

## *Chapter 10*

# **Russian North Korea Policy: Current Status and Future Outlook**

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### **Introduction**

Russia's upcoming presidential election is scheduled to take place in March 2018. It is likely that President Vladimir Putin will turn out to be victorious, and will remain in power until 2024. What sort of policy will Russia pursue on the Korean Peninsula in the future? While U.S. and Chinese policies towards the Korean Peninsula have been analyzed to an extensive degree, Russia's policy toward the Korean Peninsula has not been examined in depth, although North Korean nuclear weapons and missiles are produced based on Soviet military technology.

The purpose of the present paper is five-fold. Firstly, it attempts to clarify the place of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (hereinafter, North Korea or the DPRK) in President Putin's global policy, as well as the key objectives of Russia's policy toward North Korea, followed by a brief examination of the current status of Russia's relations with North Korea. Secondly, the paper will analyze not only the way in which Russia perceives North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile development, but the economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations on North Korea. It will also seek to elucidate Russia's response in the foreseeable future. Thirdly, it will contemplate the realities and future outlook of the economic relationship between Russia and North Korea, and those of arms export from Russia to North Korea. Fourthly, Russia's stance on the unification of the Korean Peninsula and the potential collapse of North Korea will be discussed. Finally, it will argue Japan-Russo cooperation on policy towards North Korea, after clarifying the policies that Russia is proposing in order to resolve North Korea's nuclear missile issue.

### **1 Goals and priority of Russia's policy toward the Korean Peninsula as well as the current status of the Russia-North Korea relationship**

Sharing a border with North Korea, Russia expects to maintain peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, as well as avoiding involvement in military conflicts, and reducing

the influence of the United States on the Korean Peninsula<sup>1</sup>. These goals have remained unchanged, even after the cease-fire of the Korean War in 1953. What has remarkably changed were the Moscow-Pyongyang relationship and the Moscow-Soul relationship. In July 1961, the Soviet Union concluded a military alliance in response to a request from North Korea. During the time of Gorbachev's administration, the Soviet Union switched from its focus on North Korea to a path of focusing on South Korea, in order to gain economic assistance. As a result, the military alliance, the Soviet-DPRK Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, resulted in losing its significance under Gorbachev. When the Soviet Union established diplomatic relations with South Korea in January 1991, North Korea fiercely protested against it, and began making genuine efforts to develop nuclear weapons.

In December 1991, the USSR collapsed. President Boris Yeltsin, leader of the newly formed Russian Federation, looked down upon North Korea, led by Supreme Leader Kim Il-sung, as a nation under Stalin's regime, and promoted a foreign policy oriented deeply towards South Korea, resulting in the further cooling of relations with North Korea. In 1996, the 1961 Soviet-DPRK Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance expired and became ineffective. Despite North Korea's request for the conclusion of a military alliance that clearly provides for the protection of North Korea under the Russian "nuclear umbrella," President Yeltsin rejected it in line with his foreign policy oriented strongly toward South Korea.

This approach underwent a significant change when the Putin administration took over the reins in January 2000. Putin chose North Korea as the destination for his first official visit abroad as president, and sought to develop an equi-distant foreign policy for both North and South Korea. With the aim of restoring Russia's influence on the Korean Peninsula, the Treaty on Friendship, Good Neighborly Relations and Cooperation was signed in Pyongyang in February 2000. Unlike the former treaty, the new one does not contain any provisions covering military aid in a case of attack from any state or coalition of states; The Russian side drew up a new draft treaty with North Korea by taking reference from the Treaty on Basic Relations between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Korea concluded in November 1992<sup>2</sup>. Russia is deeply concerned about being drawn into a war amidst the intensification of conflict between North and South

<sup>1</sup> Motohide Saito, "Roshia no ajia seisaku to buki yushutsu, kaku kakusan mondai," in Ryukichi Imai, Tadae Takubo, Shigeo Hiramatsu, eds., *Posuto reisen to kaku* (Keiso Shobo, 1995), pp. 86-87.

<sup>2</sup> For the negotiation over the new treaty, see Motohide Saito, *Roshia no gaiko-seisaku* (Keiso Shobo, 2004), pp. 122-127

Korea. A scenario of the revival of Russia's military alliance with North Korea seems unlikely.

Now, how is North Korea positioned in Putin's world policy? In May 2000, President Putin declared that both historically and geopolitically, the Korean Peninsula always occupied an important position in Russia's foreign policy<sup>3</sup>. However, in the words of Alexander Gabuev, senior associate at the Carnegie Moscow Center, this is by no means the case; Putin's global policy places emphasis on the United States, Europe, Middle East, and China, while the Korean Peninsula ranks low in order of priority. Russia is much more interested in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU), Ukraine, Syria, and Iran. This order of priority for Russia's foreign policy is unlikely to change any time soon.

What were the reactions of China and North Korea to Russia's annexation of the Crimea Peninsula China in the spring of 2014? China abstained from the resolution invalidating the annexation of Crimea, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in March 2014, while North Korea voted against the resolution. North Korea is one of the few countries that demonstrated public support for Russia's position on the Crimea issue, and is critical of the U.S. dominated unipolar international system. This stance has made North Korea a friendly state to Russia, which aspires to build a multipolar world.

The Sino-North Korean relations deteriorated after North Korea's second nuclear test, and the December 2013 execution of Jang Song-thaek, pro-Chinese former vice chairman of the National Defense Commission, in December 23. Thereafter, the relations between Russia and North Korea have been better than relations between China and North Korea. Russia does not seemingly expect the Beijing-Pyongyang relations will improve for the time being. Ever since the death of General Secretary Kim Jong-il in December 2011, the Putin administration has been expecting to see an opportunity to improve the situation, with respect to North Korea under the rule of Kim Jong-un, towards strengthening relations with Russia, while reducing its excessive dependence on China. In April 2016, coinciding with the birthday of Supreme Leader Kim Il-sung, and at the request of North Korea, Russia approved the relocation of the Consulate General of the DPRK from Nakhodka to Vladivostok. However, some in Russia describe the relations between Russia and North Korea cynically as "superficial friendship"<sup>4</sup>; regardless of Russia's repeated requests to suspend missile tests, North Korea has continued with the

<sup>3</sup> Aleksander Lukin, "Rossiya i dve Korei," *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunaronyue otnosheniya*, 2002, No. 6, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> *Roshia NOW*, February 10, 2016.

test firing of missiles and other military activities. As a result, Russia has been placed in a circumstance where it has been unable to handle North Korea effectively.

## 2 Russia's assessment of North Korea's ballistic missile development and its response

Some Russian researchers view the situation in Northeast Asia as stable, and there are no risks of war. However, the Putin administration seems to consider that the tension between North Korea and South Korea has been increasing in recent years, and the possibility of an outbreak of armed conflict cannot be eliminated. Russia considers North Korea to be the last Stalinist country in the world, and views it as an “uneasy neighbor,” which has embarked on the development of nuclear arms and ballistic missiles<sup>5</sup>.

