

# **Path to an Advanced North Korea by 2032: Building a Complex Networked State**

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## Knowledge-Net for a Better World

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The North Korean leadership has officially declared that North Korea will become a *gangseongdaeguk*, or “strong and prosperous state,” by 2012. But the outlook is grim. Despite its efforts to develop a nuclear military-first ideology, North Korea is walking down the path of deepening insecurity and uncertainty, followed by additional excessive security measures. Its currency reform was made to no avail. Excessive spending for security has made it impossible for Pyongyang to invest sufficiently in culture, the environment, and information technology, which are all necessary aspects of developed states in the twenty-first century. Last, Kim Jong-il’s dire health condition has led Pyongyang to the inevitable next succession, and it is unclear whether his successor, Kim Jong-un, will persist in military-first politics or redirect the country to an economy-first politics.

In the 1990s North Korea was faced with three hardships. It experienced the fall of communism in 1991, and it had to bear the death of Kim Il-sung in 1994. Then, after going through the “Arduous March,” a terrible famine that killed significant number of the total population, the second Kim’s regime raised a new banner in 1998 to build a *gangseongdaeguk* as a goal of the state for the twenty-first century. In the same year on May 22, *Rodong Sinmun* (Newspaper of the workers) described the word as defining an “audacious blueprint to lead the country and shine upon the new century.” The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) said that “numerous states and people had attempted to achieve a lasting power and prosperity, but history had yet to see a perfect *gangseongdaeguk*.” It emphasized that the DPRK would start by building a “nation of strong ideology” with Kim Il-sung at the center, then establish “mighty armed forces” as the pillar for the revolution, and last add a “flourishing economy.” “That is Our General’s [Kim Jong-il’s] own way of *gangseongdaeguk*” (*Rodong Sinmun*, May 22, 1998).



Pyongyang designated the year 1999 to be the turning point for *gangseongdaeguk* in the 1999 New Year's Joint Editorial. Now ten years have passed, and it is still suggesting its way of *gangseongdaeguk*, with the three pillars of political ideology, military, and economy, as the survival strategy for the twenty-first century. With political ideology and military already established to some extent, the DPRK is placing emphasis on the economy, which might improve the standard of living as well as help develop heavy industry (*Rodong Sinmun*, January 1, 2010).

In June 16, 1999, in a joint article titled “Our Party’s (Worker’s Party) Military-First Politics Is Invincible,” Pyongyang claimed that “the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK)’s policy of giving priority to military affairs is a powerful policy that ensures a decisive victory in long-term confrontation with imperialism.” It added that “it is the perfect mode of politics in the present times.” Also, the DPRK explained that “military-first politics is a mode of leadership which solves all problems arising in the revolution and construction on the principle of giving top precedence to military affairs and pushes ahead with the socialist cause as a whole, putting forward the army as the pillar of the revolution.” According to these writers, military-first politics is a means to strengthen the revolutionary army, guarantee the independent status of the people, and maximize the creative roles of the people (*Rodong Sinmun*, June 16, 1999).

The DPRK explained that “changes in circumstances around the *Juche* state” and “unprecedented hardships in the face of the revolution” are the reasons for Kim Jong-il’s decision to focus on military-first policy in the mid-1990s. The fall of the communist bloc, the death of Kim Il-sung, the military threat from the United States, and the Kim Young Sam administration’s hard-line North Korea policy are the four factors Pyongyang listed as alarming “changes in circumstance.” As for the “unprecedented hardships,” the following three factors were spelled out: first, the collapse of the communist market, which accounted for 70-80 percent of North Korea’s overseas exports, seriously undermined North Korean economy; second, the financial sanctions by the United States and Japan “completely blocked international finance channels” and “strangled North Korea by economic means”; last, “years of natural disasters such as floods, tidal waves, and drought” befell North Korea. As a consequence, shortages of food, fuel, and energy ensued and the Arduous March began. The DPRK records the situation of that time as follows: “History records the 900 days of the Leningrad Blockade as the most catastrophic event. But our whole country, not one city, [has been] surrounded by enemies for much longer than 900 days. These enemies are not one but numerous imperialists attacking us every single day. This is truly unprecedented” (Kang 2002; Y. Kim 2005; Chun 2004; B. Kim 2005).

