The Two Faces of EU-North Korea Relations

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Abstract

The bilateral relationship between the European Union (EU) and North Korea has made significant progress since the historic inter-Korean summit talks on June 15, 2000, in Pyongyang. However, the relationship has fallen into a stalemate with the ongoing North Korean nuclear problem in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks on American soil. As the international community began to accept the global war on terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) as the most serious items on the agenda, the European Union’s efforts to improve relations with North Korea have been significantly marred. The “European Security Strategy” published in late 2003, and the “Declaration on Anti-Terrorism” issued in March 2004 indicate that the positions of the EU on those issues do not deviate from the strategic positions of the United States. However, the EU has continued its humanitarian assistance to North Korea. Conclusively, EU-North Korea relations since 9/11 have played out at two levels: humanitarian assistance to North Korea on the one hand; and the elimination of the threat posed by the North to the international community on the other. This article attempts to examine current EU-North Korea relations based on the European Security Strategy issued in December 2003, which outlines the role of the EU as an international actor dedicated to resolving the ongoing crisis on the Korean peninsula by capitalizing on those features analyzed.
EU’s policy toward North Korea. The EU has not been just a “good uncle” to North Korea but also a “stern teacher.” This paper insists that a dual approach is needed to understand the EU’s foreign policy toward North Korea. A separation between WMD/hard security issues and other soft security issues is necessary to correctly understand the EU’s foreign policy. Assessing the nature of the EU’s involvement in North Korean issues will provide a more realistic solution to the North Korean deadlock. To evaluate the EU’s relationship with North Korea, it is necessary to look at the nature of the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), especially in the post-9/11 era. As an effort to cope with the changing situation in global security, the EU adopted the “European Security Strategy” (ESS) and the “Declaration on Combating Terrorism,” respectively on December 12, 2003 and on March 25, 2004, thereby consolidating the CFSP which has been gradually evolving since 1992.

This article examines EU-North Korea relations, with a special focus on recent developments in the EU’s common security policy. It is assumed in this paper that there has been no momentous change in North Korea’s position in the wake of 9/11. Based on this assumption, this paper examines the influence of post-9/11 bilateral relations between the EU and North Korea on the changes in strategic perception at the EU level.

Part 2 of this paper addresses EU-North Korea relations before and after 9/11, in political and economic dimensions. Part 3 examines the development of the EU’s CFSP, focusing on the European Security
Strategy and the Declaration on Anti-Terrorism and tries to draw implications for EU-North Korean relations. Part 4 investigates the roles and limitations of the EU as an active international party in resolving the North Korean nuclear issue, by reflecting on the EU’s new security strategy.

Relations between the EU and North Korea

The EU’s Political Relationship with North Korea

The EU has endorsed efforts to ensure peace on the Korean peninsula based on its fundamental position that it actively supports the reconciliation initiative between the two Koreas. After the inter-Korean summit talks in 2000 the improvement of EU-North Korea relations accelerated. In September, 2000, Paik Nam Soon, the North Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs, proposed diplomatic normalization with EU member countries. The decisions made respectively on October 9, 2000 and November 20, 2000 by the Council concerning the South’s “Sunshine Policy” indicated that the EU had decided to adopt a far more coordinated approach toward the Korean peninsula. A year later, the Stockholm European Council reached a consensus that the EU would expand its role to promoting peace, security and freedom on the Korean peninsula. On May 4, 2001, the Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson, EU Commissioner Chris F. Patten, and EU High Representative Javier Solana visited Pyongyang and Seoul to meet with the leaders of both Koreas. These events marked significant progress in dealing with North Korean issues. The EU Commission announced its decision to establish diplomatic relations with North Korea on May 14, 2001 and exchanged with North Korea a memorandum regarding the designation of an office for an EU foreign mission. Additionally, at the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)- level, the EU had earlier proclaimed its positions, through the Seoul Declaration in 2000 and the Copenhagen Declaration in 2002, that it would contribute to promoting peace on the Korean peninsula and endorse the South’s engagement policy with the North to bring about reconciliation on the divided peninsula.