How did Russia assess and respond to the development of ballistic missiles by North Korea? North Korea obtained a few short-range Scud B ballistic missiles through Egypt, and began to conduct research on ballistic missiles in the late 1970s. It is well-known that the ballistic missiles developed by North Korea are based on the Soviet Union's short-range Scuds. However, it remains unclear as to how and when North Korea obtained the Scud missiles. One theory posits that the Soviet Union had provided North Korea with 20 Scud missiles, in exchange for the provision of intelligence equipment from the USS Pueblo captured by North Korea in 1972. Another theory suggests that Egypt provided North Korea with Scuds units, produced by the former Soviet Union, as a reward for the air force pilots sent by North Korea to assist Egypt and Syria in the fourth Middle East War that erupted in October 1973. In the second half of the 1970s, North Korea obtained quite a few Scud missiles<sup>6</sup>. According to another source of information, Russia provided North Korea with Scud missiles, Iran offered funding, China gave technological assistance in the field of aerospace engineering, and the General Association of Korean Residents based in Japan had provided made-in-Japan semiconductors, contributing to North Korea's success in improving the short-range Scud ballistic missiles and producing medium-range Nodong ballistic missiles capable of reaching Japan. It is well-known that

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<sup>5</sup> Andrei Lankov, “The Resurgence of a Market Economy in North Korea,” February 3, 2016, Carnegie Moscow Center; Georgii Toloraya, ed., *Nespokoinoe sosiedstvo: problem koreiskogo poluostrova i vyzovy dlya Rossii* (Moskva: MGIMO-Universitet, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Evgeniy P. Bazhanov, “Military and Strategic Aspect of the North Korean Missile Program,” in James C. Moltz and Alexander Y. Mansourov, eds, *The North Korean Nuclear Program* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 102.

the DPRK launched the Nodong in a test in 1993 for the first time<sup>7</sup>).

There are unconfirmed reports that North Korea had the cooperation of Iran in the development of ballistic missiles. The Russian Foreign Ministry denied the credibility<sup>8</sup>.

Yet there are similarities between the type of ballistic missiles developed by North Korea and Iranian ballistic missiles. North Korea's solid-fueled missiles appear to have incorporated the technology of Iran's solid-fueled Sejils. In 2016, the United States Congress published a report that pointed out the cooperative relationship between North Korea, Iran and Syria in the development of ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons<sup>9</sup>. In January 2017, Iran implemented a trial launch of a North Korean medium-range ballistic missile.

Currently, North Korea seemingly possesses the short-range Scud ballistic missile with a range sufficient to reach South Korea, and the medium-range Nodong ballistic missile that is capable of reaching Japan. Furthermore, it is developing the medium-range Musudan-type ballistic missile with an estimated range of 2,500 and 4,000 km, and the long-range KN-08-type ballistic missile, with an estimated range of 8,000 km.

One of the matters attracting global attention today is the Musudan-type ballistic missile, which North Korea has tested repeatedly in recent years. The Musudan is a code name given to the missile by the United States, while the North Korean side claims that it is actually a man-made satellite, namely Hwasong-10. The Musdan is a single-stage liquid fueled missile and was developed based on the Scud, and the Soviet R-27 (SS-N-6) medium-range ballistic missile that is launched from submarines, with the capability of carrying weights of up to 1.25 tons. It is mobile, and is estimated to have the capability of launching within approximately 30 minutes. According to unconfirmed information provided by a North Korean defector, Yong'aksan General Trading Company from North Korea and the V.P. Makayev Engineering Design Office from Russia signed a large-scale contract in 1992 that covered the supply of the Musudan and the dispatch of Russian engineers to North Korea<sup>10</sup>. The UN Security Council Resolutions prohibit the export of launcher transporters for military use. Therefore, the DPRK managed to obtain the vehicle to launch the Musudan from China under the pretext of civilian use.

<sup>7</sup> "North Korean Missile Capabilities," *NIT*, May 1, 2010, <<http://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/north-korea-missile-capabilities>>, and Satoru Miyamoto, "Kitachosen no gunji/Kokubo seisaku" in Tadaki Kimiya, ed., *Chosen hanto to bigashi Asia* Iwanami Shoten, 2015, p. 169.

<sup>8</sup> *RIA Novosti*, May 20, 2011. February 1, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Paul K. Kerr, Steven A. Hildreth, Mary Beth, D. Nikitin, "Iran-North Korea-Syria Ballistic Missile and Nuclear Cooperation," *CRS Report*, February 26, 2016.

<sup>10</sup> "North Korean Missile Capabilities," *op. cit.*

It was then remodeled by North Korea and attached it to the vehicle, using a launching pad made in China<sup>11</sup>.

North Korea reportedly exported component parts for the Musudan to Iran, and Iran conducted test-firing on behalf of North Korea. However, on the early morning of 15 April 2016, coinciding with the Day of the Sun (birthday of Kim Il-sung), North Korea performed its first test-firing of the Musudan from a launch pad mounted onto a vehicle, near Wonsan in its eastern region. Although the DPRK did not give any prior notice to China, it had unofficially informed Russia in advance that preparations for a nuclear test and the firing of a medium-range ballistic missile were underway<sup>12</sup>. However, the flying object could not maintain its flight altitude and exploded in mid-air, resulting in the failure of the test-firing.

North Korea conducted a series of the test-firing of ballistic missiles to threaten the United States, South Korea, and Japan, all of which have been applying increasing pressure on the DPRK. Besides, North Korea intends to produce medium-range ballistic missiles which could reach the US mainland and US bases in Guam. However, according to Professor Georgy Toloraya at the Moscow State University of International Relations and an expert on the Korean Peninsula, 70% of these activities were related to North Korea's domestic affairs, and were carried out deliberately in consideration of the Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) scheduled to be held in May, 2016<sup>13</sup>.

The question to be examined here is the reason of the failure of the test-firing of the Musdan. Lee Choon-Geun, a researcher from the Korea Institute of Science and Technology, points out that although the main component parts, such as the engine, had deteriorated, as approximately 10 years had passed since production. He assumes that maintenance could not be properly carried out due to a shortage of resources, which caused the cracks leading to fuel leakage due to the vibrations from the launch, or making the missile uncontrollable. Vladimir Evseev, a senior researcher at the CIS Institute, with a Ph.D. in engineering and an expert on Russian military affairs, acknowledges that some progress was made, but analyzes that it will take time to improve on the Musdan missile. He argues that it is essential to improve North Korea's heat resistant coating technology that protects the warhead from a high temperature when it passes through the atmosphere. He also remarks that are worthy of note, including that a design office based in the city of Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine involved in the development of a heat resistant

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<sup>11</sup> *Business Insider*, February 6, 2016.

<sup>12</sup> *Kyodo News*, April 18, 2016.

<sup>13</sup> *TASS*, February 8, 2016

coating, and that North Korea's medium-range ballistic missiles also used a heat resistant coating made in China<sup>14</sup>.

Following the failure of the test-firing of the Musdan, North Korea promptly embarked on efforts to improve the engine and heat resistant coating of the Musudan, as well as research on the angle for launching the missile. On 23 April 2016, approximately one week after the launch of the Musudan, it test-fired a submarine-launched intercontinental ballistic missile (SLBM) in the Sea of Japan, offshore from the vicinity of Sinpo in South Hamgyong province, in the eastern part of North Korea. Russia's sole early warning satellite detected the instant of the launch above the Okhotsk Sea<sup>15</sup>. However, the missile did not fly straight but tilted sideways, and then fell after flying for about 30 km. Nonetheless, the former chief of staff of Russia commented that North Korea's technology for launching a missile from a submarine had achieved a certain level of improvement<sup>16</sup>.

