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## **Lessons of South Korea's Conflict Prevention Efforts: Where do we go from here? \***

**Hong Kyudok (Professor, Sookmyung Women's University)  
kdhong@sookmyung.ac.kr**

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### **I. Historical Development: South Korea's Strategy of Conflict Prevention**

The concept of conflict prevention and management of any nation is shaped and conditioned by its own history, culture, and geopolitical reality. During the Cold War period, the continued division of the Korean Peninsula and the subsequent confrontation between the two Koreas had limited the room for developing various skills and measures to obtain conflict prevention and conflict management. For South Korea, North Korea and the Communist patrons such as China and the Soviet Union that have supported Pyongyang since the Korean War were the only visible enemies and thus, deterring North Korean aggression was the single most important goal for strategists. During the Cold War period, South Korea's best policy was to maintain strong support from the United States and increase its own defense capability through strengthening economic power. Nothing could substitute the United States as an ally who sacrificed the lives of 58,000 soldiers to protect South Korea from the invasion of Communists during the Korean War.

South Korea's involvement in Vietnam was a good example to understand how Seoul's strategists value the secure insurance policy. By proposing to send its troops at his first meeting with John F. Kenney in November 1961, former President Park wanted to shift the focus of U.S. interest on Korea from transition to Korean democracy to potential security partnership in the Vietnam War. "All the way" with Americans seemed to be the best option to the strategists at the time. Due to clear opposition from key members of the Johnson administration including Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Park's chance of joining the Vietnam War looked slim. However, Park did not give up and spent four more years to persuade the key members of U.S. administration. As the situation became worse in Vietnam, the Johnson administration finally decided to utilize the ROK forces in its NSC meetings held in Honolulu on April 2, 1965.

Being the only reliable ally to the Johnson administration gave Park Chung-hee the

upper hand in industrializing his country and his status had been secured as a leading figure of the free Asia.

But he could not prevent the shift of U.S. policy after the Tet Offensive in 1968. When President Nixon announced the withdrawal of 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division from Korea without consulting him, his feeling of abandonment pushed him to seek nuclearization as an option to protect its security against North Korean threat. Also, South Korea's involvement of Vietnam caused increased North Korea's hostile military reactions (including commando attacks to the Blue House and many other border skirmishes) during the period of 1965-73.

It is interesting to note that Park initiated a peaceful approach toward Pyongyang for the first time when he felt fear of abandonment from the U.S. Perhaps other factors that led to initial dialogue between the North and South gained impetus from the détente of the early 1970s when Nixon and Kissinger approached Beijing and Moscow. The potential for a dramatic shift in the balance of power in the region prompted both Koreas to enter dialogue in 1971 and announce an agreement on the principles of a solution to the Korean question on July 4, 1972. It is an irony that both leaders did not miss the opportunity by utilizing the July 4<sup>th</sup> agreement to solidify their domestic power position.

With a consolidation of its authoritarian regime and a new constitution in hand, President Park launched the Fourth Republic. The Fourth Republic then opted to center efforts around continued economic development. Strategists envisioned increased prosperity as a mean of becoming more powerful than North Korea and further legitimizing the Park regime.

On June 23, 1973, President Park announced an open door policy, commonly called the June 23 Declaration, with dual objectives: 1) to open diplomatic relations with any country regardless of political or social orientations and 2) to join the United Nations with North Korea.

The June 23 Declaration had several implications for South Korea's conflict prevention and management policy: First and foremost, South Korean strategists had decided to seek reunification as a long-term goal and desired to minimize the influence of North Korea on its foreign policies. Second, South Korea hoped to improve relations with North Korea's primary allies, China and the Soviet Union. Third, South Korea sought to establish trade with communist countries.

However, Seoul's initiative to begin North-South dialogue was short-lived. With the introduction of the *Yushin* Constitution by President Park and the kidnapping of opposition leader Kim Dae-jung in Japan, North Korea ceased its dialogue with South Korea.

