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# Measures for ROK-Chinese Strategic Cooperation to Deter North Korea's Military Provocation



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## I. Introduction

Republic of Korea (ROK) and China have hoped to maintain peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. Prospering ROK does not have any reason to escalate military confrontation with North Korea, and that is the reason why it has never provoked any military attack against North Korea even though the latter has provoked more than ten times since 1990s. China, which is at the crossroad as a new rising global power, has considered sustaining development as a top priority, and tried to shape a favorable environment by maintaining its border area peaceful. For both, any military conflict on the peninsula will be a factor that hinders their economic activities by aggravating relations among regional states and reducing investments from outside.

However, there seems to be a great gap between South Korea and China on how to deal with North Korea to manage peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. For example, South Korea wants China to be more active controlling North Korea's bad behaviors such as nuclear tests, missile tests, verbal threats, and military provocations like Cheonan Incident and Yeonpyong Island bombardment. On the other hand, Beijing has always insisted that there are clear limits for China to influence North Korea's behaviors in reality, sometimes showed its anger about Pyongyang's unilateral provocative actions. Overall, China's seemingly passive manner in dealing with North Korea brought about disappointment, critics, and even anger among South Korean people.

While some pundits argue that Chinese influence on North Korea was exaggerated, nobody can ignore Beijing's potential capability to control

Pyongyang in that China is the only country that North Korea could count on for their survival. That is, for ROK, strategic cooperation with China would be one of the most important factors to deal with North Korea and promote peace and stability on the peninsula. If it goes well, the process of strategic cooperation can be a good opportunity for ROK-Sino relations to develop further into complete “strategic cooperative partnership” in the future. For this reason, we should examine the two countries’ perceptions on North Korea and search for some measures for preventing conflicts.

This paper seeks to the way of ROK-Sino strategic cooperation to deter North Korea’s military provocation. What are the causes of North Korea’s military provocation that ROK and China perceive? What are their stances and responses on the provocations and what were the problems that obstruct the cooperation between South Korea and China? Are there measures to promote ROK-Chinese strategic cooperation to prevent North Korea’s future military attack against South Korea?

It would never be an easy work for two countries which have different interests to coordinate their policies together. Even though South Korea and China has the same goal to maintain peace and stability on the peninsula, it does not mean their priorities of their North Korean policies are the same. For example, while South Korea wants to punish Pyongyang for its nuclear tests and military provocations against its people, China has a concern about the survival of North Korean regime and could not sanction Pyongyang’s adventurous behaviors. Nobody denies, therefore, that there is long way to go to accomplish a strategic partnership between ROK and China. As much as it is difficult, however, the process of policy coordination could have the meaning of putting a milestone for future development of strategic relations.

This paper is consisted of five chapters. In the second chapter, Professor Dongwon Lee analyzes causes of North Korea's provocation in Korean perspectives. In the third chapter, Professor Yinhong Shi will examine causes of North Korea's provocation in Chinese perspectives. Then, professor Changhee Park will address some measures for ROK-Chinese strategic cooperation to deter North Korea's military provocation in the future.

## II. ROK Perspectives on North Korea' s Provocation

### 1. Estimation of South-North relations

For much of the last 60 years, South Korea has shown restraint in the face of North Korea's provocations and taunting. In years past, North Korea has attempted to kidnap South Koreans, hijack airliners, embed spies in the South, and assassinate South Korea's president-including an attack in 1983 in Burma targeting South Korea's then-president Chun that killed 17 senior South Korean officials.

For the majority of these incidents, South Korea's policy has been "to treat the North Korean provocation almost the way you treat a child's tantrums." After the better part of four decades of inter-Korean relations defined primarily by ongoing hostility and deterrence, the inauguration of the Kim Dae Jung administration in 1998 ushered in a policy of "peaceful coexistence" with North Korea. This was followed by a policy of proactive engagement, which was primarily manifest by the rather one-sided provisions of South Korean investment, fertilizer, and humanitarian aid to North Korea. The primary objective of this approach, particularly during the Roh Mu Hyun administration, was to ensure stability in North Korea, at least in the short run.<sup>1)</sup>

President Lee Myung Bak entered office espousing a long-term vision for inter-Korean relations that included significant South Korean investment in North Korea and a stated goal of dramatically increasing North Korean per

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1) Scott Synder and See-Won Bynn, "Cheonan and Yeonpyong: The Northeast Asian Response to North Korea's Provocations," *The RUSI Journal*, Vol. 156, No. 2 (April/May 2011), pp. 75-76.

capita GNP. This approach, however, was premised on changes on North Korean behavior, particularly on progress toward denuclearizing North Korea. In practice, President Lee's policy was a sharp departure from that of his predecessors. The president and his advisors more openly raised issues such as North Korean human rights, participated in international efforts to curb North Korea's illicit activities, and changed their manner in which they handled development and humanitarian aid – all changes that were very unwelcome in Pyongyang.

In another respect, President Lee's approach to North Korea was at least in part a reflection of changing South Korean attitudes toward Pyongyang. Not only was there a growing sense that South Korea's decade of largess was unappreciated and unreciprocated, but during the Lee Administration, a series of North Korean actions further influenced underlying South Korean public opinion and inter-Korean relations.

On July 11, 2008, North Korean soldiers shot a South Korean tourist in the back at the Diamond Mountain resort. A North Korean long-range missile test and nuclear test on April 5 and May 25, 2009, respectively, further hardened South Korean public opinion. Tensions again rose in the West Sea with a naval altercation South Korea calls the "Battle of Daecheong" on November 10, 2009. This resulted in severe damage of a North Korean patrol boat and North Korean threats of retaliation, which may have found their realization in the sinking of the South Korean corvette the Cheonan. The sinking of the Cheonan on March 26 and November 23, 2010 shelling of Yeonpyong Island shocked the South Korean public. President Lee was gradually pushed by public outrage to revise the rules of engagement and to state clearly that any future such incidents would be met with a considerable show of force.

This “Yeonpyong provocation” differs from previous North Korean provocations in several significant ways. Over the past 6 decades since the armistice was signed the North Korean regime has committed countless acts of provocation, but this is the first time the “regular army” has “openly” made a “direct attack” on South Korean territory which indiscriminately targeted both military personnel and civilians. The rash and aggressive nature of this attack differs dramatically from those of the past. The Cheonan attack targeted the South Korean military around Baekryong Island, whereas the Yeonpyong attack occurred in closer proximity to the South Korean capital and involved civilians living on the island. This sends an underlying message that the next provocation may take aim directly at the capital. The announcement of the uranium enrichment program is another provocative act, sending the message that they are considering a third nuclear test of far greater destructive force than the previous two.<sup>2)</sup>

After two unprovoked attacks in 2010, South Korea’s military released helium balloons carrying propaganda leaflets just south of the demilitarized zone. The leaflets warn of the dangers of dictators and include news of recent uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. North Korean defectors frequently send such balloons, but the military has not done so since 1998 and this change could be part of South Korea’s tougher stance on the North following two unprovoked attacks in 2010. The attack elicited strong public outcry in South Korea. According to a poll of South Koreans taken in late November, some 80 percent said they would support strong military retaliation if attacked again.<sup>3)</sup>

The change in public opinion has led South Korea to rethink its policy

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2) Cheon Seong Whun, "North Korea's Attack on Yeonpyeong and the Choices for South Korea," *KINU Online Series*, CO 10-43, December 2, 2010, pp. 1-2.

3) *Yonhap News*, November 30, 2010.

of restraint. A new policy of proactive deterrence is emerging. South Korea will take a strong stance and try to deter North Korea's provocations with threats of retaliation. And the South will be prepared to do so with force. In December 2010, South Korean defense minister Kim Kwan-jin pledged to bomb North Korea if it attacks the South again.<sup>4)</sup> North-South relations grew tense in 2010 after the North attacked a South Korean island.

But in 2011 there are efforts of both Koreas to improve inter-Korean relations. Perhaps encouraged by Chinese pressure in advance of President Hu Jin Tao's January visit to Washington, Pyongyang began with calls for "unconditional" talks with South Korea. On the surface, this would seem to be a welcome development, particularly following the tensions surrounding the shelling of Yeonpyong Island. South Korean officials and President Lee also repeatedly emphasized desire for talks with the North and resumption of the Six-Party Talks. President Lee Myung-bak spoke on March 1 on the 92nd anniversary of the March 1 Movement uprisings against Japanese rule. Lee reiterated South Korea's willingness to work with the North, despite recent aggressive rhetoric from the North. "We are ready to engage in dialogue with the North any time with an open mind," said Lee.<sup>5)</sup>

As a result there are signs of change in the trends on the Korean Peninsula following a series of exchanges in July 2011, first between the heads of the South and North Korean delegations to the six-party talks, and then by the South and North Korean foreign ministers in Bali, Indonesia during the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).<sup>6)</sup> And on 25 July South Korea proposed holding a working-level dialogue with North Korea Monday to resume a suspended tourism project to the North's Mt. Geumgang resort.

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4) *Yonhap News*, December 4, 2010.

5) *Donga Ilbo*, March 1, 2011.

6) *Kyunghyang Daily News*, July 25, 2011.

It has also lifted a ban on civic groups sending humanitarian aid in the form of flour, giving a clear signal that the government may be trying to normalize inter-Korean relations. The moves come three days after top envoys from the two countries sat together for the first time in 31 months on the sidelines of a key regional security forum in Bali, Indonesia, and agreed to make joint efforts to resume the six-nation talks on ending the North's nuclear program "as soon as possible."<sup>7)</sup>

It is still too early to predict the depth of these changes, but depending on the efforts of both Koreas and other relevant nations, it could become a major turning point in both the North Korean nuclear issue and, beyond that, inter-Korean relations, which have deteriorated since the start of the Lee Myung-bak administration. Of course, one cannot exclude the exact opposite result, too. There are many difficulties South and North Korea must overcome to keep going the impetus from these long-awaited contacts. In the immediate term, there are domestic voices of concern that following the contacts between South and North Korean diplomats, the six-party talks are kicking into gear without improvement in inter-Korean relations.

