

Chapter 3

The Korean Peninsula— Strengthened Military-First Politics and “Grand Bargain” Proposal

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK or North Korea) ballistic missile launch, its second nuclear test, and its announcement concerning the conclusion of reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel and the weaponization necessary to reinforce nuclear deterrence have significantly set back negotiations on the denuclearization of North Korea and imperiled the Six-Party Talks. At the same time, Pyongyang is showing its willingness to pursue a resumption of dialogue with the US through such measures as former US President Clinton's visit to North Korea, the signing of a new economic agreement with China, and signs that it is willing to return to the Six-Party Talks and improve relations with the Republic of Korea (ROK or South Korea). Given that North Korea has not yet abandoned plans to bolster its deterrence against the United States and is continuing provocations around the Northern Limited Lines and hostile statements toward the United States, South Korea, and Japan, there is every likelihood it will conduct more missile launches and nuclear tests.

Internally, North Korea is in process of consolidating *Songun* politics (military-first politics), the cornerstone of the Kim Jong Il regime. Following the April 2009 constitutional revisions and the reform of the National Defense Commission, North Korea implemented the "150-day battle" and the "100-day battle" aimed at improving its domestic economic production capabilities in order to turn itself into a "strong and prosperous great power" by 2012. It also devalued its currency again to restore control over free markets, which had rapidly expanded as the result of the 2002 economic reform. It is also said to be strengthening military cooperation with Myanmar and Iran, and the threat of nuclear and missile development and proliferation by North Korea remains a major destabilizing factor to the surrounding region and to the international community.

South Korea's Lee Myung-bak administration pressed North Korea again in 2009 to denuclearize, offering a "grand bargain" with promises of security assurances and large-scale economic assistance if North Korea abandoned the core parts of its nuclear program. There has been no concrete progress with this initiative, however. The Lee and Obama administrations reaffirmed extended deterrence agreed to expand the scope of the US-ROK alliance to wider regional and global issues in addition to the North Korea problem. South Korea is to play the principal role in the defense of South Korea with US Forces Korea (USFK), but budgetary restrictions have slowed implementation of the defense build-up plan needed to back this up.

1. Deepening Crisis of Six-Party Talks

(1) North Korea's Missile Launches and Nuclear Test

The Six-Party Talks on North Korea's nuclear development have been stalled since the meeting of chief delegates in December 2008 and were further imperiled by North Korea's missile launch (Pyongyang claimed to have launched a satellite rocket) on April 5, 2009, its second nuclear test on May 25 and the launch of short- and medium-range ballistic missiles on July 4.

First, in terms of external factors, these events were meant to influence the potential North Korean policy of the Obama administration, which took office on January 20, 2009. Through statements issued by the Korean People's Army (KPA) General Staff and its Foreign Ministry, North Korea already sent various messages to the Obama administration before the administration's formulation of North Korean policy. For example, on January 13, before President Obama's inauguration, a North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman issued a statement entitled "No nuclear abandonment without elimination of US hostile policy toward North Korea." The statement included the comment, "If the US nuclear threat is eliminated and the United States nuclear umbrella removed from South Korea, we will probably no longer require nuclear weapons." Emphasizing that North Korea continues to attach importance to direct dialogue with the United States and that it will not readily give up its nuclear weapons, the same Foreign Ministry spokesman issued the following statement on January 17: "The reason we produced nuclear weapons was not because we were seeking normalization of relations with the United States and economic assistance, but to defend ourselves from the US nuclear threat. The problem of nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula essentially comes down to the issue of US nuclear weapons versus our nuclear weapons. Even if DPRK-US diplomatic relations are normalized, as long as there remains even a trace of the US nuclear threat, there is unlikely to be any change in our stance on maintaining nuclear weapons." The spokesmen went on to criticize South Korea, saying, "South Korea is not entitled to involve itself in the issue of nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula." In particular, North Korea showed its displeasure at the appointment to the post of South Korean Unification Minister of Hyun In-taek, who played a role in drafting South Korean President Lee Myung-bak's "denuclearization and opening 3000" initiative. North Korea also reiterated its hard-line stance against Japan, saying that "Japan is not entitled

to participate in the Six-Party Talks.”

In February, North Korea appeared to be making preparations for the launch of Taepodong II or what is thought to be an advanced version of that missile. During the course of these preparations, the North Korean Space Technology Committee announced on February 24 that it had supplied the necessary documentation for the safety of aircraft and shipping to international organizations, such as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), as part of preparations for launching the test communication satellite Kwangmyung II with delivery rocket Unha II. North Korea then announced that it had become a party to the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (Outer Space Treaty) and the Convention on the Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space (Registration Convention), adding that it planned to launch a satellite rocket between April 4 and 8. North Korea's decision to sign international treaties and to provide advance notice of a satellite rocket launch to international bodies probably reflects the lesson it learned following its July 2006 ballistic missile launch, which provoked criticism from the international community. This is probably why North Korea was careful to take into account weather conditions and technical contingencies when it decided to go ahead with a missile test on April 5 to coincide with the Twelfth Supreme People's Assembly on April 9 as a way of deflecting criticism from the international community while demonstrating its resolve to the rest of the world.

In response to this missile test, the UN Security Council (UNSC) issued a presidential statement on April 13 criticizing North Korea and stating that the launch violated UNSC Resolution 1718 adopted in 2006. However, North Korea's Foreign Ministry responded on April 29 with the statement that unless the UNSC apologized immediately, it would take additional defensive measures, which would include a second nuclear test and an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) launch test. It went on to denounce the UNSC presidential statement and accompanying announcement of sanctions against three North Korean corporations as “illegal provocations,” demanding an apology and withdrawal and declaring that if these were not forthcoming, it would rapidly resume technical development to produce its own nuclear fuel for use in the construction of light-water nuclear reactors along with conducting nuclear and missile tests. On May 25, as foreshadowed in its April 29 statement, North Korea carried out its second nuclear test.

Concerning the scale of the test, various organizations released figures based on seismic wave measurements, including an estimate of magnitude 5.3 by the Japan Meteorological Agency (October 2006 test: 4.9), 4.7 by the US Geological Survey (October 2006 test: 4.2) and 4.5 by the South Korean Institute for Geological Resources (October 2006 test: 3.58–3.7). The Russian authorities estimated the force of the test at around 20 kilotons. Reportedly, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) preparatory commission put the magnitude of the test at 4.52 (4.1), estimating that it was about four times as powerful as the nuclear test conducted on October 1, 2006. All of these measurements point to improvement in North Korea's nuclear development capabilities. Furthermore, as discussed later, Pyongyang announced that it had finished processing spent nuclear fuel. If true, it means North Korea already possesses enough plutonium to make several nuclear bombs.

