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## CHAPTER 10

# **The North Wind: North Korea's Response and Policy towards the 2002 Presidential Election in South Korea**

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### **Introduction**

On March 14, 2003, when the debate on the Special Prosecution Law Regarding the “Money Transfer to the North” was still under way, President Roh Moo-hyun announced that he would endorse the bill which had been passed by the National Assembly session attended only by the members of the opposition party, the Grand National Party, in late February 2003. The majority of the public involved in the debate, in particular those who supported President Roh during the election and the “sunshine policy” of former President Kim Dae-jung, were complacent about the possibility of President Roh’s veto of the bill. Although there was some debate between the supporters and opponents of the bill within the ruling party, the New Millennium Democratic Party, a majority of the party members wanted President Roh to veto the bill. President Roh’s endorsement of the bill brought disappointment to those who expected President Roh’s veto.

Interestingly enough, the Asia-Pacific Peace Committee, the organization responsible for the North’s policy towards the South, announced the shocking news on the very day when President Roh endorsed the bill. According to the committee, the GNP allegedly sent secret envoys to the North three times in

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2002 and tried to gain support for the election from the North by persuading them that the election of Lee Hoi-chang, the candidate of the GNP, would bring about a much larger aid package than that of President Kim. Although it is difficult to judge the validity of the announcement without further inquiry, it was widely agreed that the announcement by the North itself was closely related to the Law on Special Prosecution. It seemed that Pyongyang would not want the issue of the money transfer to the North to be investigated since the details might be damaging to the DPRK.

The thrust of the issue of the money transfer to the North was that the Kim government illegally sent up to 500 million U.S. dollars to the North through Hyundai, which had been involved in a variety of businesses including the Kumgang Mountain Tourism Project, in order to make possible the North-South Summit Meeting on June 15, 2000. The Kim government faced several criticisms. First, the improved inter-Korean relationship resulting from the North-South Summit Meeting and subsequent Nobel Peace Prize awarded to President Kim Dae-jung were simply bought with the under-the-table cash transfer from Seoul to Pyongyang. Second, the timing of the announcement of the North-South Summit, i.e., three days before the general election, justified the opposition party's point that the government used the North-South matter for domestic political purposes in order to advance the winning chances of the NMDP candidates on the eve of the crucial parliamentary elections. The ruling party tried to catch the so-called *north wind* in its sails to become a majority party in the parliament, but succeeded only in attracting a few additional votes from some constituencies.

The North-South summit was said to be similar to the "April 1996 incident," when the North staged a military provocation in the DMZ by dispatching armed soldiers into the Joint Security Area, which, arguably, had led to an electoral upset and facilitated the election victory of the New Korea Party (the

predecessor of the GNP), which had been suffering from a series of corruption incidents in the capital area.<sup>169</sup> Although it is not certain whether these two incidents that occurred before the elections were the product of Pyongyang's autonomous decision-making or the result of some sort of request originating with one of the political parties in the ROK, it is widely believed that these two incidents show the significance of North Korean influence in South Korea's domestic politics.

Although all ROK governments consistently emphasized national security in order to legitimize their authoritarian rule, North Korea was not a significant factor in South Korean domestic politics until the early 1990s because democratic rule and procedures did not represent serious issues in the North-South discourse.

Since the mid-1990s, however, North Korea has actively engaged in South Korean domestic politics, in particular the election process. One of the main examples is the presidential election of 1997. The DPRK government is known to have intervened in the ROK's domestic political process to hamper the then candidate Kim Dae-jung from winning the ROK's presidential election, by establishing "the Operation Unit of the South Korean Presidential Election". It caused the ROK experts on North-South relations a great deal of confusion since many of them expected the North to support Mr. Kim Dae-jung, who had maintained a softer stance towards North Korea and emphasized cooperation with the North.

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<sup>169</sup> It is hard to analyse quantitatively the extent to which the cross-border incidents may have influenced the results of two previous general elections. One study that analysed the *north wind's* effect on the general election held on April 11, 2000, concluded that the North Korean influence on the general election outcome was negligible. See Jung, Joon-Pyo, "Pukpungeui Chŏngch'ihak: Sŏngŏwa Pukhan Pyŏnsu (The Politics of North Wind: The Elections and the North Korean Factor)," *Hangukkwa Kukchechŏngch'I(Korea and World Politics)*, vol.14, no.1, 1998. There is no study on the April 13<sup>th</sup> general election of 2000 yet.

