

# **"The Geopolitics of the Two Koreas and the United States: Seen through the North Korean Nuclear Issue"**

Copyright 2009 Yu Nam Kim

---

A Paper Prepared for Delivery at the American Political Science Association Annual Convention, September 3-6, 2009, Toronto, Canada

## **"The Geopolitics of the Two Koreas and the United States: Seen through the North Korean Nuclear Issue"**

### **1. The Geopolitics of Korea**

The Korean Peninsula has been divided into North and South Korea for more than five decades since the end of the World War II. Since the Cease Fire Treaty of the Korean War in 1953, the two sides have been confronting each other "all the way to death," because the north denies all the measures other than its total victory over the south to unify the country under the North Korean communism.

The small peninsula, which is slightly bigger than the state of Utah, has been of interest to its larger neighbors for over 2,000 years because its geopolitical and strategic location in Northeast Asia. For centuries, the Mongols, Chinese, Japanese, Russians, and Americans have fought for and in the peninsula. China and Russia directly border with the peninsula in north(North Korea) and Japan is located across the Korean Straits in south(South Korea) within 125 miles.

Even England at the turn of the 20th century has been involved in the geopolitics of the Korean Peninsula in support of the Japanese expansion and to oppose the Czarist Russian expansion over Manchuria and Korea. The British Empire by then was to play the leading role of the world order and exerted her best influence into the regional affairs.

England accepted the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910 without criticism. After having resisted Russia's attempt to access privileged trade rights in Manchuria and Korea, England tolerated Japanese assumption of these same rights. England was even willing to assume her economic losses in support of the geopolitical interests of Japan to stop the Russian expansionism in the area.<sup>1</sup> [1]

To state simply, the United States today is burdened to assume the global role of keeping the world order and peace in the region as was England in the 1910s. The major powers of the region --China, Japan, Russia and the United States --collectively constitute an important base for peace and a regional system but the region needs a balancer who is responsible for the role of coordinated leadership among the four powers.

The United States has willy-nilly been forced to assume the complicated role by circumstantial needs at the end of World War II. In fact, South Korea was founded by the United States at the independence as opposed to the birth of a puppet regime in North Korea hand-picked by the Soviet Union. Washington's involvement in the Korean Peninsula has been beefed-up through the Korean War of 1950 and afterwards. The United States and South Korea have been bound for more than fifty-five years by a mutual security treaty, and Seoul is symbolically and strategically protected by Washington against any threat from Pyongyang.

---

1 [1] England refused to accept the concession offer to construct the Chinese Eastern Railways which cut through the Japanese controlled zone of Manchuria. See, Christian L. Davis, "Linkage Diplomacy: Economic and Security Bargaining in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1923" *International Security*, Vol. 1, No.3, Winter 2008, pp.156-157.

With a few exceptions in the immediate past two administrations of South Korea,<sup>2</sup> [2] the South Korean leadership as well as the general public has in the past traditionally been pro-American in their attitude, and generally fond of the Western democratic value imported through the United States.

Due to its division, the politics and the presidential leadership of South Korea justifiably tend to place a high priority on North Korean policy either for engagement" or "containment." An engagement policy advocates the benevolent reception of North Korea in the name of "nationalism" even if North Korea cheats or violates international rules and norms. A containment policy, on the other hand, places "carrot-and-stick diplomacy" on the table for reward and punishment. The present government in Seoul is more or less following a policy combination of reward and punishment for reciprocal and transparent inter-Korean relations.<sup>3</sup> [3]

The business of diplomatic cooperation between the governments of Seoul and Washington can cause difficulties due to the gap of different perceptions on North Korean. The US-South Korean strategic alliance is fundamentally in a right direction but it evidently raises multiple concerns with regard to the perception changes of Seoul governments visa-vis Pyongyang. The change of administration in Washington also creates the problems of policy coordination between Seoul and Washington. Coordinating the alliance policy toward North Korea is not always easy.

There has been a considerable gap found in their perceptions of North Korea, especially with the governments under the leadership of Kim Dae-jung and Roh Mu-hyun, from 1998 to 2008. Ironically, South Korea's excessively benevolent sympathy toward North Korea has grown in proportion to the anti-Americanism of the general public. The two presidents have

---

2 [2] The Kim Dae-jung(1998-2003) and Roh Mu-hyun(2003-2008) administrations of South Korea have been considered less friendly to the United States, if not been "anti-American."

