



THE SEJONG SOCIETY OF
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North Korea's Growing Dependence on China: Implications for the Future of Northeast Asia

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6:00pm Reception; 6:30pm Program

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TRANSCRIPT

Kevin Kim: Hi, thank you all for coming tonight. My name is Kevin Kim, I am the Vice President of Sejong Society. Before I turn the mic over to Dr. Jae Ku, I am going to say a few words about Sejong Society. Sejong Society is a non-partisan, all-volunteer organization that is dedicated to helping out young professionals understand more about Korea and U.S. policy towards Korea. If you have any further questions, or if you are just generally interested, please visit our website. It's www.sejongocietydc.org. If you have questions, just come find me after the event, and we can chat about it as much as you want. Here is Jae Ku.

Jae Ku: Thank you Sejong Society. Thank you Kevin, and welcome to this very topical talk on North Korea's growing dependence on China, implications for the future of Northeast Asia. This summer I had a chance to be in China and actually had to be evacuated out of Dandong during the flooding. And it was, again, clear to me how relevant and dependent China continues to be for North Korea every time I visit that region.

Before I get started, let me do some housekeeping. If you, like me, have several cell phones that you carry around, if you can turn it off, or put it on silence, I would greatly appreciate it. The format will be as usual; Venerable Pomnyun will speak for a half hour. Afterwards, we will have a very informal Q&A, which I will moderate. If you raise your hand, and if you ask a question with a question mark at the end, that would greatly facilitate the discussion.

As most of you know, Venerable Pomnyun is no stranger to this topic and to this community, and we are always delighted to host him. He brings in fresh insights through his own personal experience, but also through the organization, which he heads. He is the Chairman of the Peace Foundation in Seoul, which supports policy research and analysis aimed at Korean reunification and humanitarian issues. We all know . . . how many of us, be honest, read *North Korea Today* whenever we get it? You bet. It is probably one of the best informational, analytical pieces of what is happening in North Korea on a day-to-day basis. The Venerable Pomnyun is also the chairman of the Joint Together Society, an international relief agency with offices worldwide. And he is a Zen master with the Seoul-based Chungto Society, established in '88 to facilitate self-improvement through volunteerism. And today again, we have a very able interpreter, Jason

Lim. Thank you for coming. I know you too are a very busy person. I am always very amazed at his interpreting skills. So without further ado, Venerable Pomnyun, we can all welcome him.

Thank you.

Venerable Pomnyun: Good evening. It is good to see you all here today. And also I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Jae Ku and Sejong Society for hosting this event. I would like to engage into a moment of conversation with you all after a briefing in the beginning. As I am sure all of you know, North Korea is dependent economically to China. The percentage of trade with China and North Korea, it seems to be increasing every year. It seems like the latest figure point is over 78% dependence on China when it comes to a trade. With the worsening of the relationship between the two Koreas and the worsening of the relationship between the DPRK and the U.S. and the addition of the financial sanctions imposed by the UN, it seems like North Korea is becoming ever more economically dependent on China. Especially recently with Chinese analysis of their economic development, infrastructure development project along the northeastern area and that connects the infrastructure that connects Jilin, Tumen, and Jang-gil areas, it seems like China is also pursuing economic projects that are related to North Korea. Especially those areas need an access to the sea. And by China having a lease on the ports in North Korea on Rajin Sanbong, they are able to access the sea ports. Because Najin itself is too small to handle all the exports that China puts out, they are in discussion right now to open up the access to Chungjin port, and by doing so, they actually have an access to the land, on land, to Chungjin, from Tumen (7:12) to Chungjin directly. And you can see that in the recent visit to China, Chairman Kim Jong-il visited those areas that are related to economic projects. These

