

# The Amateur Computerist

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DPRK: Out-of-the-Box Diplomacy

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## Introduction: North Korea and the Need for Out-of-the-Box Diplomacy

This year, 2015, marks seventy years since the end of WWII and since the division of Korea. From 1950-1953 a war was fought to unite Korea. That war failed to solve the problem of the division of Korea and the war-like tension that still continues. Years of hostility between the U.S. and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, commonly known as North Korea) also failed to achieve any improvement for Korea. This issue of the *Amateur Computerist* begins with suggestions that what is needed for peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and as a step toward reunification is a new approach.

The first article, "Out of the Box Diplomacy to Build a Dialogue

with North Korea” counters the myth that talks with the DPRK can only be fruitless. It reports on a program at the Asia Society in New York City exploring the search for peace between the U.S. and North Korea. At the program, former Governor of New Mexico, Bill Richardson and Donald Gregg, former U.S. Ambassador to South Korea stressed the need for engagement rather than the U.S. policy of ‘strategic patience.’ They made a serious effort to propose both the reasons and the possible means to build a dialogue between North Korea and the U.S.

The second article reports on just such an effort at out-of-the-box diplomacy. “Women Plan Walk Across the DMZ to Support Peace and Korean Unification” tells about a plan by 30 women to walk from North Korea to South Korea through the DMZ. The group plans to hold women’s peace symposia in each of the Koreas and publicize the aspirations of Korean women for peace and for unification. The walk will express the desire for unification and the need to end the Korean War. The armistice in 1953 only ended the fighting.

Other examples of an emerging alternative force affecting diplomacy are analyzed in the article, “The Media War at the UN and the DPRK: Why Netizen Journalism Matters.” The article presents two case studies of Korea, the U.S. and the UN relations. In September 2005, just when an agreement had been reached in the six-party talks on denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the U.S. government acted against the agreement by sanctioning the Banco Delta Asia bank thus freezing DPRK funds held by that bank. Online and off line journalists, however uncovered much of the background story. Subsequently the U.S. arranged to unfreeze the funds.

The other case study involves South Korea. In 2010, South Korea accused North Korea of sinking the South Korean navel ship Cheonan and took that accusation to the UN. Especially online but also by letters to the UN Security Council, South Korea’s case was challenged and discredited. Netizens in several countries found discrepancies and questionable aspects of the alleged U.S.-South Korean investigation. In this situation the Security Council set up separate meetings to hear from both sides, unusual for the UN. In a situation where the views of both Koreas had been presented and where there was worldwide discussion online of the situation, the Security Council decided that it was a

question for the two sides to settle peacefully among themselves. While the media in the U.S. had ignored the critique of the South Korean government's investigation that was being discussed online and spread around the world, there were delegates at the UN who were aware of it.

The article describes the concept of the netizen (net citizen) introduced by the research done online by Michael Hauben. As early as 1993, Hauben predicted that netizens would be creating a broader and more widespread media. The two case studies help to demonstrate that Hauben's prediction is proving accurate. In both cases the potential of a new form for journalism described as 'netizen journalism' made possible a policy supporting peace instead of war. The article proposes, "that the response of netizens to the problems raised by the investigation of the Cheonan incident is but a prelude to the potential of netizens in different countries to work together across national borders to solve the problems of our times."

In addition to documenting out-of-the-box diplomacy, this issue of the *Amateur Computerist* returns to a topic to which we devoted two previous issues, Winter 2007 (Vol. 16, No1) and Fall 2009 (Vol. 18, No 1),\* namely, challenging the false narrative in the Western mainstream media about North Korea. This issue explores and documents the role of netizen journalism toward lessening the tension between the U.S. and the DPRK and on the Korean Peninsula.

In general the subject of the DPRK is treated by the U.S. government and mainstream media with hostility toward both the country and its policies. Many myths are presented about the DPRK, like its people suffer from great poverty and even famine. Two articles in this issue, "Enemy Image: What the DPRK Is Really Like" and "13 Observations about North Korea by a Western Visitor" present evidence of ordinary life in the DPRK similar to elsewhere. The hope one author expresses is that an accurate portrayal of life in the DPRK will become the basis "for friendly relations and cultural and people-to-people exchanges in the near future between people from the DPRK and the western countries."

In the past year, tensions on the Korean Peninsula have been heightened. In September 2014, the U.S. intensified its campaign at the UN and elsewhere to portray the DPRK as a human rights violating state. The DPRK defended itself from these accusations. Two articles in

this issue, “DPRK Human Rights Briefing at UN Challenges U.S. Unending War Strategy” and “Outside and Inside the UN Contesting the UN Human Rights COI Report on North Korea” report about the DPRK’s response and other challenges to the U.S. and UN allegations. Both articles connect the Human Rights COI Report to the U.S. hostile policy toward the DPRK since there is a lack of credible evidence of HR violations. The articles document the politicization by some UN member states of the human rights question.

The article analyzing the events surrounding the November 2014 computer hack attack on Sony Pictures Entertainment Corporation, “USA, North Korea and Hollywood (II)” compared the U.S. government rush to blame the DPRK to the way the DPRK was accused of sinking of the South Korean warship Cheonan. In both cases credible evidence was never produced. The article raises the question: is the main goal again to find “pretexts to introduce new sanctions against North Korea”?

The articles in this issue document the need and even provide an example as in the case of the Cheonan and the Security Council, for how a more accurate journalism can help create a more peace oriented diplomacy.

There is a role being played by netizens and netizen journalism to present a more accurate picture of North Korean society and to understand better the role played by the U.S. government and media in increasing the tensions between the U.S. and the DPRK and on the Korean Peninsula.

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\* The two previous issues covering this topic can be seen at:  
<http://www.ais.org/~jrh/acn/ACn16-1.pdf> and <http://www.ais.org/~jrh/acn/ACn18-1.pdf>

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# Out of the Box Diplomacy to Build a Dialogue with North Korea\*

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It was an unusual event. On Thursday, July 11, 2013, the Asia Society in New York City presented a program about the Search for Peace with North Korea. The official title of the program was “Avoiding Apocalypse: Searching for Peace with North Korea.”<sup>1</sup> Such a title is in itself an unusual event for a program about North Korea as it stresses the desire for peace with North Korea, instead of focusing on the all too often claims of the impossibility of progress in improving the U.S.-North Korean relationship.

Former Governor of New Mexico, Bill Richardson and Ambassador Donald Gregg, former U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea were the speakers with ABC’s Jon Williams in the role of moderator. The program did indeed stand out in the sense that the speakers made a serious effort to propose both the reasons and the possible means to build a dialogue between North Korea and the U.S.

Governor Richardson opened the program by asking the question, “How do we improve the relationship?” He argued that, “Isolating North Korea doesn’t work.” Instead, he proposed the need for what he called “out of the box diplomacy.”

One such proposal he made was the need for a special UN envoy to help find a peaceful resolution to the Korean Peninsula conflicts. He recalled that the UN used to have an envoy, a Canadian, Maurice Strong. Richardson suggested that the current UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon appoint an envoy. Richardson also considered the potential of a sports diplomacy, or something along the lines of the N.Y. Philharmonic concerts in the DPRK that had been so successful a few years ago.

Richardson gave as an example of the need for serious attention to the problem of the poor relationship with North Korea, the recent experience of shutting down Kaesong, the joint Korean program which provides 50,000 jobs for North Koreans in factories owned by South Koreans. This is the first time in the history of that program that the bad

relations led to the shutdown of this program, he noted.

“Some creative thinking is needed,” Governor Richardson argued. “Whether that be the appointment of a special envoy, or something else to be done by the UN, or something by the media, some kind of thinking has to evolve,” Richardson explained. “What’s happening now is not good,” he concluded.

Ambassador Donald Gregg’s contributions to the program reflected a similar sense that the U.S. needed to do more to engage with the North Koreans. Gregg spoke about how Syracuse University had set up a program more than 10 years ago providing information technology training for North Koreans. Gregg was critical of the U.S. failure to recognize that the U.S. had the potential to influence the situation, instead of handcuffing “themselves” with policies like “strategic patience.”

Ambassador Gregg related how when Kim Jung Un first came on the scene, Gregg had encouraged the U.S. government to invite him to visit the U.S. This proposal, however, like others Gregg made to the U.S. government, was not accepted by U.S. officials.

Another example described by Gregg recalled an incident in the early 1990s. Recognizing the antagonism of the North Koreans to the U.S.-South Korean military exercises each year, Ambassador Gregg had gotten the Pentagon to cancel the exercises one year. This was welcomed by the North Koreans and provided an opening for talks. Instead, however, without consulting Ambassador Gregg, the then U.S. Secretary of Defense, Dick Cheney got the military exercises put back. The result was that North Korea threw out the IAEA inspectors and a crisis developed. Describing this experience, the U.S. State Department country director for Korea at the time, Charles Kartman commented, “People were looking for clubs not solutions.”

In response to a question about the nuclear umbrella that the U.S. provides to protect South Korea and Japan, Gregg related an incident where North Koreans suggested that they be included under the U.S. nuclear umbrella as a means for them not to feel the need to have their own nuclear program. Ambassador Gregg proposed that there is a need for an understanding to develop between the U.S. and North Korea and that such an understanding can only come as a result of contact.

Governor Richardson proposed that new players were needed who could help develop a relationship between the U.S. and North Korea. He answered positively to a question from the audience about whether ASEAN might be able to play a bigger role. In general, Richardson advocated that those from the region be a source of help in opening up the relationship with North Korea.

A video of the July 11 program has been put online at the Asia Society. The title is, “Searching for Peace with North Korea.”<sup>2</sup>

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Notes

<sup>1</sup> <http://asiasociety.org/new-york/events/avoiding-apocalypse-searching-peace-north-korea-0>

<sup>2</sup> <http://asiasociety.org/video/policy/searching-peace-north-korea-complete>

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\* This article appeared on July 15, 2013, on the Netizenblog at:

<http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2013/07/15/out-of-the-box-diplomacy-to-build-a-dialogue-with-north-korea/>

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# Women Plan Walk Across the DMZ to Support Peace and Korean Unification

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On March 11, 2015, women who were planning to cross the DMZ separating the two Koreas held a press conference at the United Nations. They explained that 30 women from around the world would hold a walk for peace in Korea in May 2015. The group hoped to meet with North Korean women in North Korea and then cross the DMZ into South Korea and meet with South Korean women. They proposed to hold peace symposiums with women in North and South Korea. They hoped to learn from women in both Koreas about their hopes and aspirations for peace and for unification.

This year, 2015, is the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the division of Korea into two separate entities. Prior to the division of Korea, there was one Korea for more than a thousand years.<sup>1</sup> The division of Korea set the stage for the Korean War in 1950-1953. While an armistice in 1953 ended the fighting, it did not end the war. The promised activities to resolve outstanding issues were to take place soon afterwards, but instead the discord has continued and in the absence of a peace treaty, there are continuing hostile encounters between the two Koreas.

In order to work toward unification, a peace framework is needed. Also a peace treaty ending the Korean War would help resolve outstanding problems so as to make peace on the Korean peninsula more of a possibility. The group of international women hope their trip will contribute toward such efforts.

In October 2000, the UN Security Council passed Resolution UNSCR 1325 which recognizes the contribution women can make toward creating peaceful resolutions of conflicts.<sup>2</sup> The significant aspect of this Security Council resolution is that it calls for an important role for women not only in preventing and resolving conflicts, but as part of the decision making processes.

The preamble to the resolution states:

Reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and



resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and stressing the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution.

This language is reinforced in the text of the resolution, which urges in Paragraph 1 that member states increase the role of women in all decision making levels of conflict resolution and peace processes.

The Resolution:

1. Urges Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict;

To support this effort by member states, the UN is urged to act in a complementary way.

The Resolution:

2. Encourages the Secretary-General to implement his strategic plan of action (A/49/587) calling for an increase in the participation of women at decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes;

Hence the activity of women is not narrowed down only to acting on issues related to the impact of conflict and war on women, but the role envisioned for women is one of active and empowered participants in all levels of the peace making and conflict resolution processes.

In a recent article Ann Wright, one of the women who will be part of the group of 30 women walking for peace in Korea, wrote that the group had received tentative support for their trip from North Korea and a response from the United Nations Command (UN Command) at the DMZ that if South Korea is agreeable with the proposal, the UN Command will approve it.

While the UN has continually supported UN Resolution 1325 through follow up resolutions or presidential statements from the UN Security Council each year since the passage of UNSCR 1325, there has not been any indication from the UN Secretary General yet of support for the trip. A question was raised to his spokesperson on March 11 as to whether the announced “plans for a peace march through the

demilitarized zone between North and South Korea is something that the Secretary General would support.” The Secretary General’s spokesperson responded: “Let me take a look at what was announced, and I will get back to you a bit later.” After three weeks no response had yet been provided.

Similarly, the day after the group’s press conference at the UN announcing its plans, the question of whether or not South Korea would support the trip was raised to the South Korean Minister of Gender Equality and Family who was visiting the UN at the time. She promised to get back to the journalist raising the question by e-mail, but there was no response from her.

