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**NAVAL  
POSTGRADUATE  
SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

**THESIS**

**POLITICS OF NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES AND  
REGIONAL SECURITY IMPLICATIONS**

by

Jacqueline Danielle Chang

June 2009

Thesis Advisor:  
Second Reader:

Christopher Twomey  
Edward Olsen

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**POLITICS OF NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES AND  
REGIONAL SECURITY IMPLICATIONS**

Jacqueline Danielle Chang  
Major, United States Air Force  
B.S., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1988

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES  
(FAR EAST, SOUTHEAST ASIA, AND THE PACIFIC)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
June 2009**

Author: Jacqueline Danielle Chang

Approved by: Christopher Twomey  
Thesis Advisor

Edward Olsen  
Second Reader

Harold A. Trinkunas, PhD  
Chairman, Department of National Security Affairs Chairman

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## **ABSTRACT**

The North Korean refugee issue is a challenge to regional stability. In addition to humanitarian concerns, a mass flow of refugees would have enormous impact on operations of the Republic of Korea's military and the U.S. forces stationed in Korea and Japan. Regional players have an obligation to contribute to regional security. Proactive and cooperative policy making by China, Russia, Japan, South Korea and the United States to protect North Korean workers and help North Korean immigrants assimilate could diminish the destabilizing triggers of the refugee issue and offer multiple benefits, including increased regional stability.



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## I. THE NORTH KOREAN REFUGEE SITUATION

[W]hat terrifies South Koreans more than North Korean missiles is North Korean refugees pouring South. The Chinese, for their part, have nightmare visions of millions of North Korean refugees heading north over the Yalu River into Manchuria.<sup>1</sup>

### A. INTRODUCTION

In the minds of most international observers, North Korea is associated with Kim Jong Il and his nuclear brinksmanship. The international community and especially the countries involved in the Six-Party talks—the United States, Republic of Korea (ROK or South Korea), the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea), People’s Republic of China (PRC or China), Japan and Russia—have concerns about the immediate and long-term impact of North Korean nuclear proliferation on Northeast Asia.

However, the North Korean nuclear program is not the only contentious issue in Northeast Asia. In the competition for resources and attention in the policy realm, humanitarian issues frequently fall in line behind security issues. But in the Northeast Asian region, the humanitarian plight of North Korean refugees has a strong potential for quickly destabilizing the region, thus jeopardizing its security. The North Korean refugee situation might directly impact the delicate political balance among the Six-Party nations. How each country addresses this issue can affect its future influence within the region. Ignoring the issue poses the risk of a sudden change scenario accompanied by a mass flood of refugees. This thesis advocates policies to remove the triggers that might cause a refugee flow. Any nation taking a proactive stance on the refugee issue stands to gain long-term influence within the region.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, "When North Korea Falls," *Atlantic Monthly*, October 2006. <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200610/kaplan-korea>, accessed 8 October 2007.

## **B. PLAN OF THE THESIS**

This thesis explores each of the Six Party nations' stakes in the refugee issue, the issue's potential impact on stability in Northeast Asia and the resultant risk to U.S. regional security. This exploration and analysis is followed by recommendations for proactive planning to anticipate and prevent potentially destabilizing refugee movement. The research methodology includes a review of the relevant literature, supported by conference attendance and personal interviews.<sup>2</sup>

Chapter I presents the background of the North Korean refugee situation, its magnitude and causes, and how it is becoming a growing humanitarian and security issue. The chapter reviews the legal history of the term "refugee," which is important for evaluating China's claim that North Korean refugees are economic migrants. The discussion describes how the refugee issue was thrust into the international spotlight, and the reactions of each of the Six Party governments.

Chapter II describes the security implications of the North Korean refugee situation for the Northeast Asia region and U.S. national interests. A large U.S. military presence is stationed in Korea and Japan to defend the Republic of Korea against North Korean aggression. In addition to the uncertainties surrounding the Kim Jong Il regime and its nuclear threat, regional instability would increase with a sudden change scenario. The chapter traces changes in the ROK–U.S. command relationship and describes how the ROK's growing independence and sovereignty impact the U.S. military role on the peninsula with particular attention to potential refugee issues. It explores the implications for the U.S., ROK, and coalition militaries if a refugee-related crisis threatens regional stability, focusing on challenges to related coalition operations posed by constraints on information sharing and logistical planning. The chapter proposes that shifting emphasis in an annual exercise to a humanitarian refugee scenario would better prepare military and civilians for a refugee-related crisis, enhance command capabilities,

---

<sup>2</sup> Interviews were conducted by the author during travel to Yanji and Tumen, China for primary source data. Because interviewees include members of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that provide assistance to North Korean refugees, their names are not included for security reasons.

increase UN Command Sending State participation, improve communications and logistics planning, and strengthen the overall coalition.

Chapter III reviews the stakes of each Six Party nation in the North Korean refugee issue, covering each country's historical relationship with North Korea, the makeup of the ethnic Korean communities in Japan, Russia, and China, their immigration history and the unique characteristics of each diaspora. The chapter describes the major social problems associated with North Koreans' resettlement in the Republic of Korea, as well as the implications of North Koreans' resettlement in the United States.

The history of ethnic Koreans in other countries sets the stage for assessment of each nation's ability and desire to provide the infrastructure necessary to absorb North Koreans into their society. Successful assimilation of North Koreans in other countries might have positive reach back to North Korean development. Each of the Six-Party nations has a vested interest in Northeast Asian stability. If these nations were to collectively adopt a solution to the refugee crisis, it might have a positive impact on the nuclear issue and contribute to the long-term prosperity and security of the region.

Chapter IV presents policy recommendations for each Six-Party nation based on each nation's historical ties with North Korea, its current economic and political situation, and the potential receiving population within their country. The chapter addresses the implications of allowing North Korean refugees to immigrate into each country, outlines the required infrastructure and social programs, and evaluates the chances of successful integration in each country's social and economic structure.

Overall, this thesis aims to inform the reader of the magnitude of the North Korean refugee issue, and by providing the background of the issue along with the history of North Korea's relations with the other Six-Party nations, illustrates how this humanitarian issue also affects the security of the Northeast Asian region. The thesis advocates implementing a proactive policy that will both contribute to regional security and relieve the suffering of the refugees.

### C. BACKGROUND OF THE NORTH KOREAN REFUGEE SITUATION

The decline of the North Korean economy since 1990, combined with several natural disasters, led to famine conditions that dramatically increased the death rate in North Korea. The famine peaked in 1996–1997, resulting in 50 deaths per 1,000 people. A recent slight decrease in famine deaths may be ascribed to the ad hoc personal garden plot created with the silent consent of the North Korean regime, mainly to allow a temporary pressure valve for the food crisis.<sup>3</sup> The number of total deaths in North Korea is difficult to document, but estimates range from 600,000 to one million, equating to between three and five percent of a population of about 20 million.<sup>4</sup>

This dire situation has forced many North Koreans, particularly in the northwest provinces, to leave the country. This is further exacerbated by the DPRK’s “military first” policy that channels most of the nation’s food resources to the government elite and the armed forces.<sup>5</sup> Most who leave North Korea can be classified into one of two categories: economic migrants, who cross the border multiple times to seek work and make money, and refugees, who leave North Korea to escape political persecution.

The categorization of these North Koreans is a politically charged issue. On the one hand, China’s government regards them all as economic migrants, and does not recognize any North Koreans entering China as refugees.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, various nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and humanitarian organizations refer to them as refugees, not economic migrants. What distinguishes these two groups?

The 1951 Refugee Convention provides the answer. The Refugee Convention was adopted on July 28, 1951, by the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, which convened under General Assembly

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<sup>3</sup> Hazel Smith, *Hungry for Peace: International Security, Humanitarian Assistance, and Social Change in North Korea* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2005), 81-82.

<sup>4</sup> Haggard and Noland analyze different sources of statistics and the methodology used to extrapolate the numbers. Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, *Famine in North Korea: Markets, Aid and Reform* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 73-76.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, 85-86.

<sup>6</sup> Joshua Kurlantzick and Jana Mason, “North Korean Refugees: The Chinese Dimension,” in Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, editors, *The North Korean Refugee Crisis: Human Rights and International Response* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2006), 37.

resolution 429 (V) of December 14, 1950. The Convention went into force on April 22, 1954, in accordance with Article 43 of the Convention.<sup>7</sup> The basis of the Refugee Convention is to protect refugees from persecution in other countries through one critical element, the principle of “non-refoulement,” which prohibits expulsion or return of refugees. Article 33 of the 1951 Convention states,

No Contracting State shall expel or return [*refouler*<sup>8</sup>] a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.<sup>9</sup>

The controversy does not lie in the principle of *refoulement*, but rather in the definition of the word “refugee” itself, as well as the question of whether a convention written for a specific situation long ago can apply in today’s refugee situation. According to the Convention of 1951, a person can be considered a refugee if their status is “a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951” and the person has a

well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.<sup>10</sup>

The definition of refugee in the 1951 Convention presents a problematic technicality in that it excludes anyone who became a refugee post-1951, or who was not a refugee in Europe. However, the Protocol of 1967 changes what constitutes a refugee by deleting the time and geographical requirements.<sup>11</sup> Article 1, Paragraph 2 of the Protocol

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<sup>7</sup> Introductory note of the Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/protect/opendoc.pdf?tbl=PROTECTION&id=3b66c2aa10>, accessed 1 April 2009.

<sup>8</sup> French term meaning “to force back” or “to turn away.” *French-English Collins Dictionary* <http://dictionary.reverso.net/french-english/refouler>, accessed 1 April 2009.

<sup>9</sup> The 1951 Refugee Convention, available at [http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/o\\_c\\_ref.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/o_c_ref.htm), accessed 1 April 2009.

<sup>10</sup> The 1951 Refugee Convention.

<sup>11</sup> Bill Frelick, “Evolution of the Term ‘Refugee,’” U.S. Committee for Refugees website, [www.refugees.org/news/fact\\_sheets/refugee\\_definition.htm](http://www.refugees.org/news/fact_sheets/refugee_definition.htm) (accessed 8 January 2005; site discontinued).

states that the term “refugee” shall “mean any person within the definition of article 1 of the Convention as if the words ‘As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951...’ and the words ‘...as a result of such events,’ in Article 1 A(2) were omitted.” In Paragraph 3, the Protocol further states, “The present Protocol shall be applied by the States Parties hereto without any geographic limitation.”<sup>12</sup>

The intent in delineating the terms is to clarify what the signatories pledge to uphold. China, the ROK, Japan, Russia, and the United States are all signatories to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol; North Korea is not. Given the formal definition, the categories of economic migrant and refugee are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Furthermore, there is nothing that keeps one from starting out as an economic migrant and later becoming a refugee.<sup>13</sup> The political implication of China's decision not to recognize refugee status is that China sidesteps its obligations under the 1951 Convention. China does not want to deal with the North Koreans as refugees because it worries about opening a Pandora's Box which might detract from its focus on its own economic development.<sup>14</sup>

Regardless of how North Korean cross-border migration is categorized, the situation is a security concern to the region and hence, to the participants in the Six-Party talks. Independent of the categorization question, there are multiple important issues that require closer scrutiny, including instances of worker abuse, human trafficking and other forms of human rights infringement. For instance, North Koreans seeking refuge or political asylum often leave behind family who suffer reprisals as a result of their family member's departure. The regime's reprisal mechanisms include imprisonment, confinement to a “re-education” camps and even execution.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, available at [http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/o\\_p\\_ref.htm](http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/o_p_ref.htm), accessed 1 April 2009.

<sup>13</sup> For that matter, one might start as a refugee and become an economic migrant, although this scenario is less likely.

<sup>14</sup> This issue is discussed further in Chapter III.

<sup>15</sup> One clearly documented example is that of Kang Chol-Hwan, who tells how his whole family was sent to prison for the alleged crimes of his grandfather. Kang Chol-Hwan, *The Aquariums of Pyongyang: Ten Years in the North Korean Gulag* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 40.

Pre-1989: 607	1994: 52	1999: 148	2004: 1,894
1990: 9	1995: 41	2000: 312	2005: 1,383
1991: 9	1996: 56	2001: 583	2006: 2,018
1992: 8	1997: 85	2002: 1,138	2007: 2,544
1993: 8	1998: 71	2003: 1,281	2008: (unavailable)

**Table 1. Number of Defectors by Year<sup>16</sup>**

During the past decade, the number of North Koreans crossing the North Korea-China border and reaching South Korea each year has steadily increased (see Table 1). One effect of this population flow is increased awareness within North Korea of the contrast between conditions domestically and in other countries. Over the years, there are stories of defectors sending information back to family and friends by returning to personally relay what they have seen, or planting cell phones to allow North Koreans to communicate with people in China or South Korea. In one incident, an NGO led by a North Korean launched helium balloons over the demilitarized zone (DMZ) into North Korea. Attached to each were a small pouch of rice and money, and a flyer describing South Korean prosperity.<sup>17</sup> The lack of empirical evidence on how effectively such information seepage motivates potential defectors is an important area for further research. Anecdotal claims that smuggled South Korean drama videos affected the decision to defect suggest that information seepage into North Korea may contribute to future increases in refugees.

Because there is no reliable tracking system, the estimated number of refugees ranges from tens of thousands to up to 300,000.<sup>18</sup> Those who cross illegally often remain

<sup>16</sup> From the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Unification website. [http://www.unikorea.go.kr/eng/default.jsp?pgname=AFFhumanitarian\\_settlement](http://www.unikorea.go.kr/eng/default.jsp?pgname=AFFhumanitarian_settlement), accessed 8 January 2009.

<sup>17</sup> This came to the United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission's attention when members of the Korean People's Army issued complaints.

<sup>18</sup> Hazel Smith provides detailed information on the problems and inaccuracies of the statistics. Hazel Smith, "North Koreans in China: Defining the Problems and Offering Some Solutions," [http://gsti.miiis.edu/CEAS-PUB/2003\\_Smith.pdf](http://gsti.miiis.edu/CEAS-PUB/2003_Smith.pdf), accessed 30 September 2004.



in hiding, increasing the difficulty of gathering statistics. Various NGOs have developed internal statistics, but those who work near North Korea and most closely with the refugees hesitate to provide information, fearing it might compromise their ability to cooperate with the North Korean government or lead to persecution by the Chinese government.<sup>19</sup>

A large population of ethnic North Koreans live in Yanbian, also known as the Korean Autonomous Region, located in the Jilin province of northeast China, bordering the Ryanggang and North Hamgyong provinces of North Korea (see Figure 1). Ethnic Koreans have long inhabited this area and are co-opted by Chinese authorities to keep regional order. The Koreans are given token positions in local government, but never fill any higher-ranking or top positions in the Chinese government system.