areas also include, of course, some of the areas where Kim Il-sung, his father, had independence fighting activities. So on the surface of basic consistence of (8:08) him visiting, those areas where his father cooperated with the Chinese resistance fighters on fighting off the Japanese superiors in the Japanese colonialism era, but in the substantive talks, we believe they had discussions on economic projects in this area. And also not just these, but they are having the discussion on the development along Nandong and Sinuiju area. So, a lot of minerals and a lot of mining activities in North Korea are being run by Chinese concerns. So, North Korea is, in effect, becoming two things to China; one, supplier of the raw material in terms of minerals and other mining materials, and also a potential market for their consumer goods coming back. So, this preponderance of dependence by North Korea on China in terms of economy is going to get worse. About 80 percent or more of the goods being traded in the market are Chinese-made. And we see a lot of Chinese money being invested as an FDI in North Korea. In the long term, we can kind of see this economic dependence being translated and leaking into more political and military dependence. So, when you look at the recent Cheonan incident, the incident actually triggered a facilitation, or a speeding up, of the increase in political and military dependence also. With the beginning of the Lee administration, its focus on foreign policy was to make the U.S. and ROK relationship tighter. In that sense, China expressed some concerns about the tightening of the relationship between the U.S. and ROK. China has expressed publicly also concerns, deep concerns, about the really anti-North Korea straightened (11:29) reaction expressed by both South Korea and the U.S. in Cheonan incident. The Chinese are concerned that this really straightened overreaction from their point of view to the Cheonan incident was not just aimed at North Korea, but also had China in mind. So, that actually triggered more a

closeness of the relationship between the respective militaries of both China and the DPRK. North Korea traditionally has always expressed and emphasized their self-reliance and independence in terms of politics, diplomacy, and military. Many Chinese soldiers died during the Korean War fighting for the North Korean side. Until now, North Korea did not really emphasize the role that the Chinese played in keeping their country intact. And, officially, the Chinese position was that the official PLA (People's Liberation Army of China) was not involved in the Korean War, but it was just their Chinese volunteers fighting. But, this traditional, official line has actually shifted abruptly this year. So, what we saw in the media, and actually, we saw veterans, the Chinese veterans of Korean War being officially lauded and invited to visit North Korea. And for the first time this year, the Chinese government officially announced the casualty rate of the Chinese soldiers who died in the Korean War. They said about 70,000 plus died during the Korean War. And, they mentioned the fact that this is twice as many soldiers as the U.S. soldiers who died during the war. They also announced that 400,000 plus were injured during the war. What this is saying is that it is emphasizing the fact that the ties between North Korea and China are a blood-tie. They are basically officially emphasizing the fact that the security issues in North Korea are intimately tied to Chinese concerns. This year, basically China is reemphasizing for the first time that they are an official party to the Korean War. That implies that if, in case of any peace treaty in the Korea War that they should be a major party to it. They are reemphasizing the fact they have a deep sense of a relationship and their interests are involved in whatever happens to the Korean peninsula. Because North Korea was all about self-reliance, they really opposed being subjected to any outside influence until now. So, we don't know how true this is, but if Kim Jong-il were to need some kind of implicit

approval from the Chinese authorities on the succession plan, that in itself is a huge damage to the self-reliance concept that they have. We see this as a sign of really North Korea becoming weaker, as a self-relying country, and having to force itself to depend on China for survival. We see, in terms of social economics, North Korea is on the verge of complete collapse. But, on the political-military level, they are still cohesive. This kind of dichotomy brings about differences of opinions among the North Korea watchers; some say that North Korea is about to implode soon and some say that this is going to sustain itself for a while. But, I think we can safely come to a consensus that in the long term, North Korea in itself and the strength of the contradictions within a system is going to eventually lead to its ruination. But at the same time, we can safely assess that in the short run, they do have the awareness (17:49) with sustainable regime. Then the North Korea regime and the elites will come up with a solution to continue the survival of their regime. And this is the first and the only priority for the North Korean leaders. The North Korean regime knows that it cannot expect to maintain the regime by improving their relationship with South Korea. That's because the people's perception of South Korea is going to improve and their expectations, or their desire to be like South Korea is going to increase. But, they also realize that there is this danger of them being a slave state, which is a vassal state to China, if they continue on this road to maintain their regime. So, they actually know for themselves that improving their relationship with the U.S. is the safest, and probably the surest, way for them to maintain their regime. There is a contradiction here. The U.S. is the greatest threat to their regime, but at the same time, the U.S. is the greatest savior, possible savior, for their regime. They do have some kind of hostility towards the U.S. government. At the same time, they have a sense of hope and expectation towards the U.S. So if you look at the past 20 years, they did try

