

## **Chapter 3**

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# **The Korean Peninsula— Changing Security Environments**



On the Korean Peninsula, disputes over North Korea's nuclear issue continued into 2004. The Six-party Talks aimed at settling the issue hit a snag in the second half of the year, leaving the matter unresolved. Meanwhile, North Korea publicly avowed that it had—and would further strengthen—“nuclear deterrence.” It resumed the production and stockpiling of plutonium, and continued to develop missiles as a vehicle to deliver nuclear weapons.

The parties to the Six-party Talks, including North Korea, agreed that their final goal was the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. However, they are divided over the substance of denuclearization and on how North Korea should be rewarded for dismantling its nuclear programs. Differences between the United States and North Korea, in particular, are substantial. Moreover, since North Korea has not attended the Six-party Talks since August 2004 when it declared it was pulling out of the talks indefinitely, it is feared that the longer the talks are stalled, the stronger North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities will grow.

In 2004, the North and the South agreed to take several confidence-building measures, but the threat posed to South Korea by North Korea's weapons of mass destruction and conventional forces has not lessened. Meanwhile, discussions over the relocation of the US Forces Korea (USFK) were enlarged to include the issue of forces realignment that could entail the reduction of US forces, raising South Korean concerns over the weakening of deterrence vis-à-vis North Korea. After repeated discussions, the two countries decided to maintain and strengthen the Republic of Korea (ROK)-US combined defense posture through the deployment of cutting-edge weapons by the United States and the “cooperative self-reliant defense” policy of South Korea. The two countries are expected to review the role of the ROK-US alliance pursuant to this agreement.

In publishing a defense white paper for the first time in four years, the South Korean government deleted passages explaining its defense objectives in terms that had characterized North Korea as its main enemy—a controversial topic that led the authorities to suspend publication in the first place. Although they have thus papered over internal differences regarding what constitutes the country's “main enemy,” intense debate about security issues will continue in South Korea. Consultations between South Korea and the United States about the future of their alliance are also likely to continue, bearing in mind that South Korean public opinion has grown increasingly sensitive to the potentially unaccustomed role the United States may ask South Korea to play outside the Korean Peninsula.

## 1. The North Korea Nuclear Issue: A Deferred Solution

### (1) Continued “Nuclear Deterrence” and Development of Missiles

North Korea’s nuclear issue, which flared up again in autumn of 2002, was not resolved in 2004. North Korea has observed the moratorium on firing of ballistic missiles so far, but is thought to be continuing to develop them. In June 2003, North Korea declared its resolve to maintain its nuclear deterrence, and on February 10, 2005, it officially announced that it possessed nuclear weapons. This has had a direct and serious impact on the security of East Asia and the possibility of nuclear weapons proliferation has aroused serious concern in the international community.

North Korea’s nuclear development may be briefly summed up as follows. First, prior to the nuclear freeze imposed in 1994 by the Agreed Framework between the United States and North Korea, the latter had produced plutonium using the 5-megawatt graphite-moderated reactor in Nyongbyon. By refusing to allow the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to inspect its nuclear facilities, North Korea aroused suspicions that it had converted the plutonium into nuclear weapons. In this connection, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) reported in November 2002 that the North has one or possibly two weapons using plutonium it had produced prior to 1992.

Second, in 2003, North Korea reprocessed about 8,000 spent fuel rods that had been sealed pursuant to the Agreed Framework. The reprocessing work was allegedly carried out during the period from mid-January to the end of June 2003, and a spokesperson for North Korea’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on October 2 the same year that while its nuclear activities had been for a peaceful purpose in the past, it made a switchover in the use of plutonium in the direction of increasing its nuclear deterrence. In January 2004, a North Korean government official showed to a group of visiting American scientists a substance he called metallic plutonium that could be used as a material for building nuclear bombs and told them that it was a nuclear deterrent. The specifics and scale of the reprocessing operation in 2003 are unknown. According to one estimate introduced in a US Congressional Research Service report, if the 8,000 fuel rods have been reprocessed, they would yield 25–30 kilograms of plutonium, enough for five or six nuclear weapons. In a testimony given on March 9, 2004, before the US Senate Armed Services Committee, CIA Director George J. Tenet testified that North Korea had produced enough

plutonium for several nuclear weapons. According to an article in the *New York Times* dated December 6, 2004, IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei said in an interview that he was now certain that North Korea possessed enough plutonium for four to six nuclear weapons. This judgment was based on the fact that two years had elapsed since North Korea ejected IAEA inspectors and reprocessed about 8,000 spent fuel rods.

Third, the 5-megawatt graphite-moderated reactor in Nyongbyon may have produced additional plutonium. The resumption of its operation was confirmed in February 2003, and the Congressional Research Service report mentioned above points out that in three years, the reactor could generate about 14–18 kilograms of plutonium, enough for two to three nuclear weapons.

Fourth, a highly enriched uranium (HEU) program has surfaced, igniting the nuclear issue anew. The US Department of State announced to the press that North Korean officials acknowledged in October 2002 to Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James A. Kelly, then visiting Pyongyang, that they have an HEU program. In response, the North Koreans initially said that they were entitled to possess not only nuclear weapons but any type of weapons more powerful than that, suggesting that they did have the HEU program. Subsequently, they denied the existence of such a program. According to the aforementioned report, the CIA estimates that North Korea is constructing a plant that could produce enough weapons-grade uranium for two or more nuclear weapons per year when fully operational.

In addition, North Korea has graphite-moderated reactors in Nyongbyon and Thaechon (of the 50-megawatt and 200-megawatt class, respectively) the construction of which had been frozen. If these reactors become fully operational, North Korea would be able to produce an amount of plutonium far larger than its present capability. In December 2002, a spokesperson for North Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that it would resume the construction of these nuclear facilities, but whether or not this has happened has not been confirmed.

In addition to the extraction of plutonium and uranium, which are the main materials for making nuclear weapons, North Korea is believed to be pressing ahead with programs for developing detonators, miniaturized warheads, and delivery vehicles, none of which are covered by the Agreed Framework. In July 2003, Director of the National Intelligence Service Ko Young-koo of South Korea testified before the National Assembly's Intelligence Committee that his

agency learned that North Korea had conducted high-explosive tests linked to nuclear weapons in December 1997 through September 2002. A *New York Times* article dated April 13, 2004, reported that A.Q. Khan, a Pakistani scientist, said he was shown during a trip to North Korea in 1999 what he described as three nuclear devices.

On the question of ballistic missiles that could be used as vehicles for delivering nuclear weapons, the North Koreans rebuffed interference by the United States, Japan, and others by saying that the test, production, and deployment of missiles are issues pertaining to the legitimate rights of North Korea. It is thought that North Korea has already deployed No Dong missiles with a sufficient range (about 1,300 kilometers) to reach anywhere in Japan, and that it is developing Taepo Dong-1 and -2 missiles with a range of 1,500 kilometers or more, and 3,500–6,000 kilometers, respectively. It is also thought that while North Korea has been observing a moratorium on test-firing of missiles, it continues to develop ballistic missiles including conducting aboveground engine combustion tests. According to a report submitted to the National Defense Committee of South Korea's National Assembly on July 7, 2004, by Cho Yung-kil, then minister of national defense of South Korea, North Korea had conducted combustion tests for long-range missile engines including Taepo Dong-2. As we shall see later, North Korea is also believed to be using test data obtained from overseas sources.

