



Nautilus Institute Policy Forum Online: Response to Haksoon Paik's Essay



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Response to Haksoon Paik's Essay

By Kim Myong Chol

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June 4, 1999

I. Introduction

The following response is by Kim Myong Chol, an ethnic Korean born and living permanently in Japan who has worked as a reporter and editor at "The People's Korea" and has written extensively on DPRK perspectives on Korean and international relations. Kim argues that the inspection of the Kumchangri underground construction site played into the hands of DPRK strategy. He also maintains that Korean Peninsula issues must be solved between the US and the DPRK alone.

II. Comments by Kim Myong Chol

I am afraid that Haksoon Paik's remarks are wide off the mark. The most serious flaw of his observation is his failure to understand that the Americans are the authors of the Korean division and the ensuing Cold War structure on the Korean Peninsula and that the South Korean government is a client fostered, financed and maintained by the Americans.

First, I must explain why the North Koreans were cooperative in the visit of an American delegation to the controversial Kumchangri site. The answer is quite self-evident. The North Koreans have every good reason to cordially welcome and satisfy the American customers as they are generous welcome guests who paid a huge amount of admission fee for a May 20-24 visit to the empty tunnel complex.

As long as they are ready to pay a handsome amount as additional compensation, they will be welcome as repeaters. The North Koreans are now serious about launching a special tourist business. They privately hope that the Defense Intelligence Agency and its spy satellites will find another attractive tourist spot sometime this year and every year.

The most important fallout the Kumchangri visit is:

1. American intelligence and in particular spy satellites are not reliable means of getting information. Apparently they now look inept for their intended responsibilities. To be blunt, they appear to be on the payroll of Kim Jong Il.
2. American policy-planners must think twice before taking any policy decision concerning Pyongyang. Otherwise they would find themselves playing into the hands of Kim Jong Il the Canny Fox, continuing to pay an astronomically large compensation.
3. The North Koreans have proved candid boys. They mean what they say. The North Koreans at the outset denied that the suspected site had anything to do with any nuclear project.

The point of the Perry visit is that the Americans had to come to North Korea to gain first-hand information from North Korean officials. It is traditional Korean practice for the host to cordially receive a guest and let him or her return happy and satisfied. If Clinton or Gore or Albright or Cohen should want to come with a bag full of gifts, he or she would be given a red carpet treatment. They would not return home to Washington empty-handed.

The North Koreans never regard the Washington-Tokyo-Seoul triangular relationship as equal alliance relations. They view the Americans as calling the shots, the Japanese as having no other choice but to follow the American baton, albeit half-heartedly, and the South Koreans as second-class, third-class ball-carriers or watch-dogs. The North Koreans have never seen any need to play

them against each other, because all they had to do is engage the Americans in negotiations.

Regarding the alleged maximum and minimum gains from the Kumchangri visit, the Americans and their junior partners have learned to their cost and the hard way that there is nothing free in this world vis-a-vis the hard-bargaining North Koreans.

The foremost point is that the Americans are now left with a disheartening, inescapable obligation; that is, to rush against time to meet the deadline of 2003 by which time the Americans have to complete and deliver the promised two light-water nuclear reactors to the North Koreans. The Americans will never be allowed to default. They will also never be permitted to delay oil deliveries to Pyongyang next year and beyond.

If they should default and delay oil deliveries, the North Koreans would find themselves no longer bound by the 1994 nuclear agreement. They would resume their nuclear activities and most likely set about fabricating A-H warheads to be delivered by their small fleet of ICBMs.

To offer a comment on the sunshine policy, to all intents and purposes, it is nothing less and nothing more than a variant of Clinton's soft-landing policy. The Kim Dae-jung policy is a convenient ploy used by the American policy planners to defend their North Korean policy behavior from Congressional Republican critics. In that sense, Kim Dae-jung is a more obedient dog than his predecessor, Kim Young-sam, who became more of a problem to Washington than the North Koreans were. To be frank, Kim Dae-jung, once believed to be a winter soldier, has turned out to be a sunshine patriot. He has been totally tamed by the Americans.

What is critical to any effort to dismantle the prevailing Cold War structure on the Korean Peninsula is to bring a long-awaited halt to the American intervention in Korean affairs, which is responsible for the tragic division of Korea and the current touch-and-go situation there. The purpose can be served by signing a peace treaty to leave the state of war behind the Americans and the North Koreans and then neutralizing the American military presence or turning it into something like a peacekeeping role.

