

North Korea Under Kim Jong Il

Noriyuki Suzuki

Paper presented at the conference

North Korea Policy After The Perry Report:
A Trilateral (Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States) Workshop

March 3-4, 2000

Introduction

After the death of President Kim Il Sung in July 1994, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) seemed to be immobilized by "mourning." The veil of enigma that had shrouded his son Kim Jong Il became more opaque; the younger Kim was not seen in public for more than three months. Meanwhile, in a massive propaganda and educational campaign, the government called for strict obedience to "the will of The Great Leader" and emphasized that Kim Jong Il was as important to the country as the late president. Kim Jong Il went to extraordinary lengths to maintain stability and establish the legitimacy of his succession.

When the official three-year mourning period ended in July 1997, Kim Jong Il consolidated his position through election as general secretary of the Korean Workers' Party (KWP) in October 1997 and as chairman of the National Defense Commission (NDC) in September 1998, gradually asserting his own style of leadership in domestic affairs and foreign policy.

Foreign Policy

In August 1997, Kim Jong Il affirmed his foreign policy of giving priority to relations with the United States: "We hope to normalize the Korea-U.S. relationship."¹ When U.S. distrust of North Korea heightened over a secret underground nuclear facility at Kumchang-ni, the test-firing of a Taepodong missile in August 1998, and missile exports, North Korea resorted to brinkmanship and demands for compensation. Although Pyongyang's risky policy poses a major threat to regional security, its primary objective is regime survival. Having squared off against the United States for 50 years, North Korean leaders cannot conceivably dream of winning an all-out war against America. North Korea took a hard-line stance on the underground site and another missile launch out of fear. A simple fact should be kept in mind about North Korea's pattern of behavior: The goal is to survive, not to lash out convulsively against South Korea or its allies.

The Shift to Conciliation

North Korea's signalled a conciliatory approach on missile testing in a statement by the spokesman for the DPRK Foreign Ministry on July 26, 1999: "We do not want to regard the United States as the sworn enemy." This key phrase had been used only once before, by Kim Jong Il in August 1997. In August 1999, Kim Yong Sun, secretary of the KWP, said, "If a visitor brings us cake, we will also give cake." These "soft" words helped to defuse the tense situation.²

For years North Korea denied it was exporting missiles. In June 1994, for example, Pyongyang declared: "It is our country's policy not to supply or export weapons of mass destruction such as missiles, and we will not waver from this."³ However, in June 1998, the DPRK made a complete about-face, admitting missile sales and demanding that if the United States wanted to stop them, Washington should quickly lift its economic embargo and pay compensation for losses stemming from the discontinued exports.⁴

During the Cold War, North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile development were shielded by ideological and security ties with China and the former Soviet Union. The collapse of communism and Pyongyang's economic difficulties forced a change of policy: nuclear arms and missile became political weapons to ensure the regime's survival. North Korea has fashioned a policy of brinkmanship, raising the value of these cards to extract the maximum advantage.

If missiles are political weapons, the next launch would be timed for maximum political effect. North Korea presumably intended to test a Taepo-dong 2 missile, with a range covering Alaska and the Hawaiian Islands, as a mega bargaining chip in negotiations with the United States. But Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo warned of harsh sanctions: the United States would cut off humanitarian food aid, South Korea would suspend economic cooperation projects, and Japan would halt remittances to North Korea.

The Clinton administration also began dangling a carrot: it would relax economic sanctions if Pyongyang refrained from a missile test. North Korea would gain something from doing nothing. Weighing the benefits and losses, the DPRK entered into negotiations with the United States. Decision makers in Pyongyang knew they could resume testing if talks failed. As long as North Korea continues missile development, at some point a Taepodong obviously must be test fired.

In December 1998, tension mounted amidst speculation over a test launch in March or June 1999. Yet North Korean leaders also had grounds for fear. U.S.-led air raids against Iraq and Yugoslavia deepened Pyongyang's sense of vulnerability. In fact, many of North Korea's hard-line statements ended on less bombastic note, urging restraint and discretion.

