

A stylized map of the Korean Peninsula and surrounding regions, composed of a grid of dots. Some dots are grey, while others are red, highlighting specific locations or areas of interest.

Scenarios for the Korean Peninsula

Beyond Pyongyang's Nuclear Programme

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- The missile launch carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on the occasion of the 100th birthday of state-founder Kim Il-Sung has, for the time being, rendered obsolete the nuclear moratorium agreed between the United States and the DPRK at the end of February in Beijing, in exchange for food supplies. Instead of cautious rapprochement, confrontation and aggressive military posturing once more threaten the Korean peninsula.
- The building of a stable peace and security regime in Northeast Asia, linked to a halt in North Korea's nuclear programme and normalisation of bilateral relations between the DPRK and the United States, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan, has so far foundered on a lack of political will on the part of the states involved.
- While the Western side regards the DPRK, for the most part, as the sole aggressor, in fact the status quo has been maintained by the interplay of strategic foreign and security policy interests, based on rational calculations, of the main actors: the United States, China, DPRK and ROK Korea. Indeed, it may turn out that the Korea conflict will fall victim to the increasing great power rivalry between the United States and China in Asia.
- New, creative approaches are therefore needed in the Six-Party Talks, as well as a stronger mediatory role for the European Union and non-state actors in order to show the parties to the conflict ways out of the zero-sum game towards a system of cooperative security. In order to build up the necessary trust, in particular the inter-connecting perceptions and common interests of those concerned – which certainly exist – should be brought more vividly into the foreground.



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1. Current Situation

After the death of North Korea's leader Kim Jong-Il on 17 December 2011 there was speculation throughout the Western media concerning whether the succession process would bring about the regime's rapid demise or at least discernible instability in Pyongyang. It was feared in South Korea that the imminent transition could give rise to power struggles in the North Korean military, which might find expression in aggression against the South. The South Korean military was put into a state of alert and prepared for a possible escalation of the conflict with the North. More discriminating observers and the few experts on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) spoke of various factors of uncertainty for the regime which had increased in recent years, some of them nothing to do with the succession. Besides Kim Jong-Un's inexperience, they include struggles for power and influence between or within the key power centres of the party, the military and government, the ever-precarious economic and humanitarian situation and the gradually increasing opportunities with regard to information, communication and mobility for parts of the North Korean population. Four months after the death of Kim Jong-Il none of the abovementioned speculations had been borne out: the transition announced by the government appears to be proceeding in an orderly fashion. Nevertheless, we can assume that Kim Jong-Un will be occupied for the foreseeable future with consolidating his position among the different groups, namely the Workers' Party of Korea, the government and, above all, the power-politically crucial military.

However, speculation about the stability of the regime and internal developments has somewhat eclipsed consideration of regional power constellations and the high level of internationalisation of the conflict on the Korean peninsula. Despite the at times very nationalistic debate and the very much sui generis bilateral relations between North and South the conflict is one of the last global remnants of the Cold War, whose future, as in the past, will be determined by the interests and interaction of the great powers. The question of the future situation in North Korea and thus the stability of the regime in Pyongyang will depend first and foremost on the extent and depth to which China will commit itself in North Korea's shattered economy. But equally, relations between

the two Koreas and the US stance towards them will be significant factors of influence. The international dimension of the conflict on the Korean peninsula is thus closely linked to domestic political developments in both North and South Korea.

After severe tensions in 2010 due to various incidents, in 2011 there were cautious efforts towards rapprochement through bilateral talks, between both the United States and North Korea and between North and South Korea. At different levels and in various forms in 2012, too, points of contact need to be found and a mutual basis of trust built. This could pave the way to the resumption of the Six-party Talks, from which North Korea withdrew in 2009. The principal bone of contention, however, is North Korea's nuclear programme, which is the subject of numerous uncertainties and differing opinions. While the United States considers the cessation of uranium enrichment as key to the resumption of negotiations, the North Koreans regard this as the possible end result of a longer negotiation process with various concessions and guarantees on the American side.

