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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. Napsnet

1. Six-Party Talks

Korea Times (Michael Ha, "'SIX-PARTY TALKS SHOULD BE MADE PERMANENT'", Seoul, 2008/11/27) reported that the Brookings Institution is advising U.S. President-elect Barack Obama that the six-party talks that should become a permanent regional framework. The policy group said such a forum could also help the United States develop stronger cooperative ties with Asian powers. Brookings said the incoming Obama administration should also focus its attention on other major pan-Asian forums as a way to boost U.S.-Asia partnerships involving diplomacy, security as well as economic matters.

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2. Inter-Korean Relations

Associated Press (Jae-soon Chang, "NKOREA BEGINS RESTRICTING BORDER TRAFFIC", Seoul, 2008/12/01) reported that the DPRK on Monday ordered a sharp cut in the number of ROK citizens permitted to stay in the joint industrial complex in Kaesong, allowing only 880 — a fifth of the 4,200 with permits and about half the number there on an average workday, Seoul's Unification Ministry said. "Of course it's a nuisance. We could leave the complex at our convenience, and now that they're restricting our entry, I foresee some difficulties arising," Ahn Young-su, 51, an ROK manager in Kaesong, said at a border checkpoint. Pyongyang also suspended tours to the ancient border city near the complex as well as a cross-border train service.

Korea Herald ("N.KOREA TO BLOCK ENTRY OF S.KOREAN NEWSPAPERS, MAGAZINES", Seoul, 2008/12/01) reported that the DPRK will block all ROK publications from entering the country starting this week, an ROK government source was quoted as saying by Yonhap News Agency. In the past, the DPRK permitted 20 newspapers from nine publishers to be brought over the demarcation

line on a regular basis to be read by ROK employees working at the Kaesong Industrial District Management Committee (KIDMAC). "The decision can be seen as extending the ban that had been in place for ordinary people to KIDMAC employees," he said.

Korea Herald ("S. KOREA CALLS FOR DIALOGUE WITH N. KOREA AMID TENSION", Seoul, 2008/11/27) reported that ROK Unification Minister Kim Ha-joong appealed Thursday to the DPRK to engage in dialogue to defuse heightened tension on the peninsula. "I can hardly understand the North's unilateral measures," Kim said during a speech at a fair of products manufactured in Kaesong. "I propose that government authorities of the South and the North meet and discuss these measures."

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3. US on Inter-Korean Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("N.KOREA BETTING ON THE WRONG HORSE, SAYS U.S. ENVOY", Seoul, 2008/11/27) reported that U.S. Ambassador to Seoul Kathleen Stephens on Wednesday said that the DPRK could not improve relations with the US while ignoring the ROK. "The U.S. isn't interested in any suggestion that might alienate South Korea," she said. Stephens made the remark in a lecture hosted by the Korean Council for Reconciliation and Cooperation under the theme "Development of Seoul-Washington Relations and Peace in Northeast Asia."

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4. ROK Policy Toward DPRK

Chosun Ilbo ("KIM DAE-JUNG BLAST LEE'S N.KOREA POLICY", Seoul, 2008/11/28) reported that former ROK president Kim Dae-jung on Thursday said the Lee Myung-bak administration is intentionally trying to harm inter-Korean relations. Kim said President Lee's denuclearization-opening-3,000 plan "cannot succeed since it follows similar policies as U.S. President George W. Bush, which failed." "The right way for us is to approach the North. North Korea is like a rich vein of ore in terms of natural resources, tourism and human resources," Kim said. "People say we are pouring our own resources into North Korea, but in fact it's the other way around. We will benefit from the abundant resources in the North."

Korea Times (Kang Hyun-kyung, "LEE URGED TO CHANGE HARDLINE N. KOREA POLICY", Seoul, 2008/11/30) reported that leaders of three ROK opposition parties urged President Lee Myung-bak Sunday to change his DPRK policy. "President Lee should alter his unrealistic North Korea policy in a dramatic manner, and then seek ways of bolstering inter-Korean cooperation,'' Democratic Party (DP) leader Chung Sye-kyun, Democratic Labor Party (DLP) Chairman Kang Ki-kab and Renewal of Korea Party (ROKP) leader Moon Kook-hyun said in a joint statement made shortly after their meeting at the National Assembly.