In response to these actions by North Korea, the UNSC adopted Resolution 1874 on June 12. This resolution criticized the May 25 nuclear test in the strongest language, demanding that North Korea conduct no more nuclear or missile tests. It also added missile components to the list of prohibited exports to North Korea, requiring member states to conduct inspections of maritime cargo. Reacting to this, North Korea announced that it would no longer participate in the Six-Party Talks, declaring that it would “weaponize all newly extracted plutonium” and adding that it had “already reprocessed more than one-third of total spent fuel rods.” It went on to state that it had embarked on uranium enrichment, and following a decision to construct its own light-water reactor, had succeeded in developing the technology needed to enrich uranium in order to secure nuclear fuel, which was now at the testing stage. Persisting with its confrontational stance, it further stated that it would take “resolute military action” if the United States or its allies tried to impose any blockade on it, regarding it as “an act of war.” “No matter how desperately the Americans and other hostile forces work to isolate and blockade the DPRK, which is a fully-fledged nuclear weapon state, the DPRK will remain unfazed. The mode of counteraction based on the idea of *songun* (military first) is to decisively counter ‘sanctions’ with retaliation and ‘confrontation’ with all-out confrontation.” On July 4, North Korea launched another seven ballistic missiles, including what are thought to be improved versions of medium-range ballistic missiles, from Kittaeryong, Anbyon-gun, Kangwon-do into the Sea of Japan.

At the same time, however, North Korea has started showing signs of interest in pursuing negotiations with the United States and South Korea. On June 8, it underlined its confrontational stance towards the United States when it sentenced two female US journalists captured in March near the DPRK-China border to twelve years' hard labor after convicting them of illegal entry and hostilities against the Korean nation. North Korea is then thought to have made overtures to former US Vice President Al Gore, an executive of the media organization that employed the female journalists, for former President Clinton to visit the DPRK. As a result, former President Clinton led a delegation that visited North Korea on August 4 and the two journalists were released on August 5, the following day. US citizens have been confined by North Korea in the past, but none has been sentenced in a North Korean court like the female journalists on this occasion. Nevertheless, the ploy of detaining US citizens and looking for ways to open dialogue with the US on the pretext of negotiating their release is largely consistent with past actions by North Korea, such as the Pueblo Incident of 1968, the Bobby Hall Incident of 1994, and the Evan Hunziker Incident of 1996. This latest incident was probably another attempt by North Korea to sway the United States diplomatically using the same tactic.

On another occasion, North Korea detained an employee of the Hyundai Group, then allowed a visit to North Korea by Hyundai Group Chairwoman Hyun Jong-eun to secure his release. In meetings with Hyun Jong-eun, agreement was reached to resume the Mt. Kumgang Tourism Project and other initiatives. The detained Hyundai Group employee was also released unharmed. Subsequently, following the death of former South Korean President Kim Dae-jung, North Korea sent a mourning delegation led by Kim Ki Nam, secretary of the Korean Workers' Party Central Committee, to South Korea, resulting in meetings with South Korean Unification Minister Hyun In-taek and President Lee Myung-bak (see Section 3).

North Korea has also attempted to influence the United States or to test its resolve through actions that could lead to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). One example of this was the dispatch of the *Kang Nam*, a ship suspected of carrying WMD-related materials, to Myanmar. The *Kang Nam* had to abandon its journey and return to North Korea, however, after being pursued by a US naval vessel. This incident calls to mind the decision of the United States during the second term of the Bush administration to designate WMD proliferation as a criterion for implementing tough sanctions against North Korea. These events

show that monitoring and tracking movements by North Korean-registered vessels is an effective way to control the proliferation of WMD-related materials by North Korea.

This raises the question about the effectiveness of UNSC Resolution 1874 in the broader sense. On May 26, following North Korea's missile launch and second nuclear test, South Korea announced formally its decision to participate in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). Since then, South Korea has also moved steadily to implement UNSC Resolution 1874. Korean newspapers reported in mid-September, for example, that the South Korean Coast Guard, acting on the orders of the South Korean National Intelligence Council, had seized four containers associated with North Korea from a Panama-registered cargo ship docked in Pusan. However, concerning the effectiveness of UNSC Resolution 1718, adopted after North Korea's first nuclear test in October 2006, US researchers have concluded that the sanctions have had little effect because China and South Korea continued to provide economic assistance to North Korea. Based on these results, the inevitable conclusion is that sanctions will have little effect unless China implements the UNSC resolutions more aggressively. In fact, as discussed later, the signing of various new, primarily economic, agreements between North Korea and China in October 2009 makes it even more likely that the sanctions will have only a limited impact.

On September 3, the Korean Central News Agency published a letter in which North Korea proclaimed its opposition to the composition of the Six-Party Talks and declared that "the reprocessing of spent fuel rods is in the final phase and the extracted plutonium is being weaponized." At the same time, North Korea indicated that it was not necessarily against dialogue, stating "we are prepared for both dialogue and sanctions... If [the United States] comes to dialogue with 'sanctions,' we will also participate in the dialogue with bolstered nuclear deterrence." North Korea further declared that it "does not reject denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula itself or of the entire world." On September 28, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Pak Kil Yong, in a keynote address to the UN General Assembly, indicated North Korea's willingness to maintain a limited nuclear arsenal, stating "we only have sufficient nuclear deterrent capability to deter a military attack or the threat of such against our country" and "we will act responsibly in the management and use of nuclear arms and in the nonproliferation and denuclearization processes as long as we possess nuclear weapons." He

reinforced the message that North Korea is looking for dialogue with the United States, saying “If the U.S. comes to dialogue with ‘sanctions,’ we will also participate in the dialogue with bolstered nuclear deterrence.”

A commentary published in the October 14 edition of the *Rodong Sinmum* repeated its usual hard-line rhetoric against the United States, saying “the US is the principal culprit in bringing about the nuclear problem in the Korean Peninsula.” At the same time, however, it went on to say “a peace accord between North Korea and the US is the only way to turn the DPRK-US relationship into a peaceful relationship and to promote the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The US must abandon its hostile policies towards North Korea, eliminate the nuclear threat from the Korean Peninsula and choose the path of concluding a peace accord that will guarantee peace.” This marks a narrowing of the focus of North Korea’s previous demands for the United States to abandon its hostile policies towards North Korea to the conclusion of a peace accord. North Korea, nevertheless, stated that it will not be bound by the Obama administration’s call for abolition of all nuclear weapons and a nuclear-free world and has made no change to its stance that the nuclear problem is solely a matter for the United States and North Korea. On November 3, North Korea announced that it had finished the reprocessing of spent fuel rods and had succeeded in “weaponizing the material to bolster its nuclear deterrent.” Thus, events have unfolded in a way that is entirely contrary to the objective of the Six-Party Talks to disable North Korea’s nuclear weapons arsenal. As for North Korea’s relationship with South Korea, at a ceremony on September 26 for the reunion of separated families across the Korean Peninsula, Jang Jae-On, chairman of the Central Committee of North Korea’s Red Cross Society requested South Korean Red Cross President Yoo Chong-Ha to provide assistance in the form of rice and fertilizer, but at the same time, criticized President Lee Myung-bak’s “grand bargain” proposal.

(2) North Korea’s Reversion to the “China Card”

Since October, North Korea has shown clearly that it is looking for ways to enter a dialogue with the United States. With efforts to resume such a dialogue making no progress, it used the occasion of an event to celebrate sixty years of DPRK-China friendship to strengthen its relations with China, which supported the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1874, in a bid to find a way of resuming dialogue with the United States. North Korea invited Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao to visit

Pyongyang October 4–6. It is reported that Chairman of the National Defense Commission Kim Jong Il made the following points to Premier Wen Jiabao at a meeting on October 5.

- Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is a teaching of the late Chairman Kim Il Sung.
- Hostile relations between the DPRK and the United States should be converted into peaceful ties through bilateral talks without fail.
- The DPRK is ready to hold multilateral talks, depending on the outcome of the DPRK-US talks. Multilateral talks include the Six-Party Talks.
- The DPRK's efforts to attain the goal of denuclearizing the peninsula remain unchanged.

On October 4, Chairman of the National Defense Commission Kim Jong Il and Premier Wen Jiabao signed the DPRK-China Protocol Regarding Treaty Arrangements, an economic and technology pact, agreements on exchanges and cooperation between educational institutions, a memorandum of understanding regarding exchanges and cooperation between software industries, a protocol on import and export joint inspection between state quality supervision authorities, an understanding regarding the sightseeing of Chinese travel groups in North Korea, an agreement on enhancement of protection of wild animals, and several

economic agreements, including an agreement on economic assistance. The economic and technological cooperation and the economic assistance were reported to be worth a total of 200 million Chinese yuan (roughly 2.6 billion yen). By strengthening its relations with China, North Korea is now able to count on receiving assistance from China. As stated above, one implication of this is a potential reduction in the effectiveness of UNSC Resolution 1874.

Of greater importance is the gradual strengthening of relations between the North Korean and Chinese militaries. On November 17, 2009, Kim Jong Gak, first

deputy director of the KPA General Political Bureau, visited Beijing for talks with Vice-President Xi Jinping. On November 23, the Korean Central News Agency of North Korea reported that China's Defense Minister Liang Guanglie, on a visit to North Korea, declared "No force on Earth can break the unity of the armies and peoples of the two countries, and it will last forever." According to the report, Liang Guanglie, speaking at a reception hosted by North Korea's Ministry of People's Armed Forces, stated that he had "witnessed for himself how friendly relations between the two nations were sealed in blood while serving fifty years ago in the People's Volunteer Army in Korea." Speaking for the North Korean side, Kim Yong Chun, minister of the People's Armed Forces, said "It is the firm stand of our army and people to develop the Korea-China friendship, which has withstood all trials of history." On November 25, Defense Minister Liang Guanglie met with Chairman of the National Defense Commission Kim Jong Il.

Apart from the diplomatic objective of demonstrating to the United States North Korea's friendly relations with China, which voted in favor of UNSC Resolution 1874, another likely factor behind the strengthening military relations between North Korea and China at this time is that North Korea concluded it needed reassurances of stable military relations with China as it moves to strengthen military-first politics, an initiative symbolized by the reform of the National Defense Commission.

At the Second Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit Meeting on October 10, China's Premier Wen Jiabao told the leaders of Japan and South Korea that in his earlier meeting with Chairman of the National Defense Commission Kim Jong Il, Kim had expressed his "willingness to return to the Six-Party Talks" and his "willingness to improve relations with Japan and South Korea."

In other moves, US Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell announced implementation of the September 19, 2005 and October 4, 2007 joint declarations of the Six-Party Talks that had already been agreed to under the previous Bush administration and the United States' decision to allow food aid as a form of humanitarian assistance, while North Korea, for its part, said it was considering sending a high-level official to the United States. As a result, the United States sent Stephen Bosworth, US special representative for North Korea policy, to North Korea December 8–10. According to North Korean news reports, during the visit of Special Representative Bosworth, the North Korean side, addressing the issue of possessing its own nuclear weapons, pointed out that there is a "root

cause” for the state of war that exists in the Korean Peninsula, and underlined Pyongyang’s view of the need to change the hostile relationship between North Korea and the United States into a peaceful relationship through bilateral talks. The news report continued that unless there was “firm evidence of such a change (in the form of a peace treaty), North Korea could not conceive of participating in the Six-Party Talks.” This is another clear indication of North Korea’s desire to conclude a peace treaty. Achieving this, however, is by no means easy. Even if there is a resumption of the Six-Party Talks, reactivation of North-South contact or the reopening of indirect contacts between Japan and North Korea, a temporary easing of tensions may occur, but the path to denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula remains fraught with difficulty.

(3) Strengthening Military Cooperation with Myanmar

Clearer information is also emerging regarding North Korea’s military cooperation with Myanmar. Diplomatic relations between North Korea and Myanmar remained severed after the 1983 Rangoon Incident but were restored in 2007. Since then, there has been a surge in news reports concerning military cooperation between the two countries. On July 2, 2009, Radio Free Asia (RFA), a US government-affiliated media organization, posted a report, with photos, on a secret visit to North Korea by a high-level Burmese military delegation and the exchange of secret documents with top North Korean military officials in November 2008.

Photo: Thura Shwe Mann, chief of staff of Myanmar’s armed forces and Kim Kyok Sik, chief of General Staff of the People’s Armed Forces

RFA reported the existence of more than one hundred photos and documents, which it obtained from sources in Myanmar’s Defense Ministry. A high-level Burmese military delegation led by Thura Shwe Mann, Myanmar’s third-ranked leader, under the guise of visiting China, made a top-secret visit to North Korea on November 22, 2008 where it toured various military facilities and signed a memorandum of understanding on close military cooperation. Below is an excerpt from this memorandum.

- The two militaries will cooperate in the teaching and training of military science. The Burmese military will focus on special forces training, military security training, training in tunnel maintenance, air defense training, and language training for both countries.
- The two militaries will cooperate in the building of tunnels for aircraft and

ships as well as other underground military installations. The two countries will cooperate to modernize military arms and equipment. As such, the objective and aim of the high-level visit is deemed to be successful.

RFA also reported that the high-level Burmese military delegation visited top-secret North Korean military facilities, including weapons and radar facilities and a missile launch site, and saw surface-to-air missiles and rockets, along with naval and air-defense systems and underground bunker construction. The report obtained by RFA also describes a November 23 visit by the Burmese delegation to North Korea's National Air Defense Control Center and a November 24 visit to a North Korean naval unit in Nampo, as well as tours of an air-to-air weapons and rocket factory and a Scud missile factory. Other places visited by the Burmese delegation, according to RFA, include Myohyangsan, where missiles and tanks are stored in secret underground bunkers, and a factory on the outskirts of Pyongyang that produces Scud missiles for export mainly to Syria, Egypt, and Iran. There are growing concerns about military cooperation between North Korea and Myanmar and in June 2009, a North Korea-affiliated trading company in Japan was brought to account on suspicion of attempting to export materials to Myanmar that could be converted for use in the manufacture of ballistic missiles.

Apart from military cooperation between North Korea and Myanmar, there have been several events pointing to the existence of military cooperation between North Korea and Iran. On August 25, 2009, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) intercepted a Bahamian-registered vessel carrying North Korean-made weapons to Iran in violation of UNSC Resolution 1874 and seized rocket-propelled grenades and ammunition disguised as machinery parts from ten containers. In December, a large quantity of North Korean-made arms were discovered in a cargo plane at the former Bangkok International Airport in Thailand. Thai government authorities announced that the aircraft's final destination was Iran. Like the seizure of North Korean-registered ships, these events show that North Korea continues to engage in actions in defiance of UNSC Resolution 1874.