On May 4, 2004, South Korean newspapers such as the *Chosun Ilbo* and the *Munhwa Ilbo* quoted a high-ranking South Korean official as saying that North Korea had completed the development of a new type of intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM). According to the reports, the IRBMs are 12 meters in length, 1.5 meters in diameter, have a range of 3,000–4,000 kilometers, and are mounted on a large mobile platform. As of 2003, underground bases for these missiles were under construction at two locations: Yangdok County, South Phyongan Province; and Sangnam-ri, Hochon County, South Hamgyong Province. It is reported that these missiles are an improved version of former Soviet SS-N-6 submarine-launched ballistic missiles. The August 4, 2004, issue of *Jane's Defence Weekly* reported that North Korea was in the process of developing and deploying a new type of IRBMs. Based on the same SS-N-6 missiles, they reportedly have an estimated range of at least 2,500 kilometers and could be launched from submarines or surface ships. However, the August 5, 2004, issues of the *Dong-A Ilbo*, the *Hankook Ilbo* and other South Korean papers

quoted well-informed sources who doubted the existence of such missiles programs, arguing that North Korea did not have surface vessels or submarines capable of launching such large missiles. On the other hand, an article on *GlobalSecurity.org* points to the US government's concern that North Korea may launch the missiles from small commercial vessels approaching the US coastline.

The development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles by North Korea is also a problem that has international ramifications. In February 2004, it came to light that Pakistani scientist A. Q. Khan, by his "act of an individual," had transferred nuclear-related technology—in particular, uranium enrichment technology—to North Korea, Iran, and Syria. In a press conference held at the North Korean Embassy in Beijing, Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan of North Korea admitted that Pyongyang had sold missiles to Pakistan to acquire hard currency but denied that his country had had any dealings with Pakistan regarding uranium-enrichment technology for which it had no need. It is suspected that North Korea has transferred No Dong and related technologies to Iran and Pakistan, which were used in these countries to develop ballistic missiles such as Shahab-3 and Ghauri. It is also suspected that North Korea obtained data on the missiles from these countries, useful for developing new missiles without test-launching them. At a hearing held by the US Senate Armed Services Committee on March 9, 2004, CIA Director Tenet pointed out that North Korea had assisted Libya in constructing a Scud C production line and Syria in developing a longer-range missile program. In January 2004, it was reported that North Korea offered to provide Nigeria with missile technology, but that Nigeria had rejected the offer. These reports offer a glimpse of the fact that North Korea has not given up its plan to sell its missile technology to other countries.

It is quite conceivable that North Korea is pushing ahead with its nuclear development programs to acquire asymmetrical capability in order to redress the imbalance of conventional weapons with the ROK-US combined defense system. South Korea's Ministry of National Defense (MND) reckons that thanks to the country's military buildup that has continued since 1974, South Korea is now capable of repelling an attack from North Korea. In theory, North Korea is trying to build asymmetrical capability to redress this military imbalance. It has long been suspected that North Korea has deployed a large number of chemical weapons near the front line, in which context North Korea's efforts to build up its nuclear arsenal can be seen as part of a strategy to strengthen these

asymmetric capabilities. If this is the case, then so long as the military balance remains in favor of the ROK-US combined defense system, and little progress is made toward confidence building, North Korea will not bow to the international community's demand that it dismantle its nuclear programs even though it might agree to a freeze on them.

As of the end of 2004, North Korea went so far as to reprocess the spent fuel rods but has not gone beyond that—for instance, conducting a nuclear test. After it announced it was resuming operation of its nuclear facilities and withdrawing from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), North Korea took several provocative actions from February through March 2003. These included a MiG-19 flying over the Northern Limit Line (NLL) and two MiG-29s plus two other aircraft approaching a US RC-135 reconnaissance aircraft. However, these actions were not nuclear-related. In other words, North Korea steered clear of doing anything that could scupper chances of negotiation even after it had declared its pullout from the NPT.

Redressing its military imbalance with the ROK-US combined defense posture is not the only thing North Korea needs to do to maintain its present regime. By playing the nuclear card, North Korea is angling for security assurance from the United States and economic assistance from all the parties. If North Korea intends to use its nuclear programs as a mere ploy for negotiations, there is a prospect for dismantling them sooner or later in exchange for negotiated rewards. However, if it holds on to them for military purposes as noted above, dismantling the nuclear programs would be a hard choice for North Korea to make. Even if North Korea conceded the international community's demand, there is a possibility of North Korea carrying out the program covertly. Therefore, the dismantling of North Korea's nuclear programs must be verified in a comprehensive manner by reliable means.

What is more, one should not overlook the fact that the diplomatic tactics employed by North Korea are aimed at strengthening its negotiating position by threatening the security of other countries. The longer the process of the Six-party Talks drags on, the more time it will allow North Korea to develop nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. If that happens, further delay in reaching a binding conclusion would allow North Korea's foot-dragging to outgrow its character as a ploy for extracting rewards and become a security threat to East Asia as a whole.



## **(2) Different Versions of “Denuclearization”**

The parties to the Six-party Talks have different ideas about the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in terms of scope, timing, and what North Korea can get in return. In particular, the United States, with which North Korea has wanted to engage in direct talks from the outset of nuclear diplomacy since late 2002, believes that North Korea has been carrying out nuclear development programs including an HEU program, and has been insisting on a complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement (CVID) of North Korea’s nuclear programs. Japan and South Korea share the US position on this issue.

At the third Six-party Talks held in June 2004, the United States did not use the term CVID in its proposal, but in effect maintained its original position. According to the US proposal, North Korea must, as a first step, commit to dismantling all of its nuclear programs, and will be given three months to prepare. During this period, North Korea (a) must provide a complete list of all its nuclear activities and cease their operations; (b) must permit the securing of all fissile material and the monitoring of all fuel rods; and (c) must permit disabling of all nuclear weapons, weapons components, and key centrifuge parts in a publicly disclosed and observable manner.

As long as North Korea dismantles its nuclear development programs as promised, rewards to North Korea would continue. At the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Assistant Secretary of State Kelly explained that at first these would be provisional or temporary in nature, not permanent. More specifically, when North Korea agrees to permanently dismantle all of its nuclear development programs in a transparent manner subject to effective verification, non-US parties will provide it with heavy fuel oil. When North Korea declares the implementation of such an agreement and upon acceptance of the declaration by all parties, (a) parties will provide provisional multilateral security assurances (which will become more enduring as the process proceeds); (b) parties will begin a study to determine the energy requirements of North Korea and how to meet them by nonnuclear energy programs; and (c) parties will begin to discuss steps necessary to lift remaining economic sanctions on North Korea and remove it from the US List of State Sponsors of Terrorism.

The US government has refused to have bilateral talks with North Korea and has steadfastly maintained its policy of solving the problems within the framework of multilateral diplomacy, namely, the Six-party Talks. It favors an

approach whereby the parties give multilateral security assurances and the non-US parties energy to North Korea after the latter has dismantled its nuclear development programs in this manner. This policy of the Bush administration originated from the realization that the Agreed Framework worked out between the Clinton administration and North Korea had failed to put an end to North Korea's nuclear development programs.

