The Six-Party Talks:
A Critical Assessment and Implications
for South Korea’s Policy Toward North Korea

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Abstract

In February 2005, North Korea declared that it had no intention to continue the Six-Party Talks and already possessed nuclear weapons, and asked the United States to abandon its hostile policy. South Korea, the United States, and China have made strenuous efforts to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue through dialog. In September 2005, the fourth round of the Six-Party Talks dramatically adopted the joint statement, which provides a fundamental principle to resolve the decade–old North Korean nuclear issue.

At the joint statement North Korea agreed to abandon all nuclear weapons and all nuclear programs. South Korea, the United States, China, and Japan expressed their willingness to provide energy assistance to North Korea. They also agreed to discuss the provision of the LWR to the North at an appropriate time. However, the Six-Party Talks has been stalemated since the first round of the fifth such talks due to North Korea’s demand for provision of a light-water reactor (LWR) before any implementation of the joint statement.

To resolve the North Korean nuclear issue, a step-by-step approach might be desirable. At the first phase, all countries that signed on the joint statement should exert every effort to build favorable conditions for the North to implement the joint statement. North Korea must return to the NPT and accept IAEA inspection and related countries must prepare to give energy assistance to the North. At the second phase, North Korea must begin nuclear dismantlement process, and the United States and Japan need to improve their relations with North Korea. At the third phase North Korea must complete nuclear dismantlement, and the United States, Japan and North Korea must normalize their diplomatic relations.
Introduction

On September 19, 2005, South and North Korea, the United States, China, Japan, and Russia adopted a joint statement to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue at the fourth round of the Six-Party Talks, which was held in Beijing. The joint statement was expected to provide a fundamental principle to resolve the nuclear issue through negotiations among the relevant countries. However, the Six-Party Talks have been stalemated since the first phase of the fifth round of the Talks due to North Korea’s demand for light-water reactors (LWR) and the continued U.S. economic sanctions against North Korea. On December 23, 2005, Alexander Vershbow, the U.S. ambassador to Seoul, described North Korea as a “criminal state” that produces counterfeits. Since then, the United States and North Korea have displayed antagonistic attitudes toward each other, and the prospects for a peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue through dialog seem to be fading away.

The North Korean nuclear issue plunged into a serious situation by the late 2002. On December 12, 2002, North Korea announced dissolution of the “nuclear freeze” which was agreed on the Geneva Agreed Framework of October 1994, and began to remove seals of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on its nuclear facilities and its inspection cameras. In January 2003, North Korea again declared its intention to withdraw from the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT).

In order to resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis, the relevant countries—South Korea, the United States, China, Japan, Russia, and North Korea—held the Six-Party Talks in Beijing on August 27, 2003. The Six-Party Talks, however, have not produced any meaningful results due to different positions between the United States and North Korea: North Korea insisted on normalization of its relationship with the United States before the resolution of its nuclear problem, whereas the United States demanded dismantlement of the North Korean nuclear weapons and nuclear programs before normalization of its relationship with the

1 The United States froze North Korean accounts at Banco Delta Asia, a Chinese bank in Macao, for its alleged illegal money laundering activities.
North.

Since the third round of Six-Party Talks, which was held in Beijing in June 2004, diplomatic efforts by South Korea and China to resume the Six-Party Talks have been deadlocked due to North Korea’s refusal to return to the dialog because of the hard-line U.S. policy toward North Korea. North Korea, maintained a strong negative position against resumption of the Six-Party Talks after the U.S. Senate approved the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004. The State of the Union address of President Bush in January 2005 and the statement made by the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice describing North Korea as an “outpost of tyranny,” hardened North Korea’s negative stance against the Six-Party Talks.

In these circumstances, the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that North Korea would not return to the Six-Party Talks until favorable conditions for dialog were created. It also declared that North Korea had already produced and possessed nuclear weapons for self-defense. In spite of the North Korean declaration, the countries concerned, including South Korea and China, made every effort to resolve the nuclear crisis through dialog. As a result, the fourth round of Six-Party Talks was held from July 26, 2005 in Beijing. However, North Korea stubbornly adhered to its original position, saying that it would abandon its nuclear weapons and nuclear programs only after normalization of its relationship with the United States and the removal of the U.S. nuclear threat posed against it. The United States also clearly showed that it had no intention to change its original position. Hence, the first phase of the fourth round of the Six-Party Talks

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3 At the third round of Six-Party Talks held in Beijing in June 2004, the United States proposed three-phased guarantees to resolve the North’s nuclear issue under the condition of the CVID. In the first phase, the United States provides a tentative security guarantee and heavy oil to the North, if North Korea declares abrogation of its nuclear programs. In the second phase, the United States and related countries provide a multilateral security guarantee and energy resources to the North, if North Korea completely dismantles its nuclear weapons and nuclear programs. In the final stage, the United States and the North will undertake measures to normalize their relations.

4. President Bush described North Korea as part of the “Axis of Evil.”

adjourned after 13 days.

The second phase of the fourth round of the Six-Party Talks resumed on August 27, 2005, and dramatically produced a joint statement which includes North Korea’s abandonment of all nuclear weapons and all nuclear programs, provision of a light water reactor to North Korea, and establishment of a peace regime on the Korean peninsula. The joint statement is expected to provide a fundamental principle to resolve the second North Korean nuclear crisis, which has been aggravated since October 2002.

