

**BEYOND THE COLD WAR -  
JAPAN AND THE QUEST FOR A  
NEW ORDER IN EAST ASIA**

by

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## INTRODUCTION

Japan's relations with North Korea will persist in a state of estrangement in the foreseeable future, barring the abrupt disappearance of the incumbent regime under Kim Jong Il. The admirable efforts by both nation's in the early 1990's to achieve reconciliation fell short of any durable progress. The high expectations excited by deceased Diet member Shin Kanemaru's unprecedented visit to Pyongyang now linger as fading memories of what might have been. Revelations that North Korea had not complied fully with its obligations under the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) shattered all hope of a quick normalization of relations in the fall of 1992.

However, Japan, together with the United States, stands at a critical junction in its increasingly complex relationship with the two Koreas. Tokyo, Washington, Seoul and Pyongyang face a profound choice. On the one hand, they can all strike out on a new, albeit unchartered path that will lead them away from the practices and priorities of the Cold War and, potentially, toward a durable peace in northeast Asia. All sides would have to make major adjustments in their conduct, attitudes and relationships, particularly North Korea. The potential reward, however, would be the improvement of prospects for peace and stability in northeast Asia.

On the other hand, the four parties can continue on their current course, one defined by the perceptions, priorities, practices and relationships of the Cold War. This latter path is well known to all. It embraces ideological rivalry, economic competition, mutual hostility tempered by the Korean Armistice and the alignment of alliances that emerged during the Korean War. For half a century, however, this arrangement has perpetuated a highly volatile situation in Northeast Asia, and could too easily resume the Korean War. Both paths have their risks, but taking a new approach at least has the potential of leading us out of the present impasse and toward a durable peace. Otherwise, the risk of another Korean War will remain undiminished.

At first, the mere thought of setting out on an unchartered path in search of peace is discouraging. The endeavor would demand much from all sides. We would have to leave the comfort of the deeply rutted path we have followed during the Cold War. Bureaucracies are not known for taking the initiative and venturing into unexplored realms. But all would not be new and unknown. Reliance on deterrence, existing alliances, negotiation and dialogue could remain integral elements in the pursuit of peace.

The process would require more than the Four Party, US-DPRK, North-South and UNC-KPA dialogues. These are only parts in a process that must guide the participants away from past policy priorities and relationships, and toward entirely new ones. Tokyo, Washington, Seoul and Pyongyang would have to shuffle long standing priorities, reformulate selected policies, alter old patterns of thought and behavior, and restructure long established relationships between themselves and with other nations in the region, specifically China and Japan. Otherwise, the Cold War's legacy of loyalties and mistrust, alliances and rivalries will only cause us to go in circles.

But is the path out of the Cold War completely uncharted? No! We have the still vivid example of the course followed in Europe during the previous quarter century.

What initiated the end of the Cold War in Europe? Historians will long debate this question, but initial impressions suggest that it began with the emergence of a solid consensus between the United States and its NATO allies that the best way to deal with the "Iron Curtain" was to forego containment and to pursue engage with the "communist bloc". President Nixon initiated the process, Presidents Ford and Carter continue it and President Reagan intensified it. Britain's Margaret Thatcher and Western Germany's leaders played critical roles.

The endeavor was characterized by several features that have characterized diplomacy toward North Korea since 1991. The process of engagement required close diplomatic coordination. In Europe, this was facilitated by NATO. Behind the vanguard of diplomatic negotiations and academic, educational and athletic exchanges should a resolute policy of nuclear and conventional deterrence. Diplomatic recognition was used as a tool of engagement to facilitate communication, not as a carrot to entice cooperation. Instead, a multitude of other inducements were extended, including commercial credit, trade, technology transfer, educational programs, even food aid. All the while, rhetoric was restrained and ideological competition shelved. Instead, the accent was on reconciliation and, eventually, the reduction of both conventional and nuclear forces.

Of course this is a gross simplification of a highly complex issue, and the process of transforming the former "communist bloc" is far from complete. Nevertheless, the policy of engagement as implemented in Europe over two decades has made the world much safer.

One can argue that the Cold War in northeast Asia is being prolonged less by

the concept of engagement and more by the lack of a consensus to pursue engagement on a consistent basis. Then too, some of the underlying conditions are quite different. For example, in Europe, the key rivals, the United States and Soviet Union, competed intensely but never fought one another in a hot war. Unfortunately, the situation in northeast Asia is complicated by the legacy of the Korean War. During that war, Chinese and North Koreans fought and killed Americans and South Koreans. The process of reconciliation is therefore complicated and slowed by the legacy of hostility and mistrust.

The visit of President Clinton's special envoy to Pyongyang at the end of May, 1999 and the trilateral consultations and cooperation between Washington, Tokyo and Seoul prior to the visit are very positive steps. They signal to Pyongyang that it is facing a solid international coalition once again. Such a coalition during the nuclear crisis of 1993-94 prevented Pyongyang from playing one ally off against the other. Unable to rely on a greatly weakened Russia and a very hesitant China, Pyongyang eventually concluded it had little choice but to deal with the coalition. The pursuit of a comprehensive approach to the situation in Northeast Asia is likewise a welcome return to the successful methods of the nuclear negotiations.

Unfortunately, however, the recent estrangement of the US and China pose a potentially serious impediment to progress in the trilateral coalitions negotiations with Pyongyang. Beijing can no longer be counted on to be a "silent" partner. Rather than stand by and allow North Korea to follow a "natural" withering, Beijing's aroused nationalism and sensitivity to its national security could cause it to become more protective of North Korea. Beijing, in short, could be expected to more actively support the incumbent regime in Pyongyang to ensure that it survives as a buffer between China, on the one hand, and the US and Japan on the other. In other words, Perry's visit and the restoration of trilateral cooperation between Tokyo, Seoul and Washington are only preliminary steps. But any new beginning is a significant development, if the process is continued.

## **JAPAN: FRUSTRATED EXPECTATIONS**

Why have Japan's efforts at both unilateral and multilateral engagement with North Korea between 1992 and 1998 failed to promote Japan's interests in Northeast Asia? Decades of trade and relatively substantial Japanese investment in North Korea have yet to be converted into normal diplomatic relations between Tokyo and Pyongyang. Expectations of diplomatic normalization peaked in 1990 when Kanemaru Shin, chief Japanese delegate and then (since deceased) ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) member in the lower house of the Japanese Diet, Japan

Socialist Party (JSP) Vice Chairman of the Central Executive Committee Tanabe Makoto, and Korean Workers' Party (KWP) General Secretary of the Central Committee Kim Young Sun signed the "Joint Declaration" of September 28, 1990 in Pyongyang.

The eight point declaration called on the Japanese government to "fully and officially apology and compensate to the DPRK" for Japan's thirty six year colonization of Korea. is now deceased, met Kim Il Sung on September 29 in Pyongyang. The three parties urged the quick normalization of relations, and the development of bilateral political, economic and cultural exchanges. Also, the rights of Koreans in Japan should be guaranteed, Korea's peaceful unification should be achieved through North-South dialogue, the nuclear threat should be eliminated from "all regions on the globe", government-to-government talks should begin by November 1990, and the three political parties (LDP, JSP and KWP) should strengthen their mutual cooperation "in the interest of peace in Asia and the world."

Five weeks later, official discussions on establishing diplomatic relations between the DPRK and Japan got under way in Beijing on November 11, 1990. After eight inconclusive rounds of discussion, however, the talks were suspended in November 1992 when Japan expressed concern about North Korea's nuclear intentions. The talks finally resumed in September 1997 in Beijing, but once again proved inconclusive when the DPRK objected to Japan's inquiry about missing Japanese citizens reported by the Japanese press to have been abducted by North Korean agents in the late 1970's.

Success in these government-to-government talks, Pyongyang had hoped, would have enabled Tokyo to fill the commercial void left after the Soviet Union's collapse. As with Vietnam, Japan's private business sector was prepared to expand its engagement with North Korea. At the same time, Pyongyang appeared hopeful that economic cooperation with Japan would afford greater access to Japan's market, technology and capital. An example of this expectation was Pyongyang's hosting in October 1991 a United Nations Development Program (UNDP) conference to consider economic development of the Tumen River region. In addition to the DPRK delegation, representatives also attended from Japan, the ROK, China, the USSR and Mongolia. Subsequently, Pyongyang announced that it would establish a free trade zone in the northeastern most corner of the country at the twin ports of Najin-Sonbong.