The Korean–Chinese who reside in that region, and others who work for various NGOs, run a sort of underground railroad for North Korean refugees, providing safe houses where they can hide from the Chinese police. Late in the evenings, the refugee knocks on the door and is taken in and given food, shelter, and money.<sup>20</sup> Some remain in hiding for months, never leaving the building for fear of being caught by the Chinese police.

The percentage of migrants crossing the border for economic reasons as opposed to political reasons is not known. Some North Koreans have legal authority to cross the borders multiple times; those who do not risk deportation back to the DPRK if caught by a Chinese patrol. Those repatriated to North Korea are reportedly subject to numerous human rights violations, ranging from forced abortion and infanticide of their new babies to summary execution. Many are sent to prison for punishment or “re-education.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Smith, “North Koreans in China: Defining the Problems and Offering Some Solutions.” This point is also raised by Scott Snyder in *Paved With Good Intentions, The NGO Experience in North Korea*, edited by L. Gordon Flake and Scott Snyder (Westport, CN: Praeger, 2003), 114.

<sup>20</sup> Based on the author's interview with a former North Korean involved in refugee assistance; the source's identity is confidential due to personal security concerns.

<sup>21</sup> Human Rights Watch website, “Denied Status, Denied Education: Children of North Korean Women in China,” <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/northkorea0408web.pdf>, accessed 8 July 2008, 3.



**Figure 1. Map of the shared border between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of China<sup>22</sup>**

<sup>22</sup> From United Nations, <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/korean.pdf>, accessed 30 September 2004.

The standard of living for North Koreans in Yanbian who evade deportation is dismal. Their children do not have access to education and proper care, as they lack legal status in China.<sup>23</sup> Other examples of the plight of border-crossers are more extreme. One North Korean woman who eventually made her way to the ROK told horrendous tales of being sold as a sex slave, confined to a house and not allowed to leave. She was then sold to another Chinese man, who took her to work and hid her in a “rubbish storage place” so she could not run away.<sup>24</sup> Some go into hiding to evade the Chinese guards and avoid being sent back to DPRK prisons. Stories like these are repeated in the testimonies of refugees who have immigrated to South Korea.<sup>25</sup> Despite these conditions, many North Koreans still see Yanbian as a refuge; there are reports of women who seek traffickers to get them out of even worse conditions in North Korea.

Events captured by the media in 2002 highlight the international aspects of the North Korean refugee situation. In May, CNN aired dramatic video footage of five North Koreans (including a toddler on her mother’s back) attempting to run through the Japanese consulate gates in Shenyang, China. Chinese police pursued and caught the woman with the child and wrestled her to the ground, knocking the child off her back in the process. The child stood by crying while the police dragged her mother back through the gates, kicking and screaming.<sup>26</sup>

This incident shone a spotlight on the handling of a human rights issue by China and Japan. The international community scrutinized the role of the Japanese embassy personnel in the incident. There was some debate about whether the Japanese consular staff initially helped the refugees or the Chinese police. The video appears to show the Japanese consular staff standing by as the Chinese officials take away the refugees. One of the staffers even stooped up to pick up and hand back the hats dropped by the three

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<sup>23</sup> From United Nations, <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/korean.pdf>, accessed 30 September 2004, 8.

<sup>24</sup> Testimony of Ji Hae-Nam to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on North Korean Human Rights Violation, June 5, 2003, available at <http://foreign.senate.gov/testimony/2003/NamJiTestimony030605.pdf>, accessed 30 July 2003.

<sup>25</sup> Another detailed source is Kang Chol-Hwan.

<sup>26</sup> “Video twist to Japan-China row,” BBC News, 10 May 2002. For video footage, see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/1978817.stm>, accessed 30 May 2002.

police officers; perhaps he was uneasy and unsure of exactly how to handle this unusual situation. Eventually, the Japanese government pressured Chinese authorities to release the North Koreans to Japanese officials who then assisted the North Koreans with travel to the ROK.<sup>27</sup> The Chinese government has since tightened security around embassy compounds, as well as along parts of the North Korea-China border.

Since the incident at the Japanese consulate, attention to the North Korean refugee issue has increased. On October 18, 2003, then President George W. Bush signed the North Korean Human Rights Act (NKHRA), authorizing funding to assist the North Korean refugees.<sup>28</sup> The NKHRA also makes provisions for North Koreans to immigrate to the United States, though to date, only about 43 refugees of 6,000 have been allowed to immigrate.<sup>29</sup> The NKHRA has elicited negative response not only from North Korea, as expected, but also from the Republic of Korea, as this is an issue they prefer to handle internally.<sup>30</sup> However, as evidenced by the reduction of government funds provided to the increasing number of refugees resettling in the ROK, this is fast becoming a problem the South Koreans cannot handle alone.

A multinational, multidisciplinary organization to develop and implement policy might prevent the refugee issue from destabilizing the Northeast Asia region. Until such policy is created, there is the chance that a refugee crisis might occur. The next chapter

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<sup>27</sup> According to follow-up news, it appears that the Japanese officials allowed the Chinese police to take away the refugees, and then changed their minds, most likely for political reasons. When North Korean defectors break into an embassy, it is common for the PRC to demand a price from the embassy's home nation. This price usually involves agreeing to install additional barriers to the embassy to make future attempts harder.

<sup>28</sup> For an update on the NKHRA, see Steve Wiscombe, "North Korean Human Rights Reauthorization Act of 2008 Passes in Congress," available at <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?cataId=nk00100&num=4104>, accessed 30 October 2008.

<sup>29</sup> "Ros-Lehtinen Introduces North Korea Human Rights Act Legislation co-authored with Chairman Berman may see vote in late April," 17 April 2008, press release on House Foreign Affairs Committee website, available at [http://foreignaffairs.republicans.house.gov/list/press/foreignaffairs\\_rep/041708NK.shtml](http://foreignaffairs.republicans.house.gov/list/press/foreignaffairs_rep/041708NK.shtml), accessed 30 October 2008.

<sup>30</sup> For interesting responses to criticisms of the NKHRA, see Balbina Hwang, "Spotlight on the North Korean Human Rights Act: Correcting Misperceptions," Heritage Foundation, available at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/bg1823.cfm>, accessed 30 March 2008.

discusses the military and governmental entities primarily responsible for dealing with the humanitarian crisis should a refugee scenario occur on the Korean peninsula. It presents recommendations to enhance capabilities to better deal with such a crisis.

## II. SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF THE NORTH KOREAN REFUGEE ISSUE

Following the Communist regime's collapse, the early stabilization of the North could fall unofficially to the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) and U.S. Forces Korea (which is a semiautonomous subcommand of PACOM), also wearing blue UN helmets. But while the U.S. military would have operational responsibility, it would not have sole control. It would have to lead an unwieldy regional coalition that would need to deploy rapidly in order to stabilize the North and deliver humanitarian assistance. A successful relief operation in North Korea in the weeks following the regime's collapse could mean the difference between anarchy and prosperity on the peninsula for years to come.<sup>31</sup>

This chapter addresses the security implications of the North Korean refugee issue for the Northeast Asian region. There is a large U.S. military presence on the Korean peninsula and in Japan whose mission is to defend the Republic of Korea against North Korean aggression.<sup>32</sup> In addition to the uncertainty of the Kim Jong Il regime and its nuclear threat, there is a high risk of regional instability arising from a sudden change scenario.

This chapter explores the implications of a refugee-related crisis for the ROK and U.S. militaries in Northeast Asia and the coalition supporting the United Nations Command in Korea. It begins by describing how refugees might present a problem to the military on the Korean peninsula. The chapter then focuses on the military actors responsible for security on the Korean peninsula who conduct exercises and would be engaged in war fighting and humanitarian relief in the event of a sudden change scenario in North Korea. The chapter describes how command relationships affect the military's ability to respond to a refugee scenario and explores ways of improving exercises and planning. Two major challenges to successful operations are identified: constraints on information, and the effects of inadequate information and coordination on logistical

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<sup>31</sup> Kaplan, 2.

<sup>32</sup> According to the United States Forces Japan Forces (USJF) website and United States Forces and Korea (USFK) Public Affairs Office (PAO), respectively, approximately 50,000 serve in Japan and approximately 28,500 in Korea. USJF website, [http://www.usfj.mil/Welcome\\_to\\_USFJ/Welcome\\_to\\_USFJ.html](http://www.usfj.mil/Welcome_to_USFJ/Welcome_to_USFJ.html), accessed January 2009. Interview between PAO officer and author, 8 March 2009.

planning. The chapter explores how focusing an annual exercise on a humanitarian relief scenario might help overcome these challenges and forge better cooperation and coordination among the parties involved while simultaneously helping prepare for the possibility of a sudden change scenario involving mass movement of refugees.

#### **A. REFUGEES AS A PROBLEM FOR THE MILITARY ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA**

For years, people have predicted the collapse of the North Korean regime accompanied by a mass exodus of refugees.<sup>33</sup> Kim Jong Il's regime managed to pull through the wide-scale famine of the mid-1990s that many anticipated might lead to his demise. Despite rumors of illness, he continues to maintain a semblance of control over the North Korean population, although there are signs that his power has weakened in the past decade. The numbers of North Korean refugees leaving through the Chinese border and arriving in South Korea sharply increased over the last 10 years. Estimates range from 20,000 to 200,000 refugees in a holding pattern in northeastern China.<sup>34</sup>

Non-conflict scenarios for North Korea focus on regime collapse and address mass refugee exodus as a collateral issue. However, mass movement of refugees can present serious security issues as well as humanitarian concerns. David Maxwell outlines two soft landing and two hard landing scenarios.<sup>35</sup> He posits that the former, which both involve voluntary cooperation by the North Korean regime with South Korea, are less likely than the hard landing scenarios.<sup>36</sup> In the first of the two hard landing scenarios, a "complete collapse and disintegration of the national government" is accompanied by a

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<sup>33</sup> Robert A. Wampler, editor, "North Korea's Collapse? The End is Near—Maybe," National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 205, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB205/index.htm>, October 26, 2006, accessed 30 April 2008. See also Kaplan.

<sup>34</sup> It is not uncommon for defectors to South Korea to start up their own NGO or help other NGOs by secretly injecting outside information to those North Koreans still sequestered from the global community. Jack Kim, "South Korea NGOs set anti-Kim leaflet drop in North," October 22, 2008, <http://in.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idINIndia-36092420081022>, accessed 30 October 2008.

<sup>35</sup> David S. Maxwell, "Catastrophic Collapse of North Korea: Implications for the United States Military" (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1996), 11.

<sup>36</sup> In the first soft landing scenario, Kim Jong Il realizes he is no longer an effective leader and agrees to cooperate with the South in a phased unification; in the second, Kim Jong Il's power is usurped in a coup and a more moderate regime takes his place and cooperates with the South. Maxwell deems both these scenarios highly unlikely.



“breakdown of the internal security apparatus,” leading to a mass exodus of refugees looking for scarce resources. The catastrophic consequence would be that the countries they migrate to would be ill-prepared to support them, which could “cause extraordinary population control measures to be instituted.”<sup>37</sup> In the second hard-landing scenario, a coup is staged and factions struggling for power cause a civil war, which would also lead to a mass migration of people seeking both resources and safety. In short, the most probable scenarios for regime collapse in North Korea are likely to involve massive movement of refugees.

In a refugee scenario, tens of thousands of people would move en masse on the peninsula. This would complicate military operations enormously should it coincide with a conflict. Even in the absence of conflict, a refugee scenario, with a wide variety of logistical, security and humanitarian challenges, might well produce pandemonium. Such scenarios would constitute what former Agency for International Development analyst Andrew S. Natsios calls a complex humanitarian emergency requiring integrated responses from multiple actors, including the military.<sup>38</sup>

Experiences in Iraq and the relief efforts for the Asian tsunami, Pakistani earthquake and Hurricane Katrina reveal much to learn about planning and coordinating stabilization and reconstruction efforts and dealing with the humanitarian needs of large groups of displaced persons. Problems range from the immediate, such as preventing the spread of disease and providing adequate nutrition, shelter and security, to the long-term, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, separated families, and providing schooling for children and permanent homes for the displaced. This list is not exhaustive. Most of these problems require vast resources and extensive interagency coordination.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Maxwell, 15.

<sup>38</sup> Andrew S. Natsios, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Humanitarian Relief in Complex Emergencies* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1997), 1.

<sup>39</sup> A North Korean refugee scenario presents the added security issue of North Korean agents imbedded among the displaced population.



North Korean refugees present a political and humanitarian issue with huge operational implications for military personnel on the Korean peninsula. As Kaplan observes, any refugee scenario would have to be dealt with by the United States Forces Korea (USFK) and ROK militaries.<sup>40</sup>

**B. OWNERS OF THE PROBLEM: UN COMMAND, UN COMMAND REAR, COMBINED FORCES COMMAND AND U.S. FORCES KOREA**

The ROK–U.S. alliance is the core of military deterrent capabilities on the southern Korean peninsula. Forged during the Korean War, the alliance has been sustained since the signing of the armistice, surviving domestic turmoil spurred by ROK President Park Chung-hee’s assassination, the subsequent military coup and the Gwangju Democratization Movement. The relationship continues despite anti-American sentiments, which peaked in 2002.<sup>41</sup> Efforts by the ROK and U.S. militaries to forge close working relationships through various outreach programs greatly contribute to the maintenance of the ROK–U.S. alliance.<sup>42</sup> The Korean People’s Army (KPA) continuously attempts to drive a wedge into this tight relationship. Despite vast differences between the previous ROK administration’s policies toward North Korea and those of the U.S. administration, the alliance remains strong.

The alliance's deterrent properties are further reinforced by support from the standing coalition of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, France, Greece, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Thailand, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. Of the nations that supported the United Nations Command during the Korean War, these 14 coalition countries continue to augment the present-day alliance, pledging support in the event of another act of aggression against the Republic of Korea; along with the Republic of Korea and the United States, they are collectively known as the United Nations Command Korea. Although they did not sign the armistice, the 14 other

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<sup>40</sup> Kaplan.

