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**-“Pyongyang University of Science & Technology (PUST)”  
By Suk Hi Kim**

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I. Introduction

Suk Hi Kim, Editor of *North Korean Review* ([www.northkoreanreview.com](http://www.northkoreanreview.com)), writes, “PUST is North Korea’s first institution of higher education founded, operated, and funded by associations and people outside the country... PUST plans to train talented young North Korean people in the fields of information and communication technology, industrial management, agriculture, food and life science, architecture, joinery and construction, and public health. The major challenge that faces the university is related to maintaining its financial resources.”

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. Article by Suk Hi Kim

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I had the privilege of chairing a session on the North Korean economy at the 9th World Knowledge Forum (WKF) held in Seoul, South Korea, on October 14–16, 2008. The *Maeil Business Newspaper*, Korea’s number one economic daily, has hosted the WKF for years. Its supporting organizations include the *Financial Times*, Reuters, the OECD, and the INSEAD. Its past speakers include Colin Powell, Alan Greenspan, George Soros, Paul Krugman, and Thomas Schelling. The 9th WKF called for senior-level executives, entrepreneurial innovators, technologists, financiers, analysts, and high-level government workers to solve outstanding global issues that are in desperate need of solutions. With 150 speakers from 50 countries around the world and 3,000 participants, this important forum integrated top decision-makers from all sectors of global society in the most comprehensive way.

In the opening ceremony of the 9th WKF, South Korean President Lee Myung-bag proposed the establishment of new international organizations to cope with new global challenges, such as the global financial crisis, climate change, and the energy crisis. Lee said, "Now is the time to find common solutions to pressing global issues. We need to create a better order if necessary." Lee's aides said that he has long believed that the world needs a new international organization capable of tackling global financial market issues and the establishment of a new organization to deal with climate change. The U.S.-originated financial crisis has hit the global economy hard and terrified many people. Uncertainty seems the most appropriate term to describe today's circumstances.

Panel members of a WKF session called "The Strategic Role of North Korea" included three editorial board members of *North Korean Review*, Thomas Cargill, Suk Kim, and Marcus Noland, in addition to Donald Johnston (OECD), Chin Kyung Kim (Pyongyang University of Science & Technology), and Chan Mo Park (Blue House). The five panel members presented a variety of information on the North Korean economy from the standpoints of both economics and politics to about 200 people from the government, business, and academic communities. In my role as session organizer, I commented on each of the panelists' arguments and led the discussion. Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the session was the information about a university being established in Pyongyang by a group of South Koreans.

In these times of global and economic uncertainty, North Korean watchers have to wonder how these crises will affect North Korea. Does this country have in place the kind of infrastructure that will enable it to deal with these arising global challenges and economic uncertainties, both now and into the future? One way for any country to face its future successfully is to educate its people. Chin Kyung Kim stressed the need to develop relations with North Korea by any means possible, believing, that "the future will be brighter if we put our hands together". When China opened its doors in 1979, he realized that what was needed was a university to satisfy a populace hungry for education. A few years later, he founded Yanbian University in the heart of China's ethnic Korean region of Yanbian, near the Tumen River frontier, to fulfill this purpose. The university has become a successful model for cooperation. Now, he is trying the same model with North Korea, with Pyongyang University of Science & Technology (PUST), scheduled to be opened with 150 students in April 2009. Eventually, the university plans to grow its student body to 2,500 students and hire 250 professors.

PUST is North Korea's first institution of higher education founded, operated, and funded by associations and people outside the country. Since 2001, Chin Kyung Kim and another panel member, Chan Mo Park, have spearheaded the establishment with these privately raised funds to construct the sixteen buildings necessary for the opening of the university. The dormitories, academic and utility buildings have been almost completed as of the end of 2008. PUST plans to train talented young North Korean people in the fields of information and communication technology, industrial management, agriculture, food and life science, architecture, joinery and construction, and public health. The major challenge that faces the university is related to maintaining its financial resources. The founders and their supporters will need to provide PUST with its entire operating and

capital expenditures almost permanently, because North Korea will continue to suffer economic difficulties for years.

It is hard to believe that Mr. Chin Kyung Kim is the same man who was detained for six weeks in North Korea in 1998 and threatened with a death sentence by his interrogators. The establishment of PUST represents a shift in the outlook of North Korea's ruling elite, which counted on the former Soviet Union and its eastern allies for most of their technical aid and advice until the breakup of the Soviet empire in 1990. PUST, along with the Kaesong Industrial Complex, appears to be the best kept secret for the long-term survival of North Korea. During "The Strategic Role of North Korea" session, Kim argued that Asia needed a union, similar to the European model, and that this union would not be possible without the inclusion of North Korea to bridge gap between North and South East Asia. Kim hopes that this new university would be a first step towards bridging that gap. Those who would like to know more about PUST are encouraged to visit its website at <http://pust.net/>

### III. Pictures of PUST



### **Pyongyang University of Science and Technology (PUST)**

#### IV. Nautilus invites your responses

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