
INTERNAL DYNAMICS: THE PROCESS

The process through which a major debate often moves is much like a calendar: Each has its seasons. The watershed event in the sunshine policy's cycle was clearly the June 2000 summit. This event transformed what had been a relatively low-level public discourse into a major public brouhaha. But two other events had significant effects on the internal dynamics as well and contributed directly to the debate's nature and direction. One was President Kim's decision in January 2000 to form a new political party. This decision, understandable given the president's political position and policy aspirations, politicized what had been generally considered until then a nonpartisan issue. In the process, it riled relations within the ruling coalition and exacerbated the task of generating broader public consensus behind the administration's policies. The other was the inauguration of George W. Bush as president of the United States in January 2001. The advent of the Bush administration gave North Korea an excuse to delay dialogue with South Korea (as well as with the United States), while the public articulation of the Bush administration's new approach—as filtered through the South Korean media—further fueled a domestic debate that was already raging.

These events serve as benchmarks for the debate's seasons. The period between President Kim's inauguration in February 1998 and his decision to form a new party in January 2000 might be thought of as the "spring" of the debate. During this period, general support for the idea of trying to engage North Korea, along with continued North Korean rigidity and the exigencies of Korea's severe financial crisis, made public debate desultory, while seeds were quietly being planted for new growth later in the "year." The period between Jan-

uary 2000, when President Kim formed his new party, and the June 2000 summit was a short but intense “summer.” This period saw a series of sizzling developments, along with their concomitant dark clouds and sudden summer storms. Period three, from the summit to the beginning of the Bush administration, was the “fall,” with intense efforts by one side in the debate to harvest the fruits of the summer’s growth countered by equally intense efforts by the other side to frustrate and counter these efforts. “Winter” came in the fourth period, from January 2001 to October 2002. Appropriately long for South Korea’s harsh political climate, this period saw a freeze in North-South relations, solidification of the divides in South Korean politics, and a growing chill in U.S.-ROK relations. This chapter describes how this all happened.

SPRING (FEBRUARY 1998 TO JANUARY 2000)

As described in Chapter Three, President Kim came into office fully determined to pursue his commitment to engagement. He made this clear in his inaugural address when he said that reconciliation and cooperation with the North would be a top priority of his administration despite Pyongyang’s continuing bellicosity and the severe financial crisis that had just hit South Korea. Kim was not only determined but also confident. His decades as a major national figure and years of thinking about unification issues convinced him that he understood North Korea better, and could accomplish more, than his predecessors, who he believed had exaggerated the North Korean threat and failed to approach North Korea with the proper sensitivity and understanding.

With this confidence and determination, the administration described the goal of its policy as being to improve North-South relations as a means for inducing change inside North Korea and thereby hastening reconciliation. To President Kim and the key people in his government, this meant providing North Korea a favorable environment in which it could opt for openness and reform without feeling threatened. Providing such an environment, however, is difficult in the best of circumstances given the deep distrust of the North in South Korea—not to mention North Korea’s own paranoia, erratic behavior, and inherent vulnerability. At a minimum, sustained do-

mestic support is required to allow sufficient time to demonstrate the policy's success.

Beyond this requirement, President Kim faced several additional impediments to rapid forward movement when he first came to power:

- The “odd couple” coalition he formed with Kim Jong-pil to secure his election brought South Korea's ideological divide directly into his administration, creating significant constraints on how fast he could move in implementing his policy.
- The minority status of Kim's party in the National Assembly prevented it from unilaterally passing budgets and other legislation needed to help North Korea, increasing the president's reliance on the ruling coalition and the time and energy required to achieve compromise.
- The economy, reeling from the Asian financial crisis that hit South Korea in late 1997, was in no position to churn up large amounts of assistance for North Korea, simultaneously preoccupying the president and reinforcing the need for a “go-it-slow” approach.
- President Kim himself was deeply distrusted by large segments of the South Korean population because of his alleged “leftist” leanings, which bolstered the need for moderation in pursuing his policy objectives.

Reflecting awareness of these constraints, Kim moved cautiously at first. He emphasized that deterrence and reconciliation with the North would be pursued simultaneously. He stressed rhetorically the need for domestic consensus. He also promised that his approach to Pyongyang would be open and transparent. In addition, President Kim gave key government security posts to well-known conservative heavyweights, such as Kang In-duk (Minister of Unification) and Lee Jong Chan (director of the National Intelligence Agency), in an effort to mitigate widespread suspicions about his ideological affinities. As a further sop to conservatives, he allowed his Minister of Unification to announce that engagement would be pursued only on the basis of strict reciprocity. All this was designed to reassure a suspicious public and buy time for his sunshine policy to work.

At the same time, however, the president was beginning to move forward. In February 1998, he publicly ruled out any South Korean efforts to undermine or absorb the North and pledged active efforts to promote inter-Korean reconciliation. In March, the government announced the principle of separating economics from politics in order to create a more favorable environment for the resumption of inter-Korean relations. In April, it promised to simplify legal procedures for inter-Korean business interactions, ultimately lifting ceilings on South Korean investment in the North. Shortly thereafter President Kim authorized the Hyundai Group to donate 1,000 head of cattle to the North to facilitate efforts by its chairman, Chung Ju-yung, to establish tourist and investment activities in North Korea. To assure smooth implementation of his sunshine policy, moreover, he delegated authority to Ambassador Lim Dong-Won, then National Security advisor at the Blue House, to appoint the senior members of the National Security Council and supervise the activities of anyone involved in policy toward North Korea.

An early fruit of these efforts appeared in November 1998 when a luxury cruise ship carrying about 900 South Korean tourists set sail for North Korea's scenic Mt. Kungang. This historic trip marked the first time that any South Korean legally entered the North as a tourist since the two governments were established 50 years earlier.¹

Unfortunately for President Kim and his sunshine policy supporters, this fruit came with lots of flies. Not only did North Korea dismiss the series of South Korean signals and cooperative gestures, it maintained and even stepped up its military provocations. These included a series of armed infiltration attempts (June 1998 submarine incident, July 1998 dead North Korean agent discovery, November 1998 submarine intrusion, December 1998 sinking of North Korean spy vessel, June 1999 North-South naval clash, etc.). It also included the August 1998 attempted launch of a long-range ballistic missile (allegedly a North Korean satellite) and construction in late 1998–early 1999 of additional launch facilities. The discovery of a large underground construction in the summer of 1998 that suggested a

¹The Mt. Kungang tour was a product of Chung Ju-yung's agreement with Kim Jong Il to pay the North Koreans nearly \$1 billion over the following six years in exchange for the rights to develop this and several other projects. For details on this project and its role in the public debate, see Chapter Three.

continuing North Korean nuclear program in contravention of the 1994 U.S.-DPRK “Agreed Framework” completed the package. North Korea paired these provocative actions with increasingly belligerent rhetoric.

Not surprisingly, this behavior provoked anger among South Korean conservatives and sharp criticism of the government’s approach toward North Korea. The intense U.S. focus on North Korea’s nuclear and missile activities during this period indirectly reinforced this criticism, by strengthening South Korean skeptics who questioned the wisdom and efficacy of the sunshine policy. President Kim responded by reiterating the need to maintain deterrence and pursue dialogue simultaneously. He also increased his declaratory emphasis on national security and used the South Korean sinking of a North Korean spy ship in December 1998 to demonstrate his determination not to tolerate military provocations. This bolstered his position at home and helped dampen public debate.

At the same time, President Kim made clear he would continue to pursue engagement with North Korea. Giving early substance to this intention, he authorized the Hyundai group to proceed with the Mt. Kumgang tourist project in July 1998, despite the absence of a North Korean apology for the submarine incursion one month earlier.² Six months later—and less than one month after South Korea had sunk the North Korean spy vessel—he scaled back the administration’s prior insistence on strict reciprocity in inter-Korean interactions to “flexible” reciprocity in a renewed attempt to establish government-to-government contacts. Insisting that there were signs of cautious change in the North, President Kim emphasized that he would continue to seek active engagement if Pyongyang showed a positive attitude.³

Administration leaders also moved to counter the growing disquiet in the United States over North Korean actions, which they understood could seriously jeopardize their sunshine policy. In intensive consultations with U.S. officials, they pressed the United States hard to seek a resolution of the nuclear and missile issues through diplo-

²*The Korea Times*, July 23, 1998.

³See the text of the president’s “New Year’s Message to the Nation,” *The Korea Herald*, January 1, 1999.

matic engagement, a posture subsequently adopted in the U.S. policy review conducted by William Perry. They also pursued the idea of a comprehensive deal between Washington and Pyongyang involving resolution of the nuclear and missile issues in exchange for U.S. diplomatic recognition of the North and the lifting of economic sanctions.⁴ One product of these intense discussions was the establishment of the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) to coordinate policies among the United States, Japan, and South Korea.

These dual sets of efforts to dampen domestic debate were aided by several other developments. One was the nationwide economic crisis, which focused almost everyone's attention on the implications of economic restructuring for his or her immediate situation.⁵ Another was continued North Korean hostility. The absence of much actually happening in inter-Korean relations gave the debate about the administration's assumptions a somewhat theoretical quality. A third was the disarray in the GNP. This was caused partly by the difficulty it had adjusting to its new position as an opposition party and partly by its need to defend itself against allegations of involvement in a number of major scandals.⁶ President Kim's coalition with Kim Jong-pil probably also played a role. While the ULD leader criticized the sunshine policy and worked to derail it from within, he also publicly emphasized the importance of avoiding war, even at the cost of delaying unification, and suggested that the public could have confidence in the government because he was in it. Such statements undoubtedly helped alleviate concerns among South Korean conservatives about the intent and direction of the sunshine policy.

⁴*The Korea Herald*, December 8, 1998.