Following the SLBM launch above, on 22 June, 2016, North Korea conducted two firing tests of a flying object resembling the "Musudan" near Wonsan. Although the first attempt met with failure, the second missile flew for approximately 400 km and landed in the Sea of Japan. Rodong Sinmum, the official newspaper of the Worker's Party of Korea, announced that the missile succeeded in re-entering the atmosphere, to make a precise landing after it had reached an altitude of 1,400 km, and that the heat resistant performance of the warhead had also been proven in this test. There are also some who think that the missile had fallen at the 400 km mark, due to the high orbit; if it had been launched at a normal orbit trajectory, it may have been able to reach Guam where US forces are based, 4,000 km away from North Korea.

While North Korea has justified its test-firing of ballistic missiles as a "self-defense measure," Russia's Foreign Ministry had expressed, through its spokesperson Maria Zakharova, regret and concern over the launch of missiles, conducted twice by North Korea, which were in violation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution. It also urged North Korea to fulfill its obligations as a member of the United Nations, and encouraged all the relevant countries to restrain<sup>17</sup>. Russia has been repeatedly taking these approaches every time North Korea conducts a ballistic missile test. Russia opposes the

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<sup>14</sup> Refer to *Nihon Keizai Shinbun*, April 16, 2016 for Lee Choon-Geum's view, and *Sputnik*, March 18, 2016 for Evseev's view.

<sup>15</sup> *Interfax*, April 23, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Sputnik*, June 24, 2016.

test-firing of ballistic missiles by North Korea because it believes that the United States is using the threat from North Korea as a pretext to promote missile defense systems (MD).

While Russia estimates the improvement of the “Musudan” to be moving ahead more quickly than it expected, it points out that the “Musudan” has problems. For example, Konstantin Asmolov, a researcher at the Far East Division of the Russian Academy of Sciences, offers a conservative assessment, stating that the “Musudan” has failed to reach the greatest distance anticipated by North Korea, and has not yet entered North Korea’s list of arms<sup>18</sup>. This assessment takes the same line as the analysis by John Shilling, who described the test-firing of the “Musudan” as “a partial success.” Incidentally, Shilling’s view is as follows. (1) As there was only a short time between the first and second launch in the test-firing, there had probably been no time to review the reasons behind the failure of the test-firing, and then put in place corrective measures. (2) As the “Musudan” uses old hardware from the former Soviet Union 40 years ago, there is no guarantee of success. The performance of the “Musudan” lacks stability, and the next test-firing of the “Musudan” may end in failure; however, if the improvement work on the “Musudan” continues, and succeeds, it may be deployed during 2017<sup>19</sup>.

Since Russia has grave concerns that ballistic missiles from North Korea may go out of their orbit and fall on Russian far east territory, it deployed the latest ground-to-air missile “S400” at its border with North Korea in August 2009, in order to prevent the dropping of North Korean ballistic missiles on the Russian Far East.

The “Patriot” ground-to-air missile, manufactured by the United States and owned by South Korea, was developed to counter North Korea’s short-range ballistic missile “Scud.” On the other hand, the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system is a cutting-edge mobile system to be deployed on land to intercept, from a distance of 40 km to 150 km in mid-air, ballistic missiles flying in at an altitude of 150 km in the atmosphere or immediately after entering the atmosphere. THAAD is planned to be deployed by US forces in South Korea during the first half of 2017, moving up the schedule in order to deal with the threat from North Korea. Each THAAD unit comprises six launchers and 48 missiles, with a maximum range of 200 km and maximum detectable range of the X-band radar of 2,000 km. The United States has deployed the

<sup>18</sup> Konstantin Asmolov, “North Korea Missile Launches,” *New Eastern Outlook*, June 22, 2016, <<http://journal-neo.org/2016/06/29/north-korean-missile-launches>>. Asmolov argues that in case a military exercise is conducted within the territory of a nation, it is the internal affair of the nation, and a third party should not criticize it.

<sup>19</sup> John Shilling, “A Partial Success for the Musdan,” *38 North*, June 23, 2016, <<http://38north.org/2016/06/jshilling062316>>; *The New York Times*, June 2, 2016.



THAAD system in Hawaii and Guam.

China and Russia condemned the THAAD, which is planned to be deployed with US forces in South Korea, as a measure that goes beyond the scope of dealing with nuclear and missile threats from North Korea, and which threatens the stability of the region. Furthermore, they also asserted their concerns that it may intensify the arms race between North Korea and South Korea, and urged restraint on the part of the United States and South Korea<sup>20</sup>. China's foreign ministry strongly opposed the THAAD deployment plan, declaring that it would have a direct impact on China's strategic and security interests beyond the Korean Peninsula<sup>21</sup>.

It is noteworthy that China is more critical of THAAD than Russia is, and their positions towards THAAD appear to be out of sync. This discrepancy comes from Russia's innermost views that THAAD can play a useful role as a check against China. Both China and Russia have raised objections to NATO's eastward expansion, THAAD, and the development of missile defense systems (MD) led by the United States, while Russia's concerns lie more with the eastward expansion movements of NATO, and the development of U.S. missile defense systems that are underway in Europe, than with THAAD; on the other hand, China's primary concerns lie not with the development of US missile defense systems in Europe, but with US-led development of missile defense systems that are underway in the Asia Pacific region, as well as its attempts to deploy THAAD to US forces based in Korea<sup>22</sup>.

In mid-June 2016, Foreign Minister Yun of South Korea visited Russia and met with his Russian counterpart, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. Interestingly, THAAD did not come up as an issue; rather, Russia focused the discussion on issues related to economic cooperation, such as the development of the Russian Far East<sup>23</sup>. Foreign Minister Lavrov chose not to disagree with Foreign Minister Yun's assertion that THAAD is a means of self-defense to counter nuclear and missile threats from North Korea. Instead, Lavrov flattered South Korea by making a remark about South Korea's technological prowess, demonstrated by Samsung's mobile phones being comparable to Apple's iPhone. And he suggested that South Korea develop its own missile defense systems without relying on

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<sup>20</sup> *Russia Beyond Headlines*, February 3, 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Scott Snyder and See-won Byun, "China-Korea Relations: New Sanctions, Old Dilemmas," *Comparative Connections*, May 2016, p. 94.

<sup>22</sup> Anthony Rinna, "China and Russia's North Korea Problem," July 16, 2016, <<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2016/07/16/china-and-russia-north-korea-problem/print>>.

<sup>23</sup> *The Korea Times*, June 15, 2016.

the United States<sup>24</sup>.

Even so, at the leader's summit between China and Russia, held in Beijing at the end of June, President Putin pointed out that the THAAD system that the United States is attempting to deploy in South Korea is the same as the US-built interceptor warhead missile system "Aegis," which some NATO nations have already deployed. He also denounced that by deploying a similar system, the United States aims to encircle and contain China and Russia<sup>25</sup>.