In 1979, President Park proposed again meetings with North Korea at anytime and

at any level, initiating the second series of the Korean dialogue. Through the Central Committee of the Democratic Front for the Reunification of the Fatherlands, the North responded with a call for the reaffirmation of the principle of unification and an end to defamation and hostile acts, including all military exercises. It is very interesting to note that President Jimmy Carter who tried to withdraw U.S. ground forces from Korea proposed upon his visit to Seoul a tripartite conference, a notion promptly rejected by the North on the basis that unification and the replacement of the armistice with a peace treaty mandated separate negotiations.

In 1980, however, North Korea engaged in a diplomatic offensive aimed at exploiting Seoul's vulnerability in the aftermath of President Park's assassination. Pyongyang voluntarily reopened the telephone link with Seoul severed four years earlier. Further, North Korean officials engaged in an active campaign of letter-writing to South Korean officials urging dialogue. When the South proposed a meeting of the prime ministers, North Korea agreed, but withdrew for fear of legitimizing the new regime in Seoul.

President Chun Doo-hwan tried to restore the U.S.-ROK alliance, which had been damaged since the late Park-Carter period and Inter-Korean affairs functioned on the domestic agenda. South Korean strategists also envisaged a role for the nation in encouraging Asia-Pacific cooperation and South-South initiative. His initiative was marred by North Korean terrorist offensive. It is worth mentioning that despite shocking incidents such as downing of KAL 007 (1983) and the Rangoon bombing (1983), Chun pursued a more extended bilateral dialogue with the North. Conflict prevention and management was a key priority among those strategists and Red Cross talks indeed led to a limited number of exchange visits that drew a tremendous amount of media and popular attention.

During the Chun Period (1980-1988), the ROK increased the trade with the Communist countries including China. Seoul invited Chinese officials to Seoul to discuss the issue of returning a kidnapped civilian airplane and its passengers. This led to the beginning of Korea's sincere efforts to normalize its relations with China. In 1986, Chun visited Japan for the first time as the Korean President and accepted an apology. The Japan-Korea relationship was strengthened as Japan sanctioned North Korea again when its agent bombed the Korean Air in 1987.

The dramatic economic dynamism of the early and mid 1980's led to the more pragmatic approach and the further abandonment of the ideological blinders of old era. With the Declaration of July 7, 1988, President Roh abandoned any opposition to the participation of North Korea in the international arena. This decree served as a variation on the late West German Chancellor Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* and as a successor to the June 23 Declaration of 1973.

President Roh Tae Woo's announcement of a *Nordpolitik*, or Northern Policy, toward the Communist World contained six major points. The first three concerned intra-Korea relations, namely promotes exchanges between North and South Korean citizens, attempts to reunite families on both sides; and the opening of trade contacts. The remaining three points were external in nature, namely the approval of external ties between its allies and North Korea, the abandonment of North-South diplomatic competition, and support for cross-recognition. It entailed increased United States and Japanese contacts with North Korea along with increased contacts by South Korea with China, the former Soviet Union, and the former Eastern European Bloc. President Roh also called for a six nation summit concerning the Korean division—in his address to the United Nations in October 1988.

Seoul established relations with the Soviet Union and all nations of the former Eastern European Bloc. On September 17, 1991, South Korea gained admission to the UN and it signified the success of South Korea's post-1973 strategy of simultaneous membership and the failure of North Korea's quest for a single seat membership.

Shifts in the international alliance structure given the decline of Cold War tensions further facilitated the South Korean drive for membership in the UN. Seoul achieved legitimacy in the international arena given its establishment of relations with more than 149 countries and attainment of the fifteenth largest GNP in the world (over \$223 billion) and the thirteenth largest volume of trade (over \$140 billion). The announcement of diplomatic relations with China in 1992 signified the successful culmination of the *Nordpolitik* strategy as an effective measure of conflict prevention and management.

However, since May 1989, the Roh government began to receive a warning signal that North Korea may develop plutonium out of the Youngbyon reactor. And this was the beginning of the North Korean nuclear crisis which has been major challenge for following governments.

The nuclearization attempts by North Korea changed the overall security picture in Northeast Asia. The bloc-to-bloc ideological confrontation of the past was supposed to have been ended earlier. However, the perception of being left alone and insecurity made Pyongyang to develop nuclear weapons and it wanted to make its threat credible to concerned parties by using every possible means.

