THE POLITICS OF FAMINE RELIEF IN NORTH KOREA

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Introduction

Irish historian Cormac O Grada posits that "(r)esearch into the history of famine has borrowed from many disciplines and subdisciplines, including medical history, demography, meteorology, economic and social history, economics, anthropology, and plant pathology."[1] The author of this thesis lacks the intellect and versatility necessary to juggle, let alone master, these fields. However, a valuable service can be performed in examining responses to a particular case of famine and in showing connections between political, economic, diplomatic and strategic conditions, and the relief efforts given to a suffering civilian population. To understand the reaction of governments and international organizations to the food crisis that struck North Korea in the mid-1990s, one must understand the diplomatic relations amongst the United States, Japan and the Koreas, and the functions, motivations and limits of the relevant NGOs, international organizations and aid agencies.

This thesis details and assesses the diplomatic and political climates in the U.S. and, to a lesser extent, Japan and South Korea, as they relate to East Asia and the DPRK in the late 1980s and early-and-mid 1990s. These times included an increased albeit limited opening in the relations between the DPRK and the US, the ROK and Japan that took place in spite of acts of violence. North Korea's nuclear program and strained relationship with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) would alter this changing dynamic. This period also included the staggering decline of the North Korean economy. Amidst these and other challenges, the US, Japan and the ROK responded to the strategic challenges and humanitarian disaster of the 1990's in North Korea.

[1] Cormac O Grada, *Famine: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton, 2009), 2.

There were differences in opinion among nations and amongst policymakers and experts on the appropriateness of North Korea as a recipient of aid, the role of the United States in humanitarian efforts, regional relations in East Asia, the threshold for government involvement in food crises, and the relationship between food aid and the nuclear situation. There were also differences in opinion about the nature of aid. This thesis is not an attempt to explain every detail of the origins and conditions of the North Korean famine. It is not an almanac of the overall response. Such works would require the release of information from not only North Korea, but from the classified files of donor nations.

The sources available to the author of this thesis had strengths and limitations. First and foremost, there are limits on the availability of, and questions about the reliability of, data about the DPRK in this period.[2] Author Suk Lee summarized this problem well, writing that "...surprisingly little is known about the food crisis. We know that the country experienced extreme food shortages in the 1990s. But we do not know when and why the shortages occurred, how severe they were, how different they were from those in other countries, what consequences they had, and even whether they have ended."[3] The DPRK government would release census data. However, it would not release much data on its domestic economic and developmental matters to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). When the data comes from the DPRK, this

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[2] Nicholas Eberstadt warns about the dangers of "false precision," urging the use of DPRK official statistics and "shadow statistics" in assessing the DPRK economy. Nicholas Eberstadt, "Disparities in Socioeconomic Development in Divided Korea: Indications and Implications," *Asian Survey*, Vol.40, No.6, November-December 2000, University of California Press, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3021193, last retrieved on September 17, 2011. Other authors, including Marcus Noland and C. Kenneth Quinones, use statistics from institutions in the Republic of Korea.

[3] Suk Lee, *The DPRK Famine of 1994-2000: Existence and Impact* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2005), 2.

thesis does not rely on the precise numbers offered. Rather, the reports are useful in reflecting the goals and policy objectives of the North Korean government.

The thesis also discusses media reports that show some of the information about North Korea being presented to the outside world. A good deal of the data relied upon by media outlets and secondary authors can be sourced to South Korean institutions – be they governmental or private. These media reports have been presented to reflect the information available in the public domain about North Korea in the mid-1990s
This is also true of information on energy and agriculture from secondary authors. Some of the data on energy has been compiled from multiple sources by a secondary author. or to show the state of the literature on North Korea's economic and material declines. The data are not used to imply precise knowledge. Rather, they reflect evidence used by secondary authors to form their conclusions.

The initial estimates about the state of the DPRK after the beginning of the 1995 floods came from the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA). The DHA had its United Nations Development Program (UNDP) official take a fly-over tour, and sent a Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team to North Korea. The DHA served as a coordinating body and produced "floods situation reports" beginning in August 1995 in order to inform the outside world about the nature and the extent of the damages that followed the floods in North Korea. The World Food Program and Food and Agriculture Organization would give more detailed accounts in their "special reports." Andrew Natsios wrote that the refugee and defector accounts that he saw seemed to contradict the NGO and UN field reporting, which he calls "contradictory and ambiguous."[4] These

[4] Andrew Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine* (Washington: U.S. Institute for Peace, 2001), 55.

reports, however limited in scope and detail, are useful in that they reflect an important piece of the information that was relied on by international agencies and others in the initial stages of the famine, and detailed the official appeals to which the world community would respond. Additionally, not all information about U.S. Policymaking in this period has been declassified by the American government. Some of the State Department documents cited are partially redacted.

Noting this, the author of this thesis has tried to write within careful limits. The thesis presents and critiques relevant open source and declassified documents and existing secondary works on the question. This is an attempt to reflect a range of attitudes and theories surrounding the topic, and to explore, to the degree possible, what information and beliefs drove responses to the famine in its initial phases. Please do not confuse the provision of context in a given area as a defense of the North Korean government. If there is one point of consensus in the literature, it is that many of the roots of the problems that faced the people of North Korea started to grow inside the DPRK long before the first drop of flood water fell. The North Korean government failed to protect the lives of its citizens.

In the 1990's, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea faced a perfect storm of challenges that contributed to diplomatic isolation, economic decline, and, according to accounts, difficulty growing, purchasing and distributing adequate nutrition for all of its citizens. In the mid-1990's, a famine occurred in North Korea that is now estimated to have killed between 600,000 and 1 million North Koreans.[5] This thesis seeks to track the

[5] These numbers are debated amongst experts. The controversy will be discussed in Chapters 2, but this number comes from a study by Daniel Goodkind and Lorraine West, as cited by Suk Lee, Meredith Woo-Cumings and Marcus Noland. Daniel Goodkind and Lorraine West, "The North Korean Famine and its Demographic Impacts," *Population and Development Review* Vol.27, No.2 (2001): 229. Retrieved from JSTOR,

events in the early stages of the famine, and to discuss the contexts of the American and Japanese governments responses to the initial stages of the food crisis. Understanding the conflict surrounding the provision of this aid requires an examination of the political and diplomatic climates in which these early decisions were made.

Discussion of the famine begins not with the famine itself, but rather the emergence of North Korea's unique political and economic difficulties. In the mid-1980s, the DPRK simultaneously underwent economic decline and experienced a shift in its relationships with its principal patrons and historic rivals. Drawing from a range of primary and secondary sources, chapter 1 tracks the late-Cold War growth in relations between the Soviet Union, China, and the Republic of Korea, much to the chagrin of North Korea.[6] It also explores the opening of relations between North Korea on the one hand, and the ROK, Japan and the United States on the other. It also notes the limits of such efforts. The thesis discusses the context of these relationships, including Japanese colonialism, the diplomatic rivalry between the two Koreas[7], and the DPRK's view of the U.S. as an imperialist power – a belief that influenced and influences much of the DPRK's domestic and nuclear policy.[8] It will show the shifts in the policies of these nations, as matters of trade, diplomatic normalization, and regional nuclear disarmament were discussed, with varying degrees of progress. By 1993, this progress was at risk, as disagreements arose between the DPRK and the IAEA over inspections of suspected DPRK nuclear facilities.

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last accessed on September 11, 2011.

6 The works of Barry Gills, Don Oberdorfer and C. Kenneth Quinones show how, in this late-Cold War period, relationships between the two Koreas and past rivals began a warming process, but that North Korea lost its strategic partners and could not gain normalization with its rivals.

7 Barry Gills and Han S. Park write of the competition between the two Koreas for global legitimacy.

8 C. Kenneth Quinones and Tim Beal outlined this position.

The second chapter discusses the DPRK's economic decline that accelerated with the loss of Soviet and Chinese aid in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the extreme weather that plagued North Korea in the mid-to-late 1990s, and the emergence of the famine itself. The chapter does not itself take a firm position on the causes of the famine. However, it details the debate amongst scholars as to how North Korea's agricultural, industrial, and economic situations fell to ruin. It discusses competing theories as to the extent to which these economic declines, political decisions made by the North Korean government, or the extraordinary and catastrophic combination of floods, hailstorms and drought in North Korea in the mid-1990s, were responsible for the famine. It uses primary and secondary sources – including the 1995 flood situation reports of the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) and the World Food Program (WFP) Special Reports – to show the effects of the economic declines and catastrophic weather faced by North Korea in the mid-1990s, as well as the initial response of the international community. This chapter also shows the debates over the death totals.

The final chapter concentrates on the response to the North Korean famine, focusing on the decisions made by the U.S. government from the time of its first contribution to UNICEF for the DPRK in 1995, leading into its substantial increase in aid in 1997. It shows the changing political environment in the United States. It focuses on conflicts between Presidential and Congressional priorities with regard to foreign involvement, changes in the view of North Korea in light of the rise of the nuclear issue, and the state of humanitarian aid. It also provides insight into to the global relief needs of the period, as well as the state of the institutional and governmental responses of the U.S.

and Japan to humanitarian need and East Asia regional policy. The international community, including governments, United Nations programs, and non-governmental organizations, responded to requests for assistance from the DPRK, even prior to the 1995 flooding. However, those immediate responses were shaped by a combination of factors – regional relations and a strong pattern of consultation between the US, Japan and ROK on DPRK-related matters, the behavior of and conditions within the DPRK, domestic political concerns, beliefs about the nature and behavior of the DPRK, and the priority placed on preventing nuclear proliferation. The chapter reviews declassified executive branch documents and Congressional action and testimony to understand the climate surrounding the American government's decisions on aid to North Korea in the early stage of the famine.

Chapter One: North Korea's Changing Role in Geopolitics and East Asia

In the 1990s, North Korea faced severe economic, agricultural and climatological crises. Many of the logistical and political obstacles to effective internal response, successful resource acquisition in world markets, and the relief efforts themselves were set in motion long before the first flood rains fell on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in July 1995. In this first chapter, we detail the changing foreign relations of the DPRK, noting that these shifts had profound effects on North Korea's economic and agricultural infrastructure. They would also alter the way that the DPRK government would be viewed by those major powers in a position to provide assistance.

Since the establishment of the governments of the Republic of Korea (ROK) in Seoul and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in Pyongyang in 1948, there have been both hostilities and intermittent discussions related to reunification. In the mid-1980s, North Korea made an effort to engage its rivals. The ROK would come to convince many of the DPRK's wealthiest allies in the Communist and Non-Aligned worlds that normalizing diplomatic relations with South Korea was in their best political and financial interests.[9] The ROK, Japan and the U.S. began to increasingly engage diplomatically with North Korea, with the DPRK having traded with both Japan and the ROK for some time prior, despite challenges. However, this period would also mark the decline of the DPRK's principal patron, the Soviet Union (USSR). This left North Korea increasingly reliant for energy and food support on the Chinese government.[10] Signs of

[9] Journalist Don Oberdorfer's *The Two Koreas* presents an outstanding overview of the Republic of Korea's diplomatic efforts toward the Soviet Union and Hungary. Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (New York: Basic Books, 2001 ed.).

[10] Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard, *Famine in North Korea: Markets, Aid and Reform* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 32-33.

agricultural shortages in the North existed before the flooding and droughts of the mid-1990s. In chapter 2, the literature on the domestic economic and material effects of these shifting relations on the DPRK is explored in greater detail.

In the late 1980's, the U.S. began to open its relationship with North Korea.[11] There was little political opposition to increased openness in the United States towards North Korea, enabling the executive branch to pursue this policy at a low domestic political cost. American political rhetoric towards the DPRK shifted a second time with the rise of the nuclear issue in 1992 and the election of President Bill Clinton. Increased concern over North Korea's nuclear goals was met with an increase in rhetoric skeptical of the use negotiations to improve the U.S. relationship with the DPRK.

North Korea's government believed that its rivals had imperial ambitions in Korea and posed military threats to the DPRK. The North Korean government has viewed American policy as hostile, and the DPRK sees nuclear weapons as a deterrence.[12] Fear of forcible regime change is an important element of North Korea's view of the United States, and a mistrust of large powers is a part of the history of both Koreas.[13] The aerial bombardment of North Korea during the Korean War ultimately resulted in many deaths and destroyed the DPRK's national infrastructure.[14] General Douglas MacArthur considered the possible use of nuclear weapons as a means of preventing Chinese access to Korea, and asserted that Air Force bombings of dams flooded villages and farms,

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11 C. Kenneth Quinones and Don Oberdorfer both discuss this opening of U.S. policy towards the DPRK.

12 C. Kenneth Quinones, "Reconciling Nuclear Standoff and Economic Shortfalls: Pyongyang's Perspective," in *North Korea: The Politics of Regime Survival*; edited by Young Whan Kihl and Hong Nack Kim. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006, p.76

13 C. Kenneth Quinones, "The United States in North Korean Foreign Policy," Chapter 4, in *North Korea and the World: Explaining Pyongyang's Foreign Policy*, ed. Byung Chul Koh (Seoul: Kyungnam University Press, 2004), retrieved from http://ckquinones.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/08/2004-us-in-dprk.pdf

14 Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun* (New York: Norton, 2005 ed.), 288-98

harming civilian life and agriculture.[15] In 1968, an American ship, the U.S.S. Pueblo was seized by the North Korean navy, its crew accused of espionage.[16] In the early 1980s the United States added 4,000 troops to its existing 40,000 in Korea, sold advanced aircraft to the ROK government, and began large joint military exercises called "Team Spirit".[17]

Some scholars of Korean foreign relations identify the rivalry between the two Koreas as a contest for global legitimacy. They see the formation of distinct state identities over the course of the occupation period, their hardening in civil war, and their Cold War contexts combining to lead to a worldwide competition for recognition, resources and economic growth. The two Koreas were not merely in military and economic competition, but were striving to be accepted by the world community as the legitimate government of Korea as a nation.[18] Barry Gills, Professor of global politics at the University of Newcastle, wrote that the emergence of the "hegemonic" state and its capacity to define the national interest and supersede private interest drove industrialization and social change in the Koreas. Much of the competition between the two Koreas came to surround the capacity to industrialize, handle internal social changes, and gain global recognition.[19] Competition between the Koreas in this model was one in which national status hinged on international recognition, as found in international organizational memberships, diplomatic recognition from other states, the success of its economy, and the congruence between its international and domestic policies.[20] Han S.

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15 Ibid

16 Former crew members of the USS Pueblo established a website to tell their stories at http://www.usspueblo.org.

17 Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 475.

18 Barry Gills, *Korea versus Korea: A Case of Contested Legitimacy* (Routledge, 1996); Han S. Park, "The Nature and Evolution of the Inter-Korean Legitimacy War," in *Korean Security Dynamics in Transition*, ed. Kyung-Ae Park and Dalchoong Kim (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

19 Barry Gills, *Korea versus Korea*, 5-9.

20 Ibid, 16-18.

Park, professor of political science at the University of Georgia, wrote that, "This relationship (between the two Koreas) is predicated upon the premise that both systems cannot be simultaneously legitimate (one of the systems must be illegitimate and, therefore, disintegrated)." "Performance" and "ideology" are the bases for state legitimacy, with the DPRK leaning more heavily towards ideology while the ROK became more ideologically flexible in order to grow its economy.[21] The ROK government sought to enhance legitimacy by rejecting the *juche* ideology of the North[22], and the Kim government sought legitimacy by, in turn, rejecting the militarism and state capitalism of the South.[23]

C. Kenneth Quinones posited that the roots of this struggle for legitimacy were in the December 1948 United Nations Resolution on Korea, which gave the ROK "legitimate authority" over the South, but did not say whether the ROK is the "sole legitimate government on the Korean peninsula." The rivalries over performance and ideology were put to concrete tests in the battle grounds of the Vietnam War, and in the quests for national recognition and economic success.[24] This partnership between the Republic of Korea and the United States was designed to contain, isolate and deter North Korea, build South Korea as "a showcase for democracy and capitalism," and give the

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21 Han S. Park, "The Nature and Evolution of the Inter-Korean Legitimacy War," 3-4.

22 A term requiring further explanation, one that is nearly ubiquitous in discussions of North Korea, is *juche*. The term is used to describe the philosophy, generally seen as directed towards the preservation or pursuit of Korean autonomy, behind the state ideology, policy practices and economic objectives of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). See Bruce Cumings, "The Corporate State in North Korea," in State and Society in Contemporary Korea, Hagen Koo, ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); Charles Armstrong, "*Juche* and North Korea's Global Aspirations", Working Paper #1, North Korea International Documentation Project, September 2009, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/NKDIP_wp1.pdf, accessed April 28, 2010

23 Ibid, 14-15.

24 C. Kenneth Quinones, "South Korea's Approaches to North Korea," in *Korean Security Dynamics in Transition*, ed. Kyung-Ae Park and Dalchoong Kim (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 21-22.