⁵As one measure of this focus, the number of articles published by the conservative *Chosun Ilbo* and the progressive *Hankyoreh Sinmun* in 1998 and 1999 on economic reform and restructuring was more than ten times the number each paper published on the sunshine policy during the same period. For a flavor of the times, see Doh-jong Kim, "The Sunshine Policy and Domestic Political Dynamics: Political Implications for South Korea's Engagement Policy Toward North Korea," *National Strategy (Kukga Junryak)*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Seoul: Sejong Institute, 2000).

⁶The party and its leader were accused of having colluded with North Korea to help determine the outcome of different elections in South Korea and having diverted tax revenues for use in the party's presidential election campaign. All these accusations proved unfounded except for the last one, which is still being adjudicated.

In response, the general public's support for the sunshine policy remained high throughout this period. Preoccupied with the economic crisis and seeing little change in North Korea, most citizens were happy to have the focus shift away from unification—with its huge attendant costs—toward long-term peaceful coexistence. While they had little confidence that the government's new policy would produce significant changes in North Korea, they sensed that the threat from the North was declining and welcomed a more protracted approach to unification.⁷ Accordingly, the public debate was relatively restrained throughout this period. Although public criticism always existed, and was strong in certain quarters, it was not strong enough to precipitate a major national debate or significantly affect the direction of government policy.

SUMMER (JANUARY 2000 TO JUNE 2000)

Despite the relatively restrained debate, the president faced substantial obstacles to moving forward with his policy agenda, not only in the National Assembly but also within his own governing coalition. With the South Korean economy beginning to show signs of recovery from the financial crisis by the beginning of 2000 and his sunshine policy at a standstill, he looked for ways to change the underlying conditions. What he came up with was a new political party. Although not widely appreciated outside of Korean political circles, the president's decision to found the MDP marked a significant turning point both in the public debate over the sunshine policy and in South Korean politics.

The decision reflected the president's determination to overcome his domestic political difficulties—caused in large part by his party's minority position within the National Assembly—as a means for pursuing his larger policy objectives. At the top of these objectives was engineering a historic breakthrough in ties with North Korea. The president made the linkage between the establishment of a new

⁷Norman D. Levin, *The Shape of Korea's Future: South Korean Attitudes Toward Unification and Long-Term Security Issues* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1999). This report analyzes the findings from a February 1999 public opinion poll conducted jointly by RAND and the *JoongAng Ilbo*. The survey focused on South Korean attitudes toward unification and long-term security issues.

party and his North Korea policy ambitions explicit himself. On the day the MDP was inaugurated (January 19, 2000), he communicated his plan to seek a North-South summit if his new party did well in the upcoming (April 13, 2000) parliamentary elections.⁸

From this point on, the name of the game changed. Instead of pursuing his sunshine policy goals by seeking a broad national consensus based on his coalition with the conservative ULD, President Kim sought to expand his own independent power base so as to give him greater latitude in making policy. His calculation was clear: Increased latitude would increase the likelihood of policy success; policy success would not only advance his goals vis-a-vis North Korea but further strengthen his domestic political position. A successful summit with the North, he clearly was wagering, was essential to both.

Having made this decision and founded the MDP, Kim worked hard to induce members of the other parties to defect and join his new party. He also encouraged progressive NGOs to support the MDP and cooperate with the government in seeking to change South Korea's politics and culture more broadly. As a down payment, the president endorsed the campaign by a large coalition of civic groups and NGOs to blacklist "corrupt" or "unfit" politicians. The goal was to either deny them party endorsements or, if endorsed, prevent their victory in the April parliamentary elections. All this, to no one's surprise, outraged the GNP and ULD since they were the primary targets (as well as chief victims) of the president's actions. In the process, it became a major source of friction and distrust between the ruling and opposition parties.

At the same time, President Kim moved on his second track of seeking a North-South summit. Internally, he switched his right-hand man, Lim Dong-Won, from Minister of Unification to director of the National Intelligence Service, where Lim had more opportunity to pursue secret contacts with North Korea. Externally, he looked for a site where he could send a major public signal to the North without provoking heated political reactions in South Korea. The site chosen, replete with symbolism, was Berlin, the capital of a unified Germany.

⁸*The Korea Herald*, January 21, 2000. President Kim formally proposed this summit one week later (January 26) in his annual New Year's press conference.

On March 9, President Kim gave a speech there on the last leg of an extended European visit outlining a new set of proposals to North Korea for ending the Cold War structure on the Korean Peninsula.⁹ Subsequently labeled the “Berlin Declaration,” the speech made four points explicit:

- The South Korean government would support North Korea’s economic recovery—for which the two governments should assume responsibility given constraints on the private sector—and would actively promote large-scale economic collaboration in a broad range of industrial, infrastructure, and other areas.
- It would participate in joint efforts to end the Cold War on the peninsula and create a system for peaceful coexistence.
- It strongly wanted to arrange reunions of families separated by the Korean War.
- It wanted to reopen political dialogue and exchange official envoys between the two sides to explore how to move forward in these areas and resolve outstanding problems.

Perhaps as salient to North Korean leaders as any of these four explicit points was what was missing from the Berlin Declaration: any suggestion that South Korea would link its economic assistance to concessions by North Korea on military threat and tension reduction measures.

Following the speech, secret contacts between the two Koreas to arrange a summit meeting intensified. As a result of these contacts, and expressed North Korean willingness to exchange special envoys to discuss such a summit, President Kim appointed Park Jie-won, then Minister of Culture and Tourism, to be his representative. After four secret meetings between March 17 and April 8, the two special envoys reached agreement.¹⁰ On April 10, three days before South Korea’s national parliamentary elections, both sides announced they had agreed to hold an inter-Korean summit.

⁹“Address by President Kim Dae Jung at the Free University of Berlin, March 9, 2000,” *Korea and World Affairs*, Vol. 24, No. 1, Spring 2000, pp. 131–137.

¹⁰Ministry of Unification, *Peace and Cooperation—White Paper on Korean Unification* 2001 (Seoul: Ministry of Unification, 2001), pp. 31–32.

President Kim's bet that success with his sunshine policy would yield domestic political dividends paid off almost immediately, at least somewhat. Although the MDP did not succeed in becoming the majority party in the National Assembly elections three days later, it did increase its seats from 79 in the previous elections to 115, as shown in Table 1, narrowing its gap with the GNP to only 18 seats. It also won seats in districts virtually throughout the country (the main exception being the conservative stronghold of the southeast Yongnam region), effectively establishing itself as a national party rather than simply as a party based only in a single region (the southwestern Cholla provinces).¹¹ As a result of the election, the MDP expanded its share of total National Assembly seats from 26.4 percent in the preceding election to 42.1 percent, a significant increase.

To be sure, the MDP triumph was qualified: The GNP still out-pollled it 39 percent to 35.9 percent. Moreover, the GNP actually *increased* its share of National Assembly seats from 46.5 percent to 48.7 percent of the total. Only four seats short of a majority, it remained the nation's largest political party. By receiving just 3.1 percent less of the total national vote than did the GNP, however, the MDP established itself convincingly as the only major contender to the GNP-led conservatives in an increasingly two-party dominant system. This was reinforced by the showing of the other parties. Kim Jong-pil's ULD garnered only 9.8 percent of the total popular vote, a whopping 10 percent less than it had received in the previous election. It fell from 50 seats to 17, losing its status as a negotiating body in the National Assembly. Splinter parties did even more poorly.

Table 1
Distribution of National Assembly Seats by Political Party

| | NCNP(1996)/ MDP(2000) | NKP(1996)/ GNP(2000) | ULD | Other Parties |
|------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----|---------------|
| April 1996 | 79 | 139 | 50 | 16 |
| April 2000 | 115 | 133 | 17 | 8 |

¹¹Doh-jong Kim and Hyung-joon Kim, "Analysis of the 16th National Assembly Election," *Korea Focus*, Vol. 8, No. 3, May-June 2000, p. 2.

Along with this short-term benefit, however, came some longer-term costs. The biggest came from the announcement of the summit meeting only three days before the elections. It is hard to exaggerate the importance of this event. First, it infuriated the opposition parties, who saw it as an egregious attempt to influence the outcome of the elections and manipulate a nonpartisan issue—the universal Korean desire for reunification—for domestic political purposes.¹² Second, it spawned a range of conspiracy and corruption allegations that fostered public cynicism and undermined support for the government's policy.¹³ Third, it reignited questions about the administration's trustworthiness and credibility by demonstrating that the government had been dealing with the North Koreans behind the scenes, despite its repeated pledges to make its approach to the North completely open and transparent. Added to this are the intense personal feelings in South Korea toward Kim Dae Jung himself. For those who congenitally hate the president, the announcement that he would be the one going to Pyongyang was simply anathema. While none of these groups could challenge the idea of a North-South summit itself, they were outraged by the administration's handling of the whole matter and determined to seek retribution.

The summit, held two months later in Pyongyang, was the sunshine policy's crowning moment. As the first meeting ever between the leaders of the two Koreas, and with its demonstrable, if still implicit, recognition of the ROK by the Communist North, the fact of the meeting itself made the summit a truly historic event. The Joint Declaration announced at the end of the summit reinforced the sense of a momentous breakthrough toward inter-Korean reconciliation, by identifying a range of areas for cooperative efforts and committing Kim Jong Il to pay a return visit to Seoul. The warmth of

¹²*Hankyoreh Sinmun*, April 10, 2000.

