

NORTH KOREA IN THE VICE

FOR ITS PUBLIC ENEMY number two Washington has chosen the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the relic 'guerrilla state' whose founding myths and national identity were forged in the thirties, through armed resistance to a brutal Japanese colonialism—and hardened over half a century of Cold War since it fought the US to a standstill, in 1953. Permeated by monolithism, xenophobia and leader-worship, the DPRK has never demobilized. It still maintains a standing army, nearly a million strong, deployed along the Demilitarized Zone barely 30 miles north of Seoul; among its conventional weapons alone it numbers over 3,000 tanks, 11,000 artillery pieces, 850 combat aircraft and 430 combat ships.¹ Famously the most industrialized region of the peninsula prior to US carpet bombing during the Korean War, and surpassing the southern Republic of Korea in growth during the fifties and sixties, the DPRK's failure to import or invest in capital goods over the past decades has left its plant rotting or obsolescent, with the energy and chemical-fertilizer sectors—the latter essential for food production in this largely mountainous country—especially hard hit. From the mid-1990s, floods and famine have compounded the social and economic misery.

Yet, like spring to a frozen river, change may come to a long immutable system with violent suddenness and in unpredictable ways. The election of Kim Dae Jung as president of South Korea in 1997—his pro-engagement Sunshine Policy breaking with decades of hostility towards the North—provided the beleaguered DPRK with an opportunity to seek openings for desperately needed capital investment. Pyongyang entered negotiations, proud yet nervously vulnerable, always mindful of its local military advantage as a bargaining chip. In June 2000 Kim Dae Jung travelled north for a historic summit with Kim Jong Il; both pledged

social, economic and cultural cooperation and joint progress towards reunification, in an atmosphere of euphoric anticipation.

Hyundai began work on a Special Economic Zone near Kaesong, just north of the DMZ; a joint tourist development was opened at Mount Kumgang, a sacred site in Korean culture; mine-clearing work was started along the DMZ and railway lines repaired. The DPRK normalized relations with a series of countries, including most of Western Europe and Australia, and North Korean officials were dispatched abroad in search of development models and technical assistance. Kim himself travelled to Beijing in May 2001, Shanghai in January 2001 and Russia in August 2001. Another SEZ project was set in motion at Sinuiju, on the Yalu River frontier with China; it aimed to create a walled capitalist enclave for international finance, trade, commerce, industry, advanced technology, leisure and tourism, with the US dollar as its currency and its own independent legislature, judiciary and administration. The existing population, some half a million people, would be relocated.² In July 2002 a lurch towards Chinese-style economic reforms abolished rationing, raised wages and prices eighteen-fold (the purchase price to farmers for rice rose five-hundred-fold), introduced the first housing rents and utility charges, and devalued the currency to one seventieth of its (purely nominal) rate—from the fixed 2.20 won to the dollar rate to something closer to the 150-won black-market value.³

Yet the thickening mesh of relationships between the two Koreas—a few of the many separated families had also been united—was taking place within an increasingly fraught international context: a deteriorating world economy, heightened competition between China and Japan, and an incoming American administration already seeking a more direct assertion of Washington's primacy in the region. With the sharpening of US policy after 9.11 North Korea was declared one of the three members of the Axis of Evil in Bush's January 2002 State of the Union address; and, with Iraq, was one of the two named 'rogue states' in the September 2002 National Security Strategy document. Meanwhile in Seoul, Kim

¹ Centre for Nonproliferation Studies, www.globalsecurity.org. The term 'guerrilla state' (*yūgekитай kokka*) was first proposed by Wada Haruki: *Kin Nissei to Manshū kōnichī sensō*, Tokyo 1992.

² The future of the project remains uncertain at the time of writing, following the arrest in China of the zone's designated governor, a Dutch-Chinese businessman.

³ *P'yongyang Report*, vol. 4, no. 3, August 2002, pp. 3–4.

Dae Jung's five-year presidency staggs to its end in the December 2002 elections through a mire of corruption. Of the candidates looking set to replace him, the conservative Lee Hoi Chang of the Grand National Party, in particular, espouses a much harder rhetoric on North Korea.

Within this hostile forcefield, the Pyongyang leadership seems to have concluded that normalizing its relations with Tokyo and Washington—its former occupier, on the one hand, and the devastator of its civilian infrastructure, on the other—was now an essential goal. In October 2001, tentative feelers were sent out to Japan, seeking negotiations. Quiet diplomatic exchanges, involving at least thirty meetings between North Korean and Japanese diplomats over the following year, explored the outstanding issues: for Pyongyang, apologies and reparation for the atrocities committed during Japan's four-decade occupation of the peninsula, from 1905 to 1945; for Tokyo, the encroachment of North Korean spy ships into Japanese waters, and the suspicions that a dozen or so of its nationals had been abducted by the DPRK. Broad principles were agreed over the summer of 2002 and the stage set for Koizumi's 17 September visit to Pyongyang.

Summit of apology

The meeting was tense. Koizumi is reported to have taken his own *bentō* lunchbox with him. That night, on the plane back to Tokyo, it was still unopened. Kim Jong Il and his guest came together only to talk, not to eat. Nor, it seems, had they performed the deep ritual bow.⁴ Instead, the summit was marked by a highly unequal exchange of apologies. Koizumi issued a formulaic expression, asserting that

The Japanese side regards, in a spirit of humility, the facts of history that Japan caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of Korea through its colonial rule in the past, and expresses deep remorse and heartfelt apology.⁵

The wording—virtually identical to that used in the Japan–South Korea talks in October 1998—was acceptable to the Tokyo bureaucracy precisely because it carried no legal implications and could be seen as more-or-less perfunctory. Japan had long resisted any claim for the reparations that might properly be expected to accompany a 'heartfelt apology', and only

⁴ At least, if there was such a moment, it was missed by the TV coverage I saw.