(4) Maintenance of Hard Line against South Korea and Japan

As stated above, there has been a softening in North Korea's stance towards South Korea, but this is likely to be only temporary. While informing Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao of its desire to improve relations with South Korea and Japan, Pyongyang continues to reject the grand bargain proposed by South Korean

President Lee Myung-bak and there is little likelihood of North Korea softening its stance without some compromise by the South Korean side. Tensions between South and North Korea flared up noticeably when naval vessels of the two countries exchanged fire in the Yellow Sea on November 10. The same day, the Supreme Command of the KPA released a statement demanding an apology for what it described as grave armed provocation by South Korea. On November 13, during talks between senior North and South Korean military officers, the North Korean delegation notified the South Korean side that it would “immediately take merciless military measures” to defend its sea border with South Korea. Concerning these North Korean assertions, there is a view among South Korean military experts that this incident was deliberately instigated by North Korea. For example, an analysis by Ahn Byong-tae, former ROK Navy Chief of Staff, concluded that the exchange of fire was orchestrated by Kim Kyok Sik, commander of North Korea’s frontline Fourth Corps (former chief of General Staff) or someone of at least the status of commander of the West Fleet, and that the “provocation by a single vessel was intended to give the impression that it was an accidental occurrence” (*Chosun Ilbo*).

These military clashes between North and South Korea, however, have to be seen in the context of the diplomatic currents surrounding North Korea. On November 12, North Korea’s *Rodong Sinmum* published a commentary concerning this incident criticizing South Korea, but in its November 13 edition, the same newspaper printed an editorial calling for South Korea to resume the Mt. Kumgang and Kaesong tourism project. In a November 14 editorial, it stated that if South Korea respects the June 15 joint declaration and the October 4 declaration and moves forward positively, the state of political and military confrontation between the two sides can be resolved. Furthermore, the target of the criticism was not President Lee Myung-bak or the United States, but South Korea’s Unification Ministry and its minister Hyun In-taek. This suggests that North Korea’s actions could be interpreted as showing restraint to prevent the latest armed clash from seriously rupturing North-South relations while at the same time attempting to sway the South Korean side with a carrot-and-stick offensive.

Meanwhile, North Korea has so far continued its hard-line rhetoric against Japan without specifically naming the new administration. This reflects Pyongyang’s desire to influence the new Japanese administration while monitoring its approach to North Korea.

Overall, there appears to have been no change in North Korea's diplomatic stance of improving its deterrence against the United States through ongoing missile and nuclear development while trying to extract diplomatic concessions from the United States using its diplomatic and economic ties with China as collateral. For that reason, it is likely to carry out more missile launches and nuclear tests going forward.

2. Accelerated Solidification of the Regime

(1) Start of Preparations for Succession

Turning to developments within North Korea itself, in a New Year's Day joint editorial published on January 1, 2009, North Korea referred to 2009 as a historical watershed for turning the country into a "strong and prosperous great power." Stressing the "firm view that science and technology are the basis of economic development," it called for a "concentration of science and technology strengths at the national level to bolster economic independence." The idea of turning North Korea into an economically strong nation through the development of science and technology was also stressed in the 2008 New Year's Day joint editorial. Along with the earlier enunciated ideas of an ideologically strong nation, a militarily strong nation and an economically strong nation, this should probably be called the idea of a strong science and technology nation. In fact, in the 2010 New Year's Day joint editorial, the term "strong science and technology nation" was actually used. On the military front, the notion of a strong and prosperous military power was again emphasized, with the editorial stating that "we must strengthen the power of our military-first policy in all aspects and solidly guarantee the building of a strong and prosperous great socialist power."

On March 8, 2009, a delegate election was held for the Twelfth Supreme People's Assembly postponed from September 2008, and the first session of the Assembly was held on April 9. Along with the reelection of Kim Jong Il as chairman of the National Defense Commission and the announcement of new appointees to the National Defense Commission, the Assembly adopted revisions to the constitution. The number of National Defense Commission members was increased from the usual four to eight. In addition to Chang Sung Taek, director of the Administrative Department of the Korean Workers' Party, who is the husband of the younger sister of National Defense Commission Chairman Kim

Jong Il (and is believed to have once supported Kim Jong Nam, the chairman's eldest son, as successor), close confidants of Chairman Kim Jong Il, including Ju Sang Song, minister of people's security, and Kim Jong Gak, first deputy director of the KPA General Political Bureau, were elected.

Under the revised constitution, the position of chairman of the National Defense Commission is designated as supreme leader and his authority and term of office are clearly spelled out. The revisions also specify *songun* (military first) as the national ideology along with the *juche* (self reliance) philosophy. Although the word "socialism" remains, the term "communism" has been deleted, while "respect of human rights" has been newly added (see commentary).

Strengthening of Military-first Politics in 2009 revisions of the North Korean Constitution

As stated elsewhere in this chapter, North Korea pushed through constitutional revisions at the first session of the Twelfth Supreme People's Assembly held on April 9, 2009. The details of the revisions, however, were not posted on North Korea's official website *Naenara* until September 2009. The main focal point of the constitutional revisions concerns measures to strengthen the authority of National Defense Commission Chairman Kim Jong Il. Regarding the authority and role of the chairman of the National Defense Commission, newly added sections of Chapter 6, dealing with state organizations, include "The chairman of the DPRK National Defense Commission (NDC) is the supreme commander of the overall armed forces of the DPRK and commands and directs all the armed forces of the state," "(The chairman of the DPRK NDC shall) directly guide overall affairs of the state," "directly guide the work of the NDC," "appoint or dismiss important cadres of the national defense sector," "ratify or abrogate significant treaties concluded with other countries," and "declare a state of emergency and state of war in the country, and issue orders for mobilization." The release of the two US journalists during the visit of former US President Clinton to North Korea was based on Article 103, which states that the chairman can "exercise the right to grant special pardons." Concerning the NDC, the revised constitution states that "the NDC is the supreme national defense guidance organ of state sovereignty" and that it has the duty to "establish important policies of the state for carrying out the military-first revolutionary line."

Below is a table showing the main differences between the old and new constitutions (with changes underlined). The new constitution emphasizes *songun* or military-first politics, the core ideology of the Kim Jong Il regime, reflecting moves to bolster the regime, including reinforcement of the legal status of the chairman of the NDC. However, while the changes look very much like an attempt to legitimize and officially sanction the reality of the Kim regime, the bigger issue is why such changes were made at the Supreme People's Assembly. First, there was

likely a need to strengthen the legal foundations of the regime in preparation for a succession based on military-first politics in view of NDC Chairman Kim Jong Il's health problems. Second, the fact that the contents of the constitutional revisions were not announced until the end of September probably means it was not until then that NDC Chairman Kim Jong Il's health condition was thought to have stabilized, or at least there was a desire to give that impression both at home and abroad. There was a dramatic increase in news reports of Kim Jong Il's field guidance activities since November 2008. The discussions with former US President Clinton in August 2009 and the release of photos of Chairman Kim Jong Il at the time of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to North Korea reflect accelerated efforts to demonstrate both at home and abroad the chairman's health and the stability of the regime.

