

The Republic of Korea and Its Four Regional Partners' Policies Toward North Korea During the Global Financial Crisis

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the period 15 September 2008 to 15 September 2009, focusing on North Korean statements and actions regarding the denuclearization of the DPRK and the possibility of returning to the Six-Party Talks. The objective is to determine if the policies of China, Japan, South Korea, Russia and the United States have changed during the year, a time of severe economic downturn globally. North Korean actions were divided into negative, neutral or positive categories and placed on a timeline chart that visually depicts the number of events by month. From September 2008 until July 2009, negative actions predominated. Then, in August 2009, an “explosion” of positive events demonstrated that some factor or factors reversed the policies of the preceding ten months. After a general discussion of what might be behind the significant reversal – the health of Kim Jong Il, progress on succession decisions, etc., the article moves on to review the policies of the Republic of Korea, China, the United States, Japan, and Russia, and determines that “in reality, the frantic activity of the DPRK from September 2008 until July 2009 only made the members of the Six-Party Talks more unified in their common policies toward the DPRK.” What triggered a change in DPRK tactics is discussed, but ultimately must await an informed assessment from inside this “hermit kingdom.”

Keywords: Leadership Succession; non-proliferation; nuclear policy; DPRK-ROK relations; DPRK-U.S. relations; DPRK-China relations; DPRK-Japan relations; DPRK-Russia relations; cooperative security; Limited Nuclear Weapons Free Zone-Northeast Asia; DPRK decision making; 2009 global economic crisis.

Introduction

The period from the fall of Lehman Brothers in September 2008 to the present (mid-September 2009) forms the approximate “book ends” for this article. The collapse of this financial giant unleashed a “global financial storm”¹ that took the world into an economic crisis, unlike any since the darkest days of the Great Depression of the 1930s. Quick action by the multinational economic/financial community to increase liquidity and minimize the likelihood for individual protective action – as occurred in the 1930s—averted a long-term collapse, and, by the beginning of the 4th quarter of 2009, many economic indicators were showing that recovery was underway. Still, experts are guardedly optimistic, and advise caution in “unwinding countercyclical policies too soon.”²

This period, September 2008 until September 2009 also marked a very tumultuous moment in the affairs of North Korea and the five other states, namely China, Japan, South Korea, Russia and the United States. Beginning in December 2008 when the DPRK announced that it would no longer participate in the Six-Party Talks, the world witnessed a display of brinkmanship by North Korea that was remarkable, even for Pyongyang. Whether the reported 14 August stroke of Kim Jong Il³ played a role in the roller-coaster of events is not clear. Nor is it clear if the international financial meltdown that was occurring during Pyongyang’s “period of discontent” played any particular role – was the intense activity linked to a perceived weakness that could be exploited? What was clear were the missile launches, the second nuclear test of 25 May, and the steady decay of South-North relations characterized by a series of events that included the isolation of the Kaesong Industrial Zone and its impact on its employees, both South and North Korean. Then, as if by cue from offstage, events changed the atmosphere from despair to cautiously hopeful. Former President Bill Clinton visited Pyongyang—gaining the release of two American journalists—and former South Korean President Kim Dae Jung passed away, leading to a productive visit by a high-level North Korean delegation. Within days, the dynamics had changed. (See Appendix A that lists the primary

actions by North Korea during this period. They are labeled as “positive,” “neutral” and “negative,” depending on the nature of the event, and probable impact on the international situation.)

Of interest to this article were the reactions by the governments engaged in the Six-Party Talks, and their individual and collective actions through the United Nations Security Council and other U.N. organizations. Of specific interest is the policy toward a nuclear North Korea. Perhaps a review of these reactions will provide an insight into their likely policies in the future. That being the case, the situation for the past year will quickly be reviewed and then individual state responses examined.

Setting the Stage: A Summary of the Chronology of North Korean Events (See Appendix A for a more complete listing)

When Kim Jong Il failed to appear at a very important 9 September military parade marking the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Democratic Peoples’ Republic of Korea (North Korea), it became clear to close observers of North Korea that something serious had happened to the “Dear Leader.” Shortly after that, on the 19th, the DPRK declared that it “neither wishes to be delisted as a 'state sponsor of terrorism' nor expects such a thing to happen.” It then announced that it would re-start the Youngbyon nuclear reactor.

In a public display of disgust and anger at leaflets being released on balloons in late November, the North closed the border with the South and blasted as “confrontation policies” actions by the Lee Myung-bak South Korean government.

With these and other disruptive events as a backdrop, in December the Six-Party Talks ended in an impasse as Washington and Pyongyang failed to agree on a verification protocol—especially relating to sampling methods. From this point onward, the isolation of the Kaesong Industrial Zone intensified and only 880 South Koreans—of the 4000 South Koreans employed—were given entry permits

By the end of January, North Korea had announced that it had scrapped all military and political agreements with the Republic of Korea

nd blamed the “South’s hostile intent.” To put an exclamation point on relations, a Taepodong 2 missile was launched on a so-called satellite trajectory, followed later by more missile launches and the test of a nuclear device in May. After the ROK joined the Proliferation Security Initiative, the North responded on the 27 May with the pronouncement that such actions were a “declaration of war!”

After a very “busy” June, on the 4th of July, North Korea launched at least seven scud-type missiles that seemed to emphasize its own independence and willingness to pull “Uncle Sam’s beard.” Continuing in this very pro-active state, a spokesman for the North closed out July with a resounding critique of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s comprehensive peace package, calling it “nonsense,” and launched into a personal attack on the American official herself.

