April 24, 2008).

while North Korea's relations with the USA seem promising, it is not under pressure to make any further concessions to Japan, on the contrary, having Japan be isolated from the talks is a welcome outcome for the DPRK. In this sense, the time is on DPRK's side. Furthermore, if Japan keeps insisting on both the abduction and nuclear issue to be a precondition to normalization, it will serve as a discouraging factor to the DPRK to try to achieve progress on the abduction issue alone since it still would not be enough without the nuclear issue being solved. And lastly, the chances are that even if DPRK hypothetically decides to come out anytime later with a different version of the fates of the 8 victims, and such a version can only be less convenient to the DPRK, it will not be met with any more understanding that it is receiving now.

Experience has proven that dialogue was the only means that brought any development on the abduction issue so far. This means that if Japan is to insist on 'solving' the abduction issue, it eventually has to tread the path of dialogue.

has to tread the path of dialogue. This also means it has to step away from the opposite, which means to withdraw the imposed economic sanctions. It is actually recent news that has confirmed the above and provides a revealing clue to future development. In the 3rd meeting of the working group on Japan-DPRK relations in Beijing on June 11 and 12, DPRK unexpectedly agreed to hand-over criminals of the above discussed 1970 Yodogo plane hijacking incident and resume investigation into the 8 supposedly dead abductees in a clear retreat from its position that the issue has been already solved. The Yodogo incident is one obstacle to the de-listing from USA's State Sponsors of Terrorism List, it is therefore a well-timed move that has the power to appease Japan and achieve the de-listing at the same time. On the other hand, Japan agreed to reward this by easing the sanctions it is imposing on the DPRK. The optimistic forecast therefore has it, that if these two measures go well, Japan's joining of the financing of the energy aid to DPRK and normalization negotiations resumption might follow.³⁶ It also seems that the political will

to end the impasse with the DPRK is gaining strength – after several years of self-restraint, on May 22, 2008 40 members of Diet included some front members of both LDP and the *Democratic Party* gathered to (re-)establish a *Parliamentary League for the Promotion of Normalization between Japan and North Korea*.³⁷ It seems that a retreat from today's Japanese position towards the abduction problem is going to be loosened in some way if Japan is not to be left out of the *Six-Party Talks* process.

The timing of any further progress in Japan-North Korean relations will be most likely linked to the *Six-Party Talks*. That means that the deadline for Japan-DPRK normalization is the final denuclearization of DPRK, which is the last step of the process agreed on at the talks. There therefore is time but it is not indefinite. And if things go as outlined here, there is one thing that definitely can not be overlooked – Japanese public opinion. Even if there are commentators suggesting 'abduction fatigue' among the Japanese public³⁸, the antipathy towards the North and towards any concessions towards it remains firm. The solution therefore has to be mindful of the 'face' of the families' victims. Creating of a favorable atmosphere is indispensable – including working with symbols. The recently agreed on hand-over of the criminals of the Yodogo incident from 1970 is one important symbolic gesture. A meeting between the parents of Yokota Megumi, the most famous abduction victim with their grand-daughter, Megumi's daughter may also be another possibility very conducive to this end. So far it has been fervently opposed by the hard-liners towards DPRK but there are signs that the will to go ahead with such a meeting is growing stronger.

Normalization with the DPRK means for Japan a closing of the last major unresolved chapter of its pre-1945 history. The course of mutual negotiations so far being as thorny as has been described above, there is no hastened normalization to be expected anymore; on the contrary the eventual normalization between Japan and DPRK will probably be part of a bigger shift in the East-Asian international political landscape – notably the 'normalization' of today's abnormal position of the DPRK within this world's most dynamic region.

³⁶ *Asahi Shinbun* (June 14, 2008). PM Fukuda commented on the results by saying that "It seems that DPRK is willing to negotiate. I would consider this a good entry towards further negotiation process". Ibid.

³⁷ *Asahi Shinbun* (May 23, 2008). The actual membership of the League is reportedly around 70.
³⁸ E. Chanlett-Avery, "North Korea's Abduction of Japanese Citizens and the Six-Party Talks", *CRS Report for Congress* (The Library of Congress, March 2008), p. 5. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS22845.pdf>.

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Axel Berkofsky

EU-North Korea Relations – Engagement Course on Hold

Summary: The EU's North Korea policies do not hit the headlines. That is mainly due to the fact that Brussels is not part of the so-called 6-Party Talks aiming at denuclearizing North Korea through a multilateral forum hosted by Beijing since 2003. In the early 2000s, Brussels started implementing a fairly ambitious economic engagement strategy towards North Korea. The 2002 North Korean nuclear crisis, however, put a halt to Brussels' economic, financial and technical assistance programs. As will be shown, the EU's policies towards North Korea are bound to remain reactive until the complete and formal resolution of the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula. Currently, the EU is providing Pyongyang with humanitarian and food aid on a sporadic basis, and it remains yet to be seen whether it will prepare to fully resume its economic, financial and technical assistance programs formulated and adopted in the early 2000s any time soon.

North Korea is politically and more importantly economically, almost completely irrelevant on a global level but nevertheless catches the headlines on a regular basis.

This is when Pyongyang's erratic leadership decides to 'test' missiles or worse, nuclear devices warning the rest of the world that it is ready to defend itself against US or Japanese 'imperialists' as North Korean propaganda suggests on a regular basis,

Dr. Axel Berkofsky is Adjunct Professor at the University of Milan, Italy and Advisor on Asian Affairs at the Brussels-based European Policy Centre (EPC).

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In the 'real' world, North Korea's economic prospects look as grim as ever, its population is starving and the country's economic reform process begun in 2002 has reached the very bottom of the regime's policy agenda.¹

In other words: Very challenging times for North Korea and its regime which is above all (if not exclusively) interested in its own survival as opposed to making sure that the population has enough to eat and can enjoy the very basic medical healthcare.

Admittedly, it is equally challenging to write a topical paper on EU-North Korea relations as much of what the EU had mind in terms of engaging Pyongyang economically and politically took place in the past. US spy satellites detecting a secret North Korean nuclear program and the beginning of the second nuclear crisis in 2002 (the first being the one in 1993-1994 which led to the signing of the so-called *Agreed Framework* between the US and North Korea) made Brussels suspend all its economic and financial aid as well as its wide-ranging North Korea technical assistance programs.

Currently, the EU's North Korea policies are essentially limited to the occasional and non-institutionalized ad-hoc provision of humanitarian and food aid.

Admittedly, Europe reacting (as opposed to acting) to ongoing North Korean humanitarian and food crisis was the opposite of what Brussels was planning to do in North Korea in 2001 and 2002 as we can read in the EU's *2002 North Korea Country Strategy Paper (CSP)* which assigned a total of Euro 35 million for EU technical assistance projects until 2006.