¹³While one could always hear strong, even scurrilous, comments about Kim Dae Jung, the way the summit was announced took these to a new level. One allegation, for example, had to do with the amount of money the government had to pay Pyongyang to secure its agreement to the summit. According to those who believe this allegation, the reason why the summit was delayed one day at the last minute was because the money that was supposed to be handed over to the North in exchange for Kim Jong Il's agreement to have the summit had not yet been transferred. The administration allegedly then assessed South Korean companies the extra money required to enable the summit to go forward. Such allegations have recently been revived and have become a major issue in domestic South Korean politics.

Kim Jong Il's welcome to the southern delegates, moreover, visually reinforced this impression. Watching his performance on their television screens, many South Koreans wondered if everything they had been taught to believe about the man was sheer fiction.

No one was more swept away by the event though than President Kim. Returning to Seoul, he sounded more like a proselyte than president of the nation. "A new age has dawned for our nation," he said. "We have reached a turning point so that we can put an end to the history of territorial division." He then went on:

I found that Pyongyang, too, was our land. The Pyongyang people are the same as us, the same nation sharing the same blood. Regardless of what they have been saying and [how they have been] acting outwardly, they have deep love and a longing for their compatriots in the South. If you talk with them, you notice that right away We must consider North Koreans as our brothers and sisters. We must believe that they have the same thought Most importantly there is no longer going to be any war. The North will no longer attempt unification by force and at the same time we will not do any harm to the North.¹⁴

Unfortunately for the president, not all South Koreans shared this halcyon vision. Indeed, for many, both the substance and process of the summit raised profound concerns. The struggle between these two perspectives raised the public debate to an entirely new level and heralded the onset of a new season.

FALL (JUNE 2000 TO JANUARY 2001)

The South Korean political environment heated up almost immediately. Images of the televised summit and President Kim's remarks upon returning to Seoul lit a fire under those with a "one-people" orientation and stimulated a wave of nationalism and unification euphoria throughout the country. The government encouraged this process by calling into question the validity of the image of Kim Jong Il traditionally fostered by South Korea's elite. This in turn stimu-

¹⁴Excerpted from the text of "President Kim Dae Jung's Remarks on Returning to Seoul from the Inter-Korean Summit in Pyongyang," as appeared in *The Korea Herald*, June 16, 2000.

lated broader debate about the legitimacy of the country's anti-Communism education. Progressive groups seized this momentum to try and undermine the position of conservatives in South Korean society more broadly, labeling them "pro-Cold War," "anti-unification," and "anachronistic."¹⁵ Some branded anyone who raised questions about Kim Jong Il or suggested that the summit had certain shortcomings as a "foreigner" (i.e., not "true" Korean), a particularly inflammatory charge given Korea's history.

For his part, President Kim touted the success of his sunshine policy and mobilized progressive groups to rally behind the government. He emphasized three points in particular. First, he emphasized that the summit talks ended the danger of war on the peninsula or any North Korean attempt to achieve unification by force. Second, he emphasized that North Korea agreed to replace the provision in the Communist Party's platform calling for the liberation of the entire peninsula under socialism in return for corresponding steps by South Korea to replace its National Security Law. Third, he emphasized that Kim Jong Il agreed to a continued stationing of U.S. military forces in South Korea, even after reunification.

All of these points were aimed at strengthening President Kim's supporters and countering critics of the sunshine policy. All were also, however, highly contentious. Members of the military and others sensitive to national security concerns challenged the first point, noting the absence of any mention of the words "peace" and "security" in the summit's Joint Declaration and North Korea's refusal to discuss ways for reducing the military confrontation.¹⁶ Conservative and even many moderate South Koreans dismissed the second point as designed by Pyongyang to stimulate instability in South Korea, rather than to renounce the North's historic goal of bringing the entire peninsula under its control. The mainstream press all questioned the third point, initially on the grounds that Kim Jong Il's alleged comment was made privately to President Kim and

¹⁵*Hankyoreh Sinmun*, June 16, 2000.

¹⁶Yong-Sup Han, "Did North Korea's Threat of War Really Disappear?" *JoongAng Ilbo*, June 20, 2000.

could not be authenticated and subsequently because of contradictory statements by North Korea itself.¹⁷

On top of this, the summit's Joint Declaration itself was highly controversial. As described in Chapter Four, this was partly because the declaration appeared to reflect much more of the North's agenda than the South's—raising questions about whether the president had somehow been “deceived” into accommodating the North's position. It was also, however, because many saw in the declaration an administration willingness to entertain a degree of political integration with Pyongyang not sanctioned by either previous government policy or prior national consensus. Critics assailed the administration more broadly for having shifted the focus of the summit away from ways to implement the 1992 “Basic Agreement” and achieve peaceful coexistence—the ostensible goal of the summit as expressed originally by South Korean leaders—to how to foster unification. The president's decision to repatriate to Pyongyang all long-term North Korean prisoners in South Korean jails without a corresponding move by the North to return South Korean prisoners of war held in the North further heightened domestic controversy and reinforced conservative charges of an imbalance in North-South relations.

This was just the beginning. With their sharply divergent ideological orientations and political agendas, progressive and conservative groups geared up for enhanced confrontation. The KCRC and other progressive NGOs organized collective activities to expedite North-South exchange and prepare for Kim Jong Il's return visit to Seoul. The *Hankyoreh* and other government supporters called into question not just the intentions of government critics in pointing out problems with the summit but also their patriotism. Liberal scholars pushed the bounds of previously accepted discourse on a range of taboo topics.¹⁸ For their part, anti-U.S. and anti-U.S. military base

¹⁷The most explicit, albeit much later, example was the joint Russia-DPRK statement issued after Kim Jong Il's somewhat bizarre trip to Moscow in the fall of 2001, in which the North Korean leader explicitly insisted on the withdrawal of U.S. troops.

¹⁸One, for example, later went so far as to suggest that Kim Jong Il should not be held responsible for the Korean War since he was a child when it happened. Anything that even hinted at exculpating North Korea from responsibility for the Korean War was previously one of South Korea's major taboos. For Hwang Tae Yun's controversial remarks, see the *Chosun Ilbo*, February 27, 2001.

groups took this as a cue to step up their own activities. Citing the changed conditions due to the summit's success, they intensified their questioning of the need for a U.S. military presence. Many joined in larger coalitions with the CCEJ, PSPD, and other progressive forces to seek the closure of U.S. training facilities and revision of the U.S.-ROK Status of Forces Agreement. They also sought U.S. compensation for the killing of South Korean civilians during the Korean War (e.g., at Nogun-ri), for environmental damage caused by activities at U.S. military bases, and for a long list of other alleged offenses.

Conservative groups responded in kind. The GNP attacked the government for its "one-sided" assistance to North Korea and having played into the hands of North Korea's Communist leaders. The *Chosun Ilbo*, *Donga Ilbo*, and *JoongAng Ilbo* questioned the speed with which the administration was moving to expand inter-Korean cooperation, as well as its appropriateness. Conservative NGOs mobilized to ensure that a number of preconditions—including a North Korean apology for starting the Korean War and for conducting a slew of terrorist acts thereafter—be met before Kim Jong Il is allowed to visit Seoul.¹⁹ Many conservatives attacked President Kim for being soft on defense and neglecting, if not endangering, South Korean security. Some denounced him and his Blue House staff as being "pro-North Korean" and "anti-liberal democracy."²⁰

Two developments in the fall of 2000 heightened this confrontation further. One was the Nobel Committee's decision in October to award that year's Nobel Peace Prize to President Kim. Kim's supporters understandably saw the award as validating the president's sunshine approach toward North Korea, with some interpreting the award as confirming their broader political and ideological convictions. His detractors, however, while delighted that a South Korean had been so honored, were appalled that the South Korean honoree was their long-time antagonist. Many were alarmed that the award might stimulate further moves in a direction they considered injurious to South Korea's interests, if not morally inexcusable given the

¹⁹Sung Won Park, "Conservatives Looking for Counter-Offensive," *Shindonga*, September 2000, pp. 76–94.

²⁰*JoongAng Ilbo*, July 13, 2000.

North's despotic rule and human rights abuses. Thus, in a curious sort of way, the award energized groups on both ends of the political spectrum.

The other, more serious development was the response of North Korea after the summit. This took the form of a two-track approach. One involved intensified efforts by Pyongyang to split South Korean society. North Korea reduced its public criticism of the ROK government by roughly 75 percent in the months after the summit, for example. At the same time, it repeatedly urged South Koreans to uphold the June 15 Joint Declaration and branded South Korean "ultraconservatives" and "rightists" as being "anti-unification."²¹ This track also involved a series of highly charged activities designed to stoke emotions, and divisions, in South Korea. These included, for example, allowing North Korean athletes to march alongside their South Korean counterparts behind a single flag at the opening ceremony of the Sydney Olympics and inviting leftist South Korean workers to visit North Korea for "debates" with their North Korean counterparts on unification.²²

The other track involved efforts to bypass South Korea entirely and deal with the United States instead. North Korea sent National Defense Committee Vice Chairman Cho Myong Rok to Washington, hosted a visit by U.S. Secretary of State Albright to Pyongyang, and invited U.S. President Clinton to Pyongyang—all in an effort to utilize North Korea's missile program as a vehicle for normalizing U.S.-DPRK relations. At the same time, it dragged out a series of inter-Korean talks, apparently buying time to see what would come out of its talks with the United States. Except for two emotion-laden reunions of 100 families separated by the Korean War, it implemented none of

²¹The North's definition of these latter folks included the GNP's Lee Hoi Chang, former President Kim Young Sam, and pretty much anyone who expressed reservations about the summit or criticisms of the sunshine policy.