Since the South Korean government is an offspring of the defunct Government-General of Japan and a byproduct of the Cold War with no Korean legitimacy, it should be replaced with a truly Korean, democratic government, with the notorious National Security Law repealed. The South Korean government should never have come into being. It is a lasting disgrace on the history of the proud, independent-minded Korean nation.

It should be remembered that full diplomatic relations between Pyongyang and Washington would deprive the South Korean regime of its fundamental *raison d'être*: anti-communism, anti-democracy, anti-human rights, and anti reunification. With rapprochement between the former enemies, the South Korean regime must leave the stage of history to given way to a new, democratic coalition government committed to reunification with North Korea.

The North Koreans will remain non-nuclear if the Americans have successfully satisfied the promised target year of 2003, the fundamental American obligation under the Agreed Framework. The matter is entirely up to the Americans. The sovereign North Koreans will keep developing and improving their missiles with more sophisticated warheads, but they are ready to stop missile exports in return for appropriate compensation. The Americans are more than rich enough to reimburse for the lost export earnings. The figure is a joke for the super-rich Americans. The North Koreans would consider renouncing missile development if the Americans would respond in kind by scrapping their missile force.

Kim Jong-il, while acknowledging that the North Korean economy has been messy over the last several years, cites four contributing factors: (1) American economic sanctions, (2) American hostility-caused war spending, (3) the demise of the USSR and the Eastern socialist countries, (4) shoddy performance of economic planners.

Even with their pants down, the North Koreans will continue fighting on to settle the moral scores with the Americans, until Korea will become Korea for Koreans, Korea by Koreans, free from any foreign intervention.

Well aware that North Korea finds itself in the capitalist sea, Kim Jong-il decided to introduce the positive aspects of the free market system, reject the negative aspects of socialism, and build on the constructive nature of socialism. Many years ago, Kim Jong-il had a highly ambitious experiment with the market economy launched in the Rajin-Sonbong area. This experiment meant a major departure from his economic policy, a virtual significant opening of the society, but none of the Americans came.

This suggests that the Americans, while talking about opening the society or free-market system or reform, are not the least interested in such things, but they want the North Korean regime gone.

As things show, the real trouble is not so much the alleged North Korean fear of possible adverse effects of the introduction of foreign capital investments, as much as the American concern about foreign capital investments and free-market economic experiments ending up bolstering the North Korean economy and the North Korean regime and its armed forces. The North Koreans warn against the likely polluting impact of foreign investments in the same way as everybody takes maximum care to protect their health.

Kim Jong-il has ordered the economic policy planners to be forward in learning from the United States, Japan, and South Korea. The North Koreans are vigilant against inherent evils of capitalism and simultaneously willing to incorporate its benign aspects. But under no circumstances will Kim Jong-il and his people abandon their socialist cause. Kim Jong-il is now confident that his country will be economically better off in a few years with the food shortage settled. North Korea would never be another South Korea.

The proposed package solution is a sign of exasperation on the part of the Americans who had wishfully believed that they would not be required to implement their part of the Geneva agreement. They anticipated the collapse of the North Korean regime before construction work on the promised nuclear reactors commences. It is a sign of poor American insight into the North Korean situation. This much has been expected by Kim Jong-il since the Geneva accord was knocked together.

The American obligations are to deliver two nuclear reactors by 2003, upgrade their relations with the North Koreans to ambassador levels, and lift the economic sanctions, while providing annually 500,000 tons of fuel oil to North Korea. The North Korean obligation is to keep their nuclear activities frozen and nothing else. The North Koreans promised to expand contact with the South Koreans provided there is progress in the KEDO project.

It is now all too obvious that the Americans will fail to meet the pledged deadline of 2003. The North Koreans will be patient to wait and see how the Americans will try to meet the deadline.

The only available option for the Americans is to offer to implement the American obligations before 2003 comes -- to establish full diplomatic relations, sign a peace treaty, and end the economic sanctions -- a series of political, military and economic incentives to induce the reluctant North Koreans to connive at American failure to meet the deadline but give Americans until 2007 to

complete the light-water reactor project.

This package solution is on the table. The Americans are free to accept or ignore it. The North Koreans will accordingly react.

If the US should favor a military solution, it would be fine. If they would favor a peaceful approach, it would also be as fine. What mentions a special note is that Pyongyang is capable of retaliating against an American blitzkrieg by delivering surgical massive intercontinental strikes on the United States.

Kim Jong-il is now within striking distance of what he wants. He will emerge the winner.

III. Nautilus 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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