The EU has carried out political dialogue with North Korea at the Troika-level since 1998. As of December 2003, six rounds of political dialogue had been convened. During the first EU-North Korea political dialogue in December 1998 in Brussels, the two parties discussed a variety of issues, including the security situation on the Korean peninsula, economic reform programs, humanitarian issues and transparent distribution of food aid. This meeting in Brussels was significant in that it served to extend bilateral relations toward a greater political spectrum, which had been limited to the scope of food aid. Although the meeting failed to bring forth any substantial results, it has been hailed as significant progress in terms of the decision to set up regular channels of contact, previously available only sporadically.

As agreed between the EU and North Korea during Swedish Prime Minister Persson’s visit to Pyongyang, the first dialogue on human rights was held on June 13, 2001. After the 2001 dialogue, the two parties decided to include humanitarian issues in the annual political dialogue in lieu of the previously attempted separate humanitarian dialogue. In a series of dialogues, the EU has relayed to North Korea the message that several issues such as humanitarian affairs, the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and regional security manifest themselves as sources of serious concern to the EU in many respects. Furthermore, the EU has hinted that, according to its fundamental principles, lack of improvement in the aforementioned issues would entail limited actions on the part of the EU toward the promotion of its relations with the North.

The EU also participated in the operation of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO). By the end of 2000, the EU had contributed economic assistance to KEDO amounting to 75 million euros. In December 2001, it agreed to extend an accession treaty while promising to further contribute 100 million euros to KEDO. With these actions, the influence and stature of the EU as a member of the KEDO Executive Board has strengthened and its delegated authority to negoti-
and major funding contributors. Despite all this, however, the trading volume between the EU and North Korea was set at $311.8 million, which was equivalent to an 8.5 percent decrease from the previous year’s level. North Korea’s exports to the EU decreased by 5.9 percent to $61.2 million and its imports from the EU also decreased by 9.1 percent, to $256.9 million. Still, the most active economic relationship between the EU and North Korea lies in food aid and humanitarian assistance. The EU first began humanitarian aid to North Korea in 1995 when North Korea suffered from one of its worst floods. Since then, the EU had provided a total of nearly 400 million euros to the ill-fated country until December 2003 for food aid—including agricultural structure improvement—and humanitarian assistance. Food aid to North Korea has been administered through three distinct channels: reciprocal aid, the World Food Program, and NGOs. The EU has been concentrating on providing agricultural chemicals and equipment and pilot projects on cooperative farms to meet the priority objective of ensuring transparency in food distribution and improvement within the agricultural structure. At the same time, the EU has been implementing humanitarian assistance in various formats. The EU’s humanitarian assistance to North Korea is designed to secure proper hygienic conditions and to provide medical assistance as well as clean and potable water. The European Commission allocated 5.55 million euros, dedicated to humanitarian assistance through ECHO (the European Commission Humanitarian Office) in 2002. The EU’s humanitarian assistance policy presents itself as more proactive than that of the George W. Bush Administration. It has provided more than 290 million euros through the ECHO (European Commission Humanitarian Office) in 2002.

EU Economic Relations with North Korea

Although the EU is a major trading partner of North Korea, the trade volume itself is insignificant. Even though the EU has signed various agreements with North Korea at the national level, it has yet to make any significant progress. Major North Korean exports to the EU include apparel, electronic parts, diamonds, and machine parts while its major imports from the EU include electronic devices, machine and electronic parts, food, automobiles, optical precision machines, and chemical products. Yet, active trading has been delayed between the EU and North Korea due to a series of obstacles. Additional market access was made over the course of two decisions separately made by the Council on October 9, 2000 and November 20, 2001. As a first step, in December 2001 the European Commission decided to allow an increase in the EU’s quota allocation of North Korean textile products by 60 percent. By mid-February of 2001, the EU sent its delegation, consisting of relevant experts, to evaluate the validity of pilot projects while closely coordinating with its Commission, member countries,