¹ Pyongyang's economic reform process looked sweeping at least on paper and included the regime's endorsement of markets and government support for farmers to cultivate abandoned land and sell fruits and vegetables at private markets. Prices and wages in 2002 were partially liberalized to create incentives for workers and semi-independent entrepreneurs to generate profits for themselves. The reforms followed a decade of economic near-collapse and a series of mass famines in the 1990s that claimed the lives of up to 2 million North Koreans, the equivalent of 10% of the country's population; for an excellent analysis see e.g. B. O. Babson, "Economic Perspectives on Future Directions for Engagement With the DPRK in a Post-Test World", *The Stanley Foundation* (December 2006); www.stanleyfoundation.org/publications/pab/BabsonPAB.pdf; also A. Berkofsky, "North Korean Economy: Reform, Collapse", *ISN Security Watch* (May 8, 2007); <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?id=17586>.

North Korea's missile and later nuclear programs put an end to all of this and the formal resolution of the nuclear crisis, i.e. North Korea's complete and verifiable denuclearization, the EU Commission explains on its website covering relations with North Korea², is the pre-condition for the resumption of the EU's economic engagement course.

In May 2001, the EU established diplomatic relations with Pyongyang and many EU Member States followed the EU example in 2001 and 2002. Back then, there was a lot of EU on the diplomatic record optimism that the EU's engagement course could make a difference in re-building North Korea's collapsing economy and opening up the country to economic and social reform with EU help.

Initially, North Korea seemed willing not only to accept EU economic and financial aid but also to learn from Europe how to run and manage an economy in need of economic and structural reforms. Amongst others, Pyongyang dispatched a group of senior officials to Europe in 2002 to learn about EU economic policies and models and welcomed the EU Parliament's initiative to establish (quasi)-institutional and by North Korean standards regular exchanges. EU Parliament delegations headed by British MEP Glyn Ford visited North Korea several times in recent years gaining access to the country beyond visiting the regime's showcase markets, factories and hospitals typically presented to foreign visitors.

Today, the establishment of diplomatic relations and official EU-North Korean encounters, however, seem like distant 'highlights' of bilateral relations and Pyongyang's decision to abandon the implementation of an initially ambitious economic reform process rendered EU economic engagement policies irrelevant at best and a waste of money at worst.

The EU-North Korea trade volume is negligible and given the very small volume it does not even feature on the website of the Commission's Directorate-General for External Trade (DG Trade in Brussels lingo). EU data on EU-North Korea trade, not to mention recent one, is not publicly accessible and the most recent data of bilateral trade on the website of the Delegation of the European Commission in Pyongyang dates back to 2002.

According to more up to date (non-EU) sources the bilateral EU-North Korea trade volume between 1995 and 2005 fluctuated between \$ 200 and 400 million annually representing an almost irrelevant share of the EU's overall external trade.³

² See http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/north_korea/intro/index.htm.

³ For details see also H.J. Schmidt, "Peace on the Korean Peninsula-What Can the EU Contribute to the Six-Party Process?", *Peace Research Institute Frankfurt PRIF Reports* No. 75 (2006); <http://www.hs-fk.de/fileadmin/downloads/prif75.pdf>.

Based on the bilateral trade volume, EU-North Korea trade is roughly 1,000 times as relevant for the DPRK than it is for the EU, Korea scholar Rüdiger Frank calculated back in 2003. This calculation is still valid today and it is even likely that the irrelevance of trade with North Korea has become bigger as North Korea has been significantly increasing its trade relations with China in recent years.

No EU 'Soft Power' Required

EU 'soft power' in forms of technical assistance, generous economic, humanitarian and financial aid, it was hoped in Brussels policymaking circles in the early 2000s⁴, would enable Brussels to help convincing Pyongyang to give up its missile and nuclear ambitions.

The EU was an outspoken and active supporter of North Korea's economic reform process begun in 2002⁵ (and interrupted when the economic reform course 'threatened' to liberalize North Korea's economy beyond what was desirable to Pyongyang's Communist leadership) and was prepared not only to transfer financial aid but also know-how, technology and expertise to support the implementation of the envisioned economic reforms.

Helping others to develop economically is what the EU does best and North Korea was envisioned to be the next 'case study' of the European 'soft power.'

EU 'soft power', it was argued in Brussels back then, would not only help opening up a dictatorship to economic and social reforms but would also increase Brussels' overall political influence and leverage in East Asia. Through its North Korea engagement policies Brussels also planned to intensify security cooperation with the region's main major powers, above all with Japan which in the 1990s was a strong supporter of EU involvement in the KEDO process.⁶

⁴ This was confirmed to this author in numerous conversations with EU Commission officials in 2003 and 2004.

⁵ For details of North Korea's economic reforms see e.g. R. Frank, "Can Economic Theory Demystify North Korea?", *Nautilus Institute* <http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/0644Frank.pdf>. (The original version of the paper published in the *Korea Review of International Studies*); R. Frank, "Economic Reforms in North Korea (1998-2004): Systemic Restrictions, Quantitative Analysis, Ideological Background", *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy* Vol. 10, No. 3 (August 2005), pp. 278 – 311.

⁶ Thanks to Japan significant financial contributions to the pacification of the Western Balkans throughout the 1990s, Japan was granted observer status at the Council of Europe in 1996. In recognition of this, Tokyo strongly supported EU membership in the *Korean Energy Development Organization* (KEDO); for details see also A. Berkofsky, "True Strategic Partnership or Rhetorical Window-Dressing-A Closer Look at the Relationship between the EU and Japan", *Japan Aktuell* No. 2/2008.

That however never really happened and not even Japan, the EU's 'natural ally' in Asia as far as the EU Commission is concerned, ever advocated a more prominent EU role in solving the nuclear missile and later nuclear crisis.

More importantly though North Korea never took the European 'soft power bait' and started to become essentially disinterested in EU 'soft power' when it turned out that the EU's engagement course would not be accompanied by generous EU no-strings-attached payments of which much would have disappeared in the pockets of the political and party elites in the country.⁷

In sum, the EU's so-called 'quiet diplomacy' of the early 2002s⁸, i.e. Brussels' choice to place problematic issues such as human rights, North Korean missiles and the North's alleged money and drug trafficking towards the bottom of its North Korea agenda, did not produce the desired results.

In fact, the EU's 'quiet diplomacy' strategies turned out to be so 'quiet' that essentially none of Brussels' policy advice had any positive impact whatsoever on Pyongyang's policymakers over the years.