ROK the leading role in setting policy towards the DPRK.[25] This isolation included preventing North Korea from gaining access to markets beyond those of their Communist allies.[26]

In the first thirty years of the Cold War, however, it was far from certain whether the ROK would become a "showcase" that could outshine the DPRK, which had early success in industrializing.[27] Using South Korean talent, prior knowledge from the colonial era, and American policy and aid, the US-ROK alliance implemented the "Action in Korea" plan influenced by W.W. Rostow and drafted by Robert Komer, helping the ROK's economy to take off.[28] There was large annual economic growth in the ROK in the late-1970s (11.5% increase in real gross national product (GNP) per year for 1977 and 1978) and per capita GNP would pass $1000 in 1978.[29] The ROK economy had high inflation and was vulnerable to shocks, but experienced such manufacturing growth that it was able to direct resources away from agriculture.[30] That said, agricultural development and self-sufficiency in rice production were a big part of the government's "Fourth Five-Year Development Plan" for 1977-1982.[31] The ROK suffered economic shocks in the early 1980's. However, between 1986-88, it would experience extraordinary growth (12% growth per annum), led by exports (20% growth per annum).[32] This

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25 Ibid, 22-23.

26 Ibid.

27 Bruce Cumings, "From Japanese Imperium to American Hegemony," in *Korea At The Center: Dynamics of Regionalism in Northeast Asia*, ed. Charles K. Armstrong, Gilbert Rozman, Samuel S. Kim, and Stephen Kotkin, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 85-87.

28 Ibid.

29 The World Bank, Korea Country Management Unit, East Asia and Pacific Region, "A Productive Partnership: The World Bank and the Republic of Korea, 1962-1994", February 1999, 23-24, retrieved from http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTKOREA/Resources/Productive+partnership.pdf.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 The World Bank, "A Productive Partnership: The World Bank and the Republic of Korea, 1962-1994", 32.

discussion of growth does not fully capture the ROK's social changes.

This growth would be contrasted with the flagging economic fortunes of the DPRK, which had been the economic leader of the two coming out of the gate throughout the 1950s and 1960s. By the mid-1980's, North Korea was in a difficult condition, with its economy slipping below that of the ROK[33]. However, like the South Korean government, the DPRK government also aggressively pursued legitimacy through connections with socialist parties in other nations and by gaining diplomatic recognition. The DPRK initially interacted economically with the Communist world alone, and did not form economic relationships with capitalist nations until the 1970s.[34] Japan was the first capitalist country to have a trading relationship with the DPRK. Over the course of the 1970's, France and West Germany became substantial trade partners with North Korea, while the DPRK and Japan made progress in foreign relations.[35] The DPRK also sought to bolster its legitimacy by rallying support for its causes amongst non-aligned nations. It also built relationships with socialist parties in nations that were allied with the United States or were neutral. This would include contacts with the Japanese Socialist Party, which would prove critical to later attempts at rapprochement between Japan and the DPRK. In the 1970s and 1980s, the DPRK established diplomatic relations with 60 nations across the world, including nations in Asia, Europe, South America and Africa.[36]

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[33] Wellington University (NZ) Lecturer of Marketing and International Business Tim Beal observed that, if measured by the relationship between the DPRK Won and the U.S. Dollar, the DPRK economy falls behind that of the ROK in 1984. He cites the American economic advantage over the Soviet Union as a key. Tim Beal, *North Korea: The Struggle Against American Power* (London: Pluto, 2005), 63.

[34] Charles Armstrong, "*Juche* and North Korea's Global Aspirations," Working Paper #1, North Korea International Documentation Project, September 2009, 2-6, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/NKDIP_wp1.pdf; Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 476.

[35] Ibid.

[36] National Committee on North Korea, "DPRK Diplomatic Relations,"last updated on January 3, 2010, http://www.ncnk.org/resources/briefing-papers/resources/publications/NCNK_Issue_Brief_Diplomatic_Relations.doc/file_view.

Representatives of the DPRK provided aid[37] and instruction in their signature ideology, *juche*. This instruction sometimes included discussion of party-guided agriculture policy.[38] In the 1970s and 1980s, the DPRK also expressed interest in engaging its non-Korean adversaries, especially the United States and Japan. This would also involve situational engagement with international organizations, particularly those that would offer international legitimacy and technical assistance. Furthermore, in this period, while the governments of the DPRK and the ROK were in competition for legitimacy and supremacy on the peninsula, both sides took steps towards reunification.

In this competition for preeminent legitimacy, Gills claimed that the ROK's foreign ministry believed that its rise in international diplomatic recognition in the 1980s and 1990s came from three matters. First, South Korea used a policy initiative of increased openness called *Nordpolitik* to forge economic bonds and diplomatic relations with DPRK allies - Communist bloc members and non-aligned states alike. Second, the ROK was presented with an opportunity for global exposure and relationship building when it was awarded the 1988 Summer Olympic Games. The third cause was the opening of Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s.[39] However, other factors undergirded this emergence. The South Korean economy began to rapidly grow, leaving it far wealthier than its northern counterpart. A changing domestic environment in the ROK, a changing international landscape in which to compete for legitimacy, and public

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[37] This referenced radio broadcast discusses the DPRK's 1978 provision of technical assistance, money, and farm equipment, even tractors. "Aid from North Korea," BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, June 19, 1979, Tuesday, Source: Lusaka in English June 7, 1978, Economic and Scientific; 2. Africa; Zambia; ME/W1036/A2/5;

[38] "Burundi agricultural delegation in N Korea", BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, September 17, 1980, Wednesday, KCNA in English, September 11, 1980, retrieved July 12, 2010 via Lexis Nexis. "Nigeria; Agricultural Co-operation Agreement With North Korea", BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, June 2, 1981, Tuesday, Excerpt of Lagos in English for abroad. May 22, 1981, 0830 GMT, via Lexis Nexis, last retrieved July 12, 2010

[39] Barry Gills, *Korea versus Korea*, 223.

demonstrations and activism, would require Chun Doo Hwan and his successor Roh Tae Woo in the ROK to accede to democratic reforms. These changes support Gills' belief that flexibility in governance was a key to enhancing international support in this era.[40]

The DPRK's Changing Relations with Rivals

For the United States, North Korea was, prior to the 1980's, seen as a member of the Communist world and as a potential threat to Cold War allies. It was not a state with which the U.S. had direct high-level negotiations or formal diplomatic relations. However, within Asia, the ROK, Japan and the DPRK had made diplomatic, economic and clandestine efforts to engage one another and improve relations since the late 1960's. Often, these attempts at diplomacy were sabotaged by world events or acts of provocation or terrorism. However, several critical changes within and between these nations occurred that spurred the US, ROK and Japan towards improving relations with North Korea. At the center are four major policy decisions that were made or announced in 1987 and 1988, and made possible by prior policy shifts: 1) democratic reforms in the Republic of Korea, 2) the formal announcement by the ROK of its policy of *Nordpolitik*, an attempt to engage with the DPRK while building relationships with the DPRK's allies, 3) the US' announcement and conduct of its "modest initiative," an effort to lower barriers to diplomatic relations between itself and North Korea while supporting ROK policy, and 4) Japan's efforts to step up engagement of the DPRK through its Liberal Democratic Party.

Nordpolitik, a policy intended to simultaneously engage North Korea and its allies, was at the center of the strategy of the Republic of Korea and its own allies vis a vis the DPRK. C. Kenneth Quinones argues that the spirit behind *Nordpolitik* did not

[40] Ibid, 19-20.

begin with their public announcements in 1987 and 1988, but rather went back to strategic decisions made by the U.S. and the ROK over the course of the 1970s and 1980s. As U.S. policies in Asia shifted in the 1970s away from aid and large regional military responsibility, the American government used improved trade relations and increased diplomatic efforts to achieve American objectives.[41] In this period there were attempts by the two Koreas themselves to improve relations, particularly the Red Cross talks. These secret preliminary talks began in September 1971 as a discussion of family separation issues, and resulted in the Joint Statement on North-South Dialogue between the two governments in July 1972 and the establishment of the Inter-Korean Coordinating Committee. This in turn led to formal Red Cross talks between the two nations.[42] However, these attempts at détente would lose steam as incidents including the 1973 kidnapping of Kim Dae Jung by South Korean intelligence and the attempted assassination of Park Chung Hee in 1974 that resulted in the murder of his wife by a Korean resident of Japan would diminish trust and build tensions between the two Koreas, and the ROK and Japan.[43] In the 1980s, violence damaged the relationship between the ROK and DPRK, including the shooting down of Korean Air flight 007 over Soviet airspace in September 1983, and the October 1983 Rangoon bombing that killed several ROK cabinet members in an attempt by the DPRK on Chun's life in Myanmar. Quinones recounts that, in October 1983, while serving as a political officer in Seoul, he

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41 C. Kenneth Quinones, "North Korea: From Containment to Engagement," in *North Korea After Kim Il Sung*, ed. Dae-Sook Suh and Chae-Jin Lee (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 101-102.

42 North Korea International Documentation Project, Chronology guidebook for July 2010 Conference, "The Rise and Fall of Détente on the Korean Peninsula, 1970-1974: A Critical Oral History," (July 2010), http://www.wilsoncenter.org/topics/docs/RiseandfallChrono.pdf.

43 Ibid. Also, journalist Don Oberdorfer provides an excellent chronicling of these events in his *The Two Koreas*. He also gives a detailed description of the 1976 skirmish in which American soldiers were attacked and killed by North Korean soldiers in the DMZ in what was called the "Panmunjom axe killings." Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 42-55, 74-83.

was tasked with informing the chairmen of the ROK's Defense Affairs and Foreign Affairs committees that the U.S. would "defend South Korea, but not if it attacked North Korea first."[44] Chun would show restraint, averting war.[45] Then-ROK Foreign Minister Lee Bum Suk, in June 1983, set normalized relations with China and the USSR as an official goal of the ROK.[46] South Korean government experts asserted in 1985 that *Nordpolitik* could only work if it positively engaged the DPRK in addition to its allies.[47] Quinones places the desire to maximize participation in the 1988 Summer Olympic Games and to avoid terrorism as among the core reasons for the ROK's development and maintenance of a policy of engagement.[48]

In early September of 1984, large-scale flooding struck the Republic of Korea, leaving almost 200 people dead and causing millions of dollars worth of damage.[49] In response, the DPRK offered food and supply aid through its Red Cross that the ROK accepted.[50] Following this, North-South talks began, and Red Cross talks reopened. Dialogues with the DPRK produced family reunions of those separated for decades by war and division, as well as athletic and cultural exchanges.[51]

Despite the Cold War alliance between the U.S. and the ROK, some American

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44 C. Kenneth Quinones and Jack Tragert, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding North Korea* (New York: Alpha, 2003), 311.

45 C. Kenneth Quinones, "South Korea's Approaches to North Korea,", 31.

46 Ibid, 187-88.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid, 31-32.

49 Associated Press, "South Koreans Accept Help to Flood Victims from North," *New York Times*, September 15, 1984, Saturday, Late City Final Edition, Section 1; Page 2, Column 5; Foreign Desk, retrieved from LexisNexis.

50 "N Korean Red Cross Agrees to Meet South to Discuss Aid," "'Text' of 14th September letter from Son Song-pil, Chairman of the Central Committee of the DPRK Red Cross Society, to Yu Chang-sun, President of the South Korean Red Cross", BBC Summary of World Broadcasts; September 17, 1984, Monday; Pyongyang home service; September 14, 1984, 0900 GMT; The BBC classifies the summary with this code: Section: Part 3 The Far East; A. International Affairs; 3. Far Eastern Relations; FE/7750/A3/1; retrieved via Lexis-Nexis Academic on July 12, 2010.

51 Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 148.

policymakers were uncomfortable with aspects of the behavior of Chun and the military leadership of South Korea. For instance, the arrest and scapegoat prosecution of dissident and future ROK President Kim Dae Jung for the events surrounding the Kwangju massacre led to extensive negotiations between the Carter and Reagan administrations and the Chun administration to spare Kim Dae Jung's life.[52] Namhee Lee wrote that the Chun government's use of anticommunism was "hegemonic," and that the ROK government used the National Security Law and the Anticommunist Law to define and suppress dissent. At the same time, anti-Americanism was on the rise within various democratization movements.[53]

The International Olympic Committee's (IOC's) selection of the Republic of Korea to host these games came on September 30, 1981, a time early in Chun's rule, when South Korea faced domestic political authoritarianism and instability as well as international tension with North Korea. This was a mere 15 months after both the massacre of civilians at Kwangju, and the heavily boycotted 1980 Moscow Summer Olympic games. The Olympics presented an opportunity to show off Korean economic progress, much as Japan used the 1964 Tokyo Olympics to present their economic progress on a global stage.[54] The ROK government was forced to limit its response to demonstrations, as then-IOC chief Juan Antonio Samaranch had stated his willingness to move the Olympics if there was civil unrest.[55] Despite a lobbying of non-aligned nations

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[52] Don Oberdorfer notes that the decision to spare Kim Dae Jung was not motivated by humanitarian or philosophical concerns, but rather that Chun, as a new military dictator, used the life of Kim Dae Jung as a "trump card" to improve relations with the U.S. and enhance his legitimacy. Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 133-138.

[53] Namhee Lee, *The Making of Minjung: Democracy and the Politics of Representation in South Korea* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 71-72, 81-83, 112.

[54] Jarol Manheim, "The 1988 Seoul Olympics as Public Diplomacy," *The Western Political Quarterly* Vol. 43, No. 2 (Jun., 1990): 281-83, retrieved via JSTOR.

[55] Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 166.

and negotiations to co-host, the DPRK found itself on the outside of the subsequent success of the 1988 Summer Olympic Games, as North Korea and the International Olympic Committee would prove unable to come to a compromise on the number of events that the DRPK would hold.[56] The USSR and China would both participate in the Seoul Games, with the Soviets bringing a record-sized delegation, while North Korea's boycott was joined only by Cuba, Ethiopia and Nicaragua and two other nations[57.]

The Republic of Korea was making domestic changes, led by a popular push for democratic reforms. On June 29, 1987, Roh Tae Woo announced his party would grant the request of the opposition for a direct presidential election. The announcement came in the wake of anti-government, student-led protests that were joined by an increasingly broad coalition of middle-class people and workers against Chun Doo Hwan's announcement earlier in the month that only indirect elections would be held.[58] Chun had claimed a desire to serve only one seven year term, and to peacefully transfer power.[59] However, transitioning power by way of an electoral college was considered inadequately democratic by reformers. Barry Gills notes that the ROK, as it reformed its political system in the 1980s and 1990s, showed increased "flexibility in domestic political processes," decreased dependence on U.S. resources and a lowering of the anti-Communist dogmatism.[60] These changes were consistent with international trends such as

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[56] Dae Sook Suh, "North Korea in 1986: Strengthening the Soviet Connection," *Asian Survey* Vol. 27, No. 1, A Survey of Asia in 1986: Part I (Jan., 1987), University of California Press, 61, via JSTOR; Han Sung-Joo, "South Korea in 1987: The Politics of Democratization," *Asian Survey* Vol. 28, No. 1, A Survey of Asia in 1987: Part I (Jan., 1988), University of California Press, 61, via JSTOR.

[57] Kyongsoo Lho, "Seoul-Moscow Relations: Looking to the 1990s", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 29, No. 12 (Dec., 1989), University of California Press, 1153, retrieved via JSTOR; "Seoul 1988 Summer Olympics," International Olympic Committee, http://www.olympic.org/en/content/Olympic-Games/All-Past-Olympic-Games/Summer/Seoul-1988/.

[58] Hagen Koo, *Korean Workers: The Culture and Politics of Class Formation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 2001), 154.

[59] Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 146.