3 [3] The previous two governments have been criticized for being too generous to North Korea who is armed with nuclear weapons and long range missiles at the expense of the South Korean economic assistance According to an official account revealed by a Non-Government Organization(NGO) in Seoul, the total aid that South Korea provided North Korea for the last ten years is about \$923,07,6,915. <http://news.donga.com/fbin/output?rellink> (09/05/2009).

circumstantially and indirectly have contributed to the growth of the anti-American sentiments in South Korea.

The present government under president Lee Myung-bak since its inception February 2008 seems to have recovered the damage done by the two previous leaders and is doing quite well with president Barack Obama of the United States.<sup>4</sup> [4] South Korean leftists, particularly the opposition party members in the National Assembly, who are friendly with North Korea, have branded the Lee government as the conservative power clique of "pro-American fascists."

The anti-American population in South Korea is a mix of four factors. First, more than two-thirds of the adult population of South Korea are the post-Korean War generation who have no memories of American assistance and sacrifices. Second, the young generation of South Korea fashionably joins the international mood of anti-American sentiment in sympathy for the victims of the Afghan and the Iraq wars. Third, more than 55% of the present generation dislikes the United States and the same percentage showed a pro-North Korean sentiment to extol "Juche"(self-reliant nationalism).<sup>5</sup> [5] Fourth, North Koreans and the leftist pro-North Korean circles of South Korea promote joint anti-American campaigns in the name of North-South cooperation declared in the two summitries of 2000 and 2007.<sup>6</sup> [6]

---

4 [4] When the President Bush administration of the United States had warned the threat from the "rogue states" of Iraq and North Korea and labelled them the "axis of evil," the South Korean presidents Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun had shipped considerable aid materials and gave a large sum of money to North Korea. They also sided with China and Russia in the Beijing Sixth Party Talks as opposed to the United States, See, Sang-Hyun Lee, op.cit , p.138.

5 [5] The Gallup Korea Survey data quoted in Choong Nam Kim, "Changing Korean Perspectives of the Post-Cold War Era and the US-ROK Alliance," East-West Center Paper No. 67, April 2003, Honolulu, Hawaii. Another Gallup poll conducted with the Chosun Ilbo(daily) on June 25, 2007 showed that 43% of the respondents didn't like American, and 33% liked North Korea.

6 [6] Matthew Carlson and Travis Nelson, "Anti-Americanism in Asia?: Factors Shaping International Perceptions of American Influence," International Affairs of the Asia-Pacific, Vol. 8, No. 3, August 1, 2008, pp.304.

The negative opinions of the United States in South Korea are on the rise as the international system continues to be decentralized from the major powers of the past, particularly from the unilateral power of the United States. The minor powers of yesterday tend to advocate the world system to be more liberalized and multilateralized, and American foreign policy for Korea finds more problems than ever.<sup>7</sup> [7] The geopolitical interest of the United State in the Korean Peninsula after five decades of its involvement in the Korean may be at stake.

## **2. Tianxia and the China factors**

Demography will be the important key factor in the future. The present world population is 6.7 billion, and it will be about 9.0 billion by 2050 that would reshape the world. China's present population is 1.4 billion which consist of 20.1% of the world populations. By 2050 China's population will reach 1.9 billion which will make up of 21.1% of the world population.

If we were to imagine the world in 2050 as a village with 100 inhabitants, the population of the village would be made of 59 Asians (including 21 Chinese and 3 from the Middle East); 20 Africans; 9 from Latin America and the Caribbean; 7 Europeans; 4.5 from Northern America; and 0.5 from Oceania'. A comparative ratio between Northern Americans and Chinese will be 4.5 to 21.8 [8]

In addition to the awesome population, China is an economically emerging power to promote its voice in the world. It is possible that China's total economy could equal the US economy by 2040. China is one of the biggest investment markets for the United States and

---

7 [7] A tentative conclusion of the survey is that the political significance of anti-Americanism in Asia is overstated. With 53% viewing American influence as positive and only 23% as negative, the overall balance clearly favors the positive view, *ibid*, p.305.

8 [8] UN Report 2004 Data, "Population of the World and Its Major Areas, 1750-2150," <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/sixbilpart1.pdf> (09/10/2009).

South Korea. One hundred and twenty years ago during the Qing dynasty, China was the biggest market for souls to be saved. The Chinese in 1860s received American missionaries in Tianjin, a gateway to Beijing, and some of them received basketballs along with Bibles. The missionaries believed that salvation would come through God and hoops.

Today, the idol of the American NBA excitement is Yao Ming, the center for the Houston Rockets. He represents the symbol of the "cosmic convergence" of China and the United States. He is believed to be an example of our time when China marks its explosive rise and demonstrates a transnational life connecting East and West.

