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# **Policy Forum 05-32A: “Military-First Politics” And Building A “Powerful And Prosperous Nation” In North Korea**



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PFO 05-32A: April 14th, 2005

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Byung Chul Koh

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## **I. Introduction**

Byung Chul Koh, Professor Emeritus at the University of Illinois, Chicago, writes: "In sum, whether or not Kim Jong Il can continue to make progress, however small, in building a "powerful and prosperous nation" utilizing "military-first politics" will hinge to a striking extent on his ability to make pragmatic tactical adjustments to the changing strategic environment, thus helping to bring about a peaceful resolution of the nuclear standoff."

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Nautilus Institute. Readers should note that Nautilus seeks a diversity of views and opinions on contentious topics in order to identify common ground.

## **II. Essay by Byung Chul Koh**

- "Military-First Politics" And Building A "Powerful And Prosperous Nation" In North Korea  
by Byung Chul Koh

If a single phrase can characterize North Korea under Kim Jong Il, it is most probably *songun chongch'i* (military- first politics). If one were allowed to add another phrase, the best candidate would be *kangsong taeguk* (powerful and prosperous nation).<sup>(2)</sup> These two phrases, moreover, are closely intertwined, for "military-first politics" is touted as a key instrument for building a "powerful and prosperous nation."

Within the limits of available information, then, I shall explore the origins and aims of (1) "military-first politics" and (2) "powerful and prosperous nation" as well as the linkage between the two--that is, the role of the Korean People's Army (KPA) in building the latter. I shall conclude my analysis with a tentative assessment.

### **ORIGINS AND AIMS OF "MILITARY-FIRST POLITICS"**

Stripped to its essentials, "military-first politics" refers to the elevation of the military in its dual sense of organization and function to the highest position in the North's priority list. When the term is construed in that fashion, then one can trace its origins to the early 1960s. The North's pursuit of a "four-fold military line" (*4-dae kunsu noson*) bespoke the high priority Pyongyang placed on fortifying its military capability in the face of what it perceived as a hostile strategic environment. The "four- fold military line" consisted of (1) arming the entire nation, (2) training all KPA soldiers to assume higher responsibilities than their rank and position would dictate, (3) turning the entire country into a fortress, and (4) modernizing the KPA.<sup>(3)</sup>

Although the military continued to receive a preferential treatment in terms of resource allocation, however, it did not emerge as the dominant force in the North's political arena until after Kim Il Sung died in July 1994. The seeds of the military ascendancy in North Korea under Kim Jong Il, nonetheless, were sown by Kim Il Sung, who had paid extraordinary attention to political succession.<sup>(4)</sup>

After giving Kim Jong Il top positions in the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK)--notably, secretary (September 1973), politburo member (February 1974), and member of the politburo standing committee (October 1980)--, Kim Il Sung decided to hand over control of the military to his eldest son as well. First, Kim Jong Il was appointed the First Deputy Chairman of the National Defense Commission (NDC) in May 1990. Six months later he became the Supreme Commander of the KPA. In April 1992 he was awarded the rank of "marshal of the Republic" (*konghwaguk wonsu*), which made him the second highest-ranking person in the KPA, next to his father who held the rank of "grand marshal" (*tae wonsu*). In April 1993 Kim Jong Il was promoted to the chairman of the NDC.

Since the DPRK constitution had just been amended to transfer control over the KPA from the state president (chusok) to the NDC chairman, Kim Jong Il now controlled the North Korean military in a legal sense.(5)

Efforts to enhance his de facto control had been under way since the early 1980s, when he began visiting military bases, giving presents to division commanders, and receiving reports on key developments in the military on a regular basis. Since assuming official positions in the military in the early 1990s, Kim Jong Il invariably presided over promotion ceremonies for general officers, personally pinning stars on their shoulders. By the end of the decade, several hundred KPA general officers "owed" their promotions to their supreme commander.(6)