From December 1998, North Korean media carried a barrage of threats: "We will answer all-out war with all-out war." (December 4, Rodong Sinmun); "A second Korean War cannot be avoided" (December 7, Korea Central Broadcast Station); "Washington, Seoul and Tokyo will be reduced to a sea of fire" (December 11, Korea Central Broadcast Station); and "There is no limit to our army's striking power and no place on this planet to escape it" (December 24, Rodong Sinmun). The December 19 Rodong Sinmun carried a cartoon of three missiles aimed at aircraft labeled "Washington, Tokyo, Seoul." The Korean Peninsula seemed on the eve of war. North Korea's rigid, bellicose tone increased anxiety in Japan, triggering a debate on crisis management.

Let us compare these circumstances with 1994, when the situation was so grave that former Secretary of Defense William Perry has said the United States almost went to war in Korea.

Then, too, North Korea relentlessly criticized Japan, the United States, and South Korea, accompanying the harsh rhetoric with provocative actions. In May 1994, the North withdrew its members from the Korea Military Armistice Commission and, ignoring warnings from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), removed fuel rods from the Yongbyon reactor. It also test fired a Silkworm anti-submarine missile into the Sea of Japan. In June, North Korea declared its immediate withdrawal from the IAEA. The tirades and defiant steps continued until just before the arrival of former U.S. President Jimmy Carter on June 15.

What about this time around? Since the hard-line statements in December 1998, North Korea has not committed provocative acts similar to those in 1994. In contrast, the DPRK has maintained discussions with the United States about missiles, visits to the underground facilities and other matters, participated in the Four Party Talks, allowed the Hyundai Group to proceed with its Mt. Kumgang tourist project, and took part in the North-South Economic Cooperation Project.

This gap between tough talk and actual conduct indicates how extremely cautious, perhaps even fearful, the North Koreans are.

North Korea repeatedly insists on its sovereign right to launch satellites and test missiles. For example, on August 3, 1999, the DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman asserted: “Whether we test-fire a satellite or a missile is a legitimate independent right to be exercised by a sovereign state because it in no way runs counter to the DPRK-U.S. Agreed Framework or international conventions.” This North Korean posturing—claiming that missile tests have not been suspended because of pressure from Japan, the United States, and South Korea—may also be interpreted as a trial balloon to test reactions in the three countries.

Post-Perry Report Anxiety: A Republican Administration?

The DPRK-U.S. Berlin Agreement was reached on September 12, 1999, and the Perry Report was released in October. North Korea gives high marks to both. On December 18, 1999, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) commented that the improved atmosphere since the Berlin talks was conducive to ending the “long-standing hostile relations between the two countries.” Kim Jong Il’s favorite section in the Perry Report must be: “The DPRK’s evident problems would ultimately lead its regime to change, there is no evidence that change is imminent. United States policy must, therefore, deal with the North Korean government as it is, not as we might wish it to be.”⁵ In negotiations with Washington, North Korea has consistently sought assurances of regime survival.

On March 16, 1999, North Korea and the United States issued a Joint Press Statement announcing that agreement had been reached on measures to remove U.S. concerns about the underground site at Kumchang-ni. This Statement is noteworthy not only because both sides reaffirmed their commitment to the Agreed Framework but also to the principles of bilateral relations expressed in the U.S.-DPRK Joint Statement of June 11, 1994. The concepts of “mutual respect for each other’s sovereignty” and “non-interference in each other’s internal affairs” are not in the Agreed Framework. Pyongyang reportedly insisted on a confirmation at this time.

In 1994, North Korea temporarily halted its railing against the United States after Joint Statement and the Agreed Framework were signed. This time, however, Pyongyang is still doing it. For example: “The United States is talking about the DPRK-U.S. dialogue and improved relations, but has not made any switch over in its hostile policy towards the DPRK. It used the ‘nuclear issue,’ and ‘missile issue’ as a pretext to stifle the DPRK.”⁶

Aside from lingering uncertainties about what can be gained from talks with Washington, North Korea show its anxiety over a Republican victory in the November 2000 presidential election. On December 8, 1999, the DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman, pointing out that Republican Congressmen were calling for tougher measures toward North Korea, said it was hard to guess the true U.S. policy towards the DPRK with a presidential election at hand. He lamented that North Korea had to make a momentous decision on its missile program when the present U.S. administration which has only one year left.