[60] Barry Gills, *Korea versus Korea*, 19, 191.

markets, and South Korea received an increasing amount of international support. By the same token, the DPRK's rigidity was not helping its own cause.[61] Bruce Cumings wrote that while Seoul gained support from much of the former Soviet bloc nations, the United States did not elect to cross-recognize the DPRK because of "concern with P'yongyang's nuclear intentions."[62]

In the resulting election, Roh Tae Woo was elected President of the Republic of Korea in December 1987. Roh's policy towards the North involved plans not only for continued engagement, but also reunification, a response to the proposals offered by Kim Il Sung. This engagement policy was again tested by violence that occurred just prior to the election. On November 29, 1987, Korean Airlines flight 858 was bombed over the Andaman Sea by two DPRK agents later arrested in Bahrain, killing 115 people.[63] This bombing would further isolate the DPRK from its rivals. Japan immediately announced sanctions against North Korea, with its Foreign Ministry making a statement that supported the ROK's conclusion that the plane's demise was caused by North Korean agents. The Japanese government also announced new safety measures for the Olympics, additional restrictions on diplomatic contact, and a suspension of official visits. The statement excluded from the ban negotiation over the Japanese Fujisan Maru fishermen held by the DPRK.[64] The Soviets sought to prevent United Nations sanctions against

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61 Ibid.

62 Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place In the Sun*, 478-79.

63 Associated Press, "Suspect in Korean Crash Recovers from Poisoning," *New York Times*, December 6, 1987, http://www.nytimes.com/1987/12/06/world/suspect-in-korean-crash-recovers-from-poisoning.html?sec=health.

64 "Japan Announces Sanctions Against N Korea Over KAL Incident", "(i) 'Full text' of statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary Keizo Obuchi on Japanese sanctions against North Korea "as translated by the Foreign Ministry"", BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, January 27, 1988, *Kyodo News Service*, January 26, 1988, 0231 GMT and 0325 GMT. The BBC codes this article from Kyodo FE/0057 A3/7; Source: (a) Kyodo in English (i) 0231 and (ii) 0325 gmt 26 Jan 88, Section: Part 3 The Far East; A. International Affairs; 3. Far Eastern Relations; FE/0059/A3/1; retrieved from Lexis-Nexis

North Korea, arguing that the evidence against the DPRK was limited to a confession.[65] However, within a year of the incident, Soviet officials broke the ice on economic talks with the ROK. Less than nine months after the bombing, and less than three months prior to the Olympic games, Roh publicly announced the policy of *Nordpolitik*, pledging increased diplomatic openness, cultural exchange and improved relations between the Republic of Korea and North Korea, as well as between the ROK and Communist nations around the world. He also called for allies to increase their trade with North Korea.[66] *Nordpolitik* was not merely about government officials preparing for the Olympics. It was an effort that engaged broad forces and diverse figures in the ROK power structure to use political and economic leverage to form new relationships abroad.[67]

Roh, in September 1989, proposed the Korean National Reunification Formula. Paul French, author and director of market research group Access Asia, notes that this proposal for confederation resembled the plans proposed by Kim Dae Jung and Kim Il Sung, differing from Kim Il Sung's in that it did not mandate that U.S. troops leave Korea.[68] The two Koreas engaged in the South-North High-Level Talks from 1990 into 1992, culminating in two critical agreements. The first treaty that emerged was the Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation Between South and North Korea, signed on December 13, 1991. This treaty affirmed the

[65] "Asian News – South Korea, Soviet Union; Soviets Negative Toward Debate on KAL Incident; Korean Air (KAL)," *Japan Economic Newswire*, Tokyo, January 29, 1988, via LexisNexis, last retrieved July 12, 2010

[66] Susan Chira, "South Korean Chief, in a Switch, Seeks Wide New Ties With North," *New York Times*, July 7, 1988, retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/1988/07/07/world/south-korean-chief-in-a-switch-seeks-wide-new-ties-with-north.html?fta=y?pagewanted=1.

[67] Don Oberdorfer details the work of Daewoo head Kim Woo Chong to build economic and political agreements with nations that were previously allies of the DPRK and not the ROK, including Hungary, Sudan and Somalia. Oberdorfer describes how Hungary, with Soviet approval (citing Bazhanova), accepted a $625 million aid package from South Korea and normalized relations with Seoul in 1989. Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas,*188-191, citing Natalia Bazhanova, "North Korea and Seoul-Moscow Relations", *Korea and Russia Towards the 21st Century*, (Sejong, 1992), 334.

[68] Paul French, *North Korea: The Paranoid Peninsula – A Modern History* (New York: Zed Books, 2005), 245.

unity of the Korean people and special condition of their polity as "not being a relationship between states…a special one constituted temporarily in the process of reunification." It also set limits on each entity's behavior toward the other, set up a telephone line, and set up committees and offices tasked with promoting reconciliation. In the spirit of the *Nordpolitik* policy, the two Koreas agreed to increase cultural exchange, athletic and scientific cooperation, trade (including joint ventures), and travel between North and South.[69] The second treaty was the Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. This treaty, expressing that such restrictions are "favorable for peace and the peaceful unification of our country," limits use of nuclear energy solely to "peaceful purposes," banning "nuclear processing and uranium enrichment," and prohibits any handling, testing, acquisition or manufacture of nuclear weapons. This treaty does not explicitly mention membership in the IAEA or compliance with any standard external to Korea, such as the NPT. Rather, it calls for the creation of and joint Korean compliance with a "South-North joint Nuclear Control Commission."[70]

However, despite these agreements, not everyone saw *Nordpolitik* as promoting peaceful reunification. Jang Jip Choi wrote of *Nordpolitik* as both a radical departure from the hardline anticommunism of the ROK state, and a conservative response to the collapse of Communist governments, and the rise of democratic movements and the way they went on to "rearticulate" North Korea's role and U.S. responsibility for the partition and for the ROK's military massacre at Kwangju in 1980. It was also reacting to

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69 "Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation Between South and North Korea", Effective February 19, 1992, Accessed via USC-UCLA Joint East Asian Studies Center, Source: Ministry of Unification, http://www.international.ucla.edu/eas/documents/korea-agreement.htm

70 "Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula", Signed January 20, 1992, entered into force on February 19, 1992, http://www.ncnk.org/resources/publications/Joint_Dec_1992.pdf. This was also retrieved from Federation of American Scientists, http://www.fas.org/news/dprk/1992/920219-D4129.htm

reunification movements. However, the National Security Law remained "oppressive."[71]

Hong Nack Kim wrote that the DPRK was motivated by several factors to improve relations with Japan. These included trying to lead Japan towards a policy of "equidistance" between itself and the two Koreas. This did not happen, as Japan remained connected to the ROK by its own interests, trade and Japan's security relationship with the United States. The DPRK also desired to grow trade between itself and Japan, particularly to acquire "quality products at a reasonable price."[72] While Japan was the DPRK largest non-socialist trading partner in this period, this would run into problems.[73] The DPRK had rung up considerable debts to Japan (over $600 million U.S. or 80 billion yen, finally defaulting in 1984). This default cost MITI 30 billion yen in export insurance payments to creditors.[74] Brian Bridges wrote that the trade between Japan and the DPRK was disproportionately critical to North Korea. Japanese exports to the DPRK in the early 1990s were mostly finished products for use by North Korea's "joint ventures", including equipment for manufacturing and transportation, while most DPRK exports to Japan in this period were base metals, marine and agricultural products, and textiles.[75]

Japan's relationship with the DPRK, traditionally handled through the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), began to improve with a 1989 visit to the DPRK by a delegation of Japanese leaders from both the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the JSP.[76] Prior to

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71 Jang Jip Choi, "Political Cleavages in South Korea", in *State and Society in Contemporary Korea*, ed. Hagen Koo, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 42-3.

72 Hong Nack Kim, "North Korea's Policy Towards Japan," in *Foreign Relations of North Korea during Kim Il Sung's Last Days*,ed. Doug Joong Kim, (Seoul: Sejong Institute, 1994), 161.

73 Brian Bridges, *Japan and Korea in the 1990s: From Antagonism to Adjustment* (Cambridge: Edward Elgar, 1993), 111.

74 Hong Nack Kim, "North Korea's Policy Towards Japan", 161-163.

75 Brian Bridges, *Japan and Korea in the 1990s*, 112.

76 Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 220-22.

this visit, however, steps were taken in order to ensure a smoother path to normalization.[77] On March 30, 1989, Japanese Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita gave a speech apologizing to all Koreans for the colonization of Korea, and also expressing a desire for "direct dialogue" with the DPRK.[78] In the spring of 1989, the cabinet of Prime Minister Takeshita, in the words of then-U.S. Ambassador to Japan Michael Armacost, "put out feelers to North Korean authorities."[79] In 1990, new Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu expressed a willingness to apologize for the colonization of Korea and to have discussions with the North. The DPRK replied that this was acceptable if a prominent member of the LDP led the delegation, and if Japan was ready to both apologize and "discuss compensation and economic assistance."[80] The North Koreans preferred that the prominent Japanese LDP politician was not a current official of the government.[81]

Ambassador Armacost observed that Japan had several motivations for rapprochement with the DPRK in this period. These included a desire to balance Chinese influence in Pyongyang and in Northeast Asia as a whole if the United States scaled back its overseas military commitment. Domestic needs were also involved as Japan wanted the DPRK to calm its anti-Japan rhetoric, so as to help Japan relieve tensions within its ethnic Korean community. Japan also sought the release of the Fujisan Maru fishing crew.[82] Economically, Japan also saw the DPRK as possessing "valuable minerals and an

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77 Ibid.

78 Steven R. Weisman, "To North Korea, Tokyo Regrets the Past," *New York Times*, March 31, 1989, retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/1989/03/31/world/to-north-korea-tokyo-regrets-the-past.html.

79 Michael Armacost, *Friends or Rivals: An Insider's Account of U.S.-Japan Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 146.

80 Ibid.

81 Brian Bridges, *Japan and Korea in the 1990s*, 146.

82 Michael Armacost, *Friends or Rivals*, 144-45. These were Japanese fishermen held in the DPRK on espionage charges for helping a North Korean flee. The fishermen would be released in October 1990.

abundant supply of labor."[83]

In September of 1990, a party of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Japanese Socialist Party (JSP) officials visited Japan. LDP power broker Shin Kanemaru, Kim Il Sung, and JSP vice-chair Makoto Tanabe meet in Pyongyang. As a result, on September 28, 1990, the LDP, JSP and Korean Worker's Party signed onto a joint declaration that held that Japan should "fully and officially apologise and compensate" the DPRK for not only colonization but also for the subsequent period of division.[84] Brian Bridges wrote that the Japanese were surprised by the DPRK's speedy push for normalization of relations, pointing out that the USSR's impending normalization with South Korea and that Kim Il Sung's recent official visit to China greatly catalyzed this request.[85] An agreement was struck between these political parties and the Korean Workers' Party during this visit that left the door open for compensation and diplomatic recognition of the DPRK.[86] However, the Japanese foreign ministry did not support such a move, in part because it was not derived after consultation with South Korea and the United States and went further than the 1965 agreement between Japan and the Republic of Korea.[87] Despite these disagreements, preliminary talks went forward.

Much like American policy, Japanese policy towards the two Koreas in this period was hinged on consultation with the ROK. Japan waited until after the first round of North and South Korean high-level talks in September 1990 before seriously considering the 1991 Japan-DPRK Normalization Talks.[88] Over the course of eight rounds of

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83 Ibid, 145.
84 Brian Bridges, *Japan and Korea in the 1990s*, 146-7. Here, Bridges quotes the declaration.
85 Ibid, 147.
86 Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 220-22.
87 Ibid.
88 Tsuneo Akaha, "Japan's Approach Toward the Korean Peninsula", in *Korea At The Center: Dynamics of*

normalization talks, important debates emerge. Tsuneo Akaha asserted that there were several obstacles to normalization. First, Japan argued that DPRK territory ends at the 38th parallel. North Korea, however, saw this limitation as an attempt to divide Korea. Second, Japan insisted on the legitimacy of its 1910 treaty of annexation with Yi Choson, as well as the importance of San Francisco peace treaty. Pyongyang argues that they did not sign either document. The DPRK demanded compensation as a result of the suffering caused by colonization as well as by Japan's 1965 normalization with the Republic of Korea. Japan denied responsibility for damages, claiming that it was not at war with Korea in the Pacific War.[89] Authors Gavin McCormack and Wada Haruki point out that multiple issues impacted these negotiations, including resistance from the U.S. and the ROK, and disagreements over the particulars of compensation. The talks broke down during the eighth round, and the dispute over North Korea's abductions of Japanese civilians would grow as a divisive issue in the years after this.[90] These negotiations would not be resumed until 2000.

Improvement in U.S.-DPRK Relations

Fits and starts of at least the potential for improved relations between the U.S. and DPRK began prior to the Clinton presidency. There were brief periods in the 1970s in which the DPRK distanced itself from Moscow, especially in the period following Jimmy Carter's announcement that he would withdraw U.S. troops from the Korean peninsula.[91]

Regionalism in Northeast Asia, ed. Charles K. Armstrong, Gilbert Rozman, Samuel S. Kim, and Stephen Kotkin, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 190.

89 Ibid.

90 Gavin McCormack and Wada Haruki, "The Strange Record of 15 Years of Japan-North Korea Negotiations", *The Asia Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*; No.76, (2006), pp.111-34, retrieved from http://old.japanfocus.org/-Gavan-McCormack/1894.

91 Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 474.

Carter ultimately kept the troops in Korea. Joel Wit, C. Kenneth Quinones and Joseph Tragert argued that the real period of substantial US-DPRK engagement began not with the Clinton presidency, but rather several years prior. In 1984, the Reagan administration introduced "smile diplomacy," a policy that permitted American diplomats to go to diplomatic events even if North Koreans were there.[92]

Important to later American relief efforts in the DPRK, important decisions about U.S. policy towards food aid were made in the mid-1980's. In the 1980s, the U.S. was involved in relief efforts in Africa. During the Ethiopian famine of the 1980s, the National Security Council and then-U.S, Ambassador to the United Nations Jeanne Kirkpatrick convinced the Reagan White House to prevent the delivery of food aid to Ethiopia on the basis of its Marxist government and Cold War strategy.[93] Then-Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Peter MacPherson and then-Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Refugees Gene Dewey successfully appealed to President Reagan to overturn the policy.[94] Andrew Natsios calls the new policy resulting from this effort the Reagan Doctrine, writing that "famine assistance in the future would be based on need not on American geostrategic calculations."[95]

Dean Carol Lancaster, dean of the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, sees the roots of the separation between U.S. food aid and strategic considerations as a longer, rocky and imperfect process but real, citing aid to the Soviet

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92 C. Kenneth Quinones, "South Korea's Approaches to North Korea," 23-24; Joel S. Wit, "North Korea: The Leader of the Pack," *The Washington Quarterly* Vol.24:1 (Winter 2001), Center for Strategic Studies and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 77, accessed at http://www.twq.com/winter01/wit.pdf.

93 Andrew Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine*, 145.

94 Ibid.

95 Ibid.

Union, a nation whose ideas were "anathema to much of Washington." Despite ebbs and flows, humanitarian aid in the post-World War I era was a "broadly acceptable norm."[96] However, the existence of U.S. food aid was not independent of political considerations. In the 1930s, President Roosevelt used a form of "food aid" as a means by which to export surplus agricultural production.[97] Furthermore, Lancaster cites the releases of the "Perkins committee" report and the "Peterson Report" in the Johnson and Nixon administrations, urging the government to "put greater distance between the diplomatic and developmental uses of aid and to upgrade the latter."[98]

In contrast to the political climate that would surround the North Korean famine, members of the Congressional majority pressed the executive branch and U.S. AID on why it did not seek a greater amount of aid for Ethiopia. On December 6, 1985, a joint hearing was held by the Select Committee on Hunger and the Africa Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee entitled "Famine and Recovery in Africa: The U.S. Response." This testimony is useful, not as an objective analysis of poverty and famine in Africa, but rather to reflect the American political atmosphere with regard to a major foreign food crisis. The testimony at this hearing highlights a few things. First, the famine in Ethiopia was part of a larger food security crisis across sub-Saharan Africa. Second, while the existing emergency relief efforts in Ethiopia were seen as successful in saving lives, witnesses representing international organizations urged Congress to provide more funds for development, while representatives from the Reagan administration said that there were fewer requests for development funds by NGOs for Ethiopia than was

[96] Carol Lancaster, *Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, Domestic Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 95.
[97] D. John Shaw, *The UN World Food Programme and the Development of Food Aid* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 29.
[98] Carol Lancaster, *Foreign Aid*, 76.

expected by the committee. Reagan administration officials stated that emergency responses were more suitable for dealing with Africa's problems. Third, the information available about food levels and refugees within the African countries was often imprecise. The closest to a projection of how many had died from this famine offered at the December 1985 hearing is by U.S. AID's Ted Morse, who described the death total as "countless thousands."[99]

As for U.S.-DPRK policy, in July 1988, the U.S. announced the "modest initiative," a partial opening of communications between the U.S. and DPRK and reduction of sanctions. C. Kenneth Quinones wrote that this effort was "linked to" the *Nordpolitik* policy of the Republic of Korea.[100] The combination of these two policies would create an environment in which it was possible to improve relations between North Korea and Japan, South Korea and the United States. The will was there in American government for a change of approach. Then-Principal Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs for the U.S. Department of State William Clark, Jr. recalled that, in the mid-1980s, members of the Department of State were increasingly dissatisfied with the lack of progress being made in relations with North Korea, and that interest in the issue shared by members of Congress and the Department of State advanced the policy of engagement.[101] This happened despite violent provocations by the DPRK in the 1980s.