<sup>41</sup> Anti-American sentiments were at a high during 2002 when Roh Moo Hyun ran on an anti-American platform and won the presidential election.

<sup>42</sup> Some examples are the CFC’s and USFK’s Good Neighbor Programs, which enhance community relations between U.S. personnel serving in the ROK and local Korean citizens and businesses. Also, the ROK Ministry of Defense hosts many U.S. service personnel and their families on cultural tours and exchanges.

coalition members pledge to “again be united and prompt to resist” should there be “a renewal of the armed attack, challenging again the principles of the UN.”<sup>43</sup>

Supporting a major crisis on the Korean Peninsula would be enormously more problematic without UN Command Rear (UNC Rear), a major theater logistic enabler. There are seven bases throughout Japan where accredited members of UNC Rear are allowed to sail or fly in under the UNC flag.<sup>44</sup> Because the government of Japan is committed to providing support under a previous agreement, the UNC Rear commander, an Army colonel, does not need to secure concurrence from the government of Japan. Each time a UNC Rear-accredited Sending State sends a ship to port or an aircraft into a UNC Rear base, merely informing the government of Japan meets the terms outlined in the agreement.

## 1. Command Structures

Unique to the Korean theater is the command relationship between the ROK and U.S. militaries, and how the UNC Sending States fit into this relationship.<sup>45</sup> During the Korean War, President Syngman Rhee allowed General MacArthur to take operational command of Korean forces as the commander-in-chief of the United Nations Command, the lead command responsible for ROK defense.<sup>46</sup> On November 7, 1978, the Combined Forces Command (CFC), including ROK officers, stood up for planning and defense of

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<sup>43</sup> The War History Compilation Committee, *The Republic of Korea, History of U.N. Forces in Korean War, Volume V* (Seoul: Ministry of the National Defense, 1976), 473.

<sup>44</sup> Not all accredited members of UNC Korea are accredited members of UNC Rear. Accredited members of UNC Rear are Australia, Canada, France, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand, Turkey, United States and United Kingdom. Italy and the Republic of South Africa are still listed as accredited members of UNC Rear, but are no longer accredited members of UNC Korea. According to the UNC Rear Commander, if an accredited member of UNC Korea is not an accredited member of UNC Rear, they can apply through the UNC Rear Commander for accreditation. The seven bases that support accredited members of UNC Rear are Camp Zama, Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, Sasebo Naval Base, White Beach, Kadena and Yokota Air Base, and Yokosuka Naval Base.

<sup>45</sup> Although the United States is an accredited member of UNC, the bilateral nature of its relationship with the ROK distinguishes it from the other members. For an in-depth discussion of command and legal issues, see Donald A. Timm, “Visiting Forces in Korea,” in Dieter Fleck, editor, *The Handbook of the Law of Visiting Forces* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 443-469.

<sup>46</sup> Won-II Jung, “The Future of the United Nations Command in Republic of Korea” (Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, May 3, 2004), 10.

South Korea.<sup>47</sup> This command structure remained in place until 1994, when peacetime control of ROK forces was transferred back to the ROK military. In the event of war, operational control of ROK forces will fall under the UNC Commander, a U.S. army four-star general. After April 17, 2012, that wartime operational command will remain under ROK control.

Many senior military personnel serving in the USFK also have authority in the CFC and the UNC. The USFK Commander, an Army four-star general, wears “three hats” as the UNC, CFC, and USFK commander, and carries the title of Senior U.S. Military Officer Assigned to Korea (SUSMOAK). With the transfer of wartime operational control of ROK forces back to ROK military leadership in the year 2012, the CFC will dissolve and be replaced by the ROK Joint Forces Command (JFC) and the U.S. Korea Command (KORCOM). The KORCOM Commander will be dual-hatted as the UNC Commander, and both KORCOM and UNC will serve as supporting commands to the ROK JFC.

An augmenting force capability not yet fully realized by the ROK and U.S. forces on the Korean Peninsula is that of the UNC Sending States.<sup>48</sup> Although the national command authority of each UNC Sending State makes its own arrangements for controlling their forces in a crisis, any forces contributed on behalf of a UNC Sending State would likely fall under the UNC Commander's operational control (OPCON), similar to MacArthur's Korean War authority as UNC Commander.<sup>49</sup> This will also be the case after the 2012 OPCON transfer.

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<sup>47</sup> Jung, 11.

<sup>48</sup> For purposes of this thesis, the term “UNC Sending States” or “Sending States” refers to one or all of the following countries: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, France, Greece, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Thailand, Turkey, and United Kingdom. The United States is also Sending State. However, as the discussion in this thesis centers around how the other 14 Sending States augment ROK and U.S. forces, the term as used here excludes the United States.

<sup>49</sup> Jung states, “Because the allied troops constituted only about 10 percent of UNC ground forces, the forces of other UN member states were integrated and attached into the U.S. units of appropriate size as they arrived.” Jung, 3.

## **2. Challenges to Military Support and Coordination: Information Sharing and Logistical Planning**

[T]he more sophisticated the country, the more technologically advanced its industries, and the more reliant is its policy on the use of defense as an overt implement of diplomacy, then the more likely it is that the rules governing military activity are nationally centered and exclude collaboration with all but the most trusted allies. Even with the ‘most trusted’ allies there will still be a tendency to release information and goods only with explicit consent of higher authority.<sup>50</sup>

Korean theater command relationships present two major challenges to coalition operations. The first challenge is information sharing. Even in command structures where one nation leads a coalition, information sharing is often a limiting factor in coalition operations. The ROK–US alliance is more complex; challenges to information sharing in the multinational coalition environment complicate exercise scenarios when UNC Sending States send representatives to participate alongside ROK and U.S. forces.

Furthermore, the ever-changing global political climate affects relationships among the Sending States, the ROK and the U.S. These relationships have a profound impact on logistics planning, which feeds into the second major challenge: developing logistical plans with inadequate information and coordination with the coalition.

## **3. Constraints on Information: A Crucial Problem**

Under the auspices of UNC/CFC/USFK, the ROK and U.S. militaries conduct two major command post exercises each year, ULCHI FREEDOM GUARDIAN and KEY RESOLVE. Both are rehearsals for wartime defense of the ROK in the event of North Korean aggression; neither emphasizes military response in the event of a mass refugee scenario.

Since 2002, the UNC/CFC/USFK has made UNC integration a priority for the two annual command post exercises. The ROK–US alliance requires concurrence between the ROK and U.S. military leadership before decisions can be implemented. The participation and integration of UNC Sending States is limited by the ROK's

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<sup>50</sup> Stuart Addy, “Logistic Support,” in Dieter Fleck, editor, *The Handbook of the Law of Visiting Forces* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 212.

reluctance to disclose OPLAN information to other UNC participants. The ROK's hesitation is justifiable, as all UNC Sending States except France and the United States maintain diplomatic relations with North Korea. Nonetheless, the limits on information-sharing have far-reaching consequences, especially for logistical planning. Limited information-sharing affects the integration of the UNC Sending States into the two annual exercises on the Korean peninsula, which in turn affects planners' ability to anticipate and prepare for both war fighting and humanitarian relief contingencies.

#### **4. Planning without Commitment: The Logistical Challenges of Inadequate Information and Coordination**

During the Korean War, the United Kingdom was the first UN participant to commit naval forces. They were integrated with the U.S. Navy just five days after the start of the war.<sup>51</sup> British ground troops, committed a month later, arrived approximately 60 days after hostilities commenced.<sup>52</sup> Today, many of the Sending States have force commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan. Should hostilities or crises develop on the Korean peninsula, it is unclear which and how many UNC Sending State forces would be sent, and how long it might take for them to arrive.

Commitment priorities for each Sending State's troops and equipment are also uncertain. The amount of resources the UNC Sending States can provide varies with their level of economic strength. Their political relations with regional players impact their willingness to offer support in a conflict or humanitarian crisis, and their political relations with the ROK and the United States may affect which phase of a conflict they choose to be involved in.

If war were to break out on the Korean peninsula tonight, numerous U.S. forces would join the U.S. forces already stationed there. A plan lays out exactly which units would come from where, how many personnel would be sent, the amount and type of equipment they would need, and each unit's mission. For example, a stateside unit with F-16s dedicated to defending the Korean peninsula regularly trains and practices

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<sup>51</sup> War History Compilation Committee, *History of U.S. Forces in Korean War, Volume II* (Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, 1973), 663.

<sup>52</sup> War History Compilation Committee, 588.

scrambling the jets and gathering personnel to arrive in the Korean theater within a specified amount of time, while logisticians on the peninsula practice doing everything necessary to receive and support the unit upon its arrival.

In contrast, because the 14 individual UNC Sending States do not have standing commitments specifying which forces and how many personnel they would send to defend the ROK or support a humanitarian crisis, logistical planning is problematic. The Sending States' decisions would be made when a crisis is brewing at the very earliest, or as late as months down the road after a conflict breaks out.

Twice a year, the operational plan is exercised and U.S. forces' reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (RSOI) are rehearsed. If the UNC Sending States' assets are not spelled out in a plan, only limited RSOI processes can be exercised. These processes include procedures for requesting specific capabilities and forces from the UNC Sending States and accepting what the UNC Sending States offer of their own volition. Should a crisis break out, a Sending State's offer would depend on its available resources and global commitments. Once an offer is made, ROK and U.S. senior officials would confer with the Sending State National Command Element to decide whether to accept it and how to employ the resources. On the other hand, ROK and U.S. militaries might request assistance from a Sending State to fill a specific need. The acceptance and offers procedure of UNC Sending State assets is very much a political and economic process that creates situations where logisticians and support functions have to react to the decisions made above them.

In the twice-yearly exercises, lack of information on likely resources from UNC Sending States limits preplanning and makes it difficult to specify how units will progress through RSOI. Furthermore, a host of additional questions plague the planning process, including concerns about compatibility of equipment, supplies, communications, personnel and procedures. The more knowledge of the Sending State's capabilities and support requirements, the easier it is to plan. The longer it takes for such questions to be answered, the more likely that challenges to logistical support will compromise the mission.

### C. MEETING THE CHALLENGES: HUMANITARIAN EXERCISES AS A SOLUTION TO INFORMATION AND LOGISTICS PLANNING PROBLEMS

General Dwight D. Eisenhower said, “You will not find it difficult to prove that battles, campaigns, and even wars have been won or lost primarily because of logistics.”<sup>53</sup> A sudden change scenario and the subsequent humanitarian crisis would present an unparalleled logistical challenge. As Robert Kaplan observes, in such a situation, the United States would “lead an unwieldy regional coalition that would need to deploy rapidly in order to stabilize the North and deliver humanitarian assistance.”<sup>54</sup> The coalition's unwieldiness results from the challenge of coordinating ROK and U.S. forces, as well as the difficulty of integrating forces and support from the 14 UNC Sending States.

Suggested elements of joint phasing presented in a model consists of six phases: Phase 0, Shaping; Phase 1, Deterrence; Phase 2, Seize the Initiative; Phase 3, Dominate, Phase 4, Stabilization and Reconstruction; and Phase 5, Enable Civil Authority.<sup>55</sup> A refugee crisis would require responses focused at Phases 4 and 5, stabilization and reconstruction and support for civil authority.

At the present time, the two annual exercises on the Korean peninsula focus almost exclusively on wartime defense of South Korea, with little effort expended on dealing with refugees. The closest scenario exercise is a noncombatant evacuation operation (NEO) that simulates evacuation of approximately 123,000 noncombatants from the Korean peninsula.<sup>56</sup> However, after evacuation of noncombatants from the peninsula during a NEO, responsibility for their care no longer rests with the UNC/CFC/USFK. Potential refugee scenarios might involve similar numbers of people, but would be accompanied by many more complexities. As described above, the mass

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<sup>53</sup> Logistics Quotations website, <http://www.logisticsworld.com/logistics/quotations.htm>, accessed 4 February 2009.

<sup>54</sup> Kaplan.

<sup>55</sup> See Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning* (Washington, D.C.: Joint Staff, 26 December 2006), IV-35 through IV-37.

<sup>56</sup> Author interview with USFK Current Operations section NEO Officer, Seoul, 13 November 2008.

migration of refugees on the peninsula would present tremendous short and long term challenges, especially if it occurs during war fighting.

Although Maxwell notes that “planning for the defense of the ROK from attack by the North is the primary focus of UNC/CFC/ROK, and USFK military commands,” he also advises that it would be “prudent to examine other potential courses of action and at least prepare concept plans that can be finalized if and when indicators show that such other courses may come to fruition.”<sup>57</sup>

In order to develop such plans, it is crucial to know the UNC Sending State force capabilities likely be contributed in such scenarios, as well as the accompanying logistical details necessary for sustainment support. The challenge is to overcome the information access limitation and its impact on logistics planning in order to better integrate UNC Sending States into Korean peninsula exercises. The best solution is not to force integration into the war-fighting exercises, but rather to create a new annual exercise or replace one of the two war-fighting exercises with an exercise focused on Stabilization and Reconstruction (Phase 4) and related civil military operations.

There are a number of advantages to pursuing such a shift in exercise scenarios. Exercising a humanitarian scenario relies less on sensitive information than exercising a war fighting scenario. As noted above, international relationships determine how much information is shared. Dealing with a sensitive operational war plan increases the restrictions. It does not make sense for UNC Sending States to spend time and resources participating in the UNC/CFC/USFK exercises if they are denied necessary information. The Sending States may agree to participate more fully in UNC/CFC/USFK humanitarian scenario exercises with fewer restrictions on information sharing.

Furthermore, exercising a humanitarian scenario may more accurately mirror a real world situation, as it is likely that most UNC Sending State participation would occur during these later phases. In addition, operations in other theaters show that more countries choose to participate in Phase 4, Stabilization and Reconstruction, as such participation is politically less risky and more likely to gain domestic support. For all of these reasons, UNC integration efforts seems most likely to succeed if focused less on

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<sup>57</sup> Maxwell, 2.



integration of the war fight and more on integration of subsequent operations to achieve stabilization, reconstruction and enabling civil authority.