The Japanese government has taken the position that if North Korea takes concrete steps to dismantle its nuclear development programs, Japan is willing to have talks about supplying energy to North Korea. Japan has already engaged in bilateral consultations with North Korea with an eye on achieving the final goal of normalizing diplomatic relations between the two countries. On May 22, 2004, Prime Minister Koizumi visited Pyongyang for the second time since September 2002. During a conversation with Kim Jong Il, chairman of the National Defense Commission of North Korea, he personally conveyed to Chairman Kim in no uncertain terms "the essential need for a complete dismantlement of nuclear weapons and the need for international verification." He exacted a promise from Kim Jong Il that his goal was the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and that he intended to make efforts toward a peaceful resolution through the Six-party Talks, and had Chairman Kim reconfirm that North Korea will maintain a moratorium on test-firing of missiles. Meanwhile, the Japanese people see development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles by North Korea as a threat to the security of Japan. They also feel mounting resentment over the past abduction of their fellow citizens by the North Korean authorities and the insincere response shown subsequently by them, and call for an early solution and clarification of the facts.

Although the government of President Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea has fallen into line with the United States and Japan on the CVID demand to North Korea, it takes the view that inducement is more important than pressure in eliciting a compromise from North Korea. The South Korean government takes the position that if North Korea comes up with a

**Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi (left) shaking hands with Chairman Kim Jong Il (right) prior to talks (May 22, 2004) (Kyodo Photo)**

plan to freeze its nuclear development programs including the HEU, it is willing to provide North Korea with energy assistance. It is also reported that if North Korea dismantles its nuclear programs, the South Korean government would not mind allowing North Korea to use nuclear fuels for peaceful purposes as the NPT permits its signatories. The South Korean government has held intergovernmental talks with North Korea on this, while first encouraging an expansion of economic cooperation and cultural exchange. Factors at work behind this reconciliatory attitude are popular consciousness of common ethnicity in South Korea; the perception that North Korea's nuclear program is little more than a bargaining chip; and the strong feeling that neighboring countries should first give North Korea their security assurances.

Both China and Russia call for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, but what they have in mind are nuclear weapons, and they think it acceptable for North Korea to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. They take the position that the parties to the talks should resume assistance to North Korea when it freezes its nuclear programs, and that the parties must give North Korea some form of security assurances at the same time. More specifically, these two countries argue for having the parties give their security assurances jointly or for the United States to give its separate security assurance with the endorsement of the remaining parties—a position close to that of North Korea. However, this is not to say that China and Russia are going out of their way to take North Korea's side. Rather, they are involved in the process of the Six-party Talks with a view to promoting good relations with the United States. In particular, China, as host country, has been carrying out shuttle diplomacy to mediate differences between the United States and North Korea so that the momentum of the Six-party Talks does not die down.

South Korea, China, and Russia see eye to eye on a number of issues, such as the timing of extending assistance to North Korea and the scope of dismantlement of its nuclear programs, namely, toleration of the peaceful use of nuclear energy after nuclear weapons development programs have been dismantled. These countries are wary that the United States might resort to a hard-line policy in case the Six-party Talks break down.

### **(3) North Korea: Changing Attitudes**

The objectives North Korea wants to attain through the Six-party Talks are two-fold: security assurance from the United States and economic

compensation for freezing its nuclear development programs. Behind this tactic are the fear that the United States might be planning regime change in, and/or a preemptive attack on, North Korea, and the hope of receiving foreign economic assistance to rebuild its stagnating economy. North Korea might be speculating that as long as the process of the Six-party Talks drags on, the United States is less likely to attack, and that as long as it participates, some of the parties might be persuaded to provide some assistance.

On more than one occasion during the period from mid-December 2003 to January 2004, North Korea hinted that it might concede to the US demand for a freeze covering not just its nuclear weapons programs but also its “peaceful nuclear power industry,” namely, peaceful use of nuclear energy such as atomic power generation. Departing from the strong stance it had taken with a statement made by its representative at the first round of the Six-party Talks held in August 2003—who stated that North Korea might announce its possession of nuclear weapons and that it might carry out a nuclear test—North Korea indicated its willingness to meet the US demands halfway. At the second round of the Six-party Talks held on February 25–28, 2004, however, North Korea denied the existence of the HEU program and took the stance that objects of a freeze or dismantlement under discussion are restricted to nuclear weapons. At the third round of the talks held on June 23–26, North Korea came up with a more specific proposal, a summation of its previous proposals of “reward for freeze,” namely, North Korea will freeze its nuclear weapons-related facilities if the United States stops its “hostile policy” toward North Korea and provides economic compensation.

More specifically, not all nuclear programs—such as nuclear development for peaceful purposes—are subject to dismantlement. The North Korean proposal makes no mention of plutonium, nuclear weapons, or HEU programs in existence prior to 2003. It obliges North Korea: (a) to freeze all facilities related to nuclear weapons, and the products that result from their operation, as the first step on the path to the final goal of dismantlement of its nuclear

weapons program; and (b) not to produce, transfer, or test additional nuclear weapons. It clearly identified the 5-megawatt reactor in Nyongbyon as a nuclear weapons facility. What North Korea seeks to win as a reward are: (a) the US commitment to lifting the sanctions and removing North Korea from the US List of State Sponsors of Terrorism; and (b) energy assistance of 2 million kilowatts through the supply of heavy oil and electricity. This is equivalent to the total output of the two light-water reactors that the Korean Peninsular Energy Development Organization plans to build. This proposal hints at North Korea's desire to retain the HEU program and have the right to use its nuclear program for peaceful purposes by not committing to dismantling its nuclear programs as such. On the other hand, since North Korea has said that the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is its final goal, one may see this as a ploy to leave room to make concessions in future negotiations.

There are important differences between the two countries over the scope of denuclearization, the timing of economic assistance, and the existence of an HEU program. However, the United States is apparently trying not to provoke North Korea by avoiding use of the term CVID outright. Immediately after the session, North Korea commented that the US proposal was "noteworthy." Encouraged, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell held talks with Minister of Foreign Affairs Paek Nam Sun of North Korea by taking advantage of an ASEAN Regional Forum Ministerial Meeting held in Jakarta in July 2004.

In August, however, North Korea had begun to adopt a negative stance toward the Six-party Talks then scheduled for late September and make known its strong objections to the United States. On August 23, a spokesperson for North Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it would be difficult for North Korea to attend the Six-party Talks because President George W. Bush called Chairman Kim Jong Il "a tyrant." In September through October, there was a succession of reports about signs that North Korea would test-launch its ballistic missiles.

Soon after his reelection, President Bush spoke with the heads of four nations (Japan, China, South Korea, and Russia) during an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit meeting held in Santiago, Chile, on November 20–21, at which he confirmed his support for the framework of the Six-party Talks, and called on "Mr. Kim Jong Il" to "get rid of your nuclear weapons programs" and return to the Six-party Talks. In response, a spokesperson for North Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on December 4 that what was essential for the resumption of dialogue was for the United States to drop its hostile policy