Considerable uncertainties still lie ahead although South Korea as well as other states in the region have been seeking together new strategies to end the crisis. Under these circumstances, it is fortunate that North Korea finally returned to six-party talks and agreed to give up nuclear option at the 4<sup>th</sup> six-party talks on September 19, 2005. However, it is too early to celebrate Korea's achievements since no one is for sure whether Pyongyang will carry out what has been promised.

It is worth mentioning that South Korea has changed over 30 years in dealing with North Korea in terms of conflict prevention and management. Facing with more complex and sensitive security policy agenda than in the Cold War period, Seoul tried hard to show its sincerity by assisting the Kim Jong-il regime and increased inter-Korean cooperation in the area of non-conventional threats Pyongyang has faced.

As Liberals and Constructivists aptly point out, the definition of national interests depends in large part on the type of domestic society and culture a state has.<sup>1</sup> In South Korea, despite the continued division of the Korean peninsula and harsh experiences of the Korean War, South Korea's top decision-makers and their supporting new power elites define its national interests differently than their predecessors and their perceptions of threat are no longer influenced by the proximity of the threat.

Liberals in Korea now argue that confidence-building measures would make North Korea moderate and institutions and channels of communication can provide stable expectations of continuing peace and therefore, they strongly believe that the Prisoner's Dilemma on the Korean Peninsula could be escaped.

In this sense, the inter-Korean summit meeting in June 13-15, 2000 was a turning point for South Korea to change its conventional strategic thinking to adapt to a new security environment. But, at the moment, five and a half years after the summit, the Korean people are ironically witnessing mounting criticisms that the South Korean government has not been dealing with the North realistically while admitting that engaging North Korea is the only viable option. Why do people express their concerns and what is to be done to make Seoul's measure to be more effective?

This study will identify several lessons that we have to be careful in crafting a better policy of conflict prevention and management and hopefully suggest some recommendations for future undertakings within the field.

## **II. Lessons from the Korean Experiences**

First of all, Seoul's conflict prevention policy has often been used for domestic purpose and has easily become politicized. Unification has been such an emotional issue in Korea. In order to unite the forces that support the new thinking, the leadership has to create inevitably an enemy figure that is often blamed as anti-unification forces within the society. Conservatives and the pro-American segment of the society have been labeled as anti-reformist since they are misinterpreted as those who enjoyed the privileges over long years and therefore prefer the *status quo*.

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr. *Understanding International Conflict* (New York: Longman, 2005), p. 49.

Recently, progressive group members and conservatives clashed in Incheon when some of the radical group attempted to destroy the statue of General Douglas MacArthur, the symbolic war hero, who successfully launched an amphibious landing in Incheon during the Korean War.<sup>2</sup> Those radicals believe that General MacArthur is the villain who delayed the unification process by intervening in the Korean War and changed the direction of war against the interest of Koreans. Of course, most Korean people do not agree with this kind of revisionist view of history. The incident signifies how serious the level of confusion and deep mistrust within the Korean society has grown during the rapid process of confidence-building.

Second, Seoul's policy lacks a core value that the international community can share with since it was carried out in a unique way to save the face of North Korean decision makers. North Korea has repeatedly been demanded by international society to improve the qualities of people's life and stop widespread human rights violations. However, Seoul has maintained an ambivalent position on North Korea's inaction on the human rights issue. Seoul also did not actively participate in joining the PSI to curb Pyongyang's illicit transfer of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), their means of delivery, and their related materials. According to Jung Se-hyun, former Minister of Unification, the first priority must be to restore confidence and trust and therefore, Seoul's policy needs to be carried out in a way that recipient should not be humiliated. On November 13, 2004, President Roh Moo-hyun said in a Los Angeles speech that North Korea has not engaged in terrorism since 1987 and there is currently no evidence to link it to terrorist organizations. This unique psycho-cultural dimension of building confidence hurts Seoul's reputation and increases the credibility gap between Seoul and the rest of the world.