Old	New
Chapter I. Politics	Chapter I. Politics
Article 3 The DPRK considers the <i>juche</i> idea, which is a human-centered worldview and revolutionary idea for achieving the independence of the popular masses, as the guiding principle of its activities.	Article 3 The DPRK considers the <i>juche</i> idea <u>and the military-first (<i>songun</i>) idea</u> , which are human -centered worldviews and revolutionary ideas for achieving the independence of the popular masses, as the guiding principles of its activities.
Article 4 The sovereignty of the DPRK shall be vested in the working people, who include workers, farmers, and working intellectuals.	Article 4 The sovereignty of the DPRK shall be vested in the working people, who include workers, farmers, <u>soldiers</u> , and working intellectuals.
Article 8 The state shall safeguard and protect the interests of the working people, including workers, farmers, and working intellectuals, who have been freed from exploitation and oppression and have become the masters of the state and society.	Article 8 The state shall safeguard the interests of, and <u>respect and protect the human rights</u> of the working people, including workers, farmers, <u>soldiers</u> , and working intellectuals, who have been freed from exploitation and oppression and have become the masters of the state and society.
Chapter II. Economy	Chapter II. Economy
Article 29 Socialism <u>and communism</u> are built by the creative labor of the working masses.	Article 29 Socialism is built by the creative labor of the working masses.
Chapter IV. National Defense	Chapter IV. National Defense
Article 59 The mission of the armed forces of the DPRK is to safeguard the interests of the working people, defend the socialist system and the gains of the revolution from foreign aggression, and protect the freedom, independence, and peace of the fatherland.	Article 59 The mission of the armed forces of the DPRK is to <u>carry out the military-first revolutionary line in order to protect the nerve center of the revolution</u> , safeguard the interests of the working people, defend the socialist system and the gains of the revolution from foreign aggression, and protect the freedom, independence, and peace of the fatherland.
Chapter VI. State Organizations	Chapter VI. State Organizations
Article 95 Agenda items for discussion at the SPA shall be submitted by the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA), the Cabinet, and sectoral committees of the SPA. Deputies may also submit agenda items.	Article 95 Agenda items for discussion at the SPA shall be submitted by <u>the chairman of the DPRK National Defense Commission (NDC), the NDC</u> , the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA), the Cabinet, and sectoral committees of the SPA. Deputies may also submit agenda items.
	Article 100 <u>The chairman of the DPRK NDC is the supreme leader of the DPRK.</u>
	Article 101 <u>The term of office of the chairman of the DPRK NDC shall be the same as that of the SPA.</u>

Article 100

The NDC is the supreme national defense guidance organ of state sovereignty and the organ responsible for overall national defense management.

Article 101

The NDC shall be composed of the chairman, first vice chairman, vice chairmen, and members. The term of office of the NDC members shall be the same as that of the SPA.

Article 102

The chairman of the DPRK NDC commands and directs all the armed forces of the state.

Article 103

The NDC shall have the duties and authority to:

1. Guide the overall armed forces and defense-building work of the state
2. Establish or abolish central organs of the national defense sector.
3. Appoint or dismiss important military cadres.
4. Institute military titles and confer military titles above the general grade officer rank.
5. Declare a state of war in the country and issue orders for mobilization.

Article 104

The NDC shall make decisions and give orders.

Article 102

The chairman of the DPRK NDC is the supreme commander of the overall armed forces of the DPRK and commands and directs all the armed forces of the state.

Article 103

The chairman of the DPRK NDC shall have the duties and authority to:

1. Directly guide overall affairs of the state.
2. Directly guide the work of the NDC.
3. Appoint or dismiss important cadres of the national defense sector.
4. Ratify or abrogate significant treaties concluded with other countries.
5. Exercise the right to grant special pardons.
6. Declare a state of emergency and state of war in the country, and issue orders for mobilization.

Article 104

The chairman of the DPRK NDC shall issue orders.

Article 105. The chairman of the DPRK NDC shall be accountable for his work to the SPA.

Article 106

The NDC is the supreme national defense guidance organ of state sovereignty.

Article 107

The NDC shall be composed of the chairman, first vice chairman, vice chairmen, and members.

Article 108

The term of office of the NDC members shall be the same as that of the SPA.

Article 109

The NDC shall have the duties and authority to:

1. Establish important policies of the state for carrying out the military-first revolutionary line.
2. Guide the overall armed forces and defense-building work of the state.
3. Supervise the status of executing the orders of the chairman of the DPRK NDC and the decisions and directives of the NDC, and establish relevant measures.
4. Rescind the decisions and directives of state organs that run counter to the orders of the chairman of the DPRK NDC and to the decisions and directives of the NDC.
5. Establish or abolish central organs of the national defense sector.
6. Institute military titles and confer military titles above the general grade officer rank.

Article 110

The NDC shall issue decisions and directives.

Source: *Naenara* website (Korean version) "Korea's Politics, Socialist Constitution," *chōsen Minshushugi Jinjin Kyōwakoku Gekkan Ronchō* (Korea News Service), September 2009.

What are the main implications that can be drawn from the latest constitutional revisions? First, the designation of the position of National Defense Commission chairman as supreme leader and the adoption of *songun* as national ideology are probably intended to provide legal confirmation of the existing Kim Jong Il regime. Second, concerning the deletion of the term “communism,” a North Korean media spokesman reportedly informed the South Korean government that as long as US imperialism exists, communism could not survive. The reality is that the North Korean constitution has always been referred to as a “socialist constitution” and it is many years since North Korea stopped using the term “communism” in public pronouncements. The latest move supports the view that North Korea no longer regards communism as a useful ideology for the regime.

(2) Accelerated Solidification of the Regime to Create a Strong and Prosperous Great Power

As stated above, North Korea has described 2009 as a historical watershed for turning the country into a strong and prosperous great power. In order to mobilize the country in pursuit of this goal, it implemented the “150-day battle” and a later “100-day battle.” The 150-day battle lasted from April 20 to September 16, 2009 with the aim of improving domestic industrial output, among other things. According to a report entitled *Proud Success Opening New Phase in Creation of a Strong and Prosperous Great Power*, the country’s industrial productivity increased 112 percent.

In a bid to bolster its domestic campaign, North Korea followed up with the 100-day battle. North Korea described the 100-day battle as “a battle to create a springboard for entry through the great gate leading to a strong and prosperous great power in 2012 by achieving a major victory in 2010, the sixty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the party.” The 100-day battle continued through December, but according to the joint editorial published on January 1, 2010, it was, along with the 150-day battle, an “an unforgettable struggle that wrote the most brilliant chapter in the history of our great upsurge.”

According to Radio Press and others, North Korea’s defense spending as a percent of total government outlays was 15.8 percent (actual amount 71,292.59 million won), based on its 2008 financial statements. The country’s 2009 defense budget is also reported to be the same 15.8 percent of the total budget as in 2008, and is estimated at 76,283.07 million won.