## **Presidential Elections and the *North Wind***

This chapter is aimed at clarifying the DPRK's attitudes and policy towards the ROK's presidential elections. We will analyze how the so-called *north wind* may have influenced the Korean presidential elections, how the North responded to the South Korean presidential elections, and how it is related to the North's policy toward the South within the broader context. We define the *north wind* as the North's actions and policies intended to influence South Korean domestic politics. The term *north wind* was widely used in the South during the general election of April 1996. The "April 1996 incident" deepened public concern for national security, and it certainly played a role in attracting votes for the conservative ruling party. Since then *north wind* has been perceived as a security threat of the North consequently influencing South Korean domestic politics. The matter of the North's intentions, however, was not a major concern.<sup>170</sup>

The term *north wind* itself was, however, originally coined by the North Korean leader Kim Il Sung in a speech made at the meeting for the assessment of land reform in March 1946. He said, "They (the South) appeared to be afraid of (our) making the *north wind* let alone making *south wind* and our democratic reform and 20 clauses of our party platform." He implied in this speech that the land reform itself would influence South Korean domestic politics. Bearing in mind the North's usage of the term, therefore, it is better to say that *north wind* can be considered not only a security threat but it may also indicate Pyongyang's actions and policies intended to influence South Korean domestic politics. Based on this conceptualization, first, we will analyze the incidents of *north wind* and the DPRK's official stance in these incidents. And then we will explain the change in North

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<sup>170</sup> Jeong clarifies the characteristics of the *north wind* as "the incidents related to Pyongyang, which make the South Korean public insecure due to the war occurrence." *ibid.*, p.122.

Korea's policy direction during the presidential elections through the analysis of *north wind*.

*North Korea's Official Statements on Presidential Elections in South Korea*

It was the presidential election of 1992 in which the genuine democratic competition began. During the election the North Korean government expressed a series of negative opinions on Mr. Kim Young-sam, the then candidate of the ruling party, the Liberal Democratic Party. The main target was, however, not Mr. Kim but the LDP. They criticized the LDP as a political party established to extend military authoritarianism through the merger of three parties: the Democratic Justice Party headed by President Roh Tae-woo, the Unification Democratic Party headed by Mr. Kim Young-sam and New Democratic Republican Party headed by Mr. Kim Jong-pil. On one hand, Pyongyang expressed various negative views on the political situation in the South and, on the other hand, it criticized the then President Roh and the LDP, by saying that they would escalate the level of tension on the Korean peninsula. The North Korean authorities considered Mr. Kim Young-sam's presidential bid as a "conspiracy" designed to extend military authoritarianism. For instance, the official statement carried in the *Rodong Shinmun* said,

... We don't care about their election. It is, however, an unpardonable anti-nationalistic sin for them to intentionally worsen the North-South relationship by blaming us in order to manipulate the extension of the military fascist regime.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> *The Rodong Shinmun*, Pyongyang, November 20, 1992.

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Apart from this official statement, however, there was not clear evidence of the North's attempts to manufacture *north wind* in order to damage candidate Kim Young-sam. Again in the 1997 presidential election, the North fiercely criticized the Kim government and the ruling New Korea Party instead of candidate Lee Hoi-chang.<sup>172</sup> The *Rodong Shinmun* carried a total of ten articles under the title "To Reveal All the Sins of the Reactionary Puppet Regime" full of hostile comments on the Kim Young-sam government from November 14 to December 2, 1997. As their subtitles indicate, this series of articles dealt with various issues ranging from foreign policy to domestic politics; the North-South relationship; and issues of national security, economy, society, and culture in depth:

- "The Sin of Making South Korea Archetypical Case of Subordinate Colony";
- "The Sin of Selling National Interests to Foreign Power";
- "The Sin of Making South Korea a Worse Form of Fascism Than That of the Military Authoritarianism";
- "The Sin of Making the Patriotic Democratic Force Shed Blood in South Korea";
- "The Sin of Wielding a Knife to the Painful Heart of the People";
- "The Sin of Extremely Bad Anti-Reunification;" "The Sin of Destroying Peace and Driving the Nation to the Brink of War";
- "The Sin of Worsening the Economy and the Living Standards of People";

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<sup>172</sup> The New Korea Party succeeded the Democratic Liberal Party, which had been formed by President Kim Young-sam after he assumed the power. The Liberal Democratic Coalition established by Mr. Kim Jong-pil and some members of the former New Democratic Republican Party divorced from the DLP after the NKP was established. Later Mr. Lee Hoi-chang renamed the NKP into the GNP.

- “The Sin of Making South Korea Garbage Filled with Irregularities and Corruptions”;
- “The Sin of Destroying the National Culture, Tradition, and Good Customs.”

Amongst these fierce criticisms, one cannot find any hostile comments about the personality of candidate Lee Hoi-chang. When these articles mentioned Mr. Lee, they described the political situation rather than the individual in order to criticize the South Korean politics for its “utter disorder”.