Third, Seoul's policy lacks transparency and inevitably allows room for informal handling of the transaction. In order to obtain the historic opportunity of the inter-Korean summit during June 15-16, 2000, Kim Dae-jung and his staff had to provide additional money to the North Korean leader who demanded further. Kim Dae-jung told critics that future historians will find out his innocence and the inevitability of decision. However, it is an open secret that Pyongyang demands cash donations on every occasion of inter-Korean contacts it has made with Southern counterparts. Thus far, informal transactions are allowed to continue for encouraging further contacts. However, this kind of unhealthy transactions cost its moral justification.

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<sup>2</sup> *Chosun Ilbo* (2005.9.17), p. A3.

Fourth, Seoul's policy does not envision the role of the United States Forces Korea in the future. As we have seen in the process of German unification, the role of the U.S. as stabilizer on the Korean peninsula should be recognized. However, the new power elite downplays the role of the U.S. military as the foremost influential institution to keep the balance of power and stability that is the most important condition for maintaining prosperity in the region.

The new power elite's emphasis on self-reliance and campaign of "putting the history back on the right track" is based on a system of subjective judgments and beliefs. For them, joining the Vietnam War with Americans was part of the shameful history of the authoritarian and anti-democratic government of late President Park Chung-hee. According to their interpretation of the history, President Park bandwagoned onto the Johnson administration's imperialistic and unjust war efforts in order to solidify his own political position. They believe that Rhee Syngman and Park Chung-hee used anti-communism as a tool for receiving the continued support from the conservative sector of the American society. With American assistance, they were able to prolong the lives of their authoritarian regimes by destroying the democratic principles and torturing those who stood to fight for democracy.

The revisionist view is currently shared by most of the 386 generations and this strongly affects the core decision-makers group within the Korean governments, the ruling party, the media, members of NGOs, and many advocacy groups. President Roh finds it extremely difficult to turn his back on these supporting groups and so he has no choice but to wholeheartedly support their cause.

The problem is that their tendency to attack the U.S. position endangers the viable strategic alliance relationship that has survived for more than 50 years. They regard the Bush administration's hard-line policy toward North Korea as typical of U.S. imperialism and obstructionism. For them, the Bush administration was the greater obstacle to inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification on the Korean peninsula. The NGO leaders are now focusing on the Pyongtack issue to organize protest against the transfer of U.S. ground forces to a new post south of the Han River.

Fifth, Seoul's policy fails to explain how much will be enough to change Pyongyang's behavior and whether Seoul can afford it alone if the U.S. and Japan will not join the rescue of Pyongyang. South Korea has spent billions of dollars already to feed them and assist Pyongyang regime but they are not yet ready to give up its nuclear card once and for all. They are now demanding new Light Water Reactor in addition to Korea's 2,000 megawatts electricity offer.

It is very important to have international financial institutions such as IBRD and ADB to be involved in reconstructing North Korea if Pyongyang is ready to complete

the verification process of North Korea's elimination of all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and full compliance with the NPT and IAEA safeguards. However, it is highly unlikely that the U.S., Japan and the EU can invest in North Korea unless Pyongyang demonstrates a sustained commitment to cooperation and transparency and ceases proliferation of nuclear technology. In this sense, Inter-Korean economic cooperation through Gaesong Industrial Complex has a clear limitation.

Sixth, Seoul's unique unilateralism marginalized the international support through the UN and other multilateral institutions. It is an irony that substantial amounts of aid from the South make North Korea to ask the UN to close its WFP office in Pyongyang and to withdraw the monitoring staff by the end of 2005. They also demanded Seoul to reduce the number of Korean based NGOs from 51 to 5 by the end of this year. Seoul has provided enough food aid last year (about 500,000 ton) and has promised to deliver further if necessary. With Chinese aid of additional 150,000 tons of rice, it will prevent a potential food crisis. Also, Pyongyang would like to avoid increasing demand of transparency and intrusive monitoring system from the WFP. It is Seoul's dilemma that its increasing confidence-building efforts marginalized the efficiency of multilateral efforts through the UN agencies and other international IGOs and NGOs to assist North Korea.