The ascendancy of the military in the post-Kim Il Sung North was accentuated by a relative decline, and in a few cases, abolition, of other institutions. Elections for delegates to the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA), whose term expired in April 1995, were not held until July 1998. The SPA, in fact, failed to convene for four years following Kim Il Sung's death. Nor was there any sign that the WPK Central Committee held any plenary meetings. Abolished altogether were two key institutions--the Central People's Committee (CPC), which had functioned as a kind of "super-cabinet" since 1972, and the state presidency. All but invisible for three years was the DPRK Administration Council.(7)

None of this meant, however, that the WPK has been downgraded relative to the KPA. Kim Jong Il's decision to assume the top WPK post--that of the General Secretary (ch'ongbiso)--is noteworthy in this connection. For it is the only position not directly related to the military he has chosen to occupy. The manner in which he assumed the top party position, however, is revealing. Bypassing the WPK constitution, which empowers the WPK Central Committee to elect the General Secretary, the party organ, Nodong sinmun, published a "special press report" on October 9, 1997 announcing that Kim Jong Il had assumed the post in accordance with resolutions adopted unanimously in a series of meetings of representatives from WPK branches in nine provinces, three cities, major government organizations, and the KPA. The special report was released jointly by the WPK Central Committee and the WPK Central Military Affairs Committee.(8)

Before the phrase "military-first politics" made its debut in Pyongyang's official rhetoric, Nodong sinmun served notice that the KPA's stature had reached the highest position ever. In an editorial commemorating the 65th anniversary of the KPA's founding in April 1997, the party organ noted: "Never before have the status and role of the People's Army been so extraordinarily elevated as today when it is being led energetically by the Respected and Beloved Comrade Supreme Commander." The editorial added that in North Korea the People's Army was synonymous with the people, the state, and the party. It pointed out that because the People's Army and Kim Jong Il shared both aspirations and destinies when Kim Il Sung was alive, the KPA was able to protect Kim Jong Il after the demise of the elder Kim. The editorial characterized having Kim Jong Il as its top leader the "greatest accomplishment of the People's Army in its 65-year history" as well as the source of its "infinite pride."(9)

It was not until January 1999, however, that the word, songun (military-first), appeared in the North. In a New Year's Day editorial published jointly by the daily organs of the WPK, the KPA, and the Kim Il Sung Socialist Youth League, Kim Jong Il's leadership style was labeled one of "military-first"--one in which the People's Army serves as the main force of the revolution and in which the unity of the army and the people helps to safeguard as well as build socialism.(10) In January 2000 the expression, "military-first politics," made its way into a joint New Year's Day editorial for the first time.(11) In elaborating on the novel concept, the editorial noted that Kim Jong Il had devoted much time throughout the preceding year to the tasks of "inspecting the front-line, safeguarding the fatherland with the People's Army, and leading socialist construction." "The Comrade Kim Jong Il's military-first politics," it added, "depends on the People's Army as a pillar of our revolution, enabling

the entire people, including workers and peasants, to wage their struggle armed with revolutionary army spirit; this is a powerful and refined socialist political method that radiates brilliantly."(12)

Finally, in January 2003 the phrase, "songun sasang" (military-first ideology), entered Pyongyang's political lexicon, signaling that Kim Jong Il's "military-first" method of leadership has now attained the lofty status of ideology.(13) Although the joint New Year's Day editorial mentioned "military-first ideology" three times, however, it did not explain why "military-first politics" could be viewed as embodying a new ideology. That explanation would come later in the year.

A lengthy exposition entitled "Essential Attributes of Military-First Politics" that appeared in Nodong sinmun in December 2003 asserted that the originality of "military-first politics" stemmed from its "fresh clarification of the theory on the main force of revolution:" Whereas the theory on proletarian revolution posited the proletariat as the main force of revolution, "our Party's military-first politics" assigns that role to the People's Army. For only the latter meets the stringent criteria of loyalty, revolutionary spirit, cohesiveness, and esprit de corps. All these, Nodong sinmun noted, are prerequisite to the fulfillment of the "mission of preserving with rifles and lives the security of our party, revolution, fatherland, and people." Additionally, the party organ underscored the importance of the unity of the military and the people as well as "revolutionary military spirit," which empowers the people to carry out all the tasks of socialist construction as if they were engaged in revolution and combat.(14)