The stage for the announcement was set the year before. Gaston Sigur, then the

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[99] "Famine and Recovery in Africa: The U.S. Response," Joint hearing before the Select Committee on Hunger and the Subcommittee on Africa of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, Ninety-ninth Congress, 1st Session, Washington, DC, December 6, 1985, Serial No. 99-11, Washington, DC: printed by the Government Printing Office, 1986, 118-119.

[100] C. Kenneth Quinones and Joseph Tragert, *A Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding North Korea*, 249.

[101] Ambassador William Clark, Jr.; Interviewed by Thomas Stern, initial interview date: January 11, 1994, The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, retrieved from http://frontiers.loc.gov/service/mss/mssmisc/mfdip/2005%20txt%20files/2004cla02.txt.

U.S. Undersecretary of State for East Asia, gave two critical speeches in 1987 that reflected changes in American policy and attitudes toward the conflict between the two Koreas. On February 6, 1987, Sigur gave a speech entitled "Korean Politics in Transition" that began by emphasizing the ROK's economic and social progress. However, he asserted that there was broad consensus in Korean politics that the political system must also grow to meet the modern needs of the Korean people. He expressed his hope for a peaceful transition of power and increased civilian control of institutions, and praised Chun Doo Hwan's promise of a peaceful, democratic transition. However, Sigur made clear that the U.S. government expected follow-through on the promise, pledging ongoing military protection and an open trade system to aid the ROK government as it changed. Sigur said, "It is essential for the future of the Republic of Korea, and for the future of our bilateral relations, that any new constitution, and the laws which support representative government, create a more open and legitimate political system."[102]

Hajime Izumi notes that on July 21, 1987, Sigur gave yet another pivotal speech called "Korea: New Beginnings" that was conciliatory and placed the onus for progress on the two Koreas themselves.[103] William Clark, Jr. notes that Sigur's speech in New York had "not been cleared through the bureaucracy, including the Secretary of State's office, as widely as it probably should have been."[104] He detailed the specifics of the initiative, which included permitting Americans to use credit cards in North Korea, modifying U.S. Treasury regulations to permit "humanitarian" trade, easing academic and

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[102] Assistant Secretary of State Gaston J. Sigur, Jr., "Korean politics in transition - Gaston J. Sigur, Jr.'s address before the U.S.-Korea Society in New York City on Feb. 6, 1987," *U.S. State Department Bulletin*, April 1987, retrieved from http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1079/is_v87/ai_4991194/.

[103] Hajime Izumi, "American Policy Toward North Korea and Japan's Role," *North Korea at the Crossroads*, ed. Masao Okonogi, (Tokyo: Japan Institute for International Affairs, 1988), 192-3.

[104] Ambassador William Clark, Jr.; Interviewed by Thomas Stern.

religious exchange, and Sigur's authorizing U.S. diplomats to "have substantive discussions with their North Korean diplomats at third party functions." Sigur expected reciprocity from the DPRK for these changes, and gave examples of acceptable responses for North Korea in the speech, believing that public expressions were most effective.[105]

Follow-through on the rhetoric was forthcoming. On October 31, 1988, an official announcement was made by the U.S. Department of State's Charles Redman that the U.S. would encourage cultural exchange visits to the U.S. by eligible North Koreans. The U.S. government would also make it less financially complicated for those seeking to visit the DPRK. He notes that this decision came after consultation with the ROK, and that the United States sought a more open diplomatic relationship with the DPRK. Redman stated that the State Department would allow diplomats to have "substantive discussions with officials of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in neutral settings." He notes that this had been tried before and was not as useful as hoped, but that the State Department was trying again.[106] In 1989, the "Beijing channel" – a go-between form of communication between the Washington, DC and Pyongyang, by way of the U.S. Embassy in Beijing - opened.[107] Ambassador Clark said that its origin was complex, but that by virtue of the location of meetings being owned by the Chinese government, it qualified the discussions as multilateral (involving the PRC) rather than bilateral.[108]

Another key piece of this initiative was the reduction of sanctions and barriers placed on the DPRK. On January 20, 1988, after the 1987 bombing of Korean Airlines

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105 Ibid.

106 Statement by Charles Redman, "State Department Regular Briefing, Briefer Charles Redman," United States Department of State, Federal News Service, October 31, 1988, retrieved via LexisNexis.

107 C. Kenneth Quinones and Joseph Tragert, A Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding North Korea, 249.

108 Ambassador William Clark, Jr.; Interviewed by Thomas Stern.

flight 858 by DPRK agents, the U.S. placed the DPRK on its list of state sponsors of terror.[109] Karin Lee, executive director of the National Committee on North Korea, and Julia Choi noted that although commercial trade with the DPRK had already been prohibited by the Trading With the Enemy Act (TWEA) since the Korean War, this act gave the executive branch wide latitude to determine what forms of interaction were acceptable. In particular, the President had the authority to waive both certain sanctions in the name of national security and a country's status under the TWEA and to remove it from the State Sponsors of Terrorism List without Congressional approval."[110] Charles Redman stated, as part of announcing the Modest Initiative, that the State Department was "reviewing commerce regulations with a view toward permitting certain limited commercial exports of humanitarian goods to the DPRK on a case-by-case basis." Food, clothing and medicine - donations meeting "basic human needs" - were already permissible *donations* under the laws. However, he reiterated that the U.S. was not at that time permitting "general commercial trade" of its goods to North Korea. This latter type of trade was "regulated strictly under provisions of the Trading With The Enemy Act and the Export Administration Act." Redman also made clear that the U.S. was not prepared to remove the DPRK from its list of terrorist states.[111] These exported commercial goods were required to be permitted by the U.S. Department of Commerce. Dianne Rennack of Congressional Research Services wrote that export administration regulations (EARs)

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[109] Dianne E. Rennack, "North Korea: Economic Sanctions," Congressional Research Services, Updated June 16, 2005, accessed at http://italy.usembassy.gov/pdf/other/RL31696.pdf, p.CRS-8

[110] Karin Lee and Julia Choi, "North Korea: Unilateral and Multilateral Economic Sanctions and U.S. Department of Treasury Actions 1955 – April 2009," The National Committee on North Korea, April 2009, 10, accessed at www.ncnk.org/resources/publications/DPRK_Sanctions_Report_April_2009.doc/file_view.

[111] Statement by Charles Redman, "State Department Regular Briefing, Briefer Charles Redman," United States Department of State, Federal News Service, October 31, 1988, accessed via LexisNexis.

were changed to permit "case-by-case," licensed exports of commercial goods to North Korea if they were "intended to meet basic human needs."[112] This policy thrust would remain consistent. Lee and Choi summarize this area of policy, writing that "Between 1989 and 1995, the export of goods from the commercial sector was permitted solely for the purposes of meeting 'basic human needs.'"[113]

This "modest initiative" did not cause great domestic political controversy at the time of its announcement. If anything, it formed the basis of (albeit low) American expectations that the North Koreans would respond to the attempt to engage. Robert Holden of the United States Information Service, a government agency, wrote in a February 22, 1990 article that a U.S. official, speaking on background, commented that "(Holden's paraphrase) While the United States did not expect an immediate response to its October 1988 efforts to draw North Korea out of its isolation, it is nevertheless disappointed that North Korea still has not responded to its overtures in a meaningful way."[114] The article goes on to say that U.S. policy on North Korea had not changed since then-Secretary of State James Baker's February 1, 1990 testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Baker testified before the committee that the George H.W. Bush administration supported South Korea's opening of relations and "South-North dialogue." He also notes that U.S. policy towards the DPRK had also opened.[115] The Senators, following Baker's testimony, asked him a number of questions, none of them

[112] Dianne E. Rennack, "North Korea: Economic Sanctions," Congressional Research Services, p.CRS-7, including footnote 18. Rennack observed that "In most cases, when a validated license is required on a case-by-case basis, there is a presumption of denial for licensing."

[113] Karin Lee and Julia Choi, "North Korea: Unilateral and Multilateral Economic Sanctions and U.S. Department of Treasury Actions 1955 – April 2009," The National Committee on North Korea, April 2009, 4, accessed at www.ncnk.org/resources/publications/DPRK_Sanctions_Report_April_2009.doc/file_view.

[114] United States Information Agency, "US Awaiting DPRK Response to 1988 Steps," February 20, 1990, hosted by Federation of American Scientists, http://www.fas.org/news/dprk/1990/900220-dprk-usia.htm.

[115] Ibid.

directly pertaining to North Korea policy.[116] Despite the relative silence in Washington, DC, Ambassador Clark said that Sigur's speech received a positive response from academics and foreign diplomats who sought to broaden contact with the North Koreans.[117]

Members of the American legislative branch – Democrats and Republicans alike - were involved in the efforts to improve relations through engagement. There were negotiations regarding POWs and Congressional visits, which directly involved members of the legislative branch in the engagement policy itself. On May 28, 1990, a Congressional delegation led by House Armed Services committee chairman Sonny Montgomery (D-MS) received the remains of five American soldiers who had been missing in action since the Korean war.[118] Senator Robert Smith (R-NH), a noted conservative, journeyed to the DPRK in 1991 and 1992 to discuss issues surrounding Americans that remained missing after the Korean War. Smith was presented with the remains of 11 U.S. servicemen.[119] However, Clark noted that, it was important that the Modest Initiative produced a change in domestic governmental culture in the United States that showed dialogue to be a policy option in dealing with the DPRK.[120]

Meanwhile, the Republic of Korea continued to seek to expand its diplomatic relations. On September 30, 1990, the Republic of Korea was officially recognized by the

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116 "The Future of Europe" hearing, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, February 1, 1990, file sent by committee staff to the author of this thesis.

117 Ambassador William Clark, Jr., interviewed by Thomas Stern.

118 Paul Shin, Associated Press Writer, "North Korea to Turn Over Remains of U.S. Soldiers on Memorial Day," dateline Seoul, South Korea, The Associated Press, May 27, 1990, Sunday, AM cycle, , last accessed on September 19, 2011, retrieved via LexisNexis.

119 "U.S. Senator Arrives to Receive Korean War Remains", dateline: Seoul, ROK, United Press International, June 22, 1991, Saturday, BC cycle, last accessed on September 19, 2011, retrieved via LexisNexis.

120 Ambassador William Clark, Jr., interviewed by Thomas Stern. Clark said, "…the reaction to the speech in the United States I think made it eminently clear to my bureaucratic colleagues that mentioning the possibility of a dialogue with North Korea was not a kiss of death."

Soviet Union. The People's Republic of China would do the same in 1992. This period would presage the loss of the DPRK's patrons. By the end of 1991, the Soviet Union, North Korea's principal economic patron, had ceased to be. There were numerous delays and negotiations, as the Republic of Korea sought to enter the United Nations formally.[121] The willingness of the People's Republic of China to admit the Republic of Korea to the United Nations led the DPRK to drop its counterproposal to enter together with only one seat, and enter separately.[122] On September 18, 1991, both the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea entered the United Nations as independent states. Although the DPRK had joined a variety of international organizations, the DPRK's path to UN membership was long and complex. The DPRK already belonged to ten United Nations organizations by 1986, having become a UN Observer and having joined the World Health Organization as early as 1973.[123] An important component to the relationship between the DPRK and the world community that would significantly impact North Korea's regional relations was the debate over the DPRK's nuclear initiatives.

The Nuclear Issue's Rise

Signed in July 1968, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) serves as the basis for diplomatic efforts to prevent the emergence of new nuclear-armed states, to allow peaceful nuclear energy, and to establish an international inspections regime – the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). It also prohibits states from distributing

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121 Barry Gills cites Shim Yoon Jo of the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs as saying that UN membership was the top priority of the ROK in terms of foreign policy in 1990.

122 Larry A. Niksch, "North Korea's Negotiating Behavior," in *North Korean Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War Era*, ed. Samuel S. Kim, (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1998), 65; Ilpyong J. Kim, "China in North Korean Foreign Policy," in *North Korean Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War Era*, ed. Samuel S. Kim, (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1998), 95, 100.

123 Barry Gills, *Korea versus Korea*, 139, 196.

nuclear materials to non-nuclear states without IAEA inspection.[124] The roots of North Korean nuclear goals date back to the 1970s. There were IAEA inspections of nuclear research facilities in North Korea in 1977, and, in 1985, the DPRK signed the NPT.[125] The DPRK joined international organizations that provided technical support and agencies related to safeguards, on its own terms. In September 1989, the DPRK joined the World Energy Council, and in January 1991 signed the IAEA safeguards agreement. [126] By 1991, the two Koreas were engaged in the Joint North-South Talks, and the DPRK was in normalization talks with Japan. As these steps were taken, the U.S. withdrew its nuclear weapons from Korea on September 27, 1991, and the ROK-DPRK denuclearization agreement was signed.[127]

Despite this progress, the relationship between the DPRK and the IAEA was strained. In January 1992, the DPRK agreed to terms with the IAEA about rules on the possession or production of fissionable material, accounting and safeguards. North Korea was permitted to have less than 1 kg of fissionable material.[128] As discussed above, the two Koreas signed the Agreement of Reconciliation, Nonaggression, and Exchanges and

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124 "The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons", July 1, 1968, hosted by the United Nations, accessed at http://www.un.org/events/npt2005/npttreaty.html.

125 International Atomic Energy Agency, "Fact Sheet on DPRK Nuclear Safeguards," http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Focus/IaeaDprk/fact_sheet_may2003.shtml. C. Kenneth Quinones asserted that North Korea had agreed to enter the NPT because it had been pledged four "light-water nuclear plants" by the USSR, whose own financial problems led to the breaking of this promise. However, the DPRK had an operating research reactor at Yongbyon by 1985.C. Kenneth Quinones, "North Korea: From Containment to Engagement," 107-08.

126 Doug Joong Kim, *Foreign Relations of North Korea: during Kim Il Sung's Last Days* (Seoul: Sejong Institute, 1994), 441. This information comes from a timeline.

127 Nuclear Threat Initiative, "North Korea Profile: Nuclear Overview," retrieved from http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/NK/Nuclear/index.html. Tim Beal opines that this change was not highly meaningful, as American nuclear weapons capability was and is global. Tim Beal, *North Korea: The Struggle for American Power*, 74.

128 International Atomic Energy Agency, "Agreement of 30 January 1992 between the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards in Connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," *Information Circular #403* (May 1992),accessed at http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infcircs/Others/inf403.shtml#ast.

Cooperation in February 1992. However, its elements were not put into effect.[129] While the DPRK would submit its safeguards agreement to the IAEA in April 1992, the IAEA noted it contained reactors and storage and processing facilities that were not initially disclosed to them, and that the agency believed there was more plutonium created than was admitted in the initial report.[130] This controversy would escalate during the Clinton presidency.

With the conclusion of the Cold War, the foreign policy of the United States stood at a crossroads. Without a defined opposition such as the Soviet bloc, it could turn inward, focus on more discrete global problems, and assume new roles in the world community. Seeing the fall of the USSR, the market transition of the Chinese economy and rapid victory in Operation Desert Storm, some political figures and public intellectuals on the American right began to assert that the U.S. and, in particular, ideas of capitalism and democratically elected government, had reached a global ascendancy and a place of greater leadership.[131] On the other hand, as fewer federal funds for weapons acquisition were necessary for the U.S. to deal with the now-defunct Soviets, other thinkers across a range of the political spectrum sought reduced taxes, military drawback, expanded social services, debt reduction, or some combination thereof.[132] However, this

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[129] Dae-Sook Suh, "Crisis Management by New Leaders in North Korea," in *The Two Koreas and The United States:Issues of Peace, Security, and Economic Cooperation*, ed. Wonmo Dong, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 7, from remarks made at the symposium "The Two Koreas and the United States: Issues of Peace, Security, and Economic Cooperation" Southern Methodist University Dallas, Texas, March 20-21, 1997.

[130] David Fischer, "History of the International Atomic Energy Agency," International Atomic Energy Agency, 1997, excerpt from http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Focus/IaeaDprk/dprk.pdf.