²²Later in 2001 North and South Korean labor unions drafted a joint manifesto calling for an inter-Korean labor forum for unification. The draft advocated a formula for unification—"one people, one nation, two systems, two independent governments"—that was basically the same as North Korea's position. Such transparent efforts to exacerbate social tensions in South Korea by manipulating South Korean civic organizations violated North Korea's pledge at the summit to address inter-Korean issues directly through government-to-government talks. They also significantly inflamed debate in South Korea. *JoongAng Ilbo*, July 26, 2001.

the agreements it had reached with the South during this period. It did not rebuild its side of the North-South railroad, for example, or even show up at the South Korean groundbreaking ceremony for its reconstruction. It began to cancel scheduled meetings, with little notice and at times without any explanation. Most important, it refused to arrange a visit by Kim Jong Il to Seoul.²³

North Korea's decision to send a delegation to participate in the first-ever North-South Defense Ministerial Meeting in September 2000 appeared, for a time, to be another exception to this general pattern. Once there, however, the delegation refused to discuss any agenda items beyond the agreement reached at inter-Korean ministerial talks on July 31 to reconnect the severed Seoul-Sinuiju railway line. This refusal reinforced the view within the South Korean military that Pyongyang had no intention of discussing military issues with the ROK or of taking concrete steps toward the creation of a system of peaceful coexistence on the peninsula. In response, the ROK Ministry of Defense went ahead in December 2000 and published its annual defense White Paper, which noted the absence of any change in the North Korean threat despite the June summit and maintained its characterization of the North as the ROK's "main enemy." This further enlivened the South Korean debate. Conservatives endorsed the White Paper's characterization of North Korea and strongly defended its publication. Members of the ruling MDP and other progressives denounced the military for its "unreconstructed" attitude and criticized the government for allowing the White Paper's publication, which they argued was inappropriate to the new, postsummit situation.

Not surprisingly, North Korea's two-track approach in the months after the summit affected public opinion. The evolution here is striking. Shortly after the summit, according to a typical poll, only 4.6 percent of the general public said they viewed North Korea as an enemy. In contrast, nearly half (49.8 percent) saw the North as an equal cooperation partner to South Korea and another 44 percent

²³The reason for this refusal is not definitively known. South Koreans offer many "explanations," ranging from North Korea's nervousness over the personal security of Kim Jong Il to South Korea's failure to meet the agreed-upon conditions. Whatever the real reason, Kim Jong Il's refusal to schedule a visit reinforced the divisions within South Korea and intensified the debate over the government's sunshine policy.

said they considered North Korea a partner that South Koreans should help.²⁴ By the end of January 2001, the numbers had changed significantly: Nearly five times as many respondents (22.1 percent) indicated they viewed North Korea as an enemy (an increase of 17.5 percent since the August poll). In contrast, the number of respondents who said they considered North Korea an equal cooperation partner to South Korea declined from 50 percent to 43.4 percent, while those who saw the North as a partner that South Korea should help decreased by 11.3 percent to 32.7 percent.²⁵

This change in perceptions of the North, also not surprisingly, influenced attitudes toward the sunshine policy itself. According to a poll taken by Gallup Korea and the *Chosun Ilbo*, nearly half (49 percent) of all South Koreans supported the sunshine policy in February 2000—before either the Berlin Declaration or the euphoria that swept the country following the summit. This number fell to only a third (33.9 percent) by June of the following year.²⁶ Such polls suggest that, within months of the summit, South Koreans had become increasingly confused about North Korean intentions, dubious that the regime was serious about moving forward with issues high on South Korea's agenda, and doubtful of the wisdom of the administration's approach to dealing with North Korea.

North Korean inaction, decreased public support for the government's policy, and smoldering opposition party resentment over President Kim's alleged "politicization" of the unification issue proved to be a toxic mixture. National Assembly proceedings were tied in knots. This affected almost anything that required legislative approval, including the Unification Ministry's allocation of funds from the government budget for inter-Korean cooperation. Failure of the National Assembly to ratify four key North-South agreements (on investment guarantees, avoidance of double taxation, procedures for resolution of commercial disputes, and clearing settlements) was particularly consequential in dousing South Korean business interest in investing in North Korea. The administration's later inability to secure National Assembly support for electricity assistance to the

²⁴*JoongAng Ilbo*, August 3–6, 2000.

²⁵*JoongAng Ilbo*, January 3, 2001.

²⁶*Chosun Ilbo*, June 15, 2001.

North added to the difficulties. These further impeded North-South economic interactions and exacerbated the administration's difficulty in demonstrating the fruits of its sunshine activities. Indirectly, they contributed to a more intrinsic administration tendency to oversell the results of its policies and reinforced the growing public confusion.

Along with this increased confusion came increased polarization. The political spectrum of South Korean society increasingly divided into what many on the left described as "pro-unification" and "anti-unification" camps.²⁷ The government appeared to see the situation in equally stark terms, officially characterizing the public as divided between "the Cold War era psychology and a new mindset of the post-Cold War world."²⁸ This trend toward sharp ideological polarization was bolstered by the tendency of both sides to search for evidence in postsummit developments for their respective policy positions. As attitudes hardened with the approach of "winter," this evidence was not hard to find.

WINTER (JANUARY 2001 TO OCTOBER 2002)

President Bush's victory in the U.S. presidential election became the last benchmark in the debate's evolution to date. South Koreans had long speculated on how a Republican Party victory might affect U.S. policies toward Korea, particularly the Kim Dae Jung government's approach toward North Korea. They knew that an important part of the party's base has a visceral distaste for North Korea, considers the Clinton administration's approach to have constituted "appeasement," and strongly favors a tougher approach to alleged North Korean "blackmail." As a general statement, those on the South Korean left approached the prospect of a Republican administration with concern and those on the right approached it with varying degrees of anticipation.

²⁷Jang-Hee Lee, "Domestic Tasks Left Behind the South-North Summit Meeting," an unpublished paper prepared for a Sejong Institute conference on May 11, 2001.

²⁸Ministry of Unification, *Four Years of Policy Toward North Korea*, February 26, 2002. A copy is available online at the ministry's web site, www.unikorea.go.kr.

North Korea preempted both sides, putting substantive progress in inter-Korean talks on hold pending changes in South Korea and clarification of Bush's "hard-line" position.²⁹ It is possible that the North was alarmed by the prospect of potential policy changes in Washington and wanted to signal the new U.S. president not to alter direction. This interpretation is supported by North Korea's insistence that it would not engage in talks with the new administration unless these talks began with the same positions taken by the Clinton administration before it left office. It is also possible, however, that Pyongyang simply saw an opportunity to drive a wedge between Washington and Seoul, while increasing its bargaining leverage over the United States and inflaming South Korean opinion. Either way, the unspoken message was the same: Reconciliation with the ROK is subordinate to U.S.-DPRK relations.

Concerned about North Korean foot-dragging and anxious to enlist the new U.S. administration in support of South Korea's sunshine approach, President Kim pushed hard for an early U.S.-ROK summit. Not nearly ready for such a summit but also not anxious to turn down a valued ally, President Bush agreed. The summit, held in Washington on March 7, 2001, must rank among the more curious in U.S.-ROK diplomatic history. Rarely has there been less correlation between cause and effect.

Here is what officially happened:³⁰

²⁹The North agreed in inter-Korean talks in early February on a series of cooperative steps to facilitate the removal of land mines from the demilitarized zone so as to allow the reconnection of the Seoul-Sinuiju railway line, as agreed upon the previous summer. It declared it would not implement the agreement, however, until South Korea stopped referring to the North as its "main enemy." It simultaneously stepped up its anti-U.S. rhetoric, threatening to end its moratorium on missile tests and abandon the Agreed Framework in view of the Bush administration's new "hard-line" attitude. This was within a month of President Bush's inauguration and before he had even assembled many top members of his administration. See Donald G. Gross, "Slow Start in U.S. Policy toward the DPRK," *Comparative Connections*, April 2001, pp. 34-35. The online text is available at www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/0101Qus_skorea.html.

³⁰*Joint Statement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Korea*, March 7, 2001. The text is available at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/03/20010307-2.html.

- The two presidents publicly agreed that reconciliation and cooperation between the two Koreas contribute not only to peace on the Korean Peninsula but to stability throughout the region.
- President Bush expressed support for the ROK government's policy of engagement with North Korea.
- He endorsed President Kim's leading role in resolving inter-Korean issues.
- He also shared the South Korean leader's hope that a second inter-Korean summit would make a further contribution to inter-Korean relations and regional security.
- Both presidents also reaffirmed their commitment to the 1994 Agreed Framework and called on North Korea to join in taking steps to ensure its successful implementation.
- The two leaders then discussed their respective worldviews, concurring that the global security environment is fundamentally different than during the Cold War and requires new approaches to deterrence and defense.
- They ended their official meeting by agreeing on the importance of close consultations and coordination on policy toward North Korea and the need to work together to support South Korea's economic reform efforts and address bilateral trade issues.

Even if this had not come from a Republican president, this would appear to have been a substantial achievement from South Korea's perspective. The fact that President Kim was the first Asian leader invited to the White House, reflecting an intentional effort by the Bush administration to communicate the importance it places on U.S.-ROK relations, might appear to have reinforced this impression.

So much for appearances. As it happens, in off-hand comments to the press after the official meeting, President Bush alluded candidly to his deep distrust of Kim Jong Il and emphasized the need for "reciprocity" and "adequate verification" of any missile agreement that might be reached with North Korea. He also expressed his personal doubts over whether this would be possible in the North Korean case given the extremely closed nature of the system. Noting that his administration was in the midst of the policy review he had promised during his election campaign, he indicated that the United

States would not seek to resume missile talks with North Korea until this review was finished.