In the joint New Year's Day editorial of 2004 the word songun is mentioned more frequently than any other words—a stunning 40 times. In most cases, however, it is used not as a noun but as an adjective—such as "military-first politics," "military-first ideology," "military-first leadership," and even "military-first Korea."(15)

#### "POWERFUL AND PROSPEROUS NATION:" THE RHETORIC

The phrase kangsong taeguk (powerful and prosperous nation) made its debut in North Korea in January 1999. That year's joint New Year's Day editorial was entitled "Let Us Make This Year a Great Turning Point in Building a Powerful and Prosperous Nation."(16) The preceding four and a half years since Kim Il Sung's death had been exceedingly difficult for North Korea. Barely had Kim Jong Il overseen the solemn funeral of his late father when he found his country plunge into the worst food crisis in its history. Faced with the threat of imminent and widespread famine, Kim Jong Il was compelled to seek aid from Seoul, Tokyo, Washington, and the international community as a whole. With its entire economy tottering on the brink of collapse, the North embarked on what it called an "arduous march" (konanui hanggun). Not until 1998 did it manage to stabilize the situation a little. Elections for the tenth Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) were finally held, and its first session convened in September to revise the state constitution and re-elect Kim Jong Il as the chairman of the National Defense Commission (NDC), which, with the abolition of the state presidency, now became the "highest post of the state that involves overall leadership and control of the country's political, military, and economic capabilities."(17)

It was in large part to commemorate the latter event that on August 31, 1998 North Korea launched a three-stage rocket from its east coast that flew over Japan and landed off the coast of the Sanriku in the Pacific Ocean. Even though Tokyo and Washington saw the incident as a failed attempt to launch a satellite into orbit, Pyongyang claimed that it had actually succeeded and that a satellite was orbiting the earth beaming patriotic songs.(18)

This was the backdrop against which North Korea unveiled the lofty goal of building a "powerful and prosperous nation." As the 1999 New Year's Day editorial put it, "the past year was a proud year in which the national power of Socialist Korea was forcefully displayed. By successfully launching our first earth satellite 'Kwangmyongson 1-ho' [Bright Star Number One], we demonstrated to the entire

world our Republic's greatness and might. For our country to join the ranks of those who possess satellites in the midst of a severe ordeal is a miracle in history."

Kim Jong Il's vision of a kangsong taeguk, the editorial points out, aims to turn North Korea into a "socialist powerhouse embodying the most potent capabilities in ideology, politics, military affairs, economy in the near future." Ideologically, the entire country must be armed with Kim Jong Il's ideas as well as absolute loyalty in the sense of a willingness to defend the supreme leader with one's life. The "first pillar" of a militarily strong socialist country, the editorial stresses, is the People's Army, which also serves as the suicide squad for the defense of the supreme leader.

To build an economically strong country, "production needs to be normalized in all sectors of the people's economy" and the people's daily life stabilized and improved. To solve the problem of food shortages, the editorial underscores the importance of "improving the structure of agriculture," double-cropping, "revolutionizing seeds," and land leveling and rezoning.

The goal of building a "powerful and prosperous nation" would reappear in the title of a New Year's Day joint editorial in 2002 and 2004. The 2002 editorial was entitled "Let Us Glorify This Year, the 90th Anniversary of the Great Leader's Birth, As a Year of a New Leap in Building a Powerful and Prosperous Nation." (19) In addition to the usual emphasis on the role of ideology and the People's Army, the editorial was notable for highlighting the "pressing demand for improving and perfecting economic management stemming from the changed environment." It called for "maximizing practical gains, while firmly adhering to socialist principles" and for encouraging innovation at lower units, while maintaining the state's centralized and unified guidance.

The 2004 joint editorial featuring kangsong taeguk for a third time in five years was entitled "Under Party Leadership Let Us Glorify This Year as a Year of Proud Victory Through Revolutionary Offensive on All Fronts of Building a Powerful and Prosperous Nation." (20)

The editorial asserts that the preceding year saw the DPRK defend its pride and dignity, display its resilience, and safeguard its sovereignty and socialism under extraordinary adversity; in a word, it was a year of "proud victory." It was a year in which the DPRK marked its 55th birthday in a "great victory celebration," consolidated its unique ("our own style") socialist political system embodying "army- first" principles, and opened the way for a new leap in building a kangsong taeguk.