But Korean government has accepted recent pressure from the international community to restart the six-party talks and turned towards a divided response, including multilateral diplomacy for denuclearization discussions and bilateral talks between the two Koreas.

## 2. North Korea's intention of military provocation

The Korean peninsula is presently in the midst of a security crisis. Why

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7) *The Korea Times*, July 25, 2011.

would Pyongyang wish to continue to execute hostile acts, such as the 2010 sinking of the ROK Navy ship Cheonan and the shelling of Yeonpyong Island? Decision making in Pyongyang is opaque, and trying to understand the rationale behind North Korean actions is really just speculation. There are several probable objectives behind the North Korean regime's decision to provoke South Korea.

First, there is the internal objective of suppressing internal friction and resistance to the succession plan. North Korea's attack on the South Korean island of Yeonpyong comes during a difficult period for the isolated regime in Pyongyang. It is going through a process of political succession, with North Korean leader Kim Jong Il seeking to ensure that his son Kim Jong Un is the next leader. At the same time, North Korea is facing new food shortages. In the past, weakness and uncertainty have sparked provocations like the Nov. 23 attack.<sup>8)</sup>

North Korea has engaged in provocative actions like this before, usually when the leadership in Pyongyang felt itself weak and threatened. That is the case now, starting with Kim Jong Il's effort this year to install his youngest son as North Korea's next leader. The Kim Jong Il regime is thought to regard the loyal support of the military as essential for its survival and has been at pains to legitimize the impending transfer of power in the eyes of senior military officials.<sup>9)</sup> And there's clearly a severe economic situation, an ongoing economic crisis in North Korea, but one that's taken on an even more exacerbated form recently in terms of food shortages," which have been reported by the United Nations World Food

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8) Mike Shuster, "Why Now For North Korea's Provocation?" *Associate Press*, November 24, 2010.

9) The National Institute for Defense Studies, *East Asian Strategic Review* 2011 (Tokyo: Japan Times, 2011), pp. 93-94.

Program and others.<sup>10)</sup> At the same time, recently there has been much more contacts between the governments of North and South Korea, with North Korea pressing for aid in the form of food, fertilizer and money.

The second objective can be interpreted as a pressure tactics against the US and South Korea. North Korea intended to “provoke” the United States and South Korea so that they will take North Korea seriously and make concessions to North Korean demands. According to Andrei Lankov, a Russia-born professor at Kookmin University in Seoul, North Korean leaders are sending a message saying, “We are here, we are dangerous, and we cannot be ignored. We can make a lot of trouble, but also we behave reasonably if rewarded generously enough.”<sup>11)</sup>

The North also attempts to use the NLL dispute as a pretext to disrupt the armistice structure so that it aim at dragging the US to the table to negotiate a peace treaty and create a situation in which US troops have no choice but to pull back even if North Korea does not demand a withdrawal. This is due to the fact that once a peace treaty is signed the American people themselves will demand that US troops be withdrawn from South Korea. By committing this attack on Yeonpyong immediately after announcing the uranium enrichment program, North Korea has maximized the shock value of the provocation in hopes of heightening the interest of the US and thus creating a new opportunity for negotiations.<sup>12)</sup>

Of course, just because it says it wants to restart the 6 Party Talks or bilateral US-DPRK talks does not mean it has any intention of abandoning its nuclear programs or softening its antagonistic policy against South

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10) *Kukmin Ilbo*, November 17, 2010.

11) *Munwha Ilbo*, November 25, 2010.

12) Cheon Seong Whun, "North Korea's Attack on Yeonpyong and the Choices for South Korea," p. 2.

Korea. North Korea's objective is in the long-term to force a change of US policy in order to guarantee the continued existence of a nuclear-armed North Korean regime.

The third objective can be sending message to China. The North Korean action is also forcing China to take a position that will necessarily disappoint and frustrate the United States and South Korea. Military clashes in the West Sea/Yellow Sea are likely to bring the U.S. naval exercises into the area, which in turn will aggravate Chinese relations vis-a-vis the United States and South Korea. All this can further contribute to creating an alignment structure which places China and North Korea on one side and the United States, Japan and South Korea on the other, a situation that suits North Korea just fine.<sup>13)</sup>

In addition to the three objectives, North Korea intended to achieve (and did) a fourth objective, which was to intimidate the South Korean population and discredit the South Korean government of President Lee Myong-Bak. By bombing and killing civilians, North Korea has demonstrated that the South Korean population is vulnerable to North Korean attack and that the South Korean government cannot protect its own population. North Korea is willing to act in an inhumane way in order to prove that it can hurt the South Korean population with impunity. Not balking even at the radical step of attacking civilians, North Korea is determined to heighten fears of war and paranoia about the North Korean regime throughout South Korean society, in order to dampen our spirits and force us into submission. They seem to be pursuing a series of provocative measures aimed at changing the ROK government's policies in

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13) Han Sung-Joo, "The Yeonpyeong Shelling: North Korean Calculations," The Trilateral Commission 11th Pacific Asian Regional Meeting, December 11, 2010, Tokyo, pp.2-3.

the short-term or at least helping a pro-DPRK government to take power in the 2012 presidential elections.

### 3. South Korea's stance and response

In the wake of the Cheonan sinking in March 2010, South Korean President Lee Myung-bak announced a new South Korean approach to deterrence called "proactive deterrence." In a speech to the nation, he indicated that the ROK would no longer depend upon a "passive" deterrent, but instead would retaliate in kind for North Korean provocations.

Proactive deterrence faced another test on November 23, 2010, when North Korea used the pretext of a routine ROK Marine Corps firing exercise to bombard Yeonpyong Island, killing two ROK marines and two civilians. The Marines did respond with counter battery fire but no further action was taken. Responding to public outrage over this response, President Lee again modified Seoul's declaratory deterrence policy and explicit rules of engagement by shifting it from "controlled response" to "manifold retaliation." A month later, in another speech, Lee said, "fear was never helpful in preventing war. If we are firmly determined to brave any risks, we can fend off any emerging threats."<sup>14</sup>

But this still entails significant risk, especially if the specific provocation is related to Kim Jong-un, the presumed successor to Kim Jong Il. An orderly succession process is the regime's current top priority, and anything that is perceived to upset that will not be tolerated.<sup>15</sup> This change in

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14) Ethan Kim, "North Korean Soldiers Boast of Yeongpyeong Attack," *Los Angeles Times*, December 27, 2010.

15) Michael McDevitt, "Deterring North Korean Provocations," *Brookings Northeast Commentary*, 46, February 2011.

declaratory policy has potentially profound implications because it signals Pyongyang that Seoul is now equally willing to run the risks and face the possibility of escalation.

President Lee was gradually pushed by public outrage to revise the rules of engagement and to state clearly that any future such incidents would be met with a considerable show of force. In this political context tensions on the Korea peninsula rose dramatically in December 2010 with South Korea's decision to proceed with further live fire exercises in the area surrounding Yeonpyong Island in the face of North Korean threats to retaliate. While these exercises as well as joint U.S. and South Korean naval exercises went forth without immediate North Korean retaliation, it is useful to remember that North Korea's retaliation does not always take place at a time and place of the allies' choosing and tensions on the peninsula remain high.

And Seoul insist on a North Korean apology for the two previous incidents, the sinking of the South Korean warship Cheonan, and the bombardment of the western island of Yeonpyong, as well as concrete steps towards dismantling the North Korean nuclear programme, as preconditions for talks.

Preparing to deal with hostile actions by North Korea is intertwined with deterrence. The cruel irony that South Korea faces is that while it possesses escalation dominance with both conventional and nuclear weapons, it is disadvantaged by geography because of Seoul's location. This susceptibility to conventional attack combined with Pyongyang's track record of high risk behavior have, until recently, made the allies reluctant to test the Kim's willingness to escalate if Seoul retaliates.

Whether this new more aggressive stance will have the desired effect

and make Kim Jong Il more risk-averse remains to be seen, as does the willingness of alliance leaders to actually go through with a stronger - and riskier- response to a provocation. What South Korea can do is to continue to employ a full range of diplomatic, military and economic responses.

Countering Future North Korean Military Provocations, South Korea, must demonstrate a strong and serious determination to counter further North Korean military provocations.

The first steps in this direction have already been taken through joint US-South Korea exercises. In addition, South Korea should upgrade its ability to defend itself against a variety of attacks from North Korea and strengthen its retaliatory will and capabilities. South Korean government is renewing its efforts to improve strike-back capabilities in border areas that are vulnerable to North Korean military provocations.

But readiness to face a broad range of threats and attacks must continue to be enhanced. If such measures are not carried out, North Korea will likely calculate that it can continue to get away with military provocations. Now that we are faced with the eruption of another North Korean crisis, US-South Korea cooperation should also include the formulation of full-fledged contingency planning for the defense of South Korea in the event of North Korean aggression.

The attack on the Cheonan and shelling of Yeonpyong Island have led to a shift in the focus of South Korea's military from how to manage a full-scale war with North Korea to how to respond to localized military actions by the North. A military buildup in South Korea has also strengthened the influence of the defense industry through the South Korean legislature.

As diplomatic responses to future North Korean military provocations, a

comprehensive, negotiated settlement is the only practical way forward in the long run. This must include four interrelated key elements, all of which have been covered in previous Six-Party Talks agreements:

(1) verifiable denuclearization of North Korea, (2) the establishment of a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula that converts the current armistice agreement to a peace treaty, (3) international economic and energy cooperation with North Korea, and (4) the normalization of diplomatic relations between North Korea on the one hand and the United States and Japan on the other. North Korean bilateral negotiations with the United States, Japan, and South Korea respectively are necessary processes for achieving these elements. Specifically, US-DPRK talks are the key to denuclearization and must also address the peace regime and normalization. Meanwhile, North-South talks must address the peace regime and economic cooperation.