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8 As of 1999, it was the third-largest exporting country and the second-largest importing country.
9 Denmark (Investment Assurance Agreement), Sweden (Trade Agreement), Germany (Air Transportation Agreement and Future Transaction Agreement), Italy (Investment Assurance Agreement).
10 Some of the defining examples are: instability in the inter-Korean relationship, and political and economic instability within North Korea; a lack of indirect social capital and economic structure, and ensuing high costs; a closed system of law; an incapability of acquiring foreign assets; difficult access to markets; an insincere attitude and corruption, and an insufficient governing structure.
12 KOTRA, “Trends in North Korea’s External Trade Activities” (June 2004), p. 11.
13 Since 1998, most food aid provided by the EU has been based on the principle of reciprocity.
14 CESVI, Concern, Children’s Aid Direct, Action Contra La Faim, German Agro Action, Medecins Sans Frontieres, and Triangle are major international NGO actors.
15 The amount in 2002 is much greater than that of 2001, totaling 3.3 million euros.
rently, market economy training, restoration of the energy sector, and a pilot project designed for rural development are under way. Additionally, North Korea has been sending high-level economic officials to study the EU’s economic policy model.

However, according to the decision reached by the Council in November 2001, technical assistance and other forms of assistance have been halted, except for humanitarian assistance and food aid. It is expected that technical assistance in earnest will remain inactive in the foreseeable future unless there is an improvement in the overall political situation on the Korean peninsula, especially the North’s nuclear issue.

**EU-North Korea Relations after 9/11**

Since the inauguration of the Bush administration, pressures have consistently been mounting on North Korea, which has been suspected of possessing nuclear weapons and WMD. The 9/11 terrorist attacks began to highlight terrorism as the serious new threat and thus propelled the United States to respond militarily. The post-Cold War international order began to be restructured in order to create a new alliance system capable of a collective response against such terrorist threats. The inclusion of North Korea in the “Axis of Evil” has contributed to the increasing escalation of complications in resolving the North Korean nuclear issue.

U.S.-North Korea relations have thus been more strained following 9/11, and North Korea’s stigmatization as a possibly terrorist state has persisted since it was advanced by Bush’s “Axis of Evil” speech. In this atmosphere, the EU’s proactive actions to improve relations with North Korea have stalled. Apparently, the EU does not seek to make adjustments to its previous policy principles concerning Asia and the Korean peninsula. Yet, it seems inevitable that the EU must implement considerable changes to its established policy in the actual implementation.16

Despite the progress in EU-North Korea relations since 2000, criticism of relations with the North has been mounting inside the EU. Rapid improvements in EU-North Korea relations during the period from 2000 to 2001 were spurred by a series of political breakthroughs including the historical inter-Korean summit talks and the visit to North Korea by Swedish Prime Minister Persson. Unfortunately, the EU, disaffected both by the lack of substantial progress in its relations with North Korea and the absence of any kind of a changed attitude on the part of North Korea, has become increasingly disillusioned with the North. Evidently, even the “donor fatigue” syndrome is endemic to the EU political apparatus. Furthermore, the types of aid or assistance thus far given to North Korea have recently invited much criticism within the EU as well. One of the arguments in line with this criticism states that since the EU rapidly increased aid or assistance to the North within a very short period of time, North Korea may have wrongly believed that through the EU it could simultaneously manipulate many European countries. Therefore, the EU needs to moderate future assistance activities in terms of quantity and speed of implementation.

One of the reasons why North Korea is gaining an increasingly negative image inside the EU is because the North has neither made concessions to major issues demanded by the EU, nor has it earnestly participated in in-depth discussions. In particular, conflict surrounding the North’s humanitarian issues with the EU has been escalating since 2002. In March 2003, the 59th Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights adopted a resolution on the human rights situation in North Korea, an issue the EU had referred to the UN. The EU’s proposal of the resolution arose from two arguments. They were the overall disappointment with North Korea among member states, which had been keenly aware of the continued poor human rights conditions in North Korea, and the stalemate in dialogue over the North’s humanitarian issues. Following the EU action, North Korea responded by condemning the EU for premeditated political maneuvering. In March 2004, the EU decided that the UN resolution had not improved the human rights situation in North Korea and thus proposed a new resolution, strongly demanding that the North fully cooperate. The newly-proposed resolution was adopted during the 60th Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Subsequently, North Korea staunchly opposed the 2004 resolution on human rights by say-