⁵ Pyongyang Declaration, 17 September 2002: www.mofa.go.jp.

came to the table with Pyongyang when assured that demands for such payments would be dropped. Abandoning the long-held Korean insistence that the colonial regime was an illegal imposition, maintained by military force, Kim Jong Il ceded to the Japanese view that it was properly constituted under international law. Already, many in the South lament the outcome as an opportunity lost for Korea as a whole.⁶

For his own part, meanwhile, Kim launched into a quite extraordinary series of apologies, admitting to the abduction of a dozen Japanese civilians during the seventies and eighties, among them a schoolgirl, a beautician, a cook, three dating couples (whisked away from remote beaches) and several students touring Europe, all of whom had been taken to Pyongyang either to teach Japanese-language courses to North Korean intelligence agents, or else to have their identities appropriated for operations in South Korea, Japan or elsewhere. ‘Some elements of a special agency of state’ had been ‘carried away by fanaticism and desire for glory’, Kim explained. According to Japanese government sources, the unit responsible for the abductions is most probably Room 35—formerly, the Overseas Intelligence Department of the Korean Workers’ Party. A separate Section 56, under the ruling Korean Workers’ Party’s External Liaison Department, is suspected of abductions from Europe. But in a state over which the Leader exercises complete and unquestioned authority, there could be little doubt as to where ultimate responsibility lay.⁷

The confession, therefore, was a historic event. A Russian observer commented that ‘in a totalitarian state, an apology affects the very basis of the state system. The sense of crisis in North Korea is so deep that they had no alternative but to take this risk’.⁸ But having admitted to these instances, Kim Jong Il is now bound to come under suspicion for others. The Japanese authorities have long linked Room 35 and its

⁶ See *Hankyoreh Sinmoon*, 18 and 24 September 2002, quoted in Yoon Kooncha, ‘Sore de mo yappari Nitchō no seijōka wo’, *Shūkan kinyōbi*, 18 October 2002, p. 10.

⁷ According to Hwang Jang Yop, the KWP secretary in charge of international affairs who defected to the South in 1997, ‘Every single mission of every single spy has to be approved by him. So the major terror attacks definitely had his hand in them. This man is a terrorism genius.’ Kim Hyong Hui, convicted of the 1987 KAL bombing, also insists that orders for the attack came direct from Kim Jong Il, and that it was designed to create an atmosphere of terror to spoil the forthcoming Olympic Games in Seoul: *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 15 October 1998.

⁸ Alexander Fedorovsky, quoted in *Asahi shimbun*, 18 September 2002.

forebears to the guerrilla attack on the Blue House—the ROK presidential residence—in 1968; to the Rangoon bomb attack that killed several members of a South Korean presidential delegation to Myanmar in October 1983; and to the mid-air explosion of Korean Airlines Flight 859 over the Andaman Sea in November 1987, in which 115 people died. Ultimately, the confession will also confront Kim Jong Il with the problem of shoring up his authority in his own realm. Needless to say, nothing of the abductions, the spy ships or Kim’s apology was reported in the North Korean media. The talks were declared a triumph. The Japanese Prime Minister had come to Pyongyang to apologize, at last, for the atrocities of sixty years ago; thanks to Kim’s extraordinary intellect and resourcefulness, a normal relationship could now be expected to resume. Sooner or later, however, other versions of what transpired on 17 September are bound to circulate; Japanese pressures for open access, to investigate the fate of the abductees, will accelerate the process. It remains to be seen whether a regime so identified with the image of its ruler can survive such loss of face on his part: the transformation of the semi-divine ‘Dear Leader’ into a flawed and hard-pressed politician who confesses to such crimes—and to the Japanese, in particular.

There have been some signs that may indicate internal conflict within the DPRK elite. Kim Jong Il’s initial announcement of ‘new thinking’ and economic restructuring, made on the eve of his Shanghai visit in January 2001, was soon swept out of the news, and traditional slogans dominated the press with a vengeance. In December 2001, not long after negotiations with Tokyo had begun, a heavily armed North Korean spy ship was sent into Japanese waters. The vessel was sunk by Japanese Coastguards in the South China Sea, and salvaged at the end of September 2002; it was reported to be equipped with ‘two anti-aircraft missiles, two rocket launchers, a recoilless gun, twelve rockets, an anti-aircraft gun, two light machine-guns, three automatic rifles and six grenades’, as well as ‘an underwater scooter of a design rarely seen’.⁹ At the September 17 meeting, Kim’s reaction to Japanese protests about the ‘mystery ship’ was to claim: ‘a Special Forces unit was engaged in its own exercises. I had not imagined that it would go to such lengths and do such things . . . The Special Forces are a relic of the past and I want to take steps to wind them up’.¹⁰

⁹ Daily Yomiuri Online, 30 September 2002.

¹⁰ Wada Haruki, ‘Can North Korea’s Perestroika Succeed?’, *Sekai*, November 2002.

The Abducted Japanese, 1977–83

Survived

1. **Chimura Yasushi**: abducted in July 1978 from Fukui, aged 23; married Hamamoto Fukie in November 1979 (see below)—three children; translator at Pyongyang Academy of Science.
2. **Hamamoto Fukie**: abducted in July 1978 from Fukui.
3. **Hasuike Kaoru**: abducted in July 1978 from Kashiwazaki, Niigata, aged 20; married Okudo Yukiko in May 1980 (see below)—two children, aged 21 and 18; translator at Pyongyang Academy of Science.
4. **Okudo Yukiko**: abducted in July 1978 from Kashiwazaki, aged 22.
5. **Soga Hitomi**: abducted while shopping on 12 August 1978 from Sado Island, where she worked as a nurse, aged 19; married former US serviceman in 1980—two daughters, aged 19 and 17. (Whereabouts of mother, who disappeared with her, unknown.)

Dead

1. **Arimoto Keiko**, died 4 November 1988 with husband and child, poisoned by gas from coal heater: abducted in October 1983 from Copenhagen while studying in London, aged 23; married Ishioka Toru in 1985; remains lost in landslide in August 1995.
2. **Hara Tadaaki**, died 19 July 1986 of liver failure (cirrhosis): abducted in June 1980 from the Miyazaki Prefecture, aged 49; married Taguchi Yaeko in October 1984; their remains lost in flooding.
3. **Ichikawa Shuichi**, died 4 September 1979 of drowning (heart failure) in Wonsan: abducted in August 1978 from Kagoshima, aged 23; married Matsumoto Rumiko on 20 April 1979 (see below); remains lost in July 1995 floods and dam burst.
4. **Ishioka Toru**, died 4 November 1988: abducted on 7 June 1980 from Spain, aged 22; married Arimoto Keiko in December 1985.
5. **Matsuki Kaoru**, died 23 August 1996 in traffic accident: abducted on 7 June 1980 from Spain; remains washed away in floods but subsequently recovered, cremated, and re-interred in common grave on 30 August 2002.
6. **Masumoto Rumiko**, died 17 August 1981 of heart failure: abducted in August 1978 from the Kagoshima Prefecture, aged 24; married Ichikawa Shuichi on 20 April 1979; remains lost in July 1995 flooding.
7. **Taguchi Yaeko**, died 30 July 1986 in traffic accident: abducted in June 1978, aged 22; married Hara Tadaaki in October 1984; remains washed away in floods. [aka. Lee Un-hye, tutor to Kim Hyon-hui]
8. **Yokota Megumi**, committed suicide on 13 March 1993: abducted on 15 November 1977 from Niigata, aged 13; married Kim Chol Ju in 1986—daughter Kim Hye Gyong was born on 14 September 1987. [aka. Ryu Myong-suk]