Nevertheless, so long as these traditional methods do not have wholehearted support from China the retaliatory effect will be limited. To solve this problem the alliance must somehow persuade Beijing that its security concerns are understood and will not be compromised if actions Beijing takes to punish North Korea destabilize the Kim regime. In other words, the allies should attempt to assuage Beijing's strategic concerns regarding U.S. presence north of the DMZ. Washington and Seoul can also implement—but should not state—a more negative assurance to China. In response to the shelling of Yeonpyong Island, for example, the allies conducted drills in the West Sea (or Yellow Sea), which China has warned it considers a sensitive area. These drills were a tangible reminder of the “costs” Beijing assumes because of its tolerant approach to North Korean behavior.

China's enabling response appeared to write North Korea a blank check for further provocations; but Beijing has in fact been constrained by fear of destabilization of the Kim regime. The incidents have prompted a reappraisal of bilateral relations within the region - in particular, the South Korea-US alliance - and revealed the continuing importance of the Sino-US relationship in Korean peninsula security affairs.

The Yeonpyong attack marks the first military provocation since the end of the war in which North Korea's regular army has violated South Korean territory and inflicted indiscriminate casualties upon its citizens. Even in the 1960s and 70s, when North Korea's national power was relatively superior to that of the South, they did not dare to commit such a reckless act; the reason they are able to do so now is because they believe they are backed by a powerful force. That force is the threat of nuclear weapons.

Just as Kim Il Sung passed on the plutonium program to Kim Jong Il to enable him to stand against South Korea and the US, now Kim Jong Il is passing on a uranium enrichment program to his son Kim Jong En. We can describe the 3 generation-long history of the North Korean nuclear program by the analogy that Kim Il Sung planted the seed and Kim Jong Il raised the flower, and now Kim Jong En will be able to taste the fruit. The idea that the regime will abandon its nuclear weapons if we give in to their every demand may be a naive delusion, but at this point we have no choice but to respond to North Korea's strategy. That is the painful lesson of the last 20 years of nuclear negotiations with North Korea.

### III. Chinese Perspectives on North Korea's Provocation

#### 1. Estimation of South-North relations

History has always involved both continuity and change. However, as to the postures and policies of North Korea and China toward each other since shortly after the second nuclear test by the former on May 25, 2009 and the following punitive U.N. Security Council's Sanction Resolution 1874 against it, what really prominent has been change rather than continuity if one compares with those before until early 2003, when China began to intensively involve in the efforts of international community to deal with the North Korean nuclear problem. During that period of about six years, DPRK-China relations were often characterized by Pyongyang's hardly concealed resentment or even plausibly guessed hostility toward Beijing, as well as by Beijing's obvious complaints and occasional condemnation against the adamantly provocative behavior of Pyongyang, though perhaps something like reluctant tolerance or even nearly helpless "appeasement" marked a little more China's response.<sup>16)</sup>

How contrast the DPRK-China relations have become since then, together with the apparent attitudes of them toward each other! Three events, happened respectively at the formal beginning, the peak hitherto, and the latest days of the "new era" demonstrate that convincingly, in despite of the avoidable continuity of the negative complexities embedded

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16) For China's largely unwieldy and ineffective policies, together with their fundamental causes, see Shi Yinhong, "China and the North Korean Nuclear Issue: Competing Interests and Persistent Policy Dilemmas," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. 21, No.1 (March 2009), pp. 33-47.

in the “most tangled alliance” between North Korea and China.

Firstly, in early October 2009 China’s Premier Wen Jiabao’s visited Pyongyang in a great fanfare, resulted in promise of seemingly much increased Chinese economic aid to North Korea, without receiving Pyongyang’s at least lip service to denuclearization. The New York Times instant reaction proved to be correct: “[T]he deal struck by the North Korean leader [Kim Jong-il](#) and Prime Minister [Wen Jiabao](#) of China had far more to do with the two countries’ shared goal — stability in North Korea.”<sup>17)</sup>

Secondly, toward the end of August 2010 Kim Jong Il conducted the undoubtedly most important visit to China among the several he ever did, making in all possibility Chinese top leaders committed to endorse or even support his overwhelming priority in politics and policy—the intended “dynastic” succession arrangement. In the words paraphrased by the fully authorized Chinese official report (often a sort of understatement in such sensitive matters), that was expressed by Secretary General and President Hu Jintao as “wish the forthcoming National Congress of North Korea’s Lodong Party to be a success,”<sup>18)</sup> which one month later formally launched Kim Jong Il’s third son Jong Un into the track toward the future position of No. 1 ruler, followed by the publicized declaration from Zhou Yongkang, one of the Chinese top leaders who visited Pyongyang shortly after the Congress, that “China and North Korea are most intimate comrades.”<sup>19)</sup>

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17) Choe Sang-hun, “China Aims to Steady North Korea,” *The New York Times*, October 6, 2009.

18) “Hu Jintao met Kim Jong Il at Changchun on August 27,” Xinhua News Net, August 31, 2010, <http://news.cntv.cn/china/20100831/100569.shtml><http://news.cntv.cn/china/20100831/100569.shtml>.

19) “Zhou Yongkang met Kim Jong Il Four Times in Three Days: ‘China and North Korea Are Most Intimate Comrades,’” *Xinhua News Agency*, October 12, 2010, <http://epaper.daynews.com>.

Finally, though Kim Jong Il's most recent visit to China in late May 2011, with an extraordinary frequency as his third within merely a year, seemed far from fully happy to him because of China's "economic stringency" toward him in his nearly dire economic situation, but political endorsement or support primarily relating to his center of concern—the succession affair—could be said as already becoming a sort of taken-for-granted routine, with Hu Jintao much agreed with his emphasis that "young generation should continue the tradition of China-DPRK friendship."<sup>20</sup>

In fact, what has happened for DPRK-China relations since Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to Pyongyang in October 2009 proves to be nothing less than a resetting of them, in a direction opposite to what China once intended after the first nuclear test by North Korea in October 2006 and developing quickly into a sort of "renaissance," with the formal commitment made probably during Kim Jong Il's second visit to China in 2010 being virtually a renewal of the alliance which had been deactivated or decadent because of so numerous actions over years by both sides contrast to its substance and spirit. This is really a sea change, making either side's primary policy behavior toward the other become a systemic "new game."

A single most dictating element for the above sea change is Kim Jong Il's health, bringing up a shared perception of dire emergency and then the structural changes in both DPRK state politics and its relations with China, all as it were by an "individualistic" factor. Since autumn 2008 when Kim Jong Il's health problem began to be ambiguously known and the gravely under-prepared succession process in Pyongyang seemed in gear (both produced enormous guesses in the outside world), and moreover with the

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cn/shtml/sjdsb/20101012/5443665.shtml

20) "Kim Jong Il Made an Informal Visit to China, and Met with Hu Jintao," *Xinhua News Net*, May 26, 2011[Italics are added by this citer], <http://gb.cri.cn/27824/2011/05/26/3245s3260181.htm>.

disastrous failure of the monetary reform there, the possible calamitous future of North Korea has captured the major attention of the Western opinion and probably policy-planning in Washington and Seoul about North Korea. The scenario is that it could drastically become unviable and lapses into a cataract of instability and even collapse.

The Chinese leaders have said nothing about their speculation on the possible consequences of malfunctioning of the North Korean dictator's body and his body politic, and in all possibility they might not look at the situation in a so catastrophic way. But one could guess very plausibly that in their eyes the possibility of North Korea's destabilization has also drastically increased. This would be necessarily a commanding order in consideration of China's vital interest in an at least minimally stable and viable North Korea, which discerned and recognized by so numerous related literatures in so many years.

This, together with the persistent "lesson-learning" on the efforts for denuclearization of North Korea (in the nature of "we should not stick at it because we and any others have proved over years unable to realize it") and the resulted "defeatist" opinion, forcefully changed China's North Korean game, in the form of separating the nuclear problem determinedly from helping to sustain DPRK's internal stability and the maintenance and development of the relations with Pyongyang, making the latter for the first time since 2003 the clear and undisputed priority in China's North Korea policy. The years-cold China-DPRK relations have entered their warmest stage at least since 2005. China thereby seems to be "emancipated" from its "persistent policy dilemmas" produced by its "competing interests,"<sup>21)</sup>

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21) Shi Yinhong, "China and North Korea Nuclear Issue: Competing Interests and Persistent Policy Dilemma."

without achieving any progress in both denuclearization and the reform of North Korea while increasing the weight and perhaps also the effectiveness of a “damage-limiting strategy toward the North” for curtailing “the possibilities of a severe internal crisis.”<sup>22)</sup>

Kim Jong Il's changed attitude has been an essential agent in bringing all the above. There was his almost suddenly-coming and rarely warm posture toward China, reflected in his exceptionally frequent personal receptions given to nearly all Chinese high-level visitors since mid-September 2009 and his personal attending to public activities relating to China in Pyongyang, all with and in despite of his fragile body. Like the Chinese leaders, he has said nothing about his real motivations of the change, but they are much easier to be discerned from the major situations he has faced then and since then. The dire emergency for him was largely a contingency at the first place: he of course did not and could not anticipate the sudden coming stroke in August 2008 and had to begin to place the highly unprepared succession issue at the top of his political agenda, with the most difficult task one could image of endeavoring to prepare his beloved third son, a youngling much below thirty, as the chosen would-be ruler before his passing, the time of which is unpredictable but surely much earlier than what might be previously thought of.<sup>23)</sup>

At the external front, Kim Jong Il has fired virtually all his bridges to the U.S. and ROK, by his adamant persistence in keeping and developing

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22) Words of Professor Jonathan D. Pollack, quoted from his “The Major Powers and the Two Koreas: An Uneasy Transition,” *The Korea Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (March 2009), p. 4.

23) “Kim Jong Il Has done Utmost to Prepare His Third Son Succeeding,” *Chosun Ilbo*, September 15, 2010 (Chinese version at [www.chn.chosun.com](http://www.chn.chosun.com)).

the North Korean nuclear arms program, his vehement hatred and frequent threats against ROK, especially its incumbent Lee Myung-bak Administration, his provocative major actions of nuclear tests and longer range missile (and “rocket”) launching, and his occasional military attack against ROK target. It is particularly the last two, together with certain hawkish postures and actions on the part of the U.S. and ROK, having brought about the protracted intense military confrontation and even occasional crisis of warfare with U.S. and ROK throughout the recent months and years. All of these have been so intensively discussed by so great amount of literature that here is no need to talk about them again. Only one thing should be elaborated a little, because it definitely implies a quite dangerous and unpredictable major factor: malfunctioning of the “rational” policy-making capacity of the sick dictator as, for instance, he was in launching the disastrous monetary reform.