Though the group had not yet gotten official approval from South Korea, according to Ann Wright, there are some signs that it will get a positive response.

In her article, Ann Wright writes<sup>3</sup>:

You might wonder, what will this peace walk do? For one, it has already conveyed several important messages: 1. The Korean War must end with a peace treaty; 2. Women can and must be involved at all levels of peacemaking; and 3. We must act now to reunite millions of families tragically divided by a man-made division. If the barbed wire fences lining the DMZ were erected by men more than 60 years ago, men and women have the power to bring them down.

After the above was written, an article by AP reported that Christine Ahn who is co-organizer of Women Cross DMZ, the group planning the peace march had returned from a trip to North Korea.<sup>4</sup> During her visit, she met with officials from North Korea’s Overseas Korean Committee and Democratic Women’s Union. As a result of Ahn’s visit to Pyongyang, North Korea gave permission for the peace walk. Also Ahn indicated that she received support to hold a symposium in North Korea on women and peace building.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Command As Camouflage: On the Role of the UN in the Unending Korean War:

<http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2013/08/31/united-nations-command-as-camouflage>

<sup>2</sup>[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1325%20%282000%29](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1325%20%282000%29)

<sup>3</sup> Ann Wright, Women Walk for Peace in Korea, March 28, 2015, at:

PopularResistance.org:

<https://www.popularresistance.org/women-walk-for-peace-in-korea>

<sup>4</sup> AP, North Korea supports Gloria Steinem-led women's walk across the DMZ, *The Guardian*, April 3, 2015:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/03/north-korea-dmz-charity-walk-women-gloria-steinem>

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A version of this article appeared on March 31, 2015 on the Netizenblog at:

<http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2015/03/31/women-plan-walk-across-the-dmz-to-support-peace-and-korean-unification/>

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# The Media War at the UN and the DPRK

## Why Netizen Journalism Matters

### Notes for a Talk\*

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[Author's Note: The following are slightly edited Notes prepared for a talk presented at Stony Brook University on December 4, 2013. The talk was part of a series of talks in fall 2013 sponsored by the Center for Korean Studies at Stony Brook focusing on North Korea. The talk was presented with slides which are available at the website given at the end of these Notes. Comments are welcomed.]

## I – Preface

I am honored to be here today and to give this talk as part of the series of talks on North Korea.

In October of 2006, I began covering the United Nations first as a journalist for the English edition of the South Korean online newspaper *OhmyNews International*. When *OhmyNews* ended its English edition in 2010, I became a correspondent covering the UN for an English language blog <http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog> at the website of the German newspaper *Die Tageszeitung*. Both *OhmyNews International* and my blog at the taz.de website are online publications.

With Michael Hauben, I am a co-author of the book *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet*. The book was first published online in January 1994. On May 1, 1997, the print edition of the book *Netizens* was published in English. Later that year, in October, a Japanese translation was published. *Netizens* was the first book to recognize that along with the development of the internet, a new form of citizenship, called netizenship had emerged. This is a form of citizenship that has developed based on the broader forms of political participation made possible by the Net (i.e., the internet).

I want to share some of the background about the origin, use and impact of the netizen concept and its relation to what I call netizen

journalism before presenting two case studies of how netizen journalism has affected the media war at the UN.

## II – Introduction

While now many people are interested in the impact of the internet on society, pioneering research was done by my co-author Michael Hauben in the early 1990s when the internet was first beginning to spread and to connect people around the world.

In his research, Hauben recognized that there were people who appreciated the communication the internet made possible and that these people worked to spread the Net and to do what they felt needed for it to help to create a better world. Taking the common network term, “net.citizen” used online at the time, Hauben proposed that these people who worked to contribute to the Net and the bigger world it was part of were “netizens.”

In an article he wrote on the impact of the Net on journalism, Hauben recognized that many people online were frustrated with the mainstream media and that the netizens would be creating a broader and more widespread media.

Hauben recognized in the early 1990s that “the collective body of people assisted by (the Net)...has grown larger than any individual newspaper....” I want to look at two news events about North Korea and the UN in the context of this prediction. Then I will consider the implication of these case studies for the kind of journalism about North Korea that I propose netizens and the internet are making possible.

## III – Korea

In February of 2003 I was glancing at the front page summaries of the articles in an issue of the *Financial Times*. I saw a surprising headline for an article continued later in the issue. The article said that in 2002 netizens in South Korea had elected the president of the country, Roh Moo-hyun. He had just taken office on February 25, 2003. The new president had even promised that the internet would be influential in the form of government he established. Also I learned that an online Korean newspaper called *OhmyNews* had been important making these

developments possible. Colleagues encouraged me to get in contact with *OhmyNews* and to learn more about the netizens activities in South Korea and about *OhmyNews*.

I was able to get in contact with *OhmyNews*. I began to submit articles to it. They would be printed along with a few other English language articles others were submitting. By 2004 *OhmyNews* began an English language online edition called *OhmyNews International*. I began to write for it. I soon became the first woman columnist for the English edition.

I subsequently learned that both South Korea and China are places where the role of netizens is important in building more democratic structures for society. I began to pay attention to both of these netizen developments. South Korea, for example, has been an advanced model of grassroots efforts to create examples of netizen forms for a more participatory decision making processes. I wrote several research papers documenting the achievements and activities of Korean netizens.

## IV – Reporting on the UN

By October 2006, the second five-year term for Kofi Annan as the Secretary General of the United Nations was soon to end. One of the main contenders to become the 8<sup>th</sup> Secretary General of the UN was the Foreign Minister of South Korea, Ban Ki-moon.

I had covered one previous United Nations event which I had found of great interest. That event was the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) which encouraged access to the internet for everyone. The event took place in Tunis, Tunisia in November 2005. Also I had watched with interest some of the press reports of the speeches made by heads of state at the 2006 opening of the General Assembly session. These events gave me the sense that it probably would be interesting to go to the UN and cover the activities for *OhmyNews* if the new Secretary General would be the Korean candidate.

On October 9, 2006, Ban Ki-moon won the Security Council nomination. This nomination was to be approved by the General Assembly on October 13.

I thought this would be a historic event for South Korea.

By 2006, I was writing regularly as a featured columnist for

*OhmyNews International (OMNI).*

I asked the Editor of *OhmyNews International* if I could get a letter for a press credential to cover the UN for *OMNI*. He agreed and I was able to get my credential in time to go to the General Assembly meeting when the General Assembly voted to accept the Security Council's nomination of Ban Ki-moon.

I was surprised that some of the speeches welcoming Ban Ki-moon as the Secretary General elect were meaningful speeches referring to actual problems at the UN such as the need for reform of the Security Council. Conversely the U.S. Ambassador to the UN, John Bolton, made no pretense of both welcoming Ban and of expressing his dissatisfaction with Kofi Annan, the outgoing Secretary General who had condemned the U.S. invasion of Iraq. A significant focus of the comments to the new Secretary General from member states emphasized the importance of communication at the UN, that it was critical for the incoming Secretary General to listen to all states and to hear their views.

It was a thrill to be at the UN witnessing the vote for a new Secretary General who was from South Korea. I wondered if the internet would be able to have any impact on the new Secretary General and on what happened at the United Nations, since the internet had been able to make it possible for netizens in South Korea to impact politics.

The very next day after Ban Ki-moon's nomination was approved by the General Assembly, the Security Council took up to condemn the recent nuclear test by North Korea. This had been North Korea's first nuclear test. The Security Council imposed sanctions on North Korea, not giving the North Korean Ambassador to the UN, Pak Gil Yon, a chance to respond until after the sanctions had been voted on. When the North Korean Ambassador responded, he referred among other issues, to financial sanctions that the U.S. had imposed on North Korea. No one in the Security Council asked him what he was referring to or how this affected the issues the Security Council had acted on with respect to North Korea.

It impressed me that just as a new Secretary General from South Korea was being chosen as the new Secretary General of the UN, at the same time sanctions were being imposed on North Korea. The Security Council acted against North Korea before hearing its views on the issue

they were considering. This was in sharp contrast to the emphasis member nations had put on the importance of hearing the views of all members when member nations welcomed Ban Ki-moon to the United Nations in the meeting just one day earlier in the General Assembly.

The article I wrote for *OhmyNews International* described this situation. It explained:

The urgent problem facing the UN at this juncture in history is not whether North Korea has developed and tested a nuclear device. It is the breakdown reflected by the lack of participation and investigation by the international community into how a crisis will be handled once it develops, and whether the concerns and problems of those involved in the crisis will be considered as part of the process of seeking a solution. It is how the UN functions when tensions reach a point where serious attention is needed to help to understand and solve a problem. (Quoted from “The Problem Facing the UN,” *OMNI*, October 17, 2006).

In general when at the UN, I paid attention to Security Council developments, particularly with regard to the meetings imposing sanctions on North Korea and also on Iran. Also, I particularly followed the meetings of the Security Council and the General Assembly when Security Council reform was being discussed.

## V – Some Mainstream Media Created a Story

Soon after Ban Ki-moon took office as Secretary General at the beginning of January 2007, a story appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* (*WSJ*) accusing North Korea of using UN funds from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for its nuclear program. An editorial in the January 19 issue of the *WSJ* by Melanie Kirkpatrick had the headline: “United Nations Dictators.”

No evidence was presented in the *WSJ*, just accusations. This situation was reminiscent of how the *WSJ* and some other mainstream media had accused the former Secretary General, Kofi Annan, of misusing UN funds in Iraq, and how this had mushroomed into what had come to be known as the “Food for Oil” scandal.

The significance of this story for me, was to see that some of the



mainstream media were active creating stories and accusations with no real evidence, while only very few media appeared to be investigating the actual underlying issues that had led the North Korean government to carry out its first nuclear test.

## VI – The Six-Party Talks and the Banco Delta Asia Story

In January 2007 there were reports in the press about a meeting that had taken place in Berlin between Christopher Hill, the Assistant Secretary of State for the U.S. and Kim Kye-gwan, the Deputy Foreign Minister of North Korea.

Around this time I learned some of the background behind what had led to North Korea carrying out its first nuclear test. An agreement had been reached on September 19, 2005 between the six parties to talks about the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The six parties were North Korea, South Korea, the U.S., Japan, Russia and China. Shortly after the agreement was signed in Sept 2005, the U.S. Treasury Department announced that it was freezing the assets of the Banco Delta Asia (BDA) a bank in Macao, China, which held \$25 million of North Korean funds.

The result of this action was that North Korea lost access to \$25 million of its bank funds, and also to the use of the international banking system. North Korea's response was to leave the six-party talks to protest this action which it considered hostile and politically motivated.

North Korea was encouraged by some parties to the six-party talks to have bilateral negotiations with the U.S. over the financial sanctions. The U.S., however, refused to negotiate. Unable to find a way to negotiate with the U.S. over this situation, North Korea, in July 2006, tested a missile. The response of the UN Security Council was to condemn North Korea by passing UN Resolution 1695 but not to investigate what the problem was that led North Korea to carry out a missile test.

Then on October 9, 2006, North Korea carried out its first nuclear test. Once again the Security Council failed to investigate what was behind this action. Instead the Security Council passed Resolution 1718 imposing more sanctions on North Korea.

Only after this nuclear test did the U.S. demonstrate a willingness

to negotiate with the DPRK over the financial sanctions imposed on Banco Delta Asia.

On January 16 and 17, 2007, Christopher Hill and Kim Kye-gwan held talks in Berlin and came to an agreement. Though not officially announced, it was believed that they agreed that the \$25 million being held in the Macau BDA, along with access to the international banking system would be restored to North Korea. In exchange North Korea would return to the six-party talks. The Berlin meeting appeared to break the deadlock and the six-party talks were held again starting on February 8, 2007. Another agreement was announced five days later on February 13, 2007.

Then on March 5 and 6, Hill and Kim held bilateral talks in New York City. Despite the agreement reached in Berlin, however, the U.S. Treasury Department issued a finding on March 19 against the BDA under Section 311 of the U.S. Patriot Act. This move again deadlocked the six-party talks, even as the delegates arrived for the talks in Beijing.

The deadlock continued for the next few months, with much of the mainstream U.S. press blaming North Korea for continuing to insist that its \$25 million be returned via a banking transaction, before it would agree to any further steps in the six-party talks. The North Korean delegate said he understood that the agreement in Berlin with Christopher Hill had provided for the return of the \$25 million from the BDA as a money transfer via the international banking system.

The U.S. Treasury Department officials claimed that their decision against the BDA left it up to the bank to return the funds. The decision against the bank, however, meant that it had no means to return the funds as a money transfer as the Section 311 finding against the bank meant that it lost access to the international banking system.

During this period, there were rumors that a bank in China had been asked by the U.S. State Department to make the transfer. The bank allegedly considered the request. Eventually, however, the bank refused based on its fear that it too would be frozen out of the international banking system by the U.S. Treasury Department, as the BDA had been, if it offered to help make the transfer of funds back to North Korea.