Besides the above-described, still ongoing processes of transition in North Korea, as in many other countries, major political events are pending in 2012 that could influence the situation on the Korean peninsula. In South Korea there were parliamentary elections on 11 April which for the time being have closed the door to the opposition's hopes of policy change.¹ Much more decisive, however, are the presidential elections in December, whose outcome remains open. The current government's policy of confrontation with the North has been criticised in the South Korean public debate in recent years. The tactic of trying to bring about a change in the dynamic of the conflict by curtailing cooperation with the North is widely deemed to have failed. The recent escalation and the security threat that it entails are also indirect consequences of the downgrading of inter-Korean cooperation. If the liberal-progressive opposition wins the elections there is likely to be a change in South Korea's stance towards the North and a greater readiness to cooperate. There is a similar polarisation with regard to foreign and security policy, at least at the level of debate,

1. See Pohlmann, Christoph (2012): (Noch) kein Politikwechsel in Südkorea: knapper Wahlsieg für Regierungspartei bei Parlamentswahlen, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung; <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/09029.pdf>

between parts of the Democratic and Republican parties in the United States. Here, too, the elections at the end of the year could change the situation in fundamentally different directions. However, Obama's de facto policy towards the Korean peninsula so far differs from that of the Bush administration at most in subtle details. The greater frequency, recently, of sometimes secret meetings between the United States and North Korea shows that the former at least is more aware of the mounting problems. However, North Korea's missile launch on the occasion of the 100th birthday of state founder Kim Il-Sung rendered the previous bilateral agreement between the United States and North Korea on a cessation of the nuclear programme null and void, so that for the time being the signs point towards a resumption of confrontation. At first glance, this sometimes close parallel between cooperative and confrontational elements may appear contradictory. However, it is entirely in keeping with the pattern of development in the past, which has always been characterised by uncertainty and lack of trust on both sides.

Furthermore, in 2012 there will be a transfer of power at the top in both China and Russia – traditionally North Korea's most important allies – although we cannot expect much substantive change with regard to Pyongyang. Apart from Korea policy proper, however, the general development of relations between the great powers China and the United States will gain in importance. The heralded »return of the USA« to Asia has occasioned much and varied debate and could have direct effects on the Korean peninsula. The Chinese government is keenly aware of how the United States is trying to build up and deepen strategic – also military – partnerships with neighbouring states in its immediate environment. Ultimately, the Korean conflict concerns how the United States and China will use and develop their hegemonic influence in this strategically important region. The direction in which the Korean conflict moves will be determined by this complex interaction between the international actors and their very different – sometimes complementary, sometimes opposed – interests.

2. The Main Actors and Their Key Interests

Examining inter-state dynamics on the Korean peninsula on the basis of the analytical category of the »national interest« leads necessarily to a reductionist view, which

ultimately treats the states concerned as »black boxes«. Given the opaque character of the North Korean regime, as well as of China's political system, that is entirely appropriate. In the United States, hitherto geopolitical-strategic factors have been predominant in policy on Korea and Northeast Asia, although short-term domestic considerations can play a role. It is only in South Korea that North Korea plays an important domestic policy role, although less and less in recent years. In the South, too, the biggest differences in North Korea policy are between the most important parties. In what follows we analyse the strategic interests of the four main actors, North Korea, South Korea, the United States and China, with a brief discussion of the interests of Russia and Japan.

2.1 North Korea's Strategic Interests

The ruling elites in the central power apparatus in the party, the military and the government in North Korea are interested above all in the survival of the current regime. All other priorities are subordinate to this core interest. The most conspicuous consequence of this is »songun« or the »military first« policy, developed by the deceased head of state Kim Jong-Il on the basis of the chuch'e policy of state founder Kim Il-Sung. Regime stability – and thus the certain survival of the power elite in its privileged position – can be achieved, according to this logic, only by arming to the teeth in order, at the bare minimum, to be secure against external invasion and the overthrow of the regime. Underlying this approach is Korea's centuries-long experience – also as a united kingdom – of being the plaything of great power interests and the object of foreign military threats, right through to colonisation by Japan between 1910 and 1945. The collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the de facto cessation of the Soviet Union, its protective power, combined with an increasingly one-sided economic and security policy dependence on China have caused North Korea increasingly to seek self-reliance, also militarily. Ten years ago the policy of the Bush administration of lining up North Korea with Iran and Iraq as the »axis of evil« and the US invasion of Iraq finally convinced the North Korean leadership that it had to acquire a nuclear deterrent. Given North Korea's security policy fixation on the United States, therefore, US foreign policy under President George W. Bush, which was both aggressive and – with reference to the Iraq war – contrary to in-

ternational law, contributed significantly to the failure of South Korea's so-called »sunshine policy« under the liberal governments of the time.