The North’s attitude during the 2002 presidential election was completely different from that of 1997. Pyongyang frequently made hostile comments about candidate Lee Hoi-chang. The main reasons for those hostile comments were that he opposed the Joint Declaration of June 15<sup>th</sup> and blindly followed the U.S. policy line. For instance, the official statement by the spokesperson of the Committee for the Peaceful Unification of the Fatherland criticized Mr. Lee, saying that “he told his master (the U.S.)” that “there has been no change at all in the North”, “we have to prepare to respond to their nuclear development,” “we need the U.S. army to be stationed on the Korean peninsula even after unification,” and “if I get elected, I would demand the North to withdraw their army behind the DMZ and reduce their conventional weaponry”. The CPUF statement concluded that “Lee showed himself as the worst traitor playing up to foreign forces to achieve his private interest in power, and we (the North) would not make contact with traitors like him unless they repent for their sins”.<sup>173</sup> These criticisms were repeatedly published on page five, the designated page for South Korea-related topics in the *Rodong Shinmun*, from early February to mid-March 2002.

The following articles carried on page five also show the attitude of the North:

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<sup>173</sup> *The Rodong Shinmun*, Pyongyang, February 2, 2002.

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- 1) “We Denounce the Ignominious Remarks of Unpatriotic Traitor Challenging the Whole Nation” (February 5, 2002, announcement of the spokesperson, the Korean Social Democratic Party);
- 2) “Let’s Ostracize the Anti-Unification Subservient Traitor” (February 7, 2002, announcement of the spokesperson, the Central Committee of the Chundogyo Religion Friendly Party);
- 3) “We Have to Sever Traitors Pursuing the Break-up of the Nation from Ourselves” (February 8, 2002, announcement of the spokesperson, the Central Committee of the Korean General Alliance of Occupations);
- 4) “We Have to Pull Up in Due Time the Poisonous Weeds Preoccupied with the Desire for Power” (February 10, 2002, announcement of the spokesperson, the Central Committee of the Korean Agricultural Workers’ Alliance);
- 5) “We Denounce the Traitor of the Nation Threatening the Peace and Reunification” (March 3, 2002, News Release of the Secretariat of the Committee for the Peaceful Unification of the Fatherland).

The North fiercely criticized Mr. Lee, employing extreme remarks. After Mr. Lee Hoi-chang returned from his visit to Japan, they reproached the GNP leader, by saying that he slandered the North during his stay in Japan. The CPUF Secretariat criticized him by saying that “in his attempts to persuade his Japanese master to ‘actively respond to North Korea’s weapons of mass destruction’ and ‘to strengthen the multilateral security cooperation in East Asia,’ Lee revealed his intention to harm the North in cooperation with foreign forces.” The CPUF statement denounced that his remarks revealed himself as pro-Japanese and pro-American to the nation. In

addition, it argued that, “Lee’s visit to Japan was the act to follow the pro-Japanese footsteps of his father and to pursue power by flattering foreign powers in the ‘president’ election.” The CPUF statement demonstrates clearly that the North intended to mobilize negative opinions about Lee Hoi-chang during the election campaign in South Korea.<sup>174</sup>

Their intentions are also revealed in the official statement of the North Korean government criticizing the GNP’s “fundamental principles of the policy towards North Korea.” The announcement by the CPUF spokesperson denounced this document (containing the fundamental principles) as “an ugly one for crime.” And it threatened that “if the GNP gained power, the degree of confrontation and tension on the Korean peninsula would be increased significantly.” They also attacked Mr. Lee Hoi-chang’s family background. In the article titled “To reveal the Nature of the Poisonous Pro-Japanese and Pro-American Traitor,” Mr. Lee and his father were described as follows:

It was Lee who made a rule to pay respect to the Japanese Emperor and was proud of the picture in which Lee wearing Japanese traditional costume gave three cheers to the Japanese Emperor.<sup>175</sup>

It was intended to damage the image of candidate Lee Hoi-chang whose standing in the public opinion polls had been suffering from his father’s pro-Japanese activities as an assistant attorney during Japanese colonialism. Under the situation where the ruling party candidate Mr. Roh Moo-hyun suffered from his father-in-law’s pro-communist activities, this article consequently provided Mr. Roh with new negative ammunition and some breathing space. The North began to spread the rumors in the South that it would soon release the evidence (photos)

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<sup>174</sup> *The Rodong Shinmun*, Pyongyang, March ?, 2002.

<sup>175</sup> *The Rodong Shinmun*, Pyongyang, May 11, 2002.