The McClatchy Newspaper Company, in a way that is different from much of the rest of the mainstream U.S. media, carried articles

which helped to investigate the issues underlying this dispute between the U.S. and North Korea. Other banks in Macau, an article in the McClatchy Newspapers explained, had played a similar role with regard to North Korea, helping North Korea to sell its gold, but only the BDA had been singled out for sanctions. The article suggested that the U.S. Treasury Department's actions were not based on actual criminal activity by the bank or by North Korea, but instead were motivated by a political objective.

One of the McClatchy newspaper articles described some documents that the newspaper had acquired including the BDA's complaint challenging the U.S. Treasury Department decision against the bank. Also, the McClatchy newspaper article referred to a statement filed by the owner of the BDA to protest the Treasury Department action.

I tried to find a way to get copies of the documents. I tried to contact the law firm and even wrote to the McClatchy reporter, but none of these efforts succeeded.

I did, however, find a copy of the Patriot Act on the internet, and read Section 311, the section being used against the bank. I was able to see that the section of the law was such that the U.S. government did not have to present any proof for its actions.

In March 2007, I did a story titled "North Korea's \$25 Million and Banco Delta Asia," documenting how the use of Section 311 of the Patriot Act against the bank was a political act, rather than a criminal determination. The U.S. Treasury Department did not have to provide any evidence and acted as the accuser and judge in the case. Even though there had been an agreement between the U.S. and North Korea to return the \$25 million to North Korea, nothing happened.

The stalemate continued.

In May 2007, I covered the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary dinner celebration of the Korea Society. Chris Hill gave a short talk as part of the program. He indicated that he would persevere until a means was found to break the impasse over the \$25 million so as to make it possible for the six-party talks to continue.

Several journalists covered the event for other South Korean publications. They were particularly interested in what Hill said, but Hill's talk in itself did not seem to represent a newsworthy event.

In the next few days, however, it appeared that an important story was developing. An article by Kevin Hall titled, “Bank Owner Disputes Money-Laundering Allegations,” published by the McClatchy Newspaper Company said that the blog “China Matters” had published links to some documents refuting the Treasury Department’s charges against the bank.

“China Matters” is a blog about U.S.-China policy. The links that the blog made available included to an appeal submitted by the lawyer for Banco Delta Asia to an administrative hearing at the Treasury Department and to a statement by the owner of the Bank in Macao, Stanley Au.

I now had the documents in the case. The U.S. government’s findings were general statements providing no specific evidence of wrongdoing on the part of the bank. The bank’s statements and refutation gave significant documentation refuting charges of illegal activity on the part of the bank. The refutation also made the case that there were political motives for the U.S. government’s allegations rather than actual illegal activity on the part of the bank.

Also the blogger at China Matters who uses the pseudonym China Hand or Peter Lee posted some of the Congressional testimony by David Asher, a former U.S. government official who had helped to plan and enforce the U.S. Treasury Department sanctions against the Banco Delta Asia.

Asher explained that the U.S. government had targeted a small Macau bank to scare the banks in China. “To kill the chicken to scare the monkeys,” the ex-government official explained, quoting an old Chinese proverb in his testimony in a U.S. Congressional hearing.

I wanted to verify the testimony of Asher and understand its implications, so I searched online and found an earlier government document from November 2006. Asher had testified in a similar vein at a Congressional hearing titled “China’s Proliferation to North Korea and Iran, and Its Role in Addressing the Nuclear and Missile Situations in Both Countries,” on September 14, 2006. This document was the transcript of that hearing.

The hearing was held by a special Congressional Commission about the U.S. China relationship which held hearings semi annually.

What was most surprising in this document, however, was the

explanation that the Banco Delta Asia sanctions was an issue that was only secondarily aimed at North Korea? The primary issue that was of interest to the U.S. government officials involved in the Commission Hearing was what was China's foreign policy and how closely did China's behavior match the foreign policy goals set out by the U.S.

In the discussion at the September 2006 hearing about the Banco Delta Asia, David Asher described the political objectives of the action. Speaking about China, Asher said:

They get the message on the financial angle...there's an old saying in Chinese, 'You kill the chicken to scare the monkeys.' We didn't go out and cite a multitude of Chinese financial institutions that have been publicly identified as working with North Korea over the years....

We did need to designate one small one though, and that one small one sent a message to all the others, that they had to get in line, and it was timed to coincide with other information that we were making public....

I think they got the message.... We need to try to align our financial and economic interests. I do think, though the use of some pressure, including veiled pressure is effective. (Hearing before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2006, p. 115-116)

The Commission hearing clarified that the purpose of freezing North Korean funds in the Banco Delta Asia was not about stopping criminal activity by that bank or by North Korea, as there was never any proof presented of any such activity. Instead it was an act with a political objective which was to pressure China to act in conformity with U.S. policy goals in general and in its actions toward North Korea in particular.

At last I had the news peg for an important story. I wrote the article, "Behind the Blacklisting of Banco Delta Asia: Is the Policy Aimed at Targeting China as Well as North Korea?" submitting it around 5:00 a.m. my time to *OhmyNews International*. By noon the next day, my story appeared. That was May 18.

Also on May 18, the *Wall Street Journal* carried an Op Ed by the former U.S. Ambassador to the UN, John Bolton. The article scolded the

U.S. government for negotiating to return the \$25 million to North Korea

In late May I was an invited speaker at the International Communications Association (ICA 2007) conference in San Francisco. I summed up my experience writing for *OhmyNews International*, particularly describing the BDA story and the helpful role of online media in making it possible to present an alternative narrative as opposed to that of the mainstream U.S. media about the situation.

## VII – Voice of America News Service

Little did I realize when I gave my talk in San Francisco, however, that my experience with this story was not ending, but actually a new episode was beginning.

A short time later, on June 11, I received a surprising e-mail message. The message was from a reporter who said she worked for Voice of America News Korea (VOA News Korean Service). VOA is the official U.S. government news broadcasting service.

She began:

“Hello Ms. Hauben.”

She introduced herself as a reporter with the Korean Service of the Voice of America News in Washington, D.C.

Her e-mail continued:

While I was working on a story about BDA issue, I read your report, ‘Behind the Blacklisting of Banco Delta Asia.’ I thought you made some valuable points about the BDA issue in this report, I was wondering if I could have a conversation with you in this matter. Since I am on a deadline, I’m trying very hard to get a hold of you. So I would really appreciate it if you call or e-mail me back ASAP.

She gave her phone number.

The VOA News had become part of the U.S. State Department. I wondered if it was advisable to speak with her as VOA News has a reputation of being a promoter of U.S. government policy, rather than a news service seeking the facts. I asked my editors at *OhmyNews International* and I also spoke with a Korean journalist I know who covers stories at the UN for another Korean newspaper. They all

encouraged me to speak with her.

I called her as she had asked. She said she wanted to interview me by phone. I asked her to let me know what she would want to speak with me about. She sent me an e-mail message elaborating.

Her message explained:

The purpose of this interview is to let our listeners know what is going on regarding the BDA issue and how the BDA issue is developing.

When I read your article, I thought you made valuable and critical points about the BDA issue, and I thought it might be very important to let your idea about the BDA issue be heard by our listeners.

She listed questions she would ask me in the interview. They were:

1. How you came up with the idea of writing this article. How you prepared it. About your sources.

2. Briefly summarize your findings or main points of the article.

3. What you are trying to accomplish by writing this article?

What needs to be done to resolve the BDA issue?

“Finally,” she wrote, “I wanted to ask you if we could do this interview sometime between 9:00 a.m. and 9:30 a.m.... Thanks again,” she ended the e-mail message.

She called at the arranged time.

She told me her listeners were in North Korea. I was surprised that a reporter for a U.S. government media would offer to do a story about the hidden political objectives of U.S. policy against North Korea which was being camouflaged by false criminal accusations against North Korea.

We had a half hour telephone conversation discussing my stories, the sources I had used and the problem represented by the American government freezing the BDA funds. She also asked for the URLs to follow up on the sources I had cited. These were basically material I had found on the internet, including several government documents, and copies of the legal documents submitted by the bank owner to appeal the U.S. Treasury Department ruling against the bank.

The VOA News reporter said she was interested in contacting former U.S. government officials like David Asher who was responsible

for crafting the plan to freeze North Korea's bank account assets. She wanted to ask them to respond to my article.

Just as this contact with the VOA News journalist was happening, there were news stories describing the ongoing efforts to find a solution to the roadblock that the frozen North Korean funds represented.

Soon there were reports that the Federal Reserve Bank of New York had agreed to transfer the funds from the BDA to an account held by a Russian bank for North Korea. In the following weeks, the funds transfer was done.

The VOA News reporter wrote me saying she had other stories to do and was not for now going to pursue this story any longer.

Whether the contact had any impact on the resolution of the stalemate, I can only speculate. Regardless of her motivation, however, the VOA News reporter had contacted me before the situation was resolved. At the very least, an article I had done had caught the attention of someone connected to the *Voice of America News*, which was part of the U.S. State Department. I was given the chance to explain what I had learned about the BDA story and to explain how I understood the controversy surrounding it. So my story did indeed have more of an impact than I had understood when I gave my talk at the ICA 2007 in San Francisco.

The experience I had with my BDA story and the encounter with the Korean News Service of the VOA News demonstrates that the internet makes it possible not only to spread an accurate narrative among the public, but also to reach government officials with an interest in the issues being critiqued.

The reason I have taken the time to tell this story is that it represents for me a taste of the impact that such online journalism makes possible.

## VIII – The Phenomenon of Netizen Journalism

In the research I have been doing and the experiences I have had exploring the potential of what I call netizen journalism, the question has been raised:

What is this new form of news and what are its characteristics?

Is there something different from traditional journalism?

Is there some significant new aspect represented by netizen



journalism?

Essentially I have found that there is an important research component of what I call netizen journalism. Netizen journalism, as a socially oriented journalism, is a journalism that is oriented toward a public purpose. As such, at times there is a need to do serious research into the background, context and political significance of conflicts. By revealing the actual forces at work, netizen journalism provides a more accurate grasp of whose interests are being served, and what is at stake in the events that make up the news.

Traditionally, the press can function as a watchdog for society by exposing the use and abuse of power. Or, the press can act to support the abuse of political power.

Netizens, whether journalists or citizens who turn to journalism to challenge problems in their society, have demonstrated in a number of instances that they are able to bring public attention to situations needing change, and exert the needed pressure for the change so that the change gets made.

If netizen journalism can provide a more accurate understanding of conflicts, it can help make more likely the peaceful resolution of these conflicts.

Also as an aside, my stories about the U.S.-BDA-North Korea-UN conflict led to my being short-listed for one of the journalism awards presented each year by the United Nations Correspondence Association (UNCA) for the best journalism articles about the UN for 2007. While I did not get the award in 2007, I did get it the following year, in 2008.

## **IX – The Cheonan – Some Background**

The Cheonan conflict, which was brought to the UN in 2010, provides another interesting example how netizen journalism affected the media war and helped to make a significant contribution to a peaceful resolution of the conflict by the Security Council.

The Cheonan incident concerns a South Korean war ship which broke in two and sank on March 26, 2010. Forty-six of the crew died. At the time, the ship was involved in naval exercises with the U.S. military in an area in the West Sea/Yellow Sea between North Korea and China. This is a situation that had been the subject of much discussion on the

internet.

Initially the South Korean government and the U.S. government said there was no indication that North Korea was involved. Then at a press conference on May 20, 2010, the South Korean government claimed that a torpedo fired by a North Korean submarine exploded in the water near the Cheonan, causing a pressure wave that was responsible for the sinking. Many criticisms of this scenario have been raised.

There was no direct evidence of any North Korean submarine in the vicinity of the Cheonan. Nor was there any evidence that a torpedo was actually fired causing a pressure wave phenomenon. Hence the South Korean government had no actual case that could be presented in a court of law to support its claims.

In fact, if this claim of a pressure wave were true even those involved in the investigation of the incident acknowledge that “North Korea would be the first to have succeeded at using this kind of a bubble jet torpedo action in actual fighting.”

## X – The Cheonan Press Conference and the Local Election

The press conference held by the South Korean government on May 20, to announce that North Korea was responsible for the sinking of the Cheonan came, it turns out, at the start of the local election period. Many South Koreans were suspicious that the accusation was a ploy to help the ruling party candidates win in the local elections. The widespread suspicions about the government’s motives led to the ruling party losing many of the local election contests. These election results demonstrated the deep distrust among the South Korean population of the motives behind the South Korean government’s accusations about North Korea’s responsibility for the sinking of the Cheonan.

## XI – The Cheonan and Netizen Journalism

Netizens who live in different countries and speak different languages, however, took up to critique the claims of the South Korean government about the cause of the sinking of the Cheonan. This netizen activity had an important effect. It appears to have acted as a catalyst

affecting the actions of the UN Security Council in its treatment of the Cheonan dispute.