their all to improve their relationship with the U.S. in their own way. Especially towards the end of the Bush administration, it almost succeeded. But, ultimately that failed too. With the inter-Korean relationship, the same thing. And the danger of regime collapse is becoming, is increasing. In this situation, there is only one choice that the North Korean regime can make. They don't want this, and they realize the danger of doing this, but at the same time they have no choice but to cooperate with China across the board. The U.S.-ROK reaction, the strong reaction by the U.S. and South Korea in relation to the Cheonan incident brought about a quickening of this dependence on China. But I believe that as long as Chairman Kim Jong-il is alive, he is going to provide some kind of control and maintain a certain distance with China. But, after Kim Jong-il dies, after the successor regime, I think that is going to lead to a more and quicker dependence on China. The more precarious the regime becomes, the position the regime becomes, the more it is going to be a force that depends on China, not just economically, but also politically and militarily to maintain itself. When people, some experts, predict that an imploding and weakening North Korea is going to lean towards South Korea, and it's going to lead to make it easy for eventual unification, I think in light of what is really happening, the dynamic inside North Korea and the debates that are going on in the leadership circle of North Korea, I don't think that assessment is true. Because North Korea will choose to grow more dependent on China across the board in order to maintain its regime at all costs. If that happens, then there is some implication to Northeast Asia. If that happens, then North Korea becomes beholden to China, and there is a competition between North Korea and South Korea, which is beholden to the U.S. and also to Japan in that sphere. And also Russia playing the role of the middle, or more leaning towards China, you see more of a Cold War kind of dynamic redeveloping in Northeast

Asia. From a Korean perspective, in which we desire reunification as soon as possible, this is very discouraging because such dynamics will actually lengthen the period before the reunification, if at all. So, I believe that South Korea will soon come to face a dilemma. Economically, even South Korea's trade with China is increasing. I think South Korea exports more to China than Japan and U.S. combined at this point. So until now, probably the U.S. provided stability in the defense of the country. But, say in the future, if we see this dynamic play out and North Korea depends more on China, there is control over North Korea, and South Korea's economy becomes more intertwined with China, then South Koreans will be left with a choice of trying to improve its relationship, or cater to Chinese interests, in order to possibly reunify the country and ensure their own continuing prosperity. So, we will see a strong tension rise within South Korean society, those who support the traditional line of structure with the U.S., and those pragmatists who actually want a more pragmatic relationship with China. And we will see a tension between those two opposing viewpoints. But, you can bet that this desire in South Korea for eventual reunification, that's not going away any time soon. Soon that is going to be only possible within the sphere, within the level that China agrees with. So, if this dynamic plays out, then any eventual reunification, if it happens, then the unified Korean peninsula will tend to lean towards more China because they will be more indebted to China for reunification. From the U.S. side, they have to look at the long-term possibility, whether this possibility is in line with the U.S. interests in the region. But from a Korean person's point of view, from a Korean point of view, whether it is advantageous to allow this to play out and to push back the possibility of reunification further . . . My personal opinion is, I believe improving the relationship with North Korea by South Korea, also improving U.S.-DPRK relationship will

lessen the growing dependence that the DPRK has on China, and it's going to lead to more dynamic and more facilitated talks on reunification, and I think in the long-term strategic point of view, that is going to be advantageous to both U.S. interests and South Korean interests. As long as something is not yours yet, if it is not in your possession yet, you have less interest in losing that to somebody else. But once something becomes yours, it's in your possession, you have control over it, you tend to resist a lot stronger if somebody wants to take it away from you. So what I am saying is, that if North Korea becomes fully dependent on China and becomes a significant impact when it comes to control of China, it will become a lot harder to take it away from their sphere of influence. And I wish to really open up the floor, talk freely about such topics since there is a possibility that I threw out today. Whether delaying talks by the U.S. according to the policy of strategic patience and also the worsening of the Korean relationship, whether this current state of being within the DPRK is really advantageous in the long run is of strategic interest not only to the national interest of the U.S., but also to the ethnic interest of the Korean people. But it is very possible to predict that the more precarious the position of the North Korean regime becomes, it's going to lean towards China, not just economically, but it's going to be dependent on China politically, and also militarily. Depending on your policy objective, this situation, this phenomenon, can actually be interpreted as a positive or negative situation. We hear talks in the D.C. area, it's actually better for China to exert complete control over North Korea because then U.S. only needs to talk to China to control North Korea, because North Korea in and of itself is very difficult to talk with. Even those possibilities we can talk about in a very freely and open way.

Ku: Thank you very much, Venerable Pomnyun. Very sobering assessment, it's an assessment I heard in the progressive intellectual circle that's very popular in Korea. And I am wondering, let me as moderator, ask you the first question. Do you think that looking ahead to the 2012 presidential election, that intellectuals on the progressive side will look at your strategic issues in this way to create an atmosphere, again of creating a large anti-American sentiment?