Nevertheless, North Korea will probably conclude that it must improve relations with the United States – reach a level irreversible by a Republican administration – while Bill Clinton is in the White House. Thus it is highly likely that Pyongyang and Washington will establish liaison offices this year. But North Korea is already hedging its bets against a Republican victory; foreign policy initiatives to drive a wedge into the Japan-South Korea-U.S. alliance, restore good relations with China, and multilateral diplomacy.

Dividing Japan and South Korea

Since the Perry process began, the DPRK media have denounced military cooperation among Japan, South Korea and the United States. Threatened by the enhanced trilateral collaboration, North Korea is taking steps to undermine it.

In late 1999, North Korea moved to resume negotiations, suspended since 1992, to normalize diplomatic relations with Japan. The ultimate goal is to obtain the compensation from Japan for “the immeasurable misfortunes and disasters it inflicted on the Korean people in the past” and “its hostile policy toward the DPRK.” The more immediate aims include: 1) separate Japan from South Korea and the United States; 2) secure food aid from Tokyo; 3) improve North Korea’s image in Japan and counter containment; and 4) remove Japan’s economic sanctions against the DPRK.

On point one, North Korean policy makers may think that talks with Tokyo will allow them to take a somewhat tougher line with the United States. They were well aware that Japan had no choice but to seek a dialogue within the framework of the Perry process. North Korea timed acceptance of a Japanese multi-party delegation, headed by former Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama, to gain the upper hand in bilateral talks. In fact, the Murayama delegation made no progress on Japan’s two biggest concerns – missile tests and abductions of Japanese nationals by North Korean agents. These crucial issues were left to future negotiations.

On the abduction issue, the North Korean side agreed to “recommend that [national] Red Cross organizations cooperate”⁷ on a “humanitarian issue.” But the North Koreans insist that as long as Japan brings up this “inappropriate” matter, relations may deteriorate.⁸ The outlook for talks is unpromising: If held, progress will be at a snail’s pace.

Meanwhile, North Korea is trying to fuel South Korea impatience by playing up progress in its talks with Washington and Tokyo, totally disregarding South Korea’s role in the Perry process. According to KCNA, “The South Korean authorities’ claim moves to improve relations between the DPRK and the United States and between the DPRK and Japan as a ‘success’ for their ‘engagement policy’ is ridiculous .” The South Koreans, KCNA said, “would be well-advised not to poke their nose into other people’s business.”⁹

On October 8, 1999, the central committee of the Democratic Front for the Reunification of the Fatherland and the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland of the DPRK issued a joint statement denouncing the “massacre committed by the U.S. aggressor troops in Rogun-ri (No Gun Ri) during the Korean War” and urging the people of South Korea to wage an anti-America struggle. Subsequently “mass meetings to support the South Korean people in their struggle against GIs’ massacres” were reportedly held across North Korea. This campaign aims to inflame South Korean sentiment against the United States and drive a wedge between Seoul and Washington.

The North Korean government approved economic arrangements with South Korean private businesses, but has refused to hold official talks with the Seoul government since June 1999. On January 21, 2000, Radio Pyongyang reiterated its call for the ROK government to facilitate economic contacts, while rejecting ROK President Kim Dae-jung’s proposal for an “inter-Korean economic cooperation body.” North Korea seeks to reap benefits from Kim’s Sunshine Policy without making political concessions.

North Korea strategy is to disrupt tripartite cooperation and rattle South Korea through negotiations with Washington and Tokyo. If the Kim Dae-jung administration offered large-scale aid—fertilizer and food—Pyongyang might agree to limited North-South negotiations, as it did in June 1999.

Multilateral Diplomacy

North Korean diplomats were very active in 1999. According to an ROK National Intelligence Service (NIS) report, DPRK officials made 222 overseas visits in 1999, compared to 134 in 1998 and 99 in 1997. Particularly noteworthy in this flurry were efforts to restore friendly relations with China.