The main goal North Korea will strive to attain in the New Year, the editorial states, is to pave the way for a "fresh victory" in building a "powerful and prosperous nation." This, it adds, can be accomplished by conducting a "revolutionary offensive" on three fronts--(1) politics and ideology, (2) anti-imperialism and military affairs, and (3) economy and science.

Kangsong taeguk, then, is the distant destination the Kim Jong Il regime ardently hopes to reach eventually. It is a term that is being utilized in political indoctrination, which remains a key instrument of regime maintenance and economic development. Let us now turn to the linkage between songun chongch'i and kangsong taeguk--that is, the role played by the KPA in building a "powerful and prosperous nation."

#### THE KOREAN PEOPLE'S ARMY AND KANGSONG TAEGUK

The two components of kangsong taeguk are (1) becoming "powerful" (kang) and (2) becoming "prosperous" (song). Although the two are closely intertwined, they are nonetheless distinct, both analytically and empirically. Analytically, military and economic capabilities are clearly distinguishable. Empirically, one can find examples of countries that have awesome military capabilities that are not matched by economic capabilities as measured in per capita terms, notably the former Soviet Union and present- day China. More numerous are countries that are economically

advanced but militarily weak, of which Japan, Singapore, and Scandinavian countries are conspicuous examples.

North Korea, however, aims to become both powerful and prosperous, and the KPA has a pivotal role to play in what is certain to be a long and arduous journey to make the dream come true. The goal of becoming a "powerful nation" requires strengthening the KPA both quantitatively and qualitatively. "With 1.17 million personnel," according to General Leon J. LaPorte, Commander of the ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command and U.S. Forces Korea, the KPA "is the fifth largest active duty military force in the world." Additionally, the "North Korean air force has over 1,700 aircraft and the navy has more than 800 ships, including a large submarine fleet." When one adds "an estimated six million reserves" to the above, North Korea's "ground force is the world's third largest."(21)

What is more, "about 70 percent of the [KPA] is deployed south of Pyongyang, where they are capable of attacking with very little tactical warning. The preponderance of the North Korean long range artillery force can strike Seoul from its current position." LaPorte adds that in addition to pursuing programs to develop nuclear weapons, North Korea "maintains a substantial chemical weapons stockpile and production capability" and "has the capability to develop, produce, and potentially weaponize biological warfare agents." Estimating that Pyongyang's "ballistic missile inventory includes over 500 SCUD missile variants that can threaten the entire peninsula," LaPorte points out that North Korea continues "to produce and deploy medium- range No Dong missiles capable of striking cities and United States bases in Japan."(22)

LaPorte warns that "North Korea's 122,000-man special operations forces are the world's largest and pose a significant threat. We consider them a tough, dedicated, and profoundly loyal force. During wartime, these forces would attack to disrupt command facilities of the Republic of Korea-United States Combined Forces Command and seek to destroy our force generation capability. The North will concentrate their special operations forces against our critical war fighting nodes while seeking to deny reinforcement from the continental United States."(23)

Finally, LaPorte underscores the adaptability of the KPA. "They concentrate their efforts against the combined surveillance, precision attack, and force generation capability of the Republic of Korea and the United States." North Korea, he adds, "continues to improve their command, control, communications and intelligence systems, harden and bury their facilities, improve lines of communication, disperse forces, and improve camouflage, concealment, and deception measures. These efforts increase the survivability of North Korean combat power, and complicate our attack warning capability."(24)

If North Korea's claim that it already possesses and is continuing to strengthen a "nuclear deterrent force" is true, then it may be a step closer to becoming a "militarily strong country" than ever before.(25)

Inasmuch as a qualitative upgrading of the KPA necessitates the acquisition of ultra-modern weapons from external sources, however, the North needs to increase its revenue base; hence military power goes hand in hand with economic ability. Efforts to make the DPRK a prosperous nation, in other words, cannot be divorced from its ambition to become a militarily strong nation as well.