In early December 2009, Ambassador Stephen Bosworth, U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy, traveled to Pyongyang for the first high-level bilateral talks since President Obama took office. This was apparently a hopeful chance, with somewhat accommodating posture showed by President Lee Myung-bak’s “Grand Bargaining” proposal and Obama’s full public endorsement on that. However, contrary to his previously often indicated tactical flexibility and strategic desire to engage the U.S., this time Kim Jong Il surprisingly raised preconditions totally impossible to be met by the U.S. for any realistic progress: A peace treaty must be negotiated to replace the Korean Armistice and the United Nations must lift the sanctions it imposed following the North Korean nuclear tests, then and only then could there be DPRK’s return to the Six-party Talks and the negotiation on its nuclear problem.<sup>24)</sup> Result came quick after

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24) Choe Sang-hun, “North Korea Calls for Peace Treaty Talks with U.S.,” *The New York Times*,

Pyongyang declared these to the world: the Obama Administration publicly dismissed North Korea's peace negotiation proposal, saying that it would discuss a peace treaty with North Korea only after the North returned to the Six-party Talks and began dismantling its nuclear arms program. It also rejected at the same time Pyongyang's demand that the U.N. lift sanctions before it returns to the Talks. "We're not going to pay North Korea for coming back to the six-party-process," P.J. Crowley, a State Department spokesman said.<sup>25)</sup> This was the last chance for Kim's stratagem playing and for mitigating his grave predicament, but unlike in the past he so easily wasted it.

This kind of "irrationality" and volatility has virtually become the pattern since then, revealing, among some other major events that as a sick dictator Kim Jong Il has in some sense turned into a different person. In his dire difficulties and increasingly committed policy mistakes, he left his regime no option but depending more and more on China. As it is said for economic dimension, "[T]he heavy economic lifting in the near term will have to be done by China. 'China is the oxygen mask,' Mr. [John S.] Park [Director of the Korea Working Group at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington] said. 'North Korea is not so happy to have to rely on China, but they really have no alternative.'"<sup>26)</sup> Or in Chosun Ilbo's more comprehensive words, "Under the circumstance of gradual aggravation of North Korea's political and economic isolation, Pyongyang believes that only China is what it could rely on."<sup>27)</sup> It can be said with only a little

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January 11, 2010.

25) Choe Sang-hun, "S. Korea and U.S. Dismiss N. Korea's Peace Talks Proposal," *The New York Times*, January 12, 2010.

26) Mark McDonald, "Hardship Fail to Loosen Regime's Grip in North Korea."

27) "Kim Jong Il Visits China Again in Only Nine Months, Intending to Gain Economic Assistance," *Chosun Ilbo*, May 21, 2011 (Chinese version at [www.chn.chosun.com](http://www.chn.chosun.com)).

exaggeration that North Korea now has no diplomacy except that toward China, like China has no strategy on the issue except sustaining the Pyongyang regime, with ineffective persuasion for the resisted reform and pacification of that most untamed ally. New games are playing in such fixed tight structures.

## 2. North Korea's intention of military provocation

North Korea's intention of military provocation can be defined at three fronts. The first front is of course the paramount but at the same time the least knowable one: that of the leadership succession. Although the outside world has to depend largely on guesswork, but still are there some clues to suggest that it in its first stages might have not avoided some volatility. This means some puzzles in the virtually dynastic succession process. Somewhat surprisingly slower than so many observers and especially ROK experts predicted, up to now Kim Jong Un has still not been appointed to the political/constitutional supreme power organ National Defense Commission, eight months after his father suddenly launched him to the DPRK people and the world by letting him known from a total obscurity or darkness and appointed him as a four-star general and Vice Chairman of the Party's Military Committee. What similar with this is that Kim Jong Un has still not visit China after he was selected as "crown prince," unlike many predicted and some major foreign media once misbelieved,<sup>28)</sup> and despite that President Hu Jintao extended his invitation to North Korea's

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28) For this misbelieving, see "Kim Jong Un visits China This Morning," May 20, 2011, <http://www.peacehall.com/news/gb/intl/2011/05/201105201121.shtml>, a report based on those from Reuter, Yonhap New Agency, and *Chosun Ibo*. See also "Kim Jong Un Visits China: North Korea's New Leaders Will Sign Secret Agreement with Beijing," March 30, 2011, <http://www.1n0.net/Article/sztg/111384.html>, a report based on that from *JoongAng Daily*.

“new leaders” a few times for their visiting to China.<sup>29)</sup>

“Theoretically” speculating, much severe volatility and even potential turmoil might well be avoidable mainly because of Kim Jong Un’s youngness and lack of both broad power base and political experience. He, if without his active father relatively sooner, would have to be guided and supported by a “regent committee” headed by a few family Old Guards, which could have complex rivalry with him, other power elites, and within itself; He also have to, as it already began, reshuffle the higher level of the particularly powerful armed forces of the Songun state, because his father’s men are far from necessarily his men. Both of these two aspects have great potential for severe power struggle. Moreover, as long as his father is active and therefore dictatorial, any perceived attempt of usurpation by him in any degree or his proved political incompetence may well finish his succession prospect, finished by his father—a most power-jealous dictator.

The second front is strictly defined military affairs, the nuclear arms program, and the posture toward the U.S. and ROK. North Korea’s volatile new game at this front was so dramatic in the past two years, and the military/political events shaped by both DPRK and U.S.-ROK alliance since the sunk of ROK warship Choenan on March 26, 2010 constituted the center of East Asian strategic tension and military danger throughout most of that particularly tense year. The dramatic failure of the Bosworth Mission, resulted mainly from Kim Jong Il’s increased strategic and foreign policy volatility, is already mentioned. “Under the leading theory of the

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29) “China Invites North Korea’s New Leaders Visiting China,” China’s Central National Radio (CNR), October 12, 2010, [http://wap.cnr.cn/3g/news2/yaowen/201010/t20101012\\_507161369.html](http://wap.cnr.cn/3g/news2/yaowen/201010/t20101012_507161369.html); “China and North Korea Come to New Honeymoon,” *Chosun Ibo*, October 13, 2010 (Chinese version at [www.chn.chosun.com](http://www.chn.chosun.com)).

American intelligence agencies, Mr. Kim ordered the attack [against Choenan] to re-establish both his control and his credentials after a debilitating stroke two years ago, and by extension reinforcing his right to name his son [Kim Jong-un](#) as his successor.”<sup>30)</sup> If this were true, it would be really a very drastic, volatile, and “irrational” decision. Not long after North Korea’s three top diplomats in charge of nuclear arms negotiation and the diplomacy toward the U.S. being promoted in September 2010 and leading some ROK professionals to guess plausibly that DPRK might show moderate and even engaging face toward the U.S.,<sup>31)</sup> the latter fired dozens of shells at a South Korean Yeonpyong island on November 23, 2010, killing two South Korean soldiers and setting off an exchange of fire “in one of the most serious clashes between the two sides in decades.”<sup>32)</sup> However, what has been most puzzling happened days ago: [North Korea](#) showed a visiting American nuclear scientist a vast facility secretly and rapidly built to enrich uranium, a sort of activity whose existence it had insisted to deny for eight years! Up to now, no one outside North Korea knows “whether the calculated revelation is a negotiating ploy by North Korea or a signal that it plans to accelerate its weapons program even as it goes through a perilous leadership change.”<sup>33)</sup> The chess board of North Korea nuclear problem was thereby totally toppled, with no really

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30) David E. Sanger, “U.S. Implicates North Korean Leader in Attack,” *The New York Times*, May 22, 2010. See also Choe Sang-hun, “Succession Issues Driving North Korea, Experts Say,” *Ibid.*, May 27, 2010. The experts reported by this piece are ROK researchers in Seoul.

31) “The Leading Diplomats in Charge of U.S. Affairs Are All Promoted: DPRK Will Show Goodwill to U.S.?” *Chosun Ibo*, September 24, 2010 (Chinese version at [www.chn.chosun.com](http://www.chn.chosun.com)).

32) Quoted from Mark McDonald, “‘Crisis Status’ in South Korea After North Shells Island,” *The New York Times*, November 23, 2010.

33) David Sanger, “North Koreans Unveil Vast New Plant for Nuclear Use,” *The New York Times*, November 20, 2010. For various attempts of interpretation, see also McDonald, “‘Crisis Status’ in South Korea after North Shells Island.”

understandable concrete reasons.

The volatility in North Korea's posture toward South Korea has been also remarkable in the past months. As it experienced the most severe military confrontation with the U.S.-ROK alliance since Korean Armistice and seemed being deterred by the strong reaction of the latter in the form of massive naval drills repeatedly conducted and resolute warning of large-scale retaliation against further provocation, Pyongyang has focused its diplomatic position on resuming the Six-party Talks from which it withdrew in April 2009 with the declaration that it "will never participate in the [nuclear] talks any longer nor...be bound to any agreement of the six-party talks."<sup>34</sup>) It desires to move its game to the table, knows clearly that the paramount precondition for the resumption declared again and again by the U.S. with ROK is to have effective North-South talks at first, and indeed appeals prominently to mitigate "as soon as possible" the confrontation between the North and the South and "promote positively" the DPRK-ROK talks. However, after an unsuccessful preliminary military talk followed an advanced statement from ROK President Lee Myung-bak that a North-South Summit "may be politically possible," and then a few moderate postures made in mid-March, followed by a publicized message of Kim Jong Il made to the former U.S. President Jimmy Carter at the end of his visit to Pyongyang in late April that he was willing to meet President Lee,<sup>35</sup>) North Korea, through the spokesman of the all-powerful

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34) Quoted from Jon Herskovitz, "North Korea Quits Nuclear Talks," Reuter, April 14, 2009.

