

Provisional translation by FPCJ

Examining the Situation in North Korea (Atsuhito Isozaki, Keio University)

The Presence of the “Respected Child”

Appearances

- ① Nov. 2022 First appearance of the “beloved child”
- ② Feb. 2023 The “respected child” attended a military parade
Feb. 2023 Also went to economic event (ceremony for beginning construction of new road in Pyongyang)
- ③ Mar. 2023- Adjustment period: The “child” is not mentioned in North Korean media
- ④ Sep. 2023 The “respected child” attends an event including foreign participants
- ⑤ Jan. 2024 The “child” is mentioned individually.
 (“The respected child was accompanied.”)

The Presence of the “Respected Child”

- No explanatory article in the *Rodong Sinmun*
- “Respected,” honorific language, attitude of officials
- No need to emphasize the “bloodline of Mt. Paektu,” new element is being a woman
- Spread of unconfirmed information (e.g.: Ju-ae)

(previous examples include incorrect names for Kim Jong Un 김정은/김정운 and his mother Ko Yong Hui 고용희/고영희)

Military Buildup and Rapprochement with Russia

- Feb. 2019 Breakdown of negotiations at Hanoi US-North Korea summit
- Jan. 2020- COVID-19 response
- Jan. 2021 Start of Biden administration
- Jan. 2021 8th Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea
“Five-year plan for the development of defense science and weapon systems”
- Feb. 2022 Invasion of Ukraine
- May 2022 Start of Yoon Suk Yeol administration
- Sep. 2023 North Korea-Russia summit: Agree on “anti-imperialism”

Shift in Policy on South Korea/Unification

Kim Jong Un: Will never be reunification with South Korean government calling for “unification by absorption”

Closed three agencies working with South Korea

Banned the use of “linguistic remnants” such as “unification” and “80 million compatriots”

“North-South relations are no longer a kinship or homogeneous relationship but have completely become a relationship between two hostile countries, two belligerents at war”
“invariable principal enemy”

→Major shift from Kim Il Sung’s 1980 plan for Democratic Confederal Republic of Koryo (one nation, one state, two systems, two governments)

Denial of Father's and Grandfather's Policies

Clothing and speech style borrow Kim Il Sung's authority

Became Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army based on the "dying wish" of Kim Jong Il

- April 2019 Removed "*songun* (military first) idea" from constitution
- Oct. 2019 Ordered removal of facilities built by South Korea at Mt. Kumgang "Policy of predecessors to rely on others when the country was not strong were wrong"
- Jan. 2021 Kim Jong Un became General Secretary of Workers' Party of Korea (position had been retired in 2012)
- 2022- Did not visit Kumsusan Palace of the Sun on Kim Jong Il's birthday

Approaches Towards Japan

May 29, 2023 Statement on Japan by Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Pak Sang Gil

Jan. 5, 2024 Kim Jong Un sent message of sympathy to Prime Minister Kishida

Feb. 15, 2024 Kim Yo Jong statement on Japan

“If Japan drops its bad habit of unreasonably pulling up the DPRK over its legitimate right to self-defense and does not lay such a stumbling block as the already settled abduction issue in the future way for mending the bilateral relations, there will be no reason for the two countries not to become close and the day of the prime minister's Pyongyang visit might come.

I think our state leadership still has no idea of repairing the DPRK-Japan relations and has no interest in contact.

It is necessary to watch the ulterior intention of Prime Minister Kishida in the future.

This is just my personal view only and I am not in the position to officially comment on the relations between the DPRK.”

→Short term: Drive wedge between Japan, US, and South Korea?

Medium term: Restart negotiations between US and North Korea?