Seventh, Seoul has not successfully persuaded North Korea to cooperate with non-traditional threats, particularly environmental degradation. The energy-starved North Korea has built many dams and they have caused serious problems in the South. South Korea's hydroelectric generators are forced to suspend operations due to the shortage of waters and the areas around the Imjin River have been seriously hit by floods when Pyongyang opened the dam without notifying the South. Seoul also worried about the potential collapse of North Korea's "Innam dam" and decided to construct a new dam which can prevent the potential water offensive from Pyongyang. Prisoner's Dilemma cost both a tremendous amount of money and both have decided to provide information to prevent flooding along the Imjin River at the 10<sup>th</sup> High-Level Economic Minister's Talks on July 10, 2005. Seoul also provided scientific instruments for watching flood. However, Pyongyang failed to inform Seoul and therefore, Paju and Yonchon area were flooded again on September 6, 2005. Both still regard environmental cooperation a marginal issue and the non-traditional security threat has been overshadowed by the issue of high politics.

Eighth, Seoul's policy lacks the capability to force Pyongyang to comply with its demands. South Korea finally drops the enemy clause when it published the Defense

White Paper in 2004. But Ministry of National Defense could not get it without causing internal debate. Military confidence building is still at the very initial stage on the Korean peninsula despite both agreed CBM measures when they signed the Basic Agreement in December 1991. There were three General-Level meetings between the two to discuss measures to reduce tensions since the June 15 summit. In the Yellow Sea near the Yeonpyong islands, North Korean Navy patrol boats were frequently violating the NLL (northern limit line) in order to nullifying South Korea's claim on its waters based on the Armistice Agreement signed after the Korean War. Seoul has suggested that the North and South should use the same radio frequency to inform the opposing side as a precautionary measure before firing against unidentified enemy boats. Unfortunately, Pyongyang has kept sending their boats across the NLL without answering to the radio signals.

At the 1<sup>st</sup> General-Level Inter-Korea Military Talks, both agreed to abolish all the speakers and structures that were used for propaganda purposes. While South Korea completed, North Korea has not done as promised. At the 3<sup>rd</sup> General-Level Inter-Korean Military Talks, South Korea strongly requested North Korea to establish the communication center to increase the efficiency of communication between the navies and continue the process of abolishing propaganda structures starting from July 2005. But it remains to be seen whether they will be implemented.

On October 26, 2004, South Korean soldiers on patrol found that three wire fences along the tense inter-Korean border had been cut and penetrated. Seoul's Defense Ministry Spokesperson hurriedly announced that footprints indicated that a single civilian had defected to the North from the South in an attempt to quell the concerns that professional North Korean soldiers had infiltrated to the South through the heavily fortified DMZ. No one knows exactly what happened. However, the South Korean government does not want to publicize this story since it could undermine the public support for inter-Korean cooperation. Recently, Seoul announced the Defense Reform 2020 in which it envisions the drastic cut of the Army from 47 divisions to 20 divisions over 15 years. Yet, the question still remains how we can deter North Korea if we are not asking the same scope of reduction in Pyongyang.

Ninth, Seoul's policy did not present its clear game plan on how to achieve a peaceful stage of Northeast Asia where Japan should play a constructive role. While it is claiming to be the regional balancer, Seoul's monolithic and uncompromisingly sympathetic stance toward Pyongyang often aggravates its relationship with Japan. Unfortunately, Seoul's hyper-nationalism cannot overcome the Koizumi factor at the moment. Rhetoric and nationalistic emotion prevailed over strategic thinking and therefore people are still easily mobilized in both countries and therefore, missed the

opportunity to create a new rational world order in Northeast Asia.

Lastly, Seoul did not recognize the fact that a quick-fix of building confidence has certain limitations. In Korea, whether or not North Korean threats have diminished or disappeared becomes a judgmental question. Since Kim Dae-jung rationalized his sunshine policy for avoiding the second Korean War on the peninsula, Seoul's security policy often appeared to be irrational, being far away from *realpolitik*. To balance dialogue with pressure is an extremely difficult job in today's Korea since the progressive government in Korea clearly opposes to use any policy tool that may isolate and pressure Pyongyang. No one denies the necessity of engagement policy. Yet, conditioning further Pyongyang is very much needed in order for Kim Jong-il to get terms with an agreement he signed in 1991 and again in 2005. Carrots and sticks should go together.