In order to overcome the Arduous March, the DPRK set January 1, 1995, as the first



day of the military-first era, but it was not formalized until 1998. At the first meeting of the Tenth Supreme People's Assembly held on September 5, 1998, Kim Jong-il was promoted to Chairman of the National Defense Commission and the DPRK constitution was revised to establish military-first politics with the National Defense Commission in the center. On that day, Kim Young-nam, who gave the welcoming address, described the role of the Chairman of the National Defense Commission as "the highest post of the state with which to organize and lead the work of defending the state system of the socialist country and the destinies of the people; and strengthening and increasing the defense capabilities of the country and state power as a whole through command over all the political, military and economic forces of the country. It is also a sacred, important post which symbolizes and represents the honor of our country and the dignity of the nation" (*Rodong Sinmun*, Sept. 7, 1998).

## Decline of Military-First Politics

Military-first politics, which was chosen as a new political means to build twenty-first-century *gangseongdaeguk*, brought about the exact opposite of what was intended: a vicious circle of failing security, economy, and politics.

## Vicious Circle of the North Korean Nuclear Issue

The primary goal of military-first policy was protection of the Kim Jong-il *Suryong* or Great Leader Direct Rule<sup>1</sup> system at all costs when the socialists' international order collapsed. In the "Agreed Framework between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 1994," the United States proposed construction of a light-water reactor and provision for heavy-water reactor in return for a complete freeze on the North Korean nuclear program as well as the disassembling of existing nuclear facilities. The United States also proceeded with negotiations to improve the relationship with the North, but the DPRK did not abandon developing nuclear weapons, because it considered them the last hope for the security of the system. The efforts of the Clinton administration made it possible to hold a Washington meeting with North Korea, but due to Pyongyang's uncompromising demands for excessive security, the United States failed to achieve tangible results. Furthermore, after 9/11, the United States began to treat nuc-



lear proliferation and terrorism not merely as a matter of global security but as a matter of highest national security. This implies that North Korea's nuclear program became a matter of life and death for both Washington and Pyongyang.

The second DPRK nuclear crisis began when a high-enriched uranium (HEU) program was brought to the table by the U.S. Deputy Minister of the Asia-Pacific James Kelly, who visited Pyongyang in early October 2002. In the end, the Six-Party Talks, which began with Beijing's mediation, tentatively agreed on the September 19 Joint Statement in 2005. But the core four elements of this Joint Statement, "North Korea's nuclear abandonment," "financial support," "normalization of relations," and "peace system," faced the same fate that befell the "Agreed Framework between the U.S. and the DPRK in 1994": no practical outcome. The DPRK demanded a lifting of economic sanctions, financial support, establishment of a peace system, recognition of the North Korean regime, and improvement in U.S.-DPRK relations as preconditions for abandoning its nuclear program. On the other hand, the United States emphasized verifiable nuclear abandonment prior to any progress in other areas (Ha 2006).

As expected, the Six-Party Talks failed to reach any agreement due to financial sanctions against North Korea, involving Banco Delta Asia (BDA) in Macao, and Pyongyang launched a nuclear test in October 2006. In 2007, both sides agreed to the three fundamental steps to fulfill the Joint Statement—disable the facilities, report the progress, and finally denuclearize—but they failed to narrow the gap in the steps for report and verification. North Korea soon declared the annulment of nuclear negotiations in April 2008 and restored its measures of freeze and dismantlement to its formal conditions. On May 25, 2009, it launched a second nuclear test. The North Korean nuclear issue repeated the vicious circle of economic sanctions and nuclear tests with no viable solution. In early October 2009, Chairman Kim Jong-il met with Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao and announced: first, "denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" was the will of his deceased father, Kim Il-sung; second, the hostile relations between North Korea and the United States must be improved through bilateral talks between the two; and last, the DPRK intended to participate in the multilateral talks including the Six-Party Talks depending on the results of bilateral talks with the United States (*Rodong Sinmun*, October 6, 2009). In early May 2010, Kim Jong-il repeated these conditions during his visit to Beijing (*Rodong Sinmun*, May 8, 2010).