In these circumstances, this article analyzes and evaluates the joint statement, which was produced after the second phase of the fourth round of Six-Party Talks. It also examines the positions of the countries involved regarding the North Korean nuclear issue. It finally suggests desirable policies for South Korea toward North Korea, the United States and other countries concerned.

Progress and Issues of the Fourth Round of Six-Party Talks

North Korean Declaration as a Nuclear Weapon State

In April 2003, the North Korean Deputy Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lee Keun, stated that North Korea already possessed nuclear weapons and would not abolish them. The spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also said that North Korea was proceeding with the final stage of reprocessing of the 8,000 spent fuel rods. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Choe Su Hon, in his address at the United Nations in September 2004, further escalated the North Korean nuclear crisis by declaring that North Korea has weaponized the reprocessed fuel rods.

Conflict between the United States and North Korea continued after the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004 was passed by the U.S. Senate on October 4, 2004. On December 17, 2004, the official newspaper of the North Korean Workers’ Party, Rodong Sinmun, advocated that the U.S. demand on North Korea to abolish its nuclear program explicitly demonstrates its hard-line policy against North Korea, which intends to destroy North Korea, had not been ended, and
symbolizes that the United States has no intention for peaceful coexistence with North Korea.\(^6\)

In these circumstances, North Korea announced on February 10, 2005 that it had no intention to continue with the Six-Party Talks and that it possessed nuclear weapons. In that statement, the North declared that it would increase its nuclear arsenal as a deterrent against “the U.S. hostility.” The statement officially abrogated the “Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula” between the South and the North of 1992, and the “Geneva Agreed Framework” of October 1994 between the United States and North Korea.\(^7\)

After the North’s nuclear declaration, however, a memorandum of the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs demanded that the United States abandon its hostile policy against the North and transform it into a policy of peaceful coexistence with the North. The memorandum also said that if the United States accepts the North Korean demands, the nuclear issue would be resolved in a peaceful manner. In this regard, North Korea seemed to renounce the Six-Party Talks as a negotiation strategy in order to enhance its leverage at the next round of the Talks, by maintaining a firm stance against the U.S. hard-line policy.

**The U.S. Response After the North’s Nuclear Declaration**

In spite of the North’s nuclear declaration the U.S policies toward North Korea and on the nuclear issues had not changed. In other words, the United States continued to maintain its fundamental principle of “complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of the nuclear program (CVID) of the North.” The United States maintained that it would not give any compensation for wrongful activity such as nuclear development, and advocated that the Six-Party Talks could be the most desirable way to resolve the nuclear issue, pursuing a “stick-and-carrot” policy toward North Korea. On February 19, 2005, Secretary Rice warned North Korea after the 2+2 meeting with Japan\(^8\) that

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\(^7\) North Korea, in the two documents, agreed not to use nuclear energy for military purposes, to abolish nuclear enrichment and reprocessing facilities, and to prohibit production or possession of nuclear weapons.
North Korea should seriously consider the concerns of the international community, suggesting the United States would push very hard on North Korea unless it returns to the Six-Party Talks. On the other hand, the spokesman of the White House mentioned the possibility of direct bilateral talks between the United States and North Korea within the framework of the Six-Party Talks. In this regard, the United States seemed to understand that the North Korean nuclear declaration as a bargaining strategy to receive more compensation at the next round of the Six-Party Talks.

Blocking the “stick-and-carrot” policy of the United States, North Korea firmly adhered to the policy of “no talks.” On April 1, 2005, the First Deputy Foreign Minister of North Korea, Kang Seok Joo, refused the Chinese proposal to resume multilateral nuclear dialog. Selig Harrison, who visited Pyongyang in April 2005, delivered the North Korean position that the North could abolish nuclear weapons after diplomatic normalization with the United States, and would return to the Six-Party Talks if the latter apologizes for the statement about the “outpost of tyranny.” It suggested that North Korea had hardened its position not to return to the Six-Party Talks. As a result, a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue entered into a more complicated phase.

Nevertheless, the countries concerned, including South Korea and China, recognized that negligence of the nuclear issue further aggravates the nuclear crisis. In May 2005, the U.S. officials tried to reduce conflict with the North. China tried to induce North Korea to return to the Six-Party Talks with persuasion and diplomatic pressure. South Korea also tried to persuade the North at the Ministerial Meetings.

Responding to the strenuous efforts of the other five negotiating partners, the North Korean Foreign Minster, Paik Nam Soon, who

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8 Heads of State and Defense departments of the United States and Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Self Defense Forces of Japan participated in the 2+2 meeting between the United States and Japan.

9 Chosun Ilbo, Feb. 21, 2005.

10 On April 29, 2005, President Bush stated that the North Korean nuclear issue might be dealt with by the UN Security Council, and criticized Kim Jong Il as a tyrant. On May 31, 2005, however, he emphasized a diplomatic solution of the nuclear issue through the Six-Party Talks, referring to Kim Jong Il as “Mr. Kim.” Chosun Ilbo, July 27, 2005.
participated in the Foreign Minister’s Meeting at the 12th ASEAN Regional Forum, stated that North Korea would return to the NPT and allow IAEA inspections after a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue. Both the United States and North Korea understood that continuing confrontation without dialog would be detrimental to their interests.

**Resumption of the Fourth Six-Party Talks and the Joint Statement**

The fourth round of Six-Party Talks aimed at ending North Korea’s nuclear issue resumed in Beijing on August 26, 2005, after a 13-month hiatus. Christopher Hill, the U.S. head of delegation, urged that North Korea follow the example of previous cases of denuclearization in Libya and South Africa in his keynote speech. North Korea, however, also repeated its previous stance, namely that the North would abandon nuclear weapons after diplomatic normalization with the United States and elimination of its nuclear threats posed to the North.