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16 The policy baseline of the EU toward Asia and the Korean peninsula primarily delineates positions of principle. It is expected that no great changes will be made to these existing principles.
implementation of dialogue with affected nations; (2) whether it acts responsibly regarding its nuclear and missile issues; (3) whether it enhances its humanitarian record and complies with the various mandates of UN protocols and conventions on humanitarian issues; (4) whether it allows its populace access to foreign aid programs and ensures international NGO activity in the country; and (5) whether it opens its economy and issues visas to European correspondents. In particular, the EU pointed out that changes in North Korea’s attitude would serve as the crucial factor in determining whether the EU would intensify its involvement in the Korean peninsula.

The most detailed document that delineates the EU-North Korea relationship is “The EC-DPRK: Country Strategy Paper 2001-2004,” which was published by the EU Commission in 2000. In this document, the EU Commission outlines its underlying perceptions of North Korea. It seems North Korea as a highly-centralized socialist state with an extremely dampened humanitarian record, afflicted by tremendously frail economic conditions in terms of investment and trade, agriculture, environment, energy, transportation, and more. The EC-DPRK report sets out policy objectives in the following areas: (1) Institutional support and capacity building for effective development; (2) sustainable management and use of natural resources; (3) a reliable and sustainable transport sector; and (4) food security and sustainable rural development. It also provides criteria for evaluation: (1) Formulating a North Korean administrative establishment to help the North accept technological assistance; (2) ensuring that EU experts are provided with appropriate access; and (3) using training programs to educate North Korean experts in the principles of the market economy and the technical complexities of foreign relations.

Recent Progress in the CFSP

The CFSP of the EU has recently been driven by the pursuit of an EU-level security identity and an increased security responsibility as well as by the dual expansion of the EU and NATO. Since the end of

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18 7.5 million euros went to food supply projects, 4.5 million euros went to potable water improvement projects, and 5 million euros went to winter emergency relief projects for children.
19 The food aid was mainly provided to agricultural environment improvement projects.
20 EU Council of Ministers, “Council Conclusion on the Korean peninsula” (July 1999).
the Cold War, the EU has been taking rather passive and defensive positions in major armed conflicts - including the most recent war in Iraq. Additionally, it acknowledged that its roles were rendered relatively limited as unilateral diplomacy of the Bush administration was bolstered after 9/11.22

To set the bedrock for a future European common defense organization, the EU introduced the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), expecting this to serve as a part of its CFSP. Humanitarian rescue, peace-keeping, crisis management and peace-enforcement were selected as the Petersburg Tasks, designed to execute the ESDP. By the end of 2003, substantial progress had been made in the ESDP.23 With the recent enlargement of the EU and the adoption of the new Constitutional Draft, the EU has realized the increasing demand for formulating a more specific common security policy.24 The expansion of NATO has also propelled the EU to accept the need to strengthen its security identity.

Recently published, “The European Security Strategy (ESS)” originates from an acute perception that the EU needs to assert its own response measures in a new international security environment.25 The

ESS maps out proactive measures to respond to new international threats such as terrorism and the proliferation of WMD by relying on all possible means at the political, economic and military levels. This new concept has not only changed the security priorities of the EU, but it has also greatly broadened, to a large extent, its security scope.26 The ESS reflects strategic considerations of “threat factors.” It points out that while the EU is less likely to be exposed to massive air strikes targeted at its member states, it is increasingly vulnerable to more diverse, invisible and unpredictable threats. Also, it perceives terrorism, the proliferation of WMD, regional conflicts, failed states and organized crime as primary threat sources to European security. As terrorism extends its operational scope throughout the world and is linked to violent and radical religious extremism, Europe can be both a target and a breeding ground of such terrorism. Thus, these changed circumstances have necessitated common actions be taken at the European level. The proliferation of WMD is recognized as potentially the biggest threat to European security, particularly if they should ever fall into the hands of terrorist organizations.