### **III. Where Do We Go from Here? The Road Map for Peace-Building**

How do we make a durable peace structure? It is very important to recognize the fact that the basic concept for converting the armistice regime into a peace regime should be focused on creating a practical peace structure rather than the hasty conclusion of any peace agreement.

Therefore, the creation of a peace regime on the Korean peninsula should be promoted with an emphasis on effectively countering the attempts by North Korea to render the armistice system powerless and to conclude a peace treaty with the United States. On the other, this should be done while easing tension and promoting confidence building through respect for the existing armistice regime and the implementation of the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement that both Koreas signed in 1991.

In the long run, the two Koreas should institutionalize their peaceful coexistence by promoting confidence-building measures under the principle of resolving problems directly between the parties involved. In this way, the two Koreas should lay a foundation for peaceful unification in an environment conducive to "permanent peace."

Assuming North Korea's cooperation, the overall scenario for terminating the Cold War structure on the Korean peninsula can proceed as shown in Table 1. But Table 1 represents wishful thinking, which is a goal that cannot be achieved without the genuine cooperation of North Korea. In order to realize each step, inter-Korean relations must continue to improve, while negotiations between the U.S./Japan and North Korea are going well in progress. As of December 2005, however, the road map process of

dismantling the Cold War structure on the Korean peninsula has not completed even its first stage.

North Korea would be tempted to adopt its own methods of "separation of politics from economics," which aims to negotiate political-security issues only with Washington, while pursuing gradual economic cooperation with Seoul. It could try to gain from Seoul's engagement policy as much as possible, while making minimum concessions to keep the policy alive. Thus, the international community needs to keep watching the Korean peninsula so that the North may continue to cooperate with the South to make the "normalization" of inter-Korean relations possible.

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**Table 1. Road Map for Peace Regime-Building  
on the Korean Peninsula**

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<b>First Stage</b> (Maintaining the armistice regime)	Observing the 1953 Armistice Agreement; Exploring the North Korean nuclear resolution through the 6-party talks; North-South talks; U.S.-North Korea talks; Japan-North Korea talks
<b>Second Stage</b> (Exploring the peace regime)	Operating subcommittees and commissions under the 1992 Basic Agreement; Implementing confidence-building measures between the two Koreas; Successful implementation of the 6-party talks joint statement; Starting 4-party peace regime talks; Comprehensive assistance to the North (including North Korea's entry in international financial institutions); Lifting U.S. sanctions against the North; Accelerating U.S.-North Korea/Japan-North Korea normalization talks
<b>Third Stage</b> (Turning the armistice regime into the permanent peace regime)	Consolidation of inter-Korean confidence; Having North Korea join the CWC; Achieving conventional arms control on the Korean Peninsula; Signing the peace agreement between the two Koreas getting it endorsed by the international community; Normalizing US/Japan-North Korea relations; Realizing the Northeast Asia Security Cooperation mechanism; Readjusting the status of USFK

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Kim sung-han, Peace Regime on the Korean Peninsula and the ROK-U.S. alliance  
Paper presented at the 2005 Korea-U.S. Policy Forum on December 12, 2005.

The first step toward establishing a viable peace regime on the Korean peninsula should involve the maintenance of the armistice regime. Emphasis should be placed on ensuring a state of peace through the normalization of the truce system and the stabilization of respective military sectors. The existing truce system should be retained until the two Koreas reach a new peace treaty to replace the current armistice agreement.

At the second phase, emphasis should be placed on laying the groundwork for a peace system based on the *North-South Basic Agreement*. Various subcommittees and joint commissions envisioned in the Basic Agreement should be instituted, while detailed programs are prepared and undertaken to build confidence in politics and the military.

When the results of political and military confidence-building and exchanges and cooperation have become tangible between the two Koreas due to the successful efforts of the first two phases, then further measures should be promoted in the third phase to convert the truce system into a peace system, to have the United States and China "endorse" an inter-Korean peace treaty based on the four-party talks, and to secure the United Nations' acknowledgement of this accord.