There were substantial analyses by non governmental organizations like Spark, PSPD, Peaceboat, and others posted on the internet, either in English and in Korean or in both languages. Some of these online posts were in the form of letters that were also sent to the members of the UN Security Council. At the time, I saw discussions and critiques of the Korean government's claims at American, Japanese and Chinese websites, in addition to conversation and postings about the Cheonan on South Korean websites.

One such critique included a three part analysis by the South Korean NGO People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD). This analysis raised a number of questions and problems with the South Korean government's case. The PSPD document was posted widely on the internet and also sent to the President of the United Nations Security Council for distribution to those Security Council members interested and to the South Korean Mission to the UN.

While there were many blog comments about the Cheonan issue in Korean, there were also some bloggers writing in English who became active in critiquing the South Korean investigation and the role of the U.S. in the conflict.

One blogger, Scott Creighton who uses the pen name Willy Loman, or American Everyman, wrote a post titled "The Sinking of the Cheonan: We are being lied to."

The South Korean government had claimed that the diagram it displayed above the glass case containing the alleged torpedo shaft was from a North Korean weapons sales brochure which offered the torpedo. The torpedo was identified as the CHT-02D.

In a post he titled "A Perfect Match?," Creighton showed how there was a discrepancy between the diagram displayed by the South Korean government in the press conference, and the part of the torpedo it had on display in the glass case below the diagram. He demonstrated that the diagram did not match the part of the torpedo on display because one of the components of the torpedo shown was in the propeller section, but in the diagram, the component appeared in the shaft section. There were many comments in response to this post, including some from netizens

in South Korea. Also the mainstream conservative media in South Korea carried accounts of this blogger's critique. Three weeks later, at a news conference, a South Korean government official acknowledged that the diagram presented by the South Korean government was not of the same torpedo as the part displayed in the glass case. Instead the diagram displayed was of the PT97W torpedo, not the CHT-02D torpedo as claimed.

In a post titled "Thanks to Valuable Input" describing the significance of having documented one of the fallacies in the South Korean government's case, Creighton writes:

(I)n the end, thanks to valuable input from dozens of concerned people all across the world.... Over 100,000 viewers read that article and it was republished on dozens of sites all across the world (even translated). A South Korean MSM outlet even posted our diagram depicting the glaring discrepancies between the evidence and the drawing of the CHT-O2D torpedo, which a high-ranking military official could only refute by stating he had 40 years military experience and to his knowledge, I had none. But what I had, what we had, was literally thousands of people all across the world, scientists, military members, and just concerned investigative bloggers who were committed to the truth and who took the time to contribute to what we were doing here.

'40 years military experience' took a beating from 'we the people WorldWide' and that is the way it is supposed to be.

This is just one of a number of serious questions and challenges that were raised about the South Korean government's scenario of the sinking of the Cheonan.

Other influential events which helped to challenge the South Korean government's claims were a press conference in Japan held on July 9 by two academic scientists. The two scientists presented results of experiments they had done which challenged the results of experiments the South Korean government used to support its case. These scientists also wrote to the Security Council with their findings.

Also a significant challenge to the South Korean government report was the finding of a Russian team of four sent to South Korea to look at

the data from the investigation and to do an independent evaluation of it. The team of Russian navy experts visited South Korea from May 30 to June 7. The Russian team did not accept the South Korean government's claim that a pressure wave from a torpedo caused the Cheonan to sink. Getting a leaked copy of the Russian team's report, the *Hankyoreh* newspaper in South Korea reported that the Russian investigators determined that the ship had come in contact with the ocean floor and a propeller and shaft became entangled in a fishing net. Also the investigators thought it likely that an old underwater mine had exploded near the Cheonan adding to the factors that led to it sinking.

Such efforts along with online posts and discussions by many netizens provided a catalyst for the actions of the UN Security Council concerning the Cheonan incident.

When the UN Security Council took up the Cheonan issue in June 2010, I was surprised to learn that some of the members of the Council knew of the criticism of the South Korean government investigation blaming North Korea for sinking the ship.

## XII – The Cheonan and the UN Security Council

South Korea brought the dispute over the sinking of the Cheonan to the United Nations Security Council. The Mexican Ambassador to the UN, Claude Heller, was President of the Security Council for the month of June 2010. (The presidency rotates each month to a different Security Council member nation.) In a letter to the Security Council dated June 4, South Korea asked the Council to take up the Cheonan dispute. Park Im-kook, then the South Korean Ambassador to the UN, requested that the Security Council consider the matter of the Cheonan and respond in an appropriate manner. The letter described the investigation into the sinking of the Cheonan carried out by South Korean government and military officials. The conclusion of the South Korean investigation was to accuse North Korea of sinking the South Korean ship.

How would the Mexican Ambassador as President of the Security Council during the month of June handle this dispute? This was a serious issue facing Ambassador Heller as he began his presidency.

Ambassador Heller adopted what he referred to as a “balanced” approach to treat both governments on the Korean peninsula in a fair and

objective manner. He held bilateral meetings with each member of the Security Council which led to support for a process of informal presentations by both of the Koreas to the members of the Security Council. He arranged for the South Korean Ambassador to make an informal presentation to the members of the Security Council. Ambassador Heller also invited the North Korean Ambassador to make a separate informal presentation to the members of the Security Council. Sin Son Ho was the UN Ambassador from North Korea.

In response to the invitation from the President of the Security Council, the North Korean Ambassador to the UN sent a letter dated June 8 to the Security Council which denied the allegation that his country was to blame. His letter urged the Security Council not to be the victim of deceptive claims, as had happened with the U.S. presentation by Colin Powell on Iraq in 2003. It asked the Security Council to support his government's call to be able to examine the evidence and to be involved in a new and more independent investigation on the sinking of the Cheonan.

In its June 8 letter to the Security Council, North Korea referred to the widespread international sentiment questioning the conclusions of the South Korean government's investigation. The North Korean Ambassador wrote: "It would be very useful to remind ourselves of the ever-increasing international doubts and criticisms, going beyond the internal boundary of south Korea, over the 'investigation result' from the very moment of its release...."

What Ambassador Heller called "interactive informal meetings" were held on June 14 with the South Koreans and the North Koreans in separate sessions attended by the Security Council members, who had time to ask questions and then to discuss the presentations.

At a media stakeout on June 14, after the day's presentations ended, Ambassador Heller said that it was important to have received the detailed presentation by South Korea and also to know and learn the arguments of North Korea. He commented that "it was very important that North Korea approached the Security Council."

In response to a question about his view on the issues presented, he replied, "I am not a judge. I think we will go on with the consultations to deal in a proper manner on the issue."

Ambassador Heller also explained that, “the Security Council issued a call to the parties to refrain from any act that could escalate tensions in the region, and makes an appeal to preserve peace and stability in the region.”

Though the North Korean Ambassador to the UN rarely speaks to the media, the North Korean UN delegation scheduled a press conference for Tuesday, June 15, the day following the interactive informal meeting. During the press conference, the North Korean Ambassador presented his government’s refutation of the allegations made by South Korea. Also he explained North Korea’s request to be able to send an investigation team to the site where the sinking of the Cheonan occurred. South Korea had denied the request. During its press conference, the North Korean Ambassador noted that there was widespread condemnation of the investigation in both South Korea and around the world.

The press conference held on June 15 was a lively event. Many of the journalists who attended were impressed and requested that there be future press conferences with the North Korean Ambassador.

During his presidency of the Security Council in the month of June, Ambassador Heller held meetings with the UN ambassadors from each of the two Koreas and then with Security Council members about the Cheonan issue. On the last day of his presidency, on June 30, he was asked by a reporter what was happening about the Cheonan dispute. He responded that the issue of contention was over the evaluation of the South Korean government’s investigation.

Ambassador Heller described how he introduced what he refers to as “an innovation” into the Security Council process. As the month of June ended, the issue was not yet resolved, but the “innovation” set a basis to build on the progress that was achieved during the month of his presidency.

The “innovation” Ambassador Heller referred to, was a summary he made of the positions of each of the two Koreas on the issue, taking care to present each objectively. Heller explained that this summary was not an official document, so it did not have to be approved by the other members of the Council. This summary provided the basis for further negotiations. He believed that it had a positive impact on the process of consideration in the Council, making possible the agreement that was

later to be expressed in the Presidential Statement on the Cheonan that was issued by the Security Council on July 9.

Ambassador Heller's goal, he explained, was to "at all times be as objective as possible" so as to avoid increasing the conflict on the Korean peninsula. Such a goal is the Security Council's obligation under the UN Charter.

In the Security Council's Presidential Statement (PRST) on the Cheonan, what stands out is that the statement follows the pattern of presenting the views of each of the two Koreas and urging that the dispute be settled in a peaceful manner.

In the PRST, the members of the Security Council did not blame North Korea. Instead they refer to the South Korean investigation and its conclusion, expressing their "deep concern" about the "findings" of the investigation.

The PRST explains that "The Security Council takes note of the responses from other relevant parties, including the DPRK, which has stated that it had nothing to do with the incident."

With the exception of North Korea, it is not indicated who "the other relevant parties" are. It does suggest, however, that it is likely there were some Security Council members, not just Russia and China, which did not agree with the conclusions of the South Korean investigation.

Analyzing the Presidential Statement, the Korean newspaper *Hankyoreh* noted that the statement "allows for a double interpretation and does not blame or place consequences on North Korea." Such a possibility of a "double interpretation" allows for different interpretations.

The Security Council action on the Cheonan took place in a situation where there had been a wide-ranging international critique, especially in the online media, about the problems of the South Korean investigation, and of the South Korean government's failure to make public any substantial documentation of its investigation, along with its practice of harassing critics of the South Korean government claims. The Security Council action included hearing the positions of the different parties to the conflict.

The result of such efforts was something that is unusual in the process of recent Security Council activity. The Security Council



process in the Cheonan issue provided for an impartial analysis of the problem and an effort to hear from those with an interest in the issue.

The effort in the Security Council was described by the Mexican Ambassador, as upholding the principles of impartiality and respectful treatment of all members toward resolving a conflict between nations in a peaceful manner. It represents an important example of the Security Council acting in conformity with its obligations as set out in the UN charter.

In the July 9 Presidential Statement, the Security Council urged that the parties to the dispute over the sinking of the Cheonan find a means to peacefully settle the dispute. The statement says:

The Security Council calls for full adherence to the Korean Armistice Agreement and encourages the settlement of outstanding issues on the Korean peninsula by peaceful means to resume direct dialogue and negotiation through appropriate channels as early as possible, with a view to avoiding conflicts and averting escalation.

The mainstream U.S. media for the most part, chose to ignore the many critiques which have appeared. These critiques of the South Korean government's investigation of the Cheonan sinking have appeared mainly on the internet, not only in Korean, but also in English, in Japanese, and in other languages. They present a wide-ranging challenge of the veracity and integrity of the South Korean investigation and its conclusions.

An article in the *Los Angeles Times* on July 28 noted the fact, however, that the media in the U.S. had ignored the critique of the South Korean government investigation that was being discussed online and spread around the world.

In this example, the netizen community in South Korea and internationally were able to provide an effective challenge to the misrepresentations by the South Korean government on the Cheonan.

In conclusion, I want to propose that the response of netizens to the problems raised by the investigation of the Cheonan incident is but a prelude to the potential of netizens in different countries to work together across national borders to solve the problems of our times.

### XIII – Conclusion

Describing the frustration of many netizens with the traditional media that they had to rely on before the internet, Hauben wrote: “Today, similarly, the need for a broader and more cooperative gathering and reporting of the News has helped create the new online media that is gradually supplementing traditional forms of journalism.”

In an article about the power of the internet, Hauben recognized that the Net gives the power of the reporter to the netizen. This represents a diffusion of a power formerly held by the few, placing it in hands that are different from its former masters.

Speaking about the potential for such a journalism Hauben predicted, “As people continue to connect to Usenet and other discussion forums, the collective population will contribute back to the human community this new form of news.” He recognized that, “The Net has opened a channel for talking to the whole world to an even wider set of people than did the printed books.”

In one of the press conferences at the UN when Li Baodong was the Chinese Ambassador to the UN, he told the media, “You are the 16<sup>th</sup> member of the Security Council.” He was in general speaking to the traditional media. The case studies I have however, described, demonstrate the potential for this new media, the netizen media, to assume that membership.

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\* The slides used for this talk are online at:

<http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/stony-brook/Stony-Brook-Slides-12-04-2013.pdf>.

The url for the online version of “Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet” is: <http://www.columbia.edu/~rh120>. A version of these Notes appeared on December 17, 2013 on the Netizenblog at:

<http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2013/12/17/why-netizen-journalism-matters/>

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# **DPRK Human Rights Briefing at UN Challenges U.S. Unending War Strategy\***

by Ronda Hauben  
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The briefing held at the United Nations by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, commonly known as North Korea) on Tuesday, October 7, 2014 was an opportunity to hear the DPRK's response to U.S. and E.U. initiatives targeting the DPRK. The U.S. and the E.U. have been using the UN to try to demonize the DPRK as a perpetrator of grave human rights violations and to rally the UN Security Council to refer the DPRK to the International Criminal Court (ICC).<sup>1</sup>

In the previous few months, the DPRK Mission to the UN had held several press conferences alerting journalists to threats to international peace and security taking place on the Korean Peninsula. The October 7 briefing, however, was not only open to the press covering the UN, but to UN member nations and also to NGO's with access to UN Headquarters in New York.