Any conflicts in the Middle East, Kashmir and the Great Lake Area as well as on the Korean peninsula are expected to affect EU interests as much as conflicts geographically close to Europe, whether directly or indirectly. Regional conflicts may instigate extremism and terrorism as well as increase the demand for WMD. Also, there are matters of grave concern that must be resolved for the cause of human security. Failed states, insufficient governance and civil war eroding the state from within, are factors causing bonds to form with organized crime and terrorism, which eventually force the state’s collapse, leading to instability in the region. In a similar context, organized crime connected to terrorism and failed states poses significant security threats, and Europe is becoming one of the primary targets for such crimes.

In addition to the ESS, the EU adopted the “Declaration on Combating Terrorism” during the EU summit talks in Brussels on March 25-

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23 In January 2003, the EU took over the security mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina from the UN International Police Task Force. In order to fulfill the assigned task, a total of 500 people would be serving under the European Union Police Mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina for the next three years, and various measures were to be applied to establish a security system of a European standard. In March 2003, 350 personnel from the EU Defense Force replaced the NATO Defense Force under the operation name of “Concordia.” In December of the same year, after completing the mission they were again replaced by the EU Security Mission Force. Also, peacekeeping activities (Artemis) in the Congo were conducted, which has been hailed as the first successful non-European zone accomplishment.
24 European Convention, Constitution for Europe: Submitted to the European Council Meeting in Thessaloniki (June 20, 2003).
26, 2004. In so doing, the EU reinforced coordination in various areas such as exchange of anti-terrorism intelligence, judicial cooperation and interdiction of terrorist funding. This move came with the Madrid terrorist attacks of March 11 of the same year, out of which the EU became more aware of the need to establish a unified anti-terrorism policy. Prior to the summit talks, the EU had convened a special session bringing together all Ministers responsible for home affairs and justice, which served to strengthen coordination with respect to the third pillar (Justice and Home Affairs) of the integrated EU.

The EU has decided to include the terrorism issue as a major subject in political dialogue with any foreign countries outside the EU and to make the Article on WMD integral to any treaty signed in the future. It intends to evaluate the degree of implementation of anti-terrorism measures agreed upon between the EU and its foreign partner countries and utilize that assessment to determine whether it will further strengthen the relationship with those countries. In particular, the implementation of agreed anti-terrorism measures with developing countries could be elevated to become a vital criterion in the determination of EU economic assistance to them.27

**EU CFSP and Implications for North Korean Issues**

The adoption of the ESS is significant, in that growing discussions regarding EU common foreign and security policy have finally been formulated into a concrete security strategy paper. Yet, the EU still shows its limitations as a proactive party able to intervene in international issues. Additionally, it is observed that the EU’s perception of new types of threats, especially those of terrorism and WMD follows in the wake of U.S. events. The basic perception addressed in the ESS regarding the criteria for selecting threat sources, especially its perspective on terrorism and “rogue states,” bears much similarity to the 2002 U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS). This indicates that the EU, to a large extent, has taken into account the position of the United States concerning its global war on terrorism. However, the ESS is distinct from the NSS in that the former contains no clear-cut content on arms and homeland security while the latter does.28

Based on recent development of CFSP, several implications can be drawn regarding EU-North Korea relations. First, the North Korean nuclear problem would be dealt with through the EU’s non-proliferation and anti-WMD strategy. North Korean issues can also be considered in the categories of anti-terrorism, failed states and humanitarian crisis. As shown in the ESS, North Korea was deemed as one of the most dangerous threats to global peace. Given that the EU’s basic position toward WMD, non-proliferation and anti-terrorism is not substantially different from that of the United States, the EU would take a tough stance on North Korean nuclear problems. Even though these positions are not laid out in a formal document, the EU’s policy toward North Korean nuclear issues will be much sterner compared to its earlier strategy papers regarding North Korea.