However, the fall of nuclear military-first politics is only a matter of time. Nuclear weapons of the *Suryong* system provide a warrant not for life but for death. If the North keeps rejecting the strategic decision to abandon the nuclear program, the U.S.-led economic sanctions will be intensified, and the possibility that the United States and China would implicitly allow an emergence of a non-nuclear, pro-Chinese regime in the North



will mount. After 9/11, the United States has been placing top priority on eliminating weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. North Korea would be sorely mistaken to expect the United States to allow its nuclear program in any case.

### Failing in Economic Growth

The Kim Jong-il regime has put the banner of a *gangseongdaeguk* for its twenty-first-century nation building and emphasized military-first politics and ideology, military, and economy as the main focus of its efforts. While all of those are essential, the relative importance differs. Military-first politics is the top priority followed closely by a strong military, with economy last. Therefore, when the logic of the economy has clashed with that of military-first politics, the latter has always taken precedence (Ha 2000).

In the midst of deepening crisis, North Korea chose a military-first economic strategy to prioritize the defense industry over light industry and agriculture, even during the Arduous March. This decision can be seen as a desperate action taken at the brink of collapse after the fall of the communist bloc.

The military-first economy attempted a twenty-first-century version of *wijöng ch'öksa*, or defense of Confucian orthodoxy and rejection of Christian heterodoxy<sup>2</sup>—that is, a rigid way of looking at its own future in a dichotomy of self-reliance and subordination—outwardly, and domestically allocated its meager capital into heavy industry and defense, all of which failed to resolve the imminent financial crisis. In the end, Pyongyang carried out the “July 1 Measure” in 2002 and implemented “*jonghabsijang*,” or the “Comprehensive Market System,” in 2003. But even these efforts were carried out within the limits of the military-first economy, and North Korea’s economy went through negative growth for 10 years consecutively from 1990. Despite slight growth in the 2000s, North Korea’s GDP remains at 500 to 1,000 dollars per capita, one of the lowest in the world.

In a new attempt, Pyongyang carried out a currency reform in November 2009, and since 2010, it has been emphasizing the importance of light industry and agriculture. However, if it does not make a sweeping decision to emerge from the limits placed by military-first politics, the DPRK will inevitably fall deeper into financial crisis.

### Establishing a System for Succession

Kim Jong-il, who inherited the regime after Kim Il-sung’s death in 1994, initiated “rule by his deceased father’s will” in the face of the deepening crisis regarding the domestic economy and security instability derived from the collapse of communism. As soon as he



seized power, Kim Jong-il established a core group with his blood relatives in key posts, whose ultimate purpose was the survival of Kim's family. First, Kim and his followers maneuvered a policy of military-first politics, which prioritized the protection of the *Suryong* system as the foundation for all organizations and activities of the Korean Workers' Party, through the Organization Guidance Department (Administration Council Director Chang Sung-taek) of the Central Committee Secretariat and Propaganda and Agitation Department. Kim then took the control of the military with the Korean People's Army General Political Department (Senior Deputy Director Kim Jong-gak), General Staff Department (Chief Yi Yong Ho and Operations Bureau's Director Kim Myong-kuk), Guard Command (Commander Yun Chong-nin), Pyongyang Defense Command, and Military Security Command (Chief Kim Won-hong) at the core of the power structure. Last, Kim and his relatives needed working-level bureaucrats for the Cabinet to resolve the food crisis of 20 million people in North Korea.<sup>3</sup>

In mid-August 2008, Kim Jong-il's health deteriorated, rendering the succession issue urgent, which would be the second power succession in the sixty years of North Korean history. Compared to the first succession (from Kim Il-sung to Kim Jong-il) this recent power transition has not allowed sufficient time to prepare. The issue at hand is whether this succession will remain in the "rule by his deceased father's will," or begin to seek a new survival strategy for the new century. It will depend on how Kim Jong-un and his clique manage to become a new political force under the newly appointed leader.