35) For Lee Myung-bak 's statement and the failure of the preliminary military talk, see Mark McDonald, "2 Koreas Plan Military Talks; Summit Meeting Called 'Possible'," *The New York Times*, February 1, 2011; Idem, "Korea Talks Ended Abruptly Without Any Ease in Strains," *ibid.*, February 9, 2011. For North Korea's moderate postures in mid-March, see "North Korea Made Moderate Postures Successively; What May Be the Behind Motive?" *Chosun Ibo*, March 16, 2011 (Chinese version at [www.chn.chosun.com](http://www.chn.chosun.com)). Kim Jong Il's message to Jimmy Carter was reported in "Carter Claims that Kim Jong Il Stated His Willingness and Readiness to Meet Lee Myung-bak,"

National Defense Commission, suddenly revealed in early June its secret contacts in Beijing with named ROK envoys who proposed concretely three North-South Summits, condemning them trying to “bribe by paying a high prince” for the summits, and declaring that it would “no longer pay any heed to the band of Lee Myung-bak, the national traitors and scoundrels.”<sup>36)</sup>

The relations with China are the third front that is also closely related to its military provocations. Surprisingly or not, Pyongyang’s volatile behavior in treating this “renewed” ally and only source of assistance has been almost no less dramatic than that in dealing its enemy ROK. We have already seen the dramatic warming of its attitude toward Beijing and Kim Jong Il’s hugging for a China committed to him with the renewal of the alliance. Moreover, in all possibility it accepted China’s resolute persuasion advising prudence and forbearance over Yeonpyong crisis, a persuasion made immediately after President Obama’s behind-door threat against China’s security environment in Northeast Asia. However, less than one and half months after China identified North Korea as “intimate comrade,” the latter fired Yeonpyong and then declared with “lofty tone” its possession of a vast facility for producing enriched uranium,<sup>37)</sup> two actions totally opposite to China’s numerous repeated persuasions on the Peninsular peace and denuclearization, and surely made without any advanced information provided to China, virtually like sudden slaps in China’s face.

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China News Net, April 28, 2011, <http://www.chinanews.com/gj/2011/04-28/3006165.shtml>.

36) “What Intentions North Korea Harbor for Its Exposure of the Secret Contact for Summit?” *Chosun Ibo*, June 2, 2011 (Chinese version at [www.chn.chosun.com](http://www.chn.chosun.com)).

37) “DPRK Media Reports with Lofty Tone that Thousands Centrifuges Is Operating,” Xinhua New Net, December 1, 2010, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2010-12/01/c\\_12833767.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2010-12/01/c_12833767.htm).

And slap came again immediately after Kim Jong Il's third visit to China within a year—that in later May 2011—during which he declared that “the relay baton [of DPRK-China friendship] should be carried forward generation after generation” and that he “always has sincerity to improve North-South relations [on the Peninsular]”<sup>38)</sup>: The spokesman of National Defense Commission formally declared the abrupt end of all contacts with ROK government and North-South military communication, with the words that DPRK “will wage all-out offensive by the whole nation, in order to stop the traitor Lee Myung-bak's confrontational activity against our republic.” This was again totally opposite to what Hu Jintao surely tried to persuade him during the visit and he, as indicated above, seemed to pretend to agree.<sup>39)</sup> Surprising or out-of-expectation event like this could remain as a puzzle for its cause, but anyway “[i]t is embarrassing that China invited Kim Jong Il to visit three times in only a year, but still has not successfully expedited the resumption of the Six-party Talks.”<sup>40)</sup>

### 3. China's stance and response

Due to North Korea's military provocations, China's political relations with ROK, together with its image among South Korean public, are damaged most. At the beginning of China's new game, immediately after Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to Pyongyang in October 2009, ROK government publicly expressed its nervousness: “We are expecting China to explain the details of its economic cooperation programs with North

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38) “Hu Jintao Meets Kim Jong Il,” Xinhua News Net, May 26, 2011, <http://kp.china-embassy.org/chn/zxxx/t825633.htm>.

39) “Editorial: Why North Korea Declared the End of Contacts with ROK?” *Chosun Ibo*, May 31, 2011 (Chinese version at [www.chn.chosun.com](http://www.chn.chosun.com)).

40) *Ibid.*

Korea and whether they violated the Security Council resolutions,” Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan told a group of South Korean news media editors.<sup>41)</sup> The following opinion four months later from Jack Pritchard, the former U.S. envoy to negotiation with North Korea, could be said as largely the same as that being held by ROK policy-makers: Wen’s visit with “generous gifts” made Pyongyang “quite a different person” in its much hardened position toward nuclear negotiation, preconditioning it with a peace treaty.<sup>42)</sup>

Then followed an almost enormously referred and discussed subject: China’s difficult, embarrassed, but consistently firm position on the Cheonan affair and its reception of Kim Jong Il during the last stage of ROK government’s investigation of the case, together with further China’s alienation from ROK because of them. It is sufficient here to refer merely to the title of a Reuter’s analytical report: “China’s Embrace of North Korea’s Kim Irks Neighbors,” especially of course ROK.<sup>43)</sup> In the eyes and at the lips of South Koreans, China’s second reception of Kim Jong Il in 2010 and showing of the renewal of alliance shortly after that has been so often conveniently simplified as accepting or endorsing a dynastic

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41) Choe Sang-hun, “China Aims to Steady North Korea,” *The New York Times*, October 6, 2009.

42) Jack Pritchard, “North Korea: Quite a Different Person in Two Months,” *Chosun Ibo*, February 5, 2010 (Chinese version at [www.chn.chosun.com](http://www.chn.chosun.com)).

43) Written by Chris Buckley and Jack Kim, Reuters, May 7, 2010. Or in much more words of *The New York Times*, “Chinese leaders face two unpalatable options. One is to mollify North Korea, and risk undermining its efforts to persuade Washington, South Korea and Japan that China is a stabilizing force in East Asia. The other is to join those nations and the United Nations Security Council in condemning North Korea for the attack, which North Korea denies, and risk a wholly unpredictable response from a volatile neighbor. So far, China has sought to straddle the two, saying only that both Koreas should show restraint in the midst of a brewing crisis...The past few weeks have shown just how awkward it can be for China to walk the line between courting the South and propping up the North.” Sharon LaFraniere, “On North Korea, China Prefers Fence,” *The New York Times*, May 23, 2010.

hereditary succession, with its disgusting implications. Then, “China has stymied the U.N. Security Council from rebuking North Korea over its uranium enrichment activities and...shelling of a populated South Korean island [Yeonpyong],”<sup>44)</sup> and publicly declared its proposal for emergent meeting of the heads of delegations to the Six-side Talks to deal with the dangerous situation hours after ROK President politely refused it<sup>45)</sup>: These contributed nothing to mitigate ROK’s resentment against China’s North Korea policy and the related strategic suspicion.

China-U.S. strategic relationship has been another casualty, though between the two countries there have been sufficient other disputes, mistrust, and rival interests besides the huge gap over North Korea problem to make them characterized much more by rivalry than by cooperation or accommodation, especially in 2010. China-U.S. strategic rivalry or even confrontation along the Chinese offshore area in the late half of that year, mainly because of North Korea problem and the U.S.-ROK military reactions in the form of massive naval drills repeatedly launched there in despite of China’s security worry and national honor, has also been enormously reported and discussed around the region and even the world. It will be enough here to cite a report by South Morning China Post in Hong Kong in mid-July:

Whatever their stated purpose or the strength of the forces deployed, upcoming US-South Korean military exercises in the Yellow Sea will be

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44) “China Blocking U.N. Rebuke of North Korea, Diplomats Say,” Global Security Newswire, December 1, 2010.

45) “ROK Displeased for Referring to Six-party Talks This Moment,” *Chosun Ibo*, November 29, 2010 (Chinese version at [www. chn.chosun.com](http://www.chn.chosun.com)); “China Proposes Emergent Meeting of Heads of the Delegations to the Six-party Talks in Early December,” Xinhua News Net, November 28, 2010, <http://www.chinanews.com/gn/2010/11-28/2685814.shtml>.

greeted indignantly in Beijing because the presence of foreign warships so close to China's shores will revive painful memories of the country's invasion, political and military analysts say...China has voiced strong opposition to the exercises, mindful perhaps of demands from its own public to speak out...The PLA this month staged live-fire naval exercises in the East China Sea, close to the Yellow Sea, in an apparent protest against the possible presence of a US aircraft carrier on its doorstep...“Beijing has publicly condemned the joint operations five times over the past month. The domestic public outcry is stronger than it expected.”<sup>46)</sup>

However, China-U.S. relations have much more stakes than those relating to the Peninsular and the military rivalry, while Washington often has marginal advantage of will-power as well as strategic options. In the nearly imminent danger of explosion on the Peninsular and facing revealed DPRK's operation for enriched uranium, President Obama exerted strong pressure personally by directly threatening China twice for its restraining of Pyongyang. First in a phone call to Hu Jintao on December 6, 2010 as referred before, and again over the private dinner at the White House on January 8, 2011 during Hu's state visit to the United States, he pressed China to take a harder line toward North Korea, otherwise, he said, the U.S. would have to take long-term measures, like redeploying its forces, changing its defense posture or beefing up military exercises in Northeast Asia.<sup>47)</sup> The first exertion of him led to China's resolute persuasion in Pyongyang advising prudence and forbearance over Yeonpyong crisis and

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46) Minnie Chan, “US-Korean Military Drill Revives Painful Memories,” *South China Morning Post*, July 18, 2010.

47) Mark Landler and Martin Fackler, “For Hu, Not as Tough a Day as Some Wanted,” *The New York Times*, January 20, 2011.

then Pyongyang's declaration that it would not retaliate against ROK's artillery drill in that Island, as mentioned above; the second led to an event "once in 20 months," i.e., An nearly indirect public criticism of North Korea's behavior by China in the China-U.S. Joint Statement issued during President Hu's state visit to the U.S., a criticism reluctantly and mildly made at the time for the much desired China-U.S. "détente,"<sup>48)</sup> while has not in substance shorten the hug gap between the two countries over North Korea.