**Table 3.1. Proposals submitted at the third round of the Six-party Talks**

	US Proposals		DPRK Proposals	
	Actions to be taken by DPRK	Actions to be taken by parties other than DPRK	Actions to be taken by DPRK	Actions to be taken by parties other than DPRK
1st step	DPRK, as a first step, commits to dismantle all of its nuclear programs.		US withdraws its demand for CVID.	
Freeze	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- DPRK provides a complete list of all its nuclear activities, and ceases operations of all of its nuclear activities within a three month period.</li> <li>- DPRK permits the securing of all fissile material and the monitoring of all fuel rods within the same period.</li> <li>- DPRK permits the publicly disclosed and observable disablement of all nuclear weapons, weapons components, and key centrifuge parts within the same period.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Japan, South Korea, China, and Russia provide heavy fuel oil to DPRK.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- DPRK freezes all the facilities related to nuclear weapons (including the 5MW nuclear reactor in Nyongbyon) and products created by their operation.</li> <li>- DPRK refrains from producing more nuclear weapons, transferring and testing them.</li> <li>- (The proposal does not touch on the plutonium, nuclear weapons, and uranium enrichment programs that existed prior to 2003.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The US commits to lifting sanctions and blockade against the DPRK.</li> <li>- The parties provide energy assistance of 2 million kW through the supply of heavy fuel oil and electricity.</li> </ul>
Dismantlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- DPRK declares the dismantling of its nuclear programs.</li> <li>- DPRK removes nuclear-related facilities and complies with a long-term inspection.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The parties provide provisional, multilateral security assurances which would become more enduring as the DPRK continues to live up to its agreement.</li> <li>- The parties begin a study to determine the energy requirements of the DPRK and how to meet them by nonnuclear energy programs.</li> <li>- The parties begin a discussion of steps necessary to lift remaining economic sanctions on the DPRK and remove it from the US List of State Sponsors of Terrorism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The freeze would be the first step leading to the ultimate dismantlement of the nuclear weapons program.</li> </ul>	
Inspection and verification agency	IAEA		Parties to the Six-party Talks	

*Sources:* Data from the statement submitted to the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee by James A. Kelly, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, "Dealing with North Korea's Nuclear Programs," July 15, 2004; a statement by a spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), June 28, 2004; and *RP Kita-Chosen Seisaku Doko* (Radiopress North Korea's Policy Trend), July 25, 2004.

aimed at "bringing down the system" in North Korea and to express its willingness to coexist with North Korea.

Included among the factors North Korea mentioned as reasons for putting off its participation in the Six-party Talks were nuclear-related experiments conducted by South Korea, and this too was basically an indictment of the United

States. When South Korea's failure to report these experiments to the IAEA came to light, South Korea denied any connection between its experiments and nuclear weapons development, and the United States expressed its understanding. On September 11, a spokesperson for North Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs charged that the United States is applying double standards by trying to stamp out nuclear activities that North Korea has been carrying out for a peaceful purpose, while silently acquiescing to nuclear weapons-related activities and possession of nuclear weapons by its ally in the South. In a statement made on September 16, he used this as an excuse for not participating in the Six-party Talks.

The CVID demand is not the only issue dividing the United States and North Korea. There are many issues that must be thrashed out at the Six-party Talks. On the question of the security assurance that North Korea is seeking from the United States, the latter proposed multilateral security assurances, not a bilateral arrangement between the two countries. At the third round of the Six-party Talks, North Korea demanded that the United States remove it from the List of State Sponsors of Terrorism. In response, the United States said that commencing a discussion about the issue was itself a reward for dismantling North Korea's nuclear development programs. Commenting on this, *Rodong Sinmun*, the organ of the Workers' Party of Korea, dated July 7, 2004, said that the proposal made by the United States was unfair because it lacked any commitment to observe the principle of "words for words" and "action for action," and complained that the three-month preparatory period for the dismantlement of nuclear facilities proposed by the United States was unrealistic.

The statement issued by the chairman of the third round of the Six-party Talks is said to have stressed the necessity for the parties to observe the principle of "words for words" and "action for action" in working out a peaceful solution to the nuclear issue. Although North Korea acknowledged this point, many other contentious issues surfaced in a more sharply-defined fashion. Unable to see any prospects for solving the points of contention between itself and the United States, North Korea has been shunning the resumption of the Six-party Talks, finally announcing, on February 10, 2005, that it would indefinitely suspend its participation.

#### **(4) South Korea: Tilting Further toward Reconciliation**

The government of President Roh Moo-hyun inherited the Engagement Policy (or the "Sunshine Policy") of the previous administration of President Kim Dae-

jung, and has since been pursuing a “Policy for Peace and Prosperity” aimed at establishing durable peace in the Korean Peninsula. His government, while proclaiming that it will not tolerate the development of nuclear weapons by North Korea, has explained that the promotion of people-to-people exchanges and economic cooperation with North Korea would contribute to the solution of the nuclear issue. What prompted the Roh Moo-hyun government to pursue a reconciliatory policy toward North Korea was the fear that heightened tension on the Korean Peninsula could lead to an economic crisis in South Korea and also the tendency among young people, who are the president’s base of support, to view North Koreans as compatriots rather than as enemies. For instance, a public opinion poll taken by South Korean polltaker Research&Research in January 2004 found that 39 percent of respondents considered the United States to be the most serious threat to the security of South Korea, with only 33 percent naming North Korea. In particular, 58 percent of the respondents in their twenties named the United States, and 20 percent of them chose North Korea, reported the *Chosun Ilbo* on January 12, 2004.

Meanwhile, since the first North-South summit meeting in June 2000, North Korea has been trying to arouse in South Koreans a sense that they are one and the same people with their counterparts in the North, trumpeting slogans such as “national cooperation” and “by our nation itself.” It has thus been fanning anti-American sentiment in an effort to create an atmosphere favorable to gaining greater economic cooperation from South Korea. It also claims that the nuclear development programs it has been pursuing are aimed at the United States and at defending the security of South Korea as well. North Korea supports the Roh Moo-hyun government because it pursues a reconciliatory policy toward North Korea, and has been leveling fierce criticisms against the Grand National Party and the *Chosun Ilbo*, a leading South Korean daily, that oppose the government. However, when South Korea, be it a private organization or its government, makes remarks or take actions that North Korea considers to be “anti-North,” or when its relations with the United States deteriorate, it sometimes suspends dialogue with South Korea.

Thanks to the resonant feeling created by the Policy for Peace and Prosperity and the slogan of “by our nation itself,” official exchanges and economic cooperation between the two countries have been progressing apace. In addition to the minister- and vice minister-level talks, reunions for separated families, and food and fertilizer aid given to North Korea, South Koreans have been



making sightseeing tours by bus to North Korea's Mt. Kumgang Tourist Zone since 2003, and in 2004 South Korean businesses have started making preparations to site their factories in the Kaesong Industrial Zone. The construction work linking the Seoul-Sinuiju and East Coast railways and roads that started in September 2002 had progressed almost to the test-run stage by October 2004. The increase in the number of areas and roads in North Korea—Mt. Kumgang and Kaesong City—routinely accessible to South Koreans has a positive effect in the sense that this enhances the affinity that South Koreans feel toward North Koreans. However, visits by North Koreans to South Korea were limited mostly to participation in sports events, so this development cannot be described as reciprocal.

In addition to economic cooperation, the two countries have taken concrete steps to build confidence in the military sphere in 2004. Following the first round of North-South general officer-level military talks held at a Mt. Kumgang resort in North Korea on May 26, the second round general officer-level talks took place at a Mt. Sorak resort in South Korea on June 3–4, 2004. At that meeting, the two countries agreed on steps to stop propaganda activities and dismantle propaganda facilities along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and to prevent accidental naval clashes in the Yellow Sea. The latter stipulated a radio frequency that navy vessels of the two countries can use to communicate with each other, and this arrangement was expected to help prevent accidental naval clashes such as occurred in June 1999 and June 2002.

Since July the same year, however, North Korea has applied the brakes to the improvement of relations in several areas. North Korea did not send its representatives to the 15th North-South Ministerial Meeting scheduled for August 3. As a reason, it cited the fact that the South Korean government had permitted about 420 North Koreans (so-called “escapees from the North”) who had been residing in a Southeast Asian country (North Korea said it was Vietnam) to enter South Korea on July 27–28. On July 14, a South Korean naval ship fired warning shots at a North Korean patrol boat that intruded into the NLL. On account of these events, a working-level military meeting between the North and the South scheduled for July 19 was canceled. There were also reports about an incident in mid-October when South Korean navy vessels failed to locate North Korean submarines that had been operating in South Korean waters. While the sense of North Korea as a threat is lessening among the South Koreans, and the South Korean government is pursuing an increasingly conciliatory

policy, the military threat posed by North Korea continues. North-South relations still contain many uncertain elements.