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5. DPRK Leadership

Associated Press ("NKOREA SAYS KIM JONG IL INSPECTED AIR FORCE UNIT", Seoul, 2008/11/30) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong Il inspected an air force unit, praising the airmen for their diligence and urging them to remain disciplined in the face of enemy "aggression," Korean Central News Agency reported Sunday. Kim toured air force facilities and observed training, accompanied by Col. Gen. Ri Pyong Chol, commander of the air force, and military officials from Unit 1016, the report said. The report, which was not accompanied by photos, did not say exactly where or when Kim's visit took place.

Korea Times (Michael Ha, "'NORTH KOREAN LEADER HAD ANOTHER STROKE'", Seoul, 2008/11/26) reported that Japan's Mainichi newspaper said Wednesday that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il suffered another stroke and a seizure last month, and his condition got bad enough to consider emergency surgery. Citing an unnamed Chinese official familiar with Kim's health status, the newspaper said it could not confirm whether Kim had more surgery but added his condition now appears to have stabilized for the time being.

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6. ROK Missile Defense

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "SEOUL TAKES OVER 1ST BATCH OF GERMAN PATRIOT MISSILES", Seoul, 2008/11/28) reported that twenty-four German Patriot missile defense systems have been delivered to the ROK Air Force, officials said Friday. The deployment of the upgraded Patriot Advanced Capability (PAC-2) system is a core part of plans to build an independent theater missile defense shield, called the Korean air and missile defense network system (KAMD). Twenty-four more will be handed over to the Air Force in coming years, the officials said. The service plans to operate two Patriot battalions beginning 2010.

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7. ROK Naval Deployments

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "DESTROYER DISPATCH TO SOMALIA DELAYED", Seoul, 2008/11/28) reported that the dispatch of an ROK destroyer to Somali waters to combat pirates will be delayed for months due to financial constraints brought on by the global financial turmoil, an official of the Ministry of National Defense said Friday. The Navy had originally planned to send a 4,300-ton KDX-II destroyer to the African region to fight pirates there in January after getting approval from the National Assembly by year's end.

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8. Russian Energy Exports to ROK

Korea Herald ("S. KOREA MULLS UNDERSEA PIPELINE TO IMPORT RUSSIAN GAS", Seoul, 2008/11/26) reported that the ROK government is considering laying an undersea pipeline to import natural gas from Russia if the DPRK objects to an overland connection on its soil, Choo Kang-soo, the head of Korea Gas Corp (KOGAS) was quoted as saying by Yonhap News Agency. In September, Korea Gas Corp (KOGAS) announced it will import 7.5 million tons of natural gas from Russia beginning in 2015. "The plan to build an underwater pipeline came up during talks with Gazprom

president Alexei Miller and experts at Russia's Pacific Ocean Institute in Vladivostok last week," said Choo.

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9. ROK-Jordan Nuclear Cooperation

Yonhap (Yoo Cheong-mo, "KOREA, JORDAN TO COOPERATE ON ATOMIC PLANT, WATERWAY CONSTRUCTION", Seoul, 2008/12/01) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak and Jordanian King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein held summit talks in Seoul Monday and agreed to help ROK companies seeking to participate in Jordan's infrastructure projects, Lee's office said in a statement. "King Abdullah explained his government's plans to construct nuclear power plants, a waterway linking the Red and Dead seas and desalination facilities and asked for South Korean companies' participation in such projects," said the statement.

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10. 1987 KAL Bombing

Korea Herald (Kim So-hyun, "TERRORIST ACCUSES NIS OF FORCING HER TO LIE", Seoul, 2008/11/28) reported that Kim Hyun-hee, who bombed a Korean Air flight in 1987, claimed that the ROK intelligence agency in 2003 pressured her to lie that the bombing was not directed by DPRK leader Kim Jong-il. Kim wrote in a letter that under the Roh Moo-hyun administration, the National Intelligence Service urged her to do interviews for television programs that highlighted various suspicions over the KAL tragedy. Lee disclosed the letter on Wednesday, slamming "pro-North leftists" for trying to make her reverse her testimony that Pyongyang ordered the bombing.