Still, the most dramatic relationship China has about the Peninsular remains to be that with DPRK, even after the dramatic renewal of alliance discussed at length above. It has already been mentioned that less than one and half months after China identified North Korea as "intimate comrade," the latter fired Yeonpyong and then declared with its possession of a vast facility for enriched uranium, totally opposite to China's position on the Peninsular peace and denuclearization. After that and in the apparent context of China-DPRK joint pushing for unconditional talks, any talks—a sort of unusual "diplomatic common-enterprise" between these two countries—Kim Jong Il made his strange third visit to China within a year. Besides consolidating China's general commitment to support the "dynastic" succession he has been arranging, his purpose seemed mainly to be: (1) requesting lavish economic assistance, especially in the form of free grant, as every commentator said during and after the event; (2) attempting perhaps to make China escalate the alliance renewal from a de facto and limited one to a formal and "legalistic" re-installment, which has been

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48) "China and the United States expressed concern regarding the DPRK's claimed uranium enrichment program. Both sides oppose all activities inconsistent with the 2005 Joint Statement [of the Six-party Talks] and relevant international obligations and commitments." China-U.S. Joint Statement, January 10, 2011, <http://www.en84.com/article-5555-1.html>.

overlooked by almost all observers. The way perceived by him to realize this probable purpose is conducting pompous and much publicized ceremonies in both countries in 2011 for the 50th anniversary of the signing of China-DPRK alliance treaty, to which he referred emphatically in his meeting with Meng Jianzhu, China's State Councilor and Minister of Public Security, in mid-February 2011 in Pyongyang, and then that with Hu Jintao himself in late May in Beijing. However, for obvious strategic and diplomatic reasons, especially avoidance of being dragging into any military conflict with the United States because of North Korea's adventure and of any unintended encouragement to that, the Chinese leaders paid no heed to that.<sup>49)</sup>

This, together with the widely and very plausibly speculated disappointment over China's polite refusal to extent lavish economic free grant during his latest visit,<sup>50)</sup> made Kim Jong Il obviously displeased. Obviously, because only three days after his returning to home North Korea, as mentioned before, suddenly declared to end all contacts with ROK government and then revealed with harsh condemnation the secret contacts in Beijing with it by the ROK envoys who proposed concretely North-South Summits, totally opposite to what Hu Jintao surely tried to persuade him during the visit and he seemed to pretend to agree. This is

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49) "Kim Jong Il Met Meng Jianzhu, Saying 50th Anniversary of DPRK-China Treaty of Mutual Assistance Will Be Commemorated," Xinhua News Net, February 15, 2011, <http://news.china.com/domestic/945/20110215/16382727.html>; "Kim Jong Il Visited China From 20th to 26th and Met with Hu Jintao," Xinhua News Net, May 26, 2011, <http://news.sohu.com/20110526/n308629672.shtml>.

50) Ibid.; "Experts Say Kim Jong Il Did Not Receive Generous Gifts and Returned to Home Regretfully," *Chosun Ibo*, May 28, 2011; "Disagreeing on DPRK-China Economic Cooperation and the Summit Held in Embarrassed Atmosphere," *ibid.*, May 28, 2011. (Both are versions in Chinese at [www.chn.chosun.com](http://www.chn.chosun.com)). So there is a self-contradiction among others in China's current North Korea policy: Largely unconditional political support vs. remarkable economic "stringency".

a slap in China's face, as well as a devastating strike at any possibility of resuming any talks on the North Korean issue any soon. Such volatility tells a lot about China's cornered situation, and forebodes probably much aggravated unpredictability and instability of the whole North Korean problem.

Taking into consideration of the torturous course of China-ROK relationship over North Korea problem since 2003 when the related consultation between these two countries began, one can derive a pessimist corollary: there is now only quite narrow space for China-ROK cooperation in restraining Pyongyang's adventurism, striving for its denuclearization, and exerting reformist influence thereupon. Years ago, the general positions and even much of the concrete policies of Beijing and Seoul toward North Korea nuclear issue in the framework of Six-party Talks were once so similar, although even at that time China-ROK consultations on that issue had still been far from sufficiently close, frequent, and high-leveled. China in a few years ago once quite actively promoted the political relations with ROK, especially declared with the government in Seoul in May 2008 to escalate the bilateral relations, raising it to the level of "the partnership of strategic cooperation,"<sup>51)</sup> although it was in a large part good-intentionally rhetoric. Compare these with the current state of China-ROK political relationship, a major negative change have happened.

The virtual renewal of China-DPRK alliance, the enormous gap between the two sides in their attitudes and policy toward DPRK since the Choenan sunken ship case, the strong volatility of Kim Jong Il that resulting surely in the Chinese leaders' increased hesitation or even "timidity" in dealing with him, and the nearly extreme difficulties Pyongyang regime faces that

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51) "China-ROK Joint Statement," Xinhua News Net, May 27, 2008,

makes Seoul incline to think more than ever since General McArthur's "driving to the Yalu" to accelerate its collapse and then the South's overtaking of the North by further toughness and pressure: All these bleak the prospect of China-ROK cooperation at the North Korea issue.

However, there is still room for realistic hope and for efforts to be made as much as possible. Rhetoric of "the partnership of strategic cooperation" should and could be revived when mutual resentment or suspicion have pass over their relatively higher point as that experienced in later half of 2010, and filled into it more substance, including efforts to realize and conduct effectively the regular "strategic dialogue" between the two governments which was agreed in 2008.<sup>52)</sup> Policy consultation should be continued and made closer, more frequent, and more often in higher-level, especially during the future possible military crises initiated by DPRK when the common interest of China and ROK in maintaining peace on the Peninsular is necessarily most prominent. Information exchange should be developed very much from the present quite insufficient state, beneficial to the common requirement of restraining Pyongyang's adventurism and reducing the politico-strategic suspicions between Beijing and Seoul.

Moreover, Seoul should understand more Beijing's difficulties hard to mention in dealing with Pyongyang, believe more that the overwhelming (or at least primary) nature of its policy toward North Korea is damage-prevention rather than benefit-acquisition, keeping patience with grace like President Lee Myung-bak's really statesmanlike public words after Kim Jong Il's second visit to China within a year that he positively assessed Kim Jong Il's "frequent visits to China, which bring about many opportunities to see the Chinese type of economic development, and

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52) Ibid.

therefore being advantageous to North Korea's economy. I regard China's role as positive."<sup>53)</sup> This sort of patience and statesmanlike grace, combined with more attention, respect, and diplomatic efforts China should have toward ROK, would contribute enormously to their cooperative and roughly coordinated maneuver in restraining the North Korea's adventurism and promoting a better future for all in Northeast Asia.

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53) "ROK President Lee Myung-bak Positively Assesses the North Korean Leader Kim Jong Il's Visits to China," China News Net, August 31, 2010, [http://news.gxv.cn/20100831/news\\_1345587616371.html](http://news.gxv.cn/20100831/news_1345587616371.html).

## IV. Measures for ROK-Chinese Strategic Cooperation

### 1. Difficulties of strategic cooperation

North Korea has been in desperate situation and, if deemed necessary, can use its force at any time as a means to achieve some political aims as follows: first, Pyongyang can provoke a military attack against South Korea to facilitate power succession of Kim Jong En, who has no military background and, therefore, has to show relentlessness and cumulate personal achievements as a new dear leader through military provocation s<sup>54</sup>); second, North Korea needs small scale of crisis to enhance internal unity among people who are full of discontents because of chronic food shortage and energy problem; third, Pyongyang regime can use military provocation to send messages to neighboring countries, forcing the United States to accept bilateral talks, threatening to escalate crisis on the Korean Peninsula and thereby strengthening Sino-North Korean relations, or just expressing displeasure to South Korea and the United States; fourth, military attacks can raise the failure of current South Korean government's North Korean policy and instigate "south-south conflict" among South Korean people. As North Korea sticks to reclusive foreign policy and refuses to open their market, it will face more serious internal contradiction and be more difficult to maintain its regime and system. As a result, the possibility of military provocation will increase in the future.

Nobody can deny the importance of ROK-Chinese cooperation to prevent

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54) Jong Seok Lee, "The Next Kim: Prospects for Peace in Korea," *Global Asia*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Winter 2010), 81.

North Korea's military provocation in the future. Even though ROK, with the United States, shows military preparedness against North Korea, there are clear limits to deter the attack from the North if Beijing would not cooperate. For example, North Korea's second nuclear test in May 2009 was resulted partly because of China's hesitation to implement economic sanctions on Pyongyang regime after the first nuclear test in October 2006.<sup>55)</sup> The Yeonpyong Island bombardment in November 2010 was caused partly because Beijing had refused to criticize and designate North Korea as an attacker of South Korean warship Cheonan in April 2010 on West Sea despite apparent evidences that Joint International Inspection Team provided at the United Nations Security Council. The two incidents showed that China's attitudes can be critical factor to prevent or expedite North Korea's hostile behaviors against the South. China will be able to exert more influence on the Korean Peninsula, not just in economic terms but also in strategic aspects.<sup>56)</sup>

The most significant problem is that ROK and China have different perceptions on the cause of North Korea's military provocations. South Korean people perceive that Chinese lukewarm stance has contributed Pyongyang's recurring provocations over and over again, and, therefore, Chinese government should change its policy toward North Korea participating international sanctions based on the UN resolutions of 1718 and 1874. Chinese leaders, however, have different thoughts that the root cause of the military attacks was Pyongyang's security concerns caused by

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55) Edward J. Baker, "North Korea: It's Time to Start Talking," *Global Asia*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Winter 2010), p. 100.

56) Changhee Park, "Enhanced Sino-Russian Relations and Its Implications for the Security of South Korea," *The Korean Journal of Security Affairs*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (December 2008), p. 195

the uncompromising policy of ROK and the United States toward North Korea. For that reason, they insist that ROK and the United States should have dialogue with North Korea without any condition and open the stalled 6-party talk immediately to discuss about peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula as well as denuclearization of the North's nuclear program.