#### **IV. Recommendations for the Future**

We have discussed that there are many problems and lessons that South Korea has experienced during the past seven years when it carried out its own policy of conflict prevention and management.

The following recommendations need to be addressed:

First, Seoul and Washington's close cooperation will become very important from now on in dealing with North Korea's nuclear problems. Specific questions are highly likely to emerge on how to realize the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula or how to establish the peace regime on the peninsula. To this end, South Korea and the United States should be mindful of the following two points. One is that the situation should be prevented in which the issue of a peace regime and the nuclear issues are all mixed up. The September 19 Joint Statement of Six-party Talks includes "The directly concerned parties will negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula at an appropriate separate forum." This means the discussion on a peace regime might be seen by the two Koreas as a catalyst for denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula, while it is to be seen by the U.S. as an outcome of North Korean nuclear resolution. In

this case, discussion of the peace regime should be made separately from the six-party talks and needs to be linked to the progress of the abandonment of nuclear arms.

In addition, South Korea and the United States should provide a vision for the ROK-United States alliance on the premise that the North Korean nuclear problem is resolved. The United States must show an attitude of positive cooperation toward building a peace system on the Korean Peninsula and South Korea has to show the United States what kinds of contribution it can make for strengthening the alliance in the future.

Second, Seoul must strengthen its efforts to persuade Pyongyang to recognize the positive role that the United States forces do play on the Korean peninsula. This could be the bargaining point for Kim Jong-il regime to exchange its chance for survival with the salient American contributions to North Korea's conversion efforts to a peace structure. Setting up peace regime cannot be done without solving the thorny issue of the future role of U.S. ground forces on the Korean peninsula. If North Korea continues to argue that U.S. forces stationed in Korea would no longer be necessary since peace has been assured on the peninsula, the chance of peaceful transition will be reduced. Thus, the United States will have to readjust and re-define the strategic role of U.S. forces in Korea not only from a perspective of the Korean peninsular situation, but from a broader framework linked to the maintenance of geopolitical equilibrium, or balance of power in Northeast Asia. To adjust the R.O.K.-U.S. alliance to a regional strategic approach means that even if the threat from North Korea dissipates, the R.O.K.-U.S. alliance can continue to contribute to regional stability.<sup>3</sup>

Third, South Korea must strengthen its efforts to make nuclear diplomacy workable. The United States and China are now fully committed to peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear problem. However, it needs to be engineered so that North Korea may not be tempted to buy time for its own sake. In this sense, the elements of "coercive diplomacy" should be considered in policy consultations processes among the concerned parties. Seoul has to be reminded that carrots for North Korea should be effective when it comes with sticks.

Fourth, Seoul and Washington will have to more forthrightly address the China factor. There have also been pro-Chinese calls in Korea to replace the United States with China as Korea's key alliance partner. However, it is not desirable for Korea to

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<sup>3</sup> As to the argument that U.S. troops should remain to deal with non-conventional security threats in this region, see Robert Dujarric, *Korean Unification and After: The Challenge for U.S. Strategy* (Indianapolis: Hudson Institute, 2000).

form a new alliance with China by distancing away from the United States. Maintaining a triangular relationship among Korea, China and the United States would offer hope, opportunity and stability not only for Korea but also for other concerned parties in this area. South Korea must be prepared to deal with this reluctance to embrace a drastic change on the peninsula. A positive and cooperative China-U.S. relationship is thus essential for a smooth transition toward a unified Korea let alone peaceful coexistence of the two Koreas.

Lastly, Seoul has to double its efforts to remedy the South-South conflict among South Koreans. Conflict prevention and management have to be regarded as a long-term process and should not be used in solidifying domestic political positions. Moreover, Seoul has to clarify its moral principles and demand North Korea to meet the standard that the global society requires for protecting its own people. Moreover, Seoul must prepare to deal with North Korea's inter-locking problems of poverty, environmental degradation, lack of energy and famine in a more systematic and synchronized way.