The impact of these comments was almost instantaneous. North Korea denounced the United States for trying to prevent inter-Korean reconciliation and indefinitely postponed the next scheduled round of inter-Korean ministerial talks (as if *indefinitely postponing* North-South dialogue would *hasten* inter-Korean reconciliation). South Korea back-pedaled by giving new rhetorical emphasis to precisely those issues—how to reactivate the 1992 Basic Agreement, reduce military tensions, and establish a peace process on the peninsula—that had been omitted from the June 2000 inter-Korean summit agenda.³¹ And everyone in South Korea blamed everyone else for what all agreed was a major diplomatic failure. Over the next several months, public debate intensified sharply in South Korea, with U.S. policy becoming a central, hot button issue.

It is hard to exaggerate the role of the South Korean media in creating this situation. Although many agreements had been reached between Seoul and Pyongyang, and many more were constantly being predicted, little of substance actually happened in North-South relations in the seven months between the June 2000 summit and the January 2001 inauguration of President Bush. Despite this, the South Korean media explicitly and intentionally linked the “stalemate” between the two Koreas with the policies of the new U.S. administration. The universality of this response might appear somewhat strange given the wide political and ideological differences among the media. In fact, it reflects a broadly shared interest.

On the conservative right, the *Chosun Ilbo*, *Donga Ilbo*, and other media saw President Bush’s personal reservations about North Korea as confirmation of their own position. As recently as one month be-

³¹See, for example, President Kim’s speech to a joint American Enterprise Institute/Council on Foreign Relations luncheon the day after his meeting with President Bush, described in *The Korea Times*, March 9, 2001. President Kim reinforced this emphasis shortly after returning to Seoul, appointing Lim Dong-Won as the Minister of Unification to rejigger the presentation, at least, of South Korea’s policy. Ambassador Lim did precisely this. His inaugural speech as Minister of Unification stressed three themes: cooperation without peace has obvious limits, visible measures for building military confidence and easing tension need to be implemented between the two Koreas, and policy needs to be predicated on both domestic support and cooperation with the United States. Excerpts from his talk are in *The Korea Times*, March 28, 2001.

fore Bush's inauguration they had been forced to watch President Kim bask in world acclaim as he received the Nobel Peace Prize. They fairly jumped at this modest sign of external validation. Encouraged that South Korea's major ally shared their own doubts, they suggested that President Bush's "skepticism" was directed not only at Kim Jong Il but also at President Kim himself and warned of a split between South Korea and its chief ally over how to deal with North Korea.

For their part, the *Hankyoreh Sinmun* and other media groups on the left interpreted President Bush's comments as confirming *their* own views: The United States is driven by its hegemonic goal of dominating the world and sees Korean unification as a threat to its strategic interests. They saw in President Bush's comments the means for mobilizing South Korean progressives to advance their "one-people" unification objectives, while heightening anti-American feeling and opposition to the U.S. military presence in South Korea. They also found in U.S. policy a rationale for North Korean inaction. Not surprisingly, they seized on these comments to stimulate nationalist sentiment and portray the United States as an obstacle to North-South reconciliation.

What had actually happened at the March summit meeting, of course, was that the U.S. publicly endorsed South Korea's engagement policy—a message President Bush strongly reinforced two months later in a letter to President Kim—while it implied that its own approach would be more cautious. This general orientation became official policy when the United States announced the result of its policy review in June. The official statement by President Bush made three points explicit:³²

- The United States would "undertake serious discussions with North Korea on a broad agenda." This would include "improved implementation of the Agreed Framework," "verifiable constraints" on North Korea's missile programs and ban on its missile exports, and a "less threatening conventional military posture."

³²The text is available at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/06/20010611-4.html.

- It would pursue these discussions as part of a “comprehensive approach” to the North that seeks to “encourage progress toward North-South reconciliation, peace on the Korean Peninsula, a constructive relationship with the United States, and greater stability in the region.”
- And the United States would be willing to ease sanctions, expand assistance, and “take other political steps” if North Korea “responds affirmatively and takes appropriate action.”

Secretary of State Powell underlined these points the following day.³³ In a briefing for the press after his talks with the South Korean foreign minister, Powell emphasized three things in particular: The United States is “prepared to resume an enhanced dialogue with North Korea on issues of mutual interest to both nations.” It is “not setting any preconditions” for this dialogue but hopes it will be “an open dialogue on all of the issues that are of concern.” In addition, it is prepared in the meantime to maintain the Agreed Framework. Stressing the administration’s desire to move forward “in a more comprehensive way” to address the range of issues bedeviling North Korea’s relations with the United States, he expressed the “hope” that the long-pending return visit by Kim Jong Il to Seoul “can now be put back on track.” Secretary Powell reinforced these points during his visit to Seoul in late July, publicly stressing the “without preconditions” aspect of the U.S. proposal and urging Russian President Putin to persuade Pyongyang to resume negotiations with the United States.

The announcement of the U.S. policy review results was critical. Although the United States had made it unmistakably clear that it was prepared to resume a “serious” and “unconditional” dialogue, North Korea refused to take “yes” for an answer. Instead, it accused the United States of attempting to put “conditions” on the resumption of talks and rebuffed the offer. Kim Jong Il also stiffed repeated pleas by President Kim to pay a return visit to Seoul and resume the North-South dialogue. Instead, he turned his attention to improving North Korea’s ties with Russia and China, taking a long, meandering train trip across Siberia to Moscow in late July and early August and host-

³³The transcript was distributed by the Office of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State, and is available through <http://usinfo.state.gov>.

ing a visit by Chinese President Jiang Zemin to Pyongyang in the beginning of September. All this turned South Korean public opinion decidedly against North Korea and weakened support for the government's sunshine policy.

The state of the South Korean economy contributed to the mounting domestic tensions. After showing signs of recovery from the financial crisis at the beginning of 2000 (growth increased by 10.7 percent in 1999), the economy slowed significantly in 2001 in part because of the larger global slowdown. Growth rates projected in the 6–7 percent range at the beginning of the year were more than halved as both exports and imports dropped sharply and corporate investment faltered.³⁴ Economic anxieties further weakened diminishing South Korean willingness to provide assistance to North Korea. Among other things, the economy exacerbated the government's difficulties in trying to prop up Hyundai's floundering Mt. Kumgang project. It also hindered the government's ability to use aid as a lubricant for broader North-South interactions.

In response, the progressive media and NGOs stepped up their efforts to defend the sunshine policy, shifting blame for the stalemate in inter-Korean relations almost entirely to the United States. To make this argument they broadened the bill of particulars. According to them, the United States was exaggerating the threat from North Korea not only to force the ROK to buy advanced U.S. weapons and ensure a continued troop presence in South Korea but also to provide an excuse for developing missile defenses that would ensure U.S. global hegemony. This effort would prevent North-South reconciliation, while provoking a major arms race and ushering in a new Cold War in Asia. One of the networks created by these groups, the Committee for Collective Measures to Prevent Missile Defense and Realize Peace, generated within a couple days a letter signed by more than 100 civic group representatives demanding an end to missile defense and America's "Cold War" mentality.

The GNP, conservative media, and other groups on the right launched a counteroffensive. They denounced their leftist opponents as dangerous, destructive forces, tearing South Korean society

³⁴Korea Economic Institute, *Korea Insight*, Vol. 4, No. 2, February 2002.

apart in the name of “one people” and maliciously fostering anti-American sentiment among the public.³⁵ They also attacked the government for a wide range of alleged offenses. They criticized the government for its lax handling of North Korea’s repeated encroachments of South Korean territorial waters in June, for example, denouncing in particular its alleged “political intervention” to prevent a tough military response that might further set back North-South relations.³⁶ They challenged the administration’s effort to divert government funds to aid Hyundai, which was facing bankruptcy from losses stemming from the Mt. Kumgang project. They also assailed the government repeatedly for its “one-way” assistance policy, citing the Bush administration’s emphasis on reciprocity and verification as the only way to deal with North Korea.

In this environment, three developments significantly weakened the government and raised the volume of debate to yet a new level. One was the visit by Kim Jong Il to Moscow in late July and early August. At the end of his talks with Russian President Putin, the two sides issued a joint communiqué that publicly alluded to North Korea’s insistence on the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Korea. Normally such boilerplate rhetoric from North Korea would not receive much attention. But in the heated environment existing at the time, opponents of the sunshine policy rushed to point out the contradiction between this official document and Kim Dae Jung’s assertion that Kim Jong Il had expressed his acceptance of a continued U.S. military presence in South Korea. Gaining this acceptance in his private conversations with the North Korean leader, President Kim had long insisted, was one of his major accomplishments at the June 2000 summit. The clear contradiction between these two statements undermined the president’s credibility and political standing in South Korea.

The second development was the government’s decision to prosecute the leading conservative newspaper companies for alleged tax evasion and other financial wrongdoing. Technically, this decision was much broader than just the conservative papers. The government brought civil charges against 23 major media institutions, in-

³⁵*Chosun Ilbo*, June 8, 2001.

³⁶*Chosun Ilbo*, June 6, 2001.

cluding virtually every national news organization, and assessed them fines of nearly \$400 million for having evaded taxes.³⁷ It also fined 16 individuals within these companies roughly \$23 million for irregular business transactions. But the clear target was the major conservative press—the *Chosun Ilbo*, *Donga Ilbo*, *JoongAng Ilbo*, and *Kookmin Ilbo*—which was fined the overwhelming bulk of the \$400 million in back taxes and penalties. The magnitude of the fines was without precedent.³⁸ The government followed up in August by arresting the owners of the *Chosun Ilbo*, *Donga Ilbo*, and *Kookmin Ilbo* on charges of embezzlement and tax evasion.