The following summer, a sixty member private trade mission from Japan

arrived in Pyongyang on July 14, 1992 to seek out possible joint venture opportunities in North Korea's light industries and mining sector. In anticipation of normalization of relations with Japan, the DPRK followed up the issuance of several laws designed to facilitate investment in joint ventures in North Korea. But eight rounds of diplomatic talks ultimately fell short of expectations, and the laws still outnumber new Japan-DPRK joint ventures established since 1992.

The North Korean nuclear crisis abruptly altered everything, and threatened peace in northeast Asia. Pyongyang's failure to fulfill its commitments under the nuclear safeguards agreement that it had signed with the International Atomic Energy Agency early in 1992, not anything the Japanese government had done, destroyed all hope of achieving an early, negotiated reconciliation. Engagement, in other words, did not fail. The full responsibility for the failure must be placed on the shoulders of Pyongyang's leaders at the time.

Two years of international effort and mounting tension on the Korean peninsula between 1993 and 1994 ultimately yielded the US-DPRK Agreed Framework. The agreement froze North Korea's pursuit of a nuclear capability and restored International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) monitoring of Pyongyang's nuclear facilities. Additionally, the accord initially seemed to provide a workable road map for the normalization of relations between Washington and Pyongyang. Hope was rekindled in Tokyo of a resumption of reconciliation with Pyongyang. Tokyo eagerly embraced the Agreed Framework and unwaveringly supported the trilateral cooperation between Washington, Seoul and Tokyo which was the essence of the agreement and its primary product, the Korea Peninsula Energy Development Organization. Again, however, Tokyo's expectations of winning approval from Washington and Seoul while pursuing reconciliation with Pyongyang proved premature.

### **The Washington Factor: 1995-97**

Washington's apparent insensitivity toward Tokyo on several fronts became a keen source of frustration for Japan's Foreign Ministry as debate in the Diet reflected mounting public discomfort with US policy toward Japan. The Clinton Administration, hesitant to press Congress for more money to finance the Korea Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), turned to Tokyo for more money to pay the cost of sustaining the commitments Washington had made in the Agreed Framework.

What had begun as a well intended commitment on the part of the Japanese

Foreign Ministry turned into a political nightmare as the Diet questioned the appropriateness of Japan paying a major portion of the cost for the construction of two light water reactors and huge amounts of heavy fuel oil. Members of the Diet demanded to know why Japan should pay for what the US Congress was reluctant to fund, particularly since Japan play only a marginal role in negotiating the agreement between the US and the DPRK, and since the benefactor would be a nation increasingly hostile to Japan.

Washington's demands on Tokyo extended far beyond support for KEDO. Additionally, the Clinton Administration urged Japan to do more in the area of defense. Washington wanted Japan to increase its already very generous host nation support for US troops, expanded support for the Theater Missile Defense system and expanded commitment to supporting the US effort to defend South Korea in the event of hostilities on the Korean Peninsula.

While the Japanese government made its best efforts in this regard, grievous misconduct by US servicemen, like the American Marines' rape of a school girl on Okinawa, intensified the Japanese public's displeasure with Washington. Faced with mounting opposition party and public criticism, plus an intensifying economic recession, the Japanese government balked concerning its commitments to KEDO.

What had begun as a well intended effort to promote Japan's interests through multilateral cooperation with Washington and Seoul was by 1997 becoming a serious domestic political problem for Japan's incumbent coalition government. Additionally, the hope that support for the Agreed Framework would win Tokyo admiration in Washington and reconciliation with Pyongyang eventually yielded only criticism from both capitals.

## **Problems with Seoul**

All the while, the administration of President Kim Young-sam berated Japan between 1994 and 1997, despite Tokyo's eagerness to facilitate nuclear non-proliferation on the Korean peninsula. Instead of welcoming Tokyo's commitment, diplomatic and financial, to the Agreed Framework, President Kim used Japan as a whipping board. As domestic criticism of his administration grew louder, so too did Kim's berating of Japan. In February 1996 President Kim stunned Japan when he abruptly declared Korea to be the exclusive owner of the long disputed Tokdo Island, the tiny rocky pinnacle of a submerged mountain mid-point between Korea and Japan. Soon afterward, the long standing fishing agreement between the two countries collapsed.

Japan went so far as to succumb to President Kim's objections concerning food aid for North Korea. But no sooner had Tokyo attempted to assuage Seoul's displeasure than Washington reacted negatively to Tokyo reluctance to supply humanitarian aid to North Korea. The harder Tokyo attempted to promote trilateral cooperation, the more it seemed to put itself into a no win situation vis-a-vis its ally the United States and neighbor the Republic of Korea.

### **1998: Estrangement**

All the while, relations between Pyongyang and Tokyo as early 1999 remained frigid, and prospects for normalization in the near future remained dim. In Pyongyang's view, several politically sensitive and highly emotional issues have yet to be resolved before normalization becomes a possibility, including: the amount that Japan should compensate the DPRK for imperial Japan's colonization of Korea, an apology for and compensate of the so-called Korean comfort women who were forced to serve as "sex slaves" for the Japanese Imperial Army, and the highly complex issue of Japan's future defense role in Northeast Asia.

For Tokyo, Pyongyang has yet to account for several Japanese citizens it believes North Korea may have abducted from Japanese shores some twenty years ago, and the return to Japan of several members of the notorious terrorist group "the Japanese Red Army" that hi-jacked a Japanese airline in the early 1970's and fled to Pyongyang after some of its members had slaughtered unarmed civilians at an Israeli airport. Despite Tokyo's generous supply of 500,000 metric tons of food aid to the DPRK in the fall of 1995, Pyongyang responded only by allowing a small number of Japanese spouses of North Korean citizens to visit their homeland in November 1997 for the first time in almost four decades.

### **The Domestic Political Factors**

But probably a more problematic trend in 1998 for Japan-DPRK normalization was both governments' preoccupation with domestic political developments. In Pyongyang, Kim Jong Il was still focused on dealing with flood, famine and consolidation of his succession. For Japan, the politics of coalition government and concerns about a sagging economy have prevented the incumbent prime minister from taking any decisive steps toward normalization of relations with Pyongyang. A bold diplomatic move could invite criticism from the potent political right, and undermine the delicate political balance. On the other hand, a half hearted effort would tempt the political left to berate the effort. For the time being, both



Tokyo and Pyongyang appear willing to perpetuate the status quo while posturing publicly to project the appearance of remaining engaged, at least rhetorically.

By September 1998, Japan's relations with the DPRK were worse than in 1994, and prospects of improvement seemed only to darken. Then North Korea shocked and outraged Japan with its launching of a ballistic missile through Japanese air space.

Again, expectations of rapid progress had given way to intensified frustration. Despite Japan's championing of the Agreed Framework from its conception, both Washington and Pyongyang only seemed to take Tokyo for granted. Both wanted its billion dollar commitment to the cost of building two light water reactors in North Korea as provided for in the Agreed Framework. Neither, however, seemed willing to take into consideration Japan's concerns about Pyongyang's missile capability, past acts of terrorism involving Japanese citizens, and other politically charged issues that Tokyo had to deal with at home.

If the policy of engagement with North Korea is to be effective, Washington and Seoul must include Tokyo as an equal partner in the recently revived trilateral coalition. For nearly four decades between the Korean War and the 1992 "Basic Agreements" (National Unification Board, *Intra-Korean Agreements*. Seoul, October 1992.) between Seoul and Pyongyang, Seoul's diplomatic approach to Pyongyang was largely unilateral. In 1992, the effectiveness of this approach was proven hollow. Trilateral diplomatic cooperation contributed to the successful resolution of the nuclear crisis through negotiations. Such cooperation is essential to ensuring the effectiveness of diplomatic engagement backed by firm deterrence. The collapse of the trilateral coalition seriously blunted the effectiveness of the gains achieved with the Agreed Framework and even threatened to undermine the agreement. Progress toward reconciliation faltered between 1995 and 1998 as much because of the lack of coordination and cooperation between the three capitals (Seoul, Tokyo and Washington) as because of Pyongyang's intransigence.