## **2. Realignment of US Forces and South Korean Responses**

### **(1) Toward a New Posture of the US Forces Korea**

At the 36th ROK-US Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) held between South Korea's Minister of National Defense Yoon Kwang-ung and US Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld on October 22, 2004, the two sides confirmed that although the number of USFK troops deployed on the Korean Peninsula will be reduced, they will continue to be stationed at different locations, and that the alliance's deterrence will be maintained and strengthened by reinforcing their combat capability. On that occasion, the South Korean defense minister indicated that his government would coordinate its "self-reliant defense" posture with the defense transformation of the United States, and the US defense secretary expressed his appreciation for the vital role played by the South Korean troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. In South Korea, anti-American sentiment has been running high and demand for the withdrawal of the USFK has become increasingly vocal in recent years, while fears about weakening deterrence as a result of the proposed realignment have also mounted. Amid such developments, the discussions between the two governments over the past two years about the role the ROK-US alliance should play and the realignment of the USFK have ended on a positive note.

These discussions were held at the "Future of the ROK-US Alliance Policy Initiative" (FOTA) meetings that started in April 2003 pursuant to an agreement reached at the 34th SCM in December 2002—toward the end of former President Kim Dae-jung's time in office. At these FOTA meetings, the two countries agreed to maintain and strengthen the deterrence effect of the ROK-US alliance vis-à-vis North Korea and expand the mission and capability of the South Korean armed forces, and discussed the issue of the relocation of USFK bases.

In 2004, the scope of discussions was enlarged to cover the issue of realignment of the USFK. In May, the United States unveiled its plan to dispatch about 3,600 troops of the 2nd Brigade of the 2nd Infantry Division from South Korea to Iraq for one and a half years, adding that it has not made a decision on whether they will return to South Korea. In response, the South

Koreans expressed concern that the proposed rotation may lead to a sharp reduction in USFK troop numbers. According to a senior South Korean defense official, the United States as early as June 2003 (at the second FOTA meeting) had sounded out the South Korean government on its plan to cut the number of its troops by 12,000. After a series of working-level meetings, then National Defense Minister Cho Yung-kil and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld agreed on June 4 to carry on discussions about issues arising from the global posture review (GPR) announced by the United States in November 2003. This means that the two governments have agreed to take up the issue of USFK troop reduction as an official topic.

On June 6, 2004, the US government officially presented the South Korean government with a basic plan for cutting USFK troop strength by a third (12,500) from 34,000 by 2005. What worried the South Korean authorities was the possibility that the proposed sharp reduction, coupled with the southward relocation of the US bases, would weaken the deterrence capability against North Korea, because it will take 10 years before South Korea can build up a self-reliant defense posture even according to the optimistic estimate expressed by President Roh in August 2003. South Korea asked the United States at FOTA meetings and through other channels to delay the troop cut and reconsider the substance of the realignment. On the other hand, the United States is looking at the issue of forces realignment on a global scale from the standpoint of its GPR, and takes the view that the deterrence capability against North Korea can be strengthened even with reduced troops by increasing the sea and air power in Northeast Asia and by deploying precision weapons and increased firepower to South Korea.

As a result of four-month-long consultations, the two countries agreed on October 6 to cut the US troop numbers in three stages: by 5,000 troops (including the units dispatched to Iraq) in 2004, by 5,000 troops in 2005–2006, and by 2,500 troops in 2007–2008. At the same time, the United States decided to retain multiple-launch rocket system (MLRS) batteries and counter-battery radar aimed at neutralizing the threat of long-range North Korean artillery and to replace the attack helicopters deployed to search for North Korean special forces operatives with the AH-64D Apache Longbow. Commander of the ROK-US Combined Forces Command Gen. Leon J. LaPorte testified before the US Senate Armed Services Committee in September that the United States had already deployed Patriot Advanced Capability (PAC)-3 surface-to-air guided

missiles and was planning to reinforce them. What is more, he testified that Navy/Marine Corps F/A-18E/F Super Hornets are available to provide precision-strike capabilities day or night and in all weathers and that the United States can also rush reinforcements to South Korea via high-speed vessels and Air Force C-17 cargo aircraft. At the 36th SCM, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld also confirmed that the United States had committed \$11 billion to 150 enhancement projects for the USFK over the years to 2006. Through a combination of these US efforts, the duties that the South Korean armed forces have taken over from the USFK, and the self-reliant defense posture of South Korea itself, the allied forces of the two countries are endeavoring to maintain and strengthen the deterrence capability against North Korea.

Where the US military bases in South Korea are concerned, at the 10th FOTA meeting held on July 22–23, 2004, the two countries reached a final agreement to relocate all the bases in Seoul and its suburbs to the Pyeongtaek-Osan area, about 60 kilometers south of Seoul, by December 2008. Included are: Yongsan Garrison in the center of Seoul, where the headquarters of the ROK-US Combined Forces Command and the USFK are based; and the installations of the 2nd Infantry Division dotted between Seoul and the DMZ. In September 2004, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld said that the relocation of these military units and installations would reduce the burden on South Korea, and explained in August the same year that the move was designed to relocate the US troops from vulnerable areas near the DMZ to southern locations that are beyond the range of North Korean artillery.

Both the FOTA meetings and the concurrent ROK-US consultative meetings appeared to have been preoccupied with such immediate issues as the reduction in USFK troop strength and relocation of its military bases. With these issues settled for the time being, the two countries agreed to discuss broader, longer-term issues facing the alliance at the 36th SCM. They also agreed to initiate a series of Security Policy Initiative meetings for the purpose of identifying the future of the alliance within the next one to two years. It appears they will discuss the expansion of the South Korean armed forces' role and the strategic flexibility of the USFK. More specifically, topics that are likely to be taken up at these meetings include the establishment by the South Korean armed forces and the USFK of their own, separate command structures and the possibility of turning the USFK into a strategic mobile force in the region. It is also reported that the two countries plan to review the ROK-US alliance in light of

the new and changing security environments.

Factors leading the United States and South Korea to concur on the need to review their alliance include not just changes that have occurred in the global security environment but also a sharp division of opinion among the South Koreans over the role played by the United States and its armed

**National Defense Minister Yoon Kwang-ung (left) and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld (center) at a ceremony welcoming the minister prior to the 36th SCM (US Forces Korea)**

forces on the Korean Peninsula. While some Koreans are concerned that the dispatch of some USFK units to Iraq and a reduction in troop numbers may weaken the deterrence capability against North Korea, others view the presence of US forces in South Korea as a hindrance to the unification of the two Koreas and are demanding the withdrawal of the USFK at an early date.

## **(2) South Korea: Aiming at a “Cooperative Self-reliant Defense” System**

While seeking to build an enduring peace on the Korean Peninsula by expanding exchange and assistance programs to North Korea, the government of President Roh Moo-hyun is determined to build a military capability strong enough to deter a North Korean attack by its armed forces alone under the slogan of “self-reliant defense.” In 2004, President Roh often went out of his way to add the prefix “cooperative” to the slogan. At a commencement and commissioning ceremony of the Korea Military Academy held on March 9, 2004, he said that “during my tenure [through February 2008], I will lay the groundwork for a cooperative and self-reliant defense system in parallel with further development of the ROK-US alliance.” This remark is intended to defuse criticisms, international as well as domestic, that the self-reliant defense policy he advocates makes light of the ROK-US alliance. As the reduction in USFK troop strength was officially put on the agenda, and as concern about the weakening of the deterrence capability against North Korea mounted, he felt the necessity to play up his stance of attaching importance to cooperation with the United States and a pressing need to paint a concrete image of the self-

reliant defense posture that would be in harmony with the maintenance and development of the alliance.