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confirming the pro-Japanese activities of Mr. Lee's father, Lee Hong-gyu, which worsened the position of Mr. Lee's election campaign team.

As far as the real evidence of Mr. Lee Hong-gyu's alleged pro-Japanese activities was concerned, one reporter working for the Internet news media portal "Ohmynews.com" reportedly met a mid-ranking North Korean official who had allegedly worked for "the Operation Unit for the South Korean Presidential Election" in 1997 and asked for the evidence. The DPRK official allegedly told the reporter, "although most evidence was lost during the Korean War, some tidbits remain here and there." He added that "we don't want to intervene into South Korean domestic politics (by releasing those photos) but if there were a reward (money) offered, we may consult with the high authority (meaning Kim Jong Il) over the issue." In the long run, the North did not reveal any evidence related to the alleged pro-Japanese activities of Mr. Lee's father.<sup>176</sup> But, it continued its hostile condemnation of Mr. Lee Hoi-chang until the last day of the election campaign through various types of media, including the Internet. The DPRK government stressed its expectation that Mr. Lee Hoi-chang and the GNP would not cooperate with the North if they were to come to power in the Blue House.

During the 1990s, the North did not offer any support for any specific candidate but only denounced the conservative candidates and hard-line political forces. One can make an interesting comparison between the three presidential elections, though. In the presidential elections of 1992 and 1997, the North's denouncement focused on the ruling parties and the governments. In the case of the 2002 presidential election, the North Korean authorities focused their condemnation on Mr. Lee

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<sup>176</sup> Kim Dang, *Kichaŭi Chŏongch'i Topabogi: 'Pukp'ung' Shishibibi* ("Searching for Politics Everywhere"), Kim Dang, *To Pass Fair Judgment on North Wind*, at <http://www.ohmynews.com/>.

Hoi-chang rather than the GNP, which was not a ruling party at that time.

*Cases of the “North Wind” in 1997 Presidential Election*

The first evidence of the *north wind* was detected during the 1997 presidential election. It was threefold, with each aspect being closely related to the others. First of all, the North got actively involved in South Korean presidential election politics by pushing hard for the defeat of Mr. Kim Dae-jung in the run-up to the presidential election. Second, the National Security Planning Agency (NSPA, formerly known as the Korean Central Intelligence Agency or KCIA) and some political elements affiliated with the GNP clandestinely requested the North to pursue a negative campaign designed to bring down Mr. Kim Dae-jung’s candidacy. Third, the National Congress for New Politics (NCNP) of Mr. Kim Dae-jung, the then opposition party, vigorously tried to prevent the North from performing these activities.

The North adopted a policy to obstruct the election of Mr. Kim Dae-jung who had been considered a “cunning politician,” while making every effort to help his rivals - Mr. Lee In-je and Mr. Lee Hoi-chang. In order to advance its “No DJ”<sup>177</sup> policy, the North Korean authorities established the so-called “Operation Unit for the South Korea Presidential Election” composed of the personnel on loan from the United Front Department of the Korean Workers’ Party and the State Security Agency. They also used Mr. Oh Ik-Je, the former leader of the Chundokyo religion, who had fled to the North many years before, and Mr. Kim Byung-shik, the leader of the Korean Social Democratic Party, to sign mass mailings to key political, religious, social and business leaders in the South. That particular mailing indicated that Mr. Kim Dae-jung had a close relationship with the North. This

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<sup>177</sup> DJ is Mr. Kim Dae-jung’s nickname.

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assertion coming from Pyongyang added fuel to the fire of ideological conflict in the South and severely damaged the image of Mr. Kim Dae-jung, who had suffered from the decades of conservative propaganda under the military regimes that had been labeling him as “pro-Communist” and “pro-North Korea” since the 1971 presidential election.

Late in the election campaign, the Pyongyang Broadcasting System aired an interview with Mr. Oh Ik-je, describing Mr. Kim Dae-jung as “close to North Korea,” which proved to be another attempt to damage Mr. Kim’s image as a patriot of South Korea.<sup>178</sup> Mr. Oh also wrote a column in the *Rodong Shinmun*, appealing to the South Koreans to vote for the “election of autonomous democratic power” and not to walk the same path as they did in the 1992 presidential election in which the ruling party’s candidate, Mr. Kim Young-sam got elected. In that column, he mentioned that he had had frequent discussions with “the candidate of the NCNP” (Mr. Kim Dae-jung) over the reunification issue until he fled from the South to the North and implied that Mr. Kim Dae-jung supported the DPRK’s official proposal for reunification called the “Proposal for Creating the Koryo Democratic Confederate Republic.”<sup>179</sup> Although he did not explicitly express his support for Mr. Kim Dae-jung, the public knew very well what he meant. The whole idea of the *north wind* was to damage the liberal image and patriotic credentials of Mr. Kim Dae-jung as a presidential candidate by emphasizing his close relationship with Pyongyang.