In terms of security policy, North Korea to many observers is unpredictable and the biggest security risk in Northeast Asia because of its military build-up – around 25 per cent of the state budget is spent on the military – including the nuclear programme, not to mention repeated military incidents. On closer examination, however, this is simplistic. For decades North Korea has consistently declared that above all it seeks normalisation of relations and a peace treaty with the United States (and Japan). At the same time, it expects credible security guarantees from the United States. In this context, high-ranking representatives of North Korea have repeatedly expressed a wish, in the event of a peace treaty with the United States, that the American missile shield be extended to North Korea.

North Korea's calls for normalisation and security guarantees with regard to the United States appear justified, given the precarious security situation on the Korean peninsula. After all, the Korean War ended almost 60 years ago and every visit to the Demilitarised Zone between North and South Korea at the 38th parallel clearly shows the absurdity of the situation. The goal of friendly coexistence of the two Korean states, moreover, would be the ideal basis of a process of further rapprochement which could lead to reunification at some later date. What mainly prevent resolution of the continuing security dilemma are the differing views of North Korea, on one hand, and the United States, South Korea and Japan, on the other, concerning »sequencing«, in other words, the steps required for normalisation of relations – including economic aid – and denuclearisation. This issue, together with the problem of verifying North Korean nuclear disarmament has always been the biggest problem in peace and security efforts on the Korean peninsula, both in the 1990s, with the Agreed Framework, and in the context of the Six-party Talks.

Finally, it must be assumed that North Korea will be prepared to give up its nuclear programme only at the end of a long process of trust-building in connection with extensive economic and security policy quid pro quos. Ultimately, North Korea's nuclear programme serves both as a deterrent and – more importantly – as its sole effective bargaining chip in negotiations with the United States to

obtain these concessions. Furthermore, the nuclear programme is the only success the North Korean leadership can present domestically, which otherwise has a record of unrelenting failure, in economic and humanitarian terms, in comparison to the other states in the region and during the period of the Cold War.

Economic development through reintegration in world markets and emancipation from its one-sided dependence on China is thus a further priority interest of North Korea. However, while the population remains under the control of the totalitarian power apparatus this will be strictly subordinate to the interest in regime stability grounded on security. Furthermore, the famine in the 1990s, which claimed hundreds of thousands of victims, shows two worrying things: first, the level of suffering the leadership is willing to impose on the population and, second, the capacity of the latter to bear enormous hardships without rising up against the regime, at least in ways discernible from outside. Against this background, a transformation of the economic system and opening-up similar to China's is much too risky and uncontrollable in the current threat situation, as perceived by the North Korean government. The security policy circumstances in Northeast Asia must therefore change fundamentally and sustainably before the regime is able to contemplate more extensive economic and social reforms.

Reunification is not a priority strategic interest of North Korea. Although state-founder Kim Il-Sung developed a plan for this purpose in 1980 and his son Kim Jong-Il reaffirmed the goal of reunification with the South at the two summits in 2000 and 2007, we can assume that beyond the official rhetoric the North Korean leadership has no interest in it whatever under current conditions. Apart from anything else, the enormous economic disparities mean that an »Anschluss« of the North to the South would not be in the interests of the North's political elite.

2.2 South Korea's Strategic Interests

South Korea is the only state among those considered here in which there are major programmatic differences between important political and social actors which have an effect at the level of the articulation and implementation of foreign and security policy interests. The various camps are united in their interest in stability for

the sake of fostering the best possible economic and investment climate. There is also a superordinate interest in maintaining for the time being the military alliance with the United States and the US military presence, as well as not endangering the predominantly good bilateral relations with China.

