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I. United States

1. Japan-DPRK Talks

Agence France Presse ("NORTH KOREA TELLS JAPAN TO ATONE FOR PAST IN DIPLOMATIC TALKS," Tokyo, 3/27/00), Reuters ("JAPAN MUST SETTLE PAST TO NORMALISE TIES--N. KOREA," Tokyo, 3/27/00), and the Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA DEMANDS JAPAN ATONE," Tokyo, 3/27/00) reported that the official DPRK daily Rodong Sinmun said Monday that Japan must atone for its "grisly" colonial rule of Korea if it wants to establish diplomatic relations with the DPRK. The paper said that success in the upcoming diplomatic talks for both sides "depends entirely upon Japan's stand and attitude towards the atonement for the past wrongdoings." A Rodong Sinmun commentary carried by Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said, "the Japanese imperialists ... inflicted immeasurable spiritual, moral, human, material and cultural losses upon the Korean people." The report added that the DPRK regarded Japan as a sworn enemy because it had refused to atone for the past. It continued, "if Japan's atonement for the past crimes is resolved, other issues will be settled smoothly. Japan should properly understand this and begin the normalization process with atoning for the past crimes. At the historic turn of the century Japan's atonement for the past crimes against the Korean people brooks no further delay. The talks are imminent, but anti-Japanese feelings of the People's Army and people and their caution against Japan are growing stronger than ever before because of the recent ill-boding moves in Japan." The report also said that

the DPRK was disturbed by Japan's plans to raise the question of the DPRK's ballistic missile program and its allegations that DPRK agents have kidnapped Japanese citizens. It said, "this compels the DPRK to cast a doubt about Japan's attitude toward the talks. The Korean People's Army and people are greatly angry at the insincere stand and shameless attitude of Japan. They insist that they feel no need to have any dealing with Japan but use other means to force Japan to settle the crimes it has committed for one hundred years as well as its past wrongdoings, to satisfy the grudge of the nation." The paper concluded that Japan should avoid seeking any "concession" to avoid its responsibility for the past.

2. Italy-DPRK Relations

Agence France Presse ("ITALY LEADS EUROPEAN EFFORTS TO IMPROVE TIES WITH NORTH KOREA," Seoul, 3/27/00) reported that Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini will make a trip to the DPRK this week. Dini will meet DPRK Prime Minister Hong Song-nam and Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun in Pyongyang on March 28 and 29. Huh Moon-young of the Korea Institute for National Unification, said, "Dini's visit is politically important as it will test the fidelity of North Korea's efforts to improving relations with European nations. Italy was the most aggressive European nation to enhance ties with North Korea, which has struggled to search for new allies since the fall of the former Soviet Union. Mainly due to the communist influence in Italy, Pyongyang has selected the country for its campaign to secure a diplomatic bridgehead in Europe." Before his departure, Dini described the DPRK as "an element of instability" for East Asia because of its suspected nuclear arms program. Dini said that his visit would be an "important stage" in Italy's efforts "to open a channel of dialogue with a country that is particularly distant, both geographically and politically." He added that Italy's decision to normalize relations with the DPRK was not in "recognition of any democratic progress" but to encourage a dialogue between the ROK and the DPRK. However, an anonymous ROK foreign ministry official said, "we believe Pyongyang's diplomatic drive is largely aimed at seeking more foreign aid to recharge its crippled economy." The official agreed, however, that Dini's visit would serve as an opportunity for other nations to speed up their moves to strengthen contacts with the DPRK.

3. US Policy toward PRC

The San Diego Union-Tribune (Otto Kreisher, "DEFENSE CHIEF URGES 'CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT' WITH CHINA CONTINUE," Washington, 3/25/00) reported that US Defense Secretary William Cohen said on March 24 that the PRC is a "growing power" in economic and military terms but does not have to become a threat to the US or its Asian allies. Cohen said that the US could help shape the PRC's attitude toward the rest of the world by continuing a policy of "constructive engagement" with diplomatic, economic and military-to-military contacts, while retaining its strong military presence in the Western Pacific. He also argued that the attempts by some members of the US Congress to stop trade with the PRC in high-tech goods was "unrealistic" because of the rapid spread of technology. Cohen said, "we're living in a world in which we're seeing such a rapid dissemination of technology, the notion that we can isolate China from the rest of the world is unrealistic. Our position ought to be that we're a superpower. We will engage China in a constructive way. [While] there will be areas where we will disagree with them ... we have to have a mature approach to them, neither vaulting to any kind of euphoric state of expectations ... or simply saying they are a threat, a real threat to peace. That's not a wise policy." During his recent visits to Asia, Cohen said, his main role "was to urge the Chinese to lower their rhetoric, (their) threats of military action [against Taiwan] ... to encourage both sides to back away. There are signs that those things are happening, and the administration is making a number of diplomatic efforts to continue to ease the tensions that rose over the election of a new Taiwanese president whose party has urged

independence. The Chinese have made it clear they feel passionately about the issue of reunification with Taiwan, understanding that we have taken a position that they must do so through dialogue, not through intimidation or assault. I don't think we can afford to dismiss it or say it's exaggerated." Cohen said that he plans to go to the PRC in late spring or early summer. He added that has also urged the democratic Asian nations to work together to deal with the PRC, telling them a unified approach can increase their influence. [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for March 27, 2000.]