It turned out that the NSPA had been deeply involved in this instance of the *north wind*. After the launch of the Kim Dae-jung government, the prosecutors’ office made public the results of the investigation on Mr. Park Chae-seo, who had been an agent of the NSPA using the code name “Black Venus.” According to

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> *The Rodong Shinmun*, Pyongyang, December 13, 1997.

the prosecutors' report, the NSPA learned from Mr. Park that the North Korean government had a negative view on Mr. Kim Dae-jung's possible election victory and secretly requested that the DPRK's "Operation Unit for the South Korean Presidential Election" perform a smear campaign against Mr. Kim.

In addition, the NSPA turned out to be deeply involved in interviewing Mr. Yoon Hong-jun, an NSPA agent and Korean-American entrepreneur, in Beijing and Tokyo at the time of the presidential campaign. In those interviews, Mr. Yoon alleged that the North Korean government had been secretly financing Mr. Kim Dae-jung's activities since his presidential election bid in 1971. Some analysts within the NSPA apparently objected to the public release of Mr. Yoon's interview minutes because they believed that the evidence he presented was very weak. But, the NSPA senior management made a political decision to release the recordings of Mr. Yoon's interviews to the public in the middle of the 1997 presidential campaign. The bombshell-like allegations made in those interviews, however, did not attract public interest both inside and outside South Korea.<sup>180</sup>

Another manifestation of the NSPA's involvement in manufacturing the *north wind* was its request passed through confidential channels that North Korea orchestrate an armed attack at the DMZ in order to spook the South Korean electorate and force it to vote for the conservative candidate "strong on defense." The main figures in that incident were Mr. Oh Jung-eun, the then official at the Presidential Office, Mr. Chang Seok-joong, an NSPA agent and entrepreneur, and Mr. Hahn Seong-ki, advisor to the Chairman of the Jinro *chaebol*. These three men affiliated with the New Korea Party reportedly met with the

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<sup>180</sup> "Kongchakwŏn Hŭkkŭmsŏng! Puk Powibu Ch'imt'u, Kim Jong Il Mannata", (Agent Black Venus Met Kim Jong-il through the Infiltration of the National Security and Safeguards Agency!), *Shin Dong A (Monthly Dong-A)*, November 2002. This article based on Mr. Park Chae-seo's testimony, looks highly convincing.

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agents of the DPRK's "Operation Unit for South Korean Presidential Election" in a third country and requested that the North conduct an armed provocation at Panmunjom. They promised to deliver fertilizers and agricultural equipment and support for the North Korean Corn Project in return for Pyongyang's cooperation. Given the fact that they requested an armed attack around the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> of December 1997, just days before the presidential election, it seemed that they made this request due to the NSPA's perceived failure to manufacture the *north wind* on its own.<sup>181</sup>

When the NCNP's "Team for Counteraction to the *north wind*" learned about the fact that their rivals were instigating Pyongyang to execute an armed provocation, the NCNP acting president Mr. Cho Se-hyung made a special statement that "Concerning the situation where the North might wage an armed attack at the DMZ just before the election, we strongly warn the North not to dare to try such a risky attempt". It was widely suspected that the NCNP also promised the North Korean authorities some post-election support in return for non-interference in the South Korean presidential election. This incident, however, ended up with the release of the suspects since the court ruled that the whole story was fabricated by an investigation using torture.<sup>182</sup>

It was Pyongyang, the NSPA, and both the ruling and opposition parties that instigated the *north wind* during the 1997 presidential election campaign. One can say that it was the first incident whereby North Korea actively attempted to influence South Korean domestic politics. When the NSPA's request for an armed attack, nicknamed "gun wind," was made public, the North threaten the South that "when we open our mouth, both

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<sup>181</sup> Kim Dang, "Kichau'i Chöongch'i Topabogi: 'Pukp'ung' Shishibibi" ("Searching for the Politics Everywhere"), and Kim Dang, "To Pass Fair Judgment on North Wind," <http://www.ohmynews.com/>.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

ruling and opposition parties will be in deep trouble.”<sup>183</sup> This reaction from the North was characteristic of its previous response in the midst of the political crisis caused by the Special Prosecution Law in which Pyongyang revealed the fact that the GNP had sent secret envoys to the North to ask for political collaboration. Such reactions show that the North Korean government recognized that the ROK political parties tried to employ the *north wind* in domestic politics for their own political benefit.