Though the United States and North Korea met at the Six-Party Talks, they still maintained different positions. For North Korea, the purpose of the Talks was to eliminate the U.S. nuclear threat against the North and to accomplish complete denuclearization in the Korean peninsula, raising questions about the U.S. deployment of nuclear weapons in South Korea. In his keynote speech as the head of the North Korean delegation, Kim Gae Kwan, requested establishment of a legal and institutional framework for confidence-building between the United States and North Korea; withdrawal of nuclear weapons from South Korea and prohibition of their redeployment; and removal of the U.S. nuclear umbrella provided for South Korea. In other words, the North demanded a peace treaty with the United States and abrogation of the ROK-U.S. alliance.

The United States, on the other hand, aimed at elimination of all nuclear weapons and all nuclear programs of North Korea, including its right to peaceful use of nuclear energy. The United States was con-

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11 *Chosun Ilbo*, July 31, 2005.

12 He adhered to the previous U.S. position, i.e., diplomatic normalization with the North only after the North abrogates nuclear weapons and nuclear programs.
cerned about the North’s nuclear activities even after the Geneva Agreed Framework. The United States believed that in order to prevent clandestine nuclear development by the North, even peaceful use of nuclear energy should not be permitted to it.

Due to different positions between the United States and North Korea, the fourth round of Six-Party Talks adjourned after 13 days. Though there were some understandings in principle between the United States and North Korea, such as abrogation of nuclear weapons by the North, diplomatic normalization between the United States and North Korea, provision of multilateral security guarantee for the North, and economic assistance including energy to the North. However, due to deep-rooted mutual distrust, a resolution of the nuclear issue was difficult.

The conflict at the fourth round of Six-Party Talks between the United States and the North focused on the scope of the North’s nuclear program and its right to peaceful use of nuclear energy. The United States maintained that the North should abrogate “all nuclear weapons and all nuclear programs,” while the North advocated “all nuclear weapons and related nuclear programs” excluding nuclear reactors and facilities for power generation purposes. Pyongyang said that the North would never give up the right to a peaceful nuclear energy program and, further, asked Washington to resume construction of light-water reactors (LWRs) that it promised to deliver to the North according to the Agreed Framework in 1994. The United States responded that the issue of peaceful use of nuclear energy might be permitted sometime in the future, while rejecting the idea of resuming LWR construction. China tried to mediate between the United States and the North with a proposal that the North may maintain rights and obligations as a member of the NPT “on certain conditions.” Nevertheless, due to the North’s insistence on its right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, the talks adjourned.

After a five-week recess, the second phase of the fourth round of Six-Party Talks resumed in Beijing on September 13, 2005. On September 19, 2005, the six parties finally agreed on a joint statement. Major

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13 “[O]n certain conditions” means that the North’s return to the NPT and its acceptance of the IAEA inspections.
points of the joint statement included the following:

1. The six countries agreed on establishing a verifiable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula in a peaceful manner. The North committed to abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and returning, at an early date, to the NPT and to IAEA safeguards. The United States affirmed that it has no nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula and has no intention to attack or invade the North with nuclear or conventional weapons. The North stated that it has the right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. At an appropriate time, the related countries will discuss the provision of an LWR to the North.

2. The United States and the North agreed to make effort to normalize their diplomatic relations. At the joint statement, the two countries promised to respect each other’s sovereignty and exist peacefully together. Japan and North Korea also agreed to take steps to normalize their relations.

3. The six parties agreed to promote economic cooperation in the fields of energy, trade, and investment, bilaterally and/or multilaterally. China, Japan, South Korea, and the United States expressed their willingness to provide energy assistance to North Korea, and South Korea reaffirmed its proposal regarding the provision of 2 million kilowatts electric power to the North.

4. The six parties committed to exerting joint efforts for lasting peace and stability in Northeast Asia. The directly concerned parties will negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean peninsula at an appropriate separate forum.¹⁴

The joint statement is expected to provide a basis for peaceful resolution of the North’s nuclear crisis, which has lasted for 35 months after James Kelly’s visit to Pyongyang and the North’s recognition of its uranium enriched nuclear weapon program on October 3, 2002. The joint statement may contribute to end the Cold War on the Korean peninsula by helping the North’s diplomatic normalizations with both the United States and Japan. The Six-Party Talks may provide not only an opportunity to abolish the Cold War structure on the Korean peninsula, but

also a basis for multilateral security cooperation in Northeast Asia.

**Disputes over Implementation of the Joint Statement Between the United States and the North**

Despite the joint statement adopted at the fourth round of Six-Party Talks, it is too optimistic to expect a complete resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue. For a complete resolution of the issue, a concrete implementation scheme must be provided. However, the United States and the North have different interpretations of the joint statement.

The following issues of dispute must be resolved at the future Six-Party Talks:

First, the United States and North Korea maintain different interpretations about the order of implementation of the agreements inscribed in the joint statement. The joint statement does not mention about “an appropriate time” for the provision of the LWR to North Korea. The joint statement also does not clearly state when North Korea abandons its nuclear program, when IAEA inspections begin, and when the United States and the other four countries provide energy support to North Korea. In addition, the joint statement omits a deadline for the North to freeze nuclear programs. A complete resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue includes such complicated issues as: (a) North Korea’s return to NPT and acceptance of the IAEA safeguard agreement; (b) provision of energy and electricity to the North; (c) IAEA’s inspection of the North Korean nuclear facilities; (d) provision of LWR to the North; (e) negotiation of diplomatic recognition between the United States and the North; (f) building a peace regime on the Korean peninsula, and so forth. However, the joint statement simply identifies those issues, avoiding how to implement the agreement.