## **THE PATH TO A DURABLE PEACE**

The search for a post-Cold War order will require much from all concerned parties. Pyongyang and Seoul would have to accept one another's existence, putting peace before ideological and political rivalry. They would have to work to replace diplomatic and economic competition with reconciliation and economic cooperation. Both would have to formally recognize the legitimacy of the other side's government

and leadership. Pyongyang would have to end its intrusions into the South, and the South would have to reciprocate. Talk of the North's collapse and ways to bring it about would have to cease. Both sides could continue deterrence, but open dialogue aimed at a gradual reduction of their armed capabilities, both conventional and otherwise. Pyongyang would do well to temper its rhetoric aimed at belittling the government of South Korea and its leadership. The framework for all of this already exists in the form of the 1992 North-South Basic Agreements. Lacking, however, is the political will and mutual trust essential for joint implementation.

### **The Democratic People's Republic of Korea**

Essential to the peace process is the need for Pyongyang to undergo a radical transformation. To survive economically, it must open itself to the outside world and engage the international community on its terms, not those of a recluse state. A successful transformation will require that it cease relying on coercive diplomacy to promote its national interests. Not only does this require giving up support for and the practice of terrorism, it means no longer threatening or pursuing the development of weapons of mass destruction as a means to develop leverage in negotiations. Instead, North Korea will have to accept voluntary restraints on its sovereignty in exchange for access to the benefits of conforming to international norms of conduct. The list of changes is long, but if North Korea's priority is survival, it has no choice but to transform itself from Cold War outlaw to a member of the international community.

### **The United States**

The process of pursuing peace will also require significant adjustments on the part of the United States. Washington is making admirable efforts to reduce tensions on the Korean peninsula by dismantling North Korea's ability to develop weapons of mass destruction, specifically nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. This alone is insufficient. The United States will have to recognize that it too must accept the need to match the demands it makes on North Korea with measures of equivalent value to North Korea. Otherwise, the process of disarmament cannot begin in earnest. Inevitably, this will require putting on the agenda issues such as the nature of US forces on the peninsula and their future disposition, the replacement of the Korean Armistice and the United Nations Command (UNC) with a new peace arrangement, and the eventual fate of the Theater Missile Defense system (TMD). All are highly contentious issues and addressing them will pose difficult choices for Washington. None, however, is beyond Washington's ability to deal with, if its priority is to move beyond the Cold War era in northeast Asia.

## **Japan**

Tokyo as well will have to reshuffle its priorities. At present, the preference of its politicians and the general public is to pursue short term goals, not long term strategic national interests and enduring solutions regarding the Korean peninsula. Today, Japan is preoccupied with winning apologies from North Korea for its previous abduction of Japanese citizens and more recent launching of a missile through Japan's air space. Japan's concerns in this regard are understandable, but blur the need to address the more fundamental problems of the region, that is the need to convert North Korea from a Cold War outlaw into a less hostile neighbor. Thus far, Japan's renewed reliance on Cold War tactics, i.e. demands for admissions and apologies, may appease the frustrations of the Japanese electorate, but it has reaped Japan only the typical Cold War responses of diplomatic estrangement, recalcitrance and abusively worded responses.

## **FALTERING BEGINNINGS**

Actually, the process of ending the Cold War in East Asia started with gusto in 1991, but then began to falter in 1996. It began with Seoul and Pyongyang simultaneously entering the United Nations. President Bush advanced the process by announcing in September 1991 the withdrawal of US tactical nuclear weapons from around the globe. This opened the way for the South-North Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula of December 1991. Pyongyang soon followed up by admitting inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to its foremost nuclear facility at Yongbyon. Then came the September, 1992 signing in Pyongyang of the Basic Agreements between Seoul and Pyongyang. The nuclear crisis of 1993-94 had the potential to trigger another Korean War, but instead the United States' willingness to engage the DPRK in diplomatic negotiations enabled diplomats to resolve the crisis at a negotiating table in Geneva instead of having warring armies turn the Korean peninsula into a battle field.

## **Changing Relationships**

By 1994, the matrix of relationships in northeast Asia had undergone dramatic revision. The US and North Korea had not only engaged in diplomatic negotiations, they were preparing to open liaison offices in one another's capitals. Even before this, first Russia and then China normalized diplomatic and commercial relations with the Republic of Korea. Pyongyang and Tokyo were seriously considering the

establishment of diplomatic relations.

Over all, Seoul was doing quite well in this newly emerging arrangement. While it had gained the recognition of two former enemies, Russia and China, and gained admission to the United Nations, Pyongyang had only joined the UN and was hoping for the normalization of relations with Washington and Tokyo. At the same time, Pyongyang had actually lost its former champion, the Soviet Union. With the Soviet Union's collapse disappeared its military and commercial commitments. Russia emerged to take the place of the Soviet Union, but not its promises. China remained an ally, but it too tempered both its political and commercial commitments.

The consensus that the Korean peninsula must be made nuclear free had brought together for the first time the United States, Japan and South Korea in an informal diplomatic cooperative. China and Russia were not directly linked to the arrangement but were kept briefed about its general policy direction. This new network facilitated not only the negotiation of the Agreed Framework, it also supported and facilitated further movement toward a new pattern of cooperation in Northeast Asia, one unknown during the Cold War. Additionally, it presented Pyongyang with a united front that prevented it from playing one ally against the other.

The changing pattern of relationships continued through 1995 into the summer of 1996, largely under the provisions of the Agreed Framework. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) resumed its inspections in North Korea. Today these inspections are taken for granted. Americans began to work at North Korea's most secret nuclear facility. Their presence there soon became routine. Tedious negotiations finally gained the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) access to North Korea to begin construction of the two light water reactors at Shinpo. Despite all the pessimism, North Korea did ultimately agree not only to accept a South Korean designed reactor, but also to allow a South Korean firm to be the prime contractor.

### **The UN and the US Army Return to North Korea**

The torrential rains in the summer of 1995 and ensuing shortage of food further altered the pattern of North Korea's Cold War relationships. Agencies of the United Nations, North Korea's foremost enemy during the Korean War, were admitted on a continuing basis to distribute disaster relief. UNDP, UNICEF, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO) and the World Food Program (WFP)

came as temporary visitors. All, however, are still there after four years.

The most startling change of all, however, could well be the developing relationship between the US Army and the Korean People's Army (KPA). Other than squabbling with one another in Panmunjom since 1953, the two armies rarely had anything constructive to say to each other. Then in January 1996, delegations from each still hostile army met in Hawaii. The encounter fell short of its formal objective, the formulation of an agreement to begin joint operations to locate and to return the remains of deceased American soldiers left in North Korea during the Korean War. On the other hand, the half century old negative mutual preconceptions had been altered sufficiently by the face-to-face encounter to allow another round of talks in May, 1996. Implementation of the first agreement between the two armies began in July 1996, and despite numerous complications, the cooperative relationship continues to expand. In 1999, six teams of US soldiers will live and work in North Korea with members of the KPA during a six month period. The thought of such cooperation was beyond imagination a few years ago.

### **The Resurgence of Mistrust**

By the fall of 1996, the process of moving beyond the Cold War had faltered in Northeast Asia. Instead of continuing to focus on the future, all sides returned to their Cold War pattern of judging one another's future "sincerity" in terms of past practice. Responsibility for this reversal of the process is of less importance than recognizing why the process faltered. Pyongyang blundered by sending a submarine filled with armed commandoes to South Korea's shores in September 1996. Earlier, in December 1994, a North Korean soldier shot down an unarmed American Army helicopter that had wandered across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) into North Korea, killing the pilot. The incident had the potential to end the pursuit of a durable peace, but the resolve of both the United States and North Korea not to allow this enabled both sides to reach closure through a negotiated settle, a significant step away from the Cold War and toward a durable peace.

President Kim Young Sam unfortunately did not share this goal regarding the submarine incident. Instead, he reacted to it with the intensity of a Cold War warrior. He accused North Korea of seeking war with the South and of secretly preparing to launch one. He questioned Washington's loyalty as an ally, challenged its intentions regarding the Agreed Framework's ultimate goal, and initiated a policy aimed at ending food aid to North Korea and of bringing about the collapse of Kim Jong Il's regime. Despite North Korea's public expression of regret in December 1996, President Kim intensified his effort to bring down the Pyongyang regime. North

Korea responded as it had done repeatedly during the Cold War. It matched President's abusive and saber rattling rhetoric with its own harsh words. The ensuing shouting match wrecked havoc on the uncharted path out of the Cold War.