The linkage between the two goals, however, is reciprocal. That is to say, the KPA can contribute to the North's economic development both directly and indirectly. Directly, the KPA can perform economic tasks such as participating in agricultural and construction projects. Indirectly, the KPA can provide a model and an inspiration to the civilian population engaged in various economic activities.

Examples of the KPA's participation in economic activities include (1) providing labor and materiel to agricultural cooperatives,(26) (2) assisting in land reclamation projects,(27) (3) building roads,(28) (4) building hotels and houses,(29) (5) building power plants, both thermoelectric and hydroelectric,(30) and (6) building mines.(31)

The KPA also serves as a model and an inspiration to the civilian population, who are urged to emulate "the revolutionary spirit, virtues, and fighting style of the People's Army." Only by arming themselves with a "revolutionary military spirit" (hyongmyongjok kunin chongsin), the North Korean people are told, can they hope to make a big leap in building an "economically strong nation" (kyongje kangguk)(32).

## CONCLUSION

To what extent does the North Korean rhetoric pertaining to "military-first politics" and "powerful and prosperous nation" jibe with the reality? To what extent has Kim Jong Il attained or is he attaining his goals? What needs stressing is that the gap between rhetoric and reality may arguably be somewhat narrower than is widely assumed. "Military-first politics," in fact, may reflect the reality if one construes the term as encompassing the emergence of the military as the most influential group in the North, the top priority the KPA receives in resource allocation, and the frequency with which the phrase is mentioned in editorials, commentaries, and speeches published in the North Korean press.

Even the phrase "powerful and prosperous nation" is used in such a way as to tone down its connotations. In the editorial cited above, for example, the claims made for the preceding year's accomplishments and the goals enunciated for this year tend to be modest. It says that in 2003 the North merely "opened the way for a new leap" in building a powerful and prosperous nation and that in the New Year the North will strive to "pave the way for a fresh victory" in building a kangsong taeguk.

Notwithstanding the above, the North is much closer to becoming a militarily strong country than it is to becoming a "prosperous" one, no matter how loosely the latter term is defined. For the North is on "life support" insofar as food and energy are concerned, and the prospects for attaining self-sufficiency, in terms of ability to produce and import what is needed, are slim. Even if one were to accept a drastically diluted definition of "prosperous" nation--meaning a country in which production has been stabilized, most economic functions are performed in a normal fashion, and the basic needs of the people are met to a large extent--the North would still need to go a long way. Aiming high, nonetheless, will do no harm but may well do some good. It may help keep hope alive in a desperate situation, and it may also serve as what the regime hopes will be a useful propaganda tool.

To what extent, then, has Kim Jong Il attained his goals in embracing both "military-first politics" and "powerful and prosperous nation"? If, as has been hypothesized above, the major goal of "military-first politics" has been to consolidate his power and perpetuate his regime, then Kim Jong Il appears to have been successful thus far.

If a closely related goal has been to bolster the DPRK's external security, it too may have been achieved to some degree. The strengthening of the KPA's capabilities, including conventional, asymmetric, and weapons of mass destruction, may indeed have enhanced the North's deterrent power at least in the short run. Should six-party talks aimed at resolving the nuclear issue fail, however, the probability that coercive measures may be used would increase. There is, in other words, a chance that Pyongyang's quest for security may turn out to be counter-productive.

In sum, whether or not Kim Jong Il can continue to make progress, however small, in building a "powerful and prosperous nation" utilizing "military-first politics" will hinge to a striking extent on

his ability to make pragmatic tactical adjustments to the changing strategic environment, thus helping to bring about a peaceful resolution of the nuclear standoff.