On 8 July, the United States and South Korean governments announced the final decision to deploy THAAD to US forces based in South Korea, in order to counter the threat of ballistic missiles from North Korea, but Russian News Agency TASS reported that China and Russia were firmly opposed to the deployment of THAAD in South Korea, but refrained from publishing any specific criticisms<sup>26</sup>. However, in an announcement made by the Russian Foreign Ministry on the same day, Russia was gravely concerned about the deployment of THAAD to South Korea, as it could only make it more difficult to resolve issues confronting the Korean Peninsula, including denuclearization efforts, as well as complicate the strategic balance of power, not only in the Asia Pacific region but also in other regions and domains, and requested that the two governments reconsider the deployment<sup>27</sup>. The Chairperson of Russia's Council of the Federation Committee on Defense and Security warned that the deployment of THAAD to US forces in South Korea could result in a counter-measure by Russia to newly deploy missile troops in the Far East. It is likely that Russia's criticism against THAAD represents a synchronization of policy with China, which had expressed its intense displeasure.

Immediately after the announcement of THAAD deployment to South Korea, North Korea resisted by conducting test-firing of an intercontinental submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM). Although the launch itself was successful, there were no improvements in the flight distance.

On 13 July, South Korea announced the deployment of THAAD to Seongju, in the southern part of the country. The deployment of THAAD to Seongju leaves Russia out of the firing range, but a small part of China falls within the firing range. As the system is mobile, if THAAD were to be deployed to the northern part of South Korea, a part of the

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<sup>24</sup> *Chosun Ilbo* (Japanese edition), June 14, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> *The New York Times*, July 8, 2016, *op. cit.*

<sup>26</sup> TASS, July 8, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> "Zayavlenie MID Rossii i svyazi s resheniem o razmeshenii amerikanskoi sistemy PRO v Respublike Koreya," *Ministerstvo inostrannykh del Rossiskoi Federatsii*, July 8, 2016.

Russian Far East would enter into range, while major cities of China including Beijing would fall within the firing range.

Incidentally, does North Korea have the capability to mount nuclear warheads onto their missiles? On 9 March 2016, then-First Secretary Kim Jong-un boasted that North Korea had succeeded in reducing the weight of warheads that could be mounted onto long-range ballistic missiles. In December 2016, Vladimir Dvorkin, retired Major General and a chief researcher at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, Russian Academy of Sciences, which is a research institute whose specialized fields include the development of nuclear weapons, pointed out that North Korea was already equipped with the capability to mount nuclear warheads onto their tactical missiles<sup>28</sup>. It is assumed that these views coincide with that of the United States.

Of particular note is the point that, unlike the United States, Russia believes North Korea has the right to develop missiles, and does not fully condemn the latter's missile development activities. At the Shangri-La Dialogue held in Singapore in June 2016, Deputy Minister of Defense of Russia, Anatoly Antonov, issued a statement declaring that while it is unacceptable to develop missiles carrying nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, or biological weapons, it is within North Korea's sovereign rights to develop missiles<sup>29</sup>.

In mid-February 2017, Prime Minister Abe visited the United States and held a summit meeting with President Trump. On 12 February, North Korea conducted a test-firing of the medium-range ballistic missile "Pukguksong-2" from the point near Kusong in the northwest part of the country, as if it had been waiting for an opportune moment. It was the first test-firing of a missile after the inauguration of the Trump Administration. After the "Pukguksong-2" was fired from the ground, it made orbit corrections at an altitude of 500 km and flew for approximately 550 km before falling into the Sea of Japan.

Initially, the "Pukguksong-2" was assumed to be an improved version of the medium-range ballistic missile "Musudan." However, the Chief of Staff of South Korea announced its similarity to the submarine-launched medium-range ballistic missile using solid fuel called "Pukguksong-1." Another speculation is that it is an improved version of the Chinese ground-launched missile DF21<sup>30</sup>. Schilling, a leading expert on the study of North Korean missiles, points out that the underlying meaning of the launch was purely

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<sup>28</sup> *Sputnik*, December 10, 2016.

<sup>29</sup> *TASS*, June 5, 2016.

<sup>30</sup> *38 North*, February 13, 2017

political, as it showed the overall inferiority in its performance to the “Musudan,” despite some superiority to the “Nodong” in terms of its mobility and survivability<sup>31</sup>.

How has Russia assessed the test-firing of the “Pukguksong-2”? According to the evaluation by Vladimir Novikov of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies, North Korea was successful in launching the medium-range ballistic missile using solid fuel, with which only about five minutes is required to complete preparation for launch, rather than using liquid fuel, which requires approximately 30 minutes to complete preparation for launch. Note that, in order to complete the ICBM, it is necessary to enhance its heat-resistant function for successful atmospheric rebound. However, Alexander Vorontsov, head of the Department of Korean and Mongolian Studies at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Science, predicts that North Korea may be able to develop intercontinental ballistic missiles in approximately four years<sup>32</sup>.

### **3 Russia’s assessment and response to North Korea’s nuclear development activities**

How has Russia viewed and responded to North Korea’s nuclear development activities? North Korea had shown an interest in the development of nuclear arms since the Soviet Union era. The Soviet Union cooperated with North Korea on the peaceful use of nuclear energy, namely nuclear power generation. However, it did not provide cooperation on the development of nuclear weapons, for fear that North Korea’s may act rashly, and that Russia may become embroiled in war. Note, however, that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian scientists whose lives fell into hardship may have worked with North Korea on nuclear development, without the knowledge of the Russian government. Russia is one of the main countries maintaining the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). North Korea’s nuclear development efforts also benefited from the cooperation of Iran, as well as Dr. Abdul Khan, known as the “father” of nuclear development in Pakistan. As compensation for his help, Pakistan is said to have received missiles in return. Russia is concerned that the sale of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, by an economically impoverished North Korea to Islamic fundamentalists, may threaten the safety of Russia<sup>33</sup>.

In October 2006, the Russian Minister of Defense, Sergei Ivanov, announced, before

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<sup>31</sup> *The National Interest*, February 17, 2017

<sup>32</sup> TASS, February 20, 2017; *Famagusta gazette Cyprus*, February 13, 2017.

<sup>33</sup> Motohide Saito, “Putin no hokuto Asia seisaku no gendankai” in *Kokusai josei – Kiho*, No. 5, February 2005, p. 148, and Richard Hass, <<http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/656742//North-Korea-nuclear-threat-grow-amid-fears-Islamic-State-could-buy-atomic-secrets>>.

any other countries did, that North Korea had conducted an underground nuclear test. The following day, RIA Novosti reported that North Korea had triggered a detonator, and had in reality become the 9th nuclear power. However, in a turnaround after that, Russia started to emphasize that North Korea does not possess nuclear weapons; all it possesses are detonators. Although North Korea conducted further nuclear tests after that, Russia, like the United States, continued to deny North Korea as a nuclear power.

On 6 January 2016, immediately prior to the Congress of the Worker's Party of Korea to be held for the first time in 35 years, North Korea made a post hoc announcement that it had successfully conducted a hydrogen bomb test, without giving any advance notice to other countries including China and Russia. Wu Dawei, special representative for Korean Peninsula Affairs in China, commented that North Korea had made significant progress in the development of a hydrogen bomb, and that its missile and nuclear technologies have become quite sophisticated<sup>34</sup>. South Korea presented its views that North Korea had not conducted a hydrogen bomb test but a nuclear test, with only less than half the force of the Hiroshima atomic bomb. Analyses by Russian experts, for the most part, also indicated that the scale of the explosion was too small for it to have been a hydrogen bomb.