This is not to dismiss the merits of political engagement through political dialogue behind closed doors per se, but EU-style 'quiet diplomacy' pursuing economic engagement policies at the expense of addressing security issues has led to the negative 'side-effect' that Brussels does not get taken seriously as relevant security actor in Asia-neither by the regime in Pyongyang nor by other interested parties such as China, Japan and the US.¹⁰

In fact, the EU's 'quiet diplomacy' strategies turned out to be so 'quiet' that essentially none of Brussels' policy advice had any positive impact whatsoever on Pyongyang's policymakers over the years.

⁷ Instead, North Korea is increasingly counting on Chinese support and is increasingly enjoy active trade relations with China. Trade with China amounts to more than 40% of North Korea's total external trade and Beijing has been providing North Korea with generous economic, financial and infrastructure support in recent years.

⁸ For details see e.g. A. Berkofsky, "EU's Policy Towards the DPRK-Engagement or Standstill?"; *Briefing Paper, European Institute for Asian Studies* (Brussels 2003).

⁹ The EU and North Korea held a series of official political dialogue rounds in the late 1990s and early 2000s. However, the political dialogue rounds did not produce any results, let alone headlines in the international press.

¹⁰ The EU applies a similar quiet diplomacy approach towards China's leadership in Beijing when controversial issues such as Taiwan, Tibet and human rights make it onto the agenda. The result is the same: Beijing does not (at least not yet) take Brussels seriously as global security actor willing to exert pressure on others.

Like it or not, in a realist security environment like Northeast and East Asia the EU's decision not to get involved in 'hard security' issues like the North Korean missile and nuclear crisis undermined the credibility of Brussels' global foreign and security policy vision to play a role in security issues outside of Europe, including in Asia.

No News to Report?

The 'latest' news on the EU's North Korea policies dates back to 2007 when the Commission announced to provide North Korea with Euro 2 million in support of parts of the North Korean population affected by floods caused by heavy rainfalls in July and August 2007.¹¹

The EU Commission's website elaborating on the Union's policies towards North Korea in general has last been updated in May 2007 and much of the information available on the site has not been updated at all in years.

Put bluntly, the EU's failure to provide the interested public and researchers with up to date information on the Union's North Korea policies runs counter to the very point of running of a website (as opposed e.g. to diplomatic bluebooks or policy papers in print) whose contents should be updated on a regular basis.

To be sure, many of EU Commission's websites on its foreign policies (the one dealing with China being one of the few exceptions) are typically very outdated and offer very few real details on Commission policies. The one dealing with North Korea in particular, however, is giving the impression that the Commission has lost interest in dealing with Pyongyang years ago.

The information available on EU-North Korea relations site of the EU's Delegation to Korea (South and North Korea) is equally scarce and admittedly the very opposite of being a source of reference for those interested in facts and figures on EU-North Korea ties.¹²

The facts and figures presented on this site are so outdated that it would probably be better not to publish any figures at all in order not to further confirm the fact that the EU Commission tends to make very few of its actual policies publicly available in a detailed and transparent way.

¹¹ "The EU's Relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-DPRK (North Korea)", http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/north_korea/intro/index.htm.

¹² See the website of the *Delegation of the European Commission to the Republic of Korea* <http://www.delkor.ec.europa.eu/home/relations/dprkrelations.html> (information on EU-North Korea political and trade relations are all to be found on the site of the Delegation of the EU Commission to the Republic of Korea).

Current EU-North Korean institutional ties might be very limited, but posting details of current bilateral ties is still better than filling the site with information from six or seven years ago. To be sure, EU Commission officials continue working on ties with North Korea despite the suspension of the EU's economic engagement policies, but unfortunately no recent information whatsoever is available on what exactly this work consists of.

EU Aid Policies

As formulated in the EU's 2002 *Country Strategy Paper* (CSP) a total of Euro 35 million had been set aside for EU technical assistance projects until 2006. The CSP-together with the EU's *National Indicative Program* (NIP) for North Korea-set out the framework and objectives for technical assistance projects in North Korea. At the time, this made the EU the only substantial donor of technical assistance to North Korea. The CSP and NIP were to provide for training in market economic principles and projects designed to support and promote sustainable management and the efficient use of natural resources and energy in the DPRK, as well as institutional support and capacity-building.¹³

The *Country Strategy Paper* (2002)¹⁴ foresaw the following priority areas of co-operation:

- institutional support and capacity building,
- sustainable development and use of natural resources including access to sustainable energy sources and,
- reliable and sustainable transport sector and rural development.¹⁵

The suspension of these programs in 2002 means that Brussels would de facto have to start from scratch engaging North Korea economically should the Commission one day (at that is far from certain at this point) decide to resume these programs. What's more, the EU Commission (not least on behalf of European taxpayers) would have to ask itself whether it should be prepared to resume its comprehensive North Korea aid and technical assistance programs at all when it cannot be taken for granted that North Korea will stick to agreements abandoning and dismantling its nuclear facilities for good.

¹³ See also A. Berkofsky, "EU's North Korea Policy a Non-Starter", *The Asia Times* (July 10, 2003); <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Korea/EG10Dg01.html>.

¹⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/north_korea/csp/index.htm.

¹⁵ For details see "European Commission, North Korea Country Strategy Paper"; http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/north_korea/csp/index.htm.

Unfortunately, Pyongyang's track record of breaking agreements is rather 'impressive' and Brussels is without a doubt aware that investing financial and political resources into resuming to engage North Korea economically could once again turn into a waste of EU funds given Pyongyang's unpredictable policies.

Then again the EU funds potentially assigned to future technical and economic assistance programs in North Korea following the formal resolution of the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula are very likely to be as limited as the funds assigned for the same purpose in 2002. The Euro 35 million assigned to North Korea assistance programs as formulated in the above mentioned 2002 CSP was everything but a lot of money by EU development standards.

Consequently, the money the EU could 'lose' in North Korea is very little in the context of the EU's overall budget assigned to global development and aid policies.

Besides, it is too early to predict if (and if yes when) the EU Commission will resume its aid and assistance programs towards North Korea at all, although it is probably not a bad idea to plan for the worst-case scenario, i.e. prepared to waste money when dealing with and investing in North Korea.

Humanitarian and Food Aid

Unlike the US and Japan (and increasingly also South Korea under its newly-elected president Lee Myung-bak) the EU chose to continue providing North Korea with humanitarian aid in spite of unresolved missile and nuclear issues on the Korean Peninsula.

The distribution of the EU's limited aid on the ground, however, remains a challenge in the years ahead given the regime's policies to obstruct and often hinder the effective distribution of aid by international NGOs operating on the ground.¹⁶

¹⁶ Back in 2005 e.g., Pyongyang temporarily evicted the *World Food Program* (WFP) from North Korea.

Experience has shown that the EU has only limited means, i.e. through the NGOs operating on behalf of the EU, to control that the food and humanitarian aid reaches those in need as opposed to the military and other government bodies and individuals involved in the distribution process.