Second, the joint statement does not mention clearly about how to verify North Korea’s denuclearization. Immediately after the United States and the North signed the Geneva Agreed Framework in October 1994, the two countries disagreed on how to verify the North’s nuclear freeze. Even if North Korea accepts all IAEA inspections, and the international community recognizes the North’s nuclear abandonment, it would be hard to expect North Korea to fulfill the IAEA’s demands.
Third, North Korea agreed at the joint statement to abandon “all nuclear weapons,” but it is not clear that all nuclear weapons include those weapons made of enriched uranium. The United States assumes that North Korea formally possesses an enriched uranium program, but the North has so far has denied this.

Fourth, North Korea agreed to the abandonment of its nuclear programs, not dismantlement of the programs, in the joint statement. So far, the United States interprets that the North must dismantle all nuclear facilities, but the joint statement mentioned abandonment of nuclear weapons and nuclear programs. Therefore, North Korea may refuse dismantlement of existing nuclear facilities.

Fifth, it is not clear that the joint statement includes the U.S. intention to change its policy toward North Korea. The joint statement declared the need to build a peace regime in Northeast Asia. In order to do that, it is most important to end hostile relations between the United States and North Korea. The United States may accept that it has no intention to invade or attack North Korea with nuclear weapons as well as conventional weapons. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that the United States would withdraw the USFK and cease ROK-U.S. joint military exercises.

Though the joint statement provided a fundamental basis for resolving the North Korean nuclear issue, it is not easy to implement the agreements. For a complete resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue, concrete implementation measures must be prepared. So far, there still remain various conflicting issues between the United States and the North about how to implement the joint statement. On September 20, 2005, the North Korean Foreign Ministry released a statement, saying that it would return to the NPT and accept the IAEA inspections immediately after the United States provides it with LWR, indicating a tough negotiation process lies ahead. Regarding the provision of the LWR, Article 1 of the joint statement said that “the other parties expressed their respect and agreed to discuss, at an appropriate time, the subject of the provision of light-water reactors to North Korea.” Thus, the joint statement was vague about indicating exactly

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15 North Korea mentioned that the provision of an LWR would symbolize trust between the United States and the North.
when the other parties would deliver the LWR to the North.

Countering the North’s argument, the U.S. Secretary of State made it clear that it would not provide the North with the energy resources unless North Korea holds to its end of the bargain first. At United Nations Headquarters in New York on September 20, 2005, the U.S. Secretary said that North Korea “is not a member of the NPT, is not in good standing in the NPT, has not agreed to IAEA safeguards, and is running a military program that is clearly outside of the international obligations.”16 She also mentioned that there is “a clarity about the need for North Korea to dismantle, get back into the NPT, get IAEA safeguards, and then discuss a light-water reactor.”17 In this regard the United States considers that the current moment is not “an appropriate time.”

South Korea explained the ambiguity regarding the “appropriate time.” South Korean Deputy Foreign Minister and head of South Korean delegation to the Six-Party Talks, Song Min-soon, explained that “discussion on the light-water reactor will naturally begin when North Korea abandons its nuclear programs, joins the NPT and fulfills IAEA safeguards.”18

Japan and Russia also stated that discussion of a light-water reactor would begin after North Korea fulfills its pledge to abandon nuclear programs and return to the international atomic control system. Machimura Nobutaga, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan stated that the North’s demand for a light-water reactor is unacceptable. He explained that a light-water reactor would be discussed at an appropriate time after the North abandons all nuclear programs and fulfills IAEA obligations.19

Since immediately after the six parties signed the joint statement, disputes over the light-water reactor between the United States and the North have been continuing. The disputes could be a focal point of discussion at the next round of the Six-Party Talks. A mutually satisfying

17 Korea Herald, Sept. 21, 2005.
18 Korea Herald, Sept. 21, 2005.
solution of the nuclear issue needs another round of serious discussions.

Five Other Negotiating Partners’ Positions on the Nuclear Issue

The United States

The second Bush administration’s basic foreign policy can be seen in Bush’s inauguration speech and the State of Union Address. According to those statements, the second Bush administration’s foreign policy will be focused on “war on tyranny,” instead of “war on terrorism” of the first administration. Through the anti-terrorism campaigns, President Bush must have come to understand that elimination of terrorism is impossible by the United States alone. Therefore, he stated that the foreign policy should be focused on “regime change” of “rogue states.” President Bush also declared that he would mobilize all possible measures, including both military and diplomatic ones, to expand freedom and democracy.

In this sense, the U.S. policy toward the North will be pursued in line with the abovementioned foreign policy principles. Though President Bush referred to Kim Jong Il as “Mr. Kim” in May 2005 to bring him to the negotiation table, he still maintains a negative perception of North Korea and Kim Jong Il. He sees Kim Jong Il as a tyrant and North Korea as one of the “Axis of Evil” countries. In this regard, the second Bush administration continues to pursue a North Korean policy aimed at transforming the North Korean regime into a democratic one by mobilizing multilateral cooperation and various measures. In other words, the second Bush administration will pursue not only dismantlement of the North’s nuclear weapons and programs, but also transformation of North Korea into a democratic society.