The difference of priorities of ROK and China has also made them difficult to reconcile and coordinate their policies on North Korea. In fact, they have shared the same value of the peace of the Korean peninsula and regional stability in general. When it comes to more specific interests, however, they are more conflicting and contradictory than cooperative and harmonious. ROK's policy priority toward Pyongyang has been in order of prevention of military conflicts, denuclearization, and the North's regime survival and peaceful reunification. Having experienced military attack in 1950 and tens of large and small provocations of North Korea, ROK has put prevention of the North's military invasion as the first concerns. For China, however, North Korean regime survival comes first, denuclearization is the second, and then military provocation comes last, which is exactly opposite to ROK's priority. Beijing has worried about the North's regime collapse because it will cause enormous instability on the Korean Peninsula, with many North Korean refugees crossing the border, the increasing danger of nuclear proliferation, and the hawkish faction in North Korea attempting military provocations.

## 2. Promoting mutual understandings and respects

In spite of such apparent difficulties that were reviewed, however, there can be several ways to improve ROK-Chinese strategic cooperation. As

Yinhong Shi mentioned in the previous section, the two countries should understand and respect each other's standpoint. Only with disappointments and frustrations, nothing can be launched or achieved in promoting strategic cooperation between the two countries. They should understand first that ROK-Chinese relations have only begun in 1992, after more than 40 years of disengagement, mainly focusing on economic cooperation and social exchanges, not on security or military relations. As like the case of Sino-Japanese relations, which was normalized in 1972, economic interdependency does not necessarily bring about improvement of security cooperation especially in some critical issues related to their vital interests.<sup>57)</sup> Considering the infancy of ROK-Chinese security cooperation, therefore, it is natural that there is too big gap in the perceptions of the two countries on security issues of the Korean Peninsula. Unless their perception gap is narrowed, however, it would not be possible to expect any development of strategic cooperation on sensitive issues between them.

It would be the most difficult task for ROK and China to be in other's position. They already experienced that their relations are vulnerable and can be soured anytime when North Korean issue comes up to the fore. The Cheonan Incident and Yeonpyong Island bombardment in 2010 made the diplomatic relations between Seoul and Beijing very uncomfortable. The pre-planned combined ROK-U.S. naval exercise at West Sea in August invoked PLA's assertive argument that Yellow Sea was China's inland and PLA would not sit idle when the U.S. aircraft carrier George Washington appeared on the sea. Even when ROK and the United States decided to

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57) Vital interest is the interest which can harm seriously to the nation unless strong measures, including the use of force, are employed to protect the interest. Dennis M. Drew and Donald M. Snow, *Making Twenty-First-Century Strategy: An Introduction to Modern National Security Processes and Problems* (Maxwell Air Force Base: Air University Press, 2006), p. 33.

have the exercise at East Sea, not West Sea, the PLA's criticism on the combined exercise did not stop. In fact, Chinese leaders thought that as the North provocation was the matter of the two Koreas, and the United States should not be involved and its warships and submarines should stay away from the Korean Peninsula. South Korean people, however, thought it was the sovereign right to have military exercise on maritime territory, especially after the North's torpedo attack on their warship.

Despite the diplomatic uneasiness, ROK-Chinese relations showed resiliency in 2011. Their economic trades and social exchanges was the factor that prevent their relations from turning back to more than 20 years ago against history, and, instead, enable their relations to go forward for the future. That is, even though there have been problems of misgivings and doubts on each other's intentions, they cannot prevent them from moving toward more progressive and future-oriented direction. That is why South Korean Defense Minister Kim, Kwan-jin and Chinese Minister Liang, Gwang-lie, in July meeting in Beijing, announced to oppose any provocative behavior that can break peace on the Korean Peninsula and agreed to improve their military exchanges more vigorously.<sup>58)</sup>

In sum, to understand and respect the other's position is the necessary condition to promote strategic cooperation in the future. Likewise, ROK and China should not be disappointed to the other's attitudes around North Korean provocations of 2010, or withdraw from the current endeavors to improve security cooperation. Instead, while ROK should consider the fact that Beijing is the only ally of Pyongyang, China also should recognize that Seoul and Washington's military posture against the North has been defensive and contributed to maintain peace and stability on the peninsula,

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58) *Hankook Ilbo*, July 15, 2011.

thus promoting more room for further compromise or cooperation between them in the future.

### 3. Architecting framework for strategic dialogue

South Korea and China need to architect a cooperative framework to facilitate strategic dialogue between them. At the Joint Statement between Roh, Muhyun and Hu, Jintao on November 17, 2005 in Seoul, the two countries already agreed to enhance dialogues and contacts in the fields of defense and security.<sup>59)</sup> In the ROK-China Joint Statement on May 27, 2008 in Beijing, which was followed by another summit on August 28, 2008 in Seoul, Lee, Myungbak and Hu, Jintao agreed to elevate ROK-Chinese relations to “strategic cooperative partnership” and have strategic dialogues between both foreign ministries on the issues related common interests of the two countries. As a result, there have been active exchanges of high level officials and development of their relations. For example, ROK and China held the first strategic dialogue in the level of vice foreign minister in December 2008 and opened hot-line between navies and air forces of the two countries.

To make cooperative framework viable, ROK and China can establish track 2 strategic talks which would be held among scholars and civilian professionals, excluding government officials. Later, this will be developed into track 1.5 mechanism whose participants include not just scholars but also some portion of government officials. If it goes well, the track 1.5 dialogues could be developed into track 1 dialogue where mostly government officials initiate. As they have different interests, it would be

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59) 中華人民共和國外交部亞洲司, 「中國-韓國政府間主要文件集」(北京: 世界知識出版社, 2007), p. 504.

difficult in the beginning to get any tangible outcomes from the track 1 dialogues between them. Therefore, it would be necessary to shape environment for participants to discuss freely even on sensitive issues at the track 2 meetings, which can be held at various levels and areas, secretly or publicly. Even though it is a dialogue among civilian scholars and somewhat distant from real policies of both countries, their discussions could have meaning in that it already reflects each other's perspectives on the issues. While discussions are going on, both governments can closely monitor what opinions and recommendations are come out, and formulate how to develop further the framework for strategic cooperation between them. Establishment of that kind of mechanisms for dialogue will facilitate mutual understanding and expedite discussions on security issues on the peninsula.

#### 4. Promoting strategic partnership

ROK and China should exert themselves on moving ahead beyond the principle of "seeking the same, setting aside the difference (求同存異)." Up to now, the two countries have discussed and shared only acceptable things for both, intentionally alienating the issues which were troublesome and coarse to deal with. This approach has been successful to a degree, and their relations could have developed into "strategic cooperative partnership" without any serious trouble. In fact, however, there is long way to go for the two to realize the agreed strategic partnership. Even though they concurred to the partnership, it does not mean that ROK-Chinese relations already are there. Rather, it was a kind of promise to try to develop their relations as such in the future. That is, their partnership is not the present

progressive tense, but the future one, which does not reflect current status, but address a norm that the two countries should head for.

Now ROK and China are at the crossroad to promote strategic partnership and security cooperation more than ever. To prevent North Korea's military provocation, we can suggest some policy measures for both countries.

First, ROK and China should utilize the Defense Strategic Dialogue which was agreed to have in the level of vice ministers every year. They can share necessary information related to regional security issues including North Korea, and shape a consensus on how to deter military provocations on the Korean Peninsula. For South Korean side, it is imperative to have Beijing understand and recognize ROK military strategy of "active deterrence" which focuses on retaliation if the North's military provokes again. For Chinese side, it should not stand on the side of Pyongyang if North Korea attacks first, and relay its will to maintain peace to the leaders in Pyongyang. For example, if Hu, Jin-tao transfers ROK's intention of retaliation seriously to Kim, Jong-Il and Chinese refusal to support Pyongyang in that case, it would bring about a great effect on deterring North Korean military provocations.

Second, ROK and China should make North Korea to open its market and take a path to the economic reform. The more Pyongyang follows Chinese economic reform, the less its leaders will take a hostile policy. Beijing can enforce North Korean leaders to realize that there would be no way out from this destitute economic situation. Seoul can induce them to enlarge economic cooperation with South Korea beyond Kaeseong industrial complex. ROK and China can participate together in developing North Korean special area for economic development, if Pyongyang

decides its market to more countries including South Korea.

Third, ROK and China, with the United States other participants, can consider the measure to create a mechanism in the Six-Party Talks to monitor and discuss on the military provocations on the peninsula. “The Six-Party Talks should not be restrained by the North Korean nuclear issue for ever.”<sup>60)</sup> If North Korea provokes, the members of the Six-Party Talks can constitute an inspection team, and criticize and sanction the attacker. As we expect the Six-Party Talks should be developed into regional institution to manage Northeast Asian security, regional states can create a body and endow it with the authority to manage military provocation on the Korean Peninsula.

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60) Wu Chunsi, “The Six-Party Talks: A Good Platform for Broader Security Cooperation in Northeast Asia,” *Institutionalization of Security Cooperation in Northeast Asia*, The 3rd Northeast Asia Security Policy Forum, The Research Institute for National Security Affairs, September 21, 2007, p. 32.

## V. Conclusion

North Korean threat of military provocation will increase as its internal situation aggravates, Kim, Jon-en's power succession faces difficulties, and it refuses denuclearization and economic openness. Of course, the North's military action will not be a full-scale attack, but only a small-scale or local provocation. As ROK-U.S. alliance has prepared for deterring all-out war on the peninsula, however, there are clear limits to deter and respond to all kinds of small scale conflicts, as we could see in the case of Cheonan Incident and Yeonpyong Island bombardment in 2010. And, that is the reason why this research has searched for the measures for strategic cooperation with China.

Strategic cooperation between ROK and China will be the milestone for the future path toward strategic partnership. The fact that their security cooperation has stayed just at the early phase, while economic relations get deepened for the last 20 years, means that there is much room for them to develop strategic relations further. This will be the litmus test. If their cooperation would be successful to deter any violence on the Korean Peninsula, ROK-Chinese relations will open a new chapter in that a new axis of alignment appears. Though looks somewhat idealistic, it surely is worthy while to try to promote new strategic cooperation between them.