The Commission, via the *Food Aid* and *Food Security Programs*, has been providing food and humanitarian aid since 1995. This aid amounts to Euro 344 million and consists of food, medical, sanitation assistance as well as the supply of some agricultural equipment.

Transport costs to and distribution costs in North Korea, however, are included in these funds significantly reducing the funds available for actual food and humanitarian aid.

The aid provided in financial terms is fairly little by EU standards, but given that the overall humanitarian and financial aid provided for North Korea is very limited, the EU contributions in these sectors remain important. EU support for North Korea's health sector in particular remains important as estimates suggest that more than 50% of the population is deprived from basic medical care.

Over the years, Brussels has sought to increasingly move from regular food aid to structural food assistance. In view of North Korea's frequent and severe food crisis and widespread starvation, however, this strategy, however, gained only very limited relevance.¹⁷

In November 2006, the EU Commission adopted its most recent North Korea humanitarian assistance program assigning Euro 8 million to support the health sector in North Korea.

These funds (like all the other EU aid) are being channeled through the *European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department* (ECHO) and is providing amongst others basic medical kits and human resource development for 5,000 local health care facilities, vaccination of 200,000 pregnant women and 200,000 children and non-food aid to flood victims.

However, the EU's November 2006 programs will be completed later this year and there is yet no information publicly available if and how the Commission plans to continue the same or similar support after the programs expire.

If the EU Commission does not announce otherwise in the months ahead, it can be expected that the EU will continue its humanitarian and food aid on an ad-hoc basis.

¹⁷ On North Korea's current disastrous food and humanitarian situation see S. Haggard, M. Noland, E. Weeks, "North Korea on the Precipice of Famine", *Policy Brief*, Peterson Institute for International Economics (May 2008); <http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/08042HaggardNolandWeeks.pdf>.

The EU and the Six-Party Talks

Neither the US nor Japan or China have ever advocated a more prominent EU role solving the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula and did not consider a European contribution to negotiations on the dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear and missile programs to be relevant, including a possible EU participation in the so-called *Six-Party Talks*.¹⁸

From Brussels perspective the EU had little to gain in terms of global foreign and security influence and getting involved in the Six-Party Talks and might instead have found itself investing political and diplomatic resources into a process whose progress stands and falls with Washington and Pyongyang agreeing on the way forward.

Instead, both Washington and Tokyo have in the past repeatedly criticized the EU's economic engagement course towards Pyongyang which in their view undermined US and Japanese hard-line policies aimed at pressuring Pyongyang into foregoing its nuclear ambitions through economic sanctions and political pressure.

From a 'realpolitik' perspective the EU's choice not to request a role in the *Six-Party Talks* beyond supporting it verbally is understandable given North Korea's insistence that the resolution of the nuclear issues is essentially a matter between Pyongyang and Washington.

From Brussels perspective the EU had little to gain in terms of global foreign and security influence by getting involved in the *Six-Party Talks* and might instead (like indeed 5 of the 6 parties involved in the *Six-Party Talks*) have found itself investing political and diplomatic resources into a process whose progress stands and falls with Washington and Pyongyang agreeing on the way forward.

A 'Test Case' for EU Global Foreign and Security Policies?

If North Korea was a 'test case' for Europe's foreign and security policies (as it was claimed and hoped in Brussels back then) with global influence, Brussels failed that test.

¹⁸ A multilateral forum hosted by China and aimed at denuclearizing North Korea. The Six-Party Talks were established in 2003 and the participating nations are the US, Japan, South Korea, China, Russia and North Korea; see e.g. A. Berkofsky, "Maybe Denuclearizing North Korea", *ISN Security Watch* (March 19, 2008); <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?id=18773>.

Admittedly, 'testing' the efficiency and impact of the EU's global foreign and security policies was always going to be a challenging when dealing with North Korea.

Although the EU would of course argue otherwise, the EU's (more or less voluntary) decision not to get involved in security and nuclear issues on the Korean Peninsula somehow stands in contrast to EU plans to become a 'real' and visible global security actor.

In a speech at the European Parliament on October 11, 2006¹⁹ (the last official high-level EU speech on North Korea), the EU's Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner announced that the EU is offering political support for the *Six-Party Talks*. However, Ferrero-Waldner failed to quantify and qualify in any way what kind of political support the EU is exactly offering beyond EU-style nice-sounding political statements 'welcoming' or 'supporting' progress of the talks.

Indeed, the EU supporting a policy process such as the 6-Party Talks is not the same as actually having a policy on the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula.

Talking to Washington and Tokyo

Since 2004 and 2005 respectively, the EU has been discussing East Asian security issues with the US and Japan on an institutionalized level (through the so-called EU-US and EU-Japan Strategic Dialogue on East Asian taking place every 6 months).

The North Korean nuclear crisis and the *Six-Party Talks* are part of these dialogues, but the relevance of these dialogues for the resolution of the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula is realistically very limited. Although the dialogues have led to a few joint EU-US/EU-Japan declarations on the North Korean nuclear program, they did not result in any joint EU-US/EU-Japan North Korea policies or policy initiatives till the present day.

The US and Japan were never planning to coordinate their respective North Korea policies with the EU even if the official record of their bilateral dialogues on East Asian security might suggest otherwise.

¹⁹ B. Ferrero-Waldner, "North Korea Speech at the European Parliament", (October 11, 2006); <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/06/587&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>.

Realistically, the US and Japan were never planning to coordinate their respective North Korea policies with the EU even if the official record of their bilateral dialogues on East Asian security might suggest otherwise. Instead, the 'real' motive for Washington and Tokyo to start discussing East Asian security issues with the EU on a regular basis was to de-facto institutionalize pressure on the EU not to lift the weapons embargo imposed on China in 1989.

The EU weapons embargo, i.e. EU considerations to possibly lift the embargo imposed on China after the Tiananmen massacre in 1989, dominated the EU-US/EU-Japan strategic dialogues on East Asian security at all times.

North Korea featured on the agenda of those dialogues but was an 'also-ran' as opposed to 'real' issue on it.

The EU and KEDO

The EU joined the *Korean Energy Development Organization (KEDO)* as a member of the Executive Board in 1997. KEDO was to provide North Korea with heavy fuel oil and oversee the construction of two light-water reactors in North Korea.

To date, the EU has provided Euro 118 million to KEDO, excluding the additional bilateral contributions of a number of EU Member States. Much of this money as it turned out was spent in vain.

During the KEDO Executive Board Meeting of November 14, 2002, it was decided to suspend heavy fuel oil deliveries to North Korea. In November 2003 then, the construction of the two light-water reactors in North Korea was suspended too, de-facto marking the end of the KEDO process. In May 2006, the light-water reactor project was officially terminated and the decision to close the KEDO Secretariat in New York was taken in first half of 2007.