Compiled from information in various media sources. Pyongyang admits abduction of 7 people, but claims 5 went of their free will and one was spirited away with help from a Japanese intermediary. It also says that the two people responsible for the abductions, Chang Pong Rim and Kim Sung Chol, were tried in 1998 and sentenced to death and 15 years respectively. The five survivors told Japanese investigators in late September that they were 'reluctant to return to Japan'.

In fact, Kim may have miscalculated in making such major concessions to Tokyo at the September 17 meeting. He presumably gambled that confession would be the quickest route to resolution, and thence normalization—not foreseeing the mass uproar the abduction issue would provoke in Japan. By giving up any claim to official compensation for the crimes of Japanese colonialism, he probably calculated on eventually receiving ‘aid’ funds of around ¥1.5 trillion, or \$12 billion—roughly equivalent to the \$500 million paid to South Korea in 1965, and a very substantial sum for the financially destitute North.¹¹ However, any such sum will come only in tied, project-related form, and be at least as beneficial to the Japanese construction industry as to North Korea. Nor will it be easily wrung from the Japanese Diet in its present fiscally straitened circumstances—and in the current climate of media-stoked popular revulsion against North Korea.

Japanese backlash

As in the DPRK, so in Japan—and internationally—attention has focused almost exclusively on one side of the story. As far as Koizumi’s spin doctors were concerned, the prime minister had forced an admission of guilt from a ‘disgraceful’ (*keshikaran*) state.¹² The question of whether Japan should have paid reparations was barely raised, and the fact that its own apology came fifty-seven years late was attributed, if at all, to the stubborn and unreasonable nature of the North Korean regime—not to anything ‘stubborn’ or ‘unreasonable’ in Tokyo. One Japanese commentator tried to set this in context, questioning the normality of a Japan that

invaded a neighbouring country and turned it into a colony; appropriated people’s land, names, language, towns and villages; killed those who resisted, forcibly abducting and dispatching around various war zones young men, as labourers and soldiers for the Imperial army, and women, as ‘comfort women’, at the cost of countless lives; and then, for fifty-seven years, did not apologize or make reparation.¹³

¹¹ \$8 billion was the figure discussed when the LDP’s Kanemaru Shin led a multi-party delegation of parliamentarians to Pyongyang in 1990: *Asahi*, 16 September 2002. Richard Armitage, US Deputy Secretary of State, is said to have told Koizumi that \$12 billion would be an appropriate figure when the two met in Tokyo on 27 August 2002: *Weekly Post*, 9–15 September 2002.

¹² At an electoral meeting; see *Mainichi shimbun*, 14 October 2002.

¹³ *Shūkan kinyōbi*, 27 September 2002.

The respected Korean-in-Japan novelist, Kim Sok Pon, denounced both North Korea—for the abductions and for its ‘traitorous and shameful’ act of abandoning claims for reparations—and Japan, for its ‘historical amnesia’.¹⁴

Such voices, however, were drowned by a chorus of Japanese anguish and self-righteous anger. The revelations of 17 September stirred a public mood compared by some to that of the US after 9.11. Mass opinion was swayed by a tumult of emotions: empathy with the pain suffered by the abductees’ families, combined with fear and outrage that such things could happen at all; rage at Pyongyang, and desire for revenge; anger at the Japanese government, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in particular, for its vacillation, incompetence and dissembling; the conviction that Japan would have to teach North Korea how to be ‘a normal state’.

When, in late September 2002, the five surviving abductees told Japanese investigators that they were ‘reluctant to return to Japan’, their sentiments were almost universally attributed to brain-washing. After heavy pressure from Tokyo, the abductees—but not their six children—were brought over to Japan on 15 October. Their refusal to speak ill of North Korea to the Japanese press was seen as proof positive that they were unable to express themselves freely. Their statement that they would keep their visit brief and then return to Pyongyang was dismissed as unbelievable, and a frenzied campaign was mounted to insist they stay. On 24 October, the Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda Yasuo announced that, despite the agreement that they would be returned after two weeks, the hapless five would not be allowed back ‘regardless of their intentions’. As the *Japan Times* explained, it was ‘essential’ that they stay in Japan permanently, ‘so that they can express their free will’. Tokyo now also demanded the handover of the former abductees’ children, who were going about their life in Pyongyang with no idea, as the *Asahi* pointed out, that their parents were Japanese, let alone originally abducted Japanese, or that they had been spirited away from them and would not be allowed to come home.¹⁵

When Japanese and North Korean delegates met in Kuala Lumpur at the end of October 2002, the Japanese demand for the ‘return’—ie,

¹⁴ *Asahi.com*, 27 October 2002.

¹⁵ *Yomiuri* 25 October 2002; *Japan Times*, 25 October 2002; *Asahi*, 25 October 2002.

the handing over—of the children was a major point of contention. For Tokyo, the children were unquestionably ‘Japanese’, whether they knew it or not, and therefore belonged to Japan. The North Koreans pointed out that Tokyo was already in breach of the agreement under which the five abductees would, in the first instance, return to Japan for two weeks at most; the children could not simply be ‘handed over’ (or taken by force, as the Japanese side implied). Pyongyang was surely right to take the view that the families themselves should decide where they wished to live—for which it was indispensable that they first be reunited in their North Korean homes. And although Pyongyang would scarcely make the point, Tokyo, in deciding to keep the five ‘permanently’ in Japan, appeared to be in breach of Article 22 of the Japanese Constitution, which holds that ‘Every person shall have freedom to choose and change his residence . . . Freedom of all persons to move to a foreign country and to divest themselves of their nationality shall be inviolate’. Nevertheless, it was the North Korean delegates who were admonished to show more ‘sincerity’ and told that ‘Japan and North Korea seemed to place a different value on people’s lives’. Barely a month after September 17, the Japanese apology seemed already forgotten.¹⁶

Perhaps the most poignant story is that of 15-year-old Kim Hye Gyong. Kim’s mother, Yokota Megumi, was snatched on her way home from a badminton game in 1977, when she was only thirteen, and taken to the DPRK. In 1986 she married a North Korean man, Kim Chol Ju, and a year later gave birth to her daughter. According to Pyongyang, Yokota, suffering from depression, committed suicide in 1993, when her little girl was five. The wisdom of Solomon would scarcely suffice to decide the case: Yokota’s parents, their lives shattered by the abduction, are now demanding the ‘return’ of their grand-daughter, brought up entirely in the DPRK, and are claiming custody from her Korean father. A barrage of Japanese efforts was launched to persuade this young girl to leave home and ‘visit’ her grandparents in Japan. Interviewed for Japanese television, she tearfully asked why her grandparents, having promised to come to see her, now insisted instead that she go and visit them. Her grandparents responded with the enticement of a trip to Disneyland.