Ven. Pomnyun: I can't fully agree that this view only belongs to the progressive side. I actually believe that this is the viewpoint that should be shared by healthy conservatives. By conservatives I mean that organization of the people who place this interest of the nation first and foremost. For the progressives, I think they place a high priority on individual liberties and human rights issues. So what we need in South Korea at this point is for the conservatives to really place the national interest and look at and analyze the situation according to that standard.

Ku: Let me open up to the audience for question. If you can raise your hands, identify yourself, and we have a microphone or two going around. This gentleman here had his first hand up.

Guest 1: Hi, thank you very much. My name is ____, I am from the organization called ____. I would like to ask you about a frank opinion of yours. Don't you think that it is better for North Korea to become almost part of China if the existing North Korean situation continues, North Korean situation that starvation, and prison camps, and all the other bad things continue year, every year, and at the same time, South Korea is not ready to do much, they are not ready to unite. So, don't you think it is more important who are lives of North Korean people (35:35)

pride, Korean pride and independence? Don't you think that North Korean people lives are more important? As not the best choice, but as a possible better choice, to become almost part of China, or China should pursue North Korea to create a much more pro-China regime so that they can open their markets and maybe, it is part of China, but the lives of North Korean people will be better and that will create future unification of South Korea.

Ven. Pomnyun: Frankly I agree from a non-Korean point of view, that possibility is not entirely negative. And also, if you are really someone progressive, you can also agree to such a concept. Because individuals are more important than national interests, because individual interests should be placed ahead, I guess for the progressives, of national interests. From this kind of perspective, I think what you suggested is possible. That is why the person, the group, who should lead the discussion should be more of a moderate conservative. Because if you put priority on national interests, all the interest of people as a whole in front of the interest of individuals, that should be rightfully concerned about such a possibility. Depending on your perspective, this can be positive or negative. But what you just suggested I actually fully understand.

Ku: Next question, the gentleman in the front.

Guest 2: I would like to know your opinion on the pattern of past North Korean behavior. It seems like they are quiet for a while and they engage in an action that tends to descent (40.05) a shock the world to bring about attention of the world, total attention of the world upon

themselves, and they also use this for maintaining their regime and save some face in some ways. So, they have repeated this kind of behavior; I would like to know your opinion on this. And also, as you said, if North Korea is becoming more dependent on China, wouldn't China help them out of the food situation also?

Ven. Pomnyun: I am going to address the second question first. China is not supporting the survival of the current regime in North Korea as it is. China wants the North Korea regime, or the system of governance, to mimic that of China. But they are not in the position to force that upon North Korea. So their question is, what do we do with the current regime as it is in North Korea? Although they don't like the current regime in North Korea, if they are faced with the choice of implosion or collapse of the North Korean regime as chaos follows, and versus the maintenance of the current regime as it is, then they will choose the latter. So if they force their hand too much on China to change the North Korea regime as it is, then that is going to create more of an anti-Chinese reaction. But since their heart is not really into maintaining this current regime, they don't like it as much, their hearts are not in it, and they won't give as much aid as is possible. So I believe the Chinese aid will just toe the line of the least possible aid to maintain the current regime in place. North Korea's position against China, versus China, has weakened in recent years because of the worsening relationship between North Korea and South Korea, and the North and the U.S. So that means the possibility that North Korea is forced to accept certain demands by China is increasing. So, I don't think the North Korean regime will accede to all the demands by China across the board. That is why the Chinese, as we might suspect, are not supporting or giving aid to North Korea across the board in full amounts. But if China sees some

kind of tension within the power structure of North Korea, and they see the possibility of pro... (43.42) government taking over, then we see a more comprehensive support by China to that section in North Korea. So they are ready to give a lot of aid, but they are not giving a lot of aid, it is actually very a small amount. But, we see the situation develop in which the situation is more advantageous to China to start increasing their aid, and also leverage in North Korea. As to the first question, from our point of view, it seems like North Korea engages in this repeated provocative behavior randomly and sporadically. But from the North Korean point of view, that's not so. Because the western sea along the NLL line has been a traditional area of conflict. The actual boundaries along the lines on the NLL is very im... (44.59). We saw conflicts on those lines even when the relationship was a lot better in DJ era. So, almost, the situation was right with the MB's hard-line against North Korea for another conflict to occur on those lines. You might not be aware, but there was another firefight in the same area last December. We are not positive with the number, but North Korea suffered deaths and casualties. So this time it was North Korea's turn to lash out. We don't know whether it was intentional or not, but the size of the attack, actually maybe it was unintended, but it was North Korea's attack for South Korea's status this time. But, do you really believe that North Korea was technologically sophisticated enough militarily to create the situation at Cheonan as is described? In some ways, I think the level of the Cheonan incident itself maybe was not as intended by North Korea. So from North Korean view, I mean we don't know whether this is actually serves North Korea. So I think we really need to take those things into perspective when judging North Korea behavior. To look at certain incident like Cheonan and put it in into a proper context, is it really a huge incident, or do