At the briefing, the DPRK made a presentation about the "Report of the DPRK Association for Human Rights Studies" (Report) that it had published on September 13 about human rights in the DPRK.

The DPRK Deputy Ambassador at the UN, Ri Tong Il, opened the briefing by introducing the Report. Also taking part in the presentation were Choe Myong Nam, Deputy Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK and Kim Song, Counselor to the DPRK UN Mission.

Ambassador Ri explained that there has been an increasing tendency to carry on a human rights campaign against the DPRK. He referred in particular to a meeting organized by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry to discuss allegations of human rights abuse in the DPRK. The U.S.-sponsored meeting was held on September 23 at a hotel near the UN Headquarters. The DPRK was not invited to the meeting, and it was denied the right to attend when it asked to participate.

Ambassador Ri said that the purpose of this briefing being held by the DPRK was to focus on correcting the misinformation being spread about human rights in the DPRK and to provide a more accurate understanding of the situation of human rights in countries with differing social and political systems. He pointed out that the UN with 193 member states is made up of nations with different political systems, different values and different ideologies.

Ambassador Ri listed the five chapters in the Report giving a brief introduction to each of the chapters. Then he welcomed questions or statements from those present. Diplomats from several missions at the UN, including the Cuban and Venezuelan Missions, responded, thanking the DPRK for the briefing. They referred to the criticism made at the UN about those nations who sponsor country-specific human rights resolutions. Experience has demonstrated that such resolutions are most often politically motivated, and not geared toward improving conditions for people. Instead the purpose is an illegitimate political objective, such as regime change. The Human Rights Council had adopted the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) procedure, as an effort to counter such abuse and instead to treat all countries impartially. While many countries focus on the UPR procedure, a few nations continue to sponsor country-specific resolutions thus politically targeting other nations.

An example of such political motivation was provided by Choe Myong Nam in response to a question. He described how in 1993 after a breakdown in negotiations with the U.S. led the DPRK to pull out of the IAEA, the U.S. pressured the E.U. to bring a resolution against the DPRK for human rights violations.

A copy of the Report was distributed to those who attended the October 7 briefing.

Chapter I of the Report explores the general nature of human rights so that each nation can determine what the application will be in their situation. For the DPRK this entails making a critique of how the U.S. and certain other nations are trying to impose their view of what the standards should be for other nations. “Nobody in the international community empowered them to establish the international ‘human rights standards’,” the Report notes. (p. 12) Instead, the Report maintains that human rights standards in a country are the prerogative of the people of

that country. “In every country,” the Report explains, “those who demand the human rights and campaign (for) them are the people...” (p. 12)

The Report refers to the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (COI) recently sponsored by the Human Rights Council. The content and framework of the Report provides background that is helpful toward grasping the underlying fallacy of the COI. The Report maintains that the ‘COI’ is an attempt “to bring down the DPRK by collecting prejudiced ‘data’ without any scientific accuracy and objectivity in the content...” (p. 12)

All of Korea has been the victim of anti human rights actions by an occupying power, notes the Report. This was during the period of the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910-1945). “Each and every law manufactured by Japan in Korea in the past were...anti human rights laws aimed at depriving Korean people of all political freedoms and rights, and forcing colonial slavery upon them.” (p. 13) The Report explains that these anti-Korean laws created by the Japanese colonial rule were abolished and a new foundation established legally and politically in order to provide protection and empowerment for the Korean people. The Report argues that this demonstrates the DPRK is concerned with the question of human rights. (See pp. 14-15)

The Report proposes that the protection of human rights in the DPRK requires putting the political development of the DPRK into its historical context. Throughout the Report historical background is provided to put current developments into such a perspective. The Report documents various forms of hostile actions by the U.S. showing the effect such actions have had on the DPRK development after the end of WWII and the end of Japanese colonial rule over Korea. One such example that the Report provides is explaining that “sanctions were imposed on Korea after Korea was liberated from Japanese colonial rule.”(p. 93) The U.S. imposed sanctions against the socialist countries including the DPRK as part of its Cold War politics even before the Korean War. (p. 93)

The Report also documents recent hostile acts by the U.S. against the DPRK. The DPRK puts the anti human rights campaign by the “U.S. and its followers” in the context of the effort to “defame the image of the

DPRK in the international arena and dismantle the socialist system under the pretext of ‘protection of human rights’.” (p. 98)

A question was raised during the briefing about what was the relationship between the fact the U.S. is unwilling to negotiate a peace treaty with the DPRK to end the Korean War and the U.S. led allegations of human rights abuse against the DPRK. A possible motivation for such a question is a recent journal article by University of California Professor Christine Hong. The article offers a helpful analysis of this relationship which is at the heart of the ability to understand the nature of the U.S. campaign against the DPRK. Her article, “The Mirror of North Korean Human Rights,” published in *Critical Asian Studies*, captures the intimate connection between the U.S. government’s unending hostility against the DPRK, and the U.S. claims of gross human rights violations in the DPRK.<sup>2</sup>

The article explains that the U.S. has been and is technically and in practice at war with the DPRK. There has been an unending set of economic, political and cultural sanctions imposed on the DPRK either by the U.S. Congress or by the UN particularly the UNSC in the recent past. There have been massive military drills close to the DPRK by the U.S. and the Republic of Korea (ROK) and more recently including Japan, France, the U.K., Canada and other U.S. allies. More than 28,000 U.S. troops have been permanently stationed in the ROK since the Korean war.

In such a situation, the U.S. claims of DPRK human rights violations provide a convenient and effective discourse to cloak the image of U.S. war activities on the Korean Peninsula in a humanitarian sounding dress. Hong writes that the ‘axis of evil’ narrative introduced by the Bush administration against Iraq, Iran and the DPRK provided a means whereby “war politics proceeded under the mantle of rescue politics.” (Hong, p. 564)

Hong maintains that the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ (R2P) narrative provides the means by which “would-be rescuers lay claim to a monopoly on the virtuous use of violence....”

A fallacious WMD narrative which was provided to the U.S. government by defectors and politicized intelligence was used to camouflage the U.S. regime change invasion of Iraq. Again, a false

narrative using unverifiable claims of defectors and politicized intelligence is being dusted off for use against the DPRK.

Keeping in mind such recent examples as Iraq and Libya, Hong observes that the claims of noble goals provide a level of protection to the perpetrators of invasions using the mantle of R2P. Instead of being “viewed as human rights violations in themselves” when they engage in acts of war like aerial bombardment, military invasion, or an embargo on essential goods, they are provided with the appearance of acting as saviors.

Taken in such a context one can understand the reluctance of nations like the DPRK to take the claims of those promoting R2P and human rights as exhibiting any but aggressive intentions.

Hong goes on to point out that any legitimate U.S. concerns over human rights violations regarding the people of the DPRK would have to begin by addressing the massive destruction against the civilian population and civilian infrastructure of the DPRK carried out by the U.S. and its allies during the Korean War and harm to the civilian population since by its sanctions.

The Report the DPRK has produced refers not only to the anti human rights activities against the Korean people during the 35 years of Japanese occupation but also to the continuing saga of U.S. hostile activities before and after the Korean War Armistice. The Report is available as an official document of the UN General Assembly (A/69/383) and of the UN Security Council (S/2014/668).<sup>3</sup>

The October 7 briefing by the DPRK broadened the spectrum of understandings of the human rights question available to delegates and journalists at the UN. More such briefings should be welcomed and encouraged.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Such a strategy with Libya resulted in ICC cases against key Libyan officials weakening their fight against the NATO invasion that brought regime change and subsequently a state of serious instability to Libya. Discussing the Libyan example of regime change, Joseph S. Nye, Jr explained that it is not the facts that matter in “the information age.” Instead soft power, which includes how the narrative describing a situation is framed, is as important as, or even more important than military action, in

gaining one's objectives. As he says in an online article, "In a global information age, success is not determined just by who has the biggest army, but also by who has the best story." See the article *On Libya, Soft Power, and the Protection of Civilians as Pretext*.

[http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2011/04/30/libya\\_and\\_protection\\_civilians\\_as\\_pretext/](http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2011/04/30/libya_and_protection_civilians_as_pretext/)

<sup>2</sup> Christine Hong, "The Mirror of North Korean Human Rights," *Critical Asian Studies*, 45:4, 561-592.

<sup>3</sup> You can see the "Report of the DPRK Association for Human Rights Studies" as an UN document at: [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/668](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/668)

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\* A version of this article appeared on October 14, 2014 on the Netizenblog at: <http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2014/10/14/dprk-human-rights-briefing-un/>.

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# Outside and Inside the UN Contesting the UN Human Rights COI Report on North Korea\*

by Ronda Hauben  
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A small demonstration that took place across the street from the UN on Wednesday, October 22, 2014 was a sign of the problem represented by the Commission of Inquiry (COI) report by the UN Human Rights Council on North Korea. The COI report had been issued in March 2014.

The demonstrators carried posters challenging the action by the UN. The posters portrayed the sentiment that the report and UN actions around the report represented an injustice. These posters included statements such as:

“Stop Using N. Korean Human Right as a Weapon for Another Korean War,” “Stop Shameful Hypocrisy Pretending Human Rights Defenders,” “Stop Psychological Warfare on the Korean Peninsula,” “Remember S. Korean National Security Law an Extreme Human Rights Violation!,” “Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp, Human Rights???,” “Human Rights, Why Only N. Korea???,” “Mind Your Business in the U.S.A.???”

The reason the issues raised by the demonstration are important is that the UN has not attempted any impartial investigation of the Korean conflict to determine its roots and how to find a resolution. The signs carried by these demonstrators provide clues to the context in which this Commission of Inquiry operated. If the COI report is intended as a weapon to start another Korean War, as one of the signs proposed, then the actions of the Human Rights Council are but a pretext for an aggressive action against a sovereign nation. Another poster asked if the Human Rights Council had considered violations of human rights such as the Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp by the U.S. or the National Security Law by South Korea? These are well-documented examples of serious Human Rights abuses, but instead of doing something to

condemn such documented abuses, the Human Rights Council is targeting North Korea where there is little actual evidence that could be recognized in a court of law of any such human rights abuses. Instead the kinds of claims being substituted for evidence are testimony of defectors, and supposed satellite images. In the Iraq case in 2003, such so called evidence proved inaccurate, yet provided a pretext for the U.S. invasion and regime change activity. Similarly, false claims were used as a pretext for the NATO war against Libya in 2011.

The protest in October held outside the UN at noon was in response to an event being held at the UN later in the day. The event, sponsored by the permanent missions of Panama, Botswana, and Australia was held to present the testimony of two North Koreans who had defected to South Korea and who were making a plea that member states support an upcoming resolution by the EU and Japan against North Korea.

The DPRK had not been invited to offer its position, but its representatives did attend the event. They were called on only as part of the question period at the end of the event.

During the question period, the DPRK representatives raised the criticism that the COI report did not make any effort to be an all-sided report. Instead it only presented the testimony of the defectors, of critics of North Korea.

The content of the testimony presented at the October 22 UN meeting included often repeated claims of harsh treatment, but missing were clear statements of what the circumstances were of the situations being described. Nor was there any effort to provide factual evidence supporting the claims.

The head of the Commission of Inquiry, the Australian Judge Michael Kirby played a major role in this meeting at the UN. In response to a comment from the DPRK representatives that the soliciting of the testimony from the defector witnesses was politically motivated, Judge Kirby responded that his experience as a judge was such that he knew how to conduct such questioning.

His response failed to acknowledge that the role he is playing in the UN process is not the same as in a national court of law, where there are expected to be standards for evidence and due process for the accused. Also in a national court of law there are in general appeals processes for

the accused, as well as the right of the accused to confront those who are making the accusations. No such rights are accorded to the accused by the process that Judge Kirby is involved in. Instead he is acting as a prosecutor with no rights for the accused to provide a defense.

At the UN meeting, the representatives of both Panama and Botswana spoke about their interest in fulfilling the obligations of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) framework as part of why they are supporting taking action against North Korea. The problem with such statements is that they are ignoring the abuse that occurred by NATO in Libya under the mantle of R2P.

This event at the UN on October 22 was directed at urging support for actions at the UN directed against North Korea. But another event a few days earlier demonstrated a very different approach to the question of the stalemate in efforts to resolve the conflicts that exist between the U.S./EU and North Korea.