The United States seems to understand the North’s brinkmanship strategy, such as declaration of withdrawal from the NPT and possession of nuclear weapons, as a strategy to get more rewards at the negotiation table. Consequently, it would be difficult to expect the United States to make concessions to the North. The United States maintains in principle a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue, but may consider other measures if North Korea does not comply with the joint state-
ment of September 2005. If the North is not sincere about implementing the joint statement, the United States may bring the nuclear issue to the U.N. Security Council to put more diplomatic pressure on the North. In the worst-case scenario, the use of military measures cannot be excluded.

**China**

China, as host of the Six-Party Talks and a long-time close ally of North Korea, is expected to play an important role in resolving the North Korean nuclear issue. China understands that it will have a negative impact on peace and security in Northeast Asia, if the North’s nuclear quagmire continues. In fact, China has made a considerable effort to manage the North’s nuclear issue.

China officially is opposed to the North Korean nuclear program. After the North’s nuclear declaration in February 2005, Wang Jiarui, head of the Chinese Communist Party’s International Department, visited Pyonyang for talks with North Korean officials about its nuclear program. Wang delivered the Chinese position on the nuclear issue, saying that North Korea’s nuclear program is against Chinese security interests. He tried to persuade North Korean officials to resolve the nuclear issue at the Six-Party Talks. China’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Li Jiaoxing, also in his keynote speech at the fourth round of Six-Party Talks, stressed a gradual approach to resolve the nuclear issue through negotiations and compromises between the United States and the North.

Considering traditional relationships between China and North Korea, China might be the most important country that can play a major role for the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue. However, China is reluctant to put any serious diplomatic pressure on North Korea, worrying about North Korea’s strong resistance.

Therefore, China seems to prefer to maximize its strategic interests in the process of nuclear negotiations rather than pursuing a complete resolution of the North’s nuclear issue. China intends to use the North

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Korean card against a strengthening of the U.S.-Japanese security cooperation in the Northeast Asian region. China’s major concern is not to change the North Korean regime, but to manage North Korea and maintain stability on the Korean peninsula.

**Japan**

Japan has maintained close cooperation with the United States to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue, and has made every effort to resume the Six-Party Talks and resolve the nuclear issue peacefully through negotiations. In spite of the North’s nuclear declaration in February 2005, Japanese Prime Minister, Koizumi, has expressed his wish for resumption of the Six-Party Talks at an early date due to his political stake in normalizing diplomatic relations with North Korea.

However, Japanese conservatives have demanded that strong measures be applied to the North, advocating sanctions on the North by the U.N. Security Council resolution. On February 19, 2005, Japan and the United States agreed to put pressure on the North rather than attempt to merely persuade it. They interpreted the North’s nuclear program as a serious challenge against nuclear non-proliferation efforts of the international community and a direct threat to peace and security in Asia. In line with Japan’s strong opposition to the North’s nuclear program, Saiki Akitaga, a member of the Japanese delegation to the Six-Party Talks, warned North Korea that Japan might bring the issue to the U.N. Security Council.

Japan also has an intention to resolve remaining issues in the process of normalization with the North, such as its long-range missiles and the Japanese who were abducted by North Koreans. At the fourth round of Six-Party Talks, a Japanese delegation mentioned about those issues requesting the North to take more positive actions. In this regard, Japan is expected to put more diplomatic pressure on the North at the next round of Six-Party Talks.

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Russia

Russia has not played a major role in resolving the North’s nuclear issue. It showed an ambiguous position after the North’s nuclear declaration in February 2005. It simply repeats a fundamental principle that the North Korean nuclear issue should be resolved within the framework of the Six-Party Talks. At the U.S.-Russia summit meeting, which was held in Slovakia on February 24, 2005, the two countries, agreed in principle to cooperation for denuclearization of the North. However, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ivanov, reserved his position—saying that it is too early to reach a conclusion about whether North Korea possessed nuclear weapons, even after the North acknowledged its nuclear program in October 2004 by Choe Su Hon’s U.N. address.

Russia has maintained that a comprehensive resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue is the most desirable one, exchanging the North’s nuclear freeze in compensation for security guarantees and economic support by the countries concerned. In March 2003, Ivanov suggested several measures to resolve the nuclear issue, such as: (a) the North’s implementation of its denuclearization agreements, including the Agreed Framework of 1994; (b) provision of bilateral of multilateral security guarantee to the North; and (c) provision of humanitarian and economic assistance to the North.

Russia has made every effort to revive its traditional relationships with the North. However, Russia, like China, tries to use the North Korea card in its strategic relations with both China and the United States. Therefore, it is hard to expect Russia to play a positive role in resolving the North Korean nuclear issue.

Phased Implementation Plans of the Joint Statement

Since the six parties agreed in principle that the North Korean nuclear issue be resolved in an appropriate manner at the fourth round of Six-Party Talks, the countries concerned need to prepare alternatives to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue. Considering the disputed issues and lack of confidence between the United States and North Korea, the following step-be-step approach may be desirable:
**First Phase: Creating Favorable Conditions for Implementation of the Joint Statement**

It is most important for all parties that signed the joint statement to exert various efforts to create favorable conditions for the North to implement the joint statement at an initial stage. To create positive conditions, first of all, North Korea must start to take measures to abandon all nuclear weapons and all nuclear programs and the countries involved must prepare to provide economic assistance and energy to the North as early as possible. For that purpose, the six countries should discuss: (a) when North Korea returns to the NPT and fulfills the IAEA safeguard agreement; (b) when the relevant countries provide the LWR to the North; and (c) when the relevant countries provide economic assistance and energy to the North.