¹⁶ Asahi.com, 30 October 2002; ‘Talks on hold until Pyongyang affirms family reunion’, *Japan Times*, 1 November 2002; Daily Yomiuri Online, 1 November 2002. The Japanese also announced that they would be demanding compensation for the abductees, despite the fact that they have always ruled out any compensation to former Korean ‘comfort women’, slave labourers and other victims of the colonial era.

Japanese government statements made clear, though not to Kim, that any such visit would become a one-way trip, as it had for the five ‘returnees’. The tragedy of the abductees seems set to continue, their rights and wishes honoured in the abstract, but in practice secondary to the *amour propre* of a roused Japanese mass opinion.

In the weeks following the dramatic September meeting, North Korea provided further information on the fate of the abductees. The eight who had died appeared to have done so in very strange circumstances: two were poisoned by a defective coal-heater, two killed in traffic accidents (in a country with very little traffic), two suffered heart failure (one while swimming), one cirrhosis of the liver, and one suicide. Furthermore, the remains of almost all had been ‘washed away in floods’. In Japan, the angry and disbelieving families of the victims denounced the documentation provided by Pyongyang as a travesty and insisted the survivors be brought back, if necessary ‘by force’ (*muriyari ni*).¹⁷ South Korean sources have suggested that those who died may have been sent to mountain labour camps for refusing to perform what the Koreans call *chonhyang*, and the Japanese *tenkō*: the bow in submission to *Juche*, or Self-Sufficiency, official ideology of the DPRK. In Japan there was speculation that they may simply have known too much. The Japanese police now think there may be many more abductees than at first suspected—perhaps forty. There are also said to be people of other nationalities—European, Arab, Chinese—as well as over four hundred South Koreans snatched, according to Seoul, since 1953.¹⁸

Abduction, however, is a curious phenomenon. The initial instance of compulsion is plain; but in several cases, at least, those abducted seem to have accommodated themselves quite successfully to the North Korean system. The five Japanese who returned to Tokyo in October 2002, after more than twenty years in the DPRK, apparently did so as loyal North Korean followers of Kim Jong Il. Perhaps the most extraordinary case is that of two South Koreans, the film director, Shin Sang-Ok, and actress, Ch’oe Hyun-hi. The pair were abducted in 1978

¹⁷ The words of one of the family representatives on NHK News, 3 October 2002.

¹⁸ From a letter by the organization of families of the abducted Japanese to the Prime Minister, 19 March 2002, www.geocities.co.jp. On the ‘442 abductees’ alleged by South Korea to be still detained in North Korea, see ‘A Draft Bill of Indictment of Kim Jong Il’, drawn up in April 1999 by the Seoul-based National Conference for Freedom and Democracy.

and made several films together at the Pyongyang studios, before eventually escaping in 1986. Both insist that Kim Jong Il was directly involved in their abduction, driven by his obsession to improve the quality of North Korean cinema. In November 2001 Shin chaired the jury of the International Film Festival at Pusan, in South Korea. Looking back over a career in Seoul, Pyongyang and Hollywood, he remarked that he thought his best film was *Runaway*—one he had made for Kim Jong Il. Ironically, *Runaway* was withdrawn from screening by order of the ROK's Supreme Prosecutor.¹⁹

History of terror

It scarcely needs to be said that the main victims of the DPRK state are, and have always been, the people of North Korea. There is general agreement on the basic facts. Approximately 200,000 people—just under 1 per cent of a population of around 23 million—are thought to be held in labour camps. Between one and two million—5 to 10 per cent—are estimated to have died of starvation, and hundreds of thousands of refugees have fled, mostly to China. Although the DPRK's peculiar blend of terror, mobilization and seclusion has been slowly losing its coherence since the end of the Cold War, the system still stands, held together by the absolute authority of the 'Dear Leader', Kim Jong Il.

Yet set in a historical context, North Korea's record on this score pales before the sum of suffering inflicted by Japan and the superpowers—no least the US—on the Korean people. Washington's 'terror state' label offers neither an understanding of this past, nor any prescription for the present or future. 'Normalcy' has not been known in Northeast Asia for a hundred years. The briefest digression on the historical experience of terror in the region demonstrates the ambiguity of the concept. The most respected and honoured national hero throughout the Korean peninsula is An Chong Gun who, in 1909, assassinated Ito Hirobumi, the Japanese Resident. For Tokyo—and, no doubt, for the rest of the world—he is simply a 'terrorist'. Koizumi, for his part, has made a point of showing deep reverence for the well-kept shrines of the Japanese terrorists who, in the name and with the blessing of the Emperor, laid Asia to waste in the thirties and forties; and, above all, for those Japanese progenitors of the suicide bombers, the *kamikaze*. At the heart of the terror

¹⁹ 'Film Guru Shin Sang Ok Tells of Kim Jong Il', *Seoul Times*, November 2001.

during those years was Imperial Japan's abduction of hundreds of thousands of young Korean men, for forced labour and military service, and women, for forced prostitution. The Japanese state has barely begun to concede responsibility for these crimes.