*Suspicious of the “North Wind” During the 2002 Presidential Election*

It is not yet known whether the North has intervened in the 2002 presidential election. But, there are plenty of speculations in the media that the nuclear crisis is another kind of the *north wind*. To begin with, many observers argue that North Korea’s nuclear development is only a bluff because, first, the DPRK is still far away from developing nuclear bombs through a highly enriched uranium-based nuclear power development program; second, it is very difficult to develop nuclear bombs since most key components of the nuclear weapons must be imported from abroad; and, third, the United States would not let the North develop nuclear bombs. Based on these assumptions, they argued that the North tried to help Mr. Lee Hoi-chang get elected by employing a security threat through the nuclear crisis in the 2002 presidential election in the same way as they attempted to help the conservative party in the past.<sup>184</sup>

But this argument has several flaws. Its opponents contend that since the nuclear program is vital to the survival of the North

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> “Uranium Nongch’ukhyōng Haekmuki Kaepal Pulkanūng...Mikuki Yōnch’ulhako P’yōngyangi ‘Norae’ Pullō, (“Impossible to develop the Highly Enriched Uranium-based Nuclear Weapons....Pyongyang Sang a ‘Song’ under the Direction of the US”), *SiSa Journal*, no.687, December 26, 2002.

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Korean state, Pyongyang would not use it – either its plutonium or HEU-based components - as a tool for the *north wind*. The nuclear threat presented by the North was not helpful to Mr. Lee’s campaign at all. On the opposite, it triggered American pressure and a rise in anti-American sentiment among the South Korean public, exacerbated by the death of two middle school girls, which in the end helped Mr. Roh Moo-hyun instead of Mr. Lee Hoi-chang.

Furthermore, the North’s meeting with the GNP secret envoys itself may provide good grounds for an inference that the North had a different intention from the official smear campaign mentioned in the previous section. The former Minister of National Unification, Dr. Park Jae-kyu, who was once suspected as the GNP secret envoy, said in a media interview that the high-ranking North Korean officials appeared to have had sufficient background information on all presidential candidates. He added that “one of the high ranking officials implied that they (the North) would continue a wide range of exchange programs with the South if Mr. Lee maintained his current policies”.<sup>185</sup> In fact, most South Koreans who met the key figures from the North shared the same impression that, first, the North studied presidential candidates in depth; that, second, the North thought Mr. Lee Hoi-chang’s chances to get elected were higher than those of other candidates; and, finally, that Pyongyang made preparations for policies toward South Korea based on the assumption of Mr. Lee’s winning the presidency.

The objective analysis of the typical cases of the *north wind* suggests that the North tended to prefer and support the ROK

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<sup>185</sup> “Hannaradang, Taesŏn ‘Pukp’ung’ Ch’atan Pyŏngyang Milsa P’akyŏnsŏl Chŏnmo” (“The Full Story of the Rumour of the GNP’s Special Envoy to Pyongyang to Obstruct ‘North Wind’ in the Presidential Election,”) *Shin Dong-A (Monthly Dong-A)* March 2003. For the first time in South Korea, this article raised the possibility of the GNP’s secret envoys’ visits to North Korea.

presidential candidates with conservative attitudes towards the North: by criticizing them sharply, Pyongyang sought to drive the undecided voters into the conservative camp. In this vein, the North tried to facilitate Mr. Lee's election victory by escalating the nuclear crisis and harshly denouncing his background and stance on various policy issues. But, to the North's profound disappointment, Mr. Lee Hoi-chang lost his presidential bids in 1997 and 2002. In contrast, the North neither supported nor denounced Mr. Kim Young-sam and Mr. Roh Moo-hyun in its official statements, respectively in 1992 and in 2002, and they both won the presidency, presumably contrary to the North Korean hopes.

*DPRK Perceptions of the ROK's Presidential Election Process  
and the North Wind*

How does the North perceive the South Korean presidential elections? In order to answer this question, one needs to analyze the *north wind* within the context of North Korean policies toward the South. During the 1990s, the North Korean policy towards the South appeared to be based on three key propositions. First, the South has always been and will be a colony of the United States, whoever takes power.