However, its ways to deal with North Korean issues may differ from those of the United States. The EU still lacks proper military capacity to cope with difficult security operations and may rely on its traditional means of preventive diplomacy. Economic aid and humanitarian assistance would continuously be used as a means of soft security. Furthermore, North Korean issues are not a priority on the security agenda of the EU. The EU is still paying more attention to its neighbor-

27 However, this current EU anti-terror strategy reveals some ambiguity. First, the Article on WMD is not clear in its substance. Second, in previous cases the EU, having decided to include a provision on human rights conditions in trade agreements with developing countries, failed to successfully implement the clause with several countries such as Tunisia, Egypt and Israel. It is expected that the same type of limitation may result in the incomplete enactment of the recent anti-terrorism initiative. Thus, split opinions exist over whether the recent action will undermine or reinforce the formulation of a future EU common foreign policy. Judy Dempsey, “Words of War: Europe’s First Security Doctrine Backs Away from a Commitment to U.S.-style Pre-emption,” *Financial Times*, Dec. 5, 2003; “Discord Subverts Europe’s Lofty Foreign Policy Aims” *Financial Times*, April 3–4, 2004.

28 Institutional vulnerability has also been cited as one of the weak points found in the EU’s new security strategy. For more discussion, see Antonio Missiroli “After the Brussels Fiasco—An ESDP Without a Constitution, A CFSP Without a Foreign Minister?” *ISS Analysis*, Jan. 15, 2004, available at http://www.iss-eu.org/new/analysis/analy073.html, accessed on May 11, 2004.
urging the North to open its doors to the outside world.\textsuperscript{29}

Conclusively, the EU’s foreign policy with North Korea is a two-track approach of a dualistic nature. It employs a hard-line regarding the North’s WMD and human rights issues while sticking to a moderate approach in rendering humanitarian assistance. Continued humanitarian aid and technical assistance do not, however, signal a soft stance on the WMD and non-proliferation issues. Also, the fight against terrorism and WMD does not mean the freeze of economic support to North Korea unless it crosses a red line. It is quite possible that relations between the EU and North Korea may be strained with respect to official agenda, as affected by the ESS and the Declaration on Combating Terrorism. Yet, this obstacle is not so great as to totally deny the North EU humanitarian assistance. On the other hand, it might be naive to expect that continued humanitarian assistance will lead to a more moderate EU stance than that already postured by the United States with regard to nuclear and WMD issues. As these two lines of EU policy, characterized by its dualism, seem to maintain some distance from each other, any direct analogy and linkage between these two variables requires the greatest of caution.

To improve EU-North Korea relations, a number of conditions must be met to the satisfaction of the EU. These conditions include steps by the North to improve its relations with the United States and methodological disagreements with the United States, while pursuing European ways of peace-building based on preventive diplomacy. This stance can be featured as the EU’s two-track approach toward North Korea.

The EU’s Two-Track Approach Toward North Korea

\textit{Good uncle with a stick?}

The recent progress of the EU’s common security policy reveals underlying difficulties in improving formal relations with North Korea in the near future. The ESS acknowledges the Korean peninsula as a conflict area in the interests of the EU and specifies the North Korean nuclear program, despite its nature of distant threat, as a source of concern for the EU, tantamount to a close threat. As suggested in the ESS and the Declaration on Combating Terrorism, no further improvement in relations with North Korea, as well as direct economic assistance to the impoverished state will be easily granted, unless its WMD issues are resolved. The EU has been of the position that it will not extend economic cooperation to North Korea until its nuclear issue comes to a conclusion with a feasible solution at hand. Also, the EU has announced that it will uphold the implementation of the WMD clause and anti-terrorism measures in building official foreign relations with aspiring countries. Given this position of the EU, its official relations with the North will not easily improve unless convincing progress is made on the North Korean nuclear issue.

However, it is anticipated that humanitarian assistance and aid will endure regardless of the North’s WMD issues. Even after 9/11, the EU has been continuously providing assistance to North Korea and in effect, it records the largest assistance among all countries involved in aid to North Korea. While being in concert with South Korea, the United States and Japan, the EU seeks to extend its political and economic influence in North Korea by providing humanitarian assistance and

\[29 \text{ “L’Europe doit-elle ignorer la Corée du Nord?” Le Monde, April 8, 2004.} \]
A Realistic Understanding of EU Roles

One of the primary motivations for the EU to establish diplomatic relations with North Korea is the intention to actively exert influence concerning matters on the Korean peninsula, thereby strengthening the EU’s stature as a major player on the global stage. This effort reflects the exalted status of the EU on the international scene. The EU recognizes that North Korea’s WMD pose a significant threat not only to peace on the Korean peninsula, but also to world peace. The EU has so far focused on resolving conflicts by primarily relying on economic and diplomatic means in order to promote world peace. From this standpoint, the EU intends to set the stage to facilitate smoother access to markets on the peninsula by advancing amicable relations with both Koreas.