The coming of August brought about a fundamental shift in tactics, and the political environment seemed to improve almost overnight with former President Bill Clinton’s mission to North Korea, the DPRK funeral delegation for President Kim Dae Jung, and the positive developments relating to South-North relations. September continued on a similar, if less spectacular, track

General Comments on a Year of Uncertainty

If we examine the time-line for September 2008 to September 2009, and depict it on a chart (See Chart #1) events considered provocative or “negative” outnumber “positives” 24 to 12. Events considered “neutral” or “neutral-negative” numbered only 4. But if we take a more focused look, we observe that from September 2008 to June 2009, a ten month period, the ratio is 21 negatives to 2 positives. Thus, from just after the day Kim Jong Il reportedly had his stroke (14 August) until the end of June, there were ten negatives for every one positive.

Looking at the period from July 2009 to September 2009, the positives were 10 and the negatives only three. The negatives included one that was the unfortunate release of water from the Hwanggang Dam that killed six South Korean campers. This is listed as a “negative,” but some reports indicate that the discharge may not have been an intentional

“attack.”⁴ In fact, it is reported that the conclusive judgment on that matter is yet to be made by South Korean and U.S. Intelligence Officials. If, indeed, it turns out to have been a tragic accident, and the DPRK assumes culpability or responsibility, the negative might become a positive and contribute to a generally positive trend for the entire August to September period that would reflect 11 positives and two negatives.

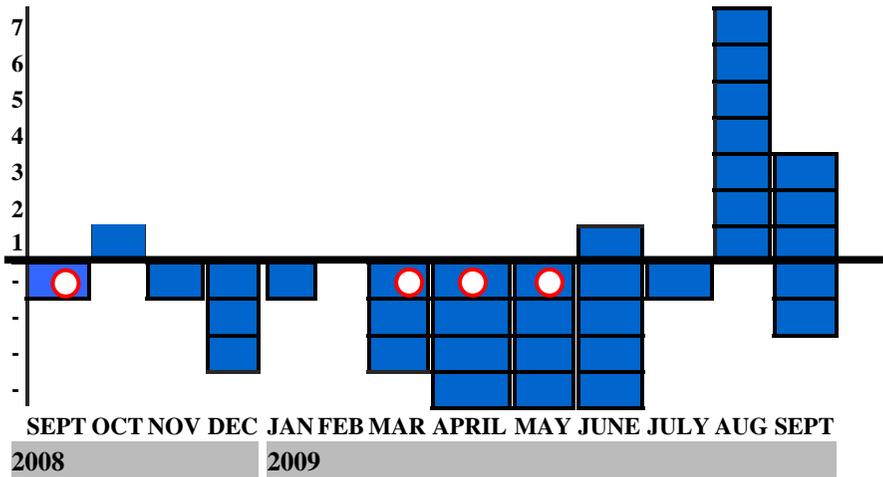
Admittedly, two months does not eliminate the lingering effects of ten months of heavily negatively oriented news, but it does allow for speculation as to why, when the health of Kim Jong Il appears to be recovering, do the number of positive events seem to increase.⁵ Permit the author an opportunity to return to this question after a review of regional interaction during this period.

Chart #1

Events Affecting DPRK Relations With Its Neighbors

POSITIVE EVENT

○ = NEUTRAL
EVENT



NEGATIVE EVENT

Policies of the Republic of Korea and Its Four Regional Partners

When it comes to examining the policies of the five states negotiating with the DPRK in the Six-Party Talks, it became quite evident in the 19 September 2005 draft agreement that all the states, China, Japan, Korea, Russia and the U.S., were in full accord. They wished to see the elimination of nuclear weapons in North Korea as soon as it could be realistically accomplished. What we may observe in looking at the period of the economic crisis are the changes in nuance that can be observed or implied by such a review.

The Republic of Korea:

Relations with its neighbor to the north somewhat cooled with the inauguration of the Lee Myung-bak government in February 2008. The new conservative government was insisting on a greater return in its dealings with the Kim Jong Il regime. In late November the North closed the border blaming South Korean activists (largely refugees from the DPRK) who were launching leaflet balloons and citing “confrontational” policies by its neighbor. By December supplies getting into the Kaesong Economic Zone had been cut by 50% and the office to coordinate South-North exchange in the zone had been closed.

In an announcement on 30 January 2009, Pyongyang declared that “. . . all agreed points concerning the issue of putting an end to the political and military confrontation between the north and the south will be nullified.”⁶ During the spring a series of events, including the arrest of the two U.S. journalists, the missile launching, arrest of a South Korean employee in Kaesong, and the United Nations’ condemnation for the missile tests led to charges and counter-charges by the North and the international security community. In this environment of heightened stress, the North declared all contracts of the Kaesong economic zone “null and void,” and ten days later detonated its second nuclear device.

In response to the nuclear test, the ROK government announced it was joining the Proliferation Security Initiative as its 16th member. The North promptly labeled this as a “declaration of war.”

It was in this extremely volatile environment that South Korea turned to a reaffirmation of the efficacy of the U.S.-ROK Alliance and sought a written statement committing the U.S. to provide “extended deterrence” through its nuclear umbrella to the South in the event of hostilities with the North.⁷ At a summit between Presidents Barrack Obama and Lee Myung-bak, both nations underscored a united stance in dealing with the “grave threat” of the DPRK,⁸ and reasserted the strength of the alliance. While standing firm in response to the provocations by the North, both leaders held out the possibility of significant assistance to the North if it chose a less adversarial stance.