In June 1999, a delegation headed by Kim Yong Nam, president of the presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA), made an official friendship visit to China. Kim Yong Nam is the titular head of state in North Korea, and the visit was the first to China by a North Korean official of this rank since Kim Il Sung went to Beijing in October 1991 and the highest level contact between North Korea and China since Kim Jong Il came to power. The visit was designed to fill the seven-year vacuum in bilateral relations since China established diplomatic ties with South Korea in 1992. as well as to obtain China's pledge of continued support for the battered North Korean economy. The two countries expressed understanding of each other's domestic circumstances. Kim Yong Nam said three times that North Korea "supports China's reform and liberalization policy." Chinese President Jiang Zemin responded that "both countries are building socialism according to their own circumstances."¹⁰

To China and North Korea, the visit demonstrated their "traditional friendship." However, the striking difference from the Cold War era was that neither sought to revive an anti-American united front; concerned as they both are about future relations with Washington. North Korea wants China as an ally in case negotiations with the United States collapse, while China wants to remind the Clinton administration that it wields considerable influence in Pyongyang.

Jiang Zemin reportedly gave China's blessing to the DPRK to improve relations with the United States, Japan and the European Union (EU). Subsequently North Korea held dialogues with the United States, Japan, and the EU.¹¹ Of course, these developments were not dictated by China, but the timing suggests Beijing retains a measure of influence in North Korea. Since the visit, China and North Korea have increased personnel exchanges, including those by military delegations.

North Korea has also improved relations with Russia. The two countries signed a new friendship treaty on February 9, 2000. The pact replaced a Cold War treaty that obligated Moscow to provide military support in case of war.

On January 4, 2000, North Korea established diplomatic ties with Italy, the first Group of Seven country to have official ties with Pyongyang. A statement by the DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman on January 9 underlined a policy shift to seeking contacts with the West.¹²

North Korea is improving relations with Australia, the Philippines, and Canada with an eye to full diplomatic ties. North Korea has shown interest in participating in the 2000 Sydney Olympics, and obtained Australian permission to station an Olympic attache in Sydney.¹³

DPRK Foreign Minister Paek Nam Sun attended the U.N. General Assembly session right after the DPRK-U.S. Berlin Agreement in September 1999, the first time a DPRK foreign minister has appeared at the United Nations since 1992. Paek Nam Sun met with foreign ministers or high foreign ministry officials from 22 countries, including the Philippines, Italy, and Australia.¹⁴ Furthermore, North Korea held a political dialogue with the EU in November 1999, following up on the first such session a year earlier. The Berlin Agreement improved the climate for Western countries to open dialogue with North Korea, a product of the Perry process.

North Korea's multilateral diplomacy has political as well as economic objectives. First, North Korea is taking out political insurance against a rupture in negotiations with the United States or a tougher U.S. policy in the event of a Republican administration in January 2001. The DPRK wants new sources of humanitarian assistance in case U.S. aid is cut off.

Domestic Trends: Dictatorship and Militarization

Kim Jong Il assumed the post of KWP general secretary in 1997 without being elected at a plenary meeting of the party Central Committee, an act not provided for in party rules, on the strength of

recommendations from provincial conferences. A special communique on his election by the KWP's Central Committee and Central Military Commission stated: "He was the first in history to propound the original idea that a working-class Party should be the Party of the leader and make it a reality." Hagiography aside, Kim Jong Il turned the KWP into his personal party. In officialese, "Comrade Kim Jong Il is the KWP and vice versa."¹⁵

In September 1998, the 10th SPA, meeting for the first time in almost four and a half years, elected Kim Jong Il chairman of the National Defense Commission. According to the official explanation, "the NDC chairmanship is the highest post of the state and commands all the political, military and economic forces of the country."¹⁶ The revised constitution, which was simultaneously adopted, defines the post as limited to military matters. The circumstances under which Kim Jong Il attained these positions indicates an attempt to stand above the law, beyond the party constitution or the DPRK's socialist constitution. Lacking the charisma of his father, Kim has devised a way to dominate the state.