This other event, which took place on October 20, was sponsored by the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and was chaired by Donald Gregg, a former U.S. Ambassador to South Korea.<sup>1</sup>

The CFR program featured Gregg interviewing Jang Il Hun who is the Deputy Ambassador for the DPRK Mission to the UN, with time provided for questions from those in the audience. Ambassador Jang is the DPRK representative for the New York channel for contact between the DPRK and the U.S. The U.S. has no formal diplomatic relations with the DPRK.

The tone of most of the CFR event provided a striking contrast to the UN meeting held a few days later.

Introducing the topic of the program, Ambassador Gregg referred to a previous program held earlier in the year with Judge Kirby discussing the COI report process. During this earlier program at CFR, Ambassador Gregg reported he had asked Judge Kirby if he had noticed any improvement in the situation in North Korea. Judge Kirby responded that he had observed improvement under Kim Jung Un. Gregg noted, however, this judgment was not reflected in the COI report.<sup>2</sup>

Also, the issue of the stalemate in relations between the U.S. and the DPRK was raised. Ambassador Jang was asked what could be done to help to make a breakthrough to end the stalemate. In general it was

agreed that neither accusations regarding human rights problems nor efforts to revive the long stalled six party talks process would be a helpful direction. Instead a visit by a friendly group organized by the Council of Foreign Relations was proposed and Ambassador Jang responded that if he received a detailed proposal for such a visit, he could make recommendations about it to his capital.<sup>3</sup>

These three situations demonstrate that there are substantive issues to be discussed through a diplomatic process with the DPRK. The program at the CFR in particular demonstrated that if an effort is made to resolve problems with the DPRK, progress is possible. Meanwhile actions being taken by nations like Japan and by the EU in particular who are threatening to bring a resolution against the DPRK, can only deepen the conflicts. And holding meetings inside or outside the UN where defector witnesses are encouraged to urge member nations of the UN to condemn the DPRK are but acts to fan the flames of hostility and conflict. The demonstration in front of the UN and the CFR meeting, though held outside the UN, reveals that the obligations of the UN Charter are obligations that can be met. And that the process of conflict resolution needs the broad participation of all those who can contribute to its success. There seem to be two tactics being used in international relations with the DPRK. Either hold punishment meetings or encourage dialogue. The UN Charter supports only the latter efforts.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup><http://www.cfr.org/north-korea/conversation-jang-il-hun/p33642>

<sup>2</sup> Gregg: “And I asked him, as I was the commentator, about 50 years, and have you noticed any changes during that period? And he said, yes, there have been improvements under Kim Jong-un, which I wish he’d said that in his report, but he at least said it in response to my — to my question.”

<sup>3</sup> JANG: Yes. If I receive any detailed proposal concerning the proposed visit, then I can make recommendations for my colleagues in the capital.

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\* This article appeared on Oct. 25, 2014 on the Netizenblog at:  
<http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2014/10/25/outside-and-inside-the-un/>

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# **13 Observations about North Korea by a Western Visitor\***

by Marcel Cartier

I had the unique opportunity to spend several days in three different parts of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, more commonly just referred to as 'North' Korea. This was an exceptionally life-changing experience that challenged many of the preconceptions that myself and fellow western visitors who accompanied me from Beijing had going in. Here are some things about North Korea that may surprise you, as many of them surprised me, as well.

## **1. Americans Are Not Hated, But Welcomed**

The Koreans have a very high level of class consciousness, and do not equate the American people with our government. They make no secret of their contempt for U.S. imperialism, but if you say you're an American, the conversation will usually revolve around culture or sports more than politics. At the Grand People's Study House in Pyongyang (think your local library on steroids, with more than 30 million books), the most popular CD is The Beatles' 'Greatest Hits', although Linkin Park is also requested a lot among local youth. The young men seem fascinated with the NBA, and know a lot more about the league than just Dennis Rodman.

## **2. Customs and Border Patrol Were a Smooth, Easy Experience**

Many of the westerners who traveled to Pyongyang from Beijing with me were concerned that the immigration procedure would be a long and intense one. Everyone seemed quite surprised that passports were stamped with no questions asked, and that only a handful of passengers had a few items in their bags looked at. Prior to traveling, it is strongly advised by tour companies that people not bring any kind of books on the Korean War or items that have American flags on them. This may be solid advice, but immigration didn't really seem too concerned about

what was brought into the country.

### 3. Pyongyang Is Beautiful, Clean and Colorful

Probably the most gorgeous city in the world, Pyongyang is incredibly well kept. Considering that the entire city was carpet bombed by U.S. forces in the Korean War (what they call the Fatherland Liberation War) and that only two buildings remained in 1953, it is an impressive accomplishment. The statues and grand buildings are awe-inspiring, as are the large green spaces where you can see people relaxing. There are many new apartment buildings sprouting up across the city, but even the ones that are evidently older are maintained well. It is often said that Pyongyang at night is dark, and although it may be compared to a western city, it does have beautiful lights that illuminate much of the downtown area.

### 4. Kim Jong Un Haircuts are Practically Non-Existent

There was one man who sported the Kim cut who I saw while en route from the airport to the city center, and it wasn't a good look on him at all! The haircut was rumoured by *BBC* and *Time*, who picked up on a South Korean tabloid story, to now be mandatory for all North Korean men of university age. Not only is this story not true, so is the allegation that the men in the DPRK only have some select few styles to choose from at the barber shop that are 'state sanctioned.' It really works just as it would in the west – there are flyers at barbershops where styles are pictured, making it easier for customers to say, "I want a number seven cut." But, just as in a New York barber shop, that doesn't mean that you are restricted to that particular look.

### 5. North Koreans Laugh, Smile and Joke – a Lot

The question you are asking is probably, "but isn't that for show?" It would be a mighty accomplishment indeed if with all of the genuine laughs I shared with Koreans, they were putting on an act. Not only that, but for vehicles speeding by on the streets, those Koreans do an impressive job of making sure they're aware when there are foreigners passing so they can pretend to laugh! Koreans have jokes for just about

everything, from Canadians and ice hockey (“why did the Canadians have sex from the back? So they can watch the hockey game”) to Americans at the DMZ (“an American passes a DPRK soldier a cigarette across the demarcation line. The soldier smokes it, but the American asks why if he hates Americans he is smoking something from the U.S. The soldier replies, I am not smoking it but rather burning it.”)

## **6. Monolithic Ideology Does Not Mean Monolithic Personality**

This is a good reminder that individualism and individuality are not one in the same. In fact, observing people interact with one another in North Korea provided the impression that a diversity of personality types was just as strong there as it is in the ‘open’ west. People have a divergence of interests, from sports to culture, and are free to pick what they enjoy and dislike.

## **7. People are Incredibly Well Dressed Across the Country**

Even in the countryside, Koreans dress in a very dignified manner. There was not one place I traveled to where people appeared in the least bit sloppy, or wearing clothes that appeared to be old. Men and women also don’t all wear the same style of clothing, as we are often conditioned to think. It is common to see women wearing very bright clothes, including pink business suits as well as more traditional Korean dresses. Men may often wear ties, collared shirts and suit coats, but it is also common to see them in more casual wear such as tracksuits depending on the occasion.

## **8. Children Begin to Learn English at the Age of Seven**

The people’s command of English, particularly among the younger generation, is very impressive. While in previous decades, high school was the time when English began to be learnt, this has been changed to the third grade. Although many children are shy (they don’t see that many foreigners, after all), I was able to get many of them to shake my hand and even exchange a few words in English. Popular languages that

are studied in high school include Chinese and German.

## 9. Tourism Will be Boosted in the Near Future

One of the aspects of the economy that will be prioritized in the future appears to be tourism. The entire Pyongyang Airport is under construction at the moment and in the midst of major expansion. The Koreans are keen to open up to the outside world, but they are also certain to do it in a very different way than the Chinese (after being in Beijing, the omnipotence of some of the worst aspects of western culture there gives them every reason to be cautious in this regard). Air Koryo, which was given the only one-star rating by the company SkyTrax, was in reality much better in terms of service and comfort than at least a dozen other airlines I had previously flown on. They have a new fleet of Russian planes that fly between Pyongyang and Beijing, provide in-flight entertainment throughout the journey (the children's cartoon Clever Raccoon Dog is hilarious), and serve a 'hamburger' (not so good, but edible) and an assortment of drinks (coffee, tea, beer, juice). The whole experience was at least worthily of three-stars if we had to go the rating route!

## 10. Koreans are Keen to Talk About the Country Candidly

People are very open about the problems facing the country, and don't shy away from discussing some of the more difficult aspects of life. For instance, they would speak about the 'Arduous March' (think the 'Special Period' in Cuba) where drought, famine and floods coupled with the loss of the majority of the country's trading partners brought big setbacks to a country that until the 1980s had a higher standard of living than the South. They will also discuss the narratives regarding the Korean War and are keen for a betterment of relations with South Korea in the eventual hope of reunification. However, they are also very firm on the fact that they will never renounce their socialist principles in order to facilitate this reunification.



## **11. Beer is Considered a Soft Drink, Micro Breweries Are Popular**

Almost every district in the country now has a local brewery that provides beer to the local area. There are a variety of different kinds that are enjoyed around the country, and most meals are served with a small quantity of beer. At Kim Il Sung Stadium where the Pyongyang Marathon started and ended, it was common to see locals having a drink as they watched the exhibition matches between DPRK football teams. Think Yankee Stadium, just without the aggressiveness of the crowd.

## **12. Most of the Tabloid Stories About the DPRK are Utterly False**

There were probably at least one hundred Americans in Pyongyang at the same time as me, due in large part to foreign amateur runners being allowed to compete for the first time in the marathon. One couple testified how this was their second visit after having traveled to DPRK the year before. They mentioned how they were a bit scared to come the previous time, because it was right after a story had hit the news about Kim Jong Un having had his ex-girlfriend and others killed for making a porn tape. The couple talked about how they walked into an Opera in Pyongyang, and as they sat down noticed that the very women who were supposed to be dead were sitting directly across from them. Walking dead, indeed! Other recent stories to hit the western press via South Korean tabloids regarding mass executions in stadiums or Kim Jong Un's uncle being fed to a pack of hungry dogs are also said to be nonsense by westerners who travel there frequently and know the country's situation well. This isn't to say anything about the existence of political reeducation camps or prisons, but an all-out demonization campaign against the country that completely distorts it is of no service to the Korean people.

## **13. Koreans Will not Hesitate to Make You Join in Their Fun**

There were a number of events organized in Pyongyang on the occasion of Kim Il Sung's birthday, which is a national holiday where

people have two days off of work. Some of these were publically organized, like the ‘mass dances’ where hundreds of people dance in large squares to popular Korean songs. Others involved people in the park having family lunches while the kids bought ice cream from vendors and drunk grannies danced hilariously because they had far too much homemade soju. But, just like in any authoritarian state, you must participate! Being shy is not an option, as they will pull you by the arm and teach you every dance move even if they themselves are not quite doing it correctly.

In short, I found the Korean people in the north to be some of the warmest, most authentic human beings I’ve ever had the chance to interact with. It would be silly to refer to the country as a ‘workers paradise’ due to the depth of problems it faces. As in all societies, there are positive aspects and negative ones. However, considering that they have overcome centuries of imperial domination, the loss of about a quarter of their population in the Korean War, and continue to maintain their social system in the face of a continued state of war, they have done tremendously well. The accomplishments in free education through university, the nonexistence of homelessness, and a proud and dignified people should be presented in order to gain a fuller, more nuanced picture of the country.

I must say that the way that the DPRK is portrayed in the western bourgeois media actually says a great deal more about the effectiveness of our propaganda apparatuses and brainwashing techniques than it does about theirs. The fact that I even have to write about the surprising things I witnessed in DPRK is evidence of the serious lack of understanding we have about the country. The problems facing Korea are never contextualized as they should be as an oppressed nation aiming to free itself from servitude to big powers intent on gobbling up every remaining state free from a dying unipolarity.

Oh, and I almost forgot about nuclear weapons! Well, let’s consider if the North Korean military was holding military drills annually off the coast of New York that simulated the carpet bombing of Manhattan and the occupation of the entirety of the country, of which they already controlled the western half. Would it not be sensible given that context for Americans to develop a nuclear deterrent? The Koreans are not war

hungry or even ‘obsessed’ with the army or military. However, given the way that the situation in Libya played out, they are all the more convinced – rightfully so – that the only reason their independent state continues to stand is due to the Songun (‘military first’ policy) and the existence of nuclear capabilities. To be sure, they have no intention of using it unless put in that position to have to do so.

It is my sincere desire that there will be continued cultural and people-to-people exchanges in the near future between people from the DPRK and the western countries. Pretty much all of the people who traveled with me back to Beijing were in awe of just how different their experience was compared to what they had expected. They – like myself – gained a great deal from the humanizing experience of interacting with Koreans. Although westerners are relatively free to travel much more so than DPRK citizens, it’s ironic how the Koreans seemingly know a great deal more about us than we know about them. That will need to change in the years to come.

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\* This post appeared on the Existence is Resistance blog on April 21, 2014 at: <http://www.existenceisresistance.org/archives4222>. Marcel Cartier is a political rapper from the South Bronx, NYC.