For Korea, the terror of Imperial Japan was immediately followed, from 1945, by further foreign occupation and *de facto* partition, as the Americans entered the southern half of the peninsula and the Soviet Union the north. The Korean War of 1950–53 began as a civil war, to re-unify a nation divided by outside powers. International intervention—first and foremost by the US, and then by China—turned it into a vast conflagration. Great efforts have been devoted to conveying the impression of North Korea as a uniquely inhuman regime during this period, responsible for the most brutal terrorism and massacre. Although its behaviour was far from blameless, it is now clear that the greatest atrocities of the War were those committed, firstly, by South Korea, at Nogunri, Taejon and elsewhere; and then by the US, whose deliberate devastation of dams, power stations, and the infrastructure of social life throughout the northern region was plainly in breach of international law. American military strategy at the time was to leave 'not a stone upon a stone', to sow terror with every means at its disposal.²⁰

Within the southern Republic of Korea, proclaimed in 1948, the violence of the war was only slowly purged. Murder, torture and kidnapping by the organs of the state remained common up until the democratic revolution of 1987. Between 1967 and 1969, over a hundred students, artists and intellectuals, studying or resident in Europe and North America, were dragged back to Seoul; accused of spying; tortured; tried; and, in a number of instances, sentenced to death or long imprisonment. Among them was Yun I-Sang, now regarded as one of the greatest Korean and German composers of the twentieth century. His death sentence was eventually commuted, but the torture left a mark from which he never fully recovered; Yun died in 1995. Others, such as Park No Su (Francis Park), a student at Oxford, were simply executed. In 1973 Kim Dae Jung, the current ROK president, was snatched by South Korean CIA agents from a Tokyo hotel room; he, too, barely escaped with his life. The affair

²⁰ Jon Halliday and Bruce Cumings, *Korea—The Unknown War*, London 1988; Stewart Lone and Gavan McCormack, *Korea since 1850*, New York 1993, pp. 119–22; Bruce Cumings, 'Occurrence at Nogun-ri bridge', *Critical Asian Studies*, vol. 33, no. 4, December 2001.

was quietly buried by the two governments and has never been properly investigated; much less resolved by apologies and compensation. The state terror of the South Korean military regime—backed to the hilt by the US and Japan—reached its apogee in 1980, when hundreds, if not thousands, were slaughtered in the Kwangju massacre. It is worth recalling, however, that it was the triumph of the popular mass movement, led by workers and students, which ended that regime of terror. Now as then, it is the Korean people themselves, and not outsiders, who can best resolve the problem of the North.²¹

Living under nuclear skies

North Korea has few cards in its pack. The nuclear one has been its joker for at least a decade. It should be recalled that the country is well acquainted with nuclear terror, having been at its receiving end for over half a century. In the winter of 1950 General MacArthur sought permission to drop ‘between thirty and fifty atomic bombs’, laying a belt of radioactive cobalt across the neck of the Korean peninsula. During the Korean War the Joint Chiefs of Staff deliberated about using the bomb, and came close to it several times. In Operation Hudson Harbour, late in 1951, a solitary B52 was dispatched to Pyongyang as if on a nuclear run, designed to cause terror—as it undoubtedly did. From 1957, the Americans kept a stockpile of nuclear weapons close to the Demilitarized Zone, designed to intimidate the then non-nuclear North. It was only withdrawn in 1991, under pressure from the South Korean peace movement; but the US continued its rehearsals for a long-range nuclear bombing strike on North Korea at least up to 1998, and probably to this very day.²² The DPRK seeks no apology; but it does want an end to the threat of nuclear annihilation under which it has lived for longer than any other nation.

North Korea knows that the world is full of nuclear hypocrisy. Non-nuclear countries bow to the prerogative of the great powers that possess the bomb, while resenting their monopoly. They recognize that entry into the ‘nuclear club’ paradoxically earns the respect of current club members—at the same time as it threatens annihilation for those outside.

²¹ For a survivor’s account: Suh Sung, *Unbroken Spirit: Nineteen Years in the South Korean Gulag*, Lanham, MD 2001.

²² Halliday and Cumings, *Unknown War*, pp. 128, 163; Hans Kristensen, ‘Preemptive posturing’, *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, vol. 58, no. 5, Sept–Oct 2002, pp. 54–9.

While Washington demands that other nations disavow any nuclear plans, it has refused to ratify the test-ban treaty and signalled its intent to pursue the militarization of space. In addition to its estimated armoury of 9,000 nuclear weapons, the US has on several occasions deployed depleted uranium, both in the Gulf War and in the Balkans; Congress is being pushed to authorize production of 'robust nuclear earth penetrators', designed for use against underground complexes and bunkers.

In 1993, US intelligence reports that North Korea was developing a plutonium-based nuclear programme led to the threat of war. The cost of implementing the Pentagon's Operations Plan 5027, however, was judged too high. It was estimated that 'as many as one million people would be killed in the resumption of full-scale war on the peninsula, including 80,000 to 100,000 Americans, that the out-of-pocket costs to the United States would exceed \$100 billion, and that the destruction of property and interruption of business activity would cost more than \$1 trillion'.²³ Much as it would have liked to force a 'regime change', in Pyongyang as in Baghdad, the US was obliged to negotiate. Carter was dispatched to the DPRK in June 1994 and a deal was done that became known as the Geneva 'Agreed Framework': under the auspices of the Korean Energy Development Organization, North Korea would drop its programme in return for two electricity-generating light-water reactors, to be installed by 2003, and an interim annual purchase of 3.3 million barrels of oil; while the US pledged to move towards 'full normalization of political and economic relations'. Pyongyang, the leading study of these events concludes, played the nuclear card 'brilliantly, forcing one of the world's richest and most powerful nations to undertake negotiations and to make concessions to one of the least successful'.²⁴

The US was reluctant about the Agreed Framework from the start; there are indications that Washington expected North Korea to collapse before the reactors were installed. The '2003' pledge was never taken seriously: delays were chronic and preliminary construction on the site only began in 2002. No electricity could be generated until the end of the decade at the earliest. On the move towards 'full normalization' of relations—a crucial part of the deal for Pyongyang—progress was equally

²³ Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, London 1998, p. 324.