- (1) This is an expanded version of a paper presented at an international conference, "Enhancing Security, Cooperation, and Peace on the Korean Peninsula," hosted by the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, Honolulu, Hawaii, 27- 29 January 2004.
- (2) In this paper Korean words and names will be Romanized in accordance with the McCune-Reischauer system. Exceptions will be made, however, when the idiosyncratic spellings of names are known and widely used. A literal translation of kangsong taeguk will be a "great country (or nation) that is both powerful and prosperous." North Korea's official translation changed from a "powerful nation" in 1999 to a "great prosperous powerful nation" in 2004. See "Joint Editorial Published on New Year," Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), Pyongyang, January 1, 1999, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/1999/9901/news01/01.htm> and "Joint New Year Editorial Published," KCNA, Pyongyang, January 1, 2004, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2004/200401/news01/01.htm>
- (3) "Uri inmin kundae rul hyongmyong kundaero mandullmyo kukbang eso chawi ui pangch'im ul kwanch'ol haja" [Let Us Implement the Policy of Making Our People's Army a Revolutionary Army and Attaining Self-reliance in National Defense], Kim Il Sung chojak-jip [Collection of Works by Kim Il Sung], 17 (1963.1-1963.12) (Pyongyang: Choson Nodong-dang Ch'ulp'an-sa, 1982), pp. 432-450. This is a speech Kim Il Sung gave at Kim Il Sung Military College on October 5, 1963.
- (4) B. C. Koh, "Political Succession in North Korea," *Korea & World Affairs* (Seoul), vol. 8, no. 3 (Fall 1984), pp. 527-545; idem, "The Politics of Succession in North Korea: Consolidation or Disintegration?" *Journal of East Asian Affairs* (Seoul), vol. 7, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 1993), pp. 58-78.
- (5) For the text of the amended "Socialist Constitution" of the DPRK, see Choson chungang yongam [Korean Central Yearbook], 1993 (Pyongyang: Choson Chungang T'ongsin-sa, 1993), pp. 140-155.
- (6) From December 1991 to August 2003 Kim Jong Il promoted a total of 1,164 general officers on 12 different occasions. T'ongilbu, 2004 Pukhan kaeyo [North Korea Handbook, 2004] (Seoul: T'ongilbu, 2003), p. 98, footnote 7.
- (7) Byung Chul Koh, "The North Korean Political System Under Kim Jong Il: A Comparative Perspective" in Jae Kyu Park (ed.), *North Korea in Transition and Policy Choices: Domestic Structure and External Relations* (Seoul: Kyungnam University Press, 1999), pp. 39-41.
- (8) Nodong sinmun [Labor News] (Pyongyang), October 9, 1997, pp. 1-2.
- (9) Ibid., April 25, 1997, p. 4.
- (10) "Olhae rul kangsong taeguk konsol ui widaehan chonhwan ui haero pinnae'ija" [Let Us Make This Year Shine as a Turning Point in Building a Powerful and Prosperous Nation," Nodong sinmun,, January 1, 1999, p. 1. This editorial was published simultaneously in Choson Inmingun [Korean People's Army] and Ch'ongnyon chonwi [Youth Vanguard] as well.
- (11) "Tang ch'anggon 55 torul mannun olhae rul ch'ollima taegojo ui pulgilsoge charangch'an sungni ui haero pinna'ija" [Let Us Make This Year, the 55th Anniversary of the Party Founding, a Year of Proud Victory Riding a Ch'ollima High Tide], ibid, January 1, 2000, p. 1, a joint editorial with Choson Inmingun and Ch'ongnyon chonwi.
- (12) Ibid.
- (13) "Widaehan songun kich'I ttara konghwaguk ui chonom kwa wiryok ul nop'I ttolch'ija" [Let Us Fully Demonstrate the Dignity and Might of our Republic Under the Great Banner of Military-First Policy], Nodong sinmun, January 1, 2003, p. 1. A joint editorial published simultaneously in the daily organs of the KPA and the Kim Il Sung Socialist Youth League as well.
- (14) "Songun chongch'i ui ponjiljok t'uksong" [Essential Attributes of Military-first Politics], ibid., December 9, 2003.
- (15) "Tang ui yongdo mit'e kangsong taeguk konsol ui modun chonson eso hyongmyongjok kongserul pollyo olhaerul chrangch'an haero pinnae'ija" [Under Party Leadership Let Us Glorify This Year as a Year of Proud Victory Through Revolutionary Offensive on All Fronts of Building Kangsong Taeguk], Nodong sinmun, January 1, 2004. For excerpts in English, see "Joint New Year Editorial Published,"