With regard to North Korea both the liberal/liberal-progressive and the moderate/right-wing conservative ends of the political spectrum pursue the state objective of reunification. In the past 15 years, however, major differences of political approach have emerged. For example, the two liberal presidents Kim Dae-Jung and Roh Moo-Hyun, with their »sunshine policy«, pursued détente and rapprochement, taking its bearings from Willy Brandt and Egon Bahr's Ostpolitik. It made possible trust-building measures, humanitarian aid and economic cooperation at both state and societal level, peaking with the two summits in 2000 and 2007. However, the security situation remained precarious, not least because of North Korea's nuclear programme. In the eyes of the conservative portion of the overall strongly polarised South Korean society, as well as the conservative political elite, this confirmed their argument that the Sunshine Policy, because of its lack of reciprocity, cost them a lot of money (around 8 billion US dollars between 1997 and 2007), while in the North it ultimately only stabilised the regime.

South Korea's current, conservative president, Lee Myung-Bak, accordingly, has undertaken a radical change of policy in relation to North Korea. Although he, too, has declared that the aim is reunification via the gradual alignment of the two systems – especially economically – he has abandoned the policy of rapprochement and instead has pursued a policy of containment with regard to North Korea, strengthening the alliance with the United States. North Korea's nuclear weapons tests and repeated military incidents have made this hardline course easier. Aid and other economic incentives with regard to North Korea have had conditionalities attached. Regarding denuclearisation the South Korean government has gone beyond the United States and demanded that this must be the point of departure for a comprehensive negotiated solution, not the goal of a longer trust-building process. The outcome of this policy has been a strengthening of the »hawks« in the North Korean leadership and a complete breakdown of official bilateral relations between North and South Ko-

rea. A climate of mistrust has developed which harbours significant potential for escalation in the event of military incidents. Furthermore, the US Obama government appears to have neither the will nor the ability to stand up to South Korea and to play a stronger intermediary role. This repeatedly confirms North Korea's conviction that ultimately the United States and South Korea are only interested in the collapse of North Korea's political system and are actively working towards this with their policy of sanctions and isolation.

In the meantime, an awareness is growing within the ruling conservative party in South Korea and in parts of the government that the North Korea policy of Lee Myung-Bak's government has failed. Since the sinking of the warship, the Cheonan in March 2010, North Korea's bombardment of the island of Yeonpyeong in December 2010 and the missile launch in April 2012, with the strong likelihood of further tests, the security situation has worsened. Even more serious, however, is the fact that North Korea has been driven more firmly into the arms of China and there are no incentives or leverage with which to influence it.

Against this background we can assume that there is a possibility for a change of policy in South Korea with regard to North Korea after the presidential election in December 2012. However, it will depend on the outcome of the vote whether the pendulum swings back to a resumption of the Sunshine Policy or instead there will be gradual, pragmatic changes within the broad outlines of current North Korea policy.

2.3 US Strategic Interests

The strategic interests of the United States in the Korean peninsula have not changed much since the Clinton government. With regard to North Korea denuclearisation remains the main objective, followed by an interest in stability in Northeast Asia as an important economic region. However, it should be noted that the Korean peninsula is well below other conflict regions, such as the Middle East and North Africa, on the Obama administration's list of foreign policy priorities. In comparison to previous administrations, moreover, the increasing great power rivalry with China is determining US policy towards North and South Korea more and more. Against this background it can be argued that the United States

has an interest in a divided Korea because it allows a strong US military presence in South Korea. The only acceptable alternative from a US standpoint would be the collapse of North Korea and its absorption by the South. One could assume, in that case, that China would reluctantly accept the continued stationing of US troops south of the 38th parallel. Despite domestic social conflict in the face of a growing and overwhelming China, as well as vivid memories of Japanese aggression, South Korea, too, is likely to favour continuance of the US military presence. However, the United States would also find a united Korea more difficult to predict or control than South Korea is at present, and thus is happy with the status quo when it comes to reunification.