Beginning with a visit in January 1995 to the Korean People's Army unit No. 214, Kim Jong Il has frequently traveled to army units, including those deployed near the demilitarized zone. Although a man who inherited political power must control the generals, Kim Jong Il seems to be going beyond that to make the military the linchpin of the state. In April 1998, the North Korean media began using the phrase "a policy of giving priority to the army." A joint article in June 1999 said "priority to the army is Kim Jong Il's main mode of politics," asserting that the military is the party, the people, and the state.¹⁷

Since Kim Il Sung's death, almost all roads, bridges, and important construction projects in North Korea have been built by the armed forces; troops have also been mobilized to assist with agriculture and mining production. With the military the only organization that has both manpower and transportation, in part because it has first call on petroleum and other resources, this may be inevitable. Still, it is no exaggeration to say that North Korea has been turned into a militarized state. Many official slogans have a martial tone. The three most frequently repeated—"the spirit of devotedly defending the leader," "the spirit of a human bomb" and "the spirit of a suicide attack"—are used to inculcate patriotism and loyalty to Kim Jong Il to the death.

The other phrase that symbolizes Kim Jong Il-style politics is "building a powerful state," the main theme in North Korea in 1998. The Dear Leader is trying to inspire the populace with more positive slogans than those used in the past such as "arduous march" or "forced march." North Korea described the launch of a "satellite" in August 1998 as "the thunder of Juche Korea trumpeting the march toward a powerful state."

October 10, 2000, will be the 55th anniversary of the founding of the KWP. The New Year's joint editorial called for it to be a "great festival glorifying forever the immortal revolutionary cause of the foundation of the Party."¹⁸ Since July 1997, Kim Jong Il has steadily normalized the regime; only the leadership of the KWP has not been revamped, which suggests a party congress may be held in October 2000. In fact, the fifth party congress was in 1970 and the sixth in 1980. If one is convened in 2000 after a twenty year hiatus, Kim Jong Il will form a Central Committee loyal to himself.

Several recent developments indicate which way the wind is blowing. Since July 1996, the three honorary vice presidents of the SPA presidium (all political bureau members of the KWP's Central Committee) – Ri Jong Ok, Pak Song Chol and Kim Yong Ju (the younger brother of Kim Il Sung) – have disappeared from the political scene. This may indicate a change of generations among the leadership. Another possibility is that an extensive reevaluation of leaders may have started. The Rodong Sinmun, in a signed article on January 18, 2000, identified class enemies as those who: 1) are opposed to the socialist system; 2) introduce corrupt bourgeois ways of life into society; 3) abandon socialist principles for money; 4) divulge state secrets for money; or 5) try to undermine socialism. Very uncommon these days, such a statement may portend a shakeup of the leadership.

No to “Reform and Openness”

Kim Jong Il has spurned outside calls for “reform and openness” and denounced Mikhail Gorbachev, convinced that the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe collapsed because of glasnost—disclosure of information, reform, and openness. Indeed, North Korea’s system can function only in a closed environment. Kim Jong Il is correct to warn that reform and opening to the outside world would be suicide for North Korea.

A June 1999 joint article echoed Kim Jong Il, attributing the demise of the former Soviet Union and East European socialist countries to imperialist ideological and cultural poisoning.” North Korea must reject resolutely openness and pluralism in ideology and politics; “the capitalist way of business management,” “reform” and “opening” in the economic field; and “creative freedom” in literature and the arts.¹⁹

The joint editorial on January 1, 2000, voiced wariness about “the spread of imperialists’ idea and culture to our society.”²⁰ (In 1998, the word “Free” was eliminated from the name of the “Rajin-Sonbong Free Economic and Trade Zone,” an example of tighter thought control.)

In April 1999, the 10th SPA adopted a law on planning the national economy. The objective is to counteract developments since 1995 when floods caused massive damage and loosened economic controls – the rationing system was disrupted and black markets thrived. Rejecting economic liberalization, the new law underscored a “planned economy based on the socialist ownership of the means of production” and centralized and unified guidance by the state.

In seeking economic recovery, Kim Jong Il has chosen the good old path of a controlled economy, rather than foster elements of capitalism that were sprouting up in North Korea. He stubbornly refuses to open the door to the outside world, an attitude even more conservative than his father that may reveal his lack of confidence in the regime’s strength.

An Economy in Trouble: New Policies for Agriculture and Energy

Since 1998, Kim Jong Il has personally led efforts to overcome economic difficulties, frequently making on-the-spot guidance trips and issuing specific instructions.