you feel that it is a huge incident, and if we feel that it was a huge incident, then why do we feel the incident so keenly? I think there is more need for us to look at this more objectively.

Jae Ku: Next question.

Guest 3: Good evening, my name is Alex from the State Department. Today, there was a Congressional hearing on North Korean refugees, where many people hit the point that the key to improving the lives and health of North Korean refugees is to improve their status in China. And I want to get your opinion on it. Do you believe that there is any way to change China's hard-line policies towards North Korean refugees?

Ven. Pomnyun: I think that is a very difficult thing to do. Because China is concerned, if they become more flexible towards their treatment of North Korean refugees, then that will generate more refugees. We don't know if that's actually going to happen or not, but that's the concern. So they are concerned that it will lead to more refugees. In this understanding between nations, between the governments, between China and North Korea, such flexibility is not in line with the understanding that the two governments have. So, in that sense, I don't believe China is in a position to be receptive to change their position in the treatment of North Korean refugees. Right now, we don't see . . . there are a very minimum number of refugees coming. The current situation inside North Korea is the worst. There are plenty of dynamics that could lead to more refugees pouring across the river. But there is a strong crackdown across the border. It is very difficult for anyone to try to cross the border to China. And from the Chinese side, the Chinese

have a strong crackdown across the border to prevent refugees from crossing. If a refugee manages to cross the North Korean, the North Korea securities along the border, there is a possibility that they might get caught by the Chinese side. But we still see some targeting of refugees for two reasons. One, there are human trafficking groups that do this systematically. Second, North Korean refugees have resettled in South Korea and spend money and pay professional brokers to get their families out of North Korea. Today, refugees are pretty much possible only through the efforts of professional brokers. We no longer really see any refugees like ten years ago, of individuals just trying to cross the border by themselves, on their own initiative. But even within China itself, you see that there are a lot of North Korean refugees stuck there, trying to go back to their country. Mostly they are women, and most of them are married to Chinese husbands. Half of them are not really normal marriages, as we think of marriages. They probably have to do with human trafficking type of marriages. Most of them are actually not in the border area, most of them are actually in far rural areas. And their situation is very dire. If the North Korean refugees are not becoming a political issue, then the Chinese authorities just leave them alone. Among them, there are people who want to cross and come to South Korea. So if a Korean woman decides she wants to leave that household, but because in the Chinese household the husband paid money for her, then he wants to stop her from going. So it is this tension-filled situation that increases the human rights abuses of North Korean refugees. Sometimes this leads to an incident that we hear of. If this leads to an incident, it becomes visible, then the local security in China tends to crack down on the North Korean refugees. It is true that their situation is bad. When I visited and saw how they live, often I had to cry, and really felt bad and felt pity for them. But there is no way, no real solution, to get them out the

situation right now. The only way to really save them is to take them and resettle them in South Korea, but because that's illegal in China, it's only possible for a broker to do that, not for any NGOs like ours. So what is suggested to China, Chinese authority is that for those people who are married, why don't you temporarily, at least, grant a legal residency status? And if you can't do that, why don't you just allow legal residency status for those women who gave birth? Because if you don't solve this problem, children actually face a difficult, serious legal issue as to their citizenship and that leads to their educational possibilities. So if this doesn't work with Chinese authorities, open channels, maybe informal channels, to try to convince them might work. I think this problem can be solved if there is somebody in South Korean government or in the U.S. government who can champion their cause really visibly and out there. But not publicize it and try to embarrass the Chinese government and shame it into doing something because that's not going to help at all. That's the reality we face.

Jae Ku: Gentleman in the blue shirt.

Guest 4: I am _____ with the Cato Institute. We are here in Washington. People come to Washington to get policy advice. You say North Korea is being more dependent on China. You indicate that this is not such a good thing. What would you have the United States do? What leverage do we have with China? What leverage do we have with North Korea?