4. G8 Summit

The Associated Press (Eric Talmadge, "G8 SUMMIT TO HAVE ASIAN FLAVOR," Nago, 3/26/00) reported that Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi said on March 26 that Asian concerns will be high on the agenda when Japan hosts this year's Group of Eight (G8) summit. Obuchi said that issues of particular concern to Asia include development, global financial reforms and education. He said, "while keeping a global viewpoint, I hope the concerns of the countries of Asia will be reflected in the summit discussions. I want the other summit leaders to feel the significance of hosting the meeting in Okinawa."

II. Republic of Korea

1. Maritime Demarcation Line

The Korea Herald (Kang Seok-jae, "N.K.'S NEW DEMARCATION HEIGHTENS TENSION IN WEST SEA," Seoul, 03/27/00), Joongang Ilbo (Kim Min-seok, "MINISTER OF DEFENSE: NORTH KOREAN ATTACK POSSIBLE," Seoul, 03/25/00), Joongang Ilbo (Kim Min-seok, "KOREAN MILITARY PUT ON ALERT OVER YELLOW SEA," Seoul, 03/24/00), Chosun Ilbo (Park Doo-sik, "PRESIDENT ORDERS ALERT ON NK ANNOUNCEMENT," Seoul, 03/27/00) and The Korea Times ("CHO WARNS OF HIGH POSSIBILITY FOR NK MILITARY PROVOCATION," Seoul, 03/26/00) reported that in the wake of the DPRK's confrontational move over the disputed waters in the West Sea (Yellow Sea) on March 23, fears are being raised that the DPRK may attempt to use force to defend its new maritime demarcation line. Many DPRK experts, both civilian and military, have warned that the DPRK would further escalate its war of words and launch a series of armed provocations this year, citing as major reasons the April 13 general elections and the upcoming 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War. Hours after the DPRK's unilateral announcement of new navigational zones around five islands that lie north of the DPRK-designated military demarcation line in the West Sea, the ROK Defense Ministry issued a strong warning. An ROK ministry spokesman said, "we will stick to the existing United Nations Command-set Northern Limit Line (NLL) and take stern measures if Pyongyang violates it." The ROK ministry also ordered stepped-up vigilance in the disputed area in preparation for any provocation from the DPRK.

The Korea Times (Chae Hee-mook, "NK THREAT OF LIMITING PASSAGE LANES SEEN AS WILD CARD AGAINST SOUTH, US," Seoul, 03/24/00) reported that the DPRK's declaration of the limited passage lanes in the West Sea on March 23 was seen as a political "tool" rather than a substantial provocation to the ROK. The most notable point of the action was the designation of two-2 km passage lanes to the five islands, located in the northern part of the DPRK-designated demarcation line. The DPRK said that ROK and US ships will be banned, along with aircraft, beyond the lanes. A military expert said that this is a step back from the declaration the DPRK made last year that practically admitted the jurisdiction of the US in the waters. He said that the DPRK has probably come up with its latest move to enhance its position in inter-Korean relations and DPRK-US talks.

The DPRK might also be seeking to trigger political debates and instability between the ROK ruling and opposition parties during the general elections campaign period. Experts also fear that the move will likely stifle the reconciliation gesture made by ROK President Kim Dae-jung to the DPRK in Berlin earlier this month.

2. ROK-Japan Talks

The Korea Herald (Kim Ji-ho, "SEOUL, TOKYO AGREE ON CLOSER COOPERATION ON N.K. POLICY," Seoul, 03/27/00) and The Korea Times ("TRILATERAL NK POLICY MEETING IN TOKYO," Seoul, 03/26/00) reported that ROK officials said on March 26 that the ROK and Japan agreed to enhance their joint stance in dealing with the DPRK, ahead of Japan's rapprochement talks with the DPRK April 4-8 in Pyongyang. During foreign ministers' talks, Japanese Foreign Minister Yohei Kono briefed his ROK counterpart, Lee Joung-binn, about Japan's plans for the talks on establishing diplomatic relationship with the DPRK. In return, Lee expressed the hope that Japan would deliver the ROK's call for DPRK leaders to come to the dialogue table with the ROK and help to wipe out their distrust of the ROK's engagement policy toward the DPRK.

The NAPSNet Daily Report aims to serve as a forum for dialogue and exchange among peace and security specialists. Conventions for readers and a list of acronyms and abbreviations are available to all recipients. For descriptions of the world wide web sites used to gather information for this report, or for more information on web sites with related information, see the collection of [other NAPSNet resources](#).

We invite you to reply to today's report, and we welcome commentary or papers for distribution to the network.

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