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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

RIA Novosti ("N.KOREA SAYS U.S. ALLEGATIONS THREATEN NUCLEAR DISABLEMENT PROCESS", Moscow, 2008/03/28) reported that the DPRK warned Washington that its allegations over uranium enrichment by Pyongyang could have grave consequences for the continuing disablement of its atomic facilities. The DPRK's Foreign Ministry said that Pyongyang had attempted to allay US suspicions that it possessed a uranium-based atomic bomb program and that it had passed on nuclear technology to Syria, but that the U.S. was clinging to its "incorrect" claims. "If the United States continues delaying the resolution of the nuclear problem by demanding what does not exist, this will have a serious impact on the desired disablement of the nuclear facilities," a DPRK Foreign Ministry official said in a statement.

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2. Inter-Korean Relations

Yonhap ("INTER-KOREAN RELATIONS WORST SINCE NUKE TEST: PRO-PYONGYANG DAILY ", Seoul, 2008/03/31) reported that a recent spate of "provocative remarks" by ROK officials have escalated tension on the Korean Peninsula to the highest point since the DPRK's nuclear test in 2006, a pro-Pyongyang newspaper in Japan said. "Political tension is escalating on the Korean peninsula. We can call it the worst confrontation since the DPRK conducted a nuclear test and the six-party talks on resolving a nuclear issue resumed in 2006," said the Choson Sinbo. "If tension deteriorates due to provocative remarks by the South Korean authorities, there is no guarantee that this would not serve another factor of reversing the implementation of terms of a six-party deal and the process of resolving the nuclear issue," it said.

Reuters (Jon Herskovitz, "NORTH KOREA SNARLS AS SOUTH'S SUNSHINE POLICY FADES", Seoul, 2008/03/31) reported that the DPRK has sent jet fighters to test the ROK's air defenses and threatened to reduce its wealthy neighbor to ashes as it tries to push the new government in Seoul to back off from its hard line with Pyongyang. "These should be understood as the first actions signaling a freeze in North and South Korean relations," said Yang Moo-jin, a specialist on the DPRK at the ROK's Kyungnam University. But analysts added that the PRC would lean on the DPRK to prevent the situation on the Korean peninsula spinning out of control.

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3. DPRK Military

Agence France-Presse (P. Parameswaran , "NKOREAN MILITARY HARDLINERS SEEN BEHIND NUCLEAR DEAL DEADLOCK ", Washington, 2008/03/31) reported that hardliners in the DPRK's powerful military may be resisting a US-led deal for the DPRK to disband its nuclear weapons program, according to US experts. The military, the experts said, will be the most impacted by any surrender of atomic arms by the DPRK. Keith Luse, a senior US Senate official, suggested in a report on his return from a recent trip to Pyongyang that the DPRK military could possibly unravel the aid-for-disarmament deal which the administration of Kim Jong-il reached with the US, PRC, the two Koreas, Japan and Russia. He then replied, "Chairman Kim's best efforts to orchestrate a balance among competing interests within the North, may be a 'stretch too far' for North Korean military hardliners."

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4. DPRK Military Maneuvers

Joongang Ilbo (Jung Ha-won, "KOREA SCRAMBLES JETS, BUT RHETORIC SOUNDS FAMILIAR", 2008/04/01) reported that the ROK has scrambled jets at least 10 times in the five weeks since President Lee Myung-bak's inauguration because DPRK jets have flown closer than ever to the border, defense sources said. Still, experts say, such saber rattling is nothing new. They have repeatedly occurred at the beginning of past ROK administrations, possibly as a way to test how the new government would respond. Many experts in Seoul called it Pyongyang's classic routine. Provocative actions by Pyongyang have also happened during changes of administrations.

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5. Sino-DPRK Relations

Xinhua ("AIR CHINA OPENS BEIJING-PYONGYANG ROUTE", Pyongyang, 2008/03/31) reported that an Air China Boeing 737 landed at Pyongyang Sunan Airport Monday, launching the company's direct flight service from Beijing to Pyongyang, the capital of the DPRK. Flight CA121 will take off from Beijing at 1:40 p.m. local time (05:40 GMT) every Monday, Wednesday and Friday and arrive in Pyongyang at 4:20 p.m. (07:20 GMT). Flight CA122, the return flight, will leave Pyongyang at 5:20 p.m. local time (08:20 GMT) and arrive in Beijing at 6:05 p.m. (10:05 GMT).