Predictably, the left and right were sharply split in their reactions. Progressive groups—in what appears to most Westerners as a clear case of ideology trumping principle—supported the government’s attack. They denounced the “shamelessness” of the “corrupt family-owned press” and demanded major “reform” of the (conservative) media. Conservatives, on the other hand, strongly criticized the government, while the major newspapers waged a life and death struggle in the name of “freedom of the press.”³⁹ Although the public generally agreed that financial wrongdoings should not be permitted, it almost universally saw the government’s escalating war on the press as a transparent attempt to silence its critics—particularly those opposing the sunshine policy. The general presumption was that, in trying to stifle or at least intimidate these papers, the government was seeking to improve both the prospects for a return visit by Kim Jong Il to Seoul and the ruling party’s prospects in the upcoming presidential election.⁴⁰

At the height of this war between the government and the conservative media, foreign press organizations and public figures began to

³⁷*The New York Times*, July 3, 2001.

³⁸David Steinberg, “The Korean Press and Orthodoxy,” *Chosun Daily* (English edition), July 17, 2001.

³⁹Even the ULD, although still in the ruling coalition at this point, opposed the government’s attack on the media and publicly asked the ruling camp not to arrest the owners of the major newspaper companies. *The Korea Times*, August 20, 2001.

⁴⁰A political reporter for the *Hankyoreh Sinmun* suggested in a book published that year that the effort to destroy the big three newspapers was preplanned by the Blue House. Han-yong Sung, *Why Did DJ Fail to Resolve the Regional Conflict?* (Seoul: Joongsim, 2001).

express concern over the South Korean government's actions.⁴¹ The conservative Korea Bar Association adopted a resolution criticizing the government for having "regressed away from the real rule of law" and urging it to pursue its reform programs "based on the rule of law, not on [the] rule of power."⁴² Also, members of the opposition parties began talking about the need to consider impeaching the president.⁴³ Rumors spread among conservatives that the MDP was planning to revise the constitution to enable President Kim to remain in power and promote his unification objectives.⁴⁴

All this further inflamed the debate over the government's handling of policy toward North Korea and sharply constrained the government's latitude for action. It also fed the growing mood of scandal surrounding the Blue House, as the mainstream press went after government officials (including several government prosecutors and tax officials who were subsequently sent to prison for bribery) and close associates of the president for their own wrongdoing. Progressive leaders in particular emphasize the importance of these scandals in damaging the president's moral legitimacy among the public and weakening his political authority. Perhaps the biggest effect, though, was that it contributed to Kim Jong-pil's subsequent decision to bolt the ruling coalition. As a result of this decision, the government lost its majority in the National Assembly, the Blue House Secretary for Policy stepped down, and President Kim resigned his position as president of the ruling party.

The third development was North Korea's August 15 celebration of Korea's liberation from Japan. A group of more than 300 delegates from South Korea participated in this highly politicized event. While

⁴¹A letter by eight U.S. Congressmen to President Kim expressing concern over a possible infringement on press freedom received particularly big play. *JoongAng Ilbo*, English edition, July 19, 2001.

⁴²*JoongAng Ilbo*, English edition, July 25, 2001.

⁴³Hyung-jin Kim, op. cit.

⁴⁴Reflecting the intensity of the distrust they feel for President Kim, if nothing else, many conservatives believe that the original plan was for Kim Jong Il to come to Seoul in the second half of 2000, whereupon both sides would issue a joint declaration of unification. On this basis, the administration would then change the ROK constitution to adopt a parliamentary system of government. This would obviate the need for presidential elections, hence terminating the "one-term" restriction against President Kim remaining in office.

there, some of the delegates attended festivities at a site honoring former North Korean leader Kim Il Sung's unification formula and engaged in other political activities praising the current leader, Kim Jong Il. By doing so, they knowingly violated both South Korea's National Security Law, which forbids these kinds of "pro-North Korea" activities, as well as an explicit pledge the delegation had made to the South Korean government not to do so in exchange for permission to attend the event.

News of this development hit South Korea like a bombshell. The conservative press viciously attacked the government's handling of the incident and called for a review of its engagement policy toward Pyongyang. The opposition parties demanded the arrest of the perpetrators and the resignation of Minister of Unification Lim Dong-Won.⁴⁵ A confrontation occurred at Kimpo Airport when the delegates returned to Seoul, with members of the Korea Veterans Association and other conservative organizations on one side and leaders of the Korean Association of Students and other progressive groups on the other. Although Minister Lim apologized for the entire incident, he refused to resign.

North Korea then intervened in an apparent effort to rescue the architect of the administration's sunshine policy. Breaking a six-month refusal to engage in talks with South Korea or even respond to the administration's repeated entreaties, it proposed restarting inter-Korean ministerial meetings on the eve of a National Assembly no-confidence vote for Lim Dong-Won in early September. Kim Jong-pil, along with most other South Koreans, saw this as a transparent attempt by the North to influence the outcome of the assembly vote. Outraged, he joined with the opposition and the vote passed. Minister Lim resigned the next day, bringing down the entire cabinet in the process.

The administration put on a brave face and tried to move forward. It accepted the North's proposal for restarting talks and hosted the fifth inter-Korean ministerial talks in Seoul from September 15–18. These talks (originally scheduled for the previous March but canceled by Pyongyang on the day they were to start) produced a lengthy list of

⁴⁵*The Korea Times*, August 22, 2001.

agreements for future meetings, including a sixth round of inter-Korean ministerial talks in October.⁴⁶ The administration initiated talks with the North in early October on revitalizing the Mt. Kumgang project. Also, a week later, it exchanged lists with Pyongyang of family members who would participate in the next round of family reunions, scheduled for mid-October. In addition, the government moved to simplify regulations on inter-Korean exchanges, while continuing to urge Kim Jong Il to honor his summit commitment to come to Seoul.

These efforts went nowhere, however, primarily because of North Korea's continuing antics. For example, North Korea unilaterally canceled the family reunions scheduled for mid-October four days before they were to take place, ostensibly over the enhanced security alert adopted by South Korea in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States. It suddenly insisted that the next round of inter-ministerial talks—which until then had rotated between the two capitals—could be held only at North Korea's Mt. Kumgang resort, which delayed the talks for nearly two weeks until South Korea capitulated on the venue. It also refused to allow progress in these talks once they were held in mid-November, ostensibly because of the “hard-line” stance taken by South Korea's new foreign minister. The ministerial talks thus ended without either a joint statement or any bilateral agreements. Such actions sent almost all South Koreans to the exits. Even North Korea's strongest Southern soul mates, like the *Hankyoreh Sinmun*, criticized its actions. No one, it seemed, could say anything positive about Pyongyang.

President Kim's lame duck status effectively dates to these developments. The long North Korean freeze on substantive dialogue and repeated provocative behavior had taken its toll, seriously weakening Kim Dae Jung politically, souring public attitudes toward the North, and undermining support for the government's policy. As the world increasingly turned its attention to the war on terrorism, much of the remaining air was sucked out of the sunshine policy. With this, winter settled hard over engagement with North Korea.

⁴⁶For details, see Aidan Foster-Carter, op. cit., 2001, available at www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/0103Qnk_sk.html.

The bleak scene was reinforced by a series of U.S. actions and official policy statements. In mid-October President Bush warned North Korea not to try to exploit U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, and he backed up the warning by deploying additional fighter aircraft to South Korea to compensate for the deployment of a U.S. aircraft carrier from the North Pacific to South Asia. In late November, President Bush demanded that North Korea allow international inspections of its suspected weapons of mass destruction (WMD) activities and terminate its destabilizing sale of missiles and missile technology. Also, in mid-December President Bush formally withdrew from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty, warning of the danger from “rogue states”—a term widely used for years to describe countries like North Korea—“who seek weapons of mass destruction.”⁴⁷ The 2002 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) completed in early January 2002 and subsequently leaked to the press drove home how seriously the Pentagon viewed such states. The NPR called among other things for the development of new nuclear weapons, especially “earth-penetrating” weapons that could destroy underground bunkers and facilities, that would be better suited to hit targets in countries like North Korea. It also described a range of contingencies for which such weapons might be used, all of which explicitly applied to North Korea.⁴⁸

The “axis of evil” remark in President Bush’s January 29, 2002, State of the Union speech formally elevated Pyongyang to the pantheon of regimes deemed to pose a “grave and growing danger” to U.S. and

⁴⁷“Remarks by the President on National Missile Defense,” December 13, 2001. A copy is available on the White House web site at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/12/print/20011213-4.html.

⁴⁸In setting requirements for U.S. nuclear strike capabilities, the NPR explicitly identified North Korea as one among a handful of states that “could be involved” in all three of the contingencies for which the United States must be prepared—“immediate, potential, or unexpected contingencies.” “All have longstanding hostility toward the United States and its security partners,” the review continued, and “North Korea and Iraq in particular have been chronic military concerns. All sponsor or harbor terrorists, and all have active WMD and missile programs.” Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review*, January 8, 2002, p. 16. For excerpts from the report from which this quotation is drawn, see www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/policy/dod/npr.htm.

global security.⁴⁹ It was accompanied by other indications of U.S. concern. CIA Director George Tenet testified in Congress, for example, that North Korea was abiding by the Agreed Framework but only “that specific agreement with regard to that specific facility,” implying that other disturbing activities were taking place elsewhere in the country.⁵⁰ This implication that North Korea might be involved in a hidden nuclear weapons program was reinforced on March 20 when President Bush, departing from his predecessor’s routine practice, refused to certify that North Korea is abiding by the Agreed Framework’s requirements. As one administration official put it, “This lays down a clear marker and puts the North Koreans on notice that we are gravely concerned.”⁵¹ It also communicated the sense of urgency growing in Washington during this period for North Korea to allow international inspectors access to facilities beyond the two nuclear reactors monitored under the Agreed Framework.