[131] This view was not representative of the entirety of the American political right, and the debate over America's role in foreign interventions would divide the intellectual right. Influential examples include Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 70, No. 1, America and the World 1990/91 (1990/1991), pp. 23-33 (article consists of 11 pages), Council on Foreign Relations, last accessed September 29, 2010, retrieved from JSTOR; Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/20044692; Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?," reprinted from *The National Interest*, Summer 1989; last accessed on September 29, 2010, http://www.wesjones.com/eoh.htm.

[132] An excellent example of a case for making such cuts is presented by Leslie H. Gelb . "Foreign Affairs; What Peace

expansive view of American leadership was not limited to camps on the political right. In fact, these views would prove most influential in this period when put into practice by members of the center-left who saw the U.S. as having a unique global leadership role.[133] The U.S. also began to concentrate its military's efforts on the humanitarian needs and security implications of nations whose governments had either ceased to exist, function or comply with international norms, like Haiti and Somalia. David Halberstam wrote of this post-Cold War that "(l)ong-repressed indigenous forces were released everywhere," and that questions surrounding a response to these conflicts had more to do with issues of "goodness and generosity of spirit" than strategy. Public interest in foreign affairs was in decline as these humanitarian conflicts rose to the forefront.[134] Once-popular President George H.W. Bush, a former Ambassador to China, lost his re-election bid, replaced by Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, a man with no foreign policy experience.

In the context of U.S. relations with North Korea, a high priority was placed on nuclear non-proliferation, structured by the enforcement of the NPT and the maintenance of the regional alliance with Japan and South Korea. On March 12, 1993, the DPRK announced that it planned to leave the NPT.[135] In 2002, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), the DPRK's state-run news agency, reported that the official reasons for North Korea's announced withdrawal in 1993 were the resumption of the Team Spirit exercises

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Dividend?," *New York Times*, February 21, 1992, http://www.nytimes.com/1992/02/21/opinion/foreign-affairs-what-peace-dividend.html?src=pm.

133 Former U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright would show the spirit of this approach when she described America as "the indispensible nation" that "sees further into the future" than other nations. Michael Dobbs and John M. Goshko, "Albright's Personal Odyssey Shaped Foreign Policy Beliefs," *Washington Post*, Friday, December 6, 1996, page A25, retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/govt/admin/stories/albright120696.htm.

134 David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace* (New York: Touchstone, 2002), 74-5.

135 Arms Control Association, "Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy," last accessed on September 19, 2011, http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/dprkchron.

and the IAEA's desire for special inspections of military facilities that the DPRK said were not used for nuclear matters.[136] Adding to the tension, the DPRK launched a Nodong missile into the East Sea/Sea of Japan in May of 1993.[137] The DPRK told the IAEA that it planned to refuel its MW-5 reactor, a move that risked giving the North Koreans uranium that could be used to manufacture plutonium for nuclear weapons.[138] Meetings between U.S. Special Envoy Robert Gallucci and DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok Ju begin in New York City on June 2, 1993 to discuss this nuclear issue.[139] Quinones asserted that the U.S. would make South Korea uncomfortable by taking greater control of regional policy in the period leading up to the Agreed Framework.[140] On June 11, 1993, the DPRK agreed to "suspend the 'effectuation' of its withdrawal" and allow the IAEA to inspect its seven previously declared nuclear sites.[141]

Robert Hathaway, executive director of the Woodrow Wilson Center, and Jordan Tama, in their study of United States Congressional action as a whole with regard to North Korea during the Clinton presidency, show how divisions emerged within and between bureaucratic agencies and political parties.[142] Many began to believe that the actions of the DPRK could no longer be changed by negotiation or concessions. Additionally, the differences in opinion between and amongst the intelligence community

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136 "KCNA accuses IAEA of speaking for U.S.", *Korean Central News Agency*, hosted by Korea News Service, Tokyo, December 10, 2002, retrieved from http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2002/200212/news12/11.htm.

137 B.C. Koh, "U.S.-Japan Security Cooperation and the Two Koreas," in *Korean Security Dynamics in Transition*, ed. Kyung-Ae Park and Dalchoong Kim, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 139.

138 C. Kenneth Quinones, "From Containment to Engagement,".117.

139 Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 283.

140 C. Kenneth Quinones, "South Korea's Approaches to North Korea," 23, 40.

141 "Memorandum of DPRK Foreign Ministry", Pyongyang, April 20, 1994, as reprinted in International Atomic Energy Agency, *Information Circular #442 (INFCIRC/442)*, May 9, 1994, retrieved from http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infcircs/Others/infcirc442.pdf.

142 Robert Hathaway and Jordan Tama, "The U.S. Congress and North Korea during the Clinton Years: Talk Tough, Carry a Small Stick," *Asian Survey* Vol.44, No.5 (September/October 2004):716, last accessed on September 17, 2011, retrieved via JSTOR.

and the Departments of Defense and State would provide a diverse body of "factual assessments of North Korea."[143]

As North Korea's development of a nuclear weapons program and processing came to the fore, those who supported a policy where deterrence was the chief component began to find their voice. In this period, the U.S. Congress' attitudes and actions towards the DPRK shifted from a consensus for (or at least silence on) a balanced approach combining deterrence and negotiation to an environment where negotiation was regarded by many elected officials from both parties as a delay tactic or insufficiently "tough." The legislative branch would come to be led by officials who believed that Presidential power, particularly with regard to multilateral intervention, needed to be checked by Congress, that positive inducement of the DPRK risked delays in preventing nuclear armament, gained little that could be trusted and ran the risk of rewarding behavior contrary to U.S. regional goals.[144]

In mid-1994, war nearly broke out on the Korean peninsula. A "war game" that diagrammed the outcomes of likely conflict scenarios estimated heavy troop and civilian losses, sanctions were known to be unlikely to be convincing to North Korea, and that the State Department at that time regarded "high-level talks" as something that the North Koreans needed to earn.[145] On June 10, 1994, the IAEA found that the DPRK was increasingly non-compliant and votes to "suspend all non-medical technical assistance" to North Korea.[146] In a 2003 report describing its second withdrawal from the IAEA

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143 Ibid.

144 Quinones, Hathaway and Tama, and Lee and Choi discuss this ascendancy of opponents of engagement and negotiation with North Korea. However, each takes a slightly different view of the effectiveness of this resistance.

145 Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 314-317.

146 International Atomic Energy Agency, "Fact Sheet on DPRK Nuclear Safeguards," May 2003, accessed at http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Focus/IaeaDprk/fact_sheet_may2003.html.

inspections regime, the DPRK asserted that in the pre-1994 withdrawal era, they had wished to build a graphite reactor rather than a light-water reactor due to simplicity and the domestic availability of the materials. They claimed the U.S. had "abused" inspections as a means of espionage.[147]

On June 15, 1994, the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee held a hearing entitled, "U.S. Policy Towards East Asia." A range of experts reflected the differing views of America's role in East Asia in this period, both within and between not only Congress, but the executive branch as well. Again, it is important to note that not all documents related to the Executive Branch's relationship with North Korea in this period have been disclosed. These hearings are a sample of the publicly expressed views of these departments. At this hearing, Assistant Secretary of Defense Chas Freeman testifies that while regional alliances are important, the U.S. needed to continue in its historical role as the "regional balancer" of Asian affairs. He emphasized that, despite economic disagreements, Japan is the most important ally the U.S. has in East Asia, as there is a bargain in which Japan provides bases and support, while the U.S. provides "security guarantees" and "regional stability," enabling Tokyo to remain without a forward army, weapons exports or nuclear weapons.[148]

The written testimony notes of Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord discussed an administration policy that was intended to produce and maintain a stable relationship with East Asia built on economic growth, multilateral initiatives and greater

[147] "KCNA 'Detailed Report' Explains NPT Withdrawal", *Korean Central News Agency*, January 22, 2003, archived by the Federation of American Scientists, accessed at http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/dprk/nuke/dprk012203.html.

[148] Remarks of Charles W. Freeman. Jr., Assistant Secretary of Defense, "Department of Defense House Foreign Affairs U.S. policy toward East Asia," House Foreign Affairs Committee, "U.S. Policy Toward East Asia," last accessed on September 12, 2011, retrieved from ProQuest Congressional.

management of East Asia by its own governments. Lord noted that North Korea's nuclear ambitions are the "wild card for our Asian -- and global – policy." He framed the administration's regional policy in the context of the American governmental priorities shifting towards domestic matters at the conclusion of the Cold War, and the impact of American economic trends on security policy.[149] As for North Korea, Lord acknowledged that diplomacy had yielded limited progress on key issues, but that such efforts were building "international solidarity" and that the pace of diplomacy had much to do with keeping the Japanese and South Koreans on board.[150] He stated that "within the confines of our objectives and the international community's objectives," the U.S. would seek to give the DPRK "a way out" besides confrontation. Lord said that the U.S. had been "in the closest consultations you could imagine with South Korea and Japan," and that those nations were on board with the plan to use a mix of sanctions, "U.N. Action," and diplomacy. He also mentioned discussions with Europe and China, noting that China did not want a nuclear North Korea and was trying to persuade the DPRK to "be reasonable." [151] That same day, former President Jimmy Carter was in talks with Kim Il Sung & DPRK officials in Pyongyang. Carter and Kim come to an agreement that avoids a war, and opens the door to talks in Geneva. On July 8, 1994, after nearly fifty years at the helm of the DPRK and less than a month after his deal with Carter, Kim Il Sung died. Journalist Still, the initial stages of the Geneva talks resume by August 5, 1994.[152] The North

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149 Winston Lord, Assistant Secretary of State, East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Capitol Hill Hearing Testimony, Testimony of June 15, 1994, House Foreign Affairs Committee, "U.S. Policy Toward East Asia," last accessed on September 26, 2010, retrieved from LexisNexis Congressional.

150 Hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, "U.S. Policy Towards East Asia", Chaired by Representative Lee H. Hamilton (D-IN), retrieved from Lexis-Nexis.

151 Ibid.

152 Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 351.

Koreans and the United States agreed to a Third Round of talks in order to formalize the agreement between Jimmy Carter and Kim Il Sung in June.[153]

The Geneva negotiations took place amidst doubts. From September 23 to October 24, 1994, negotiations between the United States and the DPRK took place. These negotiations faced opposition as they were taking place in Geneva. On October 7, 1994, John McCain, a veteran Republican Senator from Arizona, gives a speech calling for the end of these negotiations. Senator McCain claimed that North Korea was being rewarded for dangerous behavior with the bilateral negotiations that it had always wanted, and that the time spent on the negotiation was giving away "strength" necessary to 1) solve the problem without military intervention becoming necessary and 2) create a less dangerous situation in the event of hostilities.[154] These Geneva meetings culminated in the production of the Agreed Framework Between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (referred to hereafter as the Agreed Framework), a document in which the two parties agreed to address North Korean energy needs, while replacing reactors that were seen as potential production sites for fuel for nuclear weapons. This agreement involved a North Korean commitment to remain in the NPT and to submit to IAEA inspections. In this treaty, the U.S. agreed to continued negotiations with the DPRK to advance towards future normalization of relations.[155] At the Geneva hearings, the DPRK is said to have asked the United States for food aid.[156]

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153 Marion Creekmore, Jr., *A Moment of Crisis: Jimmy Carter, The Power of a Peacemaker, and North Korea's Nuclear Ambitions* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006), .

154 Remarks of Senator John McCain, October 7, 1994, *Congressional Record*, remarks hosted by Federation of American Scientists, last accessed on September 30, 2010, http://www.fas.org/spp/starwars/congress/1994/s941007-dprk.htm.

155 "Agreed Framework between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States of America", Geneva, October 21, 1994, hosted by the Institute for Corean-American Studies Inc., http://www.icasinc.org/history/agreedfw.html.

156 Don Oberdorfer reported that the U.S. diplomats were distracted by nuclear issues. Andrew Natsios wrote that this

Critical to the Agreed Framework would be the willingness of Japan and the ROK to finance the projects of the resulting organization, the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO). Japan pledged $1 billion dollars in 1994 for KEDO's operations.[157] KEDO would be responsible for the delivery of and financing for two light water reactors for North Korea by 2003, and for providing annual energy aid in the form of 500,000 metric tons of "heavy fuel oil" until the completion of the first reactor. As part of the supply agreement with KEDO, the DPRK was expected to a) comply with the Agreed Framework as well as international treaties related to nuclear safety and b) repay the costs of the reactors as an interest-free, 20 year loan.[158] During this period when the White House confronted the prospect of possible war on the Korean peninsula and sought to implement the Agreed Framework, the midterm Congressional election season was in full swing. In the November 1994 elections, the Democratic party lost control of both houses of Congress for the first time in half a century.

There were several key elements to the change in the American policy landscape as to the DPRK as 1994 came to a close. As Oberdorfer and others note, relations between the DPRK and its historic rivals were somewhat improved, while its relations with its allies were weakened by the changes that took place within those nations. It also showed the rise of the controversy over the DPRK's nuclear ambitions as the preeminent issue in the DPRK's relationship with the United States. As seen in Armacost, Bridges,

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August 1994 request for food assistance was made by DPRK negotiators to the North Korea desk officer of the United States Department of State, C. Kenneth Quinones, who directed the request to his superiors in Washington. It was refused. Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 372; Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine*, 141.

157 B.C. Koh, "U.S.-Japan Security Cooperation and the Two Koreas," 139.

158 "Agreement on Supply of a Light-Water Reactor Project to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea Between the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization and the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea", Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization, http://www.kedo.org/pdfs/SupplyAgreement.pdf.

and others, regional consultation amongst the United States, Japan and the ROK would constrain some independent attempts by its members from moving towards greater normalization with the DPRK. North Korea, in this period, and even prior to the 1980s, neither reflexively reverted to a hermitage nor eschewed all memberships or alliances, but continued to engage international institutions and trade when it found them to be useful to particular national goals.[159] Later, we will examine how these and other factors shaped the responses of the U.S. and Japan to the famine that struck the DPRK in the 1990s.

[159] Charles Armstrong, "*Juche* and North Korea's Global Aspirations," Working Paper #1, North Korea International Documentation Project, September 2009, accessed April 28, 2010 at http://www.wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/NKDIP_wp1.pdf; Barry Gills, *Korea versus Korea*, 139, 196.

Chapter 2: North Korea's Economy and Agriculture Decline into Crisis

In the first chapter, we discussed the changing nature of North Korea's foreign relations with its allies and rivals. However, those changing trends and relationships would have economic consequences and would interact with local systems and conditions, leaving North Korea ill-prepared to respond to the economic, energy-related, environmental and agricultural disasters that would follow. Here, we will explore the attempts of scholars to explain the causes of the North Korean famine. This thesis will not try to determine the precise importance of each perceived cause of the famine. However, there is consensus that certain trends were present in North Korea that contributed to the suffering of its people, and that these trends were long term.

This chapter will explore these factors. While political and security concerns – both international and domestic - affected the relationship between the DPRK and foreign nations, the impact of these changes on the economy of the DPRK proved devastating, particularly the loss of its economic patrons. In the mid and late 1980's and early 1990's, relations between the Western bloc (United States and its allies) and the Communist and unaligned worlds began to change in character. The USSR, under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, began to open relations with the West by way of the *perestroika* and *glasnost* policies. The U.S. and the USSR engaged in arms limitation talks, and Eastern European nations began to remove physical and diplomatic walls. Alongside the improvement of relations between the U.S. and the DPRK was the aforementioned increase in openness between the Republic of Korea and the North Korea's Communist bloc allies. The fall of the Soviet Union and the transformation of People's Republic of

China's economic goals left North Korea without the ability to count on its former patrons as it once did.[160]

This chapter explores, to the extent possible, the evolutions, initial successes and eventual breakdowns of the economies and system of agriculture in the DPRK. It briefly discusses the public distribution system (PDS), which distributed food to a majority of North Koreans. It details and assesses the events surrounding the heavy flooding of 1995 and the initial responses of the North Korean government and the international organizations who responded to its appeal for help. It explores the eyewitness reports and analyses presented by the United Nations officials who made the initial visits to and inspections of North Korea during this period. It reveals the multifaceted nature of the crisis, as humanitarian agencies responded to a nation devastated by a flood, but came to recognize the potential for far greater catastrophe related to energy shortages, crop losses, and economic breakdown. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the estimated impact of these conditions on the population, recognizing the limits of available information, as well as the first response of international organizations and the DPRK government to these changing conditions. This builds into the final chapter's discussion of the involvement and leadership of NGOs and international agencies in the response to the floods and subsequent famine, and the responses of the American, South Korean and Japanese governments to requests for their support.