At this June summit, the President of South Korea took the opportunity to chide the North for its unacceptable demands regarding working conditions at Kaesong. The North insisted on quadrupling the pay for workers and increasing the rent for the facilities by millions of dollars.⁹

The South Korean Defense Minister, Lee Sang-hee, approximately a month later, reiterated the policy of his government concerning nuclear weapons. He strongly reasserted that the ROK was committed to a denuclearized Korean Peninsula, and had been so committed since adhering to the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1975. He rebuked politicians of the right who were calling for the acquisition of “nuclear sovereignty” after the North detonated its second device in May.¹⁰ He alluded to the impressive conventional strength of ROK self-propelled howitzers and multiple launch rockets, saying that “Pyongyang is only 150 km away.”¹¹

In August, top U.S. and ROK diplomats charged specifically with negotiating the denuclearization of North Korea, met and reaffirmed that there was “no change” in the stance of both governments, “. . . in dealing with the North Korean nuclear weapons programs.”¹² Both Stephen Bosworth and Wi Sung-lac met at a time when it appeared North Korea was changing tactics—releasing two American journalists who had entered Korea to former President William Clinton, and sending an official delegation to pay respects to honor former President Kim Dae-jung. While the North announced it would restart family reunions and other tourism programs with South Korea, it added that it was prepared

for “. . . a merciless and prompt annihilating strike” if the U.S. or South Korea infringed on its sovereignty.¹³

The period of the financial crisis ended in mid-September without any change in the policy of South Korea toward the North’s nuclear capability. The policy of the Lee Myung-bak government since its inception in February 2008 was to require progress on denuclearization of the DPRK in exchange for aid and economic assistance. Its commitment to denuclearization of the Peninsula was clear throughout the period.

To close out the period (at least for this article), ROK Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan noted in a speech that it would be “naïve thinking” to believe that the DPRK would not target South Korea with nuclear weapons.¹⁴ He stressed that the Six-Party Talks would be the best way to solve the nuclear issue, and stressed the priority of such talks, even if bilateral negotiations between the U.S. and the DPRK happen. Finally, he indicated that the nuclear issue took precedence over South-North relations because of the gravity of the matter.

In summary, it is very clear that the South Korea stance regarding nuclear weapons in the North is very closely tied to its relationship with the U.S. and the ultimate counter to any option chosen by the DPRK. Basically, Seoul appears resolutely determined to see North Korea live up to the commitments, originally made in 1991 by both states, to realize the denuclearization of the Peninsula – it was unchanged during the period of the financial crisis.

China

China has been seen as one of, if not the key player in resolving North Korea’s infatuation with nuclear weapons since March 1993, when North Korea threatened to leave the NPT. It has also been seen as opposed to North Korea’s possessing nuclear weapons since that time.¹⁵ During the season of this article, the economic crisis began, and China continued to indicate its genuine opposition. The question being asked by most observers, however, was would China increase its pressure on the DPRK to move dramatically toward denuclearization, or would it

continue to be torn between employing effective measures to affect policy change, or would it continue to “pull its punches” out of fear that cutting its life line of support to the North Korean regime would cause it to implode and unleash massive refugee movements toward its border and coastal regions adjacent to the DPRK? These and other challenges to stability in NEA have been prime factors in determining PRC actions.

However, only hours after the second nuclear test came a clear denunciation by the PRC: On 25 May 2009, the DPRK [Democratic People's Republic of Korea] conducted another nuclear test in disregard for the common opposition of the international community. The Chinese Government is firmly opposed to this act. . . . To bring about denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, oppose nuclear proliferation and safeguard peace and stability in Northeast Asia is the firm and consistent stand of the Chinese Government. China strongly urges the DPRK to honor its commitment to denuclearization, stop relevant moves that may further worsen the situation and return to the Six-Party Talks.¹⁶

When the United Nations finally passed Resolution 1874—unanimously – the Chinese Representative, Zhang Yesui explained the position of the Peoples’ Republic in the following manner:

. . . the Chinese Foreign Ministry had issued a firm statement of opposition against the nuclear test conducted by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, in disregard for the international community’s common objective, it had strongly urged that country to honour the quest to denuclearize the Korean peninsula and return to the six-party talks...China supported the balanced reaction of the Security Council. . . . It should be stressed however, that the sovereignty, territorial integrity and legitimate security concerns and development interests of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea should be respected. After its return to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, that country would enjoy the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy as a State party. . . . The issue of inspections was complex and sensitive, and countries must act prudently and under the precondition of reasonable grounds and sufficient evidence, and refrain from any words or deeds that might exacerbate conflict. Under no circumstances should there be use

of force or threat of use of force. China has always stood for a peaceful solution to the situation and has made tremendous efforts in that regard, including by initiating the Six-Party talks.¹⁷

Agreeing to new and more stringent sanctions on the DPRK was a step for China that indicated its major dissatisfaction with the Pyongyang regime, but it was followed by a “clarification” that revealed that it still had major concerns about too much pressure that would end in the collapse of its long-time colleague state. In a demonstration that it was enforcing the new U.N. program, however, the PRC seized a shipment of vanadium in late July that was headed to the DPRK. It was hidden in a truck and was found at a routine check at a border crossing.¹⁸

It is clear that during the period of the economic crisis, China continued to press the DPRK to honor its previous commitments to denuclearize the peninsula. As the period came to a close, China had sent a senior envoy, State Councilor Dai Bingguo, on a special mission to coordinate the visit of China’s Premier Wen Jiabao, scheduled for early October. It can be assumed that discussions included the nuclear issue as he was accompanied by Wu Dawei, China’s chief envoy to the Six-Party Talks. They met with Kim Jong Il. All in all, this was a good sign.¹⁹