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# Enemy Image: What the DPRK Is Really Like\*

by Konstantin Asmolov

North Korea is one of the most unusual countries in the world. In the West they call it a pariah state, and President George Bush Junior even included the DPRK in the “axis of evil.” The demonization of the image of North Korea is promoted by the closed nature of the state and also the fact that Pyongyang deliberately cultivates a reputation as a “tough” regime that it is better to have no contact with. It is only natural that in these conditions myths proliferate around the DPRK and totally implausible “canards” about the lives of citizens of that country and the ways of the North Korean authorities regularly turn up in the press. Lenta.ru<sup>1</sup> has tried to get to the bottom of the most widespread false impressions about the DPRK.

Let us begin with poverty and famine. Undoubtedly the situation in the DPRK is not ideal in this respect, but neither extreme poverty nor constant hunger and its associated problems exist in the country. References are frequently made to statistics according to which the Northerners are shorter than their Southern brothers. This is attributed to their not receiving enough protein in their childhood. This is a half truth, because it is not only a question of the shortage of protein-rich food in the North but also the change in the nutritional regime and the departure from the traditional diet in the South, where European cuisine is popular.

Another assertion becomes tiresome: “The inhabitants of North Korea gather grass to feed themselves.” This is equivalent to the following statement: “In modern-day Russia the food situation is so bad that even urban dwellers are obliged to travel to rural localities to collect mushrooms.” Shepherd’s purse and a number of other grasses are traditional elements of Korean cuisine, and gathering them has nothing to do with the availability or otherwise of food.

The existence of the developed “parallel economy” in the DPRK also remains a secret to many people in the West, although North Korean migrants in China (shuttle traders rather than refugees) bring the

country more foreign currency than the Kaesong Industrial Complex, which is frequently positioned as the sole source of foreign currency (100 million dollars as against 80 million dollars). And if you listen not to propagandist horror stories but to the opinion of specialists, it transpires that in practice there is, if anything, more economic freedom in today's DPRK than there was in the USSR at the time of Perestroika. Illegal economic ties permeate the whole of society, and a significant number of state enterprises are essentially private. The regime gives the "capitalist" most-favored status, and he fulfills its strategic instructions and shares the profits with it.

The "primary accumulation of capital" is in full swing in Pyongyang now. Residents of the city have begun to dress better and expensive restaurants and stores selling foreign-made goods are opening. The new multistory housing districts in Pyongyang are indistinguishable from those in Busan, South Korea,

The famine of 1995-1997 occupies perhaps the main place in the demonization of the DPRK. According to the calculations of certain particularly "competent" authors the number of casualties reached three million or even four million. However, these figures were obtained by a highly original method: The "assumed estimates of the situation in the worst-affected individual regions" were extrapolated to the whole country. Moreover, losses not directly connected with the famine are added to the victims (for instance, mortality from diseases in the context of reduced immunity).

People in the West write that "the bodies of people dead from hunger were piled up right there on the streets." As in South Korea, in the DPRK they prefer to bury the deceased not in cemeteries but in places that are favorable from the viewpoint of geomancy. Therefore when famine hit the country, in order to combat possible epidemics, it was recommended that the bodies be buried in mass graves: A truck would drive around the villages collecting the bodies of the deceased, who would be carried to the roadside beforehand. Journalists saw this and interpreted it in their own way.

Another "beautiful image" connected with the DPRK is the well-known "satellite photograph" where, against the bright lights of the South, the DPRK looks like a big, totally black patch. This is a very

interesting illustration of the way in which the staffers of Radio Free Asia achieved the opposite result to what they were hoping for. Taking a real NASA image, they painted over some of the illuminations in the North so that the difference would look bigger, but while doing so they inadvertently blacked out Vladivostok and several Chinese border cities, which apparently also have no light at night.

The belief that in a state like the DPRK there can be neither culture, nor science, nor any other successes except perhaps the military kind is equally absurd. False premises produce false results. Sometimes quite comical ones. Thus, when North Korean archaeologists excavated the “Unicorn Cave” site, so called because the mythical founder of the state of Koguryo (an ancient state on the site where the DPRK now is) supposedly kept this animal there, the Western press started saying sarcastically: “North Korean scientists have proved the existence of unicorns.”

The author of these lines even came across articles about the “Potemkin” nature of the Pyongyang Metro. Apparently there are only three stations, between which they ferry foreigners, while locals are not allowed in at all. But actually the North Korean metro is a year older than South Korea’s. Incidentally, the Northerners are also in the lead in the missile race and even in another indicator, the literacy of the population: 99 per cent of the population as against 97.9 per cent in the Republic of Korea.

The DPRK is also not infrequently accused of destroying the cultural heritage, the accusation being that practically no architectural monuments of past eras remain in the country and Pyongyang was completely rebuilt as a tribute to Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il. Yet it is somehow forgotten that the cultural sites were destroyed during the Korean War of 1950-1953, toward the end of which the U.S. Air Force officially stated that it had bombed everything it could, including barrages and dams, while Pyongyang was practically completely destroyed, so there was basically nothing there to demolish.

Now let us talk about the cruelty of the regime. Here critics of the DPRK have become detached from reality to a lesser extent. Although, in the context of the traditional Confucian mentality that is characteristic of many countries of the Far East, notions of freedom and the relation-

ship between the interests of the individual and the collective differ significantly from both European and Soviet notions. Furthermore the DPRK is in the position of a “besieged fortress,” which in itself presupposes numerous restrictions.

Nonetheless, the degree of state interference in the private lives of citizens of the DPRK should not be exaggerated. An example of this exaggeration is the reports that female inhabitants of North Korea are forbidden to wear short skirts or pants, although pants are standard attire for the Far Eastern woman, while in photographs of Pyongyang from various years it is clear that Korean women certainly do not only wear traditional dress. There was a similar story about haircuts when, on the basis of photographs of examples of women’s and men’s haircuts and hairstyles that were hanging on the wall in a hairdresser’s, it was concluded that citizens of DPRK are only allowed those haircuts. The recent “canard” – “everyone must have the same haircut as the leader” – only continues this trend.

One of the most widespread recent fables about North Korea is the stories about the incredible cruelty of its ruler Kim Jong Un. Thus, there was a lot of ballyhoo about a report that an official was shot by mortar fire on his orders. None of those who reproduced this news was bothered by the fact that it is impossible in principle to shoot somebody with mortar fire. The news that Comrade Kim fed his own uncle to hungry dogs comes into the same category; it turned out to be a joke by a Chinese blogger.

One should also treat with scepticism many stories about torture in the DPRK. The defector Sin Don Khek [name as transliterated], for instance, was famous for describing such horrors. He reported in particular how they tortured him by hanging him on a hook over a fire. True, it is rather difficult to believe that Sin actually went through all this: Surviving after such things is problematic, and not becoming disabled is entirely unrealistic. But all the same, the naive reader takes the testimony of such “victims” at face value even though their health, having been undermined in the “Korean Gulag,” is sufficient for press conferences lasting many hours and propaganda tours during which they speak several times a day.

There is a widespread impression that the DPRK threatens its

neighbors or possibly the whole world. Pyongyang lays no claim to other countries' territories. Admittedly it regards the Republic of Korea as an occupied territory, but Seoul also regards the peninsula as a single country, part of which is temporary occupied by an "anti state organization."

It is not only the North Korean missile and nuclear programs that are subjected to mythological exaggeration, but the DPRK Army as a whole. It is emphasized that it ranks fourth in the world in terms of numerical strength, but the fact that on this same list the Republic of Korea comes sixth, while the South Korean military budget exceeds North Korea's by a factor of 23-26[?],<sup>2</sup> is left out. While from the viewpoint of a simple comparison of troop numbers the North appears not to have a decisive superiority, if you take into account the quality of the armaments the correlation of forces is simply disastrous for the North. DPRK Air Force pilots have only 10-25 hours' flying time a year (for comparison, NATO's pilots have a minimum of 200). In the 1990s there were about 200 tanks at Pyongyang's disposal (there are more than 8,000 in the American Army today). As one military expert with whom this author is acquainted put it, "the DPRK may have enough tanks to take Seoul, but I am not sure they have enough fuel to get there." The DPRK has fuel for 30 days and food for 60 days of war.

A "sensation" about the latest unmasked plan for a terrorist act being prepared by Pyongyang turns up in the media at least once a year. Thus, in 2006 in the context of the first epidemic of bird flu it was reported that "the DPRK is planning to develop a bacteriological weapon based on this virus and has established contacts with Al-Qaida in this connection." In 2009 "Japan's intelligence services have learned of a planned DPRK missile strike against U.S. territory, scheduled for 4 July 2009." In 2012 the DPRK "decided to disrupt the Seoul G20 summits, for which purpose it was planned to release balloons against the South, filled with poisonous gases or the spores of dangerous microorganisms."

Why is this mythologization, this distortion of the image of the DPRK, dangerous? Scourging the vices of this or that regime is fine when the vices are real and we are talking about the real North Korea, not its counterpart "in another universe." However, today the comic



image of the DPRK is encroaching on reality and supplanting it. This may be no bad thing for propaganda, but because of the grotesqueness of the image that has been constructed for North Korea, that country, with its inhabitants and their problems, becomes an object of jibes and not sympathy. And the fact that fake news about the DPRK is regularly exposed only intensifies this effect.

But there is an even more serious problem: The distorted image of the DPRK is becoming established not only among ordinary people but also in the heads of the people who make the decisions and even the propagandists themselves. So real political strategies, which theoretically should be based on an understanding of the opponent, are built on the basis of a “cartoon” image. And attempts by specialists to explain what is what, meet with a hostile reception because “everyone already knows what is happening there!”

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Lenta.ru is a Moscow based, Russian language news site with over a reported 600,000 hits per day.

<sup>2</sup> In 2012, the reported military budget of South Korea was approx. \$26.1 billion, that of North Korea was approx. \$8.2 billion giving a ration of more than 3:1 in favor of South Korea.

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\* This article appeared in Russian on the news website Lenta.ru on Feb 2, 2015. Konstantin Asmolov is a scientific staffer at the Center for Korean Studies, the Institute of Far Eastern Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

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[Editor's Note: The following article from the Strategic Culture website analyzes the relation between the U.S. and the DPRK and the cyber attack on Sony Pictures Entertainment known as the 'Sony Hack'. This is Part II of a 2-part article. Part I can be seen at: <http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2015/01/06/usa-north-korea-and-hollywood-i.html>.]

## **USA, North Korea and Hollywood (II)\***

by Alexander Vorontsov

The hackers' attack against Sony Pictures on November 24, 2014 threw the entire studio of the Hollywood giant into disarray with the computers wiped out. Media called it the biggest corporate hack in history. A group purporting to be the Guardians of Peace took responsibility for the act.<sup>1</sup> The data stolen by hackers included personal information about Sony Pictures employees and their families, e-mails between employees, information about executive salaries at the company, copies of unreleased Sony films and other information to be made accessible via internet. The perpetrators demanded to cancel the planned release of the film *The Interview*<sup>2</sup> and threatened to attack moviegoers. A message from the Guardians of Peace group posted online warned of a 9/11-like attack on movie theaters that screen the Sony Pictures Entertainment film.<sup>3</sup> At some point people panicked. After the threats of a terrorist attack the New York premiere of the Sony movie was cancelled. Screenings have also been cancelled at thousands of theaters across the country. The U.S. administration was really concerned over the goings-on. After some time it peremptorily accused Pyongyang of complicity with no evidence to substantiate the claim. It only cited the results of the FBI investigation.<sup>4</sup> The accusations were as groundless as in the case of the Malaysian Boeing airliner that went down in Ukraine. They followed the same pattern: "We know who is guilty, we possess the facts that cannot be made public because it's hush-hush information. So you have to take our word for it." Here is another example of the same tactics in use. In 2003 America accused

Iraq of pursuing a WMD (weapons of mass destruction) program though the U.S. administration knew it was not true.

North Korea has twice flatly rejected such accusations. It offered its cooperation in finding the truth but Washington refused. Instead it said Pyongyang was welcome to compensate for the losses suffered by Sony Pictures. In 2006-2007 the U.S. Treasury Department conducted an operation against what it called North Korea's illegal economic activities. It froze the Delta Asia bank accounts in Macao. The move negatively affected the six-party nuclear talks held in Beijing at the time. The U.S. never provided any proof of the bank's illegal activities or its connection to North Korea's nuclear program. Pyongyang offered to launch a joint investigation but Washington refused as it did in the case of Cheonan – the South Korean corvette sank off the country's west coast in the Yellow Sea. Back then the United Nations Security Council held an emergency session called upon South Korea's initiative. The evidence provided by Seoul was not sufficient to blame North Korea for the tragedy. The U.S. regularly refuses to hold joint investigations with North Korea. It makes the accusations of North Korean complicity in the hackers' attack against Sony Pictures not credible. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement says "Pyongyang suggested conducting a joint investigation of the incident which would open up additional opportunities for easing the tension. In fact, the step is evidence of the North Korean side's sincere striving for investigating the issue in every detail."