As for North Korea, it has leveraged diplomatic relations with the EU to mitigate the hard-line positions of the Bush administration, and to invite its inclusion in the international community. On the other hand, it has acknowledged the increasing importance of the EU as a benefactor that is less hostile toward its regime at a time when it directly needs foreign assistance in order to recover from its economic difficulties.

However, it would be too much to expect that the enlarged EU would vie with the United States in solving North Korean problems. The EU will try to enhance its relations with North Korea in its own way, focusing on preventive diplomacy, soft security and peace-building. Since the inception of the Bush administration, the United States and the EU have shown a series of disparate perceptions on methods to resolve international concerns including the one at present on the Korean peninsula. While the Bush administration has been implementing its North Korean strategy based on strict reciprocity, the EU has been more in favor of inter-Korean efforts to build reconciliation and to reduce tension on the Korean peninsula. However, the EU policy does not appear to either confront or challenge U.S. foreign policy toward

North Korea. Traditionally, the EU’s foreign and security policy has been complementary to that of the United States in cases of military and security issues such as nuclear weapons and non-proliferation.

Hence, it is not appropriate to characterize EU intervention in matters on the Korean peninsula as if it derives from the division of labor with the United States. The United States exhibits two conflicting positions regarding EU intervention. While Washington accepts the EU’s involvement in and assistance to North Korea as serving to preclude the North from carelessly conducting military provocations, it nonetheless monitors the expansion of EU influence in North Korea, ensuring that it does not undermine the extent of U.S. influence.

When it comes to resolving issues on the Korean peninsula, the EU is not a fundamental alternative as a problem-solver due to its intrinsic limitations. The EU’s foreign and security policy is suited to prevent conflicts by relying primarily on economic and diplomatic leverage. The EU lacks the military might to play the role of “world policeman” currently performed by the United States and is less prone to intervene militarily in conflicts taking place in non-European zones. These limitations have thus far driven the EU to focus more on preventive diplomacy, which in the case of North Korea translates into such methods as reinforced political dialogue as well as extended economic and humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, the EU lacks the internal cohesion needed to resolve issues on the Korean peninsula. It would be true to say that the EU has placed a lower priority on issues on the peninsula than those in Europe and neighboring areas.

The EU seems to prefer not to act as an independent player in the resolution of matters on the Korean peninsula. Rather, it desires to complement efforts made by other members of the international community. In its major supporting role, the EU intends to contribute to the prevention of conflicts and to peace-enforcement in the short term, and bring North Korea into the international community in the long run.

Given that the EU is not likely to play a critically-decisive role in resolving issues on the Korean peninsula, including the North Korean nuclear issue, it is undesirable to anticipate any immediate achievements. The EU is unlikely to engage aggressively in any sensitive political issues with North Korea. Rather, it is expected to focus on assistance through indirect means to contribute to peace-building on the
Korean peninsula. Thus, it is more realistic to anticipate complementary effects from EU policy toward North Korea.

Yet, at a time when the relationship between the United States and North Korea has been seriously strained, the EU can possibly serve to facilitate the recovery of such a stagnated relationship, in addition to being a channel through which North Korea can interact with the international community, for the EU still remains a useful partner in political dialogue with North Korea. In this regard, it is desirable that the EU be considered as complementary leverage in reinforcing the tripartite coordination between South Korea, the United States and Japan, and in solidifying the structure of the ongoing Six-Party Talks. From the mid- and long-term perspective, it is conceivable to bring the EU into a Northeast Asia Multilateral Security Organization proposed as an institutionalized format for future Six-Party Talks on the North Korean issue. Also, it is necessary to recognize that the EU’s economic assistance can be very effective in contributing to North Korea’s opening and reform.