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6. Uganda-DPRK Relations

Korea Herald ("UGANDA SIGNS RAFT OF DEALS WITH NORTH KOREA", 2008/03/31) reported that Uganda has signed several cooperation agreements with the DPRK in areas ranging from herbal medicine to policing, the Ugandan government was quoted as saying by Reuters. The deals followed a rare three-day visit to the east African country by Pyongyang's number two leader Kim Yong-nam. "Uganda and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are to exchange teachers, researchers and technical knowledge. The two countries are to cooperate in herbal medicine," it said. "The two governments also agreed to attend each other's trade fairs. Korea will cooperate with Uganda in the

building of small ships to ply Lake Victoria. They also agreed to cooperate in police service."

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7. US-Japan Security Alliance

Kyodo ("U.S. BASE-HOSTING DEAL EXPIRES DUE TO LACK OF DIET APPROVAL ", Tokyo, 2008/03/31) reported that a Japan-U.S. agreement obliging Japan to pay part of the costs to host U.S. military bases expires at midnight Monday due to a lack of approval by the Japanese parliament of a government plan to extend it for fiscal 2008 that begins Tuesday. While no major immediate effect is expected on U.S. military operations, as the United States will cover the expenses including utilities and labor costs for the time being, key Japanese officials are worried that a disruption in funding could hurt bilateral relations.

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8. Japan Nuclear Power

The Asahi Shimbun ("N-SITES SIT ON, CLOSE TO FAULTS", 2008/04/01) reported that active faults that could trigger major earthquakes run directly under or near the Mihama Nuclear Power Plant and the Monju fast-breeder reactor, power industry officials said Monday. The facilities--Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Mihama plant and Japan Atomic Energy Agency's prototype fast-breeder reactor--are located in the Tsuruga Peninsula of Fukui Prefecture. The two organizations and Japan Atomic Power Co. released the findings of the joint survey in a report to the government, but said the faults did not jeopardize the safety of the facilities.

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9. Sino-Japanese Military Relations

Xinhua ("CHINA, JAPAN REACH CONSENSUS ON TAIWAN ISSUE, DEFENSE CO-OP", Beijing, 2008/03/31) reported that the PRC and Japanese defense officials reached a consensus on the Taiwan issue and bilateral defense cooperation at a defense security consultation. "The consultation is held with the background of the continuous improvement and development of China-Japan relations, and thus is of concrete significance for promoting bilateral defense mutual trust and expanding exchanges," said Ma Xiaotian, deputy chief of the General Staff of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The two sides also reached consensus on defense exchanges and cooperation. They agreed to take steps to enhance high-level visits and exchanges of youth officers and to maintain high-level exchanges between the two defense departments. They also agreed to hold the first round of experts consultation on maritime liaison between the PRC and Japanese defense departments in April.

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10. Tibet Unrest

The Associated Press (Tini Tran, "CHINA ARRESTS SUSPECTS IN TIBETAN RIOTS ", Beijing,

2008/03/31) reported that authorities arrested suspects in four arson and murder cases stemming from anti-government riots that engulfed the Tibetan capital in mid-March. The Tibetan regional government also announced the families of two women killed in the riots were given compensation of $28,170 each, the official Xinhua News Agency said. The government has promised to give the same amount of compensation to the families of all 18 civilians killed. The PRC's official number of deaths from the riots also includes one policeman and three people who died jumping through windows to escape arrest. Tibet's government-in-exile has said that 140 Tibetans were killed during the protests.