The United States

Whether China or the United States is the prime actor in this drama is often debated. However, relations between the DPRK and the U.S. have involved nuclear weapons since General Douglas MacArthur called for their use during the dark days of the beginning of the Korean War,²⁰ and again after Chinese volunteers appeared in large numbers.²¹ Later, both John Foster Dulles and Dwight D. Eisenhower claimed to have used the threat of nuclear weapons to gain the armistice in 1953. In any event, in conversations with diplomats of the DPRK the author has often found this to be one of their leading perceptions of the need for North Korean weapons—a counter to the U.S.’s overwhelming capability which formed “. . . a tangible military threat to the DPRK’s very existence.”²²

As the period of the economic crisis began, the United States was still involved in Six-Party negotiations with the DPRK, and American

policy was clear that no nuclear weapons were to be permitted in the DPRK. The talks of December 2008, however, ended in an impasse over North Korea's failure to sign the verification protocol.²³

The stated reason for the North Korean recalcitrance was how soil samples and related on-site sampling would be conducted. But this was also the season of approaching transition of the American government. A new President, Barack Obama, had been elected in November, and it is possible North Korean negotiators were reluctant to sign such an important agreement when a new administration might give them a better deal. We also must wonder about the state of the North Korean internal decision-making process at that particular time. Was Kim Jong Il fully recovered by this point? Were other decision makers – not so committed to the nuclear deal—in a position to block action? Did the maneuvering over a possible succession plan have any role at this stage of negotiations? And, ultimately, keeping with the theme of this conference, did the international financial crisis have any role, as those in power may have believed it would completely occupy decision makers in the capitalist world.

Unfortunately, only members of the North Korean inner circle can adequately address these questions. We, however, are left with the reality of the situation. The Six-Party Talks were dead in the water, and the new Obama Administration was just beginning to address major policy issues. The outgoing CIA head, Michael Hayden, in making a list of the top ten security concerns facing the new administration, listed North Korea as eighth, with Al Qaeda leading the list.²⁴ This being the case, Peter Beck of Yonsei and American University put it best when he wrote: “Over the years, the North has learned that nothing concentrates Washington minds more effectively than provocative behavior.”²⁵

From December until July a steady stream of North Korean provocative behavior (see the above chronology) was the norm. The U.S. in all instances held firm in its policy regarding nuclear weapons for North Korea. In this regard, the bad behavior exhibited by the DPRK caused the two newly formed governments of South Korea and the United States to coordinate policies and begin to articulate a joint vision

for the future. The June 2009 summit between President Lee Myung-bak and Barack Obama emphasized that solidarity between the two long-time allies would be the hallmark for future relations. Peace and prosperity for the Korean Peninsula was highlighted and regarding the nuclear issue it was very specific: “. . . We will work together to achieve the complete and verifiable elimination of North Korea’s nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs, as well as ballistic missile programs. . . .”²⁶ At this same meeting, President Obama specifically noted that an “extended nuclear umbrella” would be provided to the ROK.²⁷

By the middle of July 2009 the level of exasperation was seen as extremely high among Washington policy makers. One senior official noted that in the absence of the Six-Party Talks, “We may have no choice but to move to containment.”²⁸ By the 25th of July, the world heard the North Korean reaction to American Secretary of State’s comments about a “comprehensive package” that would offer incentives in return for DPRK denuclearization. At the ASEAN Regional Forum, North Korean diplomats called the proposal “nonsense,” and stated: “North Korea will not agree to any kind of appeasement package until it gets the United States to reverse . . . ‘hostile policies.’”²⁹

It was not all bad news during July, as Kurt Campbell, the Assistant Secretary for East Asia and Pacific Affairs did call for “patience” in dealing with North Korea, but he insisted that “consequences” for recent provocations by the North were appropriate. He noted that the U.S. was “. . . looking at a full range of particular steps designed to put pressure on North Korea.”³⁰

Having gone through the month of June and hearing threats including “act of war” in response to the Security Council’s enhanced sanctions on the DPRK and the negative response seen above to a comprehensive package, all of the sudden in August the sky turned blue and former President William Clinton went to Pyongyang and returned with two American journalists who had been sentenced to 12 years in prison for entering the DPRK illegally. While the journalists were not too positive about their treatment while in Pyongyang, they were housed in a guest house and permitted to call home. Their incarceration in the

DPRK was basically a deal waiting to happen—especially considering their close association with former Vice President Al Gore.

After significant behind the scenes negotiations, President Clinton went to Pyongyang, had discussions with Kim Jong Il and returned to the States. From 4 August on, the atmosphere began to change. Cautiously at first; several days after Clinton’s return the White House reiterated its position regarding North Korea—“the United States wanted to enforce U.N. resolutions to ensure North Korean weapons of mass destruction are not spread. . .”³¹

Then on the 19th of August, the DPRK announced it would send a delegation to honor the late President Kim Dae-jung. South-North developments gained momentum from their visit and meetings with the South Korean president and the unification minister. The atmosphere was taking on a very different hue.

By the 21st, worldwide observers awoke to see pictures of Minister Kim Myong-Gil of the North Korean Mission to the United Nations sitting drinking coffee with New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson and long-time Korean specialist, K.A. Tony Namung.³² Their talks were seen as a “hopeful sign” with the North, indicating it was willing to start a new dialogue with the U.S over the nuclear issue. Day’s later word was released that Ambassador Stephen Bosworth would be travelling to Northeast Asia, and that a visit by him to Pyongyang would be likely, but perhaps not in the immediate future.³³

While the “immediate future” has not arrived at the time of writing, all sorts of statements are coming out of Washington, Tokyo and Seoul about a restart of bilateral U.S.—DPRK talks. Stephen Bosworth on the 8th of September was quoted as saying from Tokyo that the U.S. was “. . . willing to engage with North Korea on a bilateral basis;” how best to respond to a North Korean invitation was being considered.³⁴ Since then, several reports have reiterated the U.S. intent to find a formula for bilateral negotiations.³⁵ The bottom line, however, in all the talks would be the insistence for the North to relinquish its nuclear weapons and forgo any future involving such weapons.