## **The First Step of Coevolution Strategy for North Korea's Advancement: Transition and Reform**

### **Efforts of North Korea for Coevolution**

Without resolving its three major problems (the vicious circle of the North Korean nuclear issue, the dire economic crisis, and the establishment of a succession system) Pyongyang has had to carry out an incomplete succession due to Kim Jong-il's poor health. In the process of building a succession system, the pace of the change is crucial. A tragic fate befell the Soviet Union because it pushed its reforms too rapidly; on the other hand, China is enjoying the fruits of reform because it succeeded in pacing. The fate of North Korea will largely depend on the relevant pacing with changes occurring in and out of the state.





The first and foremost task for the new regime after is survival, guaranteeing the life and existence of the system. To achieve this, North Korea's military-first politics should be reexamined. Fifteen years of military-first politics have been a "lost fifteen years" and Pyongyang has insisted that nuclear weapon is essential for its survival due to the constant threats coming from the United States. However, the nuclear policy of military-first politics brought about exact opposite of what it intended: a warrant for the death of Kim's system involving the vicious circle of nuclear tests and economic sanctions. Therefore, for North Korea, to resolve its nuclear problem is the most pressing task before planning a survival strategy for the new century.

The Six-Party Talks, a meeting to find a solution to the North's nuclear issue, passed the first step (disablement), and is fighting an uphill battle at the second step (report and verification) with the third step (denuclearization) as its ultimate goal. These steps cannot be achieved with simple technical agreement but require beforehand the new regime of North Korea to make a strategic decision for survival without nuclear weapons. This strategy should mandate the replacement of nuclear weapons with traditional weapons as the basis of the DPRK defense system, along with the establishment of a peace system for the Korean Peninsula. For far too long, the DPRK has emphasized the peace agreement with the United States as a key to the peace system on the Korean Peninsula. Also, it has stressed that the North Korea-U.S. military committee should deal with the withdrawal of the U.S. Forces in Korea and the issue of South Korea-U.S. alliance as a proof of transition toward peaceful relation between the two states.

However, it is necessary to design a new peace system that will be more realistic and acceptable to all of the neighboring countries, including the ROK and the United States. First, instead of nuclear weapons, a comprehensive peace system should be established to guarantee the security of the North's system, within the Six-Party Talks. Previous mistakes that derived from the unrealistic peace agreement must not be repeated, and the utmost efforts are called for to prepare comprehensive security insurance for the system. Therefore, not only the peace agreement between North Korea and the United States and the one between two Koreas, but also support from China as well as the multi-channeled security system such as the Six-Party Talks are critical. Second, issues on the USFK and the ROK-U.S. military alliance can be reevaluated in a new light when North Korea makes the necessary strategic decisions and inter-Korean relations begin to steer away from mutual hostility. The denuclearization of the North will expedite its relations with the United States and Japan, and reinvigorate financial support for North Korea. Meanwhile, North Korea should reevaluate China and Russia at a new level. China will eventually prefer that North Korea gradually turn into a denuclearized economy-first regime sustained by Chi-



nese influence. In the end, Pyongyang needs to build a sophisticated comprehensive network to simultaneously engage the United States, Japan, China, and Russia. North Korea should no longer linger on its self-reliance motto.

The new survival strategy for North Korea's advancement is to make strategic decisions on denuclearization and its peace system, and to promote a transition from military-first to economy-first politics. As shown in China's case in the late 1970s since its reform, North Korea should prioritize economic development. As the latest starter in the market economy, what North Korea needs is not a limited adoption of the market system within the frame of its planned economy, but instead a transitional reform that combines the two systems.

