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PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES FOR
KOREAN REUNIFICATION

South Korea's Unification Policy and Prospects

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The Park Geun-hye administration's foreign policy/North Korean policy keyword is "trust," which is intended to be the base on which to build a "New Korean Peninsula" and a new order of peace and security in Northeast Asia. Park has reiterated that she will work to develop trust between the South and the North based on the principle of deterrence, and while remaining strict on that point, she will continue to work through the "Korean Peninsula trust process" toward building the basis for a "unification era," in which all people can live prosperous and free lives and achieve their dreams. As trust is built when the two sides talk and keep their promises, she urged that North Korea respect international norms and make correct choices.

Efforts such as sanctions on North Korea by the United States and the international community are designed to pressure North Korea to adopt an attitude of responsibility regarding the Cheonan sinking and to allow for the reopening of the Six-Party Talks on denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. If the talks are unable to find an appropriate solution to the North Korean nuclear issue, then new measures and strategies may be considered. Following the unilateral violation of the Leap Day 2012 agreement by North Korea, the United States announced new sanctions against the regime as well as preconditions for the restoration of the Six-Party Talks, and has reiterated its position that the relaxation or cessation of sanctions can only be considered as part of serious talks. After the North's third nuclear test on February 12, 2013, the UN Security Council agreed on additional sanctions supported by South Korea. Park's pursuit of "trust" proceeds in the shadow of these measures.

While North Korea has announced its abandonment of denuclearization talks, it is possible that the remaining countries in the Six-Party Talks can discuss reopening the talks with strong prerequisites, including banning further nuclear and long-range missile tests. If the Six-Party Talks do reopen, a new North Korean nuclear issue management structure can be developed based on concrete, realistic discussions for the construction of a peace regime structure on the Korean Peninsula and the relaxation of the sanctions that North Korea is requesting. Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula was the primary goal of the Lee Myung-bak government's North Korea policy. It will remain the most important principle related to North-South relations for the Park government.

If Kim Jong-un's government engages in aggression in the name of regime survival and national dignity despite the new Security Council resolution, South Korea will agree to further strengthening sanctions together with the international community in general and the United States in particular. If North Korea commits to a concrete sequence for denuclearization, participants of the Six-Party Talks, including the United States, will initiate comprehensive aid to allow North Korea to maintain stability and develop its economy. South Koreans must define the structure of their country's leading role in preparing for that burden. That is the objective of this chapter, which outlines South Korea's unification policy if circumstances permit.

THE PARK ADMINISTRATION'S UNIFICATION POLICY

Park has stated that unification begins by overcoming distrust and conflict to create a new Korean Peninsula of trust and peace, ultimately leading to a unified Korea that will represent the full completion of the Republic of Korea. To this end, she has presented "happy unification" as the core goal for realizing the construction of a new Korean Peninsula based on trust, through the presentation of a rough blueprint for unification that begins with a foundation of realistic

peace and construction of an economic community, leading finally to political federation. She envisions three steps: 1) normalization of North-South relations through a trust process; 2) progression from “small unification” to “big unification”; and 3) realistic preparation for unification through strengthening the capacity for it.

While the administration is preparing against North Korea's continual aggressive threats and seeks to resolve the nuclear issue through close cooperation with the international community, relying on UN Security Council resolutions, if the situation stabilizes and North Korea agrees to a serious denuclearization policy, the government has also opened the way for a variety of dialogue channels, including inter-Korean summits.

- Plans are being devised for the installation of a North-South Exchange and Cooperation Office in Seoul and Pyongyang for economic cooperation and socio-cultural exchanges.
- Plans are being devised to provide appropriate aid through the North-South Exchange and Cooperation Office for the Kaesong industrial complex and agricultural development as well as in the area of development cooperation.
- For large-scale economic assistance to begin, however, the issue of North Korea's nuclear weapons must take priority. If there is trust built between North and South and a degree of progress seen on the denuclearization issue, the so-called “Vision Korea Project” will be initiated. While there are some differences with the “Denuclearization-Opening-3000” policy of the Lee Myung-bak government, in the end, it is always the denuclearization issue that is the most critical point of contention.