Thus, while the period of the financial crisis witnessed some dramatic highs and lows, the basic policy of the U.S. toward nuclear weapons held by North Korea remains unchanged.

Japan

Japan's relations with the DPRK have been on a downhill slide since Pyongyang admitted it had abducted several Japanese citizens during a summit of 17 September 2002.³⁶ It came the same day that the two nations signed the "Japan—DPRK Pyongyang Declaration," which set out basic principles useful for finally establishing normal diplomatic relations. On the one hand, the declaration marked a significant mile marker and pointed toward a resolution of outstanding issues between the two powers. However, complications soon developed related to the fate of the abducted citizens, and while one hears references to the "Pyongyang Declaration," normalization of relations remains a distant goal.

In fact, relations have been so strained that, prior to the December 2008 Six-Party Talks, the North Koreans had real opposition to continuing with Japan as a participant, and according to the KCNA, "Japan is entirely responsible for the fact that Pyongyang had to pull out of the Six-Party Talks."³⁷ The issue, in addition to the missing Japanese is the fact that Japan held shipment of stores of heavy oil that had been promised to the DPRK in return for data on their nuclear program. Japan indicated it was waiting for information on the kidnapped Japanese before it released the oil.³⁸

There is no doubt that Japan wishes to see North Korea denuclearized. The second nuclear test of 25 May 2009 came as a second provocation after the April missile launching. Both items in combination are considered a "grave threat to the national security of Japan"³⁹ and prompted Japan to strengthen its ties with the United States. In the annual report of the Ministry of Defense, Japan indicated that it believed North Korea may be capable of producing a nuclear warhead for its missiles "sooner than expected."⁴⁰ With such news in Japan,

right-wing circles were calling for a renewed debate on the question of nuclear arms for Japan.

In denouncing the 25 May 2009 nuclear test, Japan, in its support of UN Resolution 1874, did call attention to the need to protect, or not harm, the “innocent people of the DPRK.”⁴¹ Also, it called for the DPRK to cease “all activities related to nuclear programs,” and urged it to resolve the abduction issue, among other observations.⁴²

After the missile launches of 4 July 2009, Japan severely protested the North Korean action. The launches were called “grave and provocative,” but in its concluding statement, it listed the abduction issue first. This final sentence read: “In addition, Japan strongly urges North Korea to take concrete steps towards the comprehensive resolution of the outstanding issues of concern including the abduction, the nuclear, and the missile issues.”⁴³ The same order of priorities had been observed in the Prime Minister’s statement of 13 June 2009, following U.N. Resolution 1874.

Of course, all discussion regarding Japan’s policy in this article up to this point has dealt with the government controlled by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). With the election of 30 August 2009, a minor revolution in East Asia occurred. The LDP was emphatically defeated by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), and replaced by a new government headed by Yukio Hatoyama.

If we examine the Manifesto of the DPJ we observe that the new government of Japan will be committed to the denuclearization of North Korea and resolving the abduction issue. In the section of the Manifesto titled: “Contribute to the World through Proactive Diplomacy,” we find: “Ensure that North Korea halts development of nuclear weapons and missiles, and make every effort to resolve the abduction issue.” It is clear that their goal is the same as that of the preceding party; action to realize the goal will now be awaited by all.⁴⁴

The previous government of Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda had made an agreement with the DPRK in August 2008, in the city of Shenyang that required North Korea to reinvestigate the abductions and to attempt to conclude that investigation sometime in the fall of 2008 (“this coming

autumn”).⁴⁵ The Japanese side was to ease sanctions once the DPRK had begun its process. The North Koreans accused Japan of not living up to its obligation, and the DPRK cancelled the agreement because of Japan’s “hostile” policies.⁴⁶ North Korea, upon the victory of the DPJ indicated it was ready to hold talks with the Hatoyama government. While this agreement refers to the normalization efforts between both countries, it does have significance if the DPRK-Japan relation can be improved. Japan can encourage the North back to the Six-Party Process.

As can be seen from the above, Japan is dedicated to seeing the end of a nuclear threat from North Korea. It can also be observed that the issue is complicated by the abduction issue involving the resolution of the welfare of 12 individuals who were kidnapped in the 1970s and 1980s, and the normalization issue. The abductee issue has been inflamed by right wing political forces and it has become a very critical issue for the Government of Japan to resolve. As we can see, at times there is a conflict between these goals and it does, at times, affect nuclear diplomacy with the DPRK. Clearly, Japan is dedicated to a non-nuclear North Korea. There has been no visible change in this policy during the period of the economic crisis.