However, China insists to maintain its unique identity and different values of its own. One good example is with the classical Chinese political thought of "*Tianxia*." China presents the concept of *Tianxia* (all-under-heaven) to understand the Chinese vision of world order. It is the key to the governance and self-conviction of the Chinese value that persists in the present China.

*Tianxia* presents a concept of new hegemony where imperial China's hierarchical governance updated for the 21st Century as it becomes a major power to challenge the United States. The concept is blur and confused with the meaning of "empire," "globalism," "nationalism," or "cosmopolitanism." China says that a Chinese model of world order of universal value is the solution to the world problems. According to *Tianxia*, the world problems are not at the failed states of Afghanistan and North Korea, but "at the Western concept of the Westphalia system"<sup>9</sup> [9] which have led the world into lawlessness.

The classical Chinese concept is critical of the Westphalia system and demand it to be transformed into the moral system of China because the immoral Western individualism is out of date. *Tianxia* opposes "democracy" because the world masses are incapable of thinking through the world and cannot be trusted to act in the world interests.

---

9 [9] The author cites a prominent Chinese philosopher Zhao Tirgyang's writing, "Tianxian Tixi: Shijie zhidu zhexue daolun: The Tianxia System: A Philosophy for the world Situations." See, William A. Calluhan. "Chinese Visions of World Order: Post-hegemonic or a New Hegemony?", *International Studies Review*. Vol 10(4), December 2008, p.751.

In *Tianxia*, the general public are believed to be "blind followers who are basically selfish, irresponsible, foolish and vulgar swindlers, idiots, and scoundrels." These fools just follow the benevolence of Confucius or a Leninist leader who occupies the top leadership of the masses. The Tianxian tenet resembles what James Madison had to warn the ambition of the masses in the Federalist Paper No. 10.<sup>10</sup> [10]

China has directly involved in the North Korean nuclear issue simply because it is Korea's contiguous neighbor who fought against the United States in the Korean War to save North Korea. China's nominal interest is in the denuclearization of North Korea and non-proliferation of the entire Korean Peninsula.<sup>11</sup> [11] China is cautious about the theoretical possibility of a US surgical strategic strike against the north Korean nuclear facilities near its 880-mile border along the Yalu River.<sup>12</sup> [12]

"China has a vital strategic interest in keeping the Korean Peninsula politically stable, and provide a calm milieu for the Chinese border. China has historically maintained a 'strategic relationship' with North Korea in this complicated, dynamic and not so benign regional security environment of Northeast Asia. It is China's vital interest to keep North Korea as its "buffer zone" or at least it would prefer not to have a hostile and troublesome neighbor on its border.<sup>13</sup> [13] The fate of North Korea will reshape the geopolitics of the future China.

---

10 [10] "As long as As long as the reason of man continues fallible, and he is at liberty to exercise it, different opinions will be formed. As long as the connection subsists between his reason and his self-love, his opinions and his passions will have a reciprocal influence on each other."

11 [11] Shi Yinhong, "China and the North Korean Nuclear Issue," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol 2, No. 1, March 209, p.34.

12 [12] It might have been not totally unintentional to locate its nuclear facilities and long range missile sites close to the China-North Korean border areas. China is bordered with North Korea in 1,381 miles, while the Russian-North Korean border is less than 11 miles.

13 [13] The Yalu(Amnok) River in the southwest runs between China and North Korea in 880 miles, and the Tumen River in the northeast of the Korean Peninsula runs between the two countries in 501 miles.

### **3. Russia Involved**

Koreans have been accustomed to perceive Russia as their fatalistic neighbor in north along with China. Geographically Russia borders with the Korean Peninsula in 11 miles along the Tumen River. Historically from the mid-19th century onward for almost 150 years the Russians have been involved in the peninsula. The Sino-Japanese War of 1894/5 and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904/5, and the Korean War of 1950 are the historical testimony of the geopolitics of the peninsula. Russia was there at the every turn of events in Korea from the Korean War to the present Six-Party Talks in Beijing.<sup>14</sup> [14]

Except its steady heavyweight status in the nuclear arsenals, Russia's influence in East Asia has been conceivably descending to minimum. However, the status with North Korea is different. Russia still maintains its strong capability to influence Pyongyang. A recent trend is that Russia tends to cooperate with China in foreign policy for North Korea. Russia offers China its oil and gas and high tech items of nuclear energy, aerospace and nano-technology<sup>15</sup> [15] in exchange for Beijing's foreign policy cooperation. Russia has been siding with China in the Six-Party Talks not to dismantle, but to help North Korea to justify its nuclear weapons programs.