Ven. Pomnyun: It is the American choice whether it was to control and deal with North Korea through China or try to deal with North Korea directly through North Korea. But until now we

have seen that North Korea is a lot easier to deal with if we talk to it directly. So if I were to be . . . my advice is that I would like to suggest that the U.S. engage with North Korea directly. Whether that direct engagement tends to be – if it could be formal or unofficial – informal. Because it is so difficult to talk to North Korea and bear any fruit, I think the U.S. tends to want to distribute the responsibility, accountability for dealing with North Korea. And at the same time, in terms of alliance maintenance, Japan and South Korea, I am sure, have rightful concerns whether any direct talks between the U.S. and DPRK might go against their national interests. I think that's why we tended to go and shift towards a multilateral type of framework. It is very possible to understand this. But I think the multilateral framework is actually more difficult to resolve this issue. I think the only solution is that for us to maintain an open multilateral framework for the dialogue, at the same time, the real negotiation and deal making should occur in a bilateral talk under the framework of multilateral talk. With the Obama administration, we saw a lack of any engagement with North Korea, direct engagement with North Korea for about two years now. I am sure there were some attempts to engage under the surface, of course, that we are not aware of. And I believe that that's because the policy makers in the Obama administration have decided that it is very difficult to get the type of solution that he wants for North Korean nukes by talking to North Korea. But if you are trying to negotiate with an enemy in an antagonistic relationship, there is no way for you to get all that you want. If you want something that is out there, then you have to be ready to pay the cost for whatever you want. So from my perspective in the middle, it seems like the U.S. wants something big, but doesn't really want to fully pay for it. So basically what I am saying is that North Korea is not ready to sell to the U.S. for the price the U.S. wants to pay. But that situation is not going to be resolved by

criticizing North Korea. For example, do you want denuclearization, because nukes, having nukes, and becoming a nuclear weapon state is actually the centerpiece of their regime and the way they control their domestic politics. So, if you try to solve this problem, and have them give up their nukes by giving them money on an economic deal making, then that's not going to work. The U.S. is making a mistake of thinking that they can buy nukes off North Korea. North Korean officials actually made this analogy to me. So, basically, it's almost like North Korea is a woman, and the U.S. is a man, a rich man, trying to buy her love, of a woman who doesn't really appreciate his advances. That's what North Korea said. How can we solve this then? So, basically, fall in love, I guess, with each other. So, basically, from North Korean point of view, falling in love with each other is the same thing as the U.S. giving up its hostile policy towards North Korea, as it sees it. But it is very difficult for the U.S. to line up its domestic dynamics to engage in more progressive policy towards North Korea, because there is a lot of public opinion against rewarding North Korea for so-called bad behavior, recognizing this bad regime. If domestic politics prevent the U.S. from engaging North Korea in such a way, then the U.S. must lower its policy objectives when it comes to the North Korean nukes. So instead of going full out for CBID situation (1:03:30), maybe you should lower your view sights to more of a non-proliferation, or disablement. Then, you can get that for the price you are willing to pay. This is basically the formula that has been going on throughout the last couple of years in negotiations. Any negotiation agreement that was reached in the last couple of years was at this level. I think it is better to put off CBID as a kind of the ultimate goal, something that's like a long-term goal. Kim Jong-il is not going to live forever. People say that he will die soon. North Korean society will inevitably undergo a change. So to summarize, basically, the choice faced by the U.S. is

this: if you want, in a very short-term, a complete CBID in North Korea, then you must be willing to pay that price. But you are not willing, or can't pay that price, then you have to lower your policy objectives and really go for non-proliferation or disablement type of option and put off CBID as more of a long-term goal. I think that's why we go back and forth on this talk.

Jae Ku: We are over, but with your permission, let's take one final question. And let's have a lady. Why don't we do this? We will take two questions, and then the Venerable will answer.

Jason Lim (Translator): The first question, that is to do with . . . Venerable Pomnyun mentioned there is an option for the U.S. to engage with China to talk to North Korea or directly talk to North Korea itself. But, is there any way for the U.S. and South Korea also to try to engage North Korea in such a way as to prevent eventual, almost defective, colonization of North Korea by China and to prevent overdependence of North Korea on China, and try to draw North Korea more towards the U.S. and South Korean sphere of influence, and thereby facilitate the eventual reunification, and also get the economic benefits out of the whole situation? So basically, I think the question refers to, what can the U.S. and South Korea do to prevent the situation from worsening? And the second question was that recently, we have seen gestures by North Korea in terms of trying to restart the divided families' talks meetings and also some media concerns predicting the re-ignition of the Six Party Process. And from these recent kinds of gestures and changing dynamics, what do you think the position of China, U.S., and South Korea might be in response to these gestures?