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11. ROK Textbook Controversy

Korea Times (Kim Rahn, "TEXTBOOK PUBLISHERS TAKING RIGHT TURN", Seoul, 2008/11/30) reported that an official of the ROK Ministry of Education, Science and Technology said Sunday that five textbook publishers gave the ministry verbal notification that they would rewrite controversial sections of the books. The authors, however, said most of the "controversial'' parts were about minor matters and that the rewriting recommendation was against the government's own policy to use textbooks by private publishers to secure diversity. "We do not accept the rewrite by publishers at their discretion, which is against copyright and defames us. We clarify that we have not agreed to the revision,'' authors of the Kumsung textbook said in a statement.

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12. US Military in Asia

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "US TO DEPLOY MORE F-22S TO PACIFIC REGION", Seoul, 2008/11/27) reported that Lt. Gen. Chip Utterback, commander of the U.S. 13th Air Force, said Thursday that the U.S. Air Force will deploy one more squadron of F-22 stealth fighters to the

Pacific region, according to Yonhap News Agency. Utterback also said in a symposium that the high-altitude Global Hawk unmanned aerial vehicle will be deployed to a base in Guam soon.

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13. ROK, PRC, Japan Relations

Korea Times (Kim Rahn, "60% HAVE ANTI-CHINA SENTIMENT", Seoul, 2008/11/28) reported that the Northeast Asian History Foundation Thursday announced research conducted on 1,500 citizens in Seoul, Beijing and Tokyo, in October. About 59.8 percent of Koreans said the ROK-PRC relationship was not good, up from 34.5 percent last year. Some 16 percent of Chinese thought the relationship between the two nations not good, also up from 6.6 percent last year. Koreans' anti-Japan sentiment also got stronger, among 76.8 of those surveyed, up from 67.7 percent last year. Japanese' negative sentiment toward the ROK also rose to 45.6 percent from 2007's 34.4 percent. Chinese saw Japan more positively, while Japan developed more negative views of the PRC.

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14. Japanese Role in Iraq

Asahi Shimbun ("ASDF MISSION IN IRAQ TO END", Tokyo, 2008/11/29) reported that Japan's troop commitment to reconstruction efforts in Iraq will finish at the end of this year, when the final deployment of Air Self-Defense Force members is withdrawn. Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada gave a formal order for the withdrawal to the ASDF on Friday afternoon.

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15. US-Japan Relations

Yomiuri Shimbun ("EXPERTS MULL JAPAN-U.S. RELATIONS", Kyoto, 2008/11/29) reported that Japan's policy regarding the nation's role in reconstruction work in Afghanistan will be among the most important factors in Japan-U.S. relations after U.S. President-elect Barack Obama takes office in January, according to panelists at a symposium Friday in Kyoto. During a symposium titled "The New U.S. President and Japan-U.S. Relations," four panelists--Makoto Iokibe, president of the National Defense Academy; Prof. Koji Murata of Doshisha University; Jin Nakamura, president of The Yomiuri Shimbun, Osaka; and Prof. Tsutomu Ishiguri of Kyoto University of Foreign Studies--discussed possible issues the Japanese government will face in dealing with the next U.S. administration.

Yomiuri Shimbun (Kenichi Okumura, "'JAPAN SHOULD STEP UP, LEAD DIPLOMATIC AGENDA WITH U.S.'", Osaka, 2008/11/27) reported that the U.S.-Japan relationship could advance from its current "golden age" to a "platinum age" if Japan adopts a proactive approach toward diplomacy and takes the initiative on major policy issues such as security and climate change, Tosh Minohara, professor at Kobe University's Graduate School of Law, said. Japan has a chance to engage in proactive diplomacy with the Obama administration, Minohara said, because the United States needs help from Japan to deal with a diverse range of problems. "A new Shinkansen bullet train construction project in California would be a good symbol of mutual friendship and collaboration," he said by way of example.