Overcoming information sharing restrictions by shifting focus to a humanitarian-based exercise scenario offers an additional advantage, as it would allow the U.S. to take the logistics challenge head-on. For the logisticians to do their job properly, agreements should be reached first, as these establish the legal and regulatory foundation for the use of monies and other resources.<sup>58</sup> Some of the 14 UNC Sending States have agreements with the ROK government, and some with the United States, to receive logistical support while performing operations on the Korean peninsula. These agreements cover support ranging from feeding and clothing military forces to servicing ground, air, and naval assets and equipment. Exercising these agreements to test their sufficiency and determine if updates or additions are required is critical to improving U.S. planning and assuring mission success.

Towards this goal, UNC/CFC/USFK could enlist Pacific Command's (PACOM) Multinational Planning Augmentation Team (MPAT) to create an exercise involving all UNC Sending States. The MPAT has conducted numerous humanitarian assistance and disaster relief exercises, and has hosted participants from numerous Pacific Rim countries and island nations. Their mission statement describes MPAT as a “cooperative multinational effort to facilitate the rapid and effective establishment and/or augmentation of a multinational task force headquarters” that “provides responsive coalition/combined expertise in crisis action planning.”<sup>59</sup>

An operational concept with a general indication of estimated capabilities and timelines can be developed without precommitting forces. Sharing information on matters such as equipment interoperability, medical capabilities, force and equipment capabilities and best practices would help integrate the RSOI of UNC Sending State forces into the operations plan. As various factors would determine the type and amount

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<sup>58</sup> Examples are ACSAs (Acquisition Cross-Servicing Agreements) and MOAs (Memoranda of Agreement).

<sup>59</sup> U.S. Pacific Command, Multinational Planning Augmentation Team (MPAT) website, <http://www1.apan-info.net/Default.aspx?alias=www1.apan-info.net/mpat>, accessed 1 November 2008.

of assets committed, firm commitment of actual forces must wait until they are needed. However, an operational plan for integrating the processes of likely participants can be prepared and codified in advance.

Humanitarian-based scenarios also offer an opportunity to engage and develop relationships with a variety of governmental and nongovernmental organizations whose participation in a crisis would be crucial for successful resolution. Exercising interagency relationships can maximize efficiencies in the event of crisis. For example, the U.S. Department of State, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, and the ROK Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT) and Unification (MOU) might all be involved and more easily integrated into a humanitarian refugee exercise scenario. There would be much value added if information gleaned from such exercises were integrated into logistics and command processes.

The activities of NGOs may impact security in the region because these groups have the potential to affect the North Korean regime. In *Paved with Good Intentions: The NGO Experience in North Korea*, L. Gordon Flake and Scott Snyder examine interactions in North Korea between the North Korean government and NGOs from the United States, Europe, and South Korea.<sup>60</sup> The NGO personnel have exposure to parts of North Korea kept inaccessible to the international media and the world community; their insight adds valuable perspective to the inner workings of the DPRK government. As Victor Cha notes, since North Korea is an opaque state, much U.S. policy is based on assumptions. Information from NGO experiences can help improve policy. Furthermore, interagency coordination with NGOs and IGOs can bridge the gap between policy-making and practical implementation, which would be useful for international community assistance in the reconstruction and stabilization of North Korea.

Snyder and Scott found that the NGOs' experiences in other countries did not prepare them for dealing with the DPRK regime in administering humanitarian aid.<sup>61</sup> In a disaster response, NGO personnel generally encounter fragmented governmental structures. In the DPRK, the government is intact and highly controlling, posing a great

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<sup>60</sup> Flake and Snyder.

<sup>61</sup> Flake and Snyder, 3.

impediment to NGO efforts at food distribution and other humanitarian aid.<sup>62</sup> Likewise, the DPRK government was in a difficult position; they were heavily dependent on outside help for food assistance after the 1995 famine brought about by natural disasters, yet accepting help required opening up to outsiders and relinquishing a degree of control over their population.<sup>63</sup>

In an attempt to maintain control, the DPRK government imposed strict controls on personnel allowed into the country. For example, no Korean-speaking personnel were admitted, increasing the NGO's reliance on government escorts. This presented additional constraints, since there were limited numbers of escorts available.<sup>64</sup> Even with escorts, the NGOs were not allowed in certain parts of the country for military security reasons.<sup>65</sup> As a result, it was difficult to monitor food distribution. (DPRK officials may have purposely impeded monitoring to facilitate hoarding by the elites).

In addition to providing humanitarian aid, the intervention affected the perceptions of the DPRK technocrats entrusted to escort the NGO participants. Their time with NGO personnel revealed the nature and the seriousness of their country's situation. Flake and Snyder believe these technocrats can serve as catalysts for change. They might influence their government to move beyond food aid and tight control, accept developmental assistance and restructure the regime, eventually creating a more open society and contributing to the world community.<sup>66</sup>

#### **D. COALITION DEVELOPMENT**

Revising the annual exercises on the Korean peninsula to integrate refugee scenarios would affect the U.S. military stationed on the Korean Peninsula, Japan and elsewhere in the Pacific.<sup>67</sup> The government of Japan allows use of UNC Rear bases

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<sup>62</sup> Flake and Snyder, 2.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 117.

<sup>67</sup> Approximately 50,000 U.S. troops are stationed on mainland Japan and Okinawa. USFJ homepage, [http://www.usfj.mil/Welcome\\_to\\_USFJ/Welcome\\_to\\_USFJ.html](http://www.usfj.mil/Welcome_to_USFJ/Welcome_to_USFJ.html), accessed 4 January 2009.

throughout Japan for logistical support of the Korean theater. A multinational coalition humanitarian scenario exercise might pave the way for Japan's participation and contribute to a better working relationship between the ROK military and the Japan Self Defense Forces.

The UNC coalition is sometimes identified as more valuable in presenting a unified international face to the North Koreans rather than as a force provider, but these functions are not mutually exclusive. Although UNC Sending States' forces are small compared to U.S. forces, many have niche capabilities that could tip the balance in a crisis, especially if their capabilities are matched to gaps and shortfalls. Encouraging greater integration by the Sending States, even in a restricted information sharing environment, might provide answers to numerous logistical questions useful in planning to maximize the use of these forces.

Maxwell advises developing a contingency plan (CONPLAN) for non-conflict scenarios. Altering a command post exercise to include a focus on Phase 4 operations would facilitate spelling out how UNC Sending State forces would be integrated. Integration of UNC resources in the last three exercises has posed tremendous challenges due to information disclosure issues. Based on other theater operations, if most UNC Sending State participation occurred in Phase 4 operations, there are ways to practice processes and develop relationships to maximize interoperability and efficiency among the ROK, the U.S., and the Sending State nations.

With the current command structure, UNC forces would be led by the 4-star U.S. commander; this structure will remain after the OPCON transfer in 2012. After the OPCON transfer, the U.S. will take a "supporting to supported" role. The ROK will control their own forces even in wartime, and U.S. forces, together with UNC forces, will provide support as needed.

The UNC integration emphasis began in 2004, and the ROK military, focused on the 2012 OPCON transfer, has not fully engaged with the integration concept. It would benefit the ROK to take more interest in UNC Sending State integration. The Civil Military Operations Division (CMOD) is a growing, ROK-led organization in charge of civil military operations on the Korean peninsula. As a developing organization, the

CMOD has the potential to coordinate UNC Sending State assets with its own organization and missions. Although the CMOD is the coordinating agency with IGOs and NGOs, there is little day-to-day interface among the groups during armistice. Given the reasonable assumption that UNC Sending States forces would be most heavily represented during Phase 4, and that IGOs and NGOs will also have a strong presence in this phase, it would behoove the ROK government to encourage their CMOD to interface with these agencies.

Representatives of the Naval, Air, Ground, and Special Operations components and staff agencies such as the Surgeon's office and subsections of the logistics community have inquired during exercise planning conferences about the capabilities that would be provided by UNC Sending States in a conflict. Because current conditions preclude Sending States from participating in exercise planning by restricting information dissemination, such questions remain unanswered. This leaves a planning gap at the operational level. Should conflict break out, UNC Sending States will still be integrated, but without prior planning. Integration and interoperability coordination would be awkward, and subsequent logistic support would be at best a reaction-based, muddle-through process, an afterthought rather than a well-planned out process. Kaplan's depiction of the United States as leading an "unwieldy regional coalition" would likely seem a vast understatement.

Since information disclosure is the main limiting factor, the CFC should take the lead in creating a forum where the relevant agencies of the ROK, the United States, UNC Sending States, and various IGOs and NGOs can share information and develop cooperative relationships. No OPLAN information would be required, and the results of this collaboration could be integrated into the OPLAN. As relationships grow and trust is fostered, full integration into the exercises may become more likely.

MPAT was already mentioned as an avenue to this end. For the ROK-led CMOD, the recommendation would be to embed U.S. civil affairs and foreign area officers into its organization, and consult with professionals of various other disciplines. Nowadays, the NGOs and faith-based organizations that have banded together to help North Korean refugees are organized and knowledgeable through field experience with

the North Korean population. Specialists in health care, psychology, education and social work are studying the North Koreans and their ability to assimilate into South Korean and American society. Along with demographic analyses, their knowledge might be indispensable in planning responses to sudden change scenarios involving North Korean refugees. As an added benefit, research from such collaboration might contribute to development of alternative U.S. policy approaches towards the North Korean nuclear issue.

This chapter addressed the responsibilities of the U.S., ROK, and coalition militaries should a refugee crisis emerge. This chapter also addressed the potential magnitude of the North Korean refugee issue should no proactive actions be taken. The following chapter switches focus from reactive to proactive. It discusses each of the regional players who have a stake in the refugee issue and outlines the bilateral issues each has with North Korea that may inhibit it from addressing the issue. That information is used to inform policy recommendations intended to preclude a refugee crisis from occurring.

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### III. THE NORTH KOREAN REFUGEE ISSUE AND THE SIX PARTY MEMBERS

The North Korean refugee issue may not be in the forefront of any of the Six Party nations' agendas, but if left unchecked, it has the potential to become a destabilizing humanitarian disaster. Its impact in terms of human and economic costs might even surpass the 2004 Asian tsunami or 2005 Hurricane Katrina. North Korea's neighbors should not wish the refugee problem away, but should be proactive and implement policy to mitigate its potential to become an unmanageable problem.

To lay the groundwork for policy recommendations in Chapter IV, this chapter begins by reviewing each country's historical relationship with North Korea. Because international relations influence the perceptions of each receiving population toward North Koreans who may want to immigrate, the historical background provides insight to factors that may hinder a country's desire to address this issue, providing the perspective necessary for developing sound policy.

The Korean diaspora constitutes an important subpopulation of each country. The United States, China, and Japan together represent 80 percent of the overseas Korean population.<sup>68</sup> Details on the nature of the Korean populations in China, Japan, Russia, and the United States can suggest the type of policy each country might most profitably develop. These Korean diasporas are potential conduits between the receiving populations and new North Korean settlers, and their characteristics may hinder or assist refugee assimilation. The discussion of South Korea centers on North Koreans who have already immigrated and the problems associated with their integration into South Korean society.

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<sup>68</sup> The next largest concentrations are in the Commonwealth of Independent States, in which Uzbekistan has the highest number, followed by Russia, and in Canada. Inbom Choi, "Korean Diaspora in the Making: Its Current Status and Impact on the Korean Economy" in C. Bergsten and Inbom Choi, editors, *The Korean Diaspora in the World Economy* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 2003), 17–18.



National policies will influence North Korean immigrants' ability to assimilate and succeed in their new environments. South Koreans living abroad had a significant impact on the economic development of their home country, and the success of North Koreans abroad could have a similar impact on North Korean development.<sup>69</sup> If the Six Party nations work together to resolve the refugee issue, they can develop a solution that both eases the suffering of the refugees and has a positive effect on the rest of the North Korean people. A solution might encourage North Korea to become a more open society, and a more open society is more transparent. Greater transparency, in turn, might help resolve the bilateral issues between North Korea and each of the individual countries, including the nuclear issue.

For example, if each country were to create a guest worker program that legalized North Korean immigration and employment, not only could North Koreans have a legal outlet to work and support their families, but countries like Japan and Russia could alleviate their worker shortage problems, and China's borders would become more secure. Indeed, such measures might lead to greater overall security in the Northeast Asian region. Awareness of potential short and long term problems likely to emerge from the refugee issue is critical for developing policies and programs to alleviate the situation. The challenge is to formulate policy acceptable to all of the Six Party nations.

#### **A. NATIONAL AGENDAS OF THE SIX PARTY MEMBERS**

Each Six Party nation has its own issues and concerns with North Korea that influence each country's incentives in dealing with the refugee issue. For China, the numbers of refugees flowing across their shared border is an unwanted distraction. Any event triggering a mass exodus threatens regional stability and would be a major detractor to China's current focus on economic and military growth. North Korea has a large monetary debt to Russia, which it is paying off by sending labor forces to work in the timber industry in the Russian Far East (RFE) region, where Russians themselves are

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<sup>69</sup> Choi describes how the Korean diasporas abroad affected the development of the Korean economy through trade and investment, funds transfers, and the labor market. Inbom Choi, "Korean Diaspora in the Making: Its Current Status and Impact on the Korean Economy" in C. Bergsten and Inbom Choi, editors, *The Korean Diaspora in the World Economy* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 2003), 17–27.

unwilling to work and live. South Korea is concerned with the economic and social ramifications of reunification, while Japan wants to resolve the abduction of its citizens before moving onto any other issues, including the nuclear issue. The United States' main efforts on North Korean issues focus on the nuclear issue rather than the humanitarian needs of refugees. If the Six Party nations were to collaborate and develop policy to address the refugee issue, this policy might alleviate or resolve many such bilateral issues.

## **B. NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES AND CHINA**

Of all the Six Party nations, China holds the key to the fate of the North Korean refugees. The 868-mile shared border, and the large ethnic Korean population living across the Tumen River in the Yanbian Autonomous Region, facilitate North Koreans' escape and provide a place for them to hide.<sup>70</sup> Chinese authorities are unwilling to sanction asylum, and despite condemnation from the international community for human rights violations, they frequently return captured refugees to face a dismal fate in North Korea. To China, international disapprobation is the lesser of the two evils, especially when the alternative is collapse of the North Korean regime followed by a mass exodus of refugees into their territory.