The origin of this proposition can be traced back to the communist definition of the Korean War as the "Liberation War." The DPRK founding father Kim Il Sung frequently mentioned until his death, "The matter of reunification of two Koreas is entirely dependent upon the United States of America. The South is a genuine colony of the U.S. and South Korean leaders are only servants of the U.S." There is abundant evidence that Kim Il Sung's perception of the South has been widely spread and shared within the DPRK's political establishment. The North has continuously emphasized the colonial nature of the South because they fear that the South might become an exit of last resort to their own people if events spin out of control

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because of a deepening political and economic crisis in the North. The North Korean leaders feel threatened by the mere existence of the South, let alone its ability to absorb the North. In addition, the DPRK government tried to legitimize its sovereign and autonomous power by contrasting it with the “colonial nature” of the South Korean regime. It is a quintessential axiom of the North Korean *juch'e* ideology that emphasizing the colonial and subservient nature of the South is helpful to maintaining the legitimacy of the independent and sovereign North. This is one of the reasons why the North always wants to deal with the United States over the military issues, instead of negotiating directly with the South. Several facts such as the U.S. wartime command authority, the U.S. as a counterpart to the armistice agreement and the military strength of the U.S. in the region, are used to justify the North Korean unyielding position in this matter. The DPRK's ardent desire to enhance its legitimacy is one of the main reasons for designating the United States as its main negotiating counterpart instead of the South.

The second key proposition behind the DPRK's current policy towards the ROK is Pyongyang's growing belief that the South is the only country able and willing to provide the North with genuine substantial assistance, especially after various socio-economic and cultural inter-Korean exchange programs have increased significantly since the mid-1990s. This is a relatively new concept for Pyongyang about the South, as compared to that of a “colony.” It is a product of the end of the Cold War and collapse of the communist bloc and its financial and military support system. The WPK ideologues justified this novel, benign view of the South by referencing it to the “united front strategy” continuously emphasized by Kim Il Sung. Specifically, in his address delivered at the Pyongyang stadium on October 14, 1945, Kim Il Sung declared that for the construction of a socialist fatherland, the progressive government should seek to obtain “money from the rich, strength from the strong, and knowledge from intellectuals.” Since the DPRK government does not

officially recognize the ROK government or the South as an independent state but considers them as a group of renegade individuals, the logic that the rich in the South can help the North is argued to be completely in line with the “united front strategy.” In this vein, North Korean propagandists describe the Mt. Kumgang Tourism Development venture of the Hyundai *chaebol* as a personal project by Mr. Chung Joo-young, a successful entrepreneur who happened to reside in the South. But, the reality is that this recognition shows that North Korea accepts the South as the only country providing economic help to the North. The *juch’*e propaganda itself is used to legitimize the acceptance of economic help from the South.

Defining the South as a colony of the United States and as the only country able and willing to help the North at the same time forces the North Korean leaders to pursue policies towards the South that are rather inconsistent and haphazard. The main reason for the inconsistency, of course, can be found in the autocratic leadership of the North. Until the 1960s, there was a limited pluralistic element in the decision-making process inside the North Korean regime. In particular, there was autonomy in the hands of Mr. Lee Hyo-soon, an expert on South Korean policy who was purged in 1967. There were coordination and adjustments in policy between concerned organizations. After the purge of key WPK figures and the emergence of Kim Jong Il as the sole successor to Kim Il Sung, this pluralistic element began to disappear. In the 1980s when this pluralistic element completely disappeared, Kim Jong Il began to dominate entirely the policy-making process vis-à-vis South Korea, like in other key policy areas. Therefore, one can say that the inconsistent South Korea policy of the North is a masterpiece of Kim Jong Il.

The third key proposition behind the North’s policy toward the South is its recognition that political pluralism and partisan competition generated by the democratization process in the South since the late 1980s provided the North with plenty of

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political opportunities and ample space where they could interfere with South Korean domestic politics, which is also in line with their belief about the “colonial nature” of the South and its image as the only provider of economic aid. Mr. Park Chae-seo, who became an instant celebrity after the public revelation of his secret activities as a NSPA agent code-named “Black Venus” responsible for the interaction with the North Korean clandestine services, stated that the North had three main strategic options vis-à-vis South Korea: first, reunification by force through war; second, a “united front strategy” aimed at absorbing the South through a takeover of a political party which would become a ruling majority party in the ROK’s domestic political process and over which they would have control; and, third, a strategy to render the South powerless by making political factions fight endlessly against each other.

The first strategy is believed to be difficult given the current international environment, especially North Korea’s isolation. Although the Liaison Department of the Korean Worker’s Party still pursues the second strategy, their hands are tied under the current economic conditions because of the heavy burden of financial costs. Therefore, the North Korean rulers appear to concentrate on the third strategy, namely “political manipulation.”