---

14 [14] There were Russian pilots in MIG-15s over the Yalu River and Soviet military advisors presented in the North Korean army units during the Korean War. This new facts have been revealed in "the Report of the Korean War" by Gen. Vladimir Razhubayev who was the head of military advisors and the military attache to the Soviet Embassy in Pyongyang during the Korean War. <http://www.hani.co.kr/section> (09/09/2009).

15 [15] Georgy Toloraya, "A Turn to the Right?": A Russian Comment on the North Korean Policy of ROK Conservative Government," *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2008, p.65.



Russia sees the present government of South Korea is deteriorating the two Korea relations in the nuclear crisis which is not in the interests of Russia.<sup>16</sup> [16] The Kremlin has repeatedly pledged to forge a "strategic partnership" with China, and both nations have been using vaguely worded anti-American statements in their support of North Korea. In fact, North Korea has volunteered for the role of the villain in the anti-American alliance among China, Russia, and North Korea. For a while, South Korea under president Kim Dae-jung and president Roh Mu-Hyun has been teamed with the anti-Americanism in the background of the North Korean nuclear issue.

Medvedev-Putin diarchy formed in the Kremlin since May 2008 has paved a road to perpetuate the foreign policy of the former president Putin without any major alterations.<sup>17</sup> [17] Putin wanted to revive the great power status of the Soviet era. To this end, Russia has been politically seeking a strong geopolitical leadership along its strategic borders from the Baltic to the Pacific. Russia at the end of Far East meets with the two Koreas for a wide range of international relations.<sup>18</sup> [18]

Russia's major goals in the region may be summarized in five categories: (1) building a multi-lateral regional security system; (2) maintaining strong Sino-Russian cooperation in foreign policy; (3) rebuilding relations with the Cold War ally North Korea; (4) stabilizing relations with South Korea; and (5) minimizing the US influence in the region.<sup>19</sup> [19] Above all, Russia wants to expand the scope of the present Six-Party Talks into a permanent multilateral

---

<sup>16</sup> [16] Ibid, p 64.

<sup>17</sup> [17] Jae-Nam Ko, "Russia's Revival and Its Great Power Diplomacy," East Asian Review, Vol. 20, No. 4, Winter 2008, p.104.

<sup>18</sup> [18] To this end, Russia is ready to re-elect Vladimir Putin for the second term presidency in 2012 at the end of the present president Dmitry Medvedev's term. It is constitutionally legal in Russia to be re-elected for the second term after an interval.

<sup>19</sup> [19] Beom-Shik Shin, "Russia's Northeast Asian Policy and (the) Korean Peninsula," The Journal of East Asian Affairs, Vol.22, No. 2, Fall/Winter 2008. p.190.

security regime, similar to a mini-model of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe(CSCE) or Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe(OSCE). 20 [20]

Initially, Russia's intimate relationships with North Korea helped Moscow increase its weight to participate in security negotiations on the Korean issues. In fact, it was Pyongyang who had ultimately demanded that Moscow to be included in the Six-Party Talks. Russia seem to have its long term interests in being part of the region's major players in the Korean affairs. Therefore, Russia is interested more in keeping itself among the major powers of the region than in solving the North Korean nuclear problem.

In the long run, Russia considers a unified Korea can potentially be a Russia's strategic partner, provided that the shape of the unification is not overly controlled by the United States. Russia, for this reason, insists on preserving special and even-handed relations with both Koreas. In the meantime, Russia has not yet repaid the remaining US \$1.47 billion debt out of a \$3 billion loan it owed South Korea at the end of the Mikhail Gorbachev era.<sup>21</sup> [21]

#### **4. The United States in Korea**

New relationship between the United States and North Korea may be at dawn as former US president Bill Clinton made a surprise visit to Pyongyang on August 5, 2009. North Korean Kim Jong-il received his visitor, who is husband of the current Secretary of State, with a smile of

---

20 [20] CSCE involved 33 European states plus the United States and Canada in a series of negotiations throughout the 1970s and 1980s for East-West dialogues and cooperation during the Cold War. It left an excellent model for a multilateral regime for negotiations which had grown into OSCE in 1990 with its 56 member states. For more on Russia's Six-Party-Talk perspectives, see Georgy Toloraya, "The Six-Party Talks: A Russian Perspective," Asian Perspective, Vol. 32, No. 4, 2008, p.51.