### **1. History of Relations between North Korea and China**

Historically, China has very strong cultural ties to the whole of the Korean peninsula. Ideologically and economically, China has been a staunch supporter of North Korea, especially when it came to North Korea's aid during the Korean War. However, a relationship once described as "close as lips to teeth" has become distant and pragmatic. The year 1992, when China normalized relations with South Korea, marked the turning point in the relationship. The deteriorating relationship was further degraded with North

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<sup>70</sup> According to Si Joong Kim, approximately two million ethnic Koreans live in China, which is about 40 percent of all overseas Koreans. In China, the largest concentration of ethnic Koreans lives in Yanbian. Si Joong Kim, "The Economic Status and Role of Ethnic Koreans in China" in C. Bergsten and Inbom Choi, editors, *The Korean Diaspora in the World Economy*, (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 2003), 103–104.

Korea's nuclear test in 2006.<sup>71</sup> The past and present value of North Korea for China has been to serve as a buffer zone between China and democratic South Korea with its large U.S. presence.

As it stands now, China wants to focus on developing its economy. North Korean relations with China might improve if it were to follow suit under Chinese tutelage. China is interested in maintaining a stable North Korea and North Korean regime, as it wants to maintain its buffer zone and is not ready to absorb a mass exodus of refugees should the regime or state of North Korea fail.

## **2. The Korean Diaspora in China**

The second largest population of Koreans outside the peninsula is concentrated in China.<sup>72</sup> Many ethnic Koreans migrated to China between 1850 and 1945, propelled by a variety of motives, including escape from the famine in Korea and the Japanese occupation.<sup>73</sup> Within China, the majority of ethnic Koreans are concentrated in Yanbian, a section in Jilin province (also known as the Korean Autonomous Region) where PRC minority policy grants ethnic Koreans regional autonomy.<sup>74</sup> This clustering of ethnic Koreans has allowed them to maintain much of their cultural heritage and language. Many signs throughout the city of Yangi are written in both Hangul and Chinese, and it is not uncommon to come across bilingual Hangul and Mandarin speakers.

Because Yanbian is geographically contiguous with North Korea and because of the PRC's isolation from South Korea prior to normalization of relations, the ethnic Koreans in this region are culturally closer to the North Koreans than the South Koreans. However, due to strengthened Chinese–South Korean relations, increasing numbers of

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<sup>71</sup> Peter Hayes, the executive director of the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development, is quoted in a background paper as saying that China became a “bad patron” when it normalized relations with South Korea, and the DPRK lost its status as China’s “tributary state.” Jaysree Bajoria, “The China-North Korea Relationship,” Council on Foreign Relations. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/11097/>, accessed 30 October 2008.

<sup>72</sup> The largest concentration is in the United States. Choi, “Korean Diaspora in the Making: Its Current Status and Impact on the Korean Economy,” 17.

<sup>73</sup> Si Joong Kim, “The Economic Status and Role of Ethnic Koreans in China” in C. Bergsten and Inbom Choi, editors, *The Korean Diaspora in the World Economy* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 2003), 102.

<sup>74</sup> Si Joong Kim, 109.

South Koreans immigrate or travel to northeast China for business purposes. As the influx of South Korean businesses increases the need for Chinese networks and language, ethnic Korean–Chinese have been drawn to these locations.<sup>75</sup>

Because of geographic accessibility, North Korean refugees turn to the ethnic Koreans in China for help in defecting. Bribing the North Korean guards, they make their way across the Tumen River into China to find food or a way to make money to take back to their families. Korean–Chinese are willing to help the refugees for several reasons. Familial ties tend to make ethnic Koreans in China more sympathetic than their counterparts in other countries. Furthermore, during the famine in China in the late 1950s and early 1960s, many ethnic Koreans crossed from China into North Korea to find food.<sup>76</sup> Now that the flow is reversed, this shared history, combined with their Korean identity, gives many Korean–Chinese a sense of kinship, allowing them to identify and sympathize with the North Koreans' plight.

### **3. Obstacles to Addressing the Refugee Issue for China**

Because it fears a flood of refugees, the Chinese government routinely repatriates North Koreans despite condemnation from the international community, justifying their return under an agreement between China and North Korea. China's stance is that North Korean repatriation is a bilateral issue, and North Korea has sovereignty over its people.

What China does not want is a unified Korea with strong ties to the United States on its border. If a unified Korea would maintain close ties to the United States, China has less incentive to address the refugee issue if doing so might contribute to Korean unification. However, if China believed that a unified Korea would be more influenced by and have closer diplomatic ties to China, it would more likely address the refugee issue.

It is interesting to note that China forms relations through economic projects with numerous smaller powers in South America and Africa, yet neglects to form such relations with North Korea. Although North Korea may not be as rich in resources as the

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<sup>75</sup> Si Joong Kim, 114.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 111.

other countries China seek ties with, its geographical location is advantageous. Should North Korea reform economically, open itself to the global community, and support a major economic project like the Iron Silk Road, China would be a major regional beneficiary.<sup>77</sup> China has attempted to coax North Korea to reform economically, without success. Chinese influence might be strengthened if they addressed the refugee issue.

Suzanne Scholte sums it up succinctly in an editorial in the *Korea Times*:

The Chinese Government and even U.S. policy makers have an unfounded fear that if China showed compassion to the refugees, this could cause destabilization: they fear China would be flooded with refugees and this could lead to the collapse of the North Korean regime. This fear is not only unfounded, but is prolonging the suffering of the North Korean refugee. This refugee situation is unlike any in the world as the refugees have a place to go—South Korea and other countries! Furthermore, refugees are leaving North Korea mostly because of famine-like conditions and most want to go back—even those who have resettled in South Korea want to go back to North Korea once Kim Jong-il is gone or reforms are enacted. If fleeing refugees could lead to the collapse of the regime, it would have happened by now. After 500,000 crossed the border and 3 million people died, Kim Jong-il's grip on power never faltered. By abiding instead by its international treaty obligations and allowing refugees safe passage to South Korea this would instead be a means to subtly pressure Kim Jong-il and his regime to reform, something that is also in China's best interest. When reform comes to North Korea, conditions will improve and China will no longer have to deal with this refugee problem, because North Koreans will not need to flee—so China is prolonging this refugee problem by their policy.<sup>78</sup>

Should China change its stance on the North Korean refugee issue and help facilitate refugees' gradual assimilation in its own country, as well as other countries, it could be the first step to prevent the scenario China fears the most—a sudden flow of refugees crossing its shared border with North Korea. Furthermore, once North Korea

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<sup>77</sup> Interview with David Kang, "Kang: North Korean Trade Potential," Council on Foreign Relations website, <http://www.cfr.org/publication/15056/kang.html>, accessed 30 March 2009. Kang also talks about the potential economic benefits of connecting various railway systems in China, Russia and Korea, and how it can serve to bolster both trade and security within the region. Victor Cha and David Kang, *Nuclear North Korea* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 107.

<sup>78</sup> Suzanne Scholte, "What President Obama Should Do About North Korea," *Korea Times*, January 27, 2009.

sees that it cannot do anything about the international community's gradual absorption of its citizens, it could eventually be coerced into becoming a more open society and more open to economic reforms.

### **C. NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES AND JAPAN**

There is not much literature on the North Korean refugee issue and its implications for relations between Japan and the Korean peninsula. This may be because so few North Korean refugees have resettled in Japan in comparison with the number in South Korea. However, an uncontrolled sudden change scenario with a mass exodus might overwhelm Japan with boat refugees.<sup>79</sup>

This section fills the gap in the literature by examining the implications of the North Korean refugee situation in the context of historical relations between Japan and the two Koreas, illustrating how the refugee situation continues to influence the relationships between Japan and the two Koreas. Japan might work towards healing its damaged relationships with its neighbors by addressing the refugee issue. If Japan were to focus its resources and military capabilities on humanitarian-based missions, and the region were to become more secure and prosperous as a result, inter-regional relations would improve. Japanese government policy on this issue might help or hinder its relations with the two Koreas and with others in the region.

#### **1. History of Relations between North Korea and Japan**

Of all the relationships between countries in Northeast Asia, none face so many obstacles as those involving Japan and the two Korean governments. After fighting the Chinese in 1894–95 and the Russians in 1904–5, the Japanese gained control of the Korean Peninsula. A Japanese protectorate from 1905, Korea endured many hardships, especially during the Japanese occupation (1910 to 1945). Relations between Japan and South Korea have improved immensely in the past half-century, while those between Japan and North Korea remain frustrating. The bitter history of the occupation created so

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<sup>79</sup> Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "Refugees, Abductees, 'Returnees': Human Rights in Japan-North Korea Relations," *Asia Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, 29 March 2009, available at <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Tessa-Morris-Suzuki/3110>, accessed 1 April 2009, 4.

much enmity that friendly relations between a unified Korea and Japan seem unattainable. Numerous disagreements stem from the governments' inability to agree on what happened in their shared history and lead to disputes over school textbook contents.

Despite these differences, Japan and South Korea have improved relations since the colonial period, with the greatest gain for South Korea occurring during Park Chung Hee's presidency (1963–1979). Unlike his predecessors Rhee Syngman and Yun Bo-seon, Park Chung Hee embraced Japan as a nation to emulate in its infrastructure, government structure, bureaucracy, and economic and technical development. Although he is remembered most for his dictatorial leadership style, Park is also the president given the most credit for South Korea's near-miraculous economic growth.<sup>80</sup> Park's accomplishments required opening his mind to see Japan as a model, but Koreans in general are unwilling to acknowledge this, particularly when their attention is focused on Japanese atrocities during the occupation. Unresolved issues revolving around territorial disputes, "comfort women" (sexual slavery), and school textbooks fuel the continued bitter relationship between Japan and Korea. Interestingly, Korean and Japanese youth pop culture is a common interest connecting the two cultures, but much more is required to overcome the rancor of the past and establish a conciliatory relationship.

## **2. The Korean Diaspora in Japan**

Japanese–Korean relations are strongly shaped by the history of how the Korean diaspora came to Japan, the development of its "civil rights" in subsequent decades, and the impact of Japanese–Korean relations on Japanese policies toward domestic Koreans. A historical perspective explains why the Koreans living in Japan overwhelmingly support North Korea.

During the Japanese occupation, Koreans were imported as forced labor in Japan. Later, while some remained in Japan, many were repatriated to North Korea. Ethnic Japanese wives accompanied their ethnic Korean husbands repatriated to North Korea

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<sup>80</sup> Richard Saccone, *Koreans to Remember: 50 Famous People Who Helped Shape Korea*, (Elizabeth: Hollym International, 1993), 24. See also General Lee Chi-Op, *Call Me "Speedy Lee": Memoirs of a Korean War Soldier* (Seoul: Won Min Publishing House, 2001), 253.

and have since not been allowed to return to Japan. North Korea's refusal to allow the Japanese women to return home is among the North Korean human rights violations identified in Japanese draft legislation.

Collectively, Koreans in Japan constitute the largest ethnic minority. They run over half of the pachinko parlors, which make gambling a large source of revenue for remittances sent to relatives in North Korea.<sup>81</sup> There are two groups within the Korean community in Japan: the "Mindan," with close ties with the South Korean government, and the "Chongryun," aligned with the North Korean government. The Chongryun run most of Japan's Korean schools, offering education ranging from elementary school to university level.<sup>82</sup> Korean immigrants wanting a Korean education for their children ended up supporting this pro-North Korean group. Right after the Korean War, many Japanese-Koreans did not support the Mindan because South Korean military governments and their close relations with the United States were unpopular.<sup>83</sup>

Discrimination is yet another obstacle to Japanese-Korean relations.<sup>84</sup> Koreans face discrimination in Japan when applying for jobs, in personal relationships and in many other social situations. On a social level, Koreans who live in Japan frequently adopt Japanese names and hide their Korean heritage in an attempt to assimilate. It is one thing to maintain one's own identity and take on the qualities prescribed by another society in order to assimilate; it is another to have to completely deny one's own heritage to be accepted. For example, in Japan, it is considered a test of true love for a Japanese person to stay in a romantic relationship after learning that his or her love interest is actually ethnically Korean.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Saccone, 87

<sup>82</sup> Mike Mervio, "The Korean Community in Japan and Shimane," <http://gsti.miis.edu/CEAS-PUB/200206Mervio.pdf>, 5, accessed 31 October 2004.

<sup>83</sup> Mervio, 217.

<sup>84</sup> Toshiyuki Tamura discusses Japanese government policies of that institutionalized such discrimination. She states that ethnic Koreans' "legal status is one of the crucial factors that have enabled the Japanese to segregate these people from daily opportunities." See Toshiyuki Tamura, "The Status and Role of Ethnic Koreans in the Japanese Economy" in C. Bergsten and Inbom Choi, editors, *The Korean Diaspora in the World Economy* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 2003), 77-97.

<sup>85</sup> Mervio, 223.



At an institutional level, Koreans living in Japan have been subject to a variety of foreigner registration systems. The original system required carrying fingerprint identification cards. With the evolution of Japanese immigration laws, requirements for some Koreans on special permanent resident status were loosened, while those in other categories continue to be required to carry special identity cards.<sup>86</sup> Though it is illegal to ask whether someone is Korean or not, places like private clubs circumvent this rule by requiring new members to show their *koseki*, a family registration card.<sup>87</sup> Thus, despite laws to eradicate discrimination, a more subtle form of discrimination towards non-Japanese has emerged.

It is ironic that Japan's discriminatory policies toward its Korean population seem to undermine its position at a time when Japan wants to forge stronger economic relations with South Korea. Because of the pressure to assimilate totally, "the loss of Korean language among Koreans in Japan alienates them from contemporary Korean society and deprives these individuals as well as Japanese society of a chance to bridge Japanese and Korean societies."<sup>88</sup>

### **3. Obstacles to Addressing the Refugee Issue for Japan**

Memories of the Japanese occupation are not the only obstacle to better relations between Japan and North and South Korea. A major issue between Japan and North Korea is the August 1998 launching of the 1500 km range Taepodong 1 missile, which flew over Japan and landed in the Pacific Ocean. In response, the Japan Air Self-Defense Force deployed E-2Cs early warning aircraft and other aircraft, and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force dispatched P-3Cs maritime patrol aircraft and vessels to the Sea of Japan to gather information. The Defense Agency conducted a search for debris but none

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<sup>86</sup> Toshiyuki Tamura, "The Status and Role of Ethnic Koreans in the Japanese Economy" in C. Bergsten and Inbom Choi, editors, *The Korean Diaspora in the World Economy*, (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 2003), 86–87.