Why did North Korea proclaim that it had succeeded in conducting a hydrogen bomb test? Russia reported that, by doing so, North Korea aims to make the United States perceive North Korea as military threat, and to defend itself against any invasions, amidst the current circumstances where it does not even possess an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of reaching the United States<sup>35</sup>. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, commented that it was advisable to refrain from overreacting to North Korea's nuclear tests, and stressed that calm responses should be taken.

Partly because Russia does not believe that North Korea will use its nuclear capabilities against it due to the friendly relations between these two countries, Russia does not perceive the North's nuclear tests as a military threat to itself<sup>36</sup>. Nevertheless, the nuclear tests conducted by North Korea have an unpleasant aspect for Russia, as Vladivostok, the largest city in the Russian Far East, is located only about 320 km away from North Korea's nuclear testing site, and there is a possibility of air pollution. Despite

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<sup>34</sup> *Sankei Shimbun*, April 9, 2016.

<sup>35</sup> *Russia Beyond Headlines*, December 17, 2015; *TASS*, January 14, 2016.

<sup>36</sup> Artyom Lukin, "Russia Shows Little Concern over North Korean Nukes (for now)," March 3, 2013, <<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/03/03/russia-shows-little-concern-over-north-korean-nuke>>.

this fact, Russia has in practice tolerated North Korea's nuclear development activities, even while protesting against them. The only reason for Russia to have adopted this stance lies in its assessment that it would be better for North Korea to continue surviving as an anti-US power, than for it to be integrated with pro-American South Korea<sup>37</sup>. If North Korea takes steps to halt its nuclear development activities, Russia is concerned about the possibility that the United States may make the move of using its military force to overthrow the regime, just as it did with the Gaddafi regime in Libya.

Toloraya, an expert on North Korean issues, pointed out that if North Korea were to use any nuclear weapons, it would be subjected to a counterattack by the United States, and the Kim Jong-un regime would be driven to a state of collapse<sup>38</sup>. If this view were to get at the heart of the situation, nuclear weapons can be described as "unusable weapons" to North Korea, aside from use for self-defense and the enhancement of national glory and pride.

North Korea shut down its nuclear reactor in Nyongbyon County in 2007, but restarted it afterwards in 2013. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) estimated that the number of nuclear warheads held by North Korea had increased from six to eight warheads in 2015, to eight to 10 warheads in 2016, basing its estimate on the quantity of plutonium (40 kg) that can be produced at the graphite-moderated reactor that it uses for tests at Nyongbyon<sup>39</sup>. In early May 2016, at the Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea, which was held for the first time in 36 years, Chairman Kim Jong-un emphasized that North Korea was steadily taking "the line of simultaneous development," in which nuclear development and economic development are promoted at the same time, and did not even give the slightest indication of abandoning the development of nuclear weapons. Artyuom Lukin of the Far Eastern Federal University predicts that North Korea would possess 100 nuclear weapons by the end of the 2010s<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> Artyom Lukin, "Why Russia and China Won't Curb North Korea Any More than the U.S. Will Curb Saudi Arabia?" *The Huffington Post*, January 7, 2016, <<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/artiom-lukin/russia-chinakorea-saudi-us-b-89>>

<sup>38</sup> Georgy Toloraya, "A Neighborly Concern: Russia's Evolving Approach to Korean Problems," *38 North*, February 18, 2016, <<http://38north.org/2016/02/gtoloraya021816>>.

<sup>39</sup> *The Japan Times*, June 9, 2016.

<sup>40</sup> Artyom Lukin, "How Russia Could Curb North Korea's Nukes," *World Post*, June 23, 2016.

#### 4 The reality and outlook of economic relations between Russia and North Korea

The United States is extremely critical toward North Korea, which is advancing on missile and nuclear development activities. It has taken the lead in pushing resolutions on economic sanctions toward North Korea in the United Nations Security Council. On the other hand, while Russia has requested North Korea to suspend missile test-firing activities that are perceived as a provocative act that violates international laws, it has been consistently opposed to imposing strong economic sanctions by the United Nations against North Korea, viewing it as a dangerous move that could bring about the collapse of the regime, and force North Korea into a tight corner. Russia has asserted that the hostile policy adopted by the United States and South Korea, as well as the conducting of joint military exercises, are the precise catalysts that have, conversely, driven North Korea toward the development of nuclear weapons. Russia has pointed out that economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations have had no impact on North Korea, and frequently called for the United States to suspend economic sanctions.

A further point to pay attention to regarding the movement of Russia and North Korea is that, in March 2014, the following month when Russia took a move towards Crimea's accession, the State Duma of the Federal Assembly, the lower house of the Federal Assembly of Russia, approved the legislation to cancel approximately 90% of unpaid debt to Russia, totaling \$11 billion, and use the remaining amount for infrastructure development, etc. in the country.

Touching on the Rason Special Economic Zone Development Project, located on the northern tip of North Korea, in which Russia has heavily engaged; Russia has injected approximately 15 billion yen (about 70% of the total construction costs) into replacing the existing narrow-gauge railroad, with a broad-gauge railway stretching for a total of 54 km, connecting Khasan in the Russian Far East with the port of Rajin in North Korea. This project was implemented in cooperation with the Korea Railroad Corporation, and the repair works were completed in September 2014. This railway line is connected to the Trans-Siberian Railway. In November of the same year, the repair and dredging works of Wharf No. 3 at Rajin Port reached completion. Russia has obtained the leasehold of the aforementioned railway and Wharf No. 3<sup>41</sup>, lasting for 49 years, and hopes to export Siberian coal from Rajin to China and South Asian countries.

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<sup>41</sup> Takashi Ito, "Nihon no keizai seisai wo sakute ni kappatsu ni toshi wo tuzukeru chuugoku ya rossia, kankoku" in *Shuukan Kinyoubi*, October 23, 2015, pp. 34-36.

In January 2016, after North Korea conducted its “hydrogen bomb” test, the United States began to draft a resolution for United Nations Security Council sanctions, without having any consultation with Russia at all, in order to impose the most severe United Nations sanctions on North Korea than ever before. Amid such a situation and immediately prior to the adoption of the United Nations resolution on sanctions toward North Korea, Kim Yong-chol, secretary of the Workers’ Party of Korea, made a top-secret visit to Russia via Beijing<sup>42</sup>. It appeared that he consulted with China and Russia about the forthcoming sanctions. In March, on the day before the passing of the United Nations Security Council Sanctions Resolution, the United States notified Russia on the United Nations Security Council Sanctions Resolution on North Korea. This was met with opposition from Russia, which requested for a revision. As a result, the adoption of the resolution was pushed back to the following day. Russia gave its support for the resolution with the following two conditions: (1) To allow for the shipping of coal and iron ore (produced in Siberia and Mongolia) from the port of Rajin in North Korea, near to the Russian Far East; (2) To allow for the fueling of North Korean civil aircraft<sup>43</sup>. The United States responded to the request from Russia. Russia expressed its satisfaction with the revisions<sup>44</sup>. Incidentally, a large proportion of the fleet under North Korea’s Air Koryo comprises of Ilyushin type-and Tupolev-type passenger aircrafts, manufactured by the former Soviet Union or present-day Russia, and also includes Antonov passenger planes made in Ukraine.