Ven. Pomnyun: Let me answer the second question first. I think China is the party that is the strongest supporter of the Six-Party Framework as the right vehicle to solve the North Korean nuke situation. But, I think North Korea is the party in the Six-Party Talks that is most strongly against the Six-Party Framework continuing because they view it as useless. But, I think North Korea has shifted its attitude a little bit, so it is more flexible about the possibility of them rejoining the Six-Party Talk process. And even South Korea, although it has not come out officially against the Six-Party Process, I think it's asking the question: what good has this Six-Party Process been to us? And I think the U.S. is also kind of pessimistic about the applicability of the Six-Party Talk process, if they believe, because they think that North Korea does not have real intentions to giving up its nukes. So, at first North Korea was mostly against this Six-Party Process, but now that North Korea has been kind of flexible and receptive to the possibility of returning to the Six Party Process, it's actually South Korea and the United States saying that they don't want to restart the Six-Party Process if North Korea does not come with a sincerity to engage in the process. No party has really come out and said that the Six-Party Process is dead. But, I think most of the parties think that the Six-Party Process is not the optimal process by which to get something done. So the problem is, do we increase the parties for this party process or decrease the number of parties attached to the party process? So I think they are shifting the use of vocabulary from "Six-Party Process" to a "multilateral process" dialogue, but we don't know if multilateral means more than six or less than six at this point. I think North Korea has a very strong position against Japan being included in this process. But it is very difficult for the U.S. to accept that condition because of the alliance. So, there is a possibility of increasing the Six-Party Process to include more members ASEAN, or Mongolia, or even the EU, or we can

actually decrease, and get rid of Russia and Japan and have just a Four-Party Talk. So, I think they are just discussing it as a multilateral process. I really don't know what's going on substantively in negotiations. But regardless of this, when it comes to this six, multilateral process, I think the situation will not be solved without the direct talks between the U.S. and the DPRK. So, basically, that actually happened before, during the talk, same goes by multilateral within a multilateral framework. But, whatever the framework turns out to be, I think I feel a momentum shift towards more engagement with North Korea, I believe, in the U.S. So, if you actually see a very hard-line statement by either party, you have to kind of examine the dynamics below the surface in order to determine whether this hard-line announcement is actually designed to lead towards more engagement or that's actually designed to go against engagement. I think in my recent trip, I felt the atmosphere in D.C. is leaning towards more engagement with North Korea. But I am sure there are a lot of barriers and obstacles. But in that sense, I think the momentum is more positive towards engagement.

And now let me address the first question. I don't think North Korea will become a colony of China. And I don't think it is going to be a forced kind of takeover of North Korea by China. I believe (1:16:30) just saying the dependence of North Korea on China politically, militarily, and economically is going to increase. I think we have to wait and see and examine what kind of phenomenon this dependence will lead to. As this gentleman mentioned in the beginning, if this brings about more of a liberalization and increase in the quality of life of North Korea people, then in a way, it's positive. Some South Korean economists actually think this is positive because if the South gets China invested in the basic infrastructure building in North Korea, the

eventual cost for reunification of the two Koreas will actually decrease. And some people actually see this as a good development because it will be easier to control the reunification process. The negative viewpoint about this growing Chinese influence in North Korea is that some people believe that this is going to actually make it harder for the Koreas to unify. Then, this is going to put more distance in eventual reunification. And I spoke to you about this before. If you try to improve this situation, I guess, from somebody who is concerned that China's influence on North Korea is going to block eventual reunification, then I think the U.S. and South Korean policy towards North Korea must change. I think the improvement of the relationship must be facilitated, and of the relationship between the parties, and try to balance out North Korean dependence and balance it out towards South Korea and the U.S. more. And that actually gives South Korea and the U.S. more leverage and channels of influence on North Korea in case of an unexpected change within North Korean circles, and I think that actually can lead to the facilitation of eventual Korean reunification. I think it is a foolish greed to expect something for nothing. So if you want eventual result on some of your investment, then you have to invest and put in a lot of effort and have patience.