<sup>87</sup> For more details on the *koseki* system, see Japan Children's Rights Network website, <http://www.crnjapan.com/references/en/koseki.html>, accessed 31 March 2009.

<sup>88</sup> Toshiyuki Tamura, "The Status and Role of Ethnic Koreans in the Japanese Economy" in C. Bergsten and Inbom Choi, editors, *The Korean Diaspora in the World Economy*, (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 2003), 88.

was found.<sup>89</sup> North Korea claimed that the Taepodong 1 was a satellite launched into space. North Korea repeated this act in April 2009. Japan, South Korea and the United States pressed for a UN statement condemning North Korea's action, but lacked the support from China and Russia.<sup>90</sup>

A multitude of other issues dating back to the Japanese occupation impede improved relations. Koreans have bitter memories of Japanese exploiting Korean women as "comfort women" for Japanese soldiers and trying to obliterate Korean culture and language by forcing Koreans to take Japanese names and forbidding them to use the Korean language. Furthermore, Japan and Korea have disagreements over fishing zones in international waters and territorial disputes over an island which the Koreans call Tokdo and the Japanese call Takeshima.

Perhaps most contentious is the abduction issue, an emotionally heated topic for the Japanese public.<sup>91</sup> In a summit meeting with Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on September 17, 2002, Kim Jong Il confessed to the abductions of 13 Japanese citizens during the 1970s and 1980s to train North Korean spies in Japanese language and culture. He claimed the abductions took place without his knowledge or approval, apologetically assured Koizumi that those responsible had been punished, and promised it would not happen again.<sup>92</sup> When Koizumi asked for the return of the abductees, the North Koreans alleged that eight of the thirteen had died of various causes; the remaining five were repatriated.

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<sup>89</sup> Federation of American Scientists website, "Response of the Defense Agency to the Missile Launch by North Korea," <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/dprk/missile/td-1-japan99.htm>, accessed 30 March 2009.

<sup>90</sup> "Security Council Wrestles with N. Korea Launch," CNN News, 7 April, 2009. <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/04/06/un.nkorea/index.html#cnnSTCText>, accessed 8 April 2009.

<sup>91</sup> A Japanese government poll conducted in October 2007 illustrates the pervasive Japanese public sentiment on this issue. According to the poll, 88.7 percent considered the "Issue of abducted Japanese" as the biggest concern in relations with North Korea, substantially more than the nuclear issue. See the Japanese Government Office of Public Relations in Cabinet Office Secretariat, Japanese Public Opinion Poll, 31 October 2007, <http://www8.cao.go.jp/survey/h19/h19-gaiko/2-1.html>, accessed July 2008.

<sup>92</sup> "Japan-North Korea Relations" from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan website, available at [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n\\_korea/relation.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n_korea/relation.html), accessed 31 July 2008.

The exact number of abductees is still in question, as mysterious circumstances surround the disappearance of other Japanese citizens. Japanese officials speculate that more than 13 were abducted. The deaths of the eight who allegedly passed away are suspect and not yet verified. The remains of one of the alleged abductees were returned to Japan, but Japanese officials claim that DNA testing proved them to be from an older woman. Even this evidence is controversial, as disinterested third parties suggest that contamination of the remains could produce false results. The North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs repeatedly states that the abduction issue has been resolved.

According to Samuel Kim, the abduction issue “dominate[s] Japanese policy toward North Korea, to the exclusion of all else.”<sup>93</sup> Because of the strong bilateral ties between Japan and the United States, the issue is on the Six Party talk’s agenda for North Korea and must be addressed if they are to receive aid and cooperation from Japan. The Japanese government claims that the abduction issue is an important concern for Japan’s sovereignty and the lives and safety of Japanese citizens.<sup>94</sup> Although Japan understands that the Six Party talks may not be the proper forum to resolve the issue, it has become a matter of national pride; its citizens will not overlook it and the Japanese government cannot dismiss it.<sup>95</sup>

The abductions make Japanese feel like victims of North Korea. Conversely, a number of issues make Koreans feel they were victims of Japan. If Japan will not address the refugee issue until these questions of national pride are resolved, the delay may be at the expense of its own security. If the other concerns are laid aside, Japan’s involvement in the refugee issue may give impetus to resolving the remaining issues.

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<sup>93</sup> Samuel S. Kim, “North Korean Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War World” (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, April 2007), 41.

<sup>94</sup> See also the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Abduction Issues of Japanese Citizens by North Korea,” 2008. [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n\\_korea/abduction.pdf](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n_korea/abduction.pdf), accessed 31 July 2008.

<sup>95</sup> This sentiment was expressed in a personal discussion with a Japanese officer attending the Joint Professional Military Education II course in Norfolk, Virginia, July 2008.

In *Alignment Despite Antagonism*, Victor Cha analyses the trilateral relationship between Japan, Korea, and the United States, characterizing the United States as the mediator between Japan and Korea.<sup>96</sup> Although U.S.–Japan relations are strong, they can still be challenged by events on the Korean peninsula. When Kim Jong Il confessed to the abduction of Japanese citizens, the issue could have divided Japan and the United States had the U.S. not honored its alliance and supported Japan's inclusion of the issue as a Six-Party talk agenda item. Through military trilateral meetings, the United States continues to try to develop and facilitate working relationships between Japan and Korea.

#### **D. NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES AND RUSSIA**

The border between Russia and North Korea is shorter than China's border with North Korea. The Russian national government is more tolerant than the Chinese government insofar as they do not necessarily subscribe to repatriating asylum-seeking North Koreans and provide more protective rights for the North Korean timber industry workers in the RFE. Oftentimes, though, local Russian officials are not aware of the workers' rights, and cooperate with the North Korean handlers to prevent defections.<sup>97</sup>

##### **1. History of Relations between North Korea and Russia**

The beginning of the Soviet–North Korea relationship in 1948 was ideologically based and driven by North Korea's geostrategic importance to the Soviets.<sup>98</sup> In 1961, a mutual defense agreement, "The Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance," was created. In the mid-1980s, the Soviets were the main source of North Korea's military acquisitions. In the latter part of the 1980s, Mikhail Gorbachev's leadership brought about a dramatic change in Soviet relations between the two Koreas,

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<sup>96</sup> Cha and Kang discuss the importance of the trilateral alliance for security of the Northeast Asian region. Victor Cha and David Kang, *Nuclear North Korea* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 183.

<sup>97</sup> Peggy Falkenheim Meyer, "Russia's Post-Cold War Security Policy in Northeast Asia," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 67, No.4 (Winter 1994–1995), 509.

<sup>98</sup> Seung-Ho Joo and Tae-Hwan Kwak, "Military Relations Between Russia and North Korea," *Journal of East Asian Affairs* (Fall/Winter 2001), 1.

shifting the balance of allegiance away from North Korea in a move to normalize relations with Seoul. Moscow continued to fortify Pyongyang with military equipment until the early 1990s.<sup>99</sup>

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia, under Boris Yeltsin's leadership, moved even closer to Seoul. In November 1992, he told South Korea's National Assembly that Russia was "turning from looking toward the West, Europe and the United States, to the Asia-Pacific region," calling South Korea "one of Russia's leading partners in the region."<sup>100</sup> An outcome of the meeting in Seoul was to start combined naval exercises. Russia even sent its military attaché in Seoul to observe the 1993 UNC/CFC/USFK annual exercise (at the time, called Team Spirit). The two major joint exercises in South Korea are always met by protests from North Korean media.<sup>101</sup>

Russia's shift to enhance relations with South Korea naturally degraded its relations with North Korea. As naval cooperation grew between South Korea and Russia, the North Korean-Russian naval relationship was minimized. Joint naval exercises between North Korea and Russia were eliminated and only military exchanges continued.<sup>102</sup> Overall military sales from Russia to North Korea dropped dramatically due to North Korea's inability to pay cash.<sup>103</sup>

The 1961 treaty expired in 1996, and Yeltsin informed ROK President Kim that they would not renew the treaty with North Korea. In 2000, the 1961 treaty was replaced by the "Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighborliness and Cooperation between Russia and the DPRK," signed by Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong Il. Noticeably absent in this treaty was the mutual defense clause. However, Putin's 2000 visit to Pyongyang, the first of

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<sup>99</sup> Joo and Kwak, 3.

<sup>100</sup> Meyer, 506.

<sup>101</sup> In keeping with the spirit of the Armistice Agreement, the United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission has a letter delivered to the KPA with 30 day notice before each exercise, stating that its intent is to practice for the defense of South Korea.

<sup>102</sup> Meyer, 508.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 508.

any Russian leader, demonstrated his desire to normalize relations with North Korea as part of a cooperative, trilateral relationship with South Korea, directed towards economic development in the Northeast Asia region.<sup>104</sup>

Though Russia has always had a stake in Northeast Asian regional stability, interest in the region increased when accession of land from China via the 1860 First Treaty of Peking expanded Russian territory, bringing the refugee issue to their border.

## **2. The Korean Diaspora in Russia**

The prominence of ethnic Koreans in RFE goes back to the 1860s, especially along the Russian–North Korean border. Fearing that ethnic Koreans who had lived under Japanese colonial rule would exert unwanted Japanese influence in the RFE, in the 1930s, Stalin forced about 172,000 ethnic Koreans to relocate to Central Asian republics such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.<sup>105</sup> In the 1990s, Gorbachev allowed those forcibly moved to return to the RFE, providing homes and farmland as restitution.<sup>106</sup>

The Korean diaspora in Russia is the most diverse of all the Six Party nations. In a study on ethnic Koreans in Russia, Jeanyoung Lee identifies nine different subgroups.<sup>107</sup> Three Korean–Russian groups, referred to as “Koryoin,” are “heavily russified [sic] in culture” and do not speak the Korean language. The first Korean–Russian group consists of those from the Stalin era who were not forced to move; the second group includes ethnic Koreans who arrived from the Sakhalin Islands having been forced there for labor by the Japanese right after World War II, and the third group is made up of immigrants from the Central Asian republics during the Soviet Republic era. One North Korean group includes North Koreans who work in the timber industry in the RFE; another is composed of North Korean refugees. Two Korean–Chinese groups

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<sup>104</sup> Meyer, 507.

<sup>105</sup> Jeanyoung Lee, “The Korean Chinese (Chosonjok) in the Russian Far East: A Research Note,” (Kyunghee University: Korea), 164, 174, available at <http://gsti.miis.edu/CEAS-PUB/200210Lee.pdf>, accessed 31 October 2004.

<sup>106</sup> Lee, 164.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, 166.

(“Chosonjok”) are characterized by Lee as “market traders” and “shuttle traders.” The two South Korean groups include businessmen and students, and missionaries, many of whom carry foreign passports, including U.S. passports.

The groups vary in Korean language usage and Korean culture, with the Korean–Chinese and those from the Sakhalins most fluent in the Korean language. The Korean diaspora in Russia differs from those in Japan and China; they are more diverse and less likely to retain their Korean heritage. These factors could directly impact each group’s ability to absorb North Korean refugees or provide an environment conducive for North Korean refugee assimilation.

### **3. Obstacles to Addressing the Refugee Issue for Russia**

Compared with other Six Party members, Russia has fewer disincentives to address the North Korean refugee issue. Russia is preoccupied with domestic internal stability and pays little attention to the North Korean refugee issue. Although refugees escape through the North Korean–Russian border, their numbers do not compare with those who cross the Chinese border. On the international front, Russia is more wary of relations with China than they are concerned with a potential refugee situation in the RFE.

However, if North Korea were to open up and the refugee issue be resolved, Russia stands to gain economically should the dream of the Iron Silk Road be realized. Kang says that the Iron Silk Road’s “potential upsides are massive, in the long run” and the project would benefit China, South Korea and Japan as well as Russia.<sup>108</sup>

## **E. NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES AND THE UNITED STATES**

Despite the 2004 passage of the North Korean Human Rights Act (NKHRA), which allows North Koreans to resettle in the United States, as of March 2008, only 43 refugees were accepted into the U.S.<sup>109</sup> Some question why a North Korean refugee would

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<sup>108</sup> “Kang: North Korean Trade Potential.”

<sup>109</sup> In an interview, Kato Hiroshi, the Executive Director of LFNKR, states that as of early 2008, over 13,000 North Korean refugees were settled in South Korea; about 170 in Japan; eight in Belgium, with 30 more waiting for status there; and over 1,300 in Germany. Refugee status and right of residency were given to 130 out of 425 applicants in the UK; and 4 out of 170 who applied in Canada were granted asylum. “Kato Speaks at International Conference,” <http://www.northkoreanrefugees.com/2008-06-speech.htm>, accessed 1 March 2009.

relocate to the United States rather than South Korea. A Japanese NGO, Life Funds for North Korean Refugees (LFNKR), notes that many refugees have relatives in the Korean communities in the United States. Furthermore, some refugees fear North Korean agents will harm them if they resettled in South Korea.<sup>110</sup> According to a 2005 State Department report, the United States is working with the South Korean government to share information for background checks on North Koreans who want to settle in the United States.<sup>111</sup>

## **1. History of Relations between the United States and North Korea**

Although the history of relations between North Korea and the United States do not go back as far as North Korea's relations with other nations, the last 58 years have been fraught with tumultuous events for U.S.–DPRK relations. Since the United States led the United Nations Command against North Korea during the Korean war, North Korea has retaliated against the U.S. and the international community by capturing the USS Pueblo and its crew, shooting down a U.S. reconnaissance plane, axing two U.S. officers to death at Panmunjom, firing a couple of missiles, and renegeing on the nuclear proliferation treaty. In turn, the United States labeled North Korea as part of the “axis of evil” and an “outpost of tyranny.”<sup>112</sup>

## **2. The Korean Diaspora in the United States**

Most overseas Koreans live in the United States and are concentrated (in descending order) in the cities of Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, Houston, and Washington, D.C.<sup>113</sup> Marcus Noland describes three waves of Korean immigration. The first wave consists of the Koreans who arrived in Hawaii in the

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<sup>110</sup> “Recent Crackdown in China,” Life Funds for North Korean Refugees website, <http://www.northkoreanrefugees.com/5inmay.html>, accessed 30 March 2009.