To successfully realize the above-mentioned reforms, three steps should be taken simultaneously. First, domestically, Pyongyang must carefully implement a transition from a planned economy to a market economy. Then, it must get away from its worn-out method of '*Minjok Kongjo*' or 'exclusive cooperation of radical nationalist,' and instead, pursue economic development in cooperation with reformists in South Korea—not the ones seeking the status quo of the North. Last, North Korea must overcome the outdated distinction between socialism and capitalism, and should actively make use of the United States, Japan, and China, regardless of such distinctions.

### **Efforts of South Korea and the International Community for Coevolution**

The first step for North Korea's difficult journey to become an advanced state is to pursue a new survival strategy which extends beyond military-first politics. But this grand project can hardly be achieved by North Korea alone. Coevolution strategy involving South Korea and other neighboring states is vital (Garnsey and McGlade 2006). The international community has thus far sought to make changes in North Korea in two main ways: sanctions and the sunshine policy. Unfortunately, neither of those succeeded in bringing change to North Korea. The advocates of the sunshine policy argue that frequent diversions in policies did not allow enough time for any significant results. Though the sunshine policy helped to extend inter-Korean exchanges, it failed to stop North Korea from both developing nuclear weapons and pursuing military-first politics. But at the same time, indiscriminating sanctions do not work as a perfect solution. The system of North Korea is designed to weather such sanctions longer than any other state in the world. It is thus extremely difficult to bring down military-first politics through sanctions. Instead, what is needed are simultaneous changes occurring inside and outside of North Korea. The sunshine policy, however, makes a too rosy assumption that someday and somehow the sunshine will penetrate to politics and the military without practically assessing the



domestic difficulties of North Korea. On the other hand, supporters of sanctions put all the responsibilities on the North's systemic attributes. In short, neither of those policies is likely to succeed unless they work in tandem for coevolution.

When Kim Jong-un's regime adopts a post-military-first politics system, it will be immensely important for the related parties to upgrade their ideas on security and prosperity to fit the new system. Currently, North Korea argues that its nuclear program is a countermeasure against hostile U.S. policies toward itself, emphasizing that it can forgo the nuclear program if the United States retracts its hostile policies. This clearly is an excessive security stance of military-first politics. If the Kim Jong-un regime promotes an appropriate level of security under the new system, South Korea and the United States should be able to convince the North that their North Korea policies are not hostile toward the new regime. This can only be achieved through a three-level comprehensive peace system that extends beyond the Korean Peninsula to include all of East Asia. This system will provide the North's new regime with a sense of security that Kim Jong-un's father's worn-out tactics of nuclear threat cannot give. The first step for a three-level comprehensive peace system is to establish the inter-Korean peace system; second, an East Asian peace system under the guarantee of the United States and China; last, a multi-channeled peace system such as the Six-Party Talks.

In addition, international communities should actively provide North Korea assistance to succeed in its new economy-first politics. To successfully implement economy-first politics, North Korea should, above all, let go of the fear that capitalism will bring down the North Korean economy. Hence, it is necessary to reexamine why back in mid-1990s the newly emerged leader, Kim Jong-il, made the fatal mistake of choosing military-first politics as his father willed. In 2012, it ought to be different.

## **The Second Step of Coevolution Strategy for North Korea's Advancement: Transformation**

### **Norms of Twenty-first Century Civilization**

For North Korea to survive in the twenty-first century, a decade of the first step of coevolution strategy is not sufficient. Another ten years of change for the second step of coevolution is needed.<sup>4</sup>