For the troubled agricultural sector, he came up with a “New Theory of Agriculture,” which features: 1) the principle of the right crop on the right soil and the right crop at the right time, while respecting the wishes of farmers; 2) revolutions in potato farming and seeds; 3) double-cropping; 4) land readjustment; and 5) raising of rabbits and goats. Explained as an evolution of Juche-style farming, Kim Jong Il’s program pays little regard to single cropping and corn, hitherto the key features of North Korean agriculture. In effect, Kim Jong Il has abandoned his father’s agricultural policy.

Double-cropping is mainly designed to exploit suitable farmland from October to June to acquire additional food in times of need. Double-cropping started on a trial basis in 1996 in cooperation with U.N. agencies; full scale implementation began in 1998. The double-cropping program for 1999-2000 calls for growing wheat and barley on 100,000 hectares of land in winter and 23,000 hectares in spring. That North Korea actually formulated a new agricultural policy around advice from the United Nations is a sign of flexibility.

Kim Jong Il proposed innovations in potato farming on a visit to Taehongdan County in Ryanggang Province in October 1998. Declaring that “potatoes are the same as rice,” he tried to ease the food shortage by elevating potatoes to the nation’s staple food. Corn growing, a hallmark of Kim Il Sung’s farm policy, will probably be gradually replaced by potatoes.

North Korea's agricultural plight seems to have eased in 1999, after many reports of famine in recent years. While the corn crop was below anticipations, thanks to good weather there was a bumper rice crop, according to the North Korean cabinet. At the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) conference held in Rome on Nov. 16, 1999, Vice Agriculture Minister Kim Yong Suk said "this year's grain output is expected to reach about 4.28 million tonnes of unhulled grain, approximately 1.4 times the level of last year."

The joint editorial of January 1, 2000, in the section on the economy, took up the electric power and coal industries first, and then addressed problems in the metal industry, railroad transportation, light industry, agriculture and important construction projects in that order. The New Year joint editorial has appeared annually since 1995 and this is the first time agriculture was not at the top of the economic agenda. The editorial also dropped the phrase "solve the food problem," used since 1997, indicating that agriculture is a lessening pressing concern.

How much food does North Korea need to feed its people? The FAO/WFP estimate the shortage at 1,293,000 tonnes.²¹ At the FAO conference, Kim Yong Suk estimated the grain shortage in 2000 at just over 1.2 million tonnes, and appealed for continued international support.

The worst of the food shortages may be over, but food remains in short supply. Furthermore, U.N.-coordinated food aid may be tapering off. According to the WFP: "Cereal contributions for WFP emergency operations in DPRK are anticipated to run out in mid-May. If additional donor pledges are not received in the course of January, the break in food supply will have serious consequences for North Koreans during the lean season, and may signal the end of the WFP programme in DPRK"²² The primary reason for North Korea's overtures to Japan in late 1999 may have been to get food aid.

North Korea also badly needs energy. Insufficient electricity has severely affected all industries. North Korean factories are believed to be operating at less than 20 percent of capacity. To deal with the energy crunch, since 1997 Kim Jong Il has pushed construction of small- and medium-sized hydropower stations, often citing Jagan Province as the model.

But under this program, the central government does not supply power to localities, instead requiring them to provide their own. That regional power stations built to local needs and specifications are of high quality is hard to imagine. Their average output is very low; even a sharp increase in the number of such power plants offers little prospect for a dramatic improvement in the electricity supply or benefit to industry.

The 500,000 tons of heavy fuel oil provided yearly by the United States under the Agreed Framework is crucially important to the North Korean economy. That North Korea, without other sources of energy, would jeopardize this supply is virtually unthinkable.

Conclusion

Kim Jong Il's policies are now clear: Brinkmanship diplomacy using the threat of a nuclear weapons program and missile tests, dictatorial assumption of power, militarization, a new agriculture policy, and requests for international economic aid. These are his response to the changed external environment and the deterioration of the domestic economy. North Korea has demonstrated flexibility as well as volatility. Kim Jong Il is not bound by his father's legacy as much as outside observers once thought. On the contrary, he has manipulated it to gain credibility and stature.