The “axis of evil” remark and related U.S. indications of concern unquestionably registered in North Korea. They also reverberated in South Korea, setting off a barrage of criticism in the National Assembly over President Kim’s own policy and ratcheting up the existing recrimination between the ruling and opposition parties.⁵² The speech had a polarizing impact more broadly.⁵³ Supporters of the sunshine policy predictably felt undercut and lashed out at the United States for “provoking war” and “undermining South Korean foreign policy.” Opponents charged that the Kim administration’s policies had created a “major gap” between Washington and Seoul, seriously weakening ROK security. In the wake of President Bush’s speech, the South Korean foreign minister was summarily dismissed, student and radical NGO leaders organized intensive public demon-

⁴⁹“The President’s State of the Union Address,” January 29, 2002. A copy is available on the White House web site at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/print/20020129-11.html.

⁵⁰Bates Gill, “A New Korean Nuclear Crisis?” *Newsweek Korea*, April 3, 2002.

⁵¹Peter Slevin, “N. Korea Not Following Nuclear Pact, U.S. to Say,” *Washington Post*, March 20, 2002.

⁵²Hong Kyudok, “South Korea-U.S. Cooperation on North Korea Policy,” *Korea Focus*, Vol. 10, No. 2, March–April 2002.

⁵³Donald G. Gross, “Riding the Roller-Coaster,” *Comparative Connections*, 1st Quarter (January–March) 2002, available at www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/0201Qus_skorea.html.

strations, and official U.S.-ROK relations were thrown into turmoil. Many observers believe that it contributed to a perceptible rise in anti-American sentiment in South Korea.

For all their immediate and perhaps lingering effects in certain quarters, the “axis of evil” remark and related U.S. statements do not appear to have altered either the basic nature or course of the public debate over South Korean policies. Two subsequent developments contributed to attenuating their impact. One was President Bush’s trip to Seoul in mid-February. In connection with this trip, the president reiterated the U.S. proposal for unconditional talks with North Korea. He expressed strong support for President Kim’s engagement policy and publicly ruled out any U.S. military attack on North Korea, a statement even stronger than former President Clinton’s assurance that the United States has “no hostile intent.”⁵⁴ He also appealed to Chinese President Jiang Zemin on his way home from Seoul to impress on Pyongyang the U.S. desire for bilateral dialogue. Coming just a couple of weeks after his State of the Union address, the trip helped defuse rising emotions on both sides of the political and ideological divide in South Korea.

Secretary of State Powell helped lower temperatures further in February by publicly reemphasizing U.S. readiness to resume dialogue with Pyongyang “at any time the North Koreans decide to come back to the table.”⁵⁵ In a major policy address a few months later, Powell reinforced this message by emphasizing U.S. readiness “to take important steps to help North Korea move its relations with the U.S. toward normalcy.”⁵⁶ He also made clear that the United States, in return, wanted Pyongyang to “come into full compliance with the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards that it agreed to when it signed the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty” and

⁵⁴Ibid.:

Bush’s statement largely fulfilled North Korea’s request that the new U.S. administration endorse former President Bill Clinton’s North Korea policy before it would agree to resume bilateral talks with the United States.

⁵⁵Secretary Colin L. Powell, “Statement on President Bush’s Budget Request for FY 2003,” before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs, February 13, 2002 [as prepared].

⁵⁶Secretary Colin L. Powell, “Remarks at Asia Society Annual Dinner,” New York, June 10, 2002, available at www.asiasociety.org/speeches/powell.htm.

address other issues on the U.S. agenda. While Powell's characterizations of North Korea remained unflattering, if not severe, his emphasis on U.S. willingness to engage with Pyongyang was reassuring to South Korean officials.

The second development involved the indications of an ongoing North Korean nuclear weapons program in violation of a series of solemn international commitments and related decision by South Korea to raise the priority of North Korean WMD activities on its own policy agenda. Such indications, to be sure, were not new. For several years U.S. intelligence analysts had suspected clandestine North Korean efforts—dating back apparently to the mid-1990s—to evade international controls on their development of nuclear weapons by switching from plutonium to uranium as the basis for their program. Circumstantial evidence developed into a pattern between 2000–2001 and, according to a report quoting high-ranking South Korean officials, was communicated to South Korea “by at least August 2001.”⁵⁷ The United States and ROK are understood to have consulted closely thereafter.

Although U.S. leaders did not have a watertight case apparently until the summer of 2002, by the late winter and early spring of that year they had grown very concerned about North Korea's WMD programs. This was reflected in the U.S. policy statements described above. Concerned itself by the direction of events, South Korea raised the salience of the WMD issue in its own policies. Publicly warning of a potential crisis by 2003 that would rival the 1993–1994 crisis over North Korea's nuclear activities, the government decided to send Ambassador Lim as a special envoy to Pyongyang to transmit this concern directly to Kim Jong Il and try to restore North-South interactions.

The trip, from April 3–5, 2002, was at least partially successful. It enabled South Korea to convey to Pyongyang both the depth of U.S. concern and seriousness of its willingness to engage in dialogue. It narrowed the gap between U.S. and ROK approaches and capped rising tensions in U.S.-ROK relations. It helped dampen public anxi-

⁵⁷For further details, see Doug Struck and Glenn Kessler, “Hints on N. Korea Surfaced in 2000,” *Washington Post*, October 19, 2002. Also see Mark Magnier and Sonni Efron, “E. Asian Strategic Balance Remains,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 19, 2002.

ety about a potential nuclear crisis stimulated by President Bush's "axis of evil" remark, as well as by his subsequent decision in late March not to certify North Korea's compliance with the Agreed Framework. It also produced a commitment by Kim Jong Il to resume inter-Korean cooperation—including restarting reunions of separated families, rescheduling economic talks, and reopening talks between military authorities—as well as a new agreement to develop a second rail link between the two Koreas along the east coast. All this helped smooth U.S.-ROK relations and defuse accusations by radicals and others in South Korea of a nefarious U.S. desire to prevent inter-Korean reconciliation.

What it did not do was reform North Korea's behavior. Over the next three months, North Korea implemented only one of the commitments it made to Ambassador Lim in early April: another (fourth) round of family reunions at the end of that month. Even this took place only after South Korea agreed to hold the reunion at Mt. Kumgang in the North, rather than in each other's capitals as had previously been the practice. Aside from this singular event, no official inter-Korean activities took place, ostensibly because of North Korean unhappiness with the South Korean foreign minister.⁵⁸

Instead of forming a new approach, North Korea reverted to form. It withdrew from inter-Korean economic talks—which would have been the first such talks in nearly a year and a half—one day before they were to take place (May 7–10). It canceled a North Korean tour of South Korean factories scheduled for late May. It also backed out of an agreement it made with a group of South Korean welfare foundation members to hold a joint church service with North Korean believers in Pyongyang, prohibiting the members from leaving their hotel unless they agreed to attend a politically sensitive North Ko-

⁵⁸In mid-April Foreign Minister Choi Sung Hong was quoted as saying that "sometimes carrying a big stick works" in dealing with North Korea. This remark infuriated North Korea, which saw Choi as supporting Washington's "hard-line" policy, and it abruptly suspended all dialogue several weeks later. This, in turn, exasperated South Korea. For the foreign minister's quote, see Fred Hiatt, "N. Korea: What a Big Stick Can Do," *Washington Post*, April 23, 2002. On the exasperation in South Korea, see Barbara Demick, "N. Korea Cancels Planned Meeting," *Los Angeles Times*, May 7, 2002.

rean festival.⁵⁹ North Korea also ignored both its promise of inter-Korean military talks—despite a South Korean decision in May to indefinitely postpone publication of its annual Defense White Paper so as not to offend North Korean sensitivities—and its offer to open a second rail link between the two Koreas. Press reports that Kim Jong Il had told South Korean National Assemblywoman Park Geun-hye during her visit to Pyongyang in mid-May that he would honor both his promise to visit Seoul and a number of other commitments appeared, a month later, to be similarly unfounded.⁶⁰

Not surprisingly, much of the energy in the public debate dissipated. The issues remained, as did the fundamental divisions. But with so little happening in North-South relations, they were largely dormant. Instead, South Koreans increasingly turned their attention to other issues: the economic situation, social—especially educational but also medical care—reform, and a seemingly endless series of political scandals. The latter, which led to the arrest of two of President Kim's sons and a decision by the president in May to formally quit the MDP in an effort to distance his party from the escalating scandals, particularly absorbed South Koreans.⁶¹ The cumulative effect of political scandal and disenchantment with the government's North Korea and domestic policies was significant. In the June 13 local elections, the opposition GNP won a landslide victory, taking 11 of the 16 provincial governor and mayor contests and sweeping most of the 232 races for heads of small cities, counties, and district wards.⁶²

⁵⁹The South Korean government had previously prohibited the group from attending the festival. Lee Dong-hyun, "Prayers, Hymns Sound in Pyongyang," *JoongAng Ilbo*, June 20, 2002.

⁶⁰As the daughter of former South Korean President Park Chung Hee, Park presented herself as having something unique to share with the son of North Korea's long-time leader, Kim Il Sung. As someone who had recently bolted the GNP to explore forming her own party and running for president herself, she sought to use her North Korea visit to strengthen her domestic political standing. The decision by the government to allow her to visit North Korea was widely interpreted as designed to damage the GNP in the run-up to the election.

⁶¹Kim had previously resigned his position as head of the ruling party in a similar effort. Joohee Cho, "S. Korean President Resigns from Party," *Washington Post*, May 7, 2002.

⁶²Neighboring Cheju-do was the only province outside President Kim's home province to support the ruling party's candidate. "The People's Choice," *KOREA Now*, June 15, 2002.

Voter disapproval of government conduct, however, did not mean voter preoccupation with Pyongyang. As World Cup fever swept the country in the second half of June, the general sense was that most South Koreans had stopped thinking about the North altogether.