Figure 3.1. North Korea’s defense spending as percentage of total budget in recent years (based on financial statements)

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
14.3%	14.4%	14.9%	15.7%	15.6%	15.9%	16.0%	15.7%	15.8%

Source: Radio Press, *Kita-chōsen Seisaku Dōkō* [Trends in North Korean Policy], Vol. 5 No. 427, April 25, 2009.

As shown in Figure 3.1, North Korea has maintained its defense expenditure at 14–16 percent of total government outlays, but management of the domestic economy continues to pose a major challenge. Reflecting these difficulties was the redenomination carried out between November 30 and December 6, 2009. This required people to exchange their money for new currency issued by the Central Bank of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, but it is thought that the main aim of the move was to strengthen controls over the new wealthy class that emerged after the economic reforms of 2002 and to tighten management of the domestic economy. An official of the Central Bank of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea himself stated that the purpose of the redenomination was to “strengthen socialist principles and order in economic management” and to “weaken the role of free markets by expanding distribution of domestically manufactured goods through the state distribution system and strengthening the state’s economic capacity.” This measure can be seen as part of moves to strengthen internal controls to prepare for Kim Jong Il’s successor, as described above. The fact that some newly issued bills carry a picture connected with Kim Jong Sook, mother of National Defense Commission Chairman Kim Jong Il, has also been interpreted as an attempt to provide legitimacy within North Korea for the dynastic succession of the Kim family. However, there have also been reports of security disturbances in certain areas, mainly among the new wealthy class who have been hit by the currency redenomination. Because such disturbances could destabilize the regime, the current North Korean authorities are likely to focus on trying to contain any social unrest for the time being. However, there are no signs of any major turnaround in the North Korean economy over the medium to long term and the country is likely to be forced to continue relying on economic assistance from China.

3. South Korea: Proposal of “Grand Bargain” with North

(1) Efforts to Resolve North Korean Nuclear Problem and Lack of Results

In order to bring about the denuclearization of North Korea, President Lee Myung-bak has held firmly to the policy since taking office in February 2008 of not providing large-scale economic assistance to North Korea unless it abandons its nuclear weapons. He reconfirmed this policy in a Liberation Day speech on August 15, 2009, adding, “When the North shows such determination, my Administration will come up with a new peace initiative for the Korean Peninsula.” On September 21, during a visit to New York for the UN General Assembly, he used the words “grand bargain” to describe this initiative. Providing further elaboration, he said that as soon as North Korea abandons the core parts of its nuclear program under the Six-Party Talks framework, the countries involved, including South Korea, would provide North Korea with economic assistance and firm security guarantees.

Underlying President Lee’s insistence on the grand bargain is a desire to break the vicious cycle that has been a feature of negotiations on North Korea’s nuclear arsenal. The pattern to date has been that the countries involved agree to provide economic assistance to North Korea in return for that country’s promise to freeze its nuclear development, but the agreement unravels when North Korea accepts the assistance but fails to observe its commitments fully. There is also the constant concern on the South Korean side that the United States will end up compromising with North Korea without fully taking South Korea’s position into account, so it is likely that President Lee’s words were intended to discourage the United States from taking unilateral action. Since proposing the grand bargain, key figures in the South Korean government, from the president down, have been putting greater emphasis on the role of South Korea as a party to efforts to deal with the North Korean problem, saying that South Korea should take the initiative and stressing the need for North-South dialogue.

For some time following the inauguration of the Lee Myung-bak administration, North Korea practically cut off all talks with South Korea, accusing that country’s administration of being “anti-North and pro-US.” In December 2008, North Korea unilaterally restricted the volume of traffic on North-South road and rail links, and in March 2009, it issued a statement saying that it could not guarantee the

safety of South Korean civilian aircraft passing near North Korean air space on the grounds of conducting military exercises in the area. It also shut down communication channels between the militaries of the two countries. In contrast to the period up to and including the Roh Moo-hyun administration, the North Korean authorities did not request the Lee administration to provide fertilizer and food assistance.

This stalemate continued until August 2009 when new developments in North-South relations emerged. The most significant of these was the arrival in Seoul of top officials of the Workers' Party of Korea and their meeting with President Lee Myung-bak. The officials were sent to Seoul as a "mourning delegation" on the death of former South Korean President Kim Dae-jung. Following their arrival in Seoul, the mourning delegation requested a meeting with President Lee. After careful consideration, the president agreed to meet with the delegation at the Cheong Wa Dae (Blue House). Details of the meeting have not been disclosed but according to news reports in South Korea, the North Korean side relayed a verbal message from National Defense Commission Chairman Kim Jong Il expressing his desire to improve North-South relations. President Lee, for his part, explained the South Korean government's "consistent and firm policy" toward North Korea and asked the delegates to relay his position to Chairman Kim. It is likely that he put forward something like the grand bargain initiative to the delegation, urging the North Koreans to abandon their nuclear weapons.

Other developments between North and South Korea since August 2009 include the following: lifting by North Korea of the traffic volume restrictions on North-South road and rail links (on August 21) and the facilitation of the movement of people and goods to the Kaesong Industrial Zone (operated by South Korean companies on the northern side of the demilitarized zone); the return of a South Korean worker detained by North Korea at the Kaesong Industrial Zone since March (August 13); the return of South Korean fishermen seized by North Korea in July (August 29); the convening of North-South Red Cross talks, which have the status of quasi-official discussions (August 26–28, at Mt. Kumgang in North Korea); and a reunion of separated families (September 26–October 1 at Mt. Kumgang) that had been agreed to at the Red Cross talks. The Red Cross talks and the reunion of separated families were the first held since the inauguration of the Lee Myung-bak administration.

One of the aims behind the softening of North Korea's stance towards South

Korea was probably to create an atmosphere conducive to the realization of US-North Korea talks. Another was to secure foreign currency and assistance. Around this time, North Korea promised South Korea's Hyundai Group that it would resume tourism to Mt. Kungang and Kaesong by South Koreans and foreigners and initiate tours to Mt. Paektu located on the China-DPRK border, while also reactivating the Kaesong Industrial Zone. It requested the South Korean authorities to raise wages at the Kaesong Industrial Zone substantially and to take appropriate steps regarding meetings between separated families. It also hinted that it would like to receive food assistance.

However, North-South relations did not progress the way the Lee Myung-bak administration hoped. On September 30, the North Korean side dismissed the grand bargain initiative proposed by President Lee in New York. This is because North Korea had adopted the position that the problem of nuclear weapons in the Korean Peninsula was one for discussion between the United States and itself. The North Koreans also refused to enter discussions on humanitarian issues between the North and South as proposed by South Korea. These included the problem of South Koreans suspected of being abducted by North Korea, the problem of South Korean soldiers captured during the Korean War and still held by North Korea, and the establishment of a meeting place where separated families can meet throughout the year. When South Korean authorities then informed North Korea on October 26 of the Lee Myung-bak administration's decision to send the first shipment of food (10,000 tons of corn), the North all but rejected the offer. According to reports in the South Korean press, this was because the North Korean authorities had been expecting food assistance totaling 100,000 tons and were unhappy at what they felt was the paltry nature of the South Korea offer. Subsequently, on November 10, a North Korean patrol boat crossed the Northern Limit Line (NLL) in the Yellow Sea, leading to an exchange of fire with a South Korean high-speed patrol boat.