Behind North Korea's brinkmanship is a mindset: "The ultimate trump card in a fierce diplomatic war is one's own firm political and military power and the confidence in victory that stems from them."²³ As long as the North Korean leadership believes that diplomacy must be backed by resolve and military

might, Pyongyang's arms buildup and brinkmanship are likely to continue.

The negotiations to dissuade North Korea from launching another Taepodong missile, just as happened in the talks on suspected nuclear weapons, may have produced the unintended result of convincing the DPRK that must bluster, threaten, and go to the brink to get a good bargain from Washington.

On the other hand, strengthened cooperation among the United States, South Korea, and Japan created by the Perry process has begun to contain North Korea, with the tacit understanding of China and Russia. North Korean attempts to split the three allies are not likely to succeed. Clearly worried, Pyongyang perhaps will reassess its brinkmanship policy.

In a bid to escape encirclement, and in anticipation of a Republican administration in Washington, North Korea is shifting from a U.S.-centered foreign policy, reestablishing cordial ties with China, and exploring the opportunities offered by multilateral diplomacy. However, unless Pyongyang improves relations with the United States, other Western countries will be reluctant to establish better ties. North Korea has no choice: relations with the United States are the key to everything .

Kim Jong Il, though burdened with the negative legacy of his father's rule, is creating his own solutions for North Korea's economic malaise. Both the agricultural and industrial sectors saw some improvement in 1999. Yet the economy is a sinking ship whose crew frantically try to plug the leaks. Without outside investment, it cannot stay afloat. Yet reform and openness are a deadly shoal. And fearful of being crushed by the West, North Korea cannot reduce military spending. This is Kim Jong Il's biggest dilemma.

Notes

1. Kim Jong Il, "Let Us Carry out the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung's Instructions for National Reunification," August 4, 1997.
2. Mike Chinoy, chief, CNN Hong Kong Bureau, August 16, 1999.
3. Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), June 29, 1994.
4. "Nobody Can Slander the DPRK's Missile policy," KCNA commentary, June 16, 1998.
5. Review of United States Policy Toward North Korea: Findings and Recommendations. Unclassified report by Dr. William J. Perry, U.S. North Korea Policy Coordinator and Special Adviser to the President and the Secretary of State, October 12, 1999.
6. KCNA commentary, January 18, 2000.
7. Joint press statement by Korean and Japanese party delegations, December 3, 1999.
8. Commentary, Korean Central Broadcast Station, December 18, 1999.
9. "S. Korean Rulers Hit for Trying to Meddle in Efforts," KCNA, December 18, 1999.
10. The People's Daily of China, June 5, 1999.
11. Ibid.
12. KCNA, January 10, 2000.

13. Remark by Tony Hely, Australian Ambassador to South Korea, Yonhap News Agency, January 15, 2000.
14. Paek met with representatives from Cuba, Syria, Iran, Singapore, Denmark, Algeria, Guyana, Malaysia, Philippines, Italy, China, Senegal, Mali, Belarussi, Laos, Vietnam, Finland, Switzerland, Austria, Norway, Australia, and the Congo.
15. "Invincible is KWP with General Secretary Kim Jong Il at Head," Rodong Sinmun, October 10, 1997.
16. The speech of Deputy Kim Yong Nam proposing to reelect General Secretary Kim Jong Il as chairman of the National Defence Commission at the first session of the 10th Supreme People's Assembly, September 5, 1998.
17. "Our Party's Policy of Giving Priority to the Army is Invincible," Joint article in Rodong Sinmun and Kulloja, organs of the Central Committee, KWP, June 16, 1999.
18. "Glorify This Year Greeting the 55th Anniversary of the Party Foundation as a Year of Proud Victory in the Frame of Great Chollima Upsurge," January 1, 2000.
19. "Let Us Reject Imperialist Ideological and Cultural Poisoning," joint article, Rodong Sinmun and Kulloja, June 1, 1999.
20. Same as note 18.
21. Special Report, FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission to DPRK, November 8, 1999.
22. WFP Emergency Report No. 01 of the year 2000, January 6, 2000.
23. Same as note 17.