21 [21] Peggy F. Meyer, "Russia's Response to the 2002-2003 North Korean Nuclear Crisis," International Journal of Korean Studies, Vol. VII, No. 1, pp.58-59.

satisfaction. The White House insisted the Clinton's visit as strictly humanitarian to rescue two American journalists convicted of illegally entering North Korea. Nothing has been revealed about what was said between Clinton and Kim Jong-il in their meeting which lasted for three hours.

Clinton's Pyongyang visit is different from former president Jimmy Carter's June 1994 trip to North Korea that resulted in the Agreed Framework between the United States and North Korea.<sup>22</sup> [22] Clinton returned home with the journalists whose release was his key mission. But coming at a time of high tension, it inevitably raised hopes of broader diplomatic impact.<sup>23</sup> [23]

North Korea has been developing nuclear weapons for the past 15 years, and the regime is believed to have at least 6 to 8 nuclear bombs with missiles which theoretically could deliver the bombs beyond Alaska and Hawaii.<sup>24</sup> [24] The United States is seriously challenged by Pyongyang's nuclear black market, blackmail, and stalemate over the future of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).<sup>25</sup> [25]

Even ordinary people on the street understand that the North Korean nuclear weapons and long range missiles are one way or the other originated from the scientific and technological know-hows of Russia or China, if they were not copied from American nuclear bombs. The international community is divided and responded uncertainly to the crisis. The crisis over

---

22 [22] For details, see "The Similarities and Differences between the Two Visits by the Former US Presidents," Dong-A Ilbo (Seoul), August 5, 2009.

23 [23] Kelly Olsen, AP, "Analysis: North Korea's Kim Faces Choice on Nuclear Program after Meeting with Clinton," Washington Examiner, August 5, 2009, <http://washingtonexaminer.com/world/ap/52543874.html> (08/06/09).

24 [24] The Taepodong-II ICBM missile, which is currently under a test, is a multistage missile capable of reaching the United States with a potential several hundred kilograms sized, nuclear weapon payload.

25 [25] Military-run Myanmar (Burma) may obtain an atomic bomb anytime soon, and experts are closely watching the military state. There's suspicion that something is going on, and increasingly that cooperation with North Korea may have a nuclear undercurrent.

nuclear proliferation has grown up to the point where mankind cannot control the danger of nuclear nightmare.

Nowhere is this more evident than in North Korea. International sanctions and diplomacy have failed so far to stop the nuclear arms program of North Korea. Syria was building a secret nuclear reactor with North Korean assistance, and finally met an Israel air strike in September 2007. But China and Russia would never allow North Korea's nuclear facilities to get an air strike near their border.

The atmosphere of U.S. domestic politics and the Obama administration as well is not totally in line with an engagement policy toward Pyongyang. Secretary of the State Hillary Clinton has shown in number of occasions that the United States under the present administration equally pursues its national interests as much as what was pursued by president George Bush under the previous administration. For that reason, North Korea, who supported the candidate Barack Obama in the 2008 presidential elections, has expressed its disappointment, saying that "American liberals and conservatives are not different in foreign policy."

The system of a three-way dialogue among Washington, Seoul, and Pyongyang has been undergoing but the structure has been extremely fluid. Washington-Pyongyang talks continued while dialogues between the two Koreas has been temporarily suspended, or vice versa. The United States believes the two-way contact between Washington and Pyongyang should remain in the context of the Six-Party Talks.<sup>26</sup> [26]

The United States has a strategic interest in preventing Russia and China, or any other power, from dominating the Korean Peninsula. The peninsula has been considered the gateway to the Pacific and the Northeast Asian continent. The United States is strongly supporting the independence and sovereignty of Korea in unification. At the same time, Russia and China also do have their legitimate interests in Korea for the same reason.

---

26 [26] Bo-hyuk Suh, "Regional Security Order under Change: The Strategic Relationships of South Korea, North Korea and the United States in the post-Cold War Era," *East Asian Review*, Vol. 20, No. 4, Winter 2008, p.39.

Either close Russo-American cooperation on the Korean Peninsula or intimate Sino-American cooperation on the Korean Peninsula is not likely. But the United States should avoid a zero-sum competition for exclusive influence there. Such competition is bound to damage American interests simply because Russia<sup>27</sup> [27] and China are located within the region and the US is not.