Few, if any, of those who have studied this crisis dispute the *presence* of elements like historically bad weather, a decline in material and energy inputs, mistakes made by

[160] This connection between the loss of Soviet and PRC trade and support on the one hand, and North Korea's economic decline is observed by C. Kenneth Quinones, Don Oberdorfer, Marcus Noland and Bruce Cumings, amongst others.

the DPRK government in this period, or any of several other key points. The dispute centers around the *relative importance* the expert place on any of these given elements, and whether these problems were themselves individually sufficient conditions for the onset of famine. One school of thought holds that the core cause(s) of the famine, or at least its extent, was either 1) the intrinsic characteristics of the form of government in the DPRK, 2) the behaviors and policies of that government, or 3) some combination of 1 and 2. The arguments of former USAID administrator Andrew Natsios, American Enterprise Institute political scientist Nicholas Eberstadt, economist Marcus Noland and political scientist Stephan Haggard fit into this camp. The second camp, including University of Virginia political scientist Meredith Woo-Cumings and University of Warwick (UK) professor of international relations Hazel Smith, asserts that a complex series of causes, including public policy decisions, but also supply problems resulting from the loss of international support, imports, and financing, and catastrophic weather are or may be responsible for the famine in North Korea.

Before discussing the positions of these two groups on the origin of famine, it is important to note that the DPRK government saw the floods and other bad weather that struck the DPRK in the mid-1990s as the cause of the food crisis. While the North Korean government privately requested and received food assistance prior to the flooding of July and August 1995, they asked that the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) make a public appeal on their behalf in August 1995.[161] The North Korean government itself made a public declaration of its flooded condition through its Korea

[161] L. Gordon Flake and Scott Snyder, *Paved With Good Intentions: The NGO Experience in North Korea*, ed. L. Gordon Flake and Scott Snyder, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), Chronology, 137.

Central News Agency on December 16, 1996, over a year after the initial rainstorms of 1995, at which time it acknowledged the arrival of food aid.[162] A February 3, 1997 statement by the Flood Damage Measure Committee declared that North Korea was facing a "temporary food problem" and that this had been caused by "repeated" and "unprecedented natural disasters" around that time. The statement goes on to criticize ROK authorities of having "obstructed food aid" by way of rumors and lies.[163] The DPRK government blamed some combination of catastrophic weather and the loss or steep decline of trade with the USSR and other former Communist states.[164]

Initial reports from international organizations confirm the existence of flooding and damage, but such reports are from those seeking to address immediate humanitarian needs after severe floods in July and August of 1995 in North Korea. These "floods situation reports" do not provide definitive analysis related to the long-term causes of the food shortages, but focused on the needs of individuals harmed by immediate agricultural losses and flood damage. However, report #7 makes clear that analysis on the nature of these damages and their implications would be "assessed more thoroughly" by others including the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).[165] However, the December 1995 Crop and Food Supply Assessment from the World Food Programme (WFP) and the FAO reads that, "...it must be recognized that the floods made an already

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[162] "Relief goods here," *Korean Central News Agency*, December 16, 1996, hosted by Korea News Service, Tokyo, , last accessed on September 12, 2011 at http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/1996/9612/news1/16.htm#5, searched from STALIN search engine, http://www.nk-news.net/.

[163] "DPRK official on food problem," *Korean Central News Agency*, February 3, 1997, hosted by Korea News Service, Tokyo, retrieved from http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/1997/9702/news2/03.htm#1.

[164] Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard, *Famine in North Korea*, 9.

[165] United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, "DPR Korea Flood Situation Report #6," September 6, 1995, retrieved from ReliefWeb, accessed at http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/ACOS-64DFQA?OpenDocument&rc=3&cc=prk; United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, "DPR Korea Flood Situation Report #7," September 13, 1995; retrieved from ReliefWeb, accessed at http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/OCHA-64DBEA?OpenDocument&rc=3&cc=prk.

and rapidly deteriorating food supply situation much worse, rather than caused the situation in the first place. It was estimated by the Mission, that Korea DPR would have carried a substantial food deficit this year notwithstanding the floods."[166]

The authors of the first group challenge the DPRK's official story. Their views on this crisis are often consistent with the ideas of economist Amartya Sen. Sen holds that starvation is not primarily the result of the absence of food, but the absence of the capacity of individuals to gain ownership of it. Scarcity or weather can be *a* cause of famine, but it must be considered as "one of many *possible* causes."[167] A person's ability to eat comes from not only ownership, but the "entitlement exchange mapping" with which he or she must deal. That is, a person must not only have means, but the value of those means in a given market must be sufficient to acquire a "commodity bundle" that contains sufficient food.[168] Sen wrote, "A famine develops when a sizable number of people – who often belong to a particular occupation group – lose the economic means of acquiring food."[169] Even in cases where there was no overall food shortage in a place, subgroups could nonetheless suffer "acute absolute deprivation."[170]

For Sen, qualities of governance can work to prevent famines, as he asserts that "no substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent and democratic country with a relatively free press."[171] This is true whether the country in question is rich or poor.[172]

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166 United Nations World Food Program and Food and Agriculture Organization, "Special Report – FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," December 22, 1995, accessed at www.fao.org.

167 Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines* (New York: Oxford, 1981, 1982 with corrections), 1.

168 Ibid, 4, 45.

169 Amartya Sen, "Nobody Need Starve," *Granta*, number 52 (Winter 1995), 215.

170 Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines*, 44.

171 Amartya Sen, "Democracy as a Universal Value," *Journal of Democracy* 10.3 (1999), 5, last accessed on September 23, 2010, http://muse.uq.edu.au/demo/jod/10.3sen.html

172 Amartya Sen, "Nobody Need Starve," *Granta*

Democracy and a free press have "intrinsic," "instrumental" and "constructive" value, and community participation, the free exchange of ideas and free opposition parties can force a government to act.[173] A free press serves to notify the nation and the world of a famine.[174]

In Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard's 2007 study Famine in North Korea: Markets, Aid and Reform, Sen's foreword compared and contrasted North Korea's situation with the Irish famine of the 19th century. He asserted that there was in both cases a poor attempt by the rulers to deal with the crisis, failures that stemmed from a desire to avoid "any political change," "callousness," and a "comprehensive failure to understand exactly what causes starvation and famines."[175] Noland and Haggard concurred with Sen's reasoning, but took the argument from the behavior and policies of the North Korean state to its nature, arguing that only regime change will solve the fundamental problems.[176] In a prior 2005 report, they wrote that "North Korea would have faced difficulties in the 1990s regardless of its regime type. But it is difficult to imagine a famine of this magnitude, or chronic food shortages of this duration, occurring in a regime that protected basic political and civil liberties."[177] Noland and Haggard cite economic studies and the existing decline of the agricultural sector to reject the idea that the famine occurred due to a rapid collapse of food availability resulting from bad weather. They acknowledge that the DPRK's declining external trade and catastrophic

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173 Amartya Sen, "Democracy as a Universal Value," *Journal of Democracy*

174 Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), 181.

175 Amartya Sen, introduction to *Famine in North Korea: Markets, Aid and Reform*, by Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), xvii.

176 Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard, *Famine in North Korea*, 3.

177 Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard, "Hunger and Human Rights: The Politics of Famine in North Korea," U.S. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, Washington, DC, 2005, 8, accessed at http://www.hrnk.org/download/Hunger_and_Human_Rights.pdf.

weather were indeed shocks, which helped lead to a decline in domestic production, but argue that a famine driven by a lack of supply is unproven. These economic studies that found that "'dominant triggering factor in the crisis'" was not the flooding, but the loss of agricultural inputs, previously obtained from the USSR and others.[178] For example, economist Heather Smith found that the WFP had over-estimated the minimum per capita need of cereals in the DPRK by 20%, and that when this, or the potential for North Korean imports not known of or counted towards the total, are considered, the gap between the minimum need and the supply goes away. Noland and Haggard wrote that, from this, the minimum needs of the population could have been met with fully efficient and equal distribution, and that any starvation was a failure of distribution and not supply. However, they noted that this may be too low a standard, and that assessing the relationship between "normal" human needs and the supply is "more ambiguous."[179]

Noland and Haggard believe that the DPRK government made a number of significant policy errors. It was limited in its ability to import needed goods by its pursuit of nuclear arms, insufficient foreign exchange and its bad credit. It failed to react quickly or properly to its declining food production, instead pursuing "national economic self-sufficiency" and "technical fixes."[180] Attempts by the DPRK to receive aid prior to the UN appeals are dismissed as lacking sufficient transparency and honesty.[181] These long-term political and economic failures to maintain the capacity to 1) bolster the total food

[178] Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard, *Famine in North Korea*, 37-38. Noland and Haggard cite the work of Heather Smith and Yiping Huang, and Marcus Noland, Sherman Robinson and Tao Wang.

[179] Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard, *Famine in North Korea*, 46. Noland and Haggard cite Heather Smith, "The Food Economy: Catalyst for Collapse?" in *Economic Integration of the Korean Peninsula*, ed. Marcus Noland (Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics, 1998)

[180] Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard, *Famine in North Korea*, 9, 23, 49-50.

[181] Ibid, 33-34, 39, 49, 65-68. Noland and Haggard cite Andrew Natsios' account of the 1991 visit of officials from the World Food Program to North Korea. The WFP, who arrived at the request of the DPRK, are said to have not found evidence of starvation.

supply, 2) to properly distribute the food they had, and 3) to use food aid as a supplement rather than a rationale to cut commercial imports that kept the DPRK from stopping the famine.[182]

Nicholas Eberstadt, a political scientist at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, wrote, contrary to Bruce Cumings' view of North Korea as a corporate state or B.R. Myers' view of North Korea as united by "race-based nationalism," that the desire to grow socialism was the key driver of its behavior.[183] He notes that the North Korean famine differed from others in three key ways. First, it happened in an industrial society rather than in a rural/agricultural one. Second, the DPRK government was well-established when the famine began, whereas many famines occur as new regimes transition into power. Third, quite often it is new policy that leads to a famine, whereas, in the DPRK, this does not seem to have happened.[184]

Andrew Natsios, a noted American conservative politician and former director of USAID, wrote that Sen's analysis is one of the "lenses" through which he assessed the crisis. Rejecting the DPRK's position that natural disasters led to the famine, he put the blame for the famine at the feet of the DPRK government, and labeled the crisis in North Korea as one of the "totalitarian famines" of the twentieth century. Such famines include the Ukrainian famine, the Great Leap Forward famine in China, and the famine in 1980s Ethiopia.[185] Natsios does not deny the existence of a shortfall in domestic supply, and

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[182] Ibid, 50.

[183] See Bruce Cumings, "The Corporate State in North Korea," *State and Society in Contemporary Korea*, Hagen Koo, ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); B.R. Myers, *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters* (Brooklyn, NY: Melville, 2010); and Nicholas Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea* (Washington, DC: AEI, 1999), 77.

[184] Ibid, 65.

[185] Andrew Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine*, 11, 49-53.

writes at length about how, since the sixteenth century, Koreans have faced periods of famine and shortage. These struggles involved wars, natural disasters, autocratic governance (domestic or colonial), and confiscatory policies.[186]

Natsios argued that the DPRK relied heavily on Soviet financial and agricultural support, building a population too large for the agricultural capacity of the land. With the loss of Soviet support, already-declining agricultural and industrial systems proved inadequate. This combined with one of the smallest bases of agricultural land per capita on the globe to send the DPRK in a direction that "could only lead to famine in the long term."[187] Despite seeing the food shortage as a sign of impending or existing famine, he observed that there were problems in distribution, especially a collapse of the Public Distribution System (PDS), and that geography and an unequal prioritization of rations were at the heart of differential death rates.[188]

Dissenting from this entitlement theory-based view, political scientist Meredith Woo-Cumings challenged Sen's view on famines, citing Mike Davis' Late Victorian Holocausts as an influence. She disputed the idea that famines and regime types have a "simple correlation," and wrote that climate and food availability supply are critical factors. Unlike Natsios, she holds that the DPRK, like China before them, had a famine despite a relatively equal distribution of food.[189] She wrote that bad weather and climate

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186 Ibid, 8-10.

187 Ibid, 12.

188 Ibid, 6, 91-97. Bruce Cumings, a left-leaning historian of North Korea, concurs with this particular point, writing that North Korea, as a class society, had a great deal of variance as far as who suffered from the famine, with those who lived Pyongyang (10% of the population) suffering least. Bruce Cumings, "U.S.-North Korean Bilateral Relations," *Korean Security Dynamics in Transition*, ed. Kyung-Ae Park and Dalchoong Kim, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 106.

189 Meredith Woo-Cumings, "The Political Ecology of Famine: The North Korean Catastrophe and Its Lessons," Asian Development Bank Institute, Research Paper 31 (January 2002), 2. Retrieved from http://www.adbi.org/research%20paper/2002/01/01/115.political.ecology/

change may be more important in driving famines than regime type. This was particularly so in states and regions with low levels of technological and economic capacity.[190] North Korea faced two climatological disasters in the famine period: 1) flooding in 1995 and 1996 whose climatological origins are unclear and 2) droughts from 1997-99 driven by the 1997-98 El Nino Southern Oscillatory system (ENSO), a global weather pattern.[191] Despite this, she observed that even mainstream works on famine reject the implications of the historically anomalous weather, with some focused on political negligence and missteps.[192] Woo Cumings is critical of Sen's "entitlement theory", challenging its utility and what she sees as its emphasis on the idea of a relationship regime types and famines and responses. She argues for a greater emphasis on "sustainable development," and argued that the literature's emphasis on famines leaves underexplored the miserable nutritional state that many in the world are forced to live with as normal circumstances.[193] In her discussion on the North Korean famine in particular, she reiterated that Sen's model is not the most appropriate framework and that Food Availability Decline (FAD, supply-side) theories, despite their limits, are useful in this case. She saw the shocks to already-challenged systems as important, and placed some of the blame on the policies that led to the pre-existing declines. North Korea indeed faced an ecological disaster – including not only policies that led to erosion and acidic soil, but extreme weather. These impacted its food production and its ability to recover from the weather damage.[194] North

[190] Ibid. Here, Woo-Cumings acknowledges that this argument could be seen as letting the Kim government off the hook, but she argues that the sins of that regime are far older and that understanding the climatic issue is important for understanding similar happenings in the future.
[191] Ibid, 27-29.
[192] Ibid, 18.
[193] Ibid, 11-15, 33.
[194] Ibid, 27-28.

Korea suffered from a serious decline in energy resources while its industrial and agricultural systems were heavily reliant on energy, particularly oil, which North Korea would have difficulty importing.[195]

Hazel Smith, who worked in the DPRK as a relief worker, found herself, like Natsios, disillusioned by the response to the famine. However, she used different lenses to assess the famine itself, and argued that there is a widespread consensus that the famine was caused by two factors in tandem, including both policy errors and a loss of material inputs. Economic decline "provided the context" for the food crisis, but the "proximate cause" was the extreme weather that struck the DPRK.[196] In this economic decline, food production was already on the way down, and this extreme weather turned the "chronic deterioration in the economic environment" into an "acute crisis."[197] She focuses her criticism of policies on the centralized industrial policy, and its demand for the local production of tools. Smith observed that there were, prior to the floods, imperfect, but functioning institutions in the DPRK providing food, health care, and sanitation. These systems were connected, and the devastation that flooding caused to sanitation systems and natural resources had compounding impacts.[198] Her criticisms are less directed towards Sen's theories in particular, and more towards analysis that project sinister motives on the DPRK's every activity, a view she calls "securitization."[199]

Suk Lee proposes an alternative idea: that the DPRK's official statistics indicate that famine began in 1994, not in 1995.[200] Despite a good autumn 1993 harvest that

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195 Ibid, 24-25.
196 Hazel Smith, *Hungry for Peace*, 34.
197 Ibid, 66.
198 Ibid, 62 -72, 74.
199 Ibid, 24-28.
200 Suk Lee, *The DPRK Famine of 1994: Existence and Impact*, 34-35.

provided 4% more domestic grain for North Korea than the year before, imports of grain significantly declined in 1994 as the Chinese maize crop, a majority of the DPRK's usual grain import, dropped 80% in 1984.[201] While some provinces had great 1993 harvests, the Hamgyong and Kangwon provinces had steep production declines and suffered from cold temperatures, requiring that the central government and other provinces send emergency food relief. However, as the overall supply declined from the loss of imports, the DPRK government "suspended" food deliveries to and the PDS of these Northern regions.[202]

The Rise and Fall of North Korean Modern Agriculture

Korea, historically, has been inhospitable to agricultural development. Andrew Natsios details a series of famines and humanitarian crises that struck the Korean peninsula over the course of the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, attributing them to a mix of war, natural disaster, and bureaucratic incompetence.[203] World Food Programme (WFP) reports describe the crop-growing season in North Korea as limited by both the "shortage of cultivable land"[204] and the "short duration and inflexibility of the crop cycle."[205] A December 1996 WFP Special Report details the problem, writing that "(o)nly some 20 percent or 2 million hectares of total land area offers scope for arable production, whilst climatically crops can only be

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[201] Ibid, 36. Suk Lee cites Kim, Woon Keun, Lee, Hyunok, and Sumner, Daniel, *Economic Development and Cultural Change* Vol.46. No. 3. (1998)

[202] Ibid, 37. Andrew Natsios took this argument that PDS service was suspended further, opining that food distribution and cutoff had something to do with – at least indirectly - the political status of individuals and communities and that the northeast regions of North Korea, the poorest in the nation, were not provided for - "triaged". Andrew Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine*, 105-09.