KCNA, Pyongyang, January 1, 2004, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2004/200401/news01/01.htm>. North Korea has not been consistent in translating songun, using successively "army-first," "army-based," and "army-centered." It also uses "songun" without bothering to provide any translation. See "Joint New Year Editorial of Newspapers," KCNA, Pyongyang, January 1, 1999, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2001/200101/news01/01.htm>; "Make 2003 A Year of Great Change Under the Banner of Great Army-based Policy," Pyongyang Times, January 4, 2003, p. 1; "Army-centered Politics Propels Economic Construction," *ibid*, February 1, 2003, p. 3; "Songun Idea Favoured," *ibid*, October 4, 2003, p. 1. In this paper I am translating songun as "military-first," which I believe is the closest approximation of the Korean word.

(16) "Olhae rul kangsong taeguk konsol ui widaehan chonhwan ui haero pinnae'ija," Nodong sinmun, January 1, 1999, a joint editorial also published in Choson inmingun and Ch'ongnyon chonwi on the same day.

(17) Although the revised DPRK constitution did not materially enhance the position of the NDC chairman, the president of the SPA presidium, Kim Yong Nam, made it clear in a speech at the first session of the tenth SPA that Kim Jong Il was the supreme leader of the country. The words quoted here are Kim Yong Nam's. See "Kim Jong Il tongji rul kukbang wiwonhoe wiwonjang uro ch'udae halte taehan cheui" [Proposal to Have Comrade Kim Jong Il Installed as the Chairman of the National Defense Commission], Nodong sinmun, September 6, 1998.

(18) Boeicho, Oshirase: Kita Chosen no misairu hatsha no bunseki kikka ni tsuite [Report on the Results of Analysis of North Korea's Missile Launch] (Tokyo: Boeicho, 1998), <http://www.jda.go.jp/j/news/1998/10/30a.htm> For Pyongyang's claim, see Nodong sinmun, September 8, 1998.

(19) "Widaehan suryongnim t'ansaeng 90-dorul mannun olhaerul kangsong taeguk konsol ui saeroun piyak ui haero pinnae'ija," Nodong sinmun, January 1, 2002.

(20) "Tang ui yongdon mit'e kangsong taeguk konsol ui modun chonson eso hyongmyongjok kongserul pollyo olhaerul charangch'an haero pinnae'ija," *ibid.*, January 1, 2004.

(21) U.S. Congress, Senate, Armed Services Committee, Statement of General Leon J. LaPorte, Commander United Nations Command, Commander, Republic of Korea-United States Combined Forces Command and United States Forces Korea Before the 108th Congress Senate Armed Services Committee, 13 March 2003 (Washington, DC, 2003), p. 10. This document is available from the web site of the U.S. Senate, <http://www.senate.gov>

(22) *Ibid.*, p. 11.

(23) *Ibid.*

(24) *Ibid.*, p. 11-12.

(25) Glenn Kessler, "N.Korea Displays 'Nuclear Deterrent' Freeze Possible, U.S. Team Is Told," Washington Post, January 11, 2004, p. A01.

(26) Choson chungang yongam 1999 (Pyongyang: Choson Chungang T'ongsin-sa, 1999), p. 149.

(27) *Ibid.*

(28) *Ibid.*, p. 185; Choson chungang yongam 2001, p. 175.

(29) *Ibid.*, p. 175; Choson chungang yongam 1999, p. 186.

(30) Choson chungang yongam 2001, p. 8, p. 176, and p. 177; Choson chungang yongam 2002, p. 168.

(31) Choson chungang yongam 2000, p. 192.

(32) "Widaehan songun ui kich'i nop'i sahoejuui chedorul kkudopsi pinnaeyo kaja" [Let Us Hold High the Military- First Banner and Continuously Glorify the Socialist System], Nodong sinmun, December 27, 2003, an editorial.

### **III. Nautilus Invites Your Responses**

The Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network invites your responses to this essay. Please send

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