The US's foreign policy to stop the North Korean nuclear project has been considered so far a total loss and failure. A twin brother of the failure is the case with the North Korean long range missile. Some liberal schools of thought in the United State have attributed the failure to the George Bush administration's blanket rejection of the preceding administration's policy approach to North Korea.<sup>28</sup> [28]

The United States holds internationally legitimate reason to remain in the Korean Peninsula to provide South Korea both the conventional and nuclear umbrellas against the North Korean nuclear threats, otherwise Seoul might finds its own way like Israel. Once a race in WMD starts in the Korean Peninsula, Japan would most certain to follow an Israeli approach for self-defense. Tokyo could expand its military and becomes "a normal state" to have a strong regular army.<sup>29</sup> [29]

It is satisfying to note that American president Barack Obama has reacted with a strong warning against the recent testing of a North Korean long range missile on April 5, 2009. He

---

27 [27] "The Right Direction for US Policy toward Russia," A Report from The Commission on US Policy toward Russia, March 2009, Washington, DC.

28 [28] George J. Moore, "America's Failed North Korean Nuclear Policy: A New Approach," Asian Perspective, Vol.32, No. 4, 2008, pp.28-29.

29 [29] In the advent of the North Korean nuclear weapons and its subsequent development of medium range ballistic missiles(MRBMs) and ICBMs, Japan is faced with two choices -- go for an Israel model or to depend on US protection.

declared that "all nations must come together to build a stronger global regime"<sup>30</sup> [30] to stop the North Korean menace once and for all.

In the end, the United States cannot contain the North Korean nuclear and ballistic missile programs as long as China and Russia are sided with North Korea and remain inconsistent in the Six-Party Talks. In fact, China and Russia seemed to have taken advantage of these mixed trends to bolster their status both in North and South Korea at the expense of the United States.<sup>31</sup> [31]

## **5. Japan under Threats for Rearmament**

Without formal diplomatic channels, Japan is faced with policy dilemmas in dealing with the North Korean threats since it has to depend on the channels of Washington-Pyongyang and Seoul-Pyongyang. Japan is seeking to formalize two sets of triangular channels of ① Tokyo-Washington-Pyongyang and ② Tokyo-Seoul-Pyongyang. However, Japan seems to have been felt uncertain and unstable with the two triangles since Japan holds no control over them.<sup>32</sup> [32]

---

<sup>30</sup> [30] See the Text of President Obama's Speech in Prague, Czech Republic, on Sunday, prepared for delivery by the White House, The Associate Press, April 5, 2009.

<sup>31</sup> [31] Richard Weitz, "US Security Challenges in Northeast Asia after Bush," *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2008, pp.95-98.

<sup>32</sup> [32] Sachio Nakato "South Korea's Paradigm Shift in North Korean Policy and Trilateral Cooperation among the US, Japan, and South Korea," *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2008, p.43.

The only way to solve the lethargy is to obtain a status of the permanent membership at the United Nations(UN) Security Council.<sup>33</sup> [33]

Japan claims itself the world's second largest donor to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund(IMF). Japan has committed to contribute about 19.5% of the UN budget, a greater amount than the United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia who are the permanent members of the Security Council. The world community sees it might be a ploy to manipulate a favorable atmosphere for Japan's application to a permanent seat in the Security Council.

The Japanese tend to observe a self-image of "international institutionalists" or "idealists" as opposed to the Chinese and the Russians being basically "international realists" or "men of power politics." But China and Russia fear that Japan could once again remilitarize and become a "normal country" with military power commensurate with its economic strength. The two neighbors of Japan historically fought two major wars against Japan in the 20th century. Furthermore, North Korea's nuclear weapons and its long range missiles(ICBMs) provided Japan justice to rearm for self-defense.

In China's perspective, a US-Japanese alliance has become a source of increasing concern. The Chinese remind the world that the enhanced security alliance between the United States and Japan leaves China with no choice but to improve its weapons and increase military strength. Russia shares the same perception, saying that it deeply concerns the change of Japan's defense posture from dove to hawk, and its impact on the neighbors.

China and Russia are anxious about Japan's decision to become more intimately tied to US theater missile defense plans in order to counter North Korea's ballistic missiles. North Korea's

---

<sup>33</sup> [33] Paul J. Smith, "China-Japan Relations and the Future Geopolitics of East Asia," *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, Vol. 35, No. 4, Winter 2009, pp.247-250.

firing of the Taepodong missile series over Japan in 1998, 2006, and 2009 already galvanized the Japanese public in support of the US-Japan joint missile defense program.<sup>34</sup> [34]

Japan is paranoid with fears that the threats may be heightened either by the political unification of the Korean Peninsula under Chinese influence or by the replacement of Kim Jong-il with a new military dictator of China-backing. Although Japan is basically friendly with South Korea, but it fears the anti-Japanese sentiment of Korea. Japan also fears the unification of the Korean Peninsula under a strong nationalistic government. Japan therefore will seek protection either in alliances or regional institutions, designed to keep China down, Russia distanced, Korea controlled, and the United States happy.