To be sure, KEDO was always years behind schedule providing North Korea with the promised heavy fuel oil and light-water reactors and some Western analysts and observers at times argued that North Korea did not have much of a choice but to turn to seek produce nuclear energy when it became clear that the construction of the light-water reactors would never be completed due to the lack of funds and political will (above all in the US and Japan).

Indeed, KEDO became a very easy 'target' for North Korean propaganda which claimed that the years-long delay of the construction of the light-water reactors 'obliged' Pyongyang to turn to nuclear energy (to be sure, the fact that North Korea did not only re-activate its nuclear programs to produce

nuclear energy but also nuclear bombs did not get in mentioned in North Korea's state-run media outlets).²⁰

The EU never had the leverage (and probably not the interests either) to really make a difference in the KEDO process and nothing on the record was ever heard coming out of the Commission requesting a more rapid implementation of the KEDO process in general and the construction of the light-water reactors in particular.

For years, KEDO was artificially kept alive and the EU went along knowing that it would not lose billions but 'only' millions in the process. KEDO has for years been a Commission's 'stepchild' and the level of enthusiasm to invest diplomatic and political resources was always fairly limited from the start as numerous off the record conversations with EU sources confirmed. EU officials directly involved in the EU's involvement in KEDO told this that is was always hard to make an inner-EU 'case', both within the EU Commission and the EU Council.

Cynically speaking, the amount of money invested into KEDO over the years was small enough not to be 'noticed' in the context of the EU's overall funds invested in its global foreign and development policies. As it turned out spending i.e., wasting, little money on KEDO was the right strategy.

Today there is next to no probability that KEDO or anything resembling KEDO could be re-established in North Korea any time soon. North Korea's energy situation is bound to remain critical in the years ahead and even if the heavy fuel oil deliveries from the US, Russia and others were to be fully resumed soon, analysts like North Korea energy expert Peter Hayes has doubts that Pyongyang will be able to process and use the heavy fuel oil deliveries efficiently.

The million tons of HFO equivalent are important to the DPRK politically, but not that important energetically and economically. The half that is HFO is not very useful at all, the half that is hardware or heavy fuel equivalent eventually might bring about 800 megawatts [of electricity] back on-line by refurbishing coal mines, transport, grids and generators. That leads perhaps to a 10-15 percent increase in electricity but not before the one-two years it will take to install and make the system work, Peter Hayes told this author earlier this year.²¹

²⁰ For this and similar North Korean propaganda see *Korean Central News Agency* at <http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm>.

²¹ See A. Berkofsky, "Maybe Denuclearizing North Korea", *ISN Security Watch* (March 19, 2008), <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?id=18773>.

Conclusions

Arguing that the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula was (or continues to be) a 'convenient' excuse for the EU to put North Korea near the bottom of its foreign and security policy agenda is probably an exaggeration, but the lack of anything resembling a (publicly available) North Korea strategy that goes beyond the occasional provision of humanitarian and food aid is not good enough for a foreign and security policy actor with global ambitions.

Unless we see a complete and lasting resolution of the North Korean nuclear crisis in the months ahead, Brussels' North Korea policy options remain very limited.

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While European food and humanitarian aid will continue to be provided to North Korea on an ad-hoc basis, resuming the EU's 2002-style economic engagement policies and aid programs on the other hand could turn out to be a matter of years in view of Brussels' complicated and typically slow decision-making process.

Remains to be seen what comes first in North Korea: A German Democratic Republic (GDR)-style regime collapse or the resumption of Brussels' North Korea economic engagement.

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The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives

By Shlomo Brom & Meir Elran (eds). Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2007.

To offer a general summation, Israel lost an important opportunity. We went to war on our own initiative, it was a long war and it ended. An organization of just a few thousand troops [Hezbollah] managed to hold out against an army that benefited from absolute air supremacy, and major benefits on the technological level.

Eliyahu Winograd

This passage comes from the which had been triggered by Lebanese interim report of the so-called *Winograd Commission*, which was trusted with the task to come to terms with the controversial achievement of the Israeli Defense Forces during the so called *second Lebanon War of Summer 2006*. The book edited by Shlomo Brom and Meir Elran is an attempt at critical evaluation of what went wrong in July and August 2006. At the time the volume was published, the final investigations of the government-appointed commission headed by Eliyahu Winograd had not yet been released.

Still prior to this final commission's report, eighteen Israeli experts representing various fields of security and defense studies were able to scrutinize the process of the war into details and to arrive at some interesting conclusions.

The book looks into various aspects of the military clash between the allegedly (and, in fact really) mighty IDF and Iran's proxy in Lebanon (*Hezbollah*) in typical asymmetric warfare, behind this military clash.

As to the structure (contents), the book's *Part I* deals with the domestic policy of Israel relating to the political decision to 'go to war' and to 'conduct the war' in the military way that led to controversial results (no military victory as expected by the planners). Of course, the confrontation with a 'non-state actor' based in a specific category of states ('failed states') has limited the attainment of clearly-cut military objectives (Shlomo Brom). If his essay comes to quite plausible results, the contribution of Giora Eiland is hard to swallow: the author suggests that there exists hardly something like a logical inter-connection in the various decision-making bodies within the Israeli government (the Office of the Prime Minister being targeted first of all). While deterrence is one of the most important means Israel can display, this instrument has worked dubiously. The elaboration of the problem by the author (Yair Evron) is less methodological than analytically descriptive, covering the deterrence pros and cons in relations to Israel's non-state enemies, Palestinian Autonomy and the openly belligerent neighbor state like Syria.

The very military dimensions of the war have been examined in the following contributions written by Giora Romm, Gabriel Siboni, Aharon Ze'evi Farkash, Yehuda Ben Meir and Meir Elran.

If one should focus at the core of their contents analysis' message, then operational approaches linked to the

start of the war had a (disastrous?) impact on the result of the military campaign. Maybe a more resolute fact finding conclusion is to be derived from the identification of various anti-Israeli factions' strategies (Giora Romm). The poor (still seen from the hypocritically exaggerated view) performance of the IDF's ground forces (Gabriel Siboni) betrays a problem the author has: the dilemma between the use of the air power and the efficiency of ground forces' operations. Here, G. Sinoni seems to betray a slight bias in disfavor of ground forces. Well, intelligence has been traditionally praised as almost a 'wonder weapon' of the Israelis. And what the author of the respective contribution – Aharon Ze'vi Farkash – has to add to this? Hardly to say: his essay resembles more an updated encyclopedia of tasks and missions to be fulfilled by (military) intelligence. If one expects the author to 'denunciate' Israeli intelligence services for failure, one is disappointed. Yes, the author concedes deficiencies at the tactical intelligence's level but the strategic dimension of Israeli intelligence is (according to him) quite impressive. Israeli public opinion and the second Lebanon war (essay by Yehuda Ben Meir) has been differentiated according to the divide between Jewish and Arab Israelis. Some conclusions of the author might be too far-fetched. He actually plays with the age-conditioned attitudes of the Israeli public opinion arena in a somewhat liberal manner. The behavior of the 'civilian front'

(the author – Meir Elran) has in mind not the public opinion but the general (statistically non-measurable) reaction of both populations involved in the conflict. His conclusions are not very encouraging for a (or the) possible repetition of the Israeli vs. Hezbollah (Lebanon) conflict. Both ‘civilian fronts’ proved to be basically resilient, supporting their own armed forces military front of the war.