A sustainable medium-to-long-term roadmap will be presented for future governments to use to strengthen peace on the Korean Peninsula and cooperation in North-South relations in case there are signs of positive changes in North Korea. Despite the fact that agreements such as the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement and the June 15, 2000 and October 4, 2007 declarations played a role in their respective periods in mediating North-South relations, the fact that these agreements proved inadequate means that work is required to develop new agreements for cooperation, which show promise for actual realization. Therefore, in order to restart dialogue and cooperation with the North, the Park government must, on the one hand, consistently demand responsible measures regarding North Korea's military provocations, and, on the other, also maintain flexibility in initiating North-South dialogue (such as was seen at the first and second round of talks in 2011 between the chief delegates to the Six-Party Talks from the North and South). This means establishing a comprehensive (governmental and civil), medium-to-long-term strategy for the support of new relations between the North and South, and continuing to pursue this strategy in stages. It also means reassessing tourism to Mt. Kungang and other forms of economic cooperation taking into account factors such as the stability of North-South relations and their economic feasibility. While North Korea lacks serious interest in opening and reform, North-South economic cooperation will take time to be of practical economic benefit.

For this strategy to be applied, a political agenda will have to be pursued under a complex design that does not recognize the separation of politics and economics but in reality is a fusion of the two. Moreover, issues such as separated families and related humanitarian aid will have

to be judged strategically on concrete analysis of the practical gains and losses. In terms of the necessary division of labor between public and private roles, there will need to be research on the political results of business with North Korea (including civil exchange) and the dynamic relationship with unification, given the precedence of the failure of the previous Sunshine Policy. In terms of issues such as the food loans to the North, and the cash-in-advance currency payments related to Mt. Kumgang tourism, structural imperfections need to be rectified and responsibility appropriately placed.

In order to build consensus among the people and the international community, emphasis should be placed on the maintenance of consistency in unification policy and clarity of intentions to pursue unification education and unification diplomacy at the same time. As Park explained, “We will maintain consistency in our unification policy by succeeding and developing a unification model for a national community based on liberal democracy.” She gives special weight to pursuing a “sustainable North Korea policy.” Unification preparation plans, accordingly, must be pursued keeping in mind both the gradual model of unification by stages as well as the possibility of sudden unification caused by an emergency situation.

As a candidate, Park said that we cannot afford to ignore the North Korean human rights problem, and showed serious intent to enact the “North Korean Human Rights Law,” which has been the subject of much political infighting between the government and the opposition. Yet, because it became a symbol of internal conflict and failed to pass either the 17th or 18th National Assembly, it will be extremely difficult to pass without extraordinary political will. Given the equal footing of the government and opposition in the 19th National Assembly, the breakdown of the legislative process due to fierce competition in the presidential election, and the likelihood of repeated protests outside the Assembly, securing support from the Assembly, the people, and the media must be Park’s first priority. Considering that the North Korea Human Rights Law is the bare minimum of humanitarian consideration for North Koreans and also the starting point for building trust, convincing the various political parties and gaining broad consensus among South Koreans is essential.

- The North Korean Human Rights Law has a lot of significance as a symbol and expression of the position and intention of South Korea to reflect the anger and interest of the international community to the inferior human rights circumstances in North Korea.
- It is also important in its concrete details as a milestone for the long-term prospects for the people and elite of North Korea.
- We need to consider the importance of presenting a thorough recognition of the anti-humanitarian, anti-democratic and criminal nature of the North Korean regime and to actively promote this recognition amongst our own citizens.

The North Korean regime is maintaining the succession system that has passed through three generations from Kim Il-sung through Kim Jong-il to Kim Jong-un. With the accession of Kim Jong-un to the highest positions in the party, military and government at the Fourth Conference of the Workers’ Party of Korea, held on April 4, 2012, it can now be said that the Kim Jong-un government has fully arrived. However, we need to consider the stability of the succession and the long-term viability of the regime and government

separately, and continue to research and make preparations for the possibility of a crisis situation or internal struggle.