<sup>111</sup> U.S. Department of State: “The Status of North Korean Asylum Seekers and the US Government Policy Towards Them” (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, March 11, 2005), available at <http://www.state.gov/g/prm/rls/rpt/43275.htm>, accessed 1 March 2009.

<sup>112</sup> In his 2002 State of the Union speech, Bush labeled North Korea, Iran and Iraq as the “Axis of Evil.” In his second term, Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice referred to North Korea, Belarus, Cuba, Iran, Burma, and Zimbabwe, as “outposts of tyranny” in a speech.

<sup>113</sup> Scott Snyder, “Managing Integration on the Korean Peninsula: The Positive and Normative Case for Gradualism with or without Integration,” in C. Bergsten and Inbom Choi, editors, *The Korean Diaspora in the World Economy*, (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 2003), 17.



early 1900s to work the sugarcane fields. The second wave includes students arriving during the decade after the Korean War, and the third wave occurred in the mid-1960s with changes in the United States immigration quota system.<sup>114</sup> As an ethnic minority in the United States, Koreans are an immigration success story, with a higher than average percentage running successful small businesses and obtaining higher education.<sup>115</sup>

Noland credits the third wave Korean immigrants as major contributors to their local economies throughout the United States.<sup>116</sup> Soogil Young notes that the U.S. educational system allowed Koreans to obtain PhD level educations. The “brainpower” of Koreans educated abroad contributes to South Korea’s economic development, which also benefits the United States through trade relations.<sup>117</sup>

### **3. Obstacles to Addressing the Refugee Issue for the United States**

The overriding issue between the United States and North Korea that competes for U.S. interest in the refugee problem is North Korea’s development and proliferation of nuclear weapons. The two nations’ patterns of negotiations on nuclear issues have hindered the United States’ ability to address humanitarian issues productively with North Korea. This is because trust and transparency cannot be established between the two countries.

Since 2003, the United States has led the Six Party talks in a back-and-forth dance to convince North Korea to stand down their nuclear program. George Perkovich, director of the Carnegie Nonproliferation Program, calls North Korea’s implosion of the Yongbyon tower in June 2008 a positive step. He emphasizes that denuclearization is a “step-by-step” process agreed to by the members of the Six Party Talks.<sup>118</sup> In his view,

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<sup>114</sup> Marcus Noland, “The Impact of Korean Migration on the U.S. Economy,” in C. Bergsten and Inbom Choi, editors, *The Korean Diaspora in the World Economy* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 2003), 61.

<sup>115</sup> Noland, 61.

<sup>116</sup> Noland, 64.

<sup>117</sup> Soogil Young, “Comments on Chapter 4,” in C. Bergsten and Inbom Choi, editors, *The Korean Diaspora in the World Economy* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 2003), 76.

<sup>118</sup> The difference between the terms “step-for-step” and “step-by-step” approach is that “step-for-step” is when North Korea takes an action and the United States then takes an action. “Step-by-step,” on the other hand, is a term used by Perkovich to describe an incremental approach. He focuses on progress rather than on achievement of the end goal.

the focus should be not be fixated on the desired end state, but on the fact that the North Koreans are “moving in the right direction.”<sup>119</sup> According to Perkovich, North Korea, motivated by the desire to feel secure that the U.S. will not isolate and invade the country, wants fully normalized relations with the United States. Interestingly, Perkovich is skeptical that denuclearization will be achieved, not for want of North Korean actions, but because he doubts that the U.S. will keep its part of the bargain in a step-for-step process.<sup>120</sup>

Leon Sigal, director of the Northeast Asia Cooperative Security Project at New York’s Social Science Research Council, outlines the events that led to the United States’ failure to uphold its end of the 1994 Agreed Framework. In the agreement, North Korea committed to freezing and dismantling its nuclear program in exchange for two light water reactors (LWRs) and 500,000 tons of heavy fuel oil. In addition, Washington was to “move towards full normalization of political and economic relations.”<sup>121</sup> But Washington failed to deliver the heavy fuel oil on schedule.<sup>122</sup> According to Sigal, domestic U.S. politics further delayed funding for the LWRs when Republicans took over Congress shortly after the signing of the Agreed Framework. Because the Republicans disagreed with President Bill Clinton’s policies, the Clinton administration “back-pedaled” and did not push for the funding. To make matters worse, Seoul was reluctant to carry out its terms in the Agreed Framework during President Kim Young Sam’s administration, and hoped that a North Korean collapse would obviate the need for the ROK to support the U.S. in carrying out its promises. Contrary to the ROK’s expectations, North Korea did not collapse. Discouraged by the other countries’ failure to deliver, North Koreans resumed their nuclear program.

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<sup>119</sup> “North Korea: Teleconference with Carnegie Experts,” transcript from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, available at <http://carnegieendowment.org/files/06-26-08-North-Korea-Transcript.pdf>, accessed 1 July 2008.

<sup>120</sup> “North Korea: Teleconference with Carnegie Experts.” In this teleconference, the point was also brought up that the denuclearization would not be complete before Bush left office. This raises the question whether the North Koreans deliberately timed this to coincide with the changing U.S. administration, anticipating less oversight and follow-up.

<sup>121</sup> Leon V. Sigal, “Did the United States Break the Agreed Framework?” History News Network Site, <http://hnn.us/articles/1353.html>, accessed 1 August 2008.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid..

All Six Party nations have a vested interest in Northeast Asia, but the nuclear issue is not the only threat to regional stability. A collective solution to the refugee crisis might have a positive influence in opening North Korea to engage more fully with the global community, which would help to the nuclear issue and considerably strengthen the region's economy.

## **F. NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES AND THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA**

The ROK has the greatest responsibility in absorbing and helping North Korean refugees, as South Korea is most refugees' final destination. The administrations of Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun advocated the Sunshine Policy, and Peace and Prosperity Policy, respectively, whereas the current Lee Myung Pak administration is transitioning to a more hard-line approach with North Korea and its nuclear issues.<sup>123</sup> Although attitudes and government policies towards the refugees change with administrations, the social concerns of North Korean resettlement in South Korea persist, especially with increases in the numbers of refugees settling in South Korea.

### **1. The Changing Demographics of Defectors**

A variety of social issues stem from the 13,000 plus North Korean refugees who have settled in South Korea over the last 19 years. Although the social dynamics of North Koreans assimilating into South Korea differ from their assimilation experiences elsewhere, the lessons learned from North Korean resettlement in South Korea can be applied to other countries. This section discusses South Korean government policy to facilitate refugee resettlement and its effect on the South Korean population's perception of the North Koreans in their midst.<sup>124</sup>

The demographics of defectors and policies addressing them have evolved over time. In the past, the South Korean government recognized defectors as "heroes" and awarded large amounts of cash, usually commensurate with the value of the intelligence

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<sup>123</sup> President Kim Dae Jung's Sunshine Policy, emphasizing engagement with North Korea, takes its name from an Aesop's fable in which the sun wins a contest by shining warmly to encourage a man to remove his coat after the wind fails to forcibly blow it off his back. President Roh Tae Hyun's Peace and Prosperity Policy extended these policies to the entire Northeast Asian region.

<sup>124</sup> Additional recommendations to address these issues are presented in Chapter IV.

provided by each person. In May 1996, a North Korean pilot reportedly received \$320,000 for landing his MIG-19 fighter jet on South Korean soil.<sup>125</sup> Perhaps these defectors left North Korea for ideological or political reasons. However, the famines of the mid-1990s drove thousands of hungry North Koreans away for economic reasons. When the number of defectors increased substantially, the South Korean government had to mass-process the refugees. A transition facility called *Hanawon* was set up, and policies adopted to integrate the growing number of defectors into South Korean society.<sup>126</sup> However, the *Hanawon* was soon filled to capacity and the three month training period was shortened to two months to accommodate the influx.

## **2. Strangers in the Homeland: Social Issues of North Korean Refugees in South Korea**

When refugees resettle in South Korea, they are debriefed, interviewed, and given government-sponsored classes designed to aid their assimilation into South Korean society. They receive a monetary settlement to get them started in their own apartment, and an allowance to live on while looking for employment.

One might imagine that North Koreans, ecstatic to leave dictatorship and poverty to live in the prosperous, democratic half of the peninsula, would have few problems assimilating into the South. This is not necessarily the case. Korea has a tradition of regionalism. More than fifty years of division has essentially created separate cultures in North and South Korea, and the North Korean refugees in South Korea exemplify the dichotomy. There are accounts of the North Koreans unable to get and keep jobs because of discriminatory hiring practices or the immigrants' lack of familiarity with South Korean work culture. Many cannot find employment outside the "3D" category: dirty, dangerous, and demeaning.

In "The Lost Generation," Christina Shim states,

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<sup>125</sup> "North Korean Fighter Pilot Defects to South with Jet," *New York Times*, May 24, 1996, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/24/world/north-korean-fighter-pilot-defects-to-south-with-jet.html?sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all>, accessed 8 July 2008.

<sup>126</sup> North Korean refugees stay in *Hanawon* when they first arrive in South Korea, and take classes preparing them to transition into South Korean society. The word "hanawon" is Korean for "the house of unity." Yoon In-Jin, "North Korean Diaspora: North Korean Defectors Abroad and in South Korea," *Development and Society*, Volume 30 Number 1, June 2001. (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 2000), 8.

The socialization of the North Korean system and the loss of the refugees' entire worldview and personal identity upon immigration are so traumatic that integrating into another society becomes impossible for the majority of them.<sup>127</sup>

For many, integration into South Korean society is especially difficult because of the disappointment in discovering that integration is not as simple as they had expected. Also, North Koreans find failure in the eyes of their "own people" in the South more humiliating than it would be in a more foreign context. For this reason, many hope to immigrate to the United States or countries other than South Korea.

To better help North Koreans integrate into South Korean society, it is imperative to understand the psyche of the refugees. The responsibility for failed integration is shared by both the North and South Koreans. South Koreans are often unaware of the issues or have preconceived notions of North Koreans. For the North Korean refugees, numerous factors come in to play. First is their inability to shed a lifetime of North Korean indoctrination after just a couple months in the *Hanawon*. Second, North Koreans expect to procure jobs like they held in North Korea, and find it difficult to adapt to a different work ethic after being raised in an environment where everything was provided by the state. Most importantly, refugees suffer from post-traumatic stress disorders as a result of their escape experiences and leaving their families behind.

Shim focuses on the sociological impacts of North Koreans' inability to assimilate into South Korean culture, and discusses the implications for reunification. She stresses that understanding these sociological problems can improve policy towards North Korean refugees, not just for South Korea, but also for others in the international community. According to Shim,

the first generation of North Korean refugees are a lost generation, permanently confused and disoriented. However, this conclusion does not advocate abandoning the refugees. Recommendations can be made to assist future refugees through research-based policy improvements.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Christina Shim, "The Lost Generation: North Korean Refugees' Adjustment to South Korean Society," Senior Thesis for Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and the East Asian Studies Department, 5 April 2004, 114.

<sup>128</sup> Shim, 114-115.

## **G. CONCLUSION**

Allowing North Koreans to emigrate legally could preclude a sudden change scenario that would cause a mass exodus of refugees from North Korea. It is possible that North Koreans who immigrate to other countries and succeed would return and serve as the brainpower for economic and social development in North Korea. Each of the Six-Party nations has the ability to provide a hospitable environment for the North Koreans. Doing so would benefit each nation by enhancing regional stability and setting the stage for economic prosperity.

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## **IV. POLICY IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES**

Why should the Six Party nations address the North Korean refugee issue? The North Korean refugee issue is not just a humanitarian problem. A mass movement of refugees would likely accompany a sudden change scenario jeopardizing regional security. Chapter II described problems the ROK and U.S. militaries would encounter in reacting to a refugee scenario. Each Six Party nation has a responsibility to contribute to regional security. If the triggers to a refugee flow are removed, regional security is enhanced. The Six Party nations should collaborate on policies to reduce the triggers and improve regional security.

Policies to allow refugees to work legally would contribute to this end. If each country creates a guest worker policy and develops social programs to insure successful refugee assimilation, the immigrant population is more likely to provide information seepage back into North Korea and to eventually return to serve as brainpower for North Korean revitalization and development.

This chapter presents an assimilation model for successful integration of North Korean refugees. With the information presented in previous chapters as a foundation, the chapter describes how each country could customize the basic model to facilitate successful immigration and benefit the host country.

### **A. A COMMON MODEL FOR NORTH KOREAN REFUGEE ASSIMILATION**

In “North Korean Diaspora: North Korean Defectors Abroad and in South Korea,” Yoon In-Jin assesses assimilation issues for North Koreans.<sup>129</sup> Intended to improve South Korean government policies and programs, his recommendations could well be implemented in other receiving countries.

According to Yoon, North Korean immigrants’ ability to integrate involves three stages: predeparture, overseas stay, and arrival and social adjustment. Refugees’

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<sup>129</sup> Yoon In-Jin, “North Korean Diaspora: North Korean Defectors Abroad and in South Korea,” *Development and Society*, Volume 30 Number 1, June 2001, 1–6.



experiences in each stage can facilitate or hinder assimilation. Yoon presents a matrix of two components of adjustment: mental adjustment and material adjustment. Mental adjustment is a “sense of belonging to host society as a full and equal member of society,” while material adjustment is “the acquisition of income, skills and jobs to lead an independent life in the host society.”<sup>130</sup>

Success in both components is defined as “full adjustment” or “integration.” Success in material but not mental adjustment is classified as partial adjustment, which Yoon calls “isolation.” Failure in material adjustment and success in mental adjustment is also partial adjustment, identified as “acculturation.” Failure in both components is “maladjustment” or “marginality.”<sup>131</sup>

There are thus four possible categories: full adjustment/integration, partial adjustment/isolation, partial adjustment/acculturation, and maladjustment/marginality. A majority of the North Koreans in South Korean society fall into the maladjustment/marginality category. The second most common is partial adjustment/isolation. Very few achieve full adjustment/integration. Yoon calls partial adjustment/acculturation “a theoretical possibility without actual probability at this time.”<sup>132</sup>

Yoon lists three social factors that affect a North Korean’s ability to adjust: age, marital status, and family size. Younger defectors adapt more quickly. Marrying a South Korean adds social connections and social support. Families that defect together provide economic and emotional support to each other and are more likely to stabilize quickly. Additional social factors affecting assimilation include socioeconomic background, level of involvement by the immigrant's sponsor, and the political and economic climate of South Korea when the defector arrives in country.