As part of the move to expand the role of the South Korean armed forces within the framework of the ROK-US combined defense posture, the two countries had already decided in November 2003 to transfer 10 duties from the USFK to the South Korean armed forces. It is said that the postponement to 2008 of the US force reduction in South Korea is related to this.

In areas other than those conventionally dependent on the USFK, the South Korean armed forces are taking steps to improve the capability of their units. In an address delivered on October 1, 2004, the 56th Armed Forces Day, President Roh stated the need to “strengthen information capabilities” as well as the ability to “perform military operations independently.” He also said that South Korea would strive to develop “versatile personnel and perfect war preparedness,” and argued that the armed forces “should establish a system under which the Republic’s forces can lead military operations and maximize effectiveness of combined operations.”

In November, the MND made public a cooperative self-reliant defense plan. As its main objectives, the plan lists (a) the promotion of an ROK-US alliance oriented more toward the future; (b) an early expansion and strengthening of war deterrence; and (c) a reorganization of the forces structure and defense reforms. Under (b), the plan is aimed at complementing the existing deterrence capability against North Korea by improved surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, enhanced real-time command and communications systems, and the strengthened capability to strike deep targets. This implies that these are the areas where the South Korean armed forces still rely on the USFK within the framework of the ROK-US combined defense system.

More specifically, equipment that the MND is seeking appropriations for in the FY2005 budget proposal includes, in the field of surveillance and intelligence collection capabilities, airborne warning and control systems (AWACS) to be purchased under a multiyear project, tactical C4I (command, control, communications, computers and intelligence) systems, tactical communications systems, and coastal surveillance radar. Also included are: K1A1 tanks, K-9 self-propelled howitzers, and MLRS, as part of its maneuver/strike forces; 7,000-ton class Aegis-equipped destroyer (Korean Destroyer Experimental-III or KDX-III), Landing Platform Experimental, 214-class (1,800-ton) submarines, and maritime patrol aircraft, as part of its maritime and

landing capability; and F-15K fighters, T-50 supersonic trainers, and short-range surface-to-air missiles, as part of its air and air defense capability. However, this plan is little different from plans that existed before President Roh advocated the self-reliant defense. As the addition of the prefix “cooperative” to “self-reliant defense” posture implies, the Roh Moo-hyun government is concerned about negative connotations that the term “self-reliant defense” might carry with respect to its relations with the United States. In this sense, it has a strong political tinge.

It therefore follows that the term “self-reliant defense” has no direct bearing on South Korea’s military procurement planning per se. Its influence is not on the contents of the plan but in securing a defense budget. Following his advocacy of self-reliant defense, President Roh actively sought to increase the defense budget. In October 2003, he commented on the FY2004 budget proposal by saying that “the government has formulated a tight national budget for the next year showing a 2.1 percent increase overall. However, we have increased the defense budget by 8.1 percent. I am aware nevertheless that this amount will not be sufficient.” The FY2005 budget was increased 9.9 percent over the year before, to 20,822.6 billion won that accounted for 2.85 percent of gross domestic product, whereas under the cooperative self-reliant defense plan mentioned above this ratio will be increased in stages to 3.2 percent in 2008.

One should also note, however, that ambitious plans for the South Korean armed forces have been frustrated by budgetary constraints in the past. Implementation of major equipment procurement plans has been delayed across the board. Further, the real growth rate of the South Korean economy dropped from 7.0 percent in 2002 to 3.1 percent in 2003, and is expected to grow by less than 4.0 percent in 2004. Whether these plans achieve their objectives or not will be influenced by economic circumstances.

**Table 3.2. South Korean defense spending**

(In billions of won, %)

Year	Force investment	Operation and maintenance	Overall defense spending	Changes
2003	5,737.9	11,776.9	17,514.8	6.5
2004	6,293.0	12,648.2	18,941.2	8.1
2005	7,065.6	13,757.0	20,822.6	9.9

Sources: Data from the Web site of the ROK Ministry of National Defense and *Yonhap News*, January 5, 2005.

Note: Figures for force investment, operation and maintenance, and overall defense spending are in billions of won, and those for changes are in percentages.

**Table 3.3. Main procurement projects delayed on account of budgetary constraints**

	Original plan		After adjustment		Remarks
F-15K fighters	1999–2008	120 units	2002–2009	40 units	
AWACS	1998–2004	4 units	2004–2012	4 units	AEW&C of Boeing E-737 and IAI Elta G-550 are candidates.
SAM-X	1991–1997	128 units	2005–2012	48 units	PAC-3 surface-to-air guided missile is being considered. The MND denied that procurement was connected with the US missile defense system.
Aerial refueling tankers	2000–2005	5 units	2009–2015	4 units	
Short-range surface-to-air missiles	1998–2007	160 units	1999–2010	120 units	
KDX-III	1999–2008	3 units	2001–2012	3 units	Aegis-equipped destroyers. Hyundai Heavy Industries had its tender accepted in Aug. 2004 for the construction of the first of the class to be delivered toward the end of 2008.

Sources: Data from the ROK Ministry of National Defense, the *Defense Budget for the Future 2004*, July 2004 and media reports.

### 3. Changes in the Domestic Environment Surrounding the Defense Policy of South Korea

#### (1) A Defense White Paper Shorn of the Concept of “Main Enemy”

As noted earlier, self-reliant defense was advocated to meet challenges that could arise in the wake of a realignment of the USFK. However, self-reliant defense that is basically designed to eradicate the uneasiness over deterrence capability against North Korea also assumes “unspecified future threats” posed by actors other than North Korea. Although this creates the impression that South Korea is considering missions it may have to undertake outside the Korean Peninsula in preparation for a revision of the ROK-US alliance, in reality that is not the case. South Korea has been talking about unspecified future threats since before President Roh came to power, and, as with the self-reliant defense, ideas have been formulated but have not necessarily been accompanied by a change in equipment procurement plans. Rather, the inclusion of unspecified future threats in the self-reliant defense plan suggests that political debate over the future direction of security policy has been going on among political leaders of South Korea.



A division of opinion concerning the perceived threat posed by North Korea has become increasingly pronounced in recent years. In particular, debate focuses on the “main enemy” concept. As is widely known, on account of the differences over the propriety of the phrase “North Korea . . . as the nation’s main enemy” that appeared in a passage of the *Defense White Paper 2000* to explain the objectives of national defense, the MND suspended the publication of its white paper after 2000. In 2004, however, senior officials of the South Korean government suggested that the term “main enemy” be deleted. On November 18, 2004, at a meeting of the National Defense Committee of the National Assembly, National Defense Minister Yoon Kwang-ung stated, in reply to a question by a member of the ruling party asking for a review of the “main enemy” concept, that in view of the fact that Northeast Asia was the world’s most militarily built-up region, he felt the necessity to use a broader concept not necessarily limited to North Korea. Although the opposition Grand National Party criticized the move to revise the “main enemy” concept on grounds that it would undermine South Korea’s security, the *2004 Defense White Paper* was published in February 2005 as the government planned. In this white paper, the term “main enemy” was deleted and the expression “direct military threats of North Korea such as its conventional weapons, its weapons of mass destruction, and forward deployment of its military power” was inserted in its place.