Japan claims itself a nation of liberal institution who believes in developing a rule-based international system built upon an institutional tradition of the Western world. However, the Chinese and Russians feel that their experiences with the Japanese in the 20th century and particularly in World War II only confirm the central tenet of the "Japanese realism" in the most incidents.<sup>35</sup> [35]

Faced with the growing pressure both from the Chinese and the North Korean military build-ups, particularly at the North Korean long range missiles shot over Japan, some Japanese hardliners begin to question if the US nuclear deterrent is sufficient to protect the country. There has been talk of adopting a preemptive posture against North Korea, and even proposed a first-strike capability to be added to Japan's New Defense Guidelines which will be released at the end of 2009.

The president Obama's vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world has only increased this sentiment, as it will force Tokyo to choose between securing a nuclear umbrella or nuclear abolition in the face of serious threats from North Korea. While the reality of a Japanese

---

<sup>34</sup> [34] Bill Emmott, "Balancing Power in Asia," McKinsey: What Matters, <http://whatmatters.mckinseydigital.com/geopolitics/balancing-power> (03/30/2009).

<sup>35</sup> [35] Paul J. Smith, op. it., pp.254-257.



preemptive option is highly improbable, North Korea's provocative and belligerent actions may push the Japanese defense policy further toward the realist school of hardliners.

At the moment, the majority of the Japanese public opinion is for disarmament with its "peace constitution" and never to talk about pursuing nuclear weapons,

but a change of the opinion may be quite possible. While they expressed anger at the North Korean nuclear test, they were concerned in that the test could strengthen the argument that Japan should pursue nuclear weapons.

As for the major movement for a nuclear-free world, Japan in principle supports for Washington to give up its nuclear arsenal which is intimately related to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. However for now, Japan yet feels it needs to be protected under the US nuclear umbrella. Until such a time when it no longer feels a threat from North Korea's nuclear weapons and long range missiles, it will be realistically difficult for Japan to support the global denuclearization movement.<sup>36</sup> [36]

The Japanese public now feel threatened much more by the North Korean missiles than the nuclear weapons. However when the missile threat is added to a nuclear warhead, the imperatives of the Japanese government may become overwhelming. The nationalistic wing of the Japanese polity believes they are castrated by the American security umbrella. In short, the current North Korean nuclear threats and tricks could be a beacon of hope for the reassertion of Japanese self-respect.

## **6. North Korea in Conclusions**

---

<sup>36</sup> [36] Sachio Nakato, op. cit., p.46.

North Korea conducts the massive military propaganda campaigns exhorting its citizens to increase productivity to strengthen national defense against the enemy. As the Pyongyang TV agitates, North Korea blames its misery and misfortunes onto "the Yankee beasts in human masks." Pyongyang threatens the United States if Washington doesn't recognize the Kim Jong-il regime as a powerful nuclear nation, North Korea will make Washington difficult and suffer "in a sea of (nuclear) flame and buried in a lump of ash." North Korea's harsh words and threats directed toward the United States surpass American counter blows of "the axis of evil" and "the rogue state."<sup>37</sup> [37]

Hardly had Pyongyang signed a nuclear disarmament agreement with Washington in late 1994 than Kim Jong-il proclaimed a "military first"(Songun) policy or the politics of "military first." The military first policy prioritizes the line of military mentality and performance in the state affairs of the country encompassing the politics, economics, and the ideology of North Korea.<sup>38</sup> [38]

The Kim Jong-il regime glorifies propaganda extolling such as "the 150 Day Battle" of production campaigns in that every worker is "a fighter." Signs reading "battleground" hang over the entrances to schools, collective farms, factories, and mines. The nation's youth are exhorted to prepare sacrificing their lives for the General Kim Jong-il and to become "resolve-to-die

---

<sup>37</sup> [37] Initially North Korea, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Libya were considered "rogue states," in 1980s but the countries except North Korea have been dropped from the list. The term has been replaced by "Axis of Evil" in 2002 in president Bush's State of the Union Address to describe governments who help terrorism and seeking WMD including nuclear weapons. The president named Iran, Iraq, and North Korea in this category.