North Korea's unprovoked firing on and sinking of a ROK Navy patrol boat on June 29 changed the picture. This incident—coming the day before the closing ceremony of the World Cup while South Koreans were basking in the extraordinary performance of their team and country—left five South Korean sailors dead and many others injured. It also left the sunshine policy in tatters. Critics launched blistering attacks on the government for its alleged negligence, naiveté, and “continuous giveaway” in the face of North Korean provocations.⁶³ Supporters either switched or withheld support, seeing both North Korea's action and the government's meek response as indefensible.⁶⁴ Even the Ministry of Defense got into the act, criticizing the government for its passivity and calling for revision of the military “rules of engagement” to permit more aggressive action in the future. Most citizens seethed with anger toward North Korea. Public opinion as a whole toughened up notably.⁶⁵ For its part, the United States resisted pressure from the ROK government to continue with its plan to send a high-level U.S. official to Pyongyang to discuss resumption of U.S.-DPRK dialogue and postponed the plan in July. All this left the ROK government with not much choice but to demand an apology from Pyongyang and try to preserve the existing North-South agreements.

⁶³Chun Young-gi, “Politicians Exchange Fire over Naval Battle,” *JoongAng Ilbo*, July 2, 2002.

⁶⁴For a good example, see Kwon Young-bin, “Sunshine Policy is No End in Itself,” *JoongAng Ilbo*, July 8, 2002. Kwon is the editorial page editor of the *JoongAng Ilbo* and someone who, as a long-time supporter of the sunshine policy, worked hard to maintain balance in the newspaper's editorial comments over the years on the government's policies. Other representative reactions include: Paik Jin-hyun, “Cockeyed Optimism Hurts Seoul,” *JoongAng Ilbo*, July 8, 2002; Lee Chung-min, “Weapons Useless Without the Will,” *JoongAng Ilbo*, July 9, 2002; and Song Chin-hyok, “No Sunshine on a One-way Street,” *JoongAng Ilbo*, July 11, 2002.

⁶⁵According to one Gallup Korea/*Chosun Ilbo* poll taken a week after the naval incident, for example, some 70 percent of the respondents saw the clash as a premeditated provocation. A total of 75 percent said the sunshine policy should either be complemented with a tougher security stance (59.3 percent) or replaced altogether (15.8 percent). *Chosun Ilbo*, July 8, 2002.

There things might have stood had North Korea not abruptly reversed direction one month later. On July 25, the regime expressed “regret” for the “accidental” naval incident and proposed talks to discuss a resumption of inter-Korean dialogue.⁶⁶ With only four and a half months remaining before South Korea’s next presidential election, President Kim chose to interpret the statement of “regret” as an “apology” and accepted the North Korean offer. This led to a flurry of activity unrivaled since the months immediately following the June 2000 North-South summit.

Some of this activity marked the resumption of endeavors long in train but long moribund or suspended. The seventh round of inter-ministerial talks, for example, was finally held in mid-August (after a delay of over nine months) and produced agreement to hold another round of family reunions and an array of additional meetings.⁶⁷ Similarly, the second South-North economic talks were held at the end of August (for the first time since December 2000) and resulted in an agreement to open two rail links across the demilitarized zone, restart talks on the Kaesong industrial complex, and pursue a series of additional cooperative activities and meetings.⁶⁸ Other activities in September—such as a friendly North-South soccer match, North Korean participation in the Asian Games in South Korea, and an agreement signed between the two sides’ military authorities to avoid clashes while work was done to reconnect the cross-border rail links—were unprecedented.

The fact that all this activity occurred amid signs of incipient but potentially significant internal North Korean reforms stimulated much discussion of whether this time North Korea might actually be serious about changing its traditional orientation.⁶⁹ Japanese Prime

⁶⁶For details, see Lee Young-jong, “North ‘Regrets’ Battle, Seeks Talks,” *JoongAng Ilbo*, July 25, 2002; and Christopher Torchia, “N. Korea Says It Regrets Clash With South, Proposes Talks,” *Washington Post*, July 26, 2002.

⁶⁷ROK Ministry of Unification, “Joint Press Statement of the 7th Inter-Korean Ministerial Talks,” *Korean Unification Bulletin*, No. 46, August 2002, pp. 1–2.

⁶⁸ROK Ministry of Unification, “Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation Promotion Committee holds the Second Meeting,” and “Agreement at the Second Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation Promotion Committee,” *ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

⁶⁹Aidan Foster-Carter, “No Turning Back?” *Comparative Connections*, 3rd Quarter 2002. For short accounts of the North Korean reforms, see James A. Foley, “Pyongyang Introduces Market Reforms,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, September 1, 2002; Doug

Minister Koizumi's surprise visit to Pyongyang in mid-September, which resulted in unexpected progress on long-standing bilateral issues, reinforced the sense of change and heartened ROK government supporters.⁷⁰ To be sure, the North Korean turnaround came too late to help President Kim politically. In the August by-elections for the National Assembly, the opposition GNP won another landslide victory, taking 11 of the 13 vacant seats being contested. This gave the GNP a majority of 139 seats in the assembly and the power to push bills through the legislature unilaterally.⁷¹ Still, supporters of the sunshine policy took the renewed activity as confirmation of the wisdom and efficacy of the government's patient, consistent approach toward North Korea.

South Korean critics and opponents of the sunshine policy, on the other hand, found much missing. There was no actual "apology" for North Korea's intentional and unprovoked sinking of the South Korean naval vessel, many charged, only a statement of "regret" for an "accidental" incident. There was no sign of North Korean willingness to begin talks on pressing military issues. And there was no agreement on a Kim Jong Il visit to Seoul. Many of the agreed-upon measures, moreover, were either indefinite (e.g., a certain meeting will be held "at an early date") or left to be decided later. Other aspects of the flurry of activity—ranging from absence of attention to the plight of North Korean refugees to the enormous costs associated with rebuilding the North's worn out rail system—reminded many South Korean critics of what they do not like about the sunshine policy. In the process, the spate of activity revived debate again over the government's approach toward North Korea.

Not surprisingly, Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to Pyongyang in mid-September contributed to the revival. Many South Koreans compared the results of his visit to that of President Kim in 2000 and

Struck, "A Taste of Capitalism in North Korea," *Washington Post*, September 13, 2002; Chang-hyun Jung and Yong-soo Jeong, "Next Step for North's Economy: Foreign Direct Investment," *JoongAng Ilbo*, September 16, 2002; and Marcus Noland, "Trainspotting in North Korea," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 24, 2002.

⁷⁰For a short description of the Koizumi visit, see Howard French, "North Koreans Sign Agreement with Japanese," *The New York Times*, September 18, 2002.

⁷¹Kim Hyung-jin, "Following Another Election Triumph, GNP Set to Flex Parliamentary Muscles," *Korea Herald*, August 10, 2002.

found the latter lacking. Conservatives in particular were enraged at Koizumi's success in gaining information about the relative handful of Japanese abducted by North Korea over the years, whereas President Kim had never even raised the issue of the vastly larger number of South Koreans seized by Pyongyang and taken to North Korea.⁷² Subsequent allegations by South Korean opposition politicians that President Kim had secretly funneled some \$400 million to the North shortly before and after the June 2000 summit, while denied by the Blue House, intensified South Korea's political divisions.⁷³

Still, the debate might have attenuated at this point had North Korea continued to provide evidence of significant, substantive change and a genuine willingness to live in peace with South Korea.⁷⁴ As it happens, the warmth that had appeared so suddenly in inter-Korean relations turned out to be a false spring. North Korea's admission to U.S. Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly in early October (made public two weeks later) that it has been pursuing a covert nuclear weapons program for years in violation of multiple international, inter-Korean, and U.S.-DPRK agreements startled the world and rattled inter-Korean relations.⁷⁵ Its defiant insistence that it is "entitled to possess not only nuclear weapons but any type of weapon more

⁷²Officially the government says North Korea has abducted nearly 3,800 South Koreans since the end of the Korean War, although others place the total in the tens of thousands. Aidan Foster-Carter, "No Turning Back?" op. cit., 2002.

⁷³For an English account, see Andrew Ward, "S. Korea 'Bribed North to Improve Relations,'" *Financial Times*, October 1, 2002.

⁷⁴Barbara Demick, "North Korea's Goodwill Gestures Spark Debate," *Los Angeles Times*, September 19, 2002.

⁷⁵Peter Slevin and Karen DeYoung, "N. Korea Admits Having Secret Nuclear Arms—Stunned U.S. Ponders Next Steps," *Washington Post*, October 17, 2002. Kelly subsequently said he told the North Koreans that the U.S. had been prepared to present a "bold approach to improve bilateral relations"—one that would involve "significant economic and diplomatic steps to improve the lives of the North Korean people"—if North Korea "dramatically altered its behavior" on a range of issues of concern to the United States. He added, however, that information indicating that North Korea is conducting a program to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons in violation of its international commitments made such an approach impossible. Kelly was surprised when, after initial denials, the North Koreans not only "flatly acknowledged that they have such a program" but also declared that they considered the Agreed Framework "nullified." For the text of Kelly's statement, see "Statement by Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James A. Kelly," October 19, 2002. A copy provided by the American Embassy Information Resource Center is available at <http://usembassy.state.gov/seoul/www43cv.html>.

powerful than that” shook the foundation on which not only South Korean but all international efforts to improve relations with North Korea had been predicated—namely, a good faith North Korean effort to comply with its nonproliferation commitments.⁷⁶ With this admission, the sun set on the sunshine policy. And winter returned with a vengeance.

⁷⁶The reference to weapons “more powerful” than nuclear weapons presumably alludes to biological weapons, although North Korea also has a large stock of chemical weapons available for use. For excerpts from the text of North Korea’s official press release, see “North Korea’s Response,” *The New York Times*, October 26, 2002.