Using the history of each nation's relations with North Korea and the nature of its Korean diaspora, and applying Yoon’s model, this chapter offers policy suggestions to facilitate assimilation of North Korean refugees into each receiving country.

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<sup>130</sup> Yoon, 10.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 15.

## B. BASIC ELEMENTS OF THE ASSIMILATION MODEL

Because North Korean society allows little individual decision making and many services are provided by the government, immigrants face a wide gap between the social norms of their homeland and the country of resettlement. Many issues challenge the successful integration of North Korean refugees. An interdisciplinary team of doctors, counselors, educators, linguistic experts, demographers and economists could create a holistic approach to North Korean assimilation. Language training, lessons on cultural integration, job skills development, educational opportunities, decision-making skills, budget management, counseling, and other programs would facilitate successful integration.<sup>133</sup>

Several models can serve as a starting point. The ROK Ministry of Unification supports the *Hanawon's* eight week course. The website describes the course content:

The resettlement program at Hanawon is an eight-week course for social adjustment in the South. The ultimate objective of the course is to instill confidence in the newcomers, narrow the cultural gap, and motivate them to achieve sustainable livelihoods in a new environment. The course has four blocks: 1) 27 hours on mental and physical health; 2) 130 hours of vocational training and counseling in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor; 3) 90 hours of education on the South's democracy and market economy; and 4) 33 hours on preparations for resettlement and moving out on their own. Furthermore, the government provides them with a variety of financial and non-financial support to assist them with resettlement. The newcomers receive, for example, an initial cash payment, incentives related to employment and education, medical support, and favorable terms for leasing apartments. The government also creates a new family registry as they are South Korean citizens with all rights and privileges under the Constitution.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> North Koreans face a language barrier in even South Korea. Since the division more than 50 years ago, the Korean language developed independently in the north and south. Colloquial terminology differs dramatically, and South Koreans borrow many words from the English language, while the North Koreans do not.

<sup>134</sup> Ministry of Unification website, available at [http://www.unikorea.go.kr/eng/default.jsp?pgname=AFFhumanitarian\\_settlement](http://www.unikorea.go.kr/eng/default.jsp?pgname=AFFhumanitarian_settlement), accessed 31 January 2009.

In addition to South Korea's *Hanawon* model, Japan has a model it used in the 1970s. After the 1975 fall of Saigon, Japan provided refuge to 14,332 Vietnamese refugees, “not only on humanitarian grounds but also from the point of view of contributing to the peace and stability of the Southeast Asian region.”<sup>135</sup> Japan has extended opportunities to over 10,000 Southeast Asian refugees since 1978, assisting assimilation with Japanese language training, classes on social integration and job placement assistance.<sup>136</sup>

## C. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SIX-PARTY NATIONS

### 1. Suggested Policy for China

Due to the burgeoning problems of human trafficking and dishonest brokers who victimize North Korean refugees, the situation in China will worsen without government intervention. China should start by recognizing the marriages of North Korean women to Chinese men and give their children the same legal rights as residents.<sup>137</sup> Although China does not need to increase its labor force, a guest worker program would alleviate the need to crack down on illegal refugees in the shared border region.

China claims it repatriates the North Koreans out of respect for North Korea's sovereignty. A guest worker policy would not impinge on North Korea's sovereignty and would provide a productive, humane environment for immigrants working in China so they can provide for their families in North Korea. In addition, as more South Korean businesses invest in China, North Koreans with work permits could provide niche capabilities to foster South Korean business development.

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<sup>135</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan website, available at [http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/pamph2000\\_archive/refugee.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/pamph2000_archive/refugee.html), accessed 8 July 2008.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Due to China's one child policy, Chinese men far outnumber Chinese women and have difficulty finding marriage partners. Sharon La Franier, “Chinese Bias for Baby Boys Creates a Gap of 32 Million,” *New York Times*, April 10, 2009, available at [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/11/world/asia/11china.html?\\_r=1&scp=1&sq=china%20boys&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/11/world/asia/11china.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=china%20boys&st=cse), accessed 16 April 2009.

## 2. Suggested Policy for Japan

In 2006, Japan passed “The Law on Countermeasures to the Abduction Problem and other Problems of Human Rights Violations by the North Korean Authorities,” referred to as “The North Korean Human Rights Act.”<sup>138</sup> The Japanese legislation pales in comparison to the U.S. North Korean Human Rights Act of 2003. With its politically-inspired focus on the refugee issue, the Japanese law has little depth in dealing with the suffering of the North Korean people, and offers no commitment of resources.

Implementation of a more sound policy for refugee assimilation might help resolve Japanese worker shortages. Institutionalized job training and placement for North Korean immigrants could help alleviate Japan's domestic worker shortage caused by its aging population. Improved policy can also help Japan counter its negative reputation from World War II. Haruhisa Ogawa, a North Korean expert and human rights advocate, says, “The way Japan handles [the North Korean refugee] situation is crucial for its international image.”<sup>139</sup> A number of Japanese NGOs are dedicated to helping North Koreans; collaboration between these groups and the South Korean government would build relationships and help heal old wounds.

In case of a North Korea regime collapse and mass exodus of refugees, Japan’s close proximity means that “boat people” may reach its shores.<sup>140</sup> Inadequate immigration policy and emergency reception plans would have disastrous consequences. Japan’s ability to handle such a scenario would be greatly enhanced by appropriate planning and preparation.

Japan is a major economic player in Asia with strong military capabilities. Its Self Defense Forces have supported humanitarian and peacekeeping operations around the

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<sup>138</sup> Tessa Morris-Suzuki, “Refugees, Abductees, ‘Returnees’: Human Rights in Japan-North Korea Relations,” *Asia Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, 29 March 2009, available at [http://www.japanfocus.org/-Tessa-Morris\\_Suzuki/3110](http://www.japanfocus.org/-Tessa-Morris_Suzuki/3110), accessed 1 April 2009.

<sup>139</sup> Quoted in Suvendrini Kakuchi, “Japan: Refugees from North Korea are a Test for Tokyo,” Global Information Network, 29 January 2003, available at <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P1-71363895.html>, accessed 1 May 2009.

<sup>140</sup> Tessa Morris-Suzuki discusses a scenario where “economic and political crisis in North Korea might generate a wave of 300,000 refugees sweeping, tsunami like, onto Japan’s shores.” It is predicted that most of these refugees will be the original (or relatives of) ethnic Koreans who were living in Japan, but were repatriated back to North Korea from 1959 to 1984. See Tessa Morris-Suzuki, above.

world.<sup>141</sup> To offset its neighbors' fears of reemerging Japanese militarism, the government should continue to support humanitarian operations and emphasize the Japanese desire for regional peace by committing resources to the North Korean refugees. Improving legislation on North Korean human rights and using the model for integrating Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s would help Japan achieve these goals.

Japan should focus only on the North Korean refugee issue in its North Korean Human Rights Act, and resist the temptation to make refugee assistance contingent on resolution of the abductee issue. This is not because the abductee issue is insignificant, but because conditions should not be placed on refugee assistance. The strength of the policy stems from the collective efforts of the regional players implementing the common model. If each country were to attach a conditional resolution of a bilateral issue, the effect is watered down. According to one refugee interviewed by this author, the DPRK regime spends a lot of energy rattling the cage on the nuclear issue to distract attention from what would really negatively impact their regime, and that is the North Korean refugees. Japanese contributions to resolving this crisis would also likely resolve issues surrounding the abductions.

### **3. Suggested Policy for Russia**

The Russian government at the federal level allows North Korean loggers to keep their passports. They can travel freely throughout Russia and to other countries as long as they do not commit crimes, and the Russians will even repatriate them to South Korea. However, local Russian officials work hand in hand with the North Korean police who monitor the North Korean laborers. Local Russian officials either do not know or ignore the rights of North Koreans, including the right of access to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Russia should they want asylum.<sup>142</sup> The Russian government at the federal level should increase awareness of local government officials and make policies for fairer working conditions for North Korean laborers.

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<sup>141</sup> This PBS website has a concise summary of the Japan Self Defense Force deployments in support of various peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, logistical support, and homeland defense operations. <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/episodes/japans-about-face/map-japans-self-defense-forces-deployments/1275/>, accessed 1 April 2009.

<sup>142</sup> Meyer, 509.

A more positive situation would emerge from creating a guest worker visa policy, mandating more favorable work conditions, and insisting that laborers be chosen selectively rather than forcibly assigned to Russia as punishment. With such changes, fewer laborers would flee. The guest worker program could serve as a pressure release valve for North Korea, giving its people more options for finding work and providing for their families. The overall economic relationship between Russia and North Korea would be enhanced.

This could improve North Korean and Russian collaboration on the Iron Silk Road project. Russia wants to connect the Trans-Siberian Railroad to the inter-Korean railway system in order to move exports from South Korea through Russia and into Europe, a project that would greatly benefit the entire region.<sup>143</sup> Strengthening the South Korean, North Korean and Russian relationship would also provide a firmer economic foundation for a unified Korean peninsula sometime in the future.

Russian leadership on the Iron Silk Road project could strengthen its position in territorial disputes with Japan. Given Korea's history with Japan, increased economic cooperation between Russia and Korea means that Korea would likely support Russia in its territorial disputes with Japan, especially since Korea and Japan have similar disagreements over territory.

In *The Korean Peace Process and the Four Powers*, Seung-Ho Joo calls Russia an "honest broker and facilitator for Korean peace."

Russia spoke up on behalf of the DPRK in international gatherings, offered good offices between the two Koreas and between North Korea and Japan/the U.S., and suggested compromise solutions to the DPRK and the U.S. Russia's role in this regard has been quite visible and fairly positive but failed to lead to a breakthrough in the deadlocked relationship between the U.S. and the DPRK. The key to Korean peace is still in the hands of North Korea and U.S.<sup>144</sup>

Russia has less influence in the Six Party talks than China, Japan and South Korea, but even compared with China, Russia arguably has the strongest, most positive

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<sup>143</sup> Joo and Kwak, "Military Relations Between Russia and North Korea," 10.

<sup>144</sup> Tae-Kwan Kwak and Seung-Ho Joo, editors, *The Korean Peace Process and the Four Powers* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 155.

relationship with North Korea. Russia is North Korea's major benefactor, and a large number of North Koreans work in the Russian Far East (primarily in the lumber industry in Vladivostok) to pay off North Korea's debt. Workers are exported to Russia and monitored by North Koreans. Poorly treated and overworked, they suffer frequent serious injuries, and even deaths. Many times, they try to defect, and some North Korean refugees in China, fearing capture by Chinese authorities, seek asylum in Russia after hearing that Russian authorities are more willing to help. The Russian government, though more lenient than the Chinese government, has a mixed record of assisting these refugees, and has returned captured refugees to North Korea to avoid aggravating Russian–North Korean relations.

To reduce suffering, give workers an incentive to stay and decrease defection rates, Russia could implement a program allowing North Koreans in the logging industry to earn land rights and to build a house after a specified tenure.

#### **4. Suggested Policy for the United States**

The highest concentrations of expatriate Koreans are in the United States. Many faith-based organizations provide assistance to the recent immigrants. Some North Koreans want to immigrate to the United States to join relatives who can provide assistance and family support. Because many who immigrated in the 1960s came from North Korea, there is less discrimination to inhibit the assimilation of new North Korean immigrants into Korean–American communities. As far as assimilation into the mainstream U.S. population, America's cultural tradition as a melting pot makes the social environment more conducive to acceptance than homogeneous societies like Japan.

The United States committed to developing sound policy with the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004, but implementation has been slow. As of 2008, only 64 North Koreans are resettled in the United States under provisions of the legislation.<sup>145</sup> The 2008 NKHRA reauthorization bill renewed the funding provided in the original bill

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<sup>145</sup> Emma Chanlett-Avery, “Congress and U.S. Policy on North Korean Human Rights and Refugees: Recent Legislation and Implementation” (CRS Report for Congress, October 22, 2008), 4.

and elevated the special envoy's status to the equivalent of an ambassador. More energetic application of the NKHRA would improve the outlook for North Korean refugees to the United States.

## **5. Suggested Policy for the Republic of Korea**

South Korea is the default destination for many North Korean refugees. South Korea considers all Koreans from North Korea to be legal citizens. Of all the countries, South Korea has accepted the most North Koreans, and has the most comprehensive program for integrating them into South Korean society.

South Korea could take more steps to improve the situation, including collaborating with other countries to accept refugees. Such collaboration should include sharing social lessons learned and assisting other countries in conducting security checks. The collective goal should be successful assimilation of North Koreans wherever they choose to resettle. South Korea cannot possibly absorb all the North Korean defectors. When North Koreans immigrate to other countries, they expand their world view; broader experience will be useful when the refugees return to help rebuild North Korea, benefiting both North and South Korea.

South Korea can also improve integration of immigrants with greater efforts to educate their own population. More refugee awareness could help South Koreans overcome their biases against North Koreans. The South Korean government should advocate fairness and non-discrimination. The future of the Korean peninsula depends on successful integration of North Koreans. An accepting and open-minded society makes successful integration more likely.

## **D. CONCLUSION**

North Korea faces another severe food shortage from flood damage sustained in the 2007 rainy season. Unless it can meet the basic needs for food and security, and provide for the health and welfare of its populace, the regime risks collapse. If North Korea can be convinced to implement programs so its citizens can work legally in China, Russia, Japan and the ROK, such programs could relieve pressure on the North Korean government by giving its citizens the means to feed their families in North Korea.



The North Korean economy would improve with the assistance of the other Six Party nations, which would invite European investment. This, in turn, would facilitate construction of an Iron Silk Road, resulting in prosperity for the whole region. North Korea should be persuaded that its geographic location gives it the key to realizing this dream.

The difficulty for such programs lies in convincing North Korea to allow citizen participation. Since the regime relies on population control to maintain power, it is inconceivable that they would allow their citizens to leave the country freely. However, thousands leave North Korea without permission. The North Korean regime will not last forever, and when the time comes for a successor, a window of opportunity may open for North Koreans abroad to return and contribute to the reformation of their homeland.

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