The New York Times (Jim Yardley, "CHINESE NATIONALISM FUELS TIBET CRACKDOWN", Beijing, 2008/03/31) reported that like so many Chinese, Meng Huizhong was horrified by the violent Tibetan protests in Lhasa. “The Dalai Lama is trying to separate China, and it is not acceptable at all. We must crack down on the rioters.” For two weeks, as PRC security forces have tried to extinguish continuing Tibetan protests, PRC officials and state news media have tried to demonstrate the party’s resolve to people like Ms. Meng. If the tough tactics have startled the outside world, the Communist Party for now seems more concerned with rallying domestic opinion — both by responding to the deep strains of nationalism in PRC society and by stoking it. Playing to national pride, and national insecurities, the party has used censorship and propaganda to position itself as defender of the motherland, and at the same time to block any examination of Tibetan grievances or its own performance in the crisis.

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11. Russian Arms Exports to the PRC

The Financial Times (Stephen Fidler , "RUSSIAN WEAPONS SALES TO CHINA FALL", London, 2008/03/31) reported that Russian arms exports to the PRC dropped a dramatic 62 per cent last year, according to figures released on Monday, in a development described by one expert as potentially marking the beginning of the end of high volume arms transfers between the two countries. The PRC has been the world’s biggest arms importer for at least a decade – and more than 90 per cent of these imports have come from Russia. But last year its overall arms imports dropped by more than 60 per cent. An important reason for this appeared to be the growing sophistication of the PRC’s defence industry.

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12. PRC Energy

Caijing Magazine (Gao Wenhuan and Wang Yichao, "CHINA WARMS TO ENERGY-SAVING CHALLENGE ", 2008/03/31) reported that overall costs for building renovations are high. Wu Yong, deputy chair of the Department of Science at the central government’s Ministry of Construction, told Caijing that current reconstruction costs in Beijing alone are about 250 yuan to 300 yuan per square meter. That means the energy-saving scenario for the next two years in the PRC capital, where 40 million square meters of existing building space are to be upgraded, is expected to require a minimum investment of 700 billion yuan. According to the construction ministry, the PRC aims to annually save 120 million tons of coal through building improvements nationwide by 2010. However, financing issues and a lack of information about energy consumption in existing buildings pose challenges.

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II. ROK Report

13. Inter-Korean Relations

The Peace Foundation (Cho Sung-Ryul, "INTER-KOREAN RELATION HEADING TOWARD CONFILCT, SOLUTION ON PRINCIPLE LEVEL NEEDED", 2008/04/01) carried an article from a researcher at the New Security Research Institute in Institute for National Security Strategy, who wrote that if the current DPRK policies of the administration stay the same, the future response of DPRK can mainly be predicted to follow one of two options. First, the DPRK could wait for the inauguration of the next US administration, delaying the imminent nuclear report until next year. Second, the DPRK could negotiate with the US and complete fulfillment of the 10.3 agreement at least. The DPRK will likely choose the latter option. In the decision making of the DPRK between the two, the ROK does not exist. Therefore, the ROK government should adhere to global opinion in the six-party talk while preparing an opportunity of natural conversation by separating the two Koreas' internal problems and materializing policies. Until then, a civilian level conversation should be positively utilized.

Yonhap News ("DPRK'S DIRECT CRITICISM ON THE PRESIDENT, BACKGROUND AND PROSPECTS", 2008/04/01) reported that specialists interpret the DPRK criticisms of the the denuclearization, opening, 3000 policy of Lee Myung-bak as an anti-unification declaration as pressure for manifestation of a firm position of DPRK policies by the ROK government before the policies are connected to specific actions. Also, there are hints of DPRK's strategy of isolating the ROK in the six-party talks. There are also voices that support the current administration that claim we must not be anxious for there are inevitable labor pains.

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14. NGOs on ROK's DPRK Policy

Unification News ("'TRYING TO DESTROY 10 YEARS OF EFFORT PUT INTO THE TOWER OF PEACE?'", 2008/03/31) reported that at a press conference held on March 31 and through published opinions, civil society organizations expressed apprehension for inter-Korean relation, demanding the ROK government to take a responsible role in coping with the issue. There are people claiming that Kim Tae-Young, the chairman of the ROK joint chief of staffs, should resign his position. There are also indications that the Lee Myung-bak administration does not have the right solution for a breakthrough in the situation. They advised that a bold redirection of policies is the key to solution.

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