

North Korean Developments and Relations with Japan

Dr. Shunji Hiraiwa, Professor, Kwansei Gakuin University

Introduction

- North Korea nuclear tests: two this year, “hydrogen bomb” and “nuclear warhead”
- Repeated missile launches: Nodong, Musudan, SLBM
- North Korean nuclear missile capabilities: “threat has reached a different dimension”
- UN Security Council response: Resolution 2270 effects→ Response by China
- Core of North Korea issues: Stance of US and international society→ China, China→ US
- What about Japan?: Comprehensive solution for abductions, nuclear tests, missile tests; negotiations and pressure; international cooperation

1. Meaning Behind the First Party Congress in 36 Years

- New position for Kim Jong-un: Party Chairman→ Kim Jong-un era starts in earnest→ Moving on from Kim Jong-il
- Balance of officials of different ages: Leaders over 80→ A kind of weight?
- Kim Jong-un regime: They have their own logic→ Positioning as a natural progression from Kim Jong-il
- Not completely stable: Is it actually unstable, is negotiation not possible due to problems within the regime?
- Young leader acting without a plan?: General opinion→ Not someone who can be negotiated with→ Accurate?
- Kim Jong-un regime's politics of fear: Purging mainly military, telling engineers “don't be afraid of failure”
- Supreme People's Assembly (June 29)→ Replaced the National Defence Commission, a symbolic organization of the military-first policy, with the State Affairs Commission
- Peacetime regime, peacetime supreme leader

2. What Nuclear Missiles Mean to North Korea

- Why was no party congress held for 36 years?
- Previous party congress: 1980, Kim Jong-il designated as successor
- With the Park Chung-hee assassination in 1979, the Chun Doo-hwan regime, and the Gwangju Uprising→ Favorable for North Korea
- North Korea: 1983 Rangoon bombing and 1987 Korean Air bombing→ Acting as a terrorist state
- Success of Seoul Olympics: South Korea in superior position→ North Korea at disadvantage→ China and the Soviet Union formed relations with South Korea
- Revolutions of Eastern European socialist regimes: Cold War moves to a close
- Two examples: Tiananmen Square incident and Ceaușescu incident (Romanian Revolution)→ Nearing the end of political changes→ Military is important
- Kim Jong-il regime as successor→ Centered on party at first→ This opportunity used to shift to military→ Military-first politics→ Crisis management regime
- Meaning of the first party congress in 36 years→ End of the crisis management regime→ Therefore, the peacetime supreme leader: party chairman

3. Resolving Threatening Situation, Future of the Nuclear Missile Issue

- What is a threat to North Korea?: Nuclear weapons, missiles→ Diplomatic relations between South Korea and China/Soviet Union→ Chinese/Soviet nuclear umbrella?
- North Korean perspective: Unilaterally exposed to the American threat
- 4th nuclear test, “satellite launch test”: Acquisition of the capacity to damage the US?
- 7th Party Congress: Focus on both nuclear tests and economy→ Positioned as strategy that should be maintained permanently
- Emphasis on success of nuclear and missile tests: Responsible nuclear state, will not use pre-emptive nuclear strike.
- Will earnestly fulfill duties for nuclear nonproliferation, and work towards a nuclear-free world
- By miniaturizing and diversifying nuclear weapons at a high standard, and increasing nuclear capabilities qualitatively and quantitatively, North Korea will be a “great nuclear state in the East” (Worker’s Party Central Committee document, May 9)
- International society: North Korean nuclear disarmament→ North Korea moving opposite
- North Korean missile capabilities: Still many issues, however, steadily becoming an actual threat to the US

4. Economic Conditions: What Are the Effects of UN Sanctions?

- Another threat to North Korea: Economy→ End of the friendly socialism price, bad weather
- Worsened economic conditions→ Food shortage, reports of starvation
- Recent party congress: Recovered from economic crisis→ Multi-year economic plan→ 5-year plan to develop national economy
- Simultaneous nuclear and economic advancement: Nuclear disarmament is an impossibility→ Is North Korea actually in a position to do both?
- However, admit to issues: Although some areas are at battle-ready levels, others have fallen significantly behind
- Strangely: Analysis by Bank of Korea→ GDP improving the last few years (approximately 1%)→ What about UN sanctions?
- China is a loophole: China and North Korea→ Asymmetrical, the 3 Northeast China provinces and North Korea→ mutually dependent
- Chinese influence: Chinese citizens also sacrificing→ Cannot convert to political power effectively→ North Korea is aware as well→ Vicious cycle
- Mystery of North Korean economic growth: Chinese economic reform→ Some growth is possible→ But there is a limit to how much
- For more, needs dealing with external affairs→ Capital, materials, and technology are necessities→ That is why seeking negotiations

Conclusion—5th Nuclear Test and International Society

- 5th nuclear test: Nuclear warhead test, “The nuclear test finally examined and confirmed the structure and specific features of movement of nuclear warhead that has been standardized to be able to be mounted on strategic ballistic rockets as well as its performance and power.... The standardization of the nuclear warhead will enable the DPRK to produce at will and as many as it wants a variety of smaller, lighter and diversified nuclear warheads of higher strike power.”
- Interest in China’s position: Actions and pose towards Dandong Hongxiang Industrial Development Co., Ltd. show a change in position?
- US-China relations regarding the North Korea issue: Cooperation or confrontation?
- South Korean response: President Park Geun-hye: “Kim Jong-un’s mental state is uncontrollable”→ China-South Korea relations?
- What is China to North Korea: Missile launch tests, UN sanctions, economic relations, Kim Jong-un visiting China?
- Japanese response: Comprehensive resolution, or dealing with abductions separately from nuclear and missile tests?

end