As part of the United Nations Economic Sanctions Resolution 2270, South Korea suspended the import of coal from Rajin. However, Russia has not halted its activities in transporting Siberian-made coal by rail and exporting it to China from the port of Rajin. Nevertheless, it is not necessarily true that the economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council on North Korea did not have any negative impact on Russia. To give an example, after the adoption of the sanctions resolution by the United Nations Security Council in March, Russia was no longer able to promote new multilateral cooperation projects to North Korea<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> *Daily NK Japan*, March 14, 2016.

<sup>43</sup> Serghei Golunov, “Does North Korea Have a Place in Russia’s ‘Turn to the East?’,” *Russia in Global Politics*, June 1, 2016.

<sup>44</sup> Refer to Resolution 2270 (2016), dist.: General, March 2, 2016, for the English text of the United Nations Security Council Sanctions Resolution 2270. The full Japanese text is carried in *Yomiuri Shimbun*, March 14, 2016.

<sup>45</sup> *TASS*, March 3, 2016.



Now, what are the realities of the export of crude oil from China and Russia to North Korea? According to China's customs statistics, China had suspended the supply of crude oil to North Korea between January and June 2014. However, in August of the same year, Voice of America (VOA) reported that Korean government officials had indicated that China was providing North Korea with assistance in the form of crude oil supply at a nominal price, separately from those provided through trade transactions. If the pipeline between China and North Korea were suspended for a certain period of time, it would become difficult to use it again. For this reason and also in an effort to prevent the collapse of the North Korean regime, China seems to have continued to send approximately 500,000 tons of poor quality crude oil produced in Daqing Oil Field through the pipeline to North Korea every year.

On the other hand, in February 2013, Russia reportedly increased the export of crude oil to North Korea by approximately 60%, and exported about 100,000 tons of diesel oil annually, in response to the international community's move to tighten economic sanctions on North Korea following its third nuclear tests<sup>46</sup>. According to the uncorroborated information from the residents of North Hamgyong Province in North Korea, more gasoline and diesel oil from Russia than from China have been sold in the area lately.

Furthermore, attention should be drawn to the fact that the Putin administration had provided support for the development of a petroleum refinery in North Korea. According to a news report, this refinery is being used to refine heavy oil into gasoline and aircraft fuel<sup>47</sup>. The same report alleges that mazut heavy oil produced in Russia, obtained cheaply by Chinese corporations from Russian corporations, via companies in Southeast Asian countries such as Singapore, undergoes re-purification into gasoline and other products, which is transported to the port of Vladivostok. From there, it is then shipped on to the port of Rajin.

After North Korea conducted the test-firing of the "Musudan" in April 2016, the United Nations Security Council started to consider issuing a statement condemning the act. Russia raised its objections to that, and requested for the addition of wording stating that the relevant countries must also practice restraint, causing difficulty in the proceedings of the talks. However, on 31 May after the Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea, North Korea once again conducted test-firing, launching the Musudan

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<sup>46</sup> Kenro Nagoshi, "Kitachosen 'suibaku jikken' de kawaru Russia to no 'yami no kankei,'" *Foresight*, January 12, 2016.

<sup>47</sup> *Sankei Shimbun*, March 16, 2016.

type-missiles. This time, Russia withdrew its demands for the revision and agreed with the issuing of the statement. Consequently, the statement condemning North Korea's actions was adopted unanimously<sup>48</sup>.

According to reports by TASS, in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Sanctions Resolution 2270, Russia would close the North Korean banks and joint venture corporations in Russia in the near future, and would freeze all financial dealings with North Korea, as well as the import of titanium, gold, iron, iron ore, and other products from North Korea. Although a draft of a presidential decree was drawn up, President Putin has not signed it<sup>49</sup>. He believes that North Korea does not pose any threats to the territorial integrity of any other state, and therefore does not deserve to be subjected to severe sanctions<sup>50</sup>.

In February 2017, following the test-firing of intermediate-range ballistic missiles conducted by North Korea contrary to the UN Security Council Resolution, China announced the prohibition of importing coal from North Korea within the same year against which North Korea reacted sharply. Meanwhile, Russia implemented a prohibition on exporting helicopters and vessels to North Korea, and at the same time commenced drawing up a draft of a presidential decree to prohibit the import of zinc, nickel, silver and other materials from North Korea. However, at the time of writing this article, it is unclear whether the decree will actually be issued.

Although Russia criticizes North Korea's missile test-firing, it is reluctant to impose severe economic sanctions on them. In early March 2017, North Korea launched four scud missiles ER from Tongchang-ri in the western part of North Korea to eastward. Three out of the four launched Scud missiles fell within Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Russia criticized North Korea but asked for restraint from other relevant countries only, and did not respond any further<sup>51</sup>.

Russia does not prohibit North Korea from making its people work in Russia in order to gain foreign currency. North Korea reportedly makes such workers pay more than half of their earnings to the government<sup>52</sup>. Workers from North Korea are engaged in the Russian Far East in construction, as well as lumbering and agriculture sectors, or work in factories such as the Hidrostroy, processing plant for marine products located in

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<sup>48</sup> *Asahi Shimbun*, June 21, 2016.

<sup>49</sup> *Chosun Ilbo* (the Japanese language edition), May 7, 2016.

<sup>50</sup> *Russia Insider*, June 13, 2016.

<sup>51</sup> TASS, March 6, 2017.

<sup>52</sup> *Asahi Shimbun*, April 6, 2016.

the Northern Territories. Russia has also not issued any orders to shut down restaurants that North Korea operates in Russia for the purposes of gaining foreign currency and collecting information. China and Russia also stand in solidarity in their opposition against the United States for imposing sanctions of its own accord on North Korea, and asserts that the imposition of sanctions on North Korea should be based on the United Nations Security Council Sanctions. In consideration of the aforementioned moves, Russia seems unlikely to impose severe economic sanctions on North Korea any time soon.

## **5 The reality and outlook of Russia—North Korea trade relations between, and Russia’s arms exports to North Korea**

What does the trade situation between Russia and North Korea look like? What is the future outlook for trade between Russia and North Korea? North Korea is ranked 113 among Russia’s trading partners, and makes up only 0.001% of Russia’s external trade<sup>53</sup>. China contributed to more than 90% of North Korea’s external trade in 2013. Russia established a new “Asian trading house” in 2015 to revitalize trade, with the aim of increasing the annual total trade with North Korea to US\$1 billion (approximately 100 billion yen) by 2020. Alexander Vorontsov notes that the North Korean economy has grown during the Kim Jong-un regime, despite the international economic sanctions to which the country has been subjected. The private sector now makes up 30% to 50% of the North Korean economy, and there are signs of growing economic disparity among the citizens with the emergence of a class of citizens with buying power. However, according to Professor Andrei Lankov of Kookmin University in South Korea, “Russia doesn’t particularly need North Korean products, while North Korea cannot afford Russian products even if it wants them”<sup>54</sup>. Unlike Russia’s expectations, there are no prospects for significant growth in trade between Russia and North Korea in the foreseeable future.

President Putin has come up with the “Iron Silk Road” concept, which involves reconnecting the Trans-Korean Railway that became divided during the Korean War, and linking it to the Trans-Siberian Railway, and collecting toll fees from the passage of trains transporting large volumes of cargo to Europe through this route. However, this concept has remained nothing more than a dream, for reasons such as the continued tension between North and South Korea, lack of funds, and North Korea’s passive

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<sup>53</sup> Konstantin Asmolov, “How Russia Implements Sanctions against North Korea,” *New Eastern Outlook*, May 26, 2016.