### **Demise of Trilateral Cooperation**

President Kim Young-sam in 1997 succeeded in doing what Pyongyang had failed to do, break up the trilateral diplomatic consortium between Seoul, Washington and Tokyo. First President Kim publicly clashed with the US over food aid to North Korea and expressed suspicions about US intentions regarding North Korea's future. Then in February 1997, he stunned Japan by abruptly renewing Seoul's claims to Tokto Island, a tiny heap of rocks mid point between the Korean peninsula and Japan.

Japan sought a middle course between the separate expectations Seoul and Washington had for it, hoping to preserve the trilateral cooperation. Eventually, however, Tokyo could not satisfy either friend. Tokyo agreed to South Korea's insistence that it not provide food aid to North Korea, angering Washington which had decided to press ahead with food aid despite Seoul's opposition. Japan then tried to assuage Washington by giving the Korea Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) its full diplomatic support and publicly pledging one billion dollars toward KEDO budget for constructing two light water nuclear reactors in North Korea. Tokyo also felt obliged to placate Seoul and Washington by agreeing to sign Washington's expanded version of "Defense Guidelines" aimed at reinforcing the US-Japan security alliance as it applied to the Korean Peninsula.

Tokyo's steady middle course gained it nothing. While President Kim Young-sam lashed out at Tokyo with long dormant claims to Tokto Island, Washington pressed Tokyo for more money to support its effort to supply heavy fuel oil to North Korea. At the same time, Washington excluded Japan not only from its deliberations with Seoul about North Korea's missile program, a major Japanese concern, but it also kept Japan out of the Four Party talks process announced in April 1997. Pyongyang, sensing the end of trilateral cooperation, rejected all of Tokyo's efforts to address its concerns about abducted Japanese citizens, among other issues.

### **The Four Party Talks Proposal**

The White House complicated the situation. National Security Adviser Tony Lake put convening the Four Party Talks ahead of implementation of the Agreed Framework. When Seoul and Washington jointly announced the initiative during

President Clinton's brief stop on Cheju Island in April 1997, neither side had a concrete plan beyond the announcement. Their expectation was that Pyongyang would quickly reject the proposal. After all, it would appear, the actual intent of the proposal apparently was less one of engaging North Korea and more one of bridging the growing gap that had opened between the two allies by projecting them as again collaborating closely.

Pyongyang did not measure up to expectations. Instead of outright rejection, it asked for more details. For the next year, Washington and Seoul squabbled over how to bring Pyongyang to the negotiating table. Washington preferred the carrot, Seoul the stick. First there were US-DPRK meetings to discuss a joint US-ROK briefing of the DPRK. Once that happened, there were a series of meetings to discuss procedures for substantive meetings. Each time Pyongyang attended a meeting related to the Four Party talks, it received food aid. Each time this happened, Seoul and the Republicans in Congress grumbled louder. All the while resources and political capital needed to implement the Agreed Framework were deflected into the unproductive effort to promote the Four Party Talks process.

Politicians in Washington, Seoul and Tokyo began to question the Clinton Administration's policy priorities toward North Korea: were they aimed at implementation of the Agreed Framework and its road map for peace on the Korean peninsula or was the goal to revitalize North Korea's economy by giving it food aid, heavy fuel oil and nuclear reactors while phasing out economic sanctions?

Pyongyang's critics of the US and the Agreed Framework joined the chorus of criticism. They claimed that the US was neither intent upon nor able to fulfill its commitments under the Agreed Framework. Furthermore, they alleged, the Four Party Talks were a decoy behind which the US, ROK and Japan were secretly plotting an invasion of North Korea. As evidence, they pointed to the expanded US-Japan defense guidelines and President Kim Young-sam's frequent warnings that North Korea's imminent collapse made it increasingly dangerous.

While Seoul squabbled with Washington and Tokyo in 1997, and the White House debated with the Republican dominated Congress, China quietly adjusted its policy toward North Korea from one of a passive, concerned observer to that of an active supporter of Kim Jong Il's regime. Beijing's motives are still unclear and debatable. Beijing may have concluded that the collapse of Kim Jong Il's government was a real possibility which would create a power vacuum on its border. Rather than risk such a development, and the ensuing likelihood of destabilizing

chaos, Beijing moved to prop up Kim Jong Il's sagging state. China sent a large amount of food aid, estimated to be as high as one million metric tons of grain and flour, plus crude oil and loans to the North. Russia had little to offer in the way of material goods, but it sent words of encouragement and some food aid while it quietly tried to temper President Kim Young-sam's impatience with the North.

### **Whither the Agreed Framework?**

The Agreed Framework, and with it peace in northeast Asia, seemed on the verge of collapse in the summer of 1998. Republicans in the House of Representatives, particularly Chairman of the International Relations Committee Congressman Gilman, berated the Clinton Administration for its alleged inept implementation of the Agreed Framework. They echoed now retired President Kim Young-sam's previous claims that the accord was propping up a dying regime. Critics of the Agreed Framework pointed to two rounds of fruitless US-DPRK missile talks, to long shelved plans to open liaison offices, to millions of dollars spent on supply heavy fuel oil to North Korea without any gains in negotiations, plus questions about the diversion of food aid from North Korean civilians to the Korean People's Army. After two years of effort, the Four Party Talks process was still preoccupied with procedural issues.

There had been, however, very significant progress, but critics wanted the pace of progress quickened. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was quietly doing its daily monitoring of North Korea's main nuclear facility where all nuclear activity had been discontinued. Some 8,000 spent nuclear fuel rods had been put into safe, long term storage under constant IAEA monitoring. The United States Army was working with the North Korean Army in joint search and recovery operations for the remains of US Korean War casualties. With little fanfare, South Korean engineers and construction workers were quietly expanding their activities at Shinpo, DPRK, site of the nuclear reactors being built under KEDO's oversight. The monitoring of food aid distribution in North Korea had gradually expanded to all provinces under the supervision of the World Food Program. The DPRK had also renounced terrorism, but then refused to follow up with concrete action. Pyongyang refused to return to Japan members of the Japanese terrorist group the Red Army who had fled to Pyongyang in 1972 and to get the DPRK to own up to its alleged abduction of Japanese citizens.

### **Pyongyang's Summer of Miscalculation**

Pyongyang discredited all this progress beginning in June 1998. First it



refused to respond positively to Japan's diplomatically asserted efforts to engage North Korea on the issue of abducted Japanese citizens. Next, North Korea's military sent yet another submarine into South Korean waters. This time, however, South Korea's new President Kim Dae-jung counseled quiet restraint. Within a few days, the body of a North Korea commando washed up on South Korea's east coast, further alarming South Korea's public. President Kim refused to become agitated by these provocations, but they seriously eroded public confidence in his policy of reconciliation toward the North, particularly after South Korea's wealthiest businessman, chairman of the enormous Hyundai Group Chung Ju-hyun, delivered several hundred cows to North Korea early in June.

A series of disquieting revelations followed. North Korea's Foreign Ministry announced in July that North Korea would pull out of the Agreed Framework and resume its nuclear program if the US fulfilled its commitment to supply heavy fuel oil on schedule and in the amount promised. (The US had always been behind in its deliveries of heavy fuel oil, and was still struggling to fund each delivery.) In August, the leak of highly classified intelligence about a suspected secret, new underground nuclear facility in North Korea created a sensation around the world. Before anyone could catch their breath, North Korea launched a three stage, long range ballistic missile through Japanese air space into the North Pacific. The chorus of criticism turned into

The chorus of criticism, centered in Washington until then, echoed around the world. In Washington, only Congress' preoccupation with the President's misconduct may have saved the Agreed Framework. Prospects for peace on the Korean peninsula dimmed in the fall of 1998 as members of Congress and Washington think tanks demanded increasingly strong measures against North Korea. By late November, *The Far East Economic Review* (December 3, 1998 issue), citing the US military commands in Hawaii and Seoul, reported details of previously classified contingency war plans aimed at defeating North Korea "in detail".