[203] Andrew Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine*, 8-10.

[204] United Nations World Food Programme, "Special Alert #270, Democratic People's Republic of Korea", hosted by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/004/W2706E/W2706E00.HTM

[205] United Nations World Food Programme, "Special Alert #267, Democratic People's Republic of Korea," May 13, 1996, hosted by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/004/W1302E/W1302E00.HTM

grown in a relatively short period from May to October."[206] The North Koreans had to compensate for these limited conditions at various times through trade, aid and development.

There are a variety of opinions on the historical context of Korea's agricultural problems and its influences. Noland and Haggard assert that the famine of the 1990s was part of a broader pattern of food shortages in the history of the DPRK, resulting from agricultural policies. Noting shortages in 1945-46, 1954-55, and 1970-73, they claim that the grain confiscation that accompanied these shortages influenced the response of rural farmers to the events of the 1990s.[207] Christine Ahn notes that Suk Lee posits that the 1946 shortages led the DPRK to begin a forty-year policy to grow their way out of shortages, and the results of these changes played a role in the emergence of famine in the 1990s.[208] This included the expansion of agricultural land, greater use of chemical fertilizers, high-grain crops, and "dense planting" techniques, and mitigation for the impacts of such farming. This system became counterproductive in the 1980's, resulting in agricultural losses.[209] By the mid-1990s, the population was increasingly urbanized and 70 percent worked in industry.[210] The first steps in this change were the land reforms and the collectivization of agriculture by the DPRK government. Historian Andrei Lankov

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206 United Nations World Food Programme, "FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Special Report," December 6, 1996, hosted by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, http://www.fao.org/docrep/004/w3690e/w3690e00.htm.

207 Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard, *Famine in North Korea*, 25.

208 Initially found in Christine Ahn, "Famine and the Future of Food Security in North Korea", "Policy Brief #11" (May 2005), Food First: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1. last accessed on September 18, 2011, http://www.kpolicy.org/documents/policy/ 050531christineahnnkfoodsecurity.pdf. Ahn continuously cites a work of Suk Lee's, entitled *Food Shortages and Economic Institutions in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, University of Warwick, Department of Economics, January 2003. The author of this thesis is unable to locate this work.

209 Ibid, 1-2, 5. Marcus Noland placed the agricultural peak for North Korea in 1989, with steep declines thereafter. Marcus Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse: The Future of the Two Koreas* (Washington, DC: Institute of International Economics, June 2000), 172.

210 Meredith Woo-Cumings, "The Political Ecology of Famine," 26.

wrote that this collectivization began in 1954-1955, and that "by the end of 1956 about 80.9 percent of all households had been forced to join the cooperatives. By the end of the next year, 95.6 percent of all North Korean peasants were members of agricultural cooperatives." Independent craftsmen and small business owners were driven out of business between 1956 and 1958, and in December 1957, farmers became prohibited from privately selling their surplus cereal production.[211] These farmers were forced to find state employment or join agricultural cooperatives.[212] Lankov here cites accounts from Hungarian official documents. An account by a North Korean official named Yi P'il-gyu claimed that taxation rates on farmers, who were around 80% of the population, were near 50%, taxes were collected violently, and that the farmers were experiencing shortfalls in grain and soybeans.[213] However, Charles Armstrong wrote that the 50% *de facto* "tax-in-kind on agricultural goods" began in 1946 and was less than the 55-60% taken from farmers during the late colonial period. These taxes were resisted by some, but land reform had helped gain popular support for the new DPRK government.[214]

The DPRK, throughout the 1970s and into the early 1990s, publicized its mechanized, fertilizer-heavy agricultural development. Meredith Woo-Cumings posited that this modernization was related to Kim Jong Il's "long-term succession."[215] The DPRK put out news releases discussing the technical advice it was providing to non-aligned and third world nations, including Burundi and Nigeria.[216] In the 1980s and

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211 Andrei Lankov, *Crisis in North Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 179.

212 Ibid.

213 Ibid, 99.

214 Charles K. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution: 1945-1950* (Ithaca: Cornell, 2004 paperback), 84-85, 148-150.

215 Meredith Woo-Cumings, "The Political Ecology of Famine," 25.

216 The DPRK promoted its provision of technical advice and aid. This referenced radio broadcast discusses the DPRK's 1978 provision of technical assistance, money, and farm equipment, even tractors. "Aid from North

1990's, news stories emerged that announced the modernization of North Korean agriculture, including mechanization, chemical fertilizer use, and pump-driven irrigation. Even if we assume that the precise numbers in such reports are exaggerated, the reported actions reflect the goals of the DPRK in this period, and help to explain later theorizing about and observation of the agricultural failure in the DPRK in the 1990s. This modernization process was gradual, becoming a priority for the DPRK in the late 1970s. On January 17, 1979, the BBC quoted a Kim Il Sung appearance on Pyongyang radio. In this report, Kim claimed a "'bumper harvest' in 1978, notwithstanding unprecedented drought and heavy rain." It also noted that an increase in "(a)gricultural planning and guidance" was needed, as the harvest could have been better, but farm skills were low. In the same 1979 broadcast, Kim Il Sung showed the linkage between agricultural development and the juche revolution, emphasizing centralized planning, a desire for greater efficiency in vegetable growth (with the freed-up land devoted to corn), and a desire to increase overall grain output. Most importantly, Kim asserted that political independence relied on economic and agricultural productivity.[217]

This improvement not only involved greater centralization and greater land for staple crops, but increased mechanization. While it is impossible to independently verify

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Korea", BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, June 19, 1979, Lusaka in English June 7, 1978, 1800 GMT; The BBC classifies this report as follows: Section: Part 4 The Middle East and Africa; Weekly Economic Report; B. Economic and Scientific; 2. Africa; Zambia; ME/W1036/A2/5; via Lexis Nexis, last accessed July 12, 2010; "Burundi agricultural delegation in N Korea", BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, September 17, 1980, Wednesday, KCNA in English, September 11, 1980, 2220 GMT; The BBC classifies this report as follows: Section: Part 3 The Far East; A. International Affairs; 5. Africa; FE/6525/A5/2; via Lexis Nexis, last accessed July 12, 2010; "Nigeria; Agricultural Co-operation Agreement With North Korea", BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, June 2, 1981, Tuesday, Excerpt of Lagos in English for abroad, May 22, 1981, 0830 GMT. The BBC classifies this report as follows:Part 4 The Middle East and Africa; Weekly Economic Report; A. Economic and Technical; 2. Africa; ME/W1136/A2/2, via Lexis Nexis, last accessed July 12, 2010

[217] Kim stated, "Only when there is plenty of food can national independence be defended and the country have its say. If one fails in farming and goes to other countries for food, one can neither defend independence nor have a say." "Kim Il-sung on N Korean agriculture", BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, January 17, 1979, retrieved from LexisNexis Academic, last accessed on June 20, 2010

these numbers, the DPRK's claims reflect a desired outcome. In 1984, the BBC quotes a KCNA report from March 7 of that year that states, "Comprehensive mechanization of agriculture is making headway in [North] Korea…" The article goes on to discuss the volume of new equipment that had been introduced to DPRK farmers in recent years. It also makes claims about the speed and the extent of the national modernization effort, and the efficiency of its farm workers. The report said that, "(i)n North Korea at present 100% of paddy and non-paddy tillage, threshing and carriage, 95% of rice-transplanting, and 70% of harvesting have been mechanized." The report also noted that the DPRK was not only manufacturing tractors built for Korean terrain, but was also capable, in each county, of producing replacement parts and performing repairs.[218] Hazel Smith notes that such local production and repair was not only disastrous, but extended into other areas, like medicine and public health, with doctors sometimes left to make their own tools.[219]

Smith and Woo-Cumings both asserted that the economic and agricultural policies of the DPRK were, for a period of years, successful in producing an improved standard of living and better crop yields in a nation tormented by the aftermath of civil war and poverty in a land ill-suited to agriculture. As the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) numbers detail, the long-term human development numbers show improvement over the course of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The 1994 UNDP report corroborates a point made by Woo-Cumings: despite the horrors of the DPRK government's behavior and the ecological problems that followed its agricultural push, it was self-reporting an increase of its percentage of citizens receiving sufficient calories from 80 percent in 1960

[218] "Society and Environment: Advent of Comprehensive Farm Mechanization", North Korean Central News Agency in English, February 23, 1984, 1020 GMT, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, March 7, 1984, last accessed on June 20, 2010, retrieved from LexisNexis Academic.

[219] Hazel Smith, *Hungry for Peace* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute for Peace, 2005), 63.

to 95 percent in 1988-1990.[220] The 1995 report asserts that, from 1960 to 1992, infant mortality rates dropped from 85 deaths per 1000 live births to 24 death per 1000 live births, exceeding even the serious global improvements in that area over that period.[221] Woo-Cumings acknowledges this gain in productivity took place amidst unconscionable regime behavior. Hazel Smith's language is less critical than the other authors, referring to this as an exchange of political rights for material provision that the North Korean populace, with little to no experience of democracy, "more or less accepted." She wrote that the Korean Worker's Party presented more opportunity for political input than the Japanese colonial authority that preceded it.[222] That said, none of the authors would regard North Korea as a modern democracy with a free press consistent with Sen's ideals as mentioned above.

While a period of economic success is acknowledged, a range of authors note that serious consequences for future land use and crop yields came from environmental destruction. Christine Ahn cites Theodor Friedrich, senior agriculturalist of the Food and Agriculture Organization, as having said that the DPRK had used a strategy called "intensive agriculture" that depended on higher chemical inputs producing higher yields. This was similar to the strategies of the US and USSR.[223] However, this approach hit diminishing returns in the DPRK, requiring increased inputs simply to maintain yield levels.[224] Marcus Noland, similar to Woo-Cumings, wrote that the

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220 United Nations Development Program, "Human Development Indicators", 1994 *Human Development Report*, http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_1994_en_indicators1.pdf.

221 United Nations Development Program, "Human Development Indicators", 1995 *Human Development Report*, http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_1995_en_indicators1.pdf.

222 Hazel Smith, *Hungry for Peace*, 45-46.

223 As quoted by Christine Ahn, "Famine and the Future of Food Security in North Korea", 25-26.

224 Ibid.

agricultural system was dependent on irrigation systems that required electricity.[225] The first report of the WFP and FAO analysts in December 1995 observed that the weather, the intensive farming techniques and "monoculture" caused the soil to decline in fertility. This, along with the small supply of land combined to produce an already-declining crop yield in North Korea even before the flooding.[226]

In 1987, the DPRK announced its third Seven Year Plan for its economy, set to run through 1993. This plan sought a near-doubling of industrial production and large increases in broad categories, but a restraint that left many particular 1993 targets at the same level (or lower) as those projected for 1989.[227] B.C. Koh makes the case that, agriculturally, North Korea was seeking state-driven expansion through technology and fertilizer, not expanded private ownership or alternative strategies. The DPRK was not pursuing autarkic economic ends. While hamstrung by debt and a poor reputation as a credit risk, it had maintained economically productive relations with the Soviet Union and the Korean residents of Japan.[228] By 1987, North Korea had become a net importer of food.[229] Still, in 1988, the DPRK publicized its continued agricultural modernization efforts. The BBC quotes a KCNA report about the March 13, 1988 10th Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the Union of Agricultural Working People, a meeting where high level officials were present. The report reads that "the ideological, technical and cultural revolutions in the rural areas" required that the DPRK government "industrialise

225 Marcus Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse*, 171.

226 United Nations World Food Programme/Food and Agriculture Organization, "FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea - 22 December 1995," http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/004/W0051E/W0051E00.HTM

227 B.C. Koh, "North Korea in 1987: Launching a New Seven Year Plan," *Asian Survey* Vol. 28, No. 1, A Survey of Asia in 1987: Part I (Jan., 1988), pp. 62-70, University of California Press.

228 Ibid.

229 Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard, *Famine in North Korea*, 27, citing Suk Lee, *The DPRK Famine of 1994: Existence and Impact*, Studies Series 05-06, (Seoul: Korea institute for National Unification, 2005), 6.

[*sic*] agriculture" by focusing on the "irrigation, electrification, mechanisation [*sic*] and chemicalisation [*sic*] of agriculture."[230] KCNA reports from 1979 and 1990 described the goals of the project and emphasized themes that included the consistency of these actions with *juche* and the direct advice of Kim Il Sung, and, by 1991, Kim Jong Il's role in such efforts.[231] In the days following 1991's New Year's address, one in which Kim Il Sung acknowledged changing global conditions, the DPRK pursued "work-harder" policies designed to bolster production.[232]

From the 1970's through the fall of the Soviet Union, the DPRK racked up increasingly large trade deficits with the USSR and received subsidized fuel.[233] A report from the Hungarian Embassy in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry from 1981 discussed the delayed repayment schedule followed by the DPRK on debts to the Soviets, and the desire of the USSR to increase interest rates. The USSR responded to Korean inquiries about a promised nuclear reactor delivery by remarking that a) it was a complex matter and b) that other nations that were to get one "also had to contribute to such investments."[234] The Soviet Union, starting in 1988, cut military aid to the DPRK, and tried to get North Korea to place its reactors under what author Evgeny Bahzanov calls "international controls."[235] This was a stark contrast to the 1984 meeting between

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230 North Korean Central News Agency in English, March 14, 1988, 0959 GMT, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, March 16, 1988, last accessed on June 20, 2010, via LexisNexis Academic .

231 For example: "National Agricultural Conference Ends in Pyongyang", *Korean Central News Agency*, January 13, 1990; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, January 17, 1979, Part 3 The Far East; B. Internal Affairs; North Korea; FE/0666/B/ 1, last accessed on June 20, 2010, via LexisNexis Academic

232 Rhee Sang-Woo, "North Korea in 1990: Lonesome Struggle to Keep Chuch'e", *Asian Survey* Vol. 31, No. 1, A Survey of Asia in 1990: Part I (Jan., 1991), pp. 71-78

233 Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 156.

234 "Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Minister", Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1981, 86. doboz, 103, 002477/1981, Translated by Balazs Szalontai, Cold War International History Project, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=75660008-C47B-FEFD-1576E7559F036879 &sort=Subject&item=Korea,%20DPRK,%20in%20Sino%20Soviet%20Split&print=true

235 Evgeny P. Bazhanov, "Korea in Russia's Post-Cold War Regional Political Context," *Korea At The Center:*

Kim Il Sung and former Premier Konstantin Chernenko in Moscow which bolstered Soviet aid to the DPRK. However, Kim Il Sung's relations with Premier Mikhail Gorbachev were less successful. By December 1988, the USSR was asking about diplomatic relations with and financial assistance from the ROK.[236]

Eventually, as the Soviet Union's circumstances changed, and then, as it ceased to exist, its non-military economic relationship with North Korea also changed. From 1990, the Soviet Union's absolute trade with and subsidy for the DPRK crashed. The North Koreans had, until this point received grain from the Soviet Union at steeply discounted rates.[237] This would cease as the Soviet Union, on November 2, 1990, demanded that, beginning in January 1991, all purchases between themselves and North Korea be transacted at world market rates and in hard currency. The North concedes.[238] DPRK imports from the USSR fell by about three-quarters from 1990-1991 from approximately $1.95 billion to around $600 million USD.[239]

In January 1992, China and the DPRK changed their trade relationship to one based on cash rather than barter. China's economic goals were also increasingly hinged to the global economic order rising after the Cold War. China still played a substantial, if reduced, role in the provision of food and energy resources to the DPRK in the pre-famine period and during the famine itself. Citing a 1999 report from the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP), an economic research group funded by the ROK government, Haggard and Noland argue that China filled some of the USSR's

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Dynamics of Regionalism in Northeast Asia, ed. Charles K. Armstrong, Gilbert Rozman, Samuel S. Kim, and Stephen Kotkin, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 217.