The *Defense White Paper 1995–1996* was the first white paper to carry a passage clearly identifying North Korea as the main enemy in an explanation of South Korea’s defense objectives. In other words, the deletion of the term “main enemy” this time round does not mean that the perception that the South Korean defense establishment has held all along has changed. Rather, it reflects the fact that South Koreans’ perception of the threat posed by North Korea is wavering—to the point where the government has to fine-tune its defense policy in favor of the dominant view.

Conversely, in 1994, the year before the term “main enemy” was used in the defense white paper for the first time, the defense objectives were revised to characterize North Korea as a primary, but not the only, threat. The phrase “to defend the nation from armed aggression by potential adversaries” that had been defined as the defense objective since 1981 was changed to “defend the nation from external military threats and invasion,” and the word “adversaries” was thus deleted. The MND explained that this change was in order to meet the

diversification of the scope and nature of threats and the requirements of a unified Korea.

At that time, to explain the equipment procurement program, the MND had to stress the necessity to deal with threats posed by actors other than North Korea. The *Defense White Paper 1994–1995* said that naval combat capability would be “enhanced to adjust to three-dimensional warfare, following the global trend and the changing strategic environment” around the Korean Peninsula. To achieve this, this paper argued, the navy would grow into an ocean-going navy. As regards surface combat capability, it “will be pursued beyond the current role of anti-North defense” and the emphasis would be on domestically developing a KDX armed with new weapons systems and cutting-edge equipment. In a statement explaining the air force’s equipment procurement program, the ministry made no mention of North Korea. In other words, up until just before the use of the term “main enemy” in the explanation of its defense objectives, South Korea appeared to be playing down the threat posed by North Korea.

Emphasizing threats other than those posed by North Korea implies a change in the existing structure of the South Korean armed forces in a way that attaches greater importance to naval and air force capabilities. However, this has not necessarily led to a change in the actual procurement programs for the navy and the air force. The project to develop and procure the KDX mentioned earlier has been in place since 1986, and the reference to it made in the *Defense White Paper 1994–1995* does not mean that it started in 1994. In the case of the Korean Fighter Program (KFP) that introduced the KF-16, an order for the production of 120 aircraft had already been placed as early as 1991.

It was after a civilian government had taken over from an army-led one that greater importance has come to be attached expressly to naval and air force capabilities. What has changed was not the substance of the equipment procurement programs but the political environment surrounding them.

Since 1974, the Ministry of National Defense has been carrying out the Yulgok Project, a defense equipment buildup project, as part of the self-reliant defense policy adopted by the government of President Park Chung-hee. Until 1990, the government had gone out of its way to institute a national defense tax to finance the project, and by the end of the government headed by Roh Tae-woo (1988–1992), the last president with a military background, as much as 33.7 percent (22,260 billion won) of the annual defense budget was invested in

the Yulgok Project. Since the civilian government of President Kim Young-sam took power in 1993, calls for a change in the way the equipment procurement programs are managed have become increasingly vocal. Criticisms were mainly directed at the corruption the project had bred, but that was not the only reason. Although the spotlight was mostly on the navy's KDX and the air force's KFP, some raised questions about the make-up of South Korea's armed forces with their heavy emphasis on the army. In an address delivered on the Armed Forces Day in 1993, President Kim Young-sam too stated that South Korea would have to pursue "the balanced development of the combat capabilities of the three services."

At a meeting of the National Defense Committee of the National Assembly held on October 5, 1993, shortly after this address by President Kim Young-sam, then Minister of National Defense Kwon Yung-hae stated that South Korea must take steps to meet the demands of the civilian administration, and ensure civilian control and a balanced development of the combat capabilities of the three services. This suggests that the MND sees that attaching importance to the navy and the air force is in keeping with the development of democratization. As noted earlier, the defense white paper of the following year (1994) gave a new definition to the role played by naval and air force capabilities, namely, preparedness to meet threats coming from sources other than North Korea.

## **(2) Politicization of Defense Policy: The North Korean Threat and "Unspecified Security Threats"**

The main enemy concept emerged as political debate raged over defense policy. A majority of South Korea's mass media point to a remark made by a North Korean representative at a North-South meeting held in March 1994—that if a war broke out, Seoul would be turned into a "sea of fire"—as the reason for the emergence of the main enemy concept. Yet as shown earlier, the defense white paper issued the same year (*Defense White Paper 1994–1995*) used an expression implying that North Korea was a primary, but not the only, threat. It was nearly two years after the North Korean representative made the "sea of fire" remark that the white paper containing the term "main enemy" was published, in October 1995. Therefore, it can hardly be said that the former had a direct bearing on the latter.

President Kim Young-sam toughened his attitude toward North Korea when

## South Korea's nuclear-related experiments

Evidence that South Korea conducted nuclear-related experiments without reporting them to the IAEA has surfaced since September 2004. More specifically, (a) in the early 1980s, South Korea conducted experiments involving the enrichment of uranium and produced about 150 kilograms of metallic uranium from natural uranium; (b) in April–May 1982 the Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute (KAERI) extracted a small amount of plutonium; and (c) in January–February 2000 KAERI conducted uranium enrichment experiments using the atomic vapor laser isotope separation method and produced 0.2 gram of enriched uranium.

At a meeting of the Board of Governors of the IAEA held on September 13, 2004, Director General ElBaradei expressed “serious concern” over the fact that South Korea had extracted enriched uranium and plutonium without reporting to the agency as required by the NPT safeguards agreement. Meanwhile, US State Department spokesperson Richard Boucher said on September 10 that inspectors of the IAEA would have “a lot of questions” to ask the South Korean government about its nuclear-related experiments and that “as this process is under way, we certainly hope that South Korea continues to cooperate in the follow-up.” John R. Bolton, US under secretary of state for arms control and international security, also said the same day that the United States would not allow a double standard in terms of treating violations of safeguards agreements.

Since its secret activities came to light, the South Korean government has been seeking to control the damage by playing up the cooperation it has extended—filing reports with the IAEA and complying with its inspection. The Ministry of Science and Technology, which is in charge of KAERI, explained on September 2 that only one plutonium separation experiment had been carried out at the KAERI site solely to satisfy the scientific interest of a few scientists involved and that the experiment facilities were dismantled immediately thereafter. The ROK authorities thus denied the involvement of the government in planning these experiments and the allegations of nuclear weapons development by South Korea. Recognizing the gravity of this problem, the National Security Council clarified the position of the South Korean government by pronouncing “Four Principles for the Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy” on September 18. They are: (a) South Korea has no intention of developing or possessing nuclear weapons; (b) it will firmly maintain nuclear transparency, and will strengthen its cooperation with the international community to this end; (c) it will faithfully abide by the norms set out in agreements on nuclear nonproliferation; and (d) it will continue to expand the peaceful use of nuclear energy on the basis of the trust of the international community.