Japan reacted with uncharacteristically vehement outrage to North Korea's launching of a missile through its air space. Japan's Diet adopted resolutions condemning North Korea's action. All cargo flights between Japan and Pyongyang were halted. On September 2, within days of the launching, Japan's Foreign Ministry announced it would suspend further financial support KEDO. (Later the Foreign Ministry would reinstate Japan's pledge to contribute one billion dollars to the KEDO project, but actual release of the funding would require Diet approval.) Through the fall months, Japan's Defense Agency (JDA) became increasingly vocal

in its concerns about North Korea's missile threat to Japan and the need to join the US in the development of a Theater Missile Defense System (TMD).

The Cold War rhetoric reached unnerving levels early in January 1999. Rumors circulated that the US was considering air strikes against North Korea's suspect nuclear facility. Defense Secretary Cohen knocked down these claims during his January visit to Tokyo and Seoul. JDA then began claiming that Japan had the "sovereign" right to unilaterally retaliate if North Korea launched another missile through Japan's air space without prior notification to Tokyo. The Agreed Framework's critics like former State Department Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Paul Wolfowitz pointed to possible air strikes against North Korea if negotiations failed to end Pyongyang's programs of weapons of mass destruction.

### **Quiet in the Storm's Eye**

As the storm of rhetoric raged around the world, and Pyongyang traded verbal blows with Tokyo and Washington, Seoul remained amazingly poised and calm. President Kim Dae Jung purposely went about constructing a consensus supportive of his policy of reconciliation, given the rather misleading nickname of "Sunshine Diplomacy" by the Korean press. The plan was now new. He had formulated it during years of study prior to his election to the presidency in December 1997. The details of his policy appear in, *Three-Stage Approach to Korean Reunification*. Los Angeles, University of Southern California, 1997. Essentially, President Kim's thesis is that the time has come to end the Cold War on the Korean peninsula and he proposes a detailed plan of how this might be accomplished.

Since his inauguration in February 1998, President Kim has worked to replace his predecessor's policy of bringing about North Korea's collapse with a policy designed to achieve reconciliation with Pyongyang through dialogue and peaceful coexistence. For many career government officials, not just in Seoul but also in Washington and Tokyo, the plan seemed naive and idealistic. As for South Koreans, they were preoccupied with economic problems and generally ambivalent about "Sunshine" diplomacy. Undeterred, President Kim set out in search of international support. He was personally warmly welcomed in Washington in May, and Tokyo and Beijing in the fall, but his "sunshine diplomacy" was greeted with polite aloofness.

Then an elderly man in a floppy hat and wrinkled rain coat, the chairman Chung Ju Yong of South Korea's foremost multinational conglomerate the Hyundai

Group, accompanied a second delivery of cows to North Korea. In Pyongyang, he struck an unbelievable deal with Kim Jong Il - the South Korean multinational Hyundai would be allowed exclusive rights to develop the Diamond Mountain region into a tourist area. South Koreans, moreover, could visit via cruise ship from the south. Promises of more business deals followed. So while Washington and Tokyo traded Cold War rhetoric with Pyongyang during the fall of 1998, Seoul and Pyongyang quietly, determinedly went about trying to put the Cold War behind them.

## **THE NEW PATH BEYOND THE COLD WAR**

Maybe the path to ending the Cold War is not such a mystery after all. Quite possibly the most directly concerned parties, South and North Korea, have already set out on that path. What is needed, therefore, is less background noise in Washington and Tokyo, and more support for President Kim's engagement policy, a process that apparently is already underway.

Washington and Tokyo have begun to refocus their remarks on support for President Kim Dae-jung's policy of reconciliation, and less on condemning North Korea. President Clinton initiated the process during his November 1998 visit to Seoul. ROK Minister of Defense Chun Yong-taek and Secretary of Defense Cohen stated at a press conference in Seoul on January 29, 1999 that, "Secretary Cohen and I reconfirmed the unswerving U.S. support of Korea's policy toward North Korea."

During the same press conference, Secretary Cohen said, "We do not, in any way, want to substitute the US for the direct dialogue that should occur between the North and South (Korea). ... we support President Kim's engagement policy. We hope that will produce a very positive result, but we do not want, in any way, to either undercut that or interfere with that, because we believe that the best hope for resolving tensions and issues that exist between North and South Korea should be resolved between the two." (See: Official transcript of the press conference that followed the annual US-ROK Security consultative Meeting, reproduced in, "Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network" NAPSNET, Special Report, January 29, 1999, page 1.)

Former Defense Secretary William Perry, Washington's North Korea policy coordinator, upon his arrival in Seoul on March 8 released a statement which read in part, "First, I believe President Kim's engagement policy is a very positive factor on

which we should build. Indeed, President Clinton has affirmed US support for the policy ...." (USIA transcript reproduced in NAPSNET, 3/15/99, p. 1-2.) He reportedly reiterated the same point in subsequent meetings with Foreign Minister Hong Sun Yong. Japan's Prime Minister Obuchi said essentially the same thing during his March 19-21 state visit to Seoul.

Some ranking officials have yet to be convinced of the effectiveness of President Kim's rapprochement with North Korea. At a March 3, 1999 UN and US Forces Korea Commander John Tilelli reportedly told the US House of Representatives Armed Services Committee, "I expect the ROKG's sunshine policy toward North Korea will be effective in easing tensions on the Korean peninsula. From a military point of view, however, North Korea is showing no sign of positive movement, and the troublesome situation will continue this year, just like last." (Yonhap News Service, March 4, 1999)

### **Trilateral Cooperation**

The long dormant trilateral diplomatic consortium between the US, Republic of Korea and Japan appears to be reemerging. State Department Ambassador at large for Korean Affairs Charles Kartman met with his South Korean and Japanese counterparts in Seoul on February 9, 1999. The three nations reportedly agreed that various sanctions would be lifted against North Korea if it erased suspicions surrounding construction at Kumchang-ni. On the other hand, the three were unable to agree on humanitarian aid to North Korea. (*Chosun Ilbo*, February 2, 1999, p. 2). Subsequent news reports indicate that Seoul is prepared to expand its humanitarian aid to North Korea, including the provision of 500,000 metric tons of chemical fertilizer. Prime Minister Obuchi on March 18, however, told reporters he was still reluctant to provide more food aid to North Korea.

Despite the lingering disagreement over some specifics, the US, ROK and Japan once again appear to be moving toward closer trilateral cooperation and coordination of their policy toward North Korea. The arrangement will reduce Pyongyang's ability to play one partner against the other. At the same time, it could bring more precision and clarity to negotiations with the DPRK concerning weapons of mass destruction. Pyongyang will know what is expected of it and what it can expect in return. Hopefully this will again enhance prospects for more productive negotiations than has been the case since 1995. Trilateral cooperation is sure to make Pyongyang uncomfortable, but it is a reality North Korea will have to learn to

live with if it wishes to survival in the post-Cold War order in northeast Asia.

## **Deterrence**

Deterrence of war on the Korean peninsula must remain a central feature of the post-Cold War order, at least until a new balance of power and permanent peace arrangement have been established in northeast Asia. President Kim has repeatedly reiterated this point publicly since his inauguration - reconciliation is inseparably linked to deterrence. President Clinton did likewise during his November 1998 visit. William Perry when he stopped in Seoul on March 10 was quoted by Reuters as having said, "Any recommendation that I give to President Clinton will deal both with the possibility that North Korea will respond to positive proposals and the possibility that they may not. If they do not, then sterner measures will be necessary." He reportedly added, "... we would expect to have the United States, Japan and South Korea united in both the need for them and the way in which we carry them out."

Deterrence, however, is a double edged sword. Displayed in the scabbard of diplomacy, the sword of deterrence can discourage war. But if brazenly, abruptly displayed as a naked weapon, the sword of deterrence becomes a threat to peace. No place is this more true than on the Korean peninsula. Here, decades of intense mutual mistrust and suspicion caused by the Korean War and combine with national division and the massive concentration of soldiers and modern weapons to make war a perpetual possibility. On the Korean peninsula, the practice of deterrence unrestrained by diplomacy becomes a threat to peace instead of a deterrence to war.

The practice of deterrence undeniably has contributed significantly to peace in Northeast Asia since the Korean War's conclusion in 1953. Usually the US and ROK carefully project their military capability to North Korea in the hope of convincing the North Korean People's Army that it would be suicidal to attack South Korea. An example is the conducting of large military exercises like Ulchi Focus Lense to demonstrate to North Korea the close coordination and high degree of preparedness shared by US and ROK forces. But the exercises are conducted well south of the DMZ, and only selected aspects are televised to magnify the exercises' deterrence effect while at the same time reassuring North Korea of exercises' peaceful, defensiveness purposes. Such carefully crafted displays are usually accompanied by equally carefully worded official statements designed to maximize the deterrent impact of the military display, while at the same time minimizing the risk of intensifying tensions.