236 Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 201-203.

237 Andrew Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine*, 12.

238 Marcus Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse,* 97.

239 Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard, *Famine in North Korea*, 28.

former role in the DPRK's economy, providing 77% of fuel imports and 68% of all food imports in 1993, even though North Korea was unable to pay China in the requested hard currency for this food and oil. There is a drop off from 740,000 metric tons of grain sent to the DPRK in 1993, compared to a total of 305,000 metric tons the following year. This number would plummet to 153,000 metric tons in 1995, before rebounding in 1996.[240]

The pain faced by the DPRK from this declining support involved an energy crisis that would impact the agricultural, manufacturing and infrastructure sectors, as systems would lose functionality.[241] As the USSR and PRC decreased their subsidies, it became harder for North Korea to meet its energy demands. C. Kenneth Quinones asserts that the DPRK went through an "oil shock" in 1991 with the fall of the Soviet Union and the elimination of its fuel subsidies, and China's demand for cash payment instead of barter. [242] The DPRK attempted, and failed, to replace much of its oil by making deals with the Arab world and the United States. However, the Arab world did not have a high enough demand for Pyongyang's missiles, and the a) light-water nuclear plant construction and b) heavy fuel oil delivery designated for the DPRK in the 1994 Agreed Framework deal was not delivered on time.[243]

Data compiled from South Korean government sources tell of a decline in energy resources prior to the floods. As discussed in the introduction, these sources are here to show the state of the literature. C. Kenneth Quinones, using data from data from Chihung Trading and the ROK Ministry of Unification, wrote that North Korea's total energy

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[240] Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard, *Famine in North Korea*, 32-33.

[241] Don Oberdorfer, C. Kenneth Quinones, Hazel Smith and others note that the decline in energy had severe consequences.

[242] C. Kenneth Quinones, "Reconciling Nuclear Standoff and Economic Shortfalls: Pyongyang's Perspective." *North Korea: The Politics of Regime Survival* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 89-90.

[243] Ibid.

supply dropped from almost 24 million metric tons of "oil equivalent" to 14 million metric tons in 1998.[244] In absolute amounts, these numbers indicate a 19% decline in overall oil imports from 1991 to 1992, a 10.5% decline 1992 to 1993, and a 33% decline from 1993 to 1994. There is a brief rise to 1,100,000 metric tons in 1995's numbers, with serious fluctuations thereafter, finally bottoming out at 317,000 M/T in 1999.[245] Marcus Noland, citing Bank of Korea statistics, wrote that "between 1989 and 1994 coal production fell by more than 40 percent, crude oil imports by 65 percent, and electrical generation by more than 20 percent."[246] Hazel Smith notes that the principal sources of energy in the DPRK were coal and hydroelectric power, both devastated by the flooding. Oil's decline harmed industrial, transportation and agricultural capacity and equipment.[247] The further breakdown of these challenged energy resources is evident from the reports from the World Food Program and Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

Providing adequate food was a struggle for the DPRK even before the floods struck. DongHo Jo and Namsoo Chang used the the Food Balance Sheet produced by the Korea Rural Economic Institute to estimate that "per capita energy supply" for North Korea had peaked in 1989-1991 at 2,698 kcals, declining sharply thereafter, with the numbers being 2,308 in 1992-1994, and 2,326 in 1994-1996 respectively.[248] Despite the relative optimism about 1989-1991 of these South Korean numbers, Noland and Haggard wrote of an East German diplomat, who noted that, as early as the late 1980s, the DPRK

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244 Ibid, 89.

245 C. Kenneth Quinones, "Reconciling Nuclear Standoff and Economic Shortfalls: Pyongyang's Perspective," 90.

246 Marcus Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse*, 144-45.

247 Hazel Smith, *Hungry for Peace*, 64, 67, 70.

248 Dongho Jo and Namsoo Chang, "Impact of North Korean Food Crisis and Malnutrition on Labor Productivity," *Food Problems in North Korea*, ed. Gill-Chin Lim and Namso Chang, (Seoul: OREUM Publishing, 2003), 129.

had a campaign encouraging its citizens to eat only two meals a day.[249] Data from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) seems to show a long-term gradual decline well before the arrival of the floods. These estimates indicate that between 1982 and 1994, the DPRK consistently held between 680,000 and 700,000 hectares of land in order to grow corn, and, between 1980 and 1989, held between 630,000 and 645,000 hectares to grow rice. However, after 1989, land available for rice is said to have declined to 600,000 hectares in 1990, a level that holds through 1994. In 1995, this number would fall further to 580,000 acres, and hold there through 1996. Between 1994 and 1995, the amount of land reserved to grow corn would fall precipitously from 700,000 hectares to 600,000 hectares.[250] However, while this data would indicate a problem by themselves, the yield numbers in these estimates also declined. Corn's decline begins in 1990, holding steady during 1992 and 1993, with a slight rise in yield from 1993 to 1994. Interestingly, 1994's rice yield was a marked improvement over 1993's very low rice yield[251] (1.1 million metric tons, a tumble from 1992's 1.4 million metric tons, as well as a fall in yield per hectare from 1992's 2.33 to 1993's 1.83). 1994's yield and land area numbers matched 1992's.[252] That said, the annual corn yield would fall an additional 25% from 2,000,000 metric tons to 1,500,000 metric tons over the course of the key years of flood and drought in this period, 1995-1997.[253] Annual rice yields would fluctuate between

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[249] Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard, *Famine in North Korea*, 264. The authors cite personal correspondence with Dr. Hans Maretzki, the former ambassador to North Korea from East Germany.

[250] Foreign Agricultural Service, United States Department of Agriculture, "North Korea: Corn Table," http://www.fas.usda.gov/remote/korea/corn.html; and Foreign Agricultural Service, United States Department of Agriculture, "North Korea: Milled Rice Table", retrieved from http://www.fas.usda.gov/remote/korea/rice.html, Information also from http://www.fas.usda.gov/pecad2/highlights/2000/08/nkoraug.htm, February 2003.

[251] This is counteracted by, as Suk Lee wrote, a serious decline in imported grain in this year.

[252] Foreign Agricultural Service, United States Department of Agriculture, "North Korea: Corn Table" and "North Korea: Milled Rice Table", retrieved from http://www.fas.usda.gov/pecad2/highlights/2000/08/nkoraug.htm, http://www.fas.usda.gov/remote/korea/corn.html, http://www.fas.usda.gov/remote/korea/rice.html, February 2003.

[253] Ibid.

1,300,000 and 1,500,000 metric tons between 1995-1998, a far cry from the consistent annual yields of over 2,000,000 metric tons that marked the 1980s.[254] Suk Lee notes that corn imports from China were cut by four-fifths in 1994 due to cold weather's ravaging a 1993 Chinese maize crop and political tension over DPRK overtures to Taiwan.[255]

In North Korea in this pre-flood period, the majority of the population received its food from the public distribution system, a hierarchical organization to which farmers contributed their grain yields to be distributed amongst the eligible population using regional outlets and warehouses.[256] Andrew Natsios describes the system as designed to have "theoretically provided the basic necessities to the population at heavily subsidized rates as payment for work." This system had normally covered about 62% of the population.[257] It excluded members of the military, who had their own distinct food distribution system. It also excluded those living on collective and state farms, who separately received an "annual ration."[258] These farmers were the principal contributors to the system.

Several authors touch on the public distribution system, with some questioning its distributive fairness and the robustness of the system, and others defending it as an egalitarian means of food distribution. The question of fair distribution of food is not easily answered. While Natsios argues that political clout in Marxist systems produces increased access to resources[259] and Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard refer to it as

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254 Ibid.

255 Suk Lee, *The DPRK Famine of 1994-2000: Existence and Impact* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, May 2005), 35-6.

256 Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard, *Famine in North Korea*, 52.

257 Marcus Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse*, 179.

258 Andrew Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine*, 92.

259 Ibid, 93-4.

Pyongyang's central vehicle for controlling the population[260], Meredith Woo-Cumings notes that there was reason, prior to the breakdown, to have faith in the PDS, praising its fairness, experience and track record in functioning well.[261] Doug Coutts of the World Food Program and then-US Representative Tony Hall would also refer to the system as working.[262] Noland and Haggard wrote that when the DPRK did attempt to respond, it concentrated on "technical fixes" for existing programs, and its main carrier of food, the public distribution system (PDS), contained geographic and occupational preferences and was broken down.[263] Noland wrote that, as the PDS ran out of food by mid-1998, a high percentage of the population began to turn to informal markets to acquire food.[264]

The sharp reduction in acquired material inputs and energy resources compromised the ability of the North Koreans to maintain their existing agricultural, industrial and transportation systems and infrastructure. In the pre-flood period, the North Koreans sought to present a public image of health and agricultural success. While presenting a public image of strength, the DPRK was in fact reaching out to other nations – including historical rivals - in order to address its agricultural and nutritional shortfalls. In March of 1991, representatives of the World Food Program visit North Korea in response to a request by the DPRK for food aid following its 1990 harvest. Natsios asserts that the WFP advisors found no cause to provide food aid, seeing no starvation

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260 Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard, *Famine in North Korea*, 53.

261 Meredith Woo-Cumings, "The Political Ecology of Famine," 5.

262 Interview with Douglas Coutts, News Hour, Public Broadcasting Service, May 21, 1996, transcript at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/asia/may96/food_shortage_5-21.html; Testimony of Congressman Tony Hall, "North Korea: An Overview", S. Hrg. 104-662, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 104th Congress, 2nd Session, September 12, 1996, Washington, DC. Printed by the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1996, pp.2-8

263 Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard, *Famine in North Korea: Markets, Aid and Reform*, 33-34, 65-68.

264 Marcus Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse*, 180.

and receiving reports of a harvest that produced 10 million metric tons.[265] However, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* reported in May 1991 that the DPRK was suffering from energy and food shortages that compromised national productivity, and had already begun receiving rice donations from South Korean churches. The article notes that the DPRK was faced with obsolete factories that ran at 40-45% capacity because they lacked sufficient fuel and energy to function, and was planning to import rice from South Korea (to whom they already bartered coal and cement for 5000 tons of rice one month prior to the article) and Thailand (in a comparable barter, except involving exporting Korean construction labor rather than materials) to address food shortages.[266] Suh Dong Kwon, the then-director of South Korean intelligence, claimed that the DPRK asked the ROK to secretly give it a half a million tons of rice.[267] In October 1991, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* also reported that North Korea was falling well short of its economic goals, set to take a hit from cuts in aid from the Chinese and the Soviets, and had become dependent on ethnic Koreans living in Japan as a source of hard currency.[268]

In December of 1992, the Korean Central News Agency painted an optimistic picture of North Korea's food supply, writing that, "Rich harvests were gathered throughout North Korea this year." It praised the increase in fruit and vegetable yields (claiming that each more than doubled the prior year's numbers) and gave examples of counties and farms (particularly in North Hamgyong Province and in the areas

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265 Andrew Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine*, 166.

266 "South Korea 1991: Rice for Reunification? (North Korea 2), *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 30, 1991,p.38, 151,22; ABI/INFORM Global.

267 Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 372

268 "Passing the Hat: North Korea Taps Supporters in Japan for Aid", Louise do Rosario, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 10, 1991; 154,41; ABI/INFORM Global, p.75

surrounding Pyongyang) that exceeded their goals for the year. [269] There is no major change in agricultural policy – mechanization and modernization are said to have moved full speed ahead. The report details the further development of dams, reservoirs and pumping stations, observing the widespread use of machines and electricity in farming.[270]

Despite the optimistic tone of these announcements, reports of economic decline and food shortages in the DPRK continued prior to the extreme weather of 1995. In May 1993, ROK Prime Minister Hwang In Sung told the South Korean Assembly that the DPRK was going to fall 20% short of its harvest goal of 6.5 million tons that year. He claimed that the DPRK lacked hard currency to make purchases on the world market or pay China for food and fuel as requested.[271] The BBC cited a KCNA report that the UN Food and Agriculture Organization sent a delegation to North Korea on May 31, 1993.[272] The *Washington Times*, an opponent of the Kim government, reported a shortfall in agricultural production in the DPRK for September 1993. It primarily cites ROK sources, including Song Kang-hyun of the South Korean Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, who estimated a rice crop decline up to 30 percent and a corn crop 20 percent below the 1992 figures. The article speculated that declines in rice crops in South Korea and Japan would impact the ability of the DPRK to secure affordable food. It also reported severe erosion resulting from a program to grow corn on the hills as the reason most given for

[269] "Agricultural Production and Irrigation Projects", *North Korean Central News Agency*, in English, December 22, 1992, 1524 GMT, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, December 30, 1992, last accessed on June 20, 2010 via LexisNexis Academic. The BBC classifies this report as Part 3 The Far East; Weekly Economic Report; A. Economic and Technical; North Korea; FE/W0262/A/ 1.

[270] Ibid.

[271] "N. Korean food shortages worsening, South's premier says", *Japan Economic Newswire*, May 4, 1993, last accessed on December 16, 2009 via Lexis-Nexis Academic.

[272] "UN Food, Agriculture Delegation in North Korea", *North Korean Central News Agency*, Pyongyang in English May 31, 1993, 1049 GMT, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, June 9, 1993, Part 3 The Far East; 1. GENERAL AND WESTERN AFFAIRS; FE/1710/A1, retrieved from LexisNexis Academic, last accessed June 20, 2010; The author of this thesis has contacted the FAO seeking confirmation but has yet to locate further documentation detailing the specifics or findings of the visit.

agricultural decline.[273] In December 1993, the Workers Party Central Committee in North Korea publicly disclosed that North Korea's economy faced a "'grave situation'" and announced a 3-year economic transition plan.[274] In February 1994, the ROK government had leaked the testimony of defectors from the DPRK who were claiming that North Koreans were eating grains intended for animals and were selling off appliances in order buy food.[275] Andrew Natsios wrote that trade between U.S. firms and the DPRK from 1992-94 provided $120 million in corn and wheat, but that the trade was cut off by the vendors as the DPRK defaulted on its debt payments, offering evidence that some were aware that a food crisis could be coming to North Korea.[276]

North Korea made some attempts in the 1980s and 1990s to gain foreign investment. In 1984, North Korea passed the Joint Venture Law, a measure designed to enable foreign companies to partner with the DPRK government and have business operations in North Korea. Ilpyong Kim asserted that "conservative cadres" within the DPRK were so opposed to this reform that the policy climate did not change, and major capitalist countries stayed away or made investments that were insufficient to make real change.[277] In December 1991, the North Korean government announced the creation of the Rajin-Sonbong Free Trade Zone, and passed laws such as the 1992 Foreign Investment Law to attract investors. Like the 1984 law, this policy change came with few

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[273] Michael Breen, "N. Korea in for a hard fall ; Nukes may take back seat to food," *Washington Times*, September 3, 1993, Part A, Page A1, last accessed June 20, 2010 via LexisNexis Academic.

[274] Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 297.

[275] "N. Korea Food Shortage at Crisis Stage, Defector Says", *Japan Economic Newswire*, February 7, 1994, retrieved from LexisNexis Academic, last accessed on December 16, 2009. Discussions of the consumption of alternative grains, and the dangers involved, are included in Lim Soon Hee (*The Food Crisis and the Changing Roles and Attitudes of North Korean Women*, p. 6), Andrew Natsios (*The Great North Korean Famine*, p.81-84), Tony Hall (*Changing the Face of Hunger*, p.127-28).

[276] Andrew Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine*, 142.

[277] Ilpyong J. Kim, "Kim Jong Il's Military-First Politics," in North Korea: The Politics of Regime Survival, ed. Young Whan Kihl and Hong Nack Kim, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006)

results.[278] Marcus Noland wrote that Rajin-Sonbong failed due to domestic political interference, poor infrastructure and an isolated location.[279]

There were limits to the DPRK's economic reform that they did not necessarily choose. Author Dick K. Nanto focused on the barriers that remained between the U.S. and the DPRK, including sanctions that limit trade between the U.S. and DPRK. The DPRK lacked most-favored nation (MFN) trade status from the United States, so the U.S. still placed high, pre-WWII level tariffs on goods imported from the DPRK.[280] Nanto did note, however, that these restrictions are mostly unilateral, and most other nations traded "non-sensitive" goods with North Korea with little to no restriction.[281] North Korea also could not receive development aid. Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard concurred with Nanto that the DPRK, in "(e)ven the late 1990s and early 2000