²⁴ 'Agreed Framework between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea', Geneva, 21 October 1994; Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, p. 336. The fuel-oil constitutes only 15 per cent of North Korea's annual consumption.

slow, speeding up only in the last months of Clinton's presidency, when visits were exchanged between Kim Jong Il's right-hand man, Marshall Jo Myong Rok, and US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

From around 1998, American intelligence agents appear to have discovered that the DPRK was engaged in the enrichment of uranium. It is not yet clear whether they did so by detecting a large thermal signature from the industrial process, leaking into the atmosphere and observable by infra-red sensors on satellites or aircraft, or by tracking the purchase of specialized equipment (possibly from Pakistan), or both. Uranium enrichment, it should be noted, was not covered by the Agreed Framework. Nor is it entirely clear what processes the DPRK has been involved in. Only highly enriched uranium can be used to create nuclear weapons; at lower levels of enrichment it is used in reactors—though not in the type of reactors that North Korea was building in the early nineties.²⁵

Koizumi had been briefed on this in Washington on 12 September 2002, just prior to his meeting with Kim Jong Il. But although the Pyongyang Declaration contained a confirmation that both sides would comply with 'all international agreements' on nuclear issues, in Washington's opinion Koizumi had not pressed hard enough. On 3 October a special presidential envoy, Deputy Secretary of State James Kelly, was dispatched to North Korea to 'stress the nuclear issue more forcefully'. The expectation was that Pyongyang would deny the charges, which would be taken as excuse enough to scrap the Agreed Framework. In bullish terms, Kelly demanded that North Korea 'dramatically alter its behaviour across a range of issues, including its WMD programmes, development and export of ballistic missiles, threats to its neighbours' and so forth.²⁶ Instead of denying the accusations, however, First Vice-Minister Kang Song Ju—according to Kelly—admitted to a uranium-enriching programme and 'other weapons' that were 'even more powerful'.

There are several questions about what really happened. What exactly did Kang—Pyongyang's most experienced negotiator and a central figure in the 1994 talks—really admit to, and with what intention? An official

²⁵ See Peter Hayes, 'The Agreed Framework is Dead, Long live the Agreed Framework!', Nautilus Institute, October 2002.

²⁶ Kelly's Pyongyang counterparts described him as 'extremely high-handed and arrogant': Alexandre Mansourov, 'The Kelly Process', NAPSNET, 22 October 2002.

statement from Korean Central News Agency merely declared that ‘the DPRK made very clear to the special envoy of the US President that the DPRK was entitled to possess not only nuclear weapons but any type of weapon more powerful than that, so as to defend its sovereignty and right to existence from the ever-growing nuclear threat by the US.’ To the UN, North Korea declared that it had indeed purchased uranium-enrichment devices, but not operated them.²⁷ Whether possession of a ‘device’ amounts to a ‘programme’ is a moot point, but North Korea has certainly done none of the testing essential to weapons development. The DPRK did have an obligation under the Agreed Framework to allow inspection by the IAEA, but only when ‘a significant portion’ of the reactors are completed and before ‘key nuclear components’ are delivered. Since there had been no progress on the KEDO front for so long, Pyongyang may have taken the view that the obligation, like the reactors, had been postponed.

In Seoul there was speculation that Washington might have ‘misunderstood’, perhaps even deliberately distorted, Kang’s words. Kim Dae Jung’s senior presidential advisor also questioned the timing of the US revelation, in the wake of the Koizumi visit and with North–South economic cooperation gaining momentum. Nevertheless, on 16 October 2002 White House spokesman Sean McCormack announced that Pyongyang was in ‘material breach’ of its agreement. Washington had now provided itself with an excuse for micro-managing regional openings to North Korea, insisting that its ‘Northeast Asian allies’ march ‘in lockstep’ from now on in terms of political and economic sanctions. On 14 November 2002, the KEDO executive announced it was suspending fuel-oil deliveries, beginning with the December shipment.

As to Pyongyang’s goals, perhaps the most likely interpretation is that offered by Seoul’s Ministry of Unification: ‘their true aim is not to continue the nuclear-development programme, but to seek a breakthrough in relations with the United States’. Alexandre Mansourov has argued in a similar vein: ‘The DPRK has been pursuing a clandestine, alternative nuclear R&D programme, as a hedge against possible collapse of the Agreed Framework, since as early as the late 1990s . . . On the one hand, Kim Jong Il responded to what he apparently perceived as

²⁷ ‘North Korea Floats Non-Aggression Pact with US to End Nuclear Crisis’, *Agence France-Presse*, 25 October 2002; ‘North: Uranium Device Not Used’, *Asahi*, 29 October 2002.

Kelly's threats with a disguised nuclear threat of his own. On the other hand, he extended an offer of comprehensive engagement.' In this view, Kim's action was not 'irrational brinkmanship' but 'premeditated coercive diplomacy'. Pyongyang's calculation may be seen as coldly rational, premised on the knowledge that a nuclear programme is one thing the US will take seriously.²⁸

'The Britain of East Asia'

In Japan, support for Koizumi rose in the immediate aftermath of his Pyongyang visit, to something near the levels he had attained when he entered office early in 2001, with surveys indicating strong backing for initiatives towards normalization.²⁹ But anger and hostility towards the DPRK escalated as the plight of the abductees became known. The peculiar Japanese phenomenon of displaced violence—in which school children wearing Korean dress were insulted and abused, or slashed with cutters on the subways or in the streets of Tokyo, Osaka and other cities—spread once again. Calls for retribution were uttered from high quarters, Korean institutions had to be placed under guard and death threats were reported.³⁰ Opposition to normalization grew. On 19 September the *Asahi*, voice of the liberal mainstream, asked: 'Is it really necessary to establish diplomatic ties with such an unlawful nation?'

There is a domestic political context to all this. Speculation is rife of imminent moves to displace Koizumi, split and reorganize the major political parties and inaugurate a new government under Ishihara Shintarō, the governor of Tokyo. Ishihara recently commented, in *Newsweek*, that his way of solving the North Korea problem would be to declare war.³¹ Prior to that, his best-known declarations have been to deny the Nanking Massacre, to call on Japan's Self Defence Forces to be ready to crush the Chinese and Koreans (*Sangokujin*), to reject the constitution as an American imposition and to declare to a Diet Committee

²⁸ *Asahi*, 19 October 2002; Mansourov, 'The Kelly Process', p. 3; Andrew Mack, 'North Korea's Latest Nuclear Gambit', NAPSNET, Special Report, 21 October 2002.

²⁹ On 19 September an *Asahi* poll found 81% support for the talks, and 58% in favour of proceeding towards normalization. By 7 October, support for resuming negotiations had fallen to 44%, but 58% still supported normalization 'in the long run': 'Poll: 88% Don't Trust North Korea', *Asahi.com*.

³⁰ Such acts tend to occur at times of Korean 'crisis', such as the nuclear stand-off in 1994 and the DPRK's Taepodong missile launch in 1998.

³¹ *Newsweek*, International Edition, 10 June 2002.

that the Third World War was commencing, for the liberation of Asia from white man's rule. For all that, Ishihara is indisputably Japan's most popular politician, strongly tipped to become prime minister. A vital element of Koizumi's agenda has been to undercut his support—by extorting apologies from former colonies, among other things. Since 17 September, Ishihara has been temporarily sidelined, but this is plainly not the end of the story.