The book’s *Part II* (bearing, by the way the subtitle *International Dimensions*) has amalgamated the international horizon into what might be called a ‘close neighborhood’ and ‘external environment’, the 2nd Lebanese war being, of course, the reference framework of all eight essays filling out this part. In recent years, the notion of ‘proxy war’ has become more and more common in security policy literature. The most prominent and at the time of the 2006 war the crucial regionally identified non-state actor – *Hezbollah* – does form a ‘multifaceted proxy organization’ according to the author of the respective contribution (Yoram Schweitzer). His essay is clear evidence that not only uncritical condemnation of Israel from within found a place in this book. Y. Schweitzer has tried to point out both military and non-military positives resulting from the IDF’s campaign. Additional implementation of the *UNSC Resolution No. 1559* and the significance of the *UNSC Resolution 1701* represent one of the remedies of the ‘non-victory’ of Israel in Lebanon in 2006. Eyal Zisser looks into the

in 2006 was a separate event propelled by its own particular circumstances. These ‘circumstances’ A. Kurz speaks about look like a coordinated effort by *Hamis* and Hezbollah to strike at Israel. Additionally, the situation was influenced by the real rulers of the Gaza Strip: by the Syrians and the political wing of *Hamis* based in Damascus. Regardless of *Hezbollah*’s entry into the Israel – *Hamis* conflict, the *Gaza Strip* did not escape the fate of being isolated in the follow-up of the Israel – Lebanon war.

Wider regional implications of the war go far beyond the perimeters of the two actors’ confrontation, i.e. Israel and Lebanon (*Hezbollah*). The war (and here, once again, we find the non-concerted logics of the book) cannot be separated from the broader setting of the Middle East. The author (Asher Susser) indirectly opposes the thesis of the war as an almost isolated event driven by close sub-regionally knit factors – as A. Kurz has seen it in the previous contribution. Yes, the theses posed by A. Susser are quite attractive: the conflict betrays historical connotations, Shia – Sunni split, interests of remote regional actors like Saudi Arabia, they involve even the unsolved Kurdish problem. Looking into these individual facets of the global Middle East panoramic picture separately is one of the reasons Israel has not been able to cope with its security threats. On the other side, the phenomenon of Lebanon as a failed state cannot be overseen. Yossi

Kupperwasser blames both the internal struggle in Lebanon (a ‘microcosm of sorts of the regional theater’), and the unwillingness of the West to invest into the security in this region for the conflict. Although the author hints at the previous Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 as a possible source of the internal strife in Lebanon, one cannot find out a clearly-cut rejection of this step. Anyway, if Y. Kupperwasser is correct, Israel cannot be safe from other aggressions in the future as long as Lebanon remains a failed state. For

Ephraim Kam, the 2nd Lebanese war has exercised a profound influence on the security doctrines of the Arab states. According to the pre-war (2006) understanding, the Arab security doctrines were reflecting the piece of knowledge that Israel is strategically superior to Arab countries in military terms. Supported by the mood of the Arab ‘streets’, which celebrated the result of the 2nd Lebanon war as ‘Arab victory’, even the Arab strategists might have concluded that some changes in their strategic assessment of Israeli military power are appropriate. There are, however, at least two factors that hinder the Arab strategic thinkers to make premature conclusions: the first is the special relationship between Israel and the US, the second one is the Israeli security net based on its nuclear capability. This contribution (E. Kam) represents one of the more optimistic views to be found in the book. The last essay in *Part II* by Mark Heller recognizes a surprisingly benevolent

attitude assumed towards Israel by the 'world' (he means not only the 'West' but also most of the Arab and other Islamic countries). The 'freedom of maneuver' ultimately worked to Israel's benefit, as the traditional most influential critic of Israel (USA) did not exercise the usual 'diplomatic pressure' to force Israel to 'cease hostilities'. This was to be brought back to the fact that after the initial attacks of Israel against official Lebanese infrastructure, it focused on *Hezbollah* afterwards and this organization did not enjoy any significant international support. The author evaluates the reaction of the international community (UN, EU, G-8, *Arab League*) as unusually moderate.

In the (unofficial) *Part III* of the book (*Appendices*) one finds a statistical overview of *Hezbollah* weaponry (Yiftah S. Shapir). It is these tactical defense weapons (especially the anti-tank missiles and other rocketry) that proved to be the most efficient military tools of *Hezbollah*. The unresolved

territorial controversy between Israel and Lebanon on the so-called *Shab'a Farms* (Amos Gilboa) resemble more a well-documented story about how the problem developed than a juridical evaluation of the problem. The author has cleverly collected documentary evidence of Syrian and Lebanese contradictions for their claims concerning the *Shab'a Farms*.

Generally, the book is a comprehensive and even controversial – the authors have arrived at various conclusions and recommendations – assessment of the 2006 conflict. Although criticism of the official Israeli approach and a slight pessimism is palpable, one can easily discover the strategic problem number one in Israel of these days: to draw lessons learned from another controversial military encounter.

Ivo Samson
Research Center of the Slovak
Foreign Policy Association

Europe and the Recognition of New States in Yugoslavia

By Richard Caplan. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2005.

Recognition of a new state is a unique, but at the same time very precarious opportunity, for establishing stability in transforming region. As Richard Caplan mentions in the introduction of his book "Europe and the Recognition of New States in Yugoslavia" conventional wisdom holds that the European Communities' (EC) recognition of Croatia and other republics caused the escalation of conflict in its 'backyard'. But Caplan's view on this not so distant history is rather different from the general point of view.

Richard Caplan is a university lecturer in international relations and fellow of Linacre College at the University of Oxford. His previous books were devoted to the examination of the Clinton administration, to issues of nationalism, European states and minorities in conflict or international governance in post-war territories.