As a phase to fasten the first button, having too much expectation is not desirable. It will be a long journey for ROK and China establish a real meaning of strategic partnership, which will take ten years or so. At this current time, it is imperative for them to promote mutual understandings on the motives of North Korea's provocation, how we should deal with it,

and how to prevent it. For the purpose of expediting the process, lots of contacts and dialogues at different levels and areas should be encouraged.

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# 북한도발 방지를 위한 한중 전략적 협력 방안

박창희, 유동원, 스인홍

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# 북한도발 방지를 위한 한중 전략적 협력 방안

박창희, 유동원, 스인홍

## 제1장 서론

### 1. 문제제기

- 북한의 군사도발 방지를 위한 한중 전략적 협력 방안은?
- 북한의 군사도발 원인에 대한 한중의 인식은?
- 북한 도발에 대한 한중의 입장과 반응, 그리고 한중의 협력을 방해하는 요인은?
- 한중 전략적 협력을 증진하기 위한 방안은?

### 2. 한중 협력의 중요성 대두

- 한중협력의 어려움에도 불구하고 한중 협력의 증진은 양국간 전략적 관계를 발전시키는 측면에서 의미를 가질 수 있음
- 특히 북한의 도발과 미중경쟁의 심화로 지난 1년간 한중 군사관계가 크게 악화된 시점에서 이에 대한 시급한 조정이 요구됨

## 제2장 북한도발에 대한 한국의 견해

### 1. 남북관계의 평가

- 정전이후 남북관계는 북한의 지속적 도발에 남한이 전략적 인내를 감수

하는 적대적 관계를 유지

- 김대중 정부이후 남북화해, 평화 공존 정책으로 남북관계는 상당히 개선
- 이명박 정부 집권이후 비핵개방 3000을 대북정책으로 채택, 이는 북한의 변화를 촉구, 남북관계는 악화됨
- 이러한 분위기에서 금강산 관광객 피살사건, 천안함 연평도 사건이 발생
- 그러나 2011년 미중 정상회담에서 한반도의 안정적 관리에 합의, 남북대화를 촉구하면서, 2011년 7월 남북 외무장관 회담과 비핵대화를 추진

## 2. 군사도발의 목적

- 북한내부, 특히 권력승계와 연계됨
- 미국과 한국에 압력을 행사하여 양보를 얻어내려 함
- 중국에 대한 메시지, 미중관계와 한중관계를 이간질
- 한국내부를 겨냥, 남한정부의 대북정책 변화를 유도

## 3. 한국의 입장과 대응

- 한국정부는 북한의 도발에 대해 적극적 억제정책을 추진, 남북대화에 전제조건을 부여
- 북한 위협에 대한 대응은 군사적, 경제적, 외교적 조치가 필요
- 군사도발에 대해 강력한 대응의지 표명, 한미 연합훈련과 자제 억제력 강화
- 외교적으로 6자회담과 양자, 다자적 기구를 활용
- 북한비핵화, 평화체제, 경제협력, 외교관계 개선 등을 논의
- 이 과정에서 중국의 역할이 핵심적, 북한에 대한 제재조치도 중국의 협력 없이는 실효성이 떨어짐

## 제3장 북한도발에 대한 중국의 견해

### 1. 북중관계 평가

- 2003-2009년 5월, 북중관계는 북한이 대중 반감을 표시하고 적대감을 드러내고, 중국도 북한의 도발적 행동에 대한 불평과 비난을 가함으로써 크게 악화됨
- 그러나 2009년 이후 세가지 사건이 있었는데, 이는 2009년 10월 원자바오 평양방문, 2010년 8월 김정일 북경방문, 그리고 2011년 5월 김정일의 북경방문이었으며, 이를 통해 북중관계는 동맹의 부활 및 강화라는 커다란 변화 야기
- 여기에는 김정일의 태도변화가 작용하였는데, 김정일로서는 2008년 뇌졸중에 따른 후계문제를 우려하지 않을 수 없었음. 이 때 북한이 남한에 대한 비난 수위를 높인 것은 바람직하지 않은 것으로 필자가 볼 때는 김정일의 건강악화로 이성적 정책결정 능력에 문제가 생긴 것으로 파악
- 결국 병약한 김정일은 “비이성적”이고 “변덕스러운” 성향으로 변모하게 되었으며, 한반도 안정에 부정적인 영향을 주게 됨

### 2. 북한의 군사도발 의도

- 첫째는 후계구도 안착을 위한 조치
  - \* 김정일은 하루 아침에 4성장군 및 국방위원회 부주석으로 증진
- 둘째는 군사문제로 핵무기 프로그램과 한미에 대한 태세 유지
  - \* 천안함 도발은 2년전 뇌졸중에 따른 통제력 약화 보완 의지가 작용하였으며, 한국에 대해 정상회담 가능성을 비추다가 이를 파기한 것은 나름 건강에 대한 자신감을 회복한 것으로 볼 수 있음
- 셋째는 중국과의 관계 측면에서 북중동맹관계 복원 의도

### 3. 중국의 입장과 반응

- 중국은 어렵고, 당황스러운 입장에 처하였으나 북한의 입장에 서서 한미 연합훈련에 반대하는 등 이전과 같이 일관된 입장을 견지
- 그러나 이러한 중국의 태도는 한중협력에 장애요인으로 작용
  - \* 북중동맹 복원, 천안함에 대한 이견, 김정일의 변덕스러움과 대중국 압력, 한국내 북한 급변사태시 “압록강 진격” 분위기 등이 한중관계 악화의 주요 요인으로 작용
- 그러나 2010년 후반기의 냉각기를 지나면서 양국간 전략적 협력 동반자 관계를 되살려야 한다는 의식 대두
  - \* 2010년 7월 국방장관 방중을 계기로 2008년 합의된 “전략대화” 정례화 필요성 공감
- 한중 간의 전략대화가 성공적인 결실을 맺기 위해서는 서로에 대한 입장을 이해하려는 노력이 필요하며, 최근 이명박 대통령이 김정일의 방중을 긍정적으로 평가한 것은 이러한 측면에서 바람직한 것으로 보임

## 제4장 한중 전략적 협력 방안

### 1. 전략적 협력의 어려움

- 향후 북한이 도발한다면 제3대 권력승계, 북한사회의 내부 단속, 미중에 대한 메시지 전달, 이명박 정부의 대북정책 실패이미지 각인 및 남남갈등 조장에 초점을 맞출 것임
- 그러나 북한의 도발에 대한 한중의 인식은 상이함
  - \* 중국은 북한의 생존이 우선이며, 한국은 북한의 도발방지에 우선 순위를 부여
  - \* 비록 한반도 평화라는 가치를 공유하나 이러한 우선순위가 상이하므로

중국은 북한의 도발방지를 위해 한미의 자극적 행동 자제 요구, 한국은 중국의 대북 압박 요구

## 2. 상호 이해와 존중의 필요

- 서로의 입장을 이해하는 것이 우선
  - \* 한중관계는 20년 밖에 되지 않음. 비록 경제적으로 깊은 관계를 맺고 있지만 이것이 자동적으로 안보관계 개선을 가져오지는 않음을 인식하고 현실을 이해하는 것이 필요
- 다행스러운 것은 천안함 사태 이후 많은 불협화음이 발생하였음에도 불구하고 한중관계는 생각보다 강인함을 보여줌
  - \* 경제관계가 안정적으로 지속되고 있으며, 2011년 7월 김관진 장관의 방중, 그리고 서울에서 한중 전략대화를 통해 양국관계의 복원 및 발전을 위한 토대 구축

## 3. 전략대화의 틀 구축

- 한중 양국이 한반도 안보와 관련한 민감한 주제를 논의하는 것은 매우 어려운 것이 사실이므로, 양국간 안보현안을 정부 또는 군 관계자가 아닌 학자들의 수준에서 우선적으로 논의함으로써 입장차를 정리하고 의제 우선순위를 설정
- 이후 민간학자들과 실무수준의 정부 또는 군 관계자가 포함된 트랙 1.5 수준의 논의로 발전시켜 향후 트랙 1 수준의 대화를 가질 수 있는 여건 조성
- 빠른 시일내 한중 고위급 간의 전략대화가 이루어지는 것은 가능하지도 바람직하지도 않음을 고려하여 대화원칙을 설정하고 단계적으로 추진해 나가는 것이 바람직할 것임

#### 4. 전략적 동반자관계 증진

- 구동존이를 뛰어넘어 어떠한 ‘의제’도 논의할 수 있어야 진정한 전략적 관계로 간주할 수 있음
- 전략적 동반자관계를 증진하기 위해서는 첫째, 국방전략대화의 활용, 둘째, 북한의 개혁개방 노력 증진, 셋째, 6자회담 틀 내에 한반도 도발 방지기구 설치 등의 방안을 고려해 볼 수 있음

### 제5장 결론

- 북한의 국지도발 가능성 더욱 증가할 것으로 전망
  - \* 북한내 정치, 사회, 경제적 상황 악화, 6자회담 전망의 불투명성, 한국 내 총선 및 대선, 그리고 전시작전통제권 전환 등은 한반도 안보상황을 불안정하게 하는 요인으로 작용
- 어려운 상황일수록 한중이 협력하여 북한의 도발을 억제하는 노력을 경주하는 과정은 그 자체로 미래 한중 전략적 동반자관계를 강화하는 초석으로 작용할 것
- 그러나 단기적 성과에 대한 기대는 금물임. 보다 장기적 관점에서 인내심을 가지고 공동의 노력을 경주해 나가는 것이 중요

## 유의사항

1. 본 연구보고서 내용은 연구진의 개인적인 견해이며 소속 기관의 공식적인 견해가 아닙니다.
2. 본 연구보고서는 정책입안시 참고자료로만 활용하고 타 기관에 불필요한 자료유출을 삼가하여 주시기 바랍니다.

## 국제공동연구프로젝트

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