Scared by threats movie theater owners delayed the screening of *The Interview*. President Barack Obama authorized additional sanctions on North Korea in the wake of the "destructive and coercive" cyber-attack on Sony Pictures Entertainment. "We take seriously North Korea's attack that aimed to create destructive financial effects on a U.S. company and to threaten artists and other individuals with the goal of restricting their right to free expression," the White House statement said. It called the sanctions "a response to the Government of North Korea's ongoing provocative, destabilizing, and repressive actions and policies, particularly its destructive and coercive cyber-attack on Sony Pictures Entertainment." Obama said the attack was technologically complex and unprecedented in scope. He promised to take punitive

actions including returning North Korea to the list of terrorist sponsors. The U.S. turns a blind eye to the fact that some details don't fit into the version of North Korean complicity in the hackers' attack. The opinions differ even inside the United States. Stylometric analysis says the linguistic features are not North Korean, for instance, some digital crime perpetrators could even be Russian speakers. Another version is based on the facts ignored by Washington. The Guardians of Peace told media they collaborated with the company's staffers to make Sony Pictures pay for criminal business-practices. According to the stolen data, there was only one woman out of 17 managers with salaries exceeding one million dollars. There is ground to believe that the attack was staged by former Sony employees disgruntled with the management policies.

The third version is related to the Chinese factor. The United States asked China to help in the investigation as the North Korean traffic that goes through Chinese cyber space. Beijing never detected any North Korean trace.

The U.S. version states that the attack was technologically complicated and it took about a year to prepare it. It means there were many collaborators inside Sony Pictures. In this case Washington has to admit that Pyongyang was able to create a broad net of agents working in the United States and it possesses a capability to organize wide-scale subversive actions.

One way or another, experts believe Washington's reaction was disproportional. Digital crimes have become routine but nobody ever tried "to punish" sovereign states for such nefarious deeds. A close scrutiny of the incident against the background of U.S. policy toward North Korea may provide some clue. It is called the policy of "strategic patience" which various American experts believe to be a version of "strategy of containment" aimed at toppling the North Korean government. Many researchers point out it was a surprise when Obama took a tougher stance on the issue than his predecessor George Bush. The instruments used to implement the "strategic patience" policy include increased pressure, sanctions, isolation and rejection of meaningful dialogue and "engagement policy." In 2014 many peace initiatives put forward by Pyongyang were rebuffed by Washington and Seoul as acts of propaganda. The previous year Pyongyang abstained from nuclear

tests and long-range ballistic missile trials. Still, the United States and the allies continued to conduct large-scale exercises near the North Korean border. The military activities serve as means of political pressure. The campaign against human rights violations in North Korea has gained unprecedented proportions. It had never been that tense, as well as it had never been made part of the United Nations General Assembly's agenda with an aim to refer the case to the International Court in the Hague. No matter the United Nations structures have strictly divided responsibilities, the North Korean issue was added to the agenda of the United Nations Security Council. The very idea that the alleged or real human rights violations in North Korea could pose a threat to international security and become an issue for consideration by the United Nations Security Council in accordance with the UN Charter is ridiculous. The Security Council will hardly come up with a unanimous ruling due to the opposition of Russia and China – the states which adamantly oppose the politicization of the human rights issue in relation to North Korea. At that the pressure on North Korea continues. The hackers' attack against Sony Pictures is used for the same purpose. The main goal is finding new pretexts to introduce new sanctions against North Korea. If the other countries don't join in, the U.S. will do unilaterally.

Many experts believe that the goal of unfriendly actions undertaken by Washington and its allies is to provoke North Korea into renewal of nuclear tests. It will make it easier for the West to introduce a new package of anti-North Korean sanctions. It is worth to note what North Korean experts say. They are sure that since the autumn of 2014 the United States started another offensive to impede the ongoing economic progress in North Korea that has been lasting for a few years now. Under the leadership of Kim Jong-un the country has achieved economic growth. Many social programs have been implemented, including high quality housing for the researchers of the Academy of Sciences, the professors of universities in Pyongyang, a water park, modern skiing resort, an equestrian sports complex, etc.

For North Korea 2014 was a year of growing tensions, as well as the time of continuous economic growth that the country reached even being under international sanctions. It was also the year when military

and political leadership consolidated its ranks thanks to the efforts of young Kim Jong-un. In 2014 a three-year mourning period for the late leader Kim Jong Il, the father of Kim Jong-un, ended. It was also the time of increasing cooperation with friendly states, first of all Russia and China. Perhaps all these things will make the regime's opponents realize that the hopes for regime change in North Korea are groundless. Perhaps it will help to revive a substantive dialogue on the problems of the Korean Peninsula.

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Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Donnelly, Matt. "Sony Hackers Have Flashed A 'Disturbing' New Warning On Staff Computers," *Business Insider*, December 11, 2014,

<http://www.businessinsider.com/sony-hackers-new-warning-on-computers-2014-12>.

<sup>2</sup>[http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/rolling\\_news/2014/12/141208\\_rn\\_hackers\\_sony\\_kim](http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/rolling_news/2014/12/141208_rn_hackers_sony_kim) (in Russian)

<sup>3</sup> "Sony hackers threaten theaters with 9/11-style attack," *USA Today*, December 16, 2014.

<http://www.wcnc.com/story/news/2014/12/16/sony-hackers-threaten-theaters-with-9-11-style-attack/20490371/> contains the original article but now the original link goes to "New York premiere of 'The Interview' canceled."

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/life/movies/2014/12/16/sony-hackers-threaten-movie-theaters/20485591/>

<sup>4</sup> "U.S. Said to Find North Korea Ordered Cyberattack on Sony," *The New York Times*, December 17, 2014,

[http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/18/world/asia/us-links-north-korea-to-sony-hacking.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/18/world/asia/us-links-north-korea-to-sony-hacking.html?_r=0)

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\* This article appeared in the Strategic Culture Foundation on-line journal, Feb 7, 2015, <http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2015/01/07/usa-north-korea-and-hollywood-ii.html>.

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[Editor's Note: The following Global Citizens' Declaration and Call were received while this issue of the *Amateur Computerist* was being edited. The Declaration and Call were being circulated by two South Korean NGOs, People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD) and Solidarity for Peace and Reconciliation of Korea (SPARK). Endorsements were requested from individuals and organization.\*]

## **Global Citizens' Declaration: A Call for an End to the Korean War and the Elimination of Nuclear Threats on the Korean Peninsula**

### ***Let's Create a Nuclear-Free World by Signing the Peace Treaty and Declaring a Nuclear-Free Zone***

This declaration proposes a fundamental and comprehensive resolution of military tensions and the nuclear crisis around the Korean peninsula, which make it difficult to achieve a region and a world without nuclear weapons.

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#### **Our Proposals**

●First: Immediately reconvene the lapsed Six-Party Talks in order to find ways to establish a nuclear-free zone on the Korean peninsula to resolve the nuclear crisis.

●Second: Parallel to, or preceding, the Six-Party Talks, the countries involved – including South Korea, North Korea, the U.S., and China – should conduct negotiations that would lead to ending the armistice system and replacing it with a permanent peace system, based on the conclusion of a peace treaty.

●Third: Parallel to, or preceding, the Six-Party Talks, North Korea-U.S., and North Korea-Japan bilateral talks should be initiated in order to comprehensively improve relations between these states.

●Fourth: The two Koreas should expand their dialogue and cooperation with each other, with the active support and encouragement of neighboring countries.

●Fifth: There must be an end to the U.S.-Japan-ROK military cooperation, including the missile defense system, which perpetuates the arms race on the peninsula and in the wider East Asian region.

●Sixth: Japan must be prevented from exercising the right of collective self-defense, as interpreted by the Abe administration, because this would nullify the Japanese peace constitution, particularly article 9, which has served as an anchor of peace in East Asia.

●Seventh: Together with the conclusion of the Korean peninsula peace treaty, hostile military alliances must be phased out, stage by stage, and replaced by peaceful reciprocal relations, in order to contribute to the common security of the Korean peninsula and all East Asian countries.

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## **A Call for an End to the Korean War and the Elimination of Nuclear Threats on the Korean Peninsula**

Seventy years ago, the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought catastrophic humanitarian consequences, not only to the Japanese people, but also to around 70,000 Korean workers who had been forcibly taken to Japan by the colonial-imperial government. As a result of the Cold War, the Korean peninsula was divided and finally torn apart by the Korean War. Under the unstable armistice system, the Korean peninsula has become the powder keg of East Asia, with the world's most concentrated accumulation of weapons-including nuclear weapons. The fear of nuclear war continues.



## Conflicts and Mutual Distrust in the Last 20 years Regarding North Korea's Nuclear Program

21 years have passed since the Agreed Framework between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was signed in 1994. Since then there have been several additional agreements to peacefully resolve the nuclear problems on the Korean peninsula, but no agreement has been fully implemented. As a result, North Korea has carried out nuclear tests on three different occasions.

The U.S. and South Korean governments have argued that it was North Korea that broke the agreement and developed nuclear weapons while dialogues were proceeding. However, this argument is not persuasive, because it is not based on observed facts. The history of interaction between North Korea and the U.S. shows numerous instances when the U.S., a major nuclear power, broke agreements to give negative security assurance to North Korea, or provoked the North by implementing rigid, hostile policies. The nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula has been aggravated because of accumulated distrust between the U.S. and North Korea, North Korea and South Korea, and neighboring countries and North Korea. It is not the fault of only one country. All must accept responsibility.

## An Unrealistic Resolution Ended in Failure: Hostility and Containment

In the last 20 years, unilateral hostile U.S. policies against North Korea, such as pressure and containment, the reinforced nuclear umbrella for South Korea and conventional weapons, have been put into effect in concert with the U.S.' partners and allies. These have proved ineffective in the effort to resolve North Korean nuclear issues. The history of conflicts that have developed around North Korea's nuclear program demonstrates that when dialogue and negotiations were pursued, Pyongyang slowed or suspended its nuclear program. The reverse was the case when the North saw itself as the target of pressure and isolation in the name of "hostile neglect" or "strategic patience." In those conditions North Korea intensified its nuclear program activities and developed long-range missile capabilities. In particular, the situation

has become worse whenever the policy has been to halt dialogue, in the vain hope that regime collapse or transition was imminent.

The U.S. and South Korean governments insist that they are “open to dialogue, but only when North Korea shows that it is sincerely willing to give up its nuclear weapons.” However, demanding that North Korea must make the first move, by dismantling its nuclear program as a prerequisite to any dialogue, automatically perpetuates the long-standing deadlock. This attitude does nothing to help solve problems related to North Korea. The North has carried out three series of nuclear tests in defiance of sanctions. In order to elicit a positive response from North Korea, new methods must be applied. We need to bring into a new level of dialogue the kinds of bold, constructive proposals that are acceptable to both sides.

## A New, Comprehensive Solution: Signing a Peace Treaty, Normalizing Relations, Establishing a Nuclear-Free Zone

Above all, we must present comprehensive solutions that will link the transition from the current armistice system to a peace system on the Korean peninsula, normalize relations between North Korea and the U.S., and between North Korea and Japan, and eliminate North Korea’s nuclear program. This is because the nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula is ultimately due to the continuation of the armistice system. Once that is understood, it can be seen that the first step toward resolving the nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula is to resume talks among the states concerned, which aim to bring about the conclusion of a Korean peninsula peace treaty. The treaty would be based on six-party agreement on a joint statement and on bilateral talks that would lead to normalization of relations between North Korea and the U.S., and between North Korea and Japan.

Second: Following this, we should go beyond Korean denuclearization and seek a more comprehensive solution that would definitively eliminate all the nuclear threats facing Northeast Asian countries. Resolving the Korean peninsula nuclear crisis is not an end in itself, but a necessary component of dealing with the Northeast Asian and global

nuclear crises. The most effective way to eliminate nuclear threats on the Korean peninsula and in the larger Northeast Asian region is to establish a nuclear-free zone in Northeast Asia, not only on the Korean peninsula.

Third: We should make an effort in order to change the various disputes and military conflicts on the Korean peninsula into reciprocal, cooperative relationships. The unstable, fragile armistice system resulted from historical conflicts created after World War II. If this historical context is ignored, allowing Japan to exercise its right to collective self-defense, and reinforcing U.S.-Japan-ROK military cooperation using the justification of nuclear and missile threats from North Korea, it will intensify the already extreme military tension and accelerate the vicious cycle of the regional arms race. Key elements in creating an East Asian peace and cooperation system are the preservation of Japan's peace constitution and the conclusion of a Korean peninsula peace treaty.

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\* Those wishing to endorse the declaration were asked to send their name/organization and country to [gayoon@pspd.org](mailto:gayoon@pspd.org)

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The opinions expressed in articles are those of their authors and not necessarily the opinions of the *Amateur Computerist* newsletter. We welcome submissions from a spectrum of viewpoints.

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