The second step requires North Korea to meet the norms of twenty-first-century civilization. Following this norm, the related parties should promote to advance North Korea, unify the Korean Peninsula, and implement a coevolution strategy involving East Asia and the world. The new model can be described metaphorically as “wolf spider (Actor) building Dabotap (Stage)” and more analytically, the theory of a complex network. Unlike other spiders, the wolf spider does not weave a web to capture its prey; rather, it attacks them like a wolf does. This metaphor precisely illustrates the necessary abilities required for the leaders of the world order today: a vital combination of two different functions of a wolf and a spider.<sup>5</sup> The East Asian order of the twenty-first century forms a complex order that shows a modern balance of power and at the same time, the two layers of the spider webs that are largely drawn by the United States and China. But it should not be ignored that smaller states are also forming complex diplomatic webs of their own in the midst of the power struggle between the two superpowers. In the [Figure 1], the picture on the left shows the spider web that is normally seen, and the picture in the middle is a two-layered spider web, visualizing the rough sketch of bipolarized East Asia. The picture on the right is an example of complex webs, a metaphor for the complex East Asian network.

[Figure 1] Simple Web and Complex Web



Let us explore the complex stage of world politics through the metaphor of Dabotap. While security and prosperity have been the traditional stage of the nineteenth century, the twenty-first century introduced an additional set of stages: environment and culture—newly emerged stages as the world suffers from indiscreet developments and the identity gaps among main actors of the world as they diverge farther apart since the end of the Cold War. As shown in [Figure 2], environment and culture, along with traditional stages of security and economy, are the four pillars of Dabotap. At the foundation of Dabotap is the information and knowledge of today. The reason why not economy but information and knowledge are the substratum can be found in history. In ancient times religions were the bases of most people’s lives, and in the era of political revolution, politics became the fundamental of lives; after the Industrial Revolution, economy played the role of substratum. However, in the



twenty-first century, with revolutionary progress in science and technology, information and knowledge began to influence the four main stages as an independent variable, consolidating its role as a foundation. Politics, on the other hand, still keeps its place at the top of Dabotap. No state can stand at the center of the global stage without building all three layers of the complex system we see in Dabotap in the new century.

[Figure 2] Dabotap: Three-story stone pagoda



South Korea is moving toward a global stage, and it will play a new role in forming the complex network with other major actors of the world. China is on a similar path. For example, in 2008 at the thirtieth anniversary of China's economic reform, President Hu Jintao suggested China's future image for the year 2049 (the hundredth anniversary of the new China).<sup>6</sup> The President stated that the last thirty years would the dramatic increase in GDP per capita to more than 3,000 dollars and by 2021, the hundredth anniversary for the foundation of the Chinese Communist Party, China is targeting a GDP per capita of 10,000 dollars. By 2049, Beijing will establish a prosperous, democratic, civilized, and harmonious socialist state. But this overly long title without any concrete explanation implies that it is not very successful in suggesting an attractive Chinese model for the twenty-first-century world. In this regard, experts in the United States and Europe are already at the table discussing the future of China. They have categorized its future into three



groups: succeed, fail, or crisis. Still, regardless of the success of the plan, it is important to keep in mind that the direction of development should go through the stage of strength and wealth, as China's case shows, before it enters the next stage, where the actor plays out the performance of a complex network.

China's 2049 model can serve as a guideline for North Korea. Each of the aforementioned concepts—"Wolf spider," "Dabotap," and building an advanced North Korea through the coevolution strategy—will be a tough yet inevitable journey for Pyongyang. If the Kim Jong-un regime insists on military-first politics for the thirty years to come, it will undoubtedly face the second and third "Arduous Marches," and become a vegetative state in the end. But if the new regime makes a decision to follow the path of China, initiates the First Step of Advancement (Transition and Reform) carries out a sweeping economic reform, and subsequently takes the Second Step of Advancement (Transformation) and forms a complex network state, reunification would no longer be a blind hope. Yet such a reform can only be achieved through a coevolution with the international community, including South Korea, the United States, and China.

The advancement of North Korea must move on to the second step of building a complex network, from the enhanced conditions that it built during the years in the first step. In order to do so, North Korea should firstly overcome its paltry efforts to sustain the system and make ends meet, and move up to the whole next level of establishing an appropriately secure and prosperous state. Meanwhile, it must not neglect environment and culture in order to complete the four main pillars of Dabotap. The next step would be to renew the information and knowledge foundation. In this step, North Korean leaders should transform the oversized military technology under military-first politics into a peaceful technology. As the last step, politics, the top of Dabotap, should steer away from military-first politics, pass the transition period of advanced *Suryong* leadership, and ultimately reach democracy in the end.