- After the sudden removal of Chief of General Staff Ri Yong-ho from his position on July 15, Kim Jong-un's succession system was consolidated on July 18, 2012 with Kim Jong-un receiving the highest military rank. It remains unknown whether he will engage in changes in the party-military relationship or bring real results of reform measures for North Korea's internal economy.
- North Korea's internal situation should not be mentioned or interfered with on a government level, but there should be support for the strengthening of the roles of civil groups and international organizations.
- We need to establish think tanks that can deal constructively and comprehensively with the various core national strategies related to diplomacy, unification, security and North-South relations.

The prospects for improvement in North Korea under Kim Jong-un are unlikely due to lack of any fundamental change in terms of opening and reform or in the structural contradictions of the North Korean regime itself. The instability of the North Korean internal situation, following the succession to a third generation of leadership, may impact South Korean and foreign policy fronts unpredictably. We need to remember that it is going to take some time before there can be real improvement in North-South relations and the construction of peace and security in East Asia.

- While some members of Kim Jong-un's family show signs of freedom to move and live abroad, we need to pay attention to the inherent duplicity. North Korea is strengthening both internal control methods, such as crackdowns and punishment of defectors, as well public security activities meant to enforce regime unity at the same time.

The future of the Korean Peninsula will be more unstable and dynamic in the medium-to-long term rather than in the immediate next five years, and therefore the Park Geun-hye government needs to prepare both public and classified action plans and frequently reassess and revise them.

- North Korea has been judged as unlikely to engage in any provocation reckless enough to lead to war and potentially cause the collapse of its regime, so effective responses to threats should be enough to prevent any extreme crisis.
- The Park Geun-hye government needs to thoroughly examine the merits and flaws of the North Korean and unification diplomacy policies of Lee Myung-bak, Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun in order to develop realistic alternatives. At the same time it needs to establish the principle that bad behavior or reckless provocation by North Korea will not be tolerated, as well as push a multifaceted approach that a crisis situation can be turned into a unification process through established strategy.

For the maintenance of sustainable peace and development within East Asia, the "East Asia Peace/Cooperation Conception" was presented, which seeks to build trust, cooperative

security, economic/social cooperation and human security with each of the relevant countries in the region. This is the Seoul Process, which can be described as the East Asian version of Helsinki Process.

- The Helsinki Process refers to the process of enacting the Helsinki Accords in 1975, signed by 35 countries divided between the Cold War factions of the U.S.-centered NATO and the Soviet-centered Warsaw Pact. This Accord contained the measures by which peace could be maintained in Europe through trust building.
- During the presidential elections, President Park expressed hopes that the Seoul Process could be used as a means to reduce the potential for conflict between the United States and China in the East Asian region, and that Seoul could function as a peace builder for the East Asian region.

For the Seoul Process to succeed, at the very minimum the national interests of the related countries need to be protected and a widespread collective agreement formed for the maintenance of the post-Cold War status quo in Northeast Asia. There still exists the possibility that North Korea will engage in further provocation or posturing towards South Korea, and to deal with this possibility we need realistic preparations that respond to the fact that the North will use these provocations as a strategic means to repeatedly gain the high ground in negotiations with the South, the United States and Japan.

- As can be seen in the attacks on the Cheonan-ham and Yeongpyeong-do in 2010, some of the most aggressive military moves along the border regions since the end of the Korean War, we cannot rule out that North Korean threats could lead to military attacks and even to the outbreak of war.

In 2013 in East Asia the emergence of new leadership will see the rise of many new challenges and difficulties to be faced. Through President Park's normalized diplomacy with neighboring countries, however, a new foundation for trust can be built. As a middle-ranking power, South Korea can use its balanced and cooperative diplomacy to create a new era of permanent peace and cooperation.

- The conventional structure of the U.S.-China rivalry revolves around the strengthening of the U.S.-Japan alliance and the expansion of the China-Russia strategic cooperation regime leading potentially to the rise of a new Cold War era. However, we need to remember that the cooperation and reliance of each nation in this region on the others is ever increasing, and we must actively develop integrated networks such as Track 1.5 or 2 cooperation dialogues such as a regional FTA.
- In East Asia, the China-Japan territorial disputes and the Japan-ROK dispute over Dokdo, as well as the problems of past history in the regime, are becoming elements of conflict that are entering into a collision course with the North Korean issue. We need to develop three-party and four-party strategic dialogue talk structures between the United States, South Korea, China, and Japan.



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