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16. PRC Tibet Issue

Associated Press (Christopher Bodeen, "CHINA: SARKOZY-DALAI LAMA MEETING THREATENS TRADE", Beijing, 2008/11/29) reported that PRC business ties with France will likely suffer if French President Nicolas Sarkozy goes ahead with a planned meeting with the Dalai Lama, Feng Zongping, European studies director at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, was quoted Saturday in the China Daily as saying. France has "underestimated China's resolution to protect its sovereignty," said Feng. French leaders want to "play the Tibet card and at the same time maintain good economic trade relations with China, which is very difficult to achieve," Feng said. "China doesn't want the West to think that 'OK, we will meet the Dalai Lama and business will go on as usual,'" he said.

New York Times (Steven Erlanger, "CHINA, IN DISPUTE OVER DALAI LAMA, DELAYS EUROPEAN TALKS", Paris, 2008/11/26) reported that the PRC has postponed an annual summit meeting with the European Union originally scheduled for Monday to register its disapproval that several European leaders will meet the Dalai Lama, the Europeans said in a statement on Wednesday. “The European Union, which set ambitious aims for the 11th European Union-China summit, takes note and regrets this decision by China,” the statement said.

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17. PRC Executions

New York Times (Andrew Jacobs, "CHINESE EXECUTE 2 CONVICTED OF SPYING", Beijing, 2008/11/28) reported that Wo Weihan, a biomedical researcher convicted of espionage by a PRC court was executed Friday, according to family members and American Embassy officials. Wo’s family said he initially confessed to the crimes but later recanted, saying the confession had been coerced. The evidence against him was deemed a state secret, and even his lawyer was not allowed to discuss it with his family. A distant relative, Guo Wanjun, was convicted as a conspirator and also put to death on Friday, family members said. The American Embassy had protested Wo’s conviction, saying that his trial was carried out in total secrecy and that the accusations, if true, did not constitute a capital crime.

Associated Press (Gillian Wong, "CHINA REJECTS EU CRITISCM OF TAIWAN SPY EXECUTION", Beijing, 2008/12/01) reported that the PRC on Mon day dismissed criticisms by the European Union over the execution Friday of Wo Weihan. The EU issued a statement condemning Wo's execution and deploring the conditions under which Wo was detained and tried, saying it did not comply with international standards. PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said in a statement Monday on the ministry's Web site that the prC views the EU's criticism as a "rude interference in China's judiciary that tramples the spirit of the rule of law and undermines the basis of the healthy development of bilateral talks on human rights."

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II. ROK Report

18. Inter-Korea Relations

PRESSian (Jung Chang-hyun, "WHY DID KIM JONG-IL GO TO SHINUIJU?", 2008/11/27) said in a column that what is most worrisome about the inter-Korean relationship is the ROK government's miscalculation about the DPRK's actions. It is significant that the announcement to curtail the Kaesong project was made right at the moment when Kim Jong-il visited the industrial complex in Shinuiju. The DPRK seems to be planning to compensate for the loss caused by the break-off of the inter-Korean relationship by increasing economic cooperation with the PRC. Also, the DPRK will try to contact the Obama administration directly. The ROK government should make new diplomacy and security plans as well as new DPRK policies. They should change official members working for unification and diplomacy as soon as possible to build more trust toward the DPRK.

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19. ROK Policy Toward DPRK

Hankyoreh ("GNP BOOSTS INTER-KOREAN CONFLICTS", 2008/11/27) reported that the ROK Grand National Party's attitude toward the DPRK policy is even firmer than the government's. The GNP's recent remarks about the DPRK sound like they have already given up improving the relationship with them. Though they might be ideologically alien from them, they should not make such remarks as a ruling party who is responsible for affairs of the state.

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20. Inter-Korea Economic Cooperation

TongilNews ("CORPORATIONS IN GAESONG CRITICIZE GNP", 2008/11/27) reported that CEOs of corporations in Gaesong expressed great dissatisfaction toward the government and the ruling party. Though they were relieved by the announcement that the government will guarantee the corporations to run the business, the government and the ruling party still keep on adding fuel to the fire.

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