US strategic interests with regard to China and the shift of emphasis in US foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific region have rendered the Obama administration largely inactive as far as working out the Korean conflict within the framework of a negotiated solution is concerned. Obviously disappointed by North Korea's second nuclear test, in May 2009 President Obama endorsed the hard-line policy of South Korean president Lee Myung-Bak with regard to North Korea. The policy of »strategic patience« in essence means that North Korea's military provocations and failure to honour its treaties are not to be rewarded with a »soft« policy of humanitarian aid, economic cooperation and multi-level dialogue along the lines of the Sunshine Policy. North Korean attempts at blackmail of all kinds are rejected, while South Korea plays for time in the hope that the North Korean regime will collapse – although after 20 years they are still waiting.

Furthermore, the US government often holds China as partly responsible for the impasse on the Korean peninsula, alleging that it makes insufficient use of its influence over North Korea. However, the US government systematically fails to recognise – or at least gives that impression – that China's influence over North Korea's foreign and security policy is much less than many assume. The Chinese leadership, too, is regularly annoyed and worried by North Korea's unpredictability and provocations, including the two North Korean nuclear tests which were deliberately held near the North Korea-Chinese border. But North Korea cleverly exploits China's overriding interest in stability in its immediate neighbourhood and corresponding aversion to transformation in North Korea whose consequences cannot be

calculated. China simply has no interest in putting North Korea under too much pressure.

Despite the current controversy about North Korea's missile launch, which could soon be followed by another, progress is possible in bilateral relations between the United States and North Korea and the resumption of the Six-party Talks. This is also reflected in the unexpected agreement reached in Beijing at the end of February 2012, in which the United States promised humanitarian aid in exchange for North Korea signing a nuclear moratorium. Although the temporary stalling of this initiative after the – unsuccessful – missile launch is a setback, it does show the opportunities for action that could open up if there was the requisite political will on both sides. Re-election of President Obama would offer an opportunity for new US diplomatic initiatives since Obama would be less concerned with domestic conditions in a second term.

2.4 China's Strategic Interests

China is interested primarily in a stable environment for its own economic development and continuing rise. With regard to the Korean peninsula this means that China has no interest in either instability in North Korea, tensions between North and South or the close involvement of the United States. As regards the division of Korea China supports the status quo because one alternative would be North Korea's absorption by the South, thus boosting the latter and its US allies or Chinese occupation of North Korea and its conversion into a Chinese province (either full-blown or de facto, with the North officially retaining independence). The latter would entail enormous financial and administrative costs, and thus China is content with how things stand at the moment. In any case, China is still able to dictate the terms of trade with North Korea, which benefits it considerably, especially as regards raw materials (including rare earth metals from North Korea).

From a geostrategic standpoint North Korea represents a buffer with regard to the US military presence in the Asia-Pacific region, which China for the time being has to accept. At the same time, China is critical of the strengthening of the South Korean-US military alliance under the leadership of presidents Lee Myung-Bak and Barack Obama. This also applies to the US attempt to

reinforce military cooperation between South Korea and Japan in order to get the two states to adopt a more offensive policy of balance in relation to the emerging China.

Among other things the release of the so-called »Wikileaks« documents has shown that at least parts of the Chinese government are extremely critical of North Korea. China simply cannot understand why North Korea does not follow its path of economic reforms, and the nuclear weapons programme and regular military incidents, which undermine stability, are a constant source of irritation. China joined in the condemnation of North Korea's missile launch in the UN Security Council on 16 April 2012, which also indicates annoyance with regard to Pyongyang's going it alone. The Chinese government had hoped that the recent rapprochement between North Korea and the United States would prevent a further nuclear test.

It is entirely possible that China would agree to Korean reunification, perhaps even if US troops remained in the country, as long as they were stationed south of the 38th parallel. China might reasonably assume that a reunited Korea would be more self-confident in its dealings with the United States than South Korea is able to be. However, China would not actively support policies directed towards reunification because of its current satisfaction with the status quo. Instead, as host of the Six-party Talks, it would try to bring about North Korea's denuclearisation and an easing of tensions on the Korean peninsula.