Along with the advancement of North Korea, the two Koreas should transcend the stage of modern contacts, and be able to meet in a new, comprehensive way. Not as a state-to-state relation, but involving various actors in a comprehensive manner. The modern idea of unification is a matter between the related states, and therefore, politics, the military, and the economy are primary concerns. However, in order to develop the inter-Korean relationship within the frame of a complex network, a far more complicated network must be built. A complete reconstruction of all three stories of Dabotap must be deliberately pursued. Simultaneous building of Dabotap for Korea, East Asia and the world must be carried out while they help North Korea to develop its own. Eventually, the two Koreas will form comprehensive states of the twenty-first century.



## Complex Network Reunification and East Asia

Should the way of Korean reunification be achieved via complex network, the East Asian order, which must also work toward coevolution, is a matter of significance as well. The East Asian community will not arrive anytime soon. It will become a reality only when individual states in East Asia and East Asia itself comprehensively solidify their identities, because in principle, it requires heart-to-heart contacts. For the future of East Asian community, states in this region will have to form dual identities in a long-run process. That is, for North and South Korea a three-fold identity is needed for reunification: identity of North or South Korea, of the Korean Peninsula, and of East Asia. Yet the reality lags far behind this idea, as the East Asian community is currently being developed in limited areas only. Considering that the formation of community is rendered possible only through aggregating mutual interests and values, it can be said that East Asia is at its beginning stage. It has just started to build a complex network that will lead its way to the East Asian community and, in a broader sense, the international community.

The most important task remaining for the Korean Peninsula is to prepare a survival strategy in the midst of the new East Asian order led by the two superpowers. For this, the “politics of the affair,” it is inevitable that South Korea should embrace the “secondary wife,” China, while maintaining its relationship with the “first wives,” the United States and Japan. There is no way to survive for small powers when reflecting personal ethics to international politics. The “politics of the affair” is, in terms of international politics, politics of the complex network. In the process of reunification, the most important web for the advanced two Koreas is the “dense network,” neighboring ones, and the thickest web should be formed with the United States, along with the one with Japan as a sidekick. The alliance with the United States began during the Cold War era in 1950s, primarily with military cooperation for survival. Since the new century, it has developed from a strategic alliance toward a complex network alliance. A “connected network” with China is no less important for South Korea. ROK-China relations, currently delineated as strategic cooperation, is less than twenty years old and the two states are based on quite different economic and political systems. Yet the swelling trade volume between the two has already surpassed that of ROK-U.S., rendering mutual dependency ever more inevitable (Burt 2007; 2010).

During the Cold War era, when the United States and China’s relations were hostile, it was impossible for South Korea to maintain friendly relations with both at the same time. But now, in the new century, ROK-U.S. and ROK-China are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The complex time of the twenty-first century calls for complex networks. As of now, the United States fully understands that China is an asymmetric G2 state, and their



relationship cannot remain hostile given China's geopolitical and geoeconomic importance to South Korea. The United States is just hoping to stay as the biggest ally in the South Korea's twenty-first century complex network. Therefore, in the current state of affairs, it may be possible for South Korea to weave a web toward China while sustaining mutual trust with the United States. What is of concern, rather, is China's "Project 2049." China now focuses on peaceful economic development, but as its economy swells in coming years, the theory of the "Chinese standard of civilization," or Sinocentrism, may loom large on the horizon. Before that happens, China and neighboring states have to put their best efforts into settling China into a proper network of East Asia. With all these tasks that await, the next thirty years of East Asia will be the "busy thirty years."