Similarly, the DPRK has usually projected its policy of deterrence by displaying carefully choreographed, massive formations of thousands of soldiers goose stepping through Kim Il Sung Plaza followed by a long parade of modern weapons. The parades, though unnerving especially when viewed on television in the quiet of one's home, they are the essence of deterrence - a powerful but non-destructive display of military might. In all such displays, the Korean People's Army and its weapons are two hundred kilometers north of Seoul, and are moving from east to west, not north to south. The rhetoric, while shrill, is aimed mostly at mobilizing the emotions of a domestic audience, the exhausted, underfed and over worked North Korean population.

Deterrence was reinforced in 1994 with the signing of the Agreed Framework between the US and the DPRK. The aim of this accord is to deter the spread of nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula by convincing North Korea that it had more to gain by engaging the international community than from being isolated from it if its nuclear development program continued. Despite public perceptions, North Korea's primary motive in signing the Agreed Framework was to better safeguard its security by winning US promises not to use or to threaten the use of force against the DPRK. This promise is clearly stated in the Joint US-DPRK Statement of June 11, 1993 in which the DPRK promised to "suspend" its withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty.

Beginning last August, however, North Korea People's Army, the US Army command in Seoul and Japan's Defense Agency have escalated their efforts to convince the other side that starting a war on the Korean peninsula would be a "no win" situation. The intensity of their efforts to deter war could not in fact lead to miscalculations that might start a war.

### **North Korea Excites Escalation**

Clearly, North Korea initiated the process. First another North Korea submarine was captured off of South Korea's east coast. Then the body of an armed North Korean commando washed ashore. In August, North Korea threatened to restart its nuclear program. When revelations of a suspected new nuclear facility in North Korea alarmed the international community, Pyongyang reacted with arrogant denials. Capping all of this was North Korea's launched of a long range ballistic missile over Japan into the north Pacific Ocean. The intent of all of this may have been to deter war by convincing Japan and the United States of North Korea's ability to retaliate against them far beyond its borders using ballistic missiles. Pyongyang's actions, however, were provocative, excessive and irresponsible. They enraged the

Japanese, shocked Americans and frightened South Koreans. Instead of nurturing peace by discouraging war, Pyongyang had unilaterally increased tensions in Northeast Asia.

### **Japan Jumps on the Band Wagon**

On the other hand, the reaction of Japanese politicians was short sighted and severely damaged the credibility of nuclear deterrence in Northeast Asia. By announcing that Tokyo would withhold its one billion dollar contribution to the construction of two light water reactors in North Korea as provided by the Agreed Framework, the Japanese government gave Pyongyang's critics of this agreement, especially those in the military, much ammunition to shoot full of holes the credibility of nuclear deterrence on the Korean peninsula. Japan's reaction did nothing to discourage North Korea from building weapons of mass destruction, either missiles or nuclear weapons. Instead, like North Korea, Japan intensified tensions and mistrust in Northeast.

The Japan Defense Agency (JDA) likewise has exceeded the needs of deterrence. Ever since last September's launching, Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiromu Nonaka has repeatedly warned North Korea of the potential consequences if it repeated the launching without giving Japan prior notification. (NAPSNET, 3/15/99, p. 2.) JDA, however, has taken a much more provocative stance. For months it has reiterated Japan's "constitutional" and "sovereign" right to unilaterally strike North Korea's missile facilities. Within this context, JDA continues to publicly advocate an unprecedented upgrading of Japan's ability to project its force capability beyond Japan. The program encompasses the development of intelligence satellite technology and the Theater Missile Defense System (TMD). It calls for the purchase of tanker aircraft to refuel fighters in mid-flight. Tokyo's Yomiuri Daily February 24 issue quoted JDA Vice Minister Seiji Ema as having explained, "Tanker planes are needed to allow us to carry out new operations. They will enable combat air patrol planes to stay airborne longer, and they will also allow other plans to fly nonstop over long distances." (See: NAPSNET, 3/2/99, p. 7 and 3/15/99, p. 2.)

### **Seoul Advises Restraint**

Japan's unusually assertive participation in deterrence has unnerved not just Pyongyang, but also Washington and Seoul. Secretary of Defense Cohen during his January 29, 1999 press conference in Seoul knocked down rumors of possible military action against North Korea. When JDA did not temper its rhetoric, Seoul

stepped into the picture. ROK Defense Minister Chun Yong-taek told the Seoul Foreign Correspondents Club on March 6 that, "If Japan launches a preemptive strike or if North Korea launches another missile and Japan retaliates, that is not acceptable to the ROK government. There is nothing more important than sustaining peace on the Korean peninsula. Close coordination between Japan, the ROK and US forces is essential." (See NAPSNET, 3/15/99, p. 4.)

### **The US Reaction: Beyond Deterrence**

Eventually the US military responded in an uncharacteristically provocative manner. Apparently high ranking US military officials in Seoul and Honolulu "leaked" to the press the details of a comprehensive war plan aimed at "defeating North Korea in detail". Details of the plan appeared in the December 3, 1998 issue of the *Far East Economic Review* under the title, "America's New War Plan for North Korea". Viewed in the context of the growing chorus of support in Washington to treat North Korea like another Iraq, the war plan's leaking was highly provocative.

Pyongyang reacted accordingly. The article had appeared on the eve of the third round of US-DPRK talks about access to the suspected nuclear facility at Kumchang-ni. The talks went no where. In Pyongyang, tens of thousands of North Korea "soldiers and workers" filled Kim Il Sung Plaza to protest the "American imperialists" provocation.

The rhetoric is becoming less provocative, but all too frequently the Cold War language of deterrence is aired just as diplomats from the US and North Korea initiate negotiations. Just as US-DPRK negotiations over Kumchang-ni were resuming in New York, UN Commander John Tilelli reportedly told the House Armed Services Committee on March 3, "North Korea is the state that is most likely to conduct a total war against the United States in the future." (NAPSNET, 3/15/99, p. 4.) He reportedly added at the same hearing, according to Yonhap News, that, "The North Korean situation is becoming more explosive and unpredictable, and such instability and unpredictability in North Korea mean increased danger. ... North Korean forces are at the final stage in strengthening their military power, and if it is completed, North Korea will be able to forward deploy 10,000 artillery tubes and 2,300 multiple rocket launchers. ... If such conventional and unconventional North Korea military power is not checked, they could scorch the whole Korean peninsula." None of this calms the situation on the Korean peninsula.

General Tilleli's expression of concern followed the release earlier in the



week of a study by the National Defense University in Washington, DC which advocated stern measures, including military action, if North Korea did not measure up to US expectations. Although termed an unofficial policy proposal, it was compiled at a US Defense Department university by former Defense and State Department officials together with staff members from the Senate and House Foreign and International Relations Committees.

All of this saber rattling comes just as North and South Korea are making progress toward reconciliation. Certain elements of the US and Japanese governments should stop trying so hard to deter war. The intensity of their effort has complicated negotiations and, if left unrestrained might even lead to miscalculations that could start a war. Surely North Korea is not blameless in all of this, but the point is the need to restrain the rhetoric and fine tune coordination between the policies of negotiation and deterrence, not to point the finger of blame. After all, the fiery rhetoric of the past several months should have subsided once North and South Korea agreed to initiate tourist visits from South to North Korea.

## **Co-existence**

The end of the Cold War in Europe can be dated from the US-Soviet agreement to co-exist peacefully. The "gentleman's agreement" opened the way for the United States and selected NATO nations, to pursue a policy of engagement with the Communist Bloc. A series of private, non-governmental agreements followed, facilitating academic, cultural and athletic exchanges. West Germans visited relatives in East Germany. By the 1980's, American food aid was flowing into the former "evil empire" as President Reagan had labeled the Soviet Union. Within two decades of the onset of engagement, the Iron Curtain crumbled. President Nixon initiated a similar policy of engagement with China in 1972. Again, in less than 20 years, China has been transformed peacefully for a hostile, militarized state into a full member of the international community that is increasingly adopting capitalist economic practices.