Russia

As early as 2003, Russia and the United States had agreed (according to a statement by President George W. Bush) to “strongly urge North Korea to visibly, verifiably, and irreversibly dismantle its nuclear weapons program.”⁴⁷

After the 2006 nuclear test by North Korea, Russia joined in the unanimous condemnation by the Security Council. The Representative of the Russian Federation stated: “. . . He could only regret that North Korean authorities had ignored the warnings contained in the Council’s presidential statement of 6 October about the negative consequences that would flow from a nuclear test, primarily for the DPRK itself.” After setting out clearly that the behavior of the DPRK was unacceptable, he added that Pyongyang must take practical steps to achieve denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.⁴⁸

When the 25 May 2009 nuclear test occurred, Russia again joined the rest of the UN Security Council and condemned the DPRK. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin of the Russian Federation in his appended comments to Resolution 1874 stated that the resolution was “. . . an appropriate response” to the actions of the DPRK.⁴⁹

Sometime after the launch of missiles and the testing of nuclear devices, it was reported that Russian military authorities had deployed air defense systems (the S-400 Triumph) in the vicinity of the Korean Peninsula. In the clarification that ultimately was given, the missile defense system was justified as a means to destroy errant missiles and debris that might transit Russian air space. No basic change in Russian policy was seen; the DPRK was not a “potential adversary;” some questioned the state of North Korean missile technology, and wanted a degree of protection against failed tests.⁵⁰

Of more importance was the progress made by the United States and Russia in reducing their own nuclear arms inventories that took place in Moscow during President Obama’s visit in July 2009. The two states made significant progress in updating nuclear weapons reduction goals. And, regarding the North Korean situation discussions between Presidents Medvedev and Obama revealed a keen interest in dealing with nonproliferation issues generally and North Korea specifically. One can reason that states in the process of reducing their own nuclear inventories have very little interest in supporting the development of an additional state with nuclear arms capability.⁵¹

With regard to Russia, it is clear that no significant change occurred during the economic crisis time frame and a commitment to a denuclearized Korean Peninsula was available from multiple vantage points.

Overall Assessment

It is clear that by resorting to bluster and bombast – plus a nuclear weapon test – the leaders of North Korea attempted to make it clear that it would not be deterred from joining the ranks of the world’s nuclear weapons states. In reality, the frantic activity of the DPRK from

September 2008 until July 2009 only made the members of the Six-Party Talks more unified in their common policies toward the DPRK. Common policies found a voice in the several resolutions and statements emanating from the U.N. Security Council during the period of observation.

What triggered a change in DPRK tactics – and at this point we can only say that the tactics have seemingly changed—is difficult to determine, even sitting on the Korean Peninsula as a close observer. The questions the author had hoped to address can be asked, but not answered. Was it a return to active participation in the policy process by the leader of the DPRK, Kim Jong Il? Was it increased pressure from Chinese or Russian sources? Did a realization that the world’s economic crisis was on the mend play any role? Were the results of the second nuclear test enough to satisfy technical requirements for a miniaturized warhead that could be mated with available missiles? Did the initial tests of the new American President reveal a will to match that of the Great Leader? Did the matter of succession enter into the equation at all?

All we can say at this moment is that it appears both the United States and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea indicate a willingness to meet in bilateral and multilateral forums to address, once more, the issues at the very root of this discordant relationship—security guarantees for one and complete nuclear disarmament for the other.

In an article that looks at foreign policy alternatives for the newly empowered Democratic Party of Japan, the respected Japanese security analyst, Yukio Okamoto, notes that in Asia there “...is no basis on which to build a collective security arrangement. . .”.⁵² The only course for Japan to guarantee its security is “. . . through the steadfast Japan-U.S. security alliance.” Having advocated the development of a limited nuclear free zone for Northeast Asia since 1991, this author has another observation. Perhaps, rather than collective security based on the formation of alliances to balance one another, we should examine cooperative security where the organizing principle features a “win-win” infrastructure. In this manner, not only would the desiderata of the DPRK and the U.S. be realized, the security desires of the remaining

states of Northeast Asia – China, Japan, South Korea, Mongolia, and Russia —would also be met.

Obviously, solving the security needs of all the states in Northeast Asia will not be easy, but the resort to nuclear weapons only creates new problems. In the early years of a new century, a new paradigm is in order.

Appendix A:

Setting the Stage: A chronology of North Korean events from the middle of September 2008:

9 September 2008: Kim Jong Il fails to appear at important military parade to mark the 60th anniversary of the founding of North Korea – Neutral

19 September 2008: DPRK declares that it neither wishes to be delisted as a 'state sponsor of terrorism' nor expects such a thing to happen.” Announces it will re-start Youngbyon reactor. – Negative

11 October 2008: Condoleezza Rice takes North Korea off the terrorist list – positive

Late-November 2008: North Korea closes the border – ostensible reason is anger at non-governmental activists sending leaflet balloons into North Korea and ROK confrontational policies – Negative

December 2008: Last Six-Party Talks Meeting – Talks end in impasse as Washington and Pyongyang fail to agree on verification protocol – especially sampling methods – Dismantlement slows down – Negative
Isolation of Kaesong Industrial Zone intensifies – Of the 4,000 South Korean workers, only 880 permitted entry – logistics support cut by 50% – Negative

The Inter-Korea Exchange & Cooperation Consultation Office is shut down by the North – Negative

30 January 2009: North Korea scraps all military and political agreements with ROK blames, “South’s hostile intent.” “. . . all the

agreed points concerning the issue of putting an end to the political and military confrontation between the north and the south will be nullified." – Negative

19 March 2009: Two U.S. Journalists Detained by North Korea for Illegal Entry – Negative

25 March 2009: Taepodong 2 missile launched on a satellite trajectory and satellite configuration – Negative

30 March 2009 -- A South Korean employee at Kaesong was arrested for allegedly criticizing the DPRK's regime and trying to persuade a local female worker to defect. Hyundai Asan engineer. – Negative

9 April 2009: Kim Jong Il attends parliamentary vote to re-elect him leader -- his first major state appearance since a suspected stroke on 14 August 2008. – Neutral

5 April 2009: DPRK launches "Unha-2" rocket carrying a communications satellite. – Negative

That test launch brought about international condemnation. Pyongyang reacted swiftly by saying:

- it would conduct a nuclear test – Negative
- begin reprocessing plutonium from Yongbyon nuclear facility. – Negative
- withdraw from the six-party talks and remain so "as long as [they continue as] they are now constructed." —Negative