(2) Announcement of Joint Vision for US-ROK Alliance

In 2009, the Lee Myung-bak administration's diplomatic activities focused on sharing President Lee's ideas on resolving the North Korean nuclear problem with the main parties involved along with reconfirming the importance of the US-ROK alliance. President Lee and US President Barack Obama had talks at the White House on June 16 and announced a Joint Vision for the Alliance of the United

States of America and the Republic of Korea. This was a commitment for the two countries to “build a comprehensive strategic alliance of bilateral, regional and global scope.” President Lee had already reached agreement in 2008 with then US President George W. Bush on the need for the US-ROK alliance to go beyond the defense of South Korea and to “contribute to peace and prosperity at the regional and global level.” The fact that he was able to obtain the agreement of the new Obama administration to continue this policy can be regarded as a diplomatic victory for President Lee.

Moreover, the Joint Vision announced on June 16 states that the United States would provide “extended deterrence, including the US nuclear umbrella” to South Korea. Top US and South Korean defense officials began using this term following North Korea’s nuclear test in October 2006. Reportedly, this was the first time for the US and South Korean heads of state to use it and it was probably intended to send a stronger signal to North Korea following that country’s second nuclear test in May 2009. The Joint Vision states that the United States and the Republic of Korea will work together to achieve the “complete and verifiable” elimination of North Korea’s nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs, while also stating that the two countries will cooperate in Afghanistan. Presidents Lee and Obama reconfirmed the contents of the Joint Vision when they met in Seoul on November 19, 2009, promising to develop the US-ROK alliance into a “strategic alliance of the twenty-first century.” They decided that the foreign and defense ministers of both countries should meet during 2010 to hammer out the specifics of the policy.

US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates reaffirmed the US commitment to provide extended deterrence for the ROK at a US-ROK Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) held on October 22 in Seoul. He also explained that this was not limited to the US nuclear umbrella, but covered the “full range of military capabilities, including conventional strike and missile defense capabilities.” The defense secretary emphasized strongly the United States’ unwillingness to tolerate any provocation by North Korea, stating that the United States would utilize both capabilities postured on the Korean Peninsula and globally available US forces in the event of a crisis in the Korean Peninsula. The fact that the role of missile defense (MD) in defending South Korea was discussed at the US-ROK SCM marks a major change from the previous Roh Moo-hyun administration. The previous administration was negative to the idea of participating in any US-led MD as well as participation in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). This was

reportedly because of a desire to avoiding upsetting North Korea and China. Although the Lee Myung-bak administration has not declared its intention to participate in MD, as discussed later, in its Defense Reform Master Plan, it is considering introducing a system involving the use of Patriot and sea-based interceptor missiles to counter North Korea's nuclear arsenal and missiles.

On May 26, 2009, President Lee stated his government's intention to participate fully in PSI. This was the day after North Korea conducted its nuclear test and launched short-range missiles. Although the South Korean government had partially participated in PSI by sending observers to PSI training sessions at the request of the United States since August 2005, during the Roh Moo-hyun administration, it declared its intention not to participate fully in November 2006. The Lee Myung-bak team also maintained a cautious stance towards PSI immediately after the presidential election, but decided on full participation following North Korea's nuclear test.

Concerning cooperation in Afghanistan referred to in the Joint Vision for the US-ROK Alliance, the South Korean government announced on October 30, 2009 that it would dispatch civilian police officers and military personnel to protect provincial reconstruction teams (PRT) made up of civilians in Afghanistan. The roughly 310-man force to be sent is due to start activities in Afghanistan from July 2010. Hitherto, the Lee Myung-bak administration, mindful of public opinion in South Korea, had rejected the dispatch of military personnel to Afghanistan, although it allowed civilian PRT activities in the country. The decision shows South Korea's resolve to commit to a more challenging role before President Obama's visit to the country, a commitment that won praise from the United States.

The Lee Myung-bak administration was thus able to secure an agreement with the Obama administration to develop the US-ROK Alliance into the future. It was also able to settle a considerable number of pending issues between the United States and South Korea that were hanging over from the time of the Roh Moo-hyun administration. President Lee himself made an effort to gain acceptance of his grand bargain proposal from the other key countries involved. The initial reaction of the United States to the term "grand bargain" was largely one of indifference, but at their November talks in Seoul, Presidents Lee and Obama spoke with one voice on the need for a grand bargain or a "comprehensive resolution."

In summit talks with President Lee Myung-bak in Seoul on October 9, Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama praised the grand bargain as a "very correct

approach.” Referring to the problems of North Korea’s nuclear weapons and missiles, he also stated that there should be no economic cooperation with North Korea unless it demonstrates concrete action and resolve. These talks were part of ongoing shuttle diplomacy between the leaders of Japan and South Korea. President Lee had talks with Prime Minister Taro Aso on January 12, 2009 in Seoul and on June 28 in Tokyo, and subsequently with Prime Minister Hatoyama on September 23 in New York. At these talks, Japan and South Korea reaffirmed the need to persuade North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons through the Six-Party Talks process and for close coordination between Japan, the United States and South Korea, as well as the need for cooperation in implementing United Nation sanctions against North Korea following its nuclear test. In the Hatoyama-Lee talks, the two leaders also agreed to cooperate with the initiative for an East Asian community. With problems over the interpretation of history off stage, 2009 can be regarded as a good year for cooperation between Japan and South Korea.

President Lee also presented his grand bargain idea to Chinese President Hu Jintao in New York on September 23. A South Korean presidential spokesman said the Chinese side showed its understanding, but it appears that President Lee was unable to secure the clear acceptance of China. In 2008, Presidents Lee and Hu agreed to describe the relationship between China and South Korea as a “strategic cooperative partnership.” However, the fact that China continues to attach importance to its relations with North Korea and to adopt a stance that could be interpreted as sympathetic to North Korea regarding the nuclear problem appears to be a source of dissatisfaction for the South Koreans. At the same time, efforts to revise the US-ROK alliance and, in particular, the emphasis on its role as a regional strategic alliance are undeniably a concern for China. Thus, the China-ROK strategic partnership contains elements that are at variance with the strategies of the two sides.

In the process of realizing the grand bargain’s goal of having North Korea abandon its nuclear weapons, full prior coordination between South Korea and other involved countries and cooperation based on that coordination will almost certainly be essential. Smooth progress is unlikely to be achieved if South Korea were to feel in its relations with the United States that insufficient attention had been paid to its position. Coordination will also be essential in Japan’s relations with South Korea in order to prioritize problems requiring solution vis-à-vis North Korea and matters regarding what Japan should do in return.