The United States and China entered a period of complex relations in this new century, overcoming the hostilities from the Cold War era. The Korean Peninsula must strengthen its alliance with the United States, weakening but still a leading state, and develop a future-oriented network with Japan, while transforming the relationship with China into the twenty-first-century version of a new alliance. If the G2 order is solidified without a proper network between the United States and China, South Korea would face serious difficulties. South Korea must embrace both the United States and China though with different approaches, so it is important that these two webs should not clash with each other.

### **Weaving a Complex Web on the Korean Peninsula**

To complete the unification based on a complex network within the two-step advancement model for North Korea, a new view on the unification for the twenty-first century is required. The key to this view is overcoming the relative disadvantages in resource power with advantages in network power. Recent research on business suggests the following tips to build stronger network power. First, weave the "dense network" as densely as possible. Applying this to the issue in hand, South Korea will need to develop the existing ROK-U.S. alliance into a more complex alliance while strengthening the ROK-Japan relationship. Second, expand the "connected network" as broadly as possible. It is particularly important that South Korea furthers its existing network with the United States and Japan to include China into the complex network. In addition, South Korea's network web must also reach to the global level as well as cyberspace. Last, apart from creating a dense and broad web, South Korea should form a knowledge-mediating web which could fill in "structural holes" in the network. When there is a tear in a network web, a role of the mediator—that is, to mend it with information and knowledge—is crucial. South Korea needs to strengthen its network power through playing the role of a knowledge mediator,





because DPRK-Japan and DPRK-U.S. relations contain a number of structural holes. Through this three-step reinforcement of a network web, South Korea should be able to complement the relative disadvantage in resource power. South Korea does not have the resource power paramount to that of the United States, China, Russia, or Japan. Therefore, in order to stand side by side with stronger neighboring states in the twenty-first century, the Korean Peninsula of advanced South and North Korea need to be equipped with more sophisticated network power.

Establishing a complex networked state, which is the second step of coevolution strategy for North Korea's advancement, would be possible through the strengthening of the three network powers mentioned above. These are taking place on the Korean Peninsula, in East Asia, the world as well as in cyberspace. Of course strengthening network power itself would not allow reunification in a traditional style, but it will lead to forming a world network web for the twenty-first century. There have been cases when a state with weak resource power was at the center of the world. For example, the Netherlands had the most sophisticated ability to network in the seventeenth-century world order; thus, it was able to become the dominant power of that time. Unfortunately, the Korean Peninsula has not had the time or energy to think about its network comprehensively due to the divisions between North and South as well as left and right, but it is not too late. If the North and South achieve advancement and reunification through the complex network web extending over East Asia, the world, and cyberspace, and succeed in coevolution, the Korean Peninsula's twenty-first century complex network web will be able to show the world a new standard of civilization. ■

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> [Translator's Note] *Suryong* holds supreme power over decision making in North Korea (Kim 2008, 90).

<sup>2</sup> [Translator's Note] Concerning this term, see Chung (1995) and Kum (2001).

<sup>3</sup> Information Center on North Korea (<http://unibook.unikorea.go.kr/MA/>).

<sup>4</sup> This part is a modified version of statements presented at the *Future Strategies Forum* by Korea Institute for Future Strategies (Ha 2010).

<sup>5</sup> [Translator's Note] This indicates that the twenty-first-century actor should be able to act as a wolf (who performs self-help or a practices balance of power policy, which is a modern international political principle of Hobbes) and a spider (who establishes network flexibly among diversified actors, which should be a basic principle in the post-modern world) at the same time.

<sup>6</sup> “中共中央總書記胡錦濤在紀念改革開放30周年大會講話” 2008/12/18 ([http://www.beijingreview.com.cn/document/2009-05/11/content\\_195251.htm](http://www.beijingreview.com.cn/document/2009-05/11/content_195251.htm)). English version: Hu, Jintao's speech at the Meeting Marking the 30th Anniversary of Reform and Opening Up ([http://www.china.org.cn/archive/2009-05/11/content\\_17753659.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/archive/2009-05/11/content_17753659.htm)).



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