<sup>54</sup> Andrei Lankov, “Moscow-Pyongyang: One Year of a New Friendship,” July 7, 2015, Carnegie Moscow Center.

attitude toward opening up the country. Judging from the leaders' dialogue held between President Putin and President Park Geun-Hye in Seoul in December 2013, South Korea is also not keen on bringing about the realization of the Trans-Korean Railway. Due to financial difficulties, there is also little hope for the materialization of an "Energy Bridge" for Russia to supply North Korea with electricity.

With respect to the relationship between Japan and North Korea, Russia hopes to see the early normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and North Korea. This is because if diplomatic relations between Japan and North Korea were normalized, Russia believes that Japan would provide economic assistance to North Korea, which would benefit Russia as well. However, for the normalization of the Japan-North Korea relationship to be realized, it is necessary that the issue of abductions of Japanese citizens by North Korea and the nuclear development problem become resolved.

Meanwhile, what is the situation like with respect to arms exports from Russia to North Korea? Russia has been providing North Korea with weapons since the Soviet Union era. However, in March 2010, President Medvedev, who wished to "reset" US-Russia relations, aligned himself with President Obama and signed a presidential decree prohibiting Russia from engaging in arms dealing with North Korea. General Secretary Kim Jong-il repeatedly requested for the procurement of modern weapons from Russia, but Russia did not respond. This policy would undoubtedly continue into the foreseeable future. Although Russia exports ground-to-air missiles and fighter aircraft to Iran, it does not export any arms to North Korea, due to Russia's understanding of North Korea lacking the ability to pay for the weapons and fears that North Korea would become uncontrollable. North Korea has been trying to obtain weapons using every possible means. However, during the early 1990s North Korea obtained 40 retired diesel golf type submarines, which were part of the Russian Pacific fleet, through a Korean trading company in Japan, disassembled and redesigned them over a long period of time, and has been using them for SLBM launch and other uses<sup>55</sup>.

What is the state of arms export from Russia to South Korea? In return for writing off the unpaid debts of the former Soviet Union toward South Korea under the Yeltsin administration, South Korea received tanks, armored vehicles, and other weapons produced by the former Soviet Union, and deployed them along the 38th parallel north<sup>56</sup>. While the technology of Russia's S300 ballistic missile seems to be incorporated

<sup>55</sup> *The New York Times*, January 20, 1994; International Herald Tribune, January 20, 1994; *Yomiuri Shimbun*, August 26, 2016; *Tokyo Shimbun*, September 3, 2016.

<sup>56</sup> Motohide Saito, "Roshia no aja seisaku to buki yushutsu, kaku kakusan mondai," pp. 92-93, *op. cit.*

into North Korea's ballistic missiles, the core part of the submarine-launched ballistic missile and the medium-range surface-to-air missile that South Korea aims to complete by 2020 incorporates the cutting-edge technology of Russian surface-to-air missile S400 with an early warning radar (multifunctional X-band radar) and the capability to ignite immediately upon reaching a certain altitude<sup>57</sup>. This technology enables the submarine to fire the missile while it is submerged underwater, whereas it enables the latter, which is currently being developed jointly by the Samsung Group from South Korea and the Thales Group from France, to counter both ballistic missiles and fighter aircraft. The S400 has enemy searching range of 600 km, and is able to shoot down flying objects 400 km ahead flying toward it at a speed of 17,000 km/h. Russia has boasted that it is even superior to the United States' surface-to-air missile "Patriot"<sup>58</sup>. Although it is not often pointed out, Russia shows interest in developing high-tech weapons, such as missiles, with South Korea, and selling them on the global market.

## **6 Russia that wishes neither for unification of the Korean Peninsula nor the collapse of North Korea**

As North Korea continues with its nuclear and missile testing activities, and tension between North and South Korea is running high, the present situation is not an ideal one for discussing the issue of unification. President Park Geun-hye has not demonstrated a proactive stance toward the unification of the Korean Peninsula. What kind of policy has Russia adopted with respect to the unification of the Korean Peninsula? Russia declares that it supports the long-held wishes of the Korean people for the unification of the Korean Peninsula, but does not sincerely wish to see the emergence of a unified Korea. This is because the emergence of a unified Korea that possesses nuclear arms may pose a threat to Russia. The proposed unification of the Korean Peninsula based on the federal system advocated by North Korea cannot possibly be accepted by South Korea. Just as West Germany absorbed East Germany, the unification of the Korean Peninsula through the absorption of North Korea by South Korea is a scenario that Russia wishes to avoid because it could result in the movement of US forces in Korea close to the

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<sup>57</sup> Refer to *Roshia NOW*, July 1, 2016, and Richard Weltz, "Russia's ROKAF Connection," *Second Line of Defense*, May 5, 2011, <<http://www.sldinfo.com/russia%E2%80%99s-rokaf-connection>>. South Korea's missile defense system (KAMD) is reportedly capable of intercepting missiles at a low altitude of less than 40 km, but not capable of intercepting medium-range ballistic missiles such as the "Musudan." *World KBS News*, July 17, 2016, <[http://world.kbs.co.kr/news\\_print.htm?lang=j&No=10057585&Category=news\\_hotiss](http://world.kbs.co.kr/news_print.htm?lang=j&No=10057585&Category=news_hotiss)>.

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border with Russia, bringing about a situation that is akin to the eastward expansion of NATO<sup>59</sup>. Russia craves for a change in the circumstances in the former Eastern Europe, three Baltic States, and the Middle East, but seeks to maintain the current status in northeast Asia, including the Korean Peninsula. Geopolitically, the Korean Peninsula has developed as a buffer zone for Russia, and the ideal scenario for Russia would be the continued segregation of the Korean Peninsula and the peaceful coexistence of North and South Korea.

The collapse of North Korea is also a scenario that Russia is hoping to avoid. If North Korea collapses, Russia may be flooded with refugees, although not to the extent that China would be, bringing about chaos in society in the Russian Far East and causing a deterioration in security. With the intention of preventing an influx of refugees and maintaining friendly relations with North Korea, Russia concluded an agreement with North Korea in February 2016 to return North Korean defectors to North Korea<sup>60</sup>. Partly for the purpose of rescuing the North Korean economy and preventing the regime from collapse, Russia wrote off approximately 90% of the North Korea's unpaid debts to Russia. In addition, Russia has significantly increased its food aid toward North Korea over the past few years. In March 2016, emergency humanitarian aid was offered to North Korea through the World Food Day (WFD) project, which provided 2,500 tons of wheat. Note, however, that in the event of the collapse of North Korea, there is a possibility that Russia will seal off the Russia-North Korean border. Russia has warned that North Korean refugees may flood into Japan as well should Kim Jong-un's regime collapse.

If North Korea collapsed, US forces in Korea may move northward. Alternatively, there are also predictions that China may expand its power to reach the northern part of the Korean Peninsula. Regardless of which scenario, the balance of power in the Asia Pacific region may change in a way that puts Russia at a disadvantage. Thus, the collapse of North Korea is a scenario that Russia wishes to avoid<sup>61</sup>.