An IAEA inspection found that the plutonium had a 98 percent concentration (higher than weapons grade) and the uranium a 77 percent concentration (close to weapons grade). In a statement issued on November 26, the chairman of the IAEA Board of Governors said that the board shared Director General ElBaradei’s “serious concern” about the failure of South Korea to report these activities in accordance with its safeguards agreements. However, as the quantities of nuclear material involved have not been sufficient for actual

weaponization, and as South Korea has been cooperating actively with the agency, the board has decided not to refer the country to the United Nations Security Council. Following the IAEA meeting, South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade released a comment saying that its government, pursuant to its Four Principles, will strengthen control of its atomic energy-related agencies to enhance nuclear transparency, and will redouble its efforts to cooperate with the international community for nuclear nonproliferation.

the first nuclear crisis erupted in 1993–1994. In an inaugural address delivered in 1993, President Kim Young-sam called on Kim Il Sung to have a summit meeting for peaceful unification by pointing out that even different races and different states have cooperated in various forms, but that feelings between allied states, however close they are, cannot be closer than those between the peoples of the same nation. As this remark indicates, President Kim Young-sam initially took a conciliatory attitude toward North Korea. However, the United States tried to work out an agreement with North Korea without consulting South Korea over a nuclear crisis that erupted subsequently, and this aroused mistrust toward the United States. In a press interview on June 9, 1994, President Kim Young-sam stressed the threat of North Korea and expressed his concern that some quarters in South Korea tend to take an optimistic view of the threat posed by North Korea. He went so far as to say that while North Koreans were a group of people who could not be easily understood, South Koreans are too ignorant of the true character of the North Korean regime. In October the same year, the United States and North Korea were on the point of signing the Agreed Framework. In an interview with a correspondent of the *New York Times* at that time, President Kim Young-sam, expressing opposition to the Agreed Framework, said that the North Korean government was on the verge of an economic and political crisis, and that a compromise offered by the United States might prolong the life of the North Korean government.

As the defense white paper for that year had already gone to press, his remark had no impact on the white paper, and the revision of the defense objectives in a way that characterized North Korea as a primary, but not the only, threat were left intact. However, in explaining the meaning of the defense objectives (to “defend the nation from external military threats and invasion”), the white paper issued the following year, the *Defense White Paper 1995–1996*, stated that “the

ROK still considers North Korea as a main enemy and will safeguard the security of the nation from all kinds of external military threats,” thus stressing the threat of North Korea in the definition of its defense objectives.

As implicit in the redefined defense objectives, which are designed to meet a broad range of security threats, measures to be taken to meet non-North Korean threats were not deleted from the explanation about the equipment procurement programs even after the emergence of the concept of main enemy. In an address delivered at the graduation and commissioning ceremony of the ROK Naval Academy in 1996, President Kim Young-sam stated that South Korea’s navy must become an ocean-going one that sails over the five oceans, and stressed the necessity to build a navy not just aimed at deterring North Korea. Dual objectives to deal with threats from North Korea and other sources have thus come into existence side by side in debates over South Korea’s national defense. In other words, the emergence of the concept of main enemy represents the birth of a political issue about what are the real threats from which the armed forces have to defend the nation.

It was during the period when publication of the defense white paper was suspended over the main enemy issue that differences about security threats to South Korea were worked out. The debates were aimed at explaining the necessity of defense spending to the people. The ratio of defense expenditure to the government’s overall fiscal outlays had dropped from 34.7 percent in 1980 to as low as 24.2 percent in 1990. Influenced by the Asian financial and currency crisis that had erupted in 1997, defense expenditure in FY1998 as a ratio of the national budget dropped to 18.3 percent and then plunged to as low as 16.3 percent in FY1999.

In 2000, President Kim Dae-jung had an Inter-Korean Summit with National Defense Commission Chairman Kim Jong Il of North Korea. Nonetheless, the *Defense White Paper 2000* continued to characterize North Korea as the main enemy, and came under scathing domestic criticism, leading the MND to suspend the publication of the white paper for the following year. In its place, the ministry published the *Defense Budget for the Future 2001* explaining, in lieu of a defense white paper, the necessity of defense expenditure. In the course of this public relations maneuver, the authors of this new publication termed threats from sources other than North Korea, such as those from surrounding countries and terrorism, as “unspecified security threats” and juxtaposed them with the North Korean threat, adding that in the long term the latter threat will be less

menacing and the former more real. The logic here is that defense spending will be necessary even if the military tensions between the North and the South thaw.

Given these trends, defense spending has slipped down the government's list of priorities, making it hard to stress the necessity of building up military equipment by playing up the threat of North Korea. This was why the defense authorities had to direct public attention to the existence of dual threats from North Korea and unspecified sources. By trumpeting these two concepts, the defense authorities stressed the necessity to provide against the threats posed not just by North Korea but also by other diverse actors.

As noted earlier, the perception of such multiple threats has not necessarily translated into a change in the military procurement plans. Rather, it helped change the explanation about the purpose that each piece of equipment was supposed to serve. For instance, the Roh Moo-hyun government stressed in its self-reliant defense policy the importance of introducing AWACS as key reinforcements to deterrence against North Korea once the USFK has been realigned. The *Defense Budget for the Future 2001*, however, said that the introduction of AWACS was intended to meet unspecified security threats.

The self-reliant defense that was born of the anxiety about the weakening deterrence against North Korea basically follows the previous defense policy that conceptualized responses to both the North Korean threat and unspecified security threats. *Self-Reliant Defense and Our National Security* released by the MND toward the end of 2003 says that the government, after establishing deterrence against immediate threats, will over the long run secure the minimum necessary level of advanced war-fighting capability against unspecified threats on the basis of a "concept of defense sufficiency." With regard to self-reliant defense, the National Security Council said in its *Peace, Prosperity and National Security* (released in May 2004) that the basic direction for building up South Korea's military capabilities is first to expand war-deterrence capabilities to meet immediate threats, and then to secure essential military elements in the long run to promote potential capabilities against unspecified future threats.

Another issue that could become a new topic of review for the ROK-US alliance is the role to be played by the South Korean armed forces outside the Korean Peninsula. The fact that South Korea will pursue self-reliant defense aimed at dealing with unspecified security threats implies that South Korea can go along with the United States in reviewing the role of the alliance in the

future. However, as unspecified security threats are a concept that has been enunciated in the context of domestic politics, they have not come up on the agenda of the ROK-US alliance. If South Korea takes up the issue of unspecified security threats in the context of the ROK-US alliance, popular opinion in South Korea is bound to be aroused. As regards South Korea-China relations, in particular, some in South Korea have already expressed their concern over the possibility of South Korea being entrapped in the US strategy vis-à-vis China. In connection with a revision of the ROK-US alliance, criticism by Roh Hoe-chan of the opposition Democratic Labor Party prompted a lot of debate. He warned that the realignment of the USFK would be aimed at attacking China and that the United States would ask the South Korean armed forces to play a regional role. He also said that the adoption of the next-generation surface-to-air missile (SAM-X) project, under which the introduction of PAC-3 surface-to-air guided missiles is contemplated, would imply South Korean participation in the missile defenses of the United States aimed at China. As these criticisms caught the public's attention in South Korea, a spokesperson for the MND rejected these allegations in categorical terms.

The South Korean government sent an army contingent to Iraq over widespread opposition. This serves to show that the government has steadily maintained the course of its policy toward the United States. However, as shown in the fact that the Ministry of Unification and the Presidential Committee on Northeast Asian Cooperative Initiative both define South Korea as a mediator between maritime powers and land powers in their concept of East Asian regional policy, it is also true that some members of the Roh Moo-hyun government lean toward adopting a position of neutrality on the question of US-China relations. In the definition of unspecified security threats, the military strength of neighboring countries was once included, but the proposition that the South Korean armed forces have a role to play outside the Korean Peninsula within the framework of the ROK-US alliance will face a strong political challenge in South Korea. Therefore, debates about a review of the ROK-US alliance will have to be conducted while taking the domestic situation in South Korea into consideration.