15 May 2009: DPRK declares contracts of Kaesong Econ Zone "Null and void." – Negative

23 May 2009: Former President Roh Moo Hyun committed suicide – Kim Jong Il sends condolences. – Neutral

25 May 2009: DPRK tests 2nd nuclear device and declares it is no longer bound by the 1953 truce. – Negative

26 May 2009: ROK joins the PSI becoming the 16th member – Negative

- 27 May 2009: DPRK responds with this is a “declaration of war!” Negative
- June 2009: North proposes reopening talks on Kaesong industrial zone – Positive
- 2 June 2009: Kim Jong Il seems to appoint his successor – Kim Jong Un – Neutral
- 8 June 2009: Two U.S. journalists sentenced to 12 years in jail – Laura Ling and Euna Lee – for crossing the border illegally – Negative
- 11 June 2009: Pyongyang demands pay be quadrupled for Kaesong workers; introduces new rent structures – Negative
- 12 June 2009: United Nations Security Council votes unanimously to impose tougher sanction on the DPRK – Negative
- 13 June 2009: North Korea responds that any blockade will be considered an “act of war” and that it will weaponize its weapon stock – Negative
- 4 July 2009: North Korea launches at least 7 missiles of Scud type – Negative
- 25 July 2009: North Korea calls Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s comprehensive package “nonsense,” and launches a personal attack on her – Negative
- 4 August 2009: 27 President Clinton brings home the two U.S. journalists from DPRK – meets with Kim Jong Il – Positive
- 19 August 2009: DPRK sends a funeral delegation for Kim Dae Jung – Positive
- 21 August 2009: Minister Kim Myong Gil of DPRK UN Mission meets with Governor Bill Richardson of New Mexico – Positive
- 23 August 2009: DPRK delegation meets with President LMB and Unification Minister – Positive
- 24 August 2009: Hyundai Group Hyun Jung-eun returns from DPRK – traffic normalized to Kaesong Economic Zone – Positive
- 28 August 2009: DPRK Agrees to resume family reunion exchanges – Positive

29 August 2009: DPRK Frees ROK fishermen detained in July – Positive

5 September 2009: North and South Korea normalize operations of the Inter-Korea Exchange & Cooperation Consultation Office – had closed in December – Positive

5 September 2009: North Korea in correspondence to the U.N. claims that its uranium enrichment program is nearing completion – Negative

7 September 2009: North Korea Discharges possibly 40 million tons of water from the Hwanggang dam into the Imjin River killing six South Korean campers. – Negative

11 September 2009: DPRK modifies pay increase demands for Kaesong employees to 5% – Positive

14 September 2009: U.S. indicates it is ready for bilateral talks with the DPRK – Positive

Notes:

¹ Lee Sun-young, “One Year after Lehman, hope replaces fears,” *The Korea Herald*, 3 September 2009, p.1.

² Sakong Il, “It’s too early to discuss ‘exit strategies,’” *Ibid.* 23 June 2009, p. 10.

³ Steven Erlanger, “Doctors Confirm Kim Jong Il Stroke,” *New York Times*, 11 December 2008, Internet Edition.

⁴ Jung Sung-ki, “North Korea’s Water Discharge Not Seen as Attack,” *The Korea Times*, 14 September 2009, p. 2.

⁵ Of course, this is a very rough way to indicate the dynamics of the situation. Were we to assign weights to each event in terms of significance, we might observe some change in the overall profile, but that is for another time.

⁶ See Internet Site: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/dprk/2009/dprk-090130-rianovosti01.htm>.

⁷ Kim Ji-hyun, “Alliance receives boost from summit,” *The Korea Herald*, 18 June 2009, p. 2.

⁸ Hwang Jang-jin, “Korea-U.S. ties key to peninsula security,” *The Korea Herald*, 18 June 2009, p. 1.

⁹ Kim So-hyun, “President rejects Gaeseong demands,” *The Korea Herald*, 18 June 2009, p. 2.

¹⁰ “Korean peninsula must be nuke free, says defense chief,” *The Korea Herald*, 20 July 2009, p. 2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² “S. Korea, U.S. to maintain pressure on Pyongyang,” *The Korea Herald*, 24 August 2009, p. 4.

¹³ “U.S. Welcomes N.K. steps, but wants more,” *The Korea Herald*, 19 August 2009, p. 1.

¹⁴ Kim Ji-hyun, “Foreign minister says N.K. nukes target South,” *The Korea Herald*, 19 September 2009, p. 1.

¹⁵ In the author’s association with the concept for a Limited Nuclear Weapons Free Zone for Northeast Asia, one moment in March 1993 stands out. Permit a slight, but interesting digression from the era of the financial crisis. At the time of our first international conference dealing with the concept held in Beijing in March 1992, the Chinese delegation attending that meeting of 75 representatives from all of the states in the region except Taiwan, was adamantly opposed to such an idea and made its opposition in clear and not very complimentary language. However, during a follow-up meeting in Atlanta in the first week of March 1993 with the same Chinese delegation, a Japanese delegation and an American group, the leader of the Chinese team (a member of the Chinese Peoples’ Congress) approached the author at an evening reception on the first day of the meeting and said that now the time was appropriate to consider the idea in a very positive light. This represented a complete “about face” in attitude. It became clear why their policy had changed one week later when Pyongyang announced it would leave the NPT. From that volte face, one had to draw the conclusion that Beijing, like most others, was loathe to see a North Korea with nuclear weapons.

¹⁶ Hui Zhang, “Ending North Korea’s Nuclear Ambitions: The Need for Stronger Chinese Action,” *Arms Control Today*, July/August 2009 – available at: http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2009_07-08/zhang.