2.5 Strategic Interests of Russia and Japan

Although Russia and Japan are integral parts of the Six-party Talks, their roles in the Korea conflict are not as decisive as those of the other four participants. Russia is interested primarily in maintaining or even extending its sphere of influence in Northeast Asia. At present, it favours the status quo on the Korean peninsula since it does not feel threatened by North Korea and – in contrast to the United States and China – North Korea does not give rise to any direct costs for Russia. However, we can assume that Russia would not be averse to a cooperative solution to the Korean conflict if it could benefit from it, for example, through the opening up of new areas of business in the energy sector or the economic

development of the regions of Russia bordering North Korea.

Japan sees North Korea as a threat both to itself and to security stability in Northeast Asia. At the same time, it is worried about China's growing dominance in the region. We can therefore assume that Japan lines up alongside the United States in the Korean conflict. Japan would not be against a process of stabilisation and exchange within the framework of the Six-party Talks if North Korea took credible steps towards denuclearisation and disarmament. In order to normalise bilateral relations with North Korea and to conclude a peace treaty, however, Japan would insist on clarification concerning earlier abductions of Japanese people by North Korean agents.

3. Scenarios for the Peninsula's Future

In what follows we shall outline three deliberately bold scenarios of how the situation on the Korean peninsula will develop within a time horizon of around three to five years. Superficially, the scenarios are related to the future development of the international dimension of the conflict, assuming that the relevant foreign policy approaches of the various actors are influenced by the upcoming elections or changeovers of power.

3.1 »Confrontation«

The negative scenario is that the confrontation between the two sides will harden and the cautious attempts at rapprochement in 2011 and the beginning of 2012 will come to nothing. Given that its own demands have little prospect of success North Korea will carry out further missile and nuclear tests, while the uranium and plutonium enrichment programme will be continued as a demonstration of power for both domestic and international consumption. North Korea's confrontational stance in the diplomatic arena will bring about the temporary breakdown of negotiations on the resumption of the Six-party Talks. The few informal communication channels between North Korea and the United States will break down again and a climate of mutual mistrust and accusation will increasingly prevail. As prospects of success continue to diminish Pyongyang will finally resort to military provocation, which it imagines will im-

prove its negotiating position by heightening the threat perceptions of South Korea and the United States. Also, cooperation with other »rogue states«, such as Iran, in nuclear research and missile technology will deepen, escalating the situation even further.

The direction in which this confrontational situation will go next depends, in turn, on the reactions of the other international actors. In the case of a government in South Korea that continues to reject trust-building cooperation and, for its part, responds to North Korean provocation by military means the situation could escalate dramatically. Military hostilities on the Korean peninsula, even to the extent of a major confrontation between China and the United States, are improbable in this scenario. However, given the perceptions we have described and the possible escalation that could result from them, such hostilities cannot be entirely ruled out.

3.2 »Change through Rapprochement«

The positive scenario begins with a deepening of cooperation between the two Koreas, based on increased mutual trust. The changeover of power in South Korea will enable resumption of the »sunshine policy« towards the North, which will find expression in heightened economic cooperation, renewal of humanitarian aid and gradual establishment of a multi-level dialogue. This will also enable rapprochement at the civil society level again. A re-elected President Obama will be convinced by the South Korean president to pursue this policy with regard to Pyongyang. Given the new political situation the newly elected governments will see a long-desired opportunity to launch a new diplomatic initiative concerning North Korea at the beginning of 2013. Cooperative forces in North Korea will thereby gain the upper hand, prevailing over the sceptics and preventing outward aggression.

Due to the heightened trust tensions between the two states on the Korean peninsula will diminish discernibly, reinforced by agreement on a mutual military early warning system. Although South Korean public opinion remains divided as regards dealings with the North, the first successes of the policy change will get the majority of the population on board with the government's course.

Gradually, the Six-party Talks will be resumed, in which bilateral formats, especially between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), will play more of a role. Finally, agreement will be reached on a schedule and concrete implementation measures with regard to denuclearisation, economic cooperation and normalisation of relations between the DPRK and the United States. Although on this scenario China would become concerned about its exclusive sphere of influence in the North, ultimately it would get on board with the change of policy in the interest of stability on the Korean peninsula. The United States and China will finally agree on a joint peace plan for the Korean peninsula, outlining the future security architecture and safeguarding the interests of the two great powers.

