

Discussion of NAPSNet Forum #18 — Political/Economic Transition on the Korean Peninsula

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Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network

DISCUSSION OF "POLITICAL/ECONOMIC TRANSITION ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA"

#18B -- JUNE 19, 1998

The is intended to provide expert analysis of contemporary peace and security issues in Northeast Asia, and an opportunity to participate in discussion of the analysis. The Forum is open to all participants of the [Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network \(NAPSNet\)](#) . As always, NAPSNet

invites your responses to this report. Please see ["NAPSNet Invites Your Responses,"](#) below, and send your responses to the NAPSNet Coordinator at: napsnet-reply@nautilus.org .

DISCUSSION OF "POLITICAL/ECONOMIC TRANSITION ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA"

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[I. Comments by Hugo WheeGook Kim](#)

[II. NAPSNet Invites Your Responses](#)

[Go to Essay by Scott Snyder](#)

I. Comments by Hugo WheeGook Kim

Comments on Essay by Scott Snyder: by Hugo WheeGook Kim, President of [East-West Research Institute](#) , Washington, DC

I enjoyed my friend Scott's essay very much. His view is informative and

persuasive to me by exploring important issues on the Korean peninsula. I have several comments on his paper.

(a) In "South Korean Political Transition," Scott overly emphasized domestic political constraints on Kim Dae-jung's leadership toward the North. It is believed that the three new principles for dealing with Pyongyang declared at his inauguration strongly represent the consensus of the people, so that his "Sunshine Policy" will be supported unanimously and consistently by both ruling and opposition parties, including right wing conservatives who have recognized the importance of engagement.

(b) In "North Korean Political Transition," we have to remember that the military is under control of the labor party in DPRK. The voices from the military community may be influential, particularly in the period of famine and unstable conditions, but the party makes decisions for the government, and the armed forces protect the regime from internal and external threats, as in other nations.

(c) In "Regional Attitudes and Implications," I agree that the major pattern of inter-Korean negotiations has been "to pursue a zero-sum and no compromise approach that almost inevitably leads to deadlock and breakdown without the involvement of a third party to mediate between the two sides." However, I believe that compromise will be possible in the future under the three new principles if the DPRK recognizes that deadlock is not helpful for their interests in the long run and that the role of a third party is important.

(d) As in (c), I agree with Scott's suggestion that "international financial support will be necessary to cover certain costs associated with a Korean arms reduction process, including mutual troop and equipment reductions and repositioning." As far as arms reduction on both sides, the sooner the better. This must be studied separately and intensively by the world organization as well as by researchers in the two Koreas. In line with this, the role and status of U.S. Forces on the Korean peninsula need to be reexamined and redefined as a peace-keeper and a balancer for the region. I agree that the U.S. Forces should stay on the Korean peninsula even after Korean unification for the

regional balance as President Kim Dae-jung mentioned previously.

(e) In "Consolidation of Korea's Parallel Economic and Political Transition," I agree with Scott that "the key principle to be observed is parallelism." This is a very important point in dealing with two Korean issues. "The United States should not get ahead of South Korea in relations with Pyongyang, nor should the United States fall behind the pace of improvement of relations between Seoul and Pyongyang." This point should not be missed in U.S.-ROK relations in the future in order to make the policy effective toward regional peace and prosperity. I highly respect Scott's view on the theory of parallelism.

II. NAPSNet Invites Your Responses

The Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network invites your responses to this essay. Please send responses to: napsnet-reply@nautilus.org . Responses will be considered for redistribution to the network only if they include the author's name, affiliation, and explicit consent.

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[Return to top of this page](#) NAPSNet Policy Fora Online

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