¹⁷ U.N Security Council, Resolution 1874 (2009): It can be accessed at: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2009/sc9679.doc.htm>.

¹⁸ “China seized metal bound for N. Korea,” *The Korea Herald*, 30 July 2009, p. 2.

¹⁹ “North Korean leader meets China’s envoy,” *The Korea Herald*, 19 September 2009, p. 2.

²⁰ Bruce Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun: A Modern History*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), p. 272.

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- ²¹ *Ibid.* See especially a discussion beginning on pages 290 – 293. A request by MacArthur for 38 nuclear weapons was not approved.
- ²² Edward Olsen, “U.S.-North Korean Relations: The Nuclear Issue.” Available at: http://allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/0/7/1/0/4pages71048/p7.
- ²³ 11 December 2008: Please refer to: <http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2008/December/20081211172120dmslahrellek0.112652.html>.
- ²⁴ FOX News: Please refer to: <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2009/02/02/cia-director-al-qaeda-job-security-challenges>.
- ²⁵ Peter M. Beck, “Lessons Obama Can Learn from the Wily North Korean,” *YaleGlobal*, 26 November 2008, p. 3. Available at: <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=11654>.
- ²⁶ “Full text of joint vision for U.S.-Korea alliance,” *The Korea Herald*, 18 June 2009, p. 4.
- ²⁷ Jung Sung-ki, “Obama Pledges Nuclear Umbrella for S. Korea,” *The Korea Times*, 17 June 2009, p. 1.
- ²⁸ Paul Richter, “Obama officials debate N.K. policy,” *The Korea Herald*, 15 July 2009, p. 4.
- ²⁹ Kim Ji-hyun, “Not much in concessions to N.K.,” *The Korea Herald*, 25 July 2009, p. 1.
- ³⁰ “U.S. envoy calls for patience on North Korea,” *The Korea Herald*, 20 July 2009, p. 1.
- ³¹ Steve Holland, “White House says policy toward North Korea unchanged,” *The Star-Online*, 7 August 2009, p. 1. Available at: <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2009/8/7/worldupdates/2009-08-07T010459Z>.
- ³² “Richardson: Talks with N. Koreans a ‘hopeful sign,’” *Korea Herald*, 21 August 2009, p. 1.
- ³³ “Bosworth has no immediate plans to visit N.K.: State Dept.,” *The Korea Herald*, 27 August 09, p. 2.
- ³⁴ Kim Ji-hyun, “U.S. inching closer to talks with N.K.,” *The Korea Herald*, 10 September 2009, p. 2.
- ³⁵ Kirit Radia reports on ABC News” “US Shifts Policy, Willing to Meet 1-on-1 With North Korea,” ABC News. See at: <http://blogs.abcnews.com/politicalpunch/2009/09/us-shifts-policy-willing-to-meet-1on1-wi>.

³⁶ “Abductions of Japanese Citizens by North Korea,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2008, p. 1.

³⁷ Axel Berkofsky, “Japan-North Korea Relations: (Sad) State of Play and (Sad) Prospects,” IFRI Centre Asie, p. 4. Available at: http://www.ifri.org/files/centre_asie/AV17_Berkofsky_final.pdf.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ “Statement by H.E. Ambassador Yukio Takasu. . . At the Meeting of the Security Council On Non-Proliferation/DPRK,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 12 June 2009, p. 1. Available at: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/speech/un2009/un0906.html>.

⁴⁰ “U.S., Japan agree to stronger nuclear defense,” *The Korea Herald*, 20 July 2009, p. 4.

⁴¹ Statement by H.E. Ambassador Yukio Takasu, 12 June 2009, Japan MOFA, p. 2.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Japan Protests Against North Korea’s Ballistic Missile Launches,” MOFA, 4 July 2009, p. 1. Available at: http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/2009/7/1193555_1193555_1138.html.

⁴⁴ Manifesto of the Democratic Party of Japan, p. 18. Available at: <http://www.dpj.or.jp/english/manifesto/manifesto2009.pdf>.

⁴⁵ “Progress in Japan-DPRK talks on kidnap issue,” *People’s Daily Online*, 14 August 2008. Available at: <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90780/91343/6475893.html>.

⁴⁶ “Pyongyang hopeful of Hatoyama,” *The Japan Times Online*, 12 September 2009. Available at: <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/print/nn20090912a1.html>.

⁴⁷ Alexander Lukin, “Russia Joins the US in Tackling North Korean Challenge,” *YaleGlobal Online*, 2 June 2003, p. 2. Available at: <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=1757>.

⁴⁸ UN Resolution 1718, 14 October 2006. Available at: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8853.doc.htm>.

⁴⁹ Security Council Resolution 1874, 12 June 2009, p. 9. Available at: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2009/sc9679.doc.htm>.

⁵⁰ “ROAR Russia defends itself from North Korea’s missile tests,” *Russia Today*, 28 August 2009. Available at: <http://russiatoday.com/Politics/2009-08-28/roar-russia-korea-missile.html/print>.

⁵¹ Clifford J. Levy and Peter Baker, “U.S.-Russia Nuclear Agreement Is First Step in Broad Effort,” *The New York Times*, 6 July 2009. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/07/world/europe/07prexy.html>, and “Background Readout by Senior Administration Officials on President Obama’s Meeting with Russian President Medvedev.” Available at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Background-Readout-By-Senior-Administration-Officials-On-President-Obamas-Meeting-With-Russian-President-Medvedev.

⁵² Yukio Okamoto, “A quiet revolution erupts in Japan,” *The Korea Herald*, 21 September 2009, p. 13.