<sup>38</sup> [38] Manchukuo (State of Manchuria) was an Imperial Japan's puppet state in Manchuria and eastern Inner Mongolian by the Japanese military. The region was the Qing Dynasty's historical homeland, created by former Qing Dynasty officials with help from Imperial Japan in 1932. The state was founded and administered by Imperial Japan, with Puyi, the last Qing emperor, as the nominal regent and emperor. It was abolished in 1945 after the defeat of Imperial Japan at the end of World War II.

squads" (gyeolsadae) and "human bullets" (yuktan) in the "holy war" (seongjeon) against the arch enemy the United States.<sup>39</sup> [39]

If the true nature of North Korean were uncovered, the world can understand it is impossible to disassemble the North Korean nuclear program. Allowing even modest exercise of economic freedom through the "jangmadang"(informal markets) threatens the government's total control. With a stagnant and deteriorating economy and nowhere else to turn, the diehard nationalist state is determined to live and die by its record of standing up to the outside world. This is especially so for a regime that must maintain some degree of domestic support in the face of self-imaged threats from outside.

The North Korean regime cannot continue to justify its existence if it exchanges national pride for aid from South Korea and the United States. Aid and assistance that North Korea receives therefore must be made in the name of "gifts" and "donation." Henceforth it is to recall that the Chinese and Russian delegates in the Six-Party Talks have insistently ordered the United States to offer "loving and trust-building measures" for North Korea.<sup>40</sup> [40]

North Korea is a regime that terrorizes and murders their own people, and run at least 30-some labor camps along with 7 political detention camps in the hide-places of the mountain valleys. This fact has been known to the South Korean authorities as well as to the US religious organizations who watch Pyongyang's inhumane atrocity.<sup>41</sup> [41] North Korea is one of the most evil regimes in modern times, but for various geopolitical reasons, nobody in the West or

---

<sup>39</sup> [39] B. R. Myers, "North Korea is no Communist State: Pyongyang's True Ideology," Wall Street Journal Asia, June 30, 2009, p.4.

<sup>40</sup> [40] See, Virginia Grzelezyk, "Carrots and Sticks: The Construction of an American Foreign Policy toward North Korea," Korea Observer, Vol. 39, No. 4, Winter 2008, pp.540-542; Gennady F. Chufrin, "Russian Foreign and Security Strategy in East Asia," Northeast Asian Strategic Outlook, 2006, The Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security(IFANS), MOFA, pp.92-94.

<sup>41</sup> [41] "Open Door," an international non-profit ministry which supports and strengthens persecuted Christians in over 45 countries including North Korea, <http://opendoorsusa.org/> (09/08/09)

elsewhere is going to go in and put a stop to it. The United States is the only country who tries to initiate some efforts.

It is hoped that when North Korea collapse, it happens in a way that doesn't bring a crisis in the regional power system where the four major powers of the world converge. Chaos will create a situation of power vacuum in North Korea, and

China is almost certain to send its troops into the peninsula as the Chinese Peoples Liberation Army(PLA) crossed the Yalu in the Korean War. While keeping South Korea out, Russia would also send aid along with a carefully picked puppet they might try to set up as the Soviet Union did in 1948 when Kim Il-sung was picked. In the event, South Korea and the United States will be forced to stay out of North Korea.<sup>42</sup> [42]

In the meantime, Kim Jong-il in power requires "the enemy number one," the United States kept in South Korea. Besides all the bluster about hatred for the Yankee Imperialists, the United States has become very important to the North Korean regime for its survival. During the years of the Korean War and after, it was pure hatred, but as the world has evolved, especially since the fall of the Soviet communism, the presence of the United States in South Korea has definite advantages for its propaganda purposes.

The Pyongyang regime needs an awesome enemy to justify its continued harsh rule armed with nuclear weapons. The American "threat" justifies continued sacrifices, poor food, insufficient quantities of everything. It allows tight control over the better-fed elite in Pyongyang saying that "We must remain united in the face of the enemy."

Kim Jong-il would be glad to see the Yankee Devil gone under ideal circumstances about in 2050, but for now he needs the enemy kept close by. With

the United States in South Korea, the regime could overcome with problems from

---

42 [42] Ben Kremenak, former Korea Representative of The Asia Foundation, "The North Korean Regime Needs an Enemy to Justify Its Continued Harsh Rule," an email essay, unpublished, June 25, 2009.

its own people, from cliques in its army and party, as well as increased economic and political pressures from China. With regard to the United States, Kim Jong-il prefers "the devil you know, rather than the devils you don't know."<sup>43</sup> [43]

(END)

---

---

<sup>43</sup> [43] *Ibid.*