The revised book provides a different view on the puzzle of the development of the former Yugoslavia's break-up. As Caplan identified, not so much attention was devoted to the strategic thinking behind the EC recognition policy in existing literature. He comments that this situation was caused by the controversy surrounding the recognition initiative and by the weakness of the EC in the implementation of this

policy. The first was demonstrated by Germany's recognition of Croatia and the latter by the EC's derogation from its own requirements for recognition. The book is therefore concentrated on the analysis of the EC recognition policy in the context of three thematic areas: conflict management, political conditionality and international norms. On that account the core argument of the book is that conditional recognition can play a limited role in the support of conflict mitigation, especially if reinforced by complementary measures such as conditional membership in regional organization. Unfortunately, this kind of chance was not exploited in the former Yugoslavia because as the author concludes, violent forces in the region were operating independently of the recognition initiative. So, the book illustrates that there exist some influence enforced by the EC/EU 'soft power' but it was rather weaker than many politicians and diplomats were expecting in the turbulent times of the 1990s.

To prove the relevance of his view, the author analyzed primary resources of EC official documents, political memoirs and other documents that evidence the logic that conditional recognition would serve as a tool for providing security and peace. The author also worked

with various secondary literature and conducted interviews with official actors engaged in that process (1995-1999) that enabled him to capture some specific details of strategic thinking and its consequences.

Europe and the Recognition of the New States in Yugoslavia offers the overview of legal thinking and historical practice of recognizing new states that provide some background for the analysis of recognition policy as an instrument of conflict management. In spite of treating recognition as a conflict regulation tool in conflict literature, it was thought to be useful for the former Yugoslavia because it represented a genuine attempt and it focused on the effort to ensure a large measure of minority rights. These included cultural, political rights and in some cases territorial autonomy. But the EC innovation resided in conditioning recognition on criteria relevant to regional security. It was thought that the offer of recognition would induce aspiring state entities to adopt such minority policies that will help calm down the situation on the ground. The other considerations include the eventuality that actual recognition would change the interstate conflict to interstate war and create new possibilities for third parties to intervene. Recognition was also seen as punitive for Belgrade and was hoped to change violent policies towards leaving republics. Last but not least recognition policy also mirrored member states' (especially Germany) concerns and interests that Caplan

illustrates by referring to different explanations.

Political conditionality is nowadays most spelled out in connection with EU enlargement policy, but Caplan offers analysis of conditionality evolution from rather earlier times, and what is more important he compares this to some extant cases from different regions and historical periods (e.g. post-war Germany, Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa). Conditionality is this sense an approach to distribution of development aid or in this case to recognize a country that tries to influence the political behavior of a recipient country. The EC stressed in relations with former Yugoslavia objectives like the promotion of human rights, democratization and good governance that were sometimes related to domestic political structures more than to those of the leaving entities or newly established states. So, the specific objectives set by the EC can be seen as limiting or favorable for conditional recognition. Caplan provides examples of 'mixed' results of conditional aid and some positive effects of conditional recognition in the case of Croatia or Macedonia but also unsustainable results in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Following the overview of these examples and considering the normative outlook he argues that conditional recognition can be used as a utile conflict management tool. He also stresses the importance of other factors like coordination of recognition by main powers and

support for reform powers in country for the likelihood of recognition policy success that creates limitations of recognition policy effects.

Examining EU foreign policy as normative policy is one of the latest approaches, but this book takes norms into consideration because they shape decision-making in critical times and help to create measurement of stability and order in the world. Therefore in the concept analysis Caplan focuses on norms that perform constitutive and regulatory functions in international relations as earlier defined by Peter J. Katzenstein. Norms determine the identity of an international actor and also shape expectations about its behavior. In this sense norms create barriers to innovative actions as conditional recognition. EC recognition policy was based on the notion of recognition as an informal regime governed by a set of political and legal norms that should ensure compliance with international order. Therefore the author sees EC conditioning of recognition as on the one hand innovative but at the same time as designed to be consistent with international order. Even though international theory concepts usually refer to the state as the "principal" actor, by presented analysis of the EC's activity Caplan creates an opportunity for deeper evaluation of EC/EU relations towards Western Balkans.

No one expects the analysis of international law documents to be a fascinating reading but the advantage of this book is that Caplan offers an excellent combination of theoretical knowledge and empirical evidence from four social scientific branches: strategic studies, development studies, international law and international relations. For those interested only in the history narrative author strictly recommends reading only two chapters. The other chapters are an extensive interdisciplinary analysis of a peculiar international actor- the European Union. On the one hand, there had been some expectations towards Europe's involvement in the former Yugoslavia as there are now expectations to continue with enlargement, but on the other hand the EU has to deal with its internal situation. In the 1990s this was the failure to intervene in diplomatic terms and later with the use of military, and now it is the budgetary issues or the political resentment. Caplan's analysis is important because the European Union is still not a single international actor and as it evolves it has to deal with its or member states' previous decisions and their consequences.

Zuzana Lisoňová
Research Center of the Slovak
Foreign Policy Association

Európa a Turci. Úvahy nad zložitými vzťahmi (Europe and the Turks. Reflections on the Complicated Relations)

By Ingmar Karlsson. Bratislava: Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, 2008.

Ingmar Karlsson is a prominent Swedish diplomat who has served in numerous diplomatic posts for more than thirty years. Since 2001 he has worked as General Consul of Sweden in Istanbul and as a director of the section for Turkish-Swedish cooperation. Karlsson became deeply interested in the countries of the Near and Middle East and since the early 80's he has published several books covering the issues of politics and religion in this region.

In this latest book Karlsson attempts to apply the problematic relationship between Islam and Europe on the concrete case of Turkey and the EU. His main goal is to combat the conventional European view that Turkey belongs to Europe neither geographically, nor culturally. In this effort he doesn't hide his disenchantment from the allegedly hypocritical role that EC/EU had played by the accession process since 1963. But on the other hand he also addresses the main problems that Turkey has been facing virtually from its inception: coming to terms with Atatürk's legacy, the Armenian tragedy, the Kurdish question and Cyprus. The lucid character of the book makes it an

exceptional contribution to a deeper understanding of the complexity of the Turkish-European relations in the context of the Slovak discourse.