But before these processes could begin, the rivals first had to agree to cease their efforts to destroy the other and instead to co-exist peacefully. Both North and South Korea have actually initiated the process. When Seoul and Pyongyang accepted admission to the United Nations in 1991, they subscribed to Chapter I, Article 2, paragraph 1 of the UN Charter which reads, "The Organization is based on principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members." On December 19, 1991, both parties signed the Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression and Exchanges and Cooperation between the South and North. Designated to enter into force as of

February 19, 1992, Chapter I, Article 1 of the accord reads, "The South and the North shall recognize and respect each other's system."

Recently South Korea's foreign Minister Hong Soon-young was quoted in the March 18, 1999 edition of the Korea Herald (page 2) as having said, "Peaceful coexistence presupposes an independent and sovereign North Korea." Hong's remarks contradict article 3 of the Republic of Korea's constitution which reads, "The territory of the republic of Korea shall consist of the Korean Peninsula and its adjacent islands." The DPRK constitution, on the other hand, does not have a similar clause. Instead, article I. reads, "The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is an independent socialist state representing the interests of all the Korean people." Obviously, it is Pyongyang turn to take the next step.

## CONCLUSION

Japan's re-emergence as a core member of the diplomatic coalition endeavoring to achieve peace, stability and reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula is crucial not only to the success of the coalition, but to Japan's goal of defusing the North Korean threat to peace in Northeast Asia. Despite repeated frustrations in dealing with North Korea, Tokyo appears intent now to persistent in pursuing a policy of engagement backed by a stance of resolute deterrence. At the same time, Tokyo, along with Washington and Seoul, appears to have learned that its primary interests are shared with its friends, and thus are best served through common action both in the areas of diplomacy and security.

Thus Tokyo has joined Washington in 1999 to publicly announce its resolution support for South Korean President Kim Dae-jung's policy of engagement. This stance by Tokyo, like President Kim's so-called "sunshine diplomacy", is a radical departure from the Cold War patterns of behavior and policy that have haunted the Korean Peninsula since the Korean War.

Consequently, Japan no longer stands alone, as it did between 1995 and 1998, in pursuing its goals vis a vis North Korea. Through the cooperative effort of the Korea Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), Tokyo is promoting its goal of a nuclear free Korean Peninsula. While the price for supporting this project (one billion US dollars) seems high, it is a relative bargain compared to the potential cost of having to dealing with a nuclear armed North Korea. Furthermore, in exchange for publicly supporting South Korea's leadership in the implementation of engagement, Tokyo benefits from the reduced tensions in the region. This

reduction of tensions, moreover, is being achieved with inducements provided largely by South Korea at no cost to Tokyo. They include: substantial humanitarian assistance, tourism and investment in North Korea.

Prospects are bright that Japan's interest will ultimately be served best by engagement's combination of dialogue and economic cooperation plus restrained deterrence. Now President Kim Dae Jung, with strong support from Tokyo and Washington, appears to be positioning himself for an escalation of engagement. He responded to North Korea's January call for dialogue by indicating some willingness to meet the North half way on its preconditions. Several long term prisoners loyal to North Korea were recently released from prison and the National Security Law is under review. North Korea's third precondition regarding its military alliance with the US is beyond alteration, at least for the time being. Instead, the president through his foreign minister appears to have offered a different olive branch, formal recognition of the North Korean government's sovereignty.

Japan's leaders, like that in Washington and Seoul, must temper the public's expectations about how quickly a durable peace can be achieved in Northeast Asia. The best way to avoid the frustrated expectations of the past is to expect that progress in the future will be very slow, and there will be countless reversals along the way. Likewise, the pace of progress will be uneven. Progress on the nuclear front may move ahead more quickly than regarding the missile issue. All the while progress must be measured both in terms of process and movement toward goals. Movement away from confrontation and toward dialogue between Tokyo and Pyongyang over the issue of missing Japanese citizens is invaluable progress. The process of dialogue between the two capitals is important not just because it reduces tensions between them, but also establishes a channel for resolving a very contentious issue.

The process of engagement backed by trilateral cooperation has only just begun. North Korea's initial reaction has been mixed. But still there is evidence of progress. Improved cooperation and coordination between Tokyo, Seoul and Washington in the areas of both diplomacy and deterrence has prevented Pyongyang from playing one capital against the other. North Korea is hesitantly engaging South Korea in political dialogue. Humanitarian assistance by the international community continues to open North Korea to new ways of doing things, and greater access to its interior. Suspicions about Kumchangni have subsided. North Korea is in compliance with its commitments under the Agreed Framework and the International Atomic Energy Agency's continuous presence and access to North Korea's nuclear facilities is now taken for granted.

Problems persist, however. Pyongyang has yet to address any of Tokyo's concerns, particularly regarding its missile development program and the disappearance of Japanese citizens. But then too, Japan would do well to recognize that its concerns are not unique. Seoul and Washington are equally concerned about North Korea's potential missile threat. As for humanitarian concerns, tens of thousands of South Korean families await reunification with their relatives in North Korea and tens of thousands of American families await the return of the remains of husbands, sons and brothers who died in North Korea during the Korean War. Ultimately, North Korea has no recourse but to address these humanitarian concerns. Only by demonstrating such concern will Pyongyang be able to begin to erase the legacy of mistrust that denies it respect from the international community.

At present, however, the Pyongyang's missile threat is the foremost concern. The decision by Tokyo and Washington to respond to this threat with the development of a Theater Missile Defense (TMD) system has, unfortunately, compounded the tensions created by the threat. On the one hand, Seoul has distanced itself from the TMD project, posing a possible split in the trilateral consortium. At the same time, China has reacted with alarm to the TMD program.

Seoul's reservations and Beijing's concerns suggest the need for Tokyo and Washington to refine their approach to the missile problem. But why burden Tokyo and Washington with this task? It is they who came up with the idea of trying to counter North Korea's missile threat with more missiles. Instead, it might be more productive if Tokyo and Washington considered viewing the missile issue in the broader context of the lingering Cold War atmosphere in Northeast Asia. In other words, Tokyo's adding of longer range missiles to its arsenal is less likely to induce North Korea to forego ballistic missiles. At the same time, a pledge by Seoul to end its development of ballistic missiles and to join the Missile Technology Control Regime might prove a better inducement to Pyongyang to do likewise, especially since this solution would be more likely to win Beijing's backing.

Ultimately, the Cold War in Northeast Asia and a durable peace for the region will become possible only after Pyongyang has been convinced that relinquishing its current reliance on coercion and fear as ways to pursue its national interests. The dual policy of persistent engagement and restrained deterrence backed by trilateral diplomatic and military cooperation between Tokyo, Seoul and Washington appears the best approach for Japan to achieve its goals in Northeast Asia. After all, Tokyo's goals - a stable Korean peninsula free of the weapons of mass destruction and a North Korea which respects and adheres to the norms of the international

community - are essentially the same as those of the United States and the Republic of Korea. The process of achieving these goals is certain to be long and arduous. Impatience, however, is likely only to yield intensified tension and possibly even war in the region. Tempered expectations combined with patient persistence, however, is more likely to reduce tensions and ensure eventual success for Japan, and its allies.

## **PYONGYANG TAKES THE DIPLOMATIC OFFENSIVE**

Pyongyang responded to the "train wreck" in Berlin in November by initiating a diplomatic offensive. First Pyongyang in a formal statement by the Foreign Ministry announced that it was disengaging from further negotiations with Washington to reassess whether such talks were of any value. Immediately after the announcement, Pyongyang sent positive signals to Tokyo, Seoul, Australia and the European Union. North Korea, after numerous false starts, invited former Japanese Prime Minister and Socialist Party head Murayama for a quasi official visit. A vice minister level DPRK official will visit Seoul the week of December 20, the first such visit since the summer of 1992. DPRK-Australian talks have been upgraded to the ambassadorial level in Bangkok and selected EU capitals have been invited to send missions to Pyongyang.

## **JAPAN**

Former Prime Minister Murayama was accompanied to Pyongyang by fourteen other members of Japan's National Diet. They had highly visible, constructive discussions with Kim Young Sun, Korean Workers Party Secretary for International Affairs (not a formal government position). The two politicians reached a "political" agreement between their respective political parties, but not between their governments. Essentially, Murayama agreed to press incumbent Prime Minister Obuchi to resume government to government discussions. Obuchi agreed. Prospects for progress in the Japan-DPRK talks, stalled since 1992, remain bleak, however, because of the large number of complex and sensitive issues that separate the two governments.