The strategy of “political manipulation” is based on the rational assumption that consistent military interference by the North would make South Korean political leaders think of the North as an important political factor and lead them to offer aid packages to the North in return for both direct and indirect support of the North. North Korean interference with South Korean domestic politics would bring about benefits to the North in at least two senses. They can “kill two birds with one stone” -- they can obtain economic aid offered by various political factions of the South and they can cause political disorder in the South. The strategy of “political manipulation” has been in operation since

the South took a superior position to the North in terms of both economic and military power. Since the mid-1990s, the North has received financial assistance from various South Korean entities ranging from private companies to political parties to government agencies, and that money was used as slush funds for Kim Jong Il's regime. That is why they continue to issue armed threats, regardless of the public mood in the South. Kim Jong Il could not care less about the number of casualties in this operation.<sup>186</sup>

Various incidents that took place during the 1997 and 2002 presidential elections offer some support to this theory of Mr. Park. For instance, North Korea's seemingly illogical wish for the defeat of Mr. Kim Dae-jung in the 1997 presidential election can be considered a tactic designed to make Korean political parties actively pursue a close relationship with the North under the circumstance where Mr. Kim Dae-jung could attack the ruling party as an opposition leader.<sup>187</sup> Mr. Park's argument that the North feared the hypothetical situation where political parties and private companies become hostile to the North under Mr. Kim's power can be valid in this sense. The North thought that it would be beneficial to them for the political parties, which they could freely attack, to take power because Pyongyang could more easily manipulate South Korean domestic politics and gain economic benefits under that kind of regime.

Contrary to its initial expectations, the North gained economic benefits, especially the transfer of 500 U.S. million dollars, when President Kim Dae-jung was in power in the Blue House. The self-righteousness of Mr. Kim Dae-jung contributed to the success of the North Korean strategy. In return, the North did nothing to help Mr. Kim's government when it was facing political crisis during its last weeks and days. The North Korean

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<sup>186</sup> See "Agent Black Venus Met Kim Jong-il through the Infiltration of the National Security and Safeguards Agency!" *Monthly Dong-A*, op.cit.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

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leader Kim Jong-il refused to meet Mr. Lim Dong-won, President Kim Dae-jung's Special Envoy, when the latter visited the North to discuss the nuclear issue in early 2002. Although Pyongyang leaked the rumor that the GNP had also sent a secret envoy to the North, they did not reveal any details. All in all, the North Korean nuclear issue overshadowed President Kim's highly praised "sunshine policy."

### **Conclusion**

One can make several conclusions about North Korea's policy towards the South. First, the nature of the South Korean government and ruling regime is not an important factor determining North Korea's policy towards the South. Particularly telling is the fact that the North did not interfere in the 2002 presidential election campaign when Mr. Lee Hoi-chang was believed to have a good chance to get elected. Second, the North seems to prefer a South Korean government with which they can maintain distance. They may fall into confusion when a friendly, pro-North Korean regime assumes power in the South. Third, the *north wind* has not been a significant factor in deciding the outcome of presidential elections so far and is unlikely to be such in the future, as the democratization process is consolidated and the legacy of the Cold War rapidly disappears. These days, presidential elections in South Korea depend mainly upon domestic variables and great power politics.

Democratic presidential elections in the South opened a window of opportunity to the North in terms of influencing domestic political processes inside the ROK. The *north wind* may be a prelude to a new closer relationship between the North and the South. Pyongyang refused to initiate a wholesale open-door policy to attract substantial amounts of foreign aid in order to rehabilitate its worsening economy. Instead, it bet on the South and its fears -- the North Korean leaders prefer to manipulate South Korean political parties and private companies in order to

gain economic benefit. In terms of regime survival, it was a rational decision on their part.

Contrary to reasonable expectations, since the early 1990s, Pyongyang has interfered in South Korean domestic politics by supporting the politicians hostile towards the North instead of the politicians friendly to the North. The *north wind* in 1997 was a typical case. During the 2002 presidential election campaign, however, the North officially denounced Mr. Lee Hoi-chang. They did not support Mr. Roh Moo-hyun, who proclaimed his intention to uphold the basic principles of the "sunshine policy" either. Although they announced that "Lee's defeat shows that those who opposed the Joint Declaration of June 15, 2000, and the DPRK will always face defeat" five days after the election, it was not meant to be a sign of explicit support for Mr. Roh Moo-hyun but a reflection of their negative opinion on Mr. Lee Hoi-chang.<sup>188</sup>

In reality, the North Korean government may have different intentions from its official statements altogether. Pyongyang may not be interested at all in accepting the friendly overtures and offers of help from those ROK politicians who prioritize the exchange and cooperation between the North and the South. For such acceptance would undermine the ideological legitimacy of the North Korean regime that criticizes the South as a political puppet and economic colony of the United States. In the final analysis, cooperation with the South could shake the image of North Korea as a country superior to the South and the leadership of Kim Jong-il. Hence, the Dear Leader may talk the talk about the inter-Korean cooperation and reconciliation but is unlikely to walk the walk any time soon.



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<sup>188</sup> *The Rodong Shinmun*, Pyongyang, December 22, 2002.