(3) Defense Reform Master Plan Focused on North Korea's Nuclear and Missile Capabilities

On June 26, 2009, South Korea's Ministry of National Defense unveiled its Defense Reform Master Plan covering the years 2009–2020. This is a revised version of the Defense Reform 2020 plan produced in 2005 during the Roh Moo-hyun administration. According to the explanation given, the main change was a shift in emphasis to deal with North Korea's nuclear weapons and missiles. Defense Reform 2020 called for reducing the size of the army from ten corps and 548,000 personnel in 2005 to six corps and 371,000 personnel in 2020. It also called for reduction in the ROK Navy from 68,000 personnel (three fleets, one submarine flotilla, one air wing, and two marine divisions) to 64,000 personnel (three fleets, one submarine command, one naval air command, one maneuver flotilla, and two marine corps divisions) and maintaining the air force at 65,000 personnel (increasing its combat commands from one to two). The plan's main aim was to maintain and strengthen South Korea's overall military potential by speeding up the modernization of its three services while reducing army personnel.

The Defense Reform Master Plan of 2009, by contrast, calls for reducing personnel to 517,000 in 2020 from 681,000 in 2006 and 655,000 in 2009. This is 17,000 more than the 500,000 target envisaged in Defense Reform 2020 and represents a slightly less ambitious reduction. Specific troop levels for each services were not disclosed, but the plan calls for increasing the targets set out in Defense Reform 2020 by one corps, four divisions (peacetime), and one brigade (Figure 3.2). There is no major change in the goals for the composition of the navy. However, instead of the expansion of naval air capacity to one naval air command, the current one air wing will be kept. Although the number of marine corps divisions is unchanged, the plan envisages additional island protection forces for Baengnyeong and Yeonpyeong islands (both located near the sea boundary with North Korea in the Yellow Sea) and Jeju Island. Regarding the air force, there has

Table 3.2. Realignment plan for the ROK Army

		Corps	Divisions	Brigades
Actual number in 2005		10	47	16
2020 target	2005 plan	6	24	23
	2009 plan	7	28+10*	24

Source: Compiled from ROK Ministry of National Defense materials

* The figure of 28 is the number of peacetime divisions. The figure of 10 represents additional divisions in time of war.

been no change in the plan to establish a new Northern Combat Command (most likely in Osan) in addition to the current Southern Combat Command (established in Daegu in 2003). The Defense Reform Master Plan adds the creation of a tactical air control unit to manage air support for the army and navy. Hitherto South Korea probably relied heavily on US forces for this capability and the enhancement is presumably related to the transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON).

The Defense Reform Master Plan aims for the establishment of capabilities that will facilitate network-centric warfare (NCW) and also refers to the need to block and eliminate the nuclear and missile threat from North Korea on North Korean territory as far as possible. To achieve that, it envisages establishing a 24-hour surveillance capability (satellites, unmanned aerial vehicles [UAV], ground-based early warning radar systems, etc.), precision strike capability covering all North Korean territory (joint air-to-surface long-range missiles, etc.), intercept capability (Patriot missiles, sea-based interceptors, etc.), and protective capability (electromagnetic pulse [EMP] protection, etc.). The concept can be regarded as a combination of something like an MD system and counter attack capability.

The Defense Reform Master Plan also refers to the establishment of a standby unit (of 3,000 personnel, including reserves) for international peacekeeping operations (PKO) and an Information Defense Command to deal with cyber attacks. In July, immediately after the unveiling of this plan, the computer networks of South Korean government bodies, financial institutions and other organizations were subjected to a major cyber attack, highlighting the reality of this threat.

A first vice chairman will be positioned under the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to take charge of a Joint Operations Headquarters. After the transfer of wartime operational control in April 2012 (discussed later), the chairman is to assume operational command for South Korea's combat forces, assisted by the first vice chairman and the Joint Operations Headquarters. In 2008, there was a proposal to establish a new Joint Forces Command to direct the combat forces of all three branches of the military, with the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to serve concurrently as the head of that Command, but this plan was scrapped.

Concerns have been expressed in South Korea that budgetary constraints could pose a hurdle for achieving the goals of the Defense Reform Master Plan within the specified timetable. In 2005, South Korea set a figure of 8.0 percent as the annual rate of growth in its national defense budget, but this was revised down to 7.6 percent in the Defense Reform Master Plan. However, in the budget for

calendar 2010, an annual increase of only 3.8 percent was approved. According to South Korean media reports, the establishment of the Ground Operations Command (integrating the First and Third Armies) has been postponed from 2012 to 2015, the introduction of 3,000-ton class submarines from 2018 to 2020, the acquisition of refueling aircraft from 2013 to 2014, and the installation of high-altitude UAV (understood to be Global Hawk) from 2011 to 2015-2016, while the decision to introduce 2,000-ton class frigates is being reconsidered. *Hankyoreh*, a progressive newspaper that supported the Roh Moo-hyun administration, claimed that the reason for the smaller cuts in the army compared to the Defense Reform 2020 plan is that the army has restored its influence under the conservative administration, resulting in delays in re-equipping the navy and air force. The newspaper described the development as “turning back the clock.” Despite these concerns and criticisms, however, the acquisition of a precision strike capability against North Korea, the centerpiece of the Defense Reform Master Plan, does not appear to have encountered any major opposition in South Korea.

Concerning the transfer of wartime operational control to South Korea, National Defense Minister Kim Tae-young and US Secretary of Defense Gates confirmed at the US-ROK Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) in October 2009 that this would go ahead as planned on April 17, 2012. Operational command here refers to command of South Korean combat forces. In peacetime (during ceasefires) the chairman of South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff will take command and in times of crisis (wartime), the commander of the ROK-US Combined Forces Command (CFC), a US Army general (who serves concurrently as commander, United Nations Command and commander, US Forces Korea), will take command. In February 2007, during the Roh Moo-hyun administration, the two countries also agreed on the transfer of wartime operational control to South Korea. With the transfer, CFC will be dismantled and the US Forces Korea will be reorganized into a US Korea Command (US KORCOM) (meaning command of US forces in South Korea). According to South Korean newspapers, US KORCOM will be set up around June 2010. Even after the transfer of wartime operational control to South Korea, it is reportedly planned to keep the United Nations Command and the Eighth US Army (the commanding formation of US Army troops in the ROK) in South Korea. In 2004, plans were made to relocate the US Forces Korea headquarters from Yongsan Garrison, located in central Seoul, to Pyeongtaek, a city approximately 60 kilometers south of Seoul, by the end of 2008, but the plan has been postponed

a number of times and as of the end of 2009, the relocation is expected to occur in 2014.

Operations by the South Korean Navy to Eradicate Piracy in the Sea off Somalia

Since April, 2009, the South Korean government has sent a navy unit consisting of a *Chungmugong Yi Sun Shin*-class destroyer (4,500 tons), one Lynx helicopter and a commando unit to help in eradicating piracy in the sea off Somalia (in August and December, these were replaced by a second and third contingent, respectively, of the same size). Apart from protecting South Korean shipping, the purpose of dispatching the unit is to participate in international efforts to improve maritime safety and counter terrorism and to engage in activities in the Gulf of Aden as a member of the multinational task force CTF-151, comprising US, British, and other forces. The navy unit has scored some successes, using a helicopter to chase off a pirate boat that was approaching a North Korean cargo vessel in May and deploying the commando unit to board and subdue a pirate boat in September.