## **Security Issues**

North Korea continues to press Japan to cease its trilateral diplomatic cooperation with the US and South Korea, and to discontinue military cooperation

with South Korea. Pyongyang is highly suspicious of the US-Japan Defense Guidelines, a comprehensive set of bilateral military to military agreements focused on Japan's military role in the event of hostilities on the Korean Peninsula. The guidelines were finalized between the US and Japan in 1997, and significantly increase Japan's defense role in Northeast Asia. Japan's parliament approved the US-Japan agreement in July, 1999.

Japan supports the US and South Korea's insistence that North Korea cease its development, production and export of ballistic missiles. To counter North Korea's ballistic missile program, Japan has publicly committed financial and technical support for the US Theater Missile Defense (TMD) program. TMD's aim is to equip the US and Japan with the ability to use ballistic missiles to counter any ballistic missile attack from North Korea or China.

## Commercial Relations

Japan remains an important trade partner for North Korea, but commercial relations remain troubled. The Japanese government in 1986 stopped insuring Japanese investment in North Korea. At the time, North Korea owed Japanese firms more than \$600 million. Trade declined further over the subsequent decade as North Korea's economy collapsed because of lost access to cheap oil from China and large grants and other aid from the former Soviet Union.

Japan is no longer a source of large sums of private money for North Korea. The Kobe earthquake of January 1996 affected the largest concentration of Korean-Japanese resident in Japan. The Korean-Japanese community's economic vitality sustained severe damage. The usually large flow of money from this community to North Korea was diverted to rebuilding the Korean-Japanese community. Subsequently, deterioration of Japan-DPRK relations and the aging of the Korean-Japanese population in Japan has reduced the flow of money to North Korea. South Korea's President Kim Dae-jung then opened the way for Korean-Japanese to visit South Korea. Approximately 80 percent of Koreans in Japan trace their ancestry to South Korea. President Kim's benevolent act shifted the allegiance of many Korean-Japanese residents away from Pyongyang and toward Seoul.

Prospects for growth in Japan-North Korea are dim. China remains North Korea's primary trade partner (\$656.3 million in 1997), accounting for 30 percent of North Korea's entire trade. Japan ranks second with 22.5 percent of total trade worth

\$489.3 million. South Korea comes next with \$308 million, both direct North-South trade and trade between the two halves of Korea via third countries. But in 1997, North Korea's trade gap with Japan worsened significantly. North Korean exports to Japan declined from \$3 million while imports from Japan increased \$5 million. (Source: *A Handbook on North Korea*. Seoul: Naewoe Press, 1998. p. 33).

The shrinking Korean-Japanese business community involved in this trade is determined to reverse these trends and restore previous levels of trade. Many political observers in Japan believe these businessmen, aided by profits from Pachinko gambling parlors, have put up the large sums of money to induce prominent politicians like Prime Minister Murayama and fourteen other members of the Diet to visit Pyongyang in late November 1999. This highly visible delegation struck a party to party deal with Korean Workers Party Secretary for International Affairs Kim Yong Sun that promises a resumption of bilateral government to government talks. This is all well and good, particularly for the Japanese politicians who are certain to have reaped significant financial support from the Korean-Japanese business community for traveling to Pyongyang. Numerous divisive issues remain to be resolved, however, before there can be any significant progress toward the normalization of Japan-DPRK relations.

### Economic Sanctions

Japan's economic sanctions on North Korea are mostly symbolic. When North Korea fired a Taepo-dong ballistic missile over Japan in September 1998, the Japanese government halted all charter flights between the two countries. This affected nine weekly cargo flights and 14 passenger flights scheduled to carry Korean-Japanese residents to festivities commemorating Kim Jong Il's formal recognition as North Korea's leader. The passenger flights were canceled but both kinds of charter flights were allowed to resume in September 1999 in support of President Clinton's announcement that the US would begin to phase out economic sanctions imposed during the Korean War under the Trading With the Enemy Act of 1918.

Other Japanese government sanctioned imposed in September 1998 included: suspension of support for the Korea Peninsula Energy Development Organization's (KEDO) construction of light water nuclear reactors in North Korea, government food aid and bilateral diplomatic talks. Suspension of support for KEDO affected the US and South Korea more than North Korea, and this sanction was quietly allowed to evaporate at the end of October 1998. Japanese government funded food aid had been halted in 1996 at the request of the South Korean government so there was no food aid scheduled to go to North Korea when this sanction was announced

in September 1998. Private food aid funded by non-governmental organizations was allowed to continue. As for the diplomatic talks, these had been previously suspended and have yet to resume. (Source: *ABC News.com* as reported by the Associated Press, "Japan Ends Flights to North Korea," September 2, 1998.)

## Normalization Talks

Bilateral Japan-DPRK efforts to normalize relations broke off in 1992 because of mounting concern about North Korea's nuclear program and Pyongyang's refusal to discuss the alleged kidnaping of Japanese citizens by North Korean agents (see below). These talks could resume, but prospects for progress remain bleak because there has not been any progress toward resolution of numerous unresolved issues.

## Kidnaped Japanese Citizens

The Japanese government has considerable evidence that North Korea between 1977 and 1980 kidnaped about ten Japanese citizens ranging in age from 13 to 52. Another three Japanese citizens are believed to have been abducted by North Korean agents in Europe and sent to North Korea between 1980 and 1982. Japan wants North Korea to cooperate fully in an investigation of what happened to several Japanese citizens kidnaped twenty years ago and believed to have been taken to North Korea.

Evidence of North Korea's involvement in these disappearances continues to mount. In 1977, a North Korean living in Japan confessed to police that he had abducted a Japanese security guard and turned him over to the crew of a North Korean submarine. Similar stories have appeared in the Japanese press. One of the most famous cases involves one of the two North Korean agents, Kim Hyon Hui, who bombed a South Korean jetliner in 1987. Ms. Kim, who was carrying a Japanese passport when arrested in Bangkok, told Japanese authorities that she had learned the Japanese language and customs from a Pyongyang resident named Li Un Hye. The Japanese police eventually identified Ms. Li as Yaeko Taguchi of Tokyo who had disappeared in 1979.

North Korea has adamantly and repeatedly refused to discuss these abductions with Japanese authorities, much to the keen displeasure of Japanese politicians and the general public. (Source: *The Japan Times*. Tokyo, June 9, 1998, p. 3.)



## Korean Comfort Women Issue

The Japanese Imperial Armed Forces during World War II "drafted" upwards of 250,000 women from Korea, the Philippines and Taiwan to serve as "comfort women" or prostitutes for Japanese military personnel. Many of these women have long sought apologies compensation from the Japanese government. The 54<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights held in Geneva March 16-April 24, 1997 condemned Japan's past actions and urged the Japanese government to respond compassionately to the former "comfort women's" grievances. The Japanese government refused to do so. On April 28, 1998, a Japanese District Court in Yamaguchi Prefecture ordered the central government to make an official apology and to pay compensation to ten former "comfort women" from South Korea. The Japanese government has refused to apply the ruling to all the former comfort women. The North Korean government is adamant that the Japanese government must compensate the comfort women residing in North Korea before bilateral relations can improve. So far the Japanese government has rejected this and all other claims. (Source: *The People's Korea*. Tokyo, June 6, 1998).

### Japanese Spouses in North Korea

The health and welfare of some 6,637 Japanese women married to Korean men and residing in North Korea remains a divisive issue. Between 1959 and 1982, about 93,000 Koreans resident in Japan emigrated to North Korea. Most made the move between 1960 and 1966. About 6,637 Japanese women accompanied their Korean husbands to North Korea. Of this number, 1,828 retained Japanese citizenship as of the early 1990's. Pyongyang had promised that the women could visit Japan every two or three years, but this was never allowed. In November 1998, the Japanese Red Cross was finally able to arrange the visit to Japan of a small group of the women who had retained their Japanese citizenship. The results were mixed. Some of the women had tearful reunions with aging parents. Others, however, were rejected by their kinsmen after they had made pro-North Korean comments to journalists upon their arrival in Japan. No further visits are envisioned.

(Library of Congress, *North Korea: A country Study*. Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993).