Second, the countries concerned should discuss how to organize a peace forum on the Korean peninsula. In line with North Korea’s nuclear abrogation and related countries energy support to the North, a peace forum on the Korean peninsula should be materialized through various dialogs between South and North Koreas, the United States and the North, and China and the North, respectively. In that process, the South and the North must embark on military dialogs to enhance military confidence between them.

Third, to build a favorable condition for implementation of the joint statement, the United States and Japan must make strenuous efforts to improve their relations with the North. The United States and the North must discuss removal of the U.S. economic sanctions against the North and improvement of their relations. Japan and North Korea must reopen dialog to normalize their diplomatic relations. The South and the North must discuss economic cooperation, military confidence-building measures, and measures for the South to provide energy to the North.

**Second Phase: Dismantlement of North Korean Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Programs**

After favorable conditions to implement the joint statement are materialized, dismantlement of North Korean nuclear weapons and
programs will come into effect. In the dismantlement process, relevant countries will consider the following issues. After North Korea returns to the NPT and fulfills the IAEA safeguard agreement, the countries involved will provide economic assistance and security guarantees to the North, followed by a full-scale nuclear dismantlement process. Nuclear dismantlement in general will take effect through reporting of nuclear facilities, a freeze of nuclear activities, inspection, and dismantlement. In the process of nuclear dismantlement, it is expected that North Korea will try to divide dismantlement procedures into several parts to delay, or interfere with, the process. Therefore, it is important to determine when North Korea starts nuclear dismantlement in an irreversible way. At that time, it is expected that the United States and North Korea would begin to negotiate about the provision of the LWR to North Korea.

Second, if North Korea implements the joint statement sincerely, South Korea may consider power supply to North Korea. For electricity support, South Korea must build transmission facilities in North Korea. In the process of building power transmission facilities, the two militaries of South and North Korea may discuss relocation of military bases and facilities and military cooperation measures in case of unexpected accidents occurring. Thus, the two Koreas may enhance military confidence.

Third, the countries concerned must make preparations for a peace forum on the Korean peninsula. It is desirable to include the two Koreas, the United States and China as members of the peace forum. The two Koreas are directly-involved parties that are responsible for peace on the Korean peninsula, and the United States and China are the parties that signed the armistice agreement in 1953. The peace forum will discuss alternatives for the armistice agreement, ways to conclude a peace treaty, international guarantees for the peace treaty, ways to manage a peace regime on the Korean peninsula, etc.

Fourth, the United States and Japan need to improve their relations with North Korea. Major issues between the United States and North Korea include the U.S. economic sanctions against the North and release of North Korea from lists of countries that support terrorism. To normalize relations between Japan and North Korea, the two countries should resolve issues of the North’s long-range missiles and Japanese
who were abducted by North Koreans.

Fifth, inter-Korean relations also need to be improved. If the joint statement is implemented continuously, the two Koreas may hold a second inter-Korean summit conference. The second inter-Korean summit may adopt a peace declaration on the Korean peninsula, which includes arms control and arms reduction on the Korean peninsula. After the peace declaration inter-Korean economic cooperation will be expanded and various government-level talks will be regularized.

Third Phase: Completion of North Korean Nuclear Dismantlement and Diplomatic Normalization Between the U.S. and North Korea

The final phase of the North Korean nuclear resolution will be a completion of the North’s nuclear dismantlement with the other five countries’ energy support and construction of the LWR. The construction of the LWR will take about 10 years, and during that period the United States and Japan will normalize their relations with North Korea.

First, when North Korea completes dismantlement of nuclear weapons and nuclear programs, the countries involved will provide energy to the North and discuss the provision of the LWR.

Second, the United States and Japan will take measures to improve their relations with North Korea, and the armistice system on the Korean peninsula will be transformed into a peace regime. Peace treaties between the two Koreas, and between the United States and North Korea, respectively, will complete a Korean peninsula peace regime.

Third, after North Korea completes nuclear dismantlement, the United States and North Korea will negotiate normalization of their diplomatic relations. The United States and North Korea must resolve such issues as North Korea’s long-range missiles, chemical and biological weapons, human rights abuses, illicit trafficking of drugs, illegal money laundering and production of counterfeits, etc. If North Korea is sincere about nuclear dismantlement and observes international norms that regulate weapons of mass destruction, a package settlement to normalize relations between the United States and the North will be possible.
Policy Suggestions for South Korea

The nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula was aggravated due to North Korea’s nuclear declaration in February 2005. However, concerted efforts made by countries such as South Korea, the United States and China succeeded in resuming the fourth round of Six-Party Talks and adopted the joint statement for peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue. Nevertheless, it is not optimistic to expect a complete resolution of that issue. The United States and North Korea still maintain conflicting interpretations regarding when an LWR will be provided to North Korea. In that sense, another nuclear crisis might be possible, unless the North complies with the joint statement.

In this circumstance, it is no wonder that South Korea’s policy objective is to resolve the nuclear issue through negotiations at the Six-Party Talks. However, there exist many difficulties for South Korea to resolve the issue peacefully, since it does not have any decisive leverage for that. Unless we resolve the nuclear issue at the earliest moment, it would be possible for North Korea to produce more nuclear weapons and improve their capabilities. If this happens, it will be more difficult to resolve the issue, and South Korea will face more serious security threats from North Korea. Therefore, South Korea must pursue appropriate policies toward North Korea, and exert every effort possible to resolve the issue in cooperation with the other parties to the talks.