3.3 »Muddling through«

The third scenario lies midway between the extreme situations of escalation and of change arising from cooperation. A re-elected President Obama or a moderate Republican will continue to have other foreign policy priorities than the Korean peninsula and will largely leave South Korea to shape their own policy. The government in Seoul, however, will have no clear progressive character and pursue – also because of internal government conflicts – a selective and incoherent policy towards the North. Deepening of economic cooperation will resume, and there will even be progress in other areas. But the South Korean government will maintain its military build-up of recent years and also its dominant, sometimes even arrogant public stance towards the North. Both sides will predominantly retain a passive, cautious approach and weigh any further steps, given the prevailing uncertainty, in terms of narrowly defined, mainly domestic and foreign policy interests.

Since mistrust will predominate on both sides, although the Six-party Talks will be resumed from time to time, there will be no sustainable progress or significant breakthrough. China's role will remain ambivalent because great uncertainty will remain concerning future US policy on Korea. Coordination between the United States and China concerning strategic dealings with the Korean peninsula will not improve for the foreseeable future. As in the past, the North Korean government will be in a position to cleverly exploit the stalemate for its own purposes and obtain the odd concession from the

great powers. Outwardly, both confrontational and co-operative signs will be discernible on the part of North Korea, which means that it will remain difficult to tell who is doing what within the system, including possible conflicts. Meanwhile, the development of North Korea's nuclear programme will remain shrouded in ignorance and uncertainty. Moreover, cooperation between the DPRK and Iran in missile technology and civilian and military nuclear research will continue.

4. Outlook: The Role of Germany and the EU

The security policy situation on the Korean peninsula remains complex and the current state of affairs can best be described as muddled. The tensions and confrontation, including military incidents, of recent years have heavily strained the basis of trust between the main actors. The military and political costs of the current situation are high and threaten to increase if the main actors, North and South Korea, together with the United States and China cannot summon up the necessary will and capability to change course. This applies especially to the two Koreas and the United States, whose governments bear the main responsibility for the current situation.

However, the foreign and security policy interests of these four states, which we have portrayed as oriented primarily towards maintaining the status quo, stand in the way of a sustainable change of policy towards one of détente, rapprochement and gradual normalisation, disarmament and economic integration. External actors are thus needed as intermediaries to build bridges via dialogue and reduction of tensions. The European Union and Germany come to the fore here since they have their own experiences of overcoming conflicts and division, as well as having good relations with all those concerned. A relaxation of the security situation on the Korean peninsula and a tempering of the growing great power conflict between the United States and China are also in the strategic foreign policy interests of Europe

and Germany. It is therefore time that Europe began to play a more active and far-sighted foreign policy role in the region, no longer concentrating almost exclusively on foreign trade interests.

Furthermore, more support should be given to intermediaries, such as the German political foundations in their cooperation with partners in Northeast Asia and their work in North Korea. For example, Track II initiatives, such as the conference on Northeast Asia involving high-ranking participants held recently by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in New York could provide impetus for dialogue and increase mutual understanding and even trust-building. Finally, civil society should be given every possible opportunity to promote rapprochement and reconciliation between the two societies by means of non-state contacts, forms of dialogue and events.

If one wishes to draw lessons from history it is perhaps worth making a comparison with the situation in Germany and Europe in the 1950s and 1960s. The way in which the Cold War was playing out was pushing the two German states further apart, with a focus on confrontation. Furthermore, there were no diplomatic relations over the borders of the different blocs, even though in the West there was no societal consensus on how to deal with the East. It was the Ostpolitik of Willy Brandt and Egon Bahr that broke with the Hallstein Doctrine from the 1970s and thus made it possible to overcome estrangement and confrontation in Europe. It would be naïve to assume that the experiences of the CSCE process in Europe and European integration could be transferred directly to the situation in Northeast Asia, characterised by nationalism, ideological conflict and geostrategic power interests. However, the failed political efforts of recent years do show one thing: more political imagination and creativity is needed to enable the states and societies in the region in the not too distant future to develop and finally implement a common conception or even vision for peace, security and cooperation in Northeast Asia.



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