There is also the prospect, for whichever faction of the LDP seizes control of the normalization process—and subsequent 'aid and development' programmes—of lucrative business opportunities to build roads, bridges, dams, power stations, railways and other elements of a North Korean infrastructure, to the benefit of their associates in the recession-hit construction industry. Significant funds had been creamed off such deals by the ruling faction in the sixties, when relations were normalized with South Korea. A similar prospect almost certainly attracts the embattled stalwarts of Japan's construction state: for the *doken kokka*, North Korea represents virgin territory of almost unlimited potential, free of the inconvenience of civil-society protests.³²

There has been speculation that such an opening might tempt Tokyo towards the creation of an independent foreign policy, Washington's long-feared nightmare. For the Pentagon, it remains fundamental that Japan 'continue to rely on US protection'. Any attempt to replace this by an entente with China would 'deal a fatal blow to US political and military influence in East Asia'.³³ If tensions were eased in the relations between Japan and North Korea, and between North and South Korea, the purpose of the American bases there—especially Okinawa—and the comprehensive incorporation of Japan within the US's global hegemonic project, would be open to question.

Japanese independence?

The contemporary Japanese economic, political and social crisis is often seen as rooted in the structures of dependence set in place during the post-war American occupation (and embraced by Japanese elites). Its

³² For interesting speculation about this, see 'Struggle for control of development project', *Weekly Post*, 23–29 September 2002.

³³ Zalmay Khalilzad et al., 'The United States and Asia: toward a New U.S. Strategy and Force Posture' ['The Rand Report'], Washington 2001, p. 15.

nationalism has therefore been understood as a form of distorted ‘neo-nationalism’, either ‘comprador’ or ‘parasite’—in the sense of combining an exaggerated stress on the rhetoric and symbolism of the nation with entrenched military and political subordination (to the US).³⁴ In this view, Japan’s problems can only begin to be solved when it stands on its own feet and gives priority to its own national, regional and global interests, rather than Washington’s. Interestingly, a number of high-level former functionaries have recently voiced similar concerns.

Thus Taniguchi Makoto, Japan’s former ambassador to the UN and former deputy secretary-general of the OECD, has called for a sweeping reconsideration of the ‘follow the US’ mindset within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and for the adoption of an Asia-centred, multilateral foreign policy. Taniguchi describes the predominant dependence on the US in terms of an unrequited love. Takeoka Katsumi, former secretary-general of the Defence Agency, has argued that there is no force in East Asia capable of invading Japan, and that therefore many of the measures adopted at US prodding in response to 9.11 are ‘sheer military lunacy’. Akiyama Masahiro, the former deputy chief of the Defence Agency, opined that ‘for Japan to become a true partner of the US, it should offer harsh advice when necessary’. Iccho Ito, the mayor of Nagasaki, in his annual statement issued in August 2002, on the anniversary of his city’s nuclear destruction, declared himself ‘appalled’ by the recent actions of the US. On the same occasion the mayor of Hiroshima stated that ‘the United States government has no right to force Pax Americana on the rest of us, or to unilaterally determine the fate of the world’.³⁵

From the private sector, Terashima Jitsurō, head of the Mitsui Global Problems Research Institute, also sees Japan’s contemporary problems as rooted in its fifty years of viewing the world through a US lens. Foreseeing a period of great confusion for Japan under the new US foreign-policy doctrine, Terashima believes the time has come for Tokyo to respond by developing an autonomous doctrine of its own; and, in the

³⁴ See my ‘Introduction’ to 2nd Revised edition, *The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence*, New York 2001; Ishida Hidenari, Ukai Satoshi, Komori Yōichi, Takahashi Tetsuya, ‘21 seiki no manifesuto—datsu “parasaito nashonarizumu”’, *Sekai*, August 2000; Ishikawa Masumi, Tanaka Shūsei, and Yamaguchi Jirō, *Dō suru, Nihon no seiji*, Tokyo, Iwanami bukkuretto, no. 519, Oct 2000, p. 52

³⁵ For Taniguchi and Takeoka: *Sekai*, July 2002 and *Nihon no shinro*, March 2002; for Iccho: www.citynagasaki.nagasaki.jp

long run, putting an end to the foreign military presence on its soil.³⁶ Increasingly, too, there is a gap between popular sentiment in the two countries. In September 2002, Japanese support for an attack on Iraq was a mere 14 per cent, with 77 per cent opposed; in the US, the figures were 57 per cent, with 32 per cent opposed. Fifty per cent of Japanese thought the US a bad influence on global security; only 23 per cent thought its influence positive.³⁷

A great deal hinges on how the domestic Japanese contest evolves. While many left and liberal commentators have supported the opening to Pyongyang, the neo-nationalist right wing—which has always regarded the DPRK with utter antipathy, and has a thinly veiled contempt for all Koreans—was able to say: we told you so. After 17 September, passage of the government's 'emergency' bills, shelved in the summer of 2002, looks much more feasible. Constitutional reform regarding Japan's military role, and re-opening the nuclear issue, are back on the agenda. In this context, the pressure from Washington for Japan to expand its defence horizon—supporting coalition operations as a fully-fledged, NATO-style partner, the 'Britain of the Far East'—carries a potential for real friction.³⁸

Some have argued that Koizumi's September 17 visit presages a dramatic break with 'half a century of close coordination in foreign policy between Washington and Tokyo'.³⁹ Such a rupture certainly has not happened yet. But increasing numbers of Japanese seem to be saying that it is time, after 120-odd years, to 'normalize' relations with the continent, to become the 'Japan' rather than the Britain of East Asia. That vision, however, often bears within it a refusal to recognize the disastrous character of the former 'Greater Japan'. Nevertheless, as the US redefines the post-Cold War role of its military, Japanese anxieties are bound to become more intense.

There are those who welcome such pressures, though their agenda is not Washington's. Norota Hōsei, chief of the Defence Agency, argued in

³⁶ Terashima Jitsurō, 'Nazo no sakushin "1938 nen no tame ni"', *Sekai*, August 2002; and 'Miete kita shin gaikō dokutorin', *Sekai*, June 2002,

³⁷ 'Ayau "seigi" ni keikaishin', *Asahi shimbun*, 4 September 2002.