Policy Toward North Korea

It is believed that a fundamental purpose for North Korea to develop a nuclear program is to maintain its political system, which has been suffering a serious economic crisis for more than two decades. North Korea is a barrack state, in which its military controls every aspect of North Korean society in order to ensure the survival of its political system in this serious situation of diplomatic isolation and economic crisis. In its survival game with South Korea, North Korea cannot help strengthening its military forces and developing nuclear weapons.

In other words, the essence of the North Korean nuclear issue is closely related with its system’s survivability. If North Korea abolishes its nuclear programs and weapons of mass destruction and transforms
its system into an open one, it will secure economic assistance and security guarantees from the international community, including the United States. However, North Korea is concerned that if it opens up its society to the outside world, it would be contaminated with capitalist ideology, which might ultimately lead to the collapse of its system. In this regard, North Korea is desperately attempting to cling to its nuclear program to survive this difficult situation.

South Korea has pursued various programs to assist North Korea based on the presumption that reconciliation and cooperation with North Korea is the best choice to maintain stability and peace on the Korean peninsula. First, South Korea has carried out the Mt. Kumgang tourism project. The overland tour program that was opened in September 2003 enabled more South Korean tourists to visit Mt. Kumgang. On July 2, 2004, the Mt. Kumgang Hotel was opened, and Hyundai Co. is planning to construct a golf course and another hotel there. Second, South Korea has supported various forms of humanitarian assistance to North Korea, either directly or through international institutions such as the World Food Program and UNICEF. South Korea has delivered 30–40 tons of grains and 20–30 tons of fertilizers every year since the Kim Dae-jung administration. In 2004, it provided $1 million to the North to improve children’s nutrition status, $670,000 to prevent malaria, and 100,000 tons of corn through the WFP. Third, South Korea completed relinkage of the southern part of the railroad between Seoul and Pyongyang, which was severed after the Korean War. South Korea finished relinking 12 km of railroad and 5.1 km of landroad of the Kyongui Line. Fourth, South Korea is ambitiously promoting the Kaesung Industrial Complex project. The South Korean government is planning to develop a total of 65.7km² in a gradual manner in Gaesong. In December 2004, the South agreed to provide electricity and communication infrastructure for the Kaesung Industrial Complex, and the construction is ongoing.

As mentioned above, South Korea has continuously carried out various cooperative and assistance projects, even though the North has been developing nuclear weapons. Kim Jong II, in his New Year’s mes-

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23 More than 1 million South Koreans have visited Mt. Kumgang since the tour project began in 1998.
sage in 2005, urged South Korea to take part in an anti-American struggle through close cooperation between Korean people of the South and the North, thus intending to divide the South Korean society.

In these circumstances, it is worth evaluating whether South Korea’s reconciliation and cooperation policies toward the North have contributed to changing its political system into a reformed and open one. Kim Jong Il has been strengthening his dictatorship by relying on the military. North Korea maintains 1.17 million-strong armed forces, and the domestically produced and deployed “Cheonmaho,” literally meaning “Flying Horse,” tanks near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). It also deployed 170 mm self-propelled long-range artillery and 240 mm multiple-rocket launchers there. More than 130 hovercraft and 300 An-2 aircraft would be able to carry Special Operation Forces penetrating easily into rear areas of the South. Furthermore, North Korea has already weaponized such germs as anthrax, smallpox, and pesticides, and is assumed to maintain 2,500–5,000 tons of biological and chemical weapons. It also is capable of producing 100 Scuds every year, and has deployed a total of brigade-sized missile units about 59 km north of the DMZ.24

These military activities of the North clearly show that it continues to maintain a hostile policy toward the South, meaning that South Korea’s economic and humanitarian assistance programs under the policy of reconciliation and cooperation are not helpful to changing the North. Therefore, South Korea needs a linkage policy between various cooperation projects and the North’s responses. Under the circumstances of concerted efforts by the international community to resolve the nuclear issue, it is not desirable for the South to request the international community’s understanding of the peculiarity of inter-Korean relations and the necessity of reconciliation and cooperation between the South and the North.

**Policy Toward the United States**

Anti-American sentiment in South Korean society has been aggravated since the deaths of two schoolgirls killed by an armored vehicle of the USFK in June 2002. In fact, anti-American sentiment has grown together with South Korea’s economic growth. Recent conflicts between the USFK and South Korean residents who are living near its bases have increased sharply, due to pollution caused by the USFK bases, noise near the USFK air bases, and criminal activities of some USFK soldiers. Issues of defense burden sharing and revision of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) further aggravated anti-American sentiment in the South.

However, President Bush called the North Korean regime part of the “Axis of Evil” and the North has continuously attempted to sell its WMDs to international terrorist groups to earn foreign currency. President Bush called Kim Jong Il a dictator and a “tyrant.” His understanding about North Korea and Kim Jong Il sharply contrasts with that of the current South Korean government. South Korea’s reluctant cooperation regarding relocation of the Second Division of USFK and Yongsan Headquarters\(^\text{25}\) may suggest conflict between the South and the United States. Many South Korean conservatives were shocked by the U.S. unilateral announcement about reduction of the USFK with the 12,500 troop-cut by 2008,\(^\text{26}\) worrying about weakening of the blood-bonded alliance.