Another scenario that Russia wishes to avoid is the outbreak of war on the Korean Peninsula, which may embroil Russia. Japan, the United States, China, and South Korea also do not wish for war to break out on the Korean Peninsula. Russian experts

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<sup>59</sup> Shinji Hyodo, *Ukuraina kikigo no roshia no taiboku chosen seisaku*, p. 67. <[http2.jiia.or.jp/pdf/research/H26\\_Korean\\_Peninsula/06-hyodo.pdf](http2.jiia.or.jp/pdf/research/H26_Korean_Peninsula/06-hyodo.pdf)>.

<sup>60</sup> *The Moscow Times*, February 4, 2016.

<sup>61</sup> Andrei Lankov, "Moscow-Pyongyang: One Year of a New Friendship," July 7, 2015, Carnegie Moscow Center.

analyze that, although North Korea is engaging in provocative actions, it is unlikely that Chairman Kim Jong-un of the Workers' Party of Korea would issue orders for a war as that would be a "suicidal" course of action for North Korea<sup>62</sup>.

On 12 November 2015, Russia and North Korea concluded an agreement on preventing dangerous military action. This agreement was signed by Nikolai Bogdanovsky, First Deputy Chief of General Staff of the Russian army, and Oh Gum-chol, Vice Chief of General Staff of the Korean People's Army. In addition to reaffirming the ties between Russia and North Korea, this agreement also seeks to achieve the prompt and peaceful resolution between the armies of the two countries in the event of an unintended accident. The two countries also agreed on putting in place safety measures during the implementation of military actions such as test-firing exercises, in order to prevent damage to assets and to soldiers from both garrisons deployed nearby<sup>63</sup>.

### **Conclusion—Toward cooperation between Japan and Russia**

Finally, this section will discuss cooperation between Japan and Russia on policies toward North Korea. First, it should be pointed out that Russia, falling into a state of financial difficulties, has become increasingly reliant on nuclear arms after the Ukrainian crisis. Amidst the international situation of the "mini-Cold War," Russia is putting effort into enhancing its nuclear and missile capabilities, and it is not realistic to put too much hope on Russia for pressuring North Korea into suspend its nuclear and missile development activities.

Russia recognizes that it does not possess influence on North Korea and does not have any effective means of making North Korea suspend its nuclear and ballistic missile development activities<sup>64</sup>. However, it may be possible for Japan, the United States, China, Russia, and South Korea to work together and patiently engage with North Korea to request for its restraint. Toloraya, an expert on Korean Peninsula issues, points out that while it is impossible to make North Korea give up on the development of nuclear weapons, a possible scenario is for the United States to agree to an assurance system and the implementation of a large-scale economic cooperation project in return for North Korea to freeze its nuclear development activities<sup>65</sup>. If that were to happen, we could say that the most realistic countermeasure would be for the relevant countries to work

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<sup>62</sup> *The Moscow Times*, April 9, 2013.

<sup>63</sup> *UPI*, November 12, 2015.

<sup>64</sup> *Roshia NOW*, February 10, 2016.

<sup>65</sup> Toloraya, "A Neighborly Concern."

together in a united form, and persist in negotiating with North Korea with the aim of persuading it to freeze its nuclear development activities.

The six-party talks have been on hold since North Korea declared in April 2009 its intention to withdraw permanently from the talks. Some Russian experts hold the view that “surgical military attacks” on North Korea’s nuclear facilities should be added to the countermeasures if North Korea does not suspend its nuclear development activities. However, the Putin administration takes the policy that the nuclear development issue should be resolved peacefully through multilateral negotiations, rather than through bilateral negotiations between the United States and North Korea or military means. The Putin administration is not prepared to take the initiative to initiate multilateral talks about the North Korean issue. The Iran Nuclear Deal established in 2015 reached an agreement under the leadership of President Obama, with Russia playing a supporting role from beginning to end. At present, the Syria Peace Talks seems to be the only multilateral negotiation, which Russia takes the initiative to reach resolution on the stage of international politics.

In the Foreign Ministers’ Meeting held between China and Russia in late March 2016, the foreign ministers of the two countries agreed to restart the six-party talks. This policy was reconfirmed during the Foreign Ministers’ Meeting between China and Russia held in Bonn in mid-February 2017. To launch the six-party talks again, it is vital to gain the cooperation of China and the consent of North Korea. Russia hopes that China would take the initiative to persuade North Korea and restart the six-party talks. Foreign Minister Lavrov has declared that while restarting the six-party talks is a complex matter, it is not without hope<sup>66</sup>. On the other hand, North Korea has declared that the six-party talks are dead. It is difficult to restart the six-party talks any time soon. China criticizes the United States that the latter and other countries are pressing the former to take the responsibility for resuming the talks.

Under the current circumstances, where there are no prospects for the early resumption of the six-party talks, Russia’s next best hope would be the continuation of the Northeast Asia Cooperative Dialogue (NEACD). The NEACD is organized by the Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation (IGCC) and was launched in 1993. Every year, Japan, the United States, China, Russia, and South Korea participate in Track II of the event, which involves the participation of diplomats, defense officials, and civilian researchers. The North Korean representative was absent consecutively in 2014 and

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<sup>66</sup> *Sputnik*, January 10, 2014.



2015, but attended the Northeast Asia Cooperative Dialogue held in Beijing in June 2016, and the United States and North Korea apparently made contact during the event.

Aside from the Northeast Asia Cooperative Dialogue, there are other opportunities for Japan and Russia to discuss the North Korean issue. Japan and Russia have made use of various channels, including the Japan-Russia Deputy Foreign Ministers' Meeting and the Japan-Russia Vice-Ministerial Consultation, to discuss the North Korean issue. When Prime Minister Abe visited Russia in November 2013 and a leader's meeting with President Putin was held in Moscow, the two leaders agreed on establishing a Japan-Russia "2+2" meeting. However, this initiative ended up being suspended after the Ukrainian crisis occurred. In early May 2016, Prime Minister Abe launched a "new approach" in an attempt to break through the stagnated relations between Japan and Russia. President Putin responded immediately by proposing the resumption of the Japan-Russia "2+2" meeting. Following the visit by President Putin in December, Japan and Russia agreed to resume the Japan-Russia "2+2" meeting, and it is scheduled to be held in Tokyo in March 2017. If the initiative were to be re-established, the North Korean issue would also be discussed. Both Japan and Russia hope for peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, and have concerns about reckless actions on the part of North Korea.

After the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001, Japan provided economic assistance to Russian border guards protecting the border at Tajikistan in Central Asia, neighboring Afghanistan. The Japan Maritime Self Defense Force and the Russian Armed Forces have also conducted joint exercises off the Somalian coast in 2014 in efforts to counter piracy. The promotion of friendly relations between Japan and Russia not only serves in enhancing understanding of Russia's stance on international relations and the situation on the Korean Peninsula, but also has a certain degree of effectiveness in restraining anti-Japanese sentiments in China and Russia. Making use of the opportunities such as the Japan-Russia "2+2" meeting, Japan should also enquire about the level of the Kim Jong-un regime and the actual state of the South Korea-Russia missile development cooperation as well as Russia's policy towards South Korea.

Amidst the occurrence of seismic changes to international relations in northeast Asia, it seems that Japan should promote cooperation with Russia on the policy toward North Korea, while holding fast to the Japan-US security system and closely cooperating with the United States. However, in doing so, it is necessary to bear in mind that Russia is reluctant to exercise economic sanctions against North Korea, and that Russia's policy focuses on the need to engage in discussion without linking the Northern Territories issue with the North Korean issue.