The book starts at the point where all the biggest problems in the human history begin – when the distinction of 'Us' and 'Them' is being born. The author presents a very compelling argument that the Arabic civilization as an Islamic political unit and the *Ottoman Empire* as its successor represent the essential other on which Europe could build its identity. In other words, the Ottoman Empire (and for that matter the Turks as well) became the co-creators of the European identity. As Karlsson puts it: "The spread of Islam in the Orient and northern Africa contributed tremendously to the fact that Europe and its Latin Christianity happened to be perceived as synonyms. Islam, in a way, created Europe (regardless of the minority of the orthodox churches in the orient) by locking up Christianity in herself" (p. 13). I would add that it is one of the many historical paradoxes that Anatolia is the land of Apostle Paul's first missionary journeys and the ultimate cradle of the first organized Christian communities. Notwithstanding the

first Christian communities, the *Islamic Ottoman Empire* laid for many centuries the foundation for the political and military mobilization (crusades into the Holy Land) by all sorts of European rulers on the basis of the Turkish threat. The European campaign against everything Turkish (that had lasted for centuries) had led to deep-seated prejudices. As an expression of that are the numerous idioms used in many European languages which depict the Turks generally as bloodthirsty Barbarians. In my view, it is more complicated than that. One can perceive Karlsson's pro-Turkish bias on this matter because he omits to mention the undoubting historical fact that the *Ottoman Empire* (under the banner of Islam) pursued really an expansive militaristic policy into the heart of the so called Christian Europe and was finally stopped at the gates of Vienna in 1683. It seems to me that Karlsson's criticism of the European prejudices against Turks overstates some legitimate foundations of them. Even though the Ottoman Empire might have had a very benign form of Islam and a tolerant policy towards other religious communities on the conquered territory, it was still an alien culture for the new subjects and the endangered cultural identity has always in the history bred grievances and resentment. Not to mention the obvious that every aggressive military campaign brings suffering and therefore can be only hardly justified.

In the second chapter Karlsson elaborates on the nature of the governing principles of the Ottoman

Empire. He does not know the answer to the question why the Ottomans with their tribes were precisely the ones who managed to conquer their neighbors, defeat the Byzantine Empire and finally were stopped at the gates of Vienna. He only makes an argument that the Islamic religion has never come in the way of military expansion. It has had a syncretistic (undogmatic) form and for most of the time was used instrumentally and pragmatically. The intermarriages between Muslim sultans and Christian princesses were a common currency at that time. It must be a surprising notion for the many proponents of the 'clash of civilizations' thesis that some of the influential Greek religious dignitaries praised still in the 18th century the Turkish sultan for saving the Orthodox Church from the submission to Roman Catholicism. Karlsson mentions also the conversions to Islam which had in many instances also pragmatic roots – fixed taxation tariffs. The converted indigenous people preferred to pay a fixed tariff to a Turkish sultan than to be exposed to an arbitrary taxation of a Christian feudal lord. In the year 1566 (after the death of Sultan Süleyman the Great), Karlsson writes, the Ottoman Empire reached the peak of its power. It stretched from the current Slovak-Polish border in the north to Yemen in the south and from Iran in the east to Venetia in the west. What happened from the end of the 16th century that the Ottoman Empire set on a long trail of decline which eventually brought

it the famous sticker 'the sick man of Europe'? In my opinion, Karlsson makes a compelling argument in this regard. He says that one of the main reasons why the Ottoman Empire started to decline was "the unwillingness to adjust to new conditions and the mistrust against new knowledge" (p. 39). To explain it more lucidly he adds that this development had a lot to do with the "firm conviction of the state apparatus that there was nothing to learn from the faithless barbarians in the West" (p. 39). From the famous fiasco at the gates of Vienna in 1683 on, the Ottoman Empire encountered one defeat after another. These historical processes led, in the 19th century, to a response in the form of the creation of a movement called 'young Turks' who stood in opposition to the 'young Othmans'. The proponents of the 'young Turks' didn't want to save the Ottoman Empire; their goal was a radical reform. The members and adherents of this movement were mainly students of the military academies who belonged under the *Committee for Unity and Progress*. Since the early 20th century their voice began to gain the upper hand in Ottoman politics. The defeat in *World War I* meant a symbolic nail into the coffin of the Ottoman Empire. The newly emerged state on the map, Turkey, was led into an uncertain future by the war hero Mustafa Kemal, who became known as Atatürk – father of the Turks.

Karlsson is trying to present a realistic picture of Atatürk and his

legacy. The political, economic and social reforms that Atatürk embarked upon were nothing short of a revolution. The first president of Turkey wanted to create a modern and prosperous state which was only possible, if Turkey adopts the ideology, institutions and lifestyle of western civilization. To that goal he designed an ideology (known as 'Kemalism') which stood on six pillars: *republicanism* (break with the Ottoman past with caliphates as political units), *nationalism* (homogenous nation), *populism* (sovereignty in the hands of people), *etatism* (state as the main actor in the economic modernization), *secularism* (strict separation of religion from state) and *reformism* (effort to undertake radical reforms in the society). Nationalism and secularism (according to the French model) were by far the two most important features of this modernization project. Karlsson contends that secularism had two paradoxical consequences for the Turkish Islam: it gave an identity to the political opposition against the authoritarian and antidemocratic tendencies of Atatürk's regime and the strict control of religion in Turkey contributed to the creation of a modernized and reformed kind of Islam which led to the emergence of an Islamic version of the Christian democrats. In my view, this is a highly contested point because there are clear cases in the Muslim world (Egypt, Iran) where modernization, secularization and westernization has had the opposite effect – a more radical form of

Islam has begun to gain support among the population of these countries. The fact that the Turkish ruling Islamic AKP party (Party for Justice and Development) has a moderate form and is the strongest supporter of the integration into the EU is in my opinion the most stunning feature of Turkish politics which requires further scholarly attention. In sum, the Kemalist ideology has left a mixed blessing – on one hand it has helped to create a modern secular state with the ambitions to join the EU but on the other hand it has made from itself a secular religion in its own right which has to be protected by the army independent from the civilian control. Nowadays the army and not the moderate Islamic parties possess the greatest threat to democracy in Turkey.

In the successive parts Karlsson devotes his attention to the complicated process of the Turkish accession to the EU. He blames the EU for imposing double standards when comparing the accession talks with Turkey (the associational treaty was signed already in 1963) to accession talks with other 'more' European countries. He makes a compelling argument the "denial of Turkish membership in the EU could have a radicalizing effect throughout

the whole Muslim world, as well as in Turkey. It would support the argument of the fundamentalists that the Muslim world must close in itself because the rest of the world is conspiring against it" (p. 81). With respect to the Kurdish problem and the question of Cyprus, Karlsson's argumentation proceeds in a very cautionary tone. He avoids one sided judgment which is documented by his ability to look critically at the activities of both sides in these complicated and long protracted disputes. The same could be said about his description of the most painful Turkish historical event – the 'tragedy' (as he calls it) of the Armenian minority. Although it might sound for some people provocative or even outrageous, it serves the purpose of arousing a discussion on using the term 'genocide' (which is a crime in Turkey).

The translation of Karlsson's book into Slovak is a pioneering achievement in the Slovak context. Its vivid character and easy language makes it a book determined to end up on the shelves of ordinary citizens interested in politics.

Igor André
Comenius University in Bratislava

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International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs
Hviezdoslavovo nám. 14
811 02 Bratislava 1
Slovak Republic
Tel: +421 2 5443 31 57
Fax: +421 2 5443 31 61
E-mail: brezani@sfpa.sk
stazay@sfpa.sk