Different interpretations of, and approaches toward, North Korea between the South and the United States have been applied to the North Korean nuclear issue. Different perceptions on North Korea and its leader directly linked their policy toward North Korea. South Korea has implemented policies of reconciliation and cooperation in order to prevent rapid change or sudden collapse of the North Korean regime-

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\(^{25}\) At the ninth meeting of the Future ROK-U.S. Alliance Policy Initiative (FOTA), the two countries agreed that the USFK would use 3.49 million pyeong (about 1151.7km\(^2\)) of land in the Pyeongtaek–Osan area.

\(^{26}\) The U.S. unilaterally announced a reduction of 12,500 USFK troops by the end of 2005 at the ninth FOTA. However, at the 10th such meeting, South Korea and the United States agreed on a gradual reduction to the same size of the USFK by 2008.
whereas the United States assumes that North Korea’s nuclear and missile development programs may contribute to global proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and increase instability in Northeast Asia. The United States also assumes that international terrorist groups can easily acquire such weapons of WMDs made by the North.

These different perceptions toward North Korea weaken the fundamental basis of confidence between the South and the United States. South Korea argues that the United States does not understand its unique situation, in which it must cope with two problems at the same time: both peace-building and prevention of war on the Korean peninsula. On the contrary, the United States assumes that South Korea underestimates the nuclear and WMD threats from North Korea. While the South emphasizes inter-Korean cooperation and economic assistance to the North, the United States makes its utmost efforts to deter the North’s nuclear development programs, rather than supporting inter-Korean cooperation.

For an effective policy toward North Korea, South Korea needs solid cooperation with the United States. However, South Korea needs also to pursue policies of reconciliation and cooperation toward North Korea to reduce military threats from the North, even though it is not a desirable policy for South Korea to continue economic assistance to the North while the latter continues developing its nuclear programs. In this regard, South Korea’s policy toward the North must be based on close cooperation with the United States. It is imperative for South Korea to remove the nuclear threat from the North rather than to put an emphasis on emotional nationalism. South Korea should pursue policies of reconciliation and cooperation with the North after North Korea abolishes all nuclear weapons and all nuclear programs. Economic assistance and various cooperation projects by South Korea to the North at this moment might ultimately damage the South’s security. Maintenance of a firm ROK-U.S. alliance and close trilateral cooperation among South Korea, the United States and Japan will guarantee a more active role of China in resolving the North Korean nuclear issue. Then, North Korea may transform its society into one of reform and openness.
The fifth round of Six-Party Talks was expected to discuss detailed plans to implement the joint statement, which was adopted at the fourth round. Kim Gae Kwan, the head of North Korean delegation demanded: (a) Inspection and verification of denuclearization in South Korea; (b) abrogation of the U.S. nuclear umbrella provided to South Korea; (c) abolition of the U.S. nuclear activities in Northeast Asian region; and (d) prohibition of passages of aircraft or submarines carrying nuclear weapons around the Korean peninsula. In return, he promised that North Korea would: (a) Freeze all nuclear activities; (b) abandon nuclear weapons and nuclear programs; (c) abandon any attempt to produce new nuclear bombs; and (d) return to the NPT and fulfill IAEA safeguard agreement. Such North Korean demands may be acceptable after North Korea abrogates all nuclear weapons and nuclear programs and accepts IAEA inspections. In this regard, his statement is considered as a negotiation strategy to make implementation of the joint statement difficult and to secure more concessions from the other countries involved in the talks.

On the second day of the fifth round of the Six-Party Talks, the head of North Korean delegation announced that the current situation was not favorable to continuing with the negotiations. In September 2005, the United States secured evidence that the Banco Delta Asia in Macao has been involved in illegal money laundering for North Korea, and took measures to freeze all North Korean accounts at that bank. Kim Gae Kwan strongly criticized that the U.S. measures were damaging to confidence-building between the two countries. In these circumstances, he stated that due to the U.S. sanctions against North Korea, which was a serious violation of the joint statement, North Korea might not carry out the joint statement. Since then, the Six-Party Talks for resolving the North Korean nuclear issue have been stalled.

To resolve the North Korean nuclear issue effectively, it is most important for South Korea to establish a common understanding on North Korea with the United States. South Korea should seek such common ground with the United States regarding the nuclear issue, WMD proliferation, and the issue of human rights in North Korea, etc. It also needs close cooperation and consultation with the United States.
about what kinds of measures will be necessary, unless the nuclear issue will be resolved at the next round of Six-Party Talks.

It is not desirable policy for South Korea to support the North Korean position. That may result in mistrust between the South and the United States and thus make a nuclear resolution more difficult. South Korea’s policies of reconciliation and cooperation must be closely linked with North Korea’s attitude toward its nuclear programs. Unless North Korea abolishes its nuclear programs, South Korea should not support economic assistance to the North. The Mt. Kumgang tourism project, the Kaesung Industrial Complex project, and re-linkage of the railroad project are not contributing to a peaceful resolution of the North’s nuclear problem. South Korea’s pledge about electricity assistance to the North also needs to be re-examined.

South Korea must recognize that North Korea poses a direct military threat to its security and the North’s nuclear programs make the regional security unstable. It also should acknowledge existence of human rights abuses in the North. South Korea’s participation in the Preventive Security Initiative (PSI) to deter proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by the North is a necessity. Those measures will contribute to enhancing confidence-building with the United States and resolve the North Korean nuclear issue at an early stage.