³⁸ 'The US and Japan: Advancing toward a Mature Partnership' ['The Armitage Report'], Institute for National Strategic Studies, Washington 11 October 2000.

³⁹ Bruce Cumings, 'Pyongyang visit a challenge to the US', www.asahi.com

March 1999 that, in certain circumstances, Japan's self-defence entitlement included the right of pre-emptive attack; the context made clear he was thinking of North Korea. Calls for Japan to arm itself with nuclear weapons have punctuated political discourse in recent years. Nishimura Shingo, the Defence Agency's parliamentary vice-minister, raised the possibility in October 1999. In 2002 Fukuda Yasuo, the cabinet secretary, and Abe Shinzō, assistant cabinet secretary, argued that it was time to review Japan's 'three non-nuclear principles' and that nuclear weapons would not contravene the Constitution. In June 2002 Ozawa Ichirō, leader of the Liberal Party, wrote that China should be careful not to push Japan, because 'if its nationalism is aroused, calls for it to adopt nuclear weapons might emerge'.⁴⁰ These are all no more than straws in the wind; but the climate of anger, fear and frustration sparked by the 17 September revelations makes Japan's course difficult to predict. On the eve of the normalization talks the nuclear issue, which had been of secondary Japanese interest in September, was at the top of the agenda. The tentative moves towards an autonomous Japanese diplomatic initiative had been squashed and Koizumi was firmly in step with his 'alliance partners'.

Korean interconnexions

South Korean reactions to September 17 were, of course, very different. There was anger that Kim Jong Il should have reserved his apologies on the abductions for Japan, when South Korea's grievances were so much greater. Support for Kim Dae Jung, already apparently at a nadir due to the corruption charges against his family, declined still further—his Sunshine Policy, which had raised so many hopes, seemed to have borne little fruit. But there has also been a markedly more sceptical response here to Kelly's nuclear revelations and an accompanying wariness towards the US. Washington's rhetoric merely compounds the obstacles facing the South Koreans as they attempt to negotiate with Pyongyang on many fronts. The description of the 'axis-of-evil' statement offered by one former foreign-ministry official—'diplomatically wayward, strategically unwise and historically immoral'—expresses widespread sentiment in the South.⁴¹

⁴⁰ For Norota and Nishimura, see my 'Nationalism and Identity in post-Cold War Japan', *Pacifica Review*, vol. 12, no. 3, October 2000, p. 256; for Fukuda and Abe: *Sekai*, August 2002, pp. 53–4; for Osawa: *Shūkan Kinyōbi*, 7 June 2002, p. 8.

⁴¹ Haksoon Paik, 'What to do with the ominous cloud over the Korean peace process?', NAPSNET, Special Report, 19 February 2002.

Whereas Tokyo and Washington have vented paroxysms of rage over (respectively) the abductions and the uranium enrichment, the reaction from Seoul was much cooler, insisting that both force and sanctions were out of the question: dialogue was the only feasible response. While the US and Japan rehearsed the ultimatum that would be delivered to the North at the Kuala Lumpur talks on 29 October 2002, exchanges between Seoul and Pyongyang continued unabated. A top-level delegation from the North, including the chair of the State Planning Committee and Kim Jong Il's brother-in-law, a powerful figure in the Korean Workers Party, flew in to Seoul on 26 October for a nine-day visit to semi-conductor, auto, chemical and steel plants.⁴² The South displays increasing confidence about dealing with Pyongyang as cross-border relationships deepen.

Representatives of the 'no-quarter' position, formerly deeply ingrained in the ROK's armed forces, remain influential. The establishment *Wolgan Chosun*, for example—monthly publication of South Korea's oldest and largest daily, the *Chosun Ilbo*—could claim the massacre of 'a minimum six million people' by Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il as 'an evil comparable to the holocaust, the mass purge of Russians by Stalin and the killing fields of Pol Pot'.⁴³ Such thinking will almost certainly be more directly represented in the government of Kim Dae Jung's successor. In practice, however, any government in Seoul is likely to continue with the policy of 'positive engagement'; the alternatives for the South are simply too catastrophic to consider. Resort to force would produce the sort of casualties the US quailed at in 1994, and which caused the then ROK president Kim Young Sam to veto American military action. Induced collapse through the application of sanctions could create a social and economic nightmare for South Korea, leaving it with 22 million starving people on its borders and an army of hundreds of thousands of troops that could spin out of control. The costs of 'shock' reunification—estimated at up to \$3,200 billion—would drag the South's economy into recession, threatening the entire Northeast Asian region.⁴⁴

⁴² 'North Korean economic survey team to visit South Korea', AP, Seoul, 24 October 2002.

⁴³ Cho Kapche, 'Figures Speak for Themselves', *Wolgan chosun*, September 1999; my thanks to Kim Hyung-A for this reference. Clearly a rhetorical rather than a historical figure, the 'six million' attributes all Korean War casualties to Kim Il Sung.

⁴⁴ *Financial Times*, 8 November 2002.

Colonialism, occupation, war and the entrenched partition systems have left the peninsula as a whole painfully scarred, and the 'normal' national aspirations of its people—the ancient kingdom of Korea, with its unique linguistic and cultural traditions, had been unified since 668AD—still bitterly frustrated. Ironically, divided as they are, both Koreas have shared certain structuring similarities over the past fifty years. Both, as Paik Nak Chung has pointed out, have been cursed by states that are 'strong vertically' (against their own populations) but weak horizontally (against outside pressures from other powers)—for Kim-ist self-sufficiency was always a myth, and North Korea heavily dependent on Soviet aid.⁴⁵ Both, too, have suffered not only from Japanese but from US imperialism, which for decades backed brutal military dictatorships in the ROK. Can either expect anything more than the ruthless pursuit of their own interests from these two powers—or from China?

The task of negotiating with the DPRK—desperately poor, yet fiercely proud—is one of the utmost delicacy. No state and no people in modern times can have less expectation of receiving it. While prepared to give up almost everything else, two psychological factors, pride and face, are of immense value to North Korea. Some understanding of both the pain and the sense of justice, however perverted, that drive these feelings is a prerequisite for any successful democratization and economic improvement in the DPRK. The more the US and Japan ratchet up the pressure to force a submission from Pyongyang, the less likely a positive outcome. The future of the peninsula, North and South, can best be determined by the Korean people themselves.

⁴⁵ Paik Nak Chung, 'Habermas on National Unification in Germany and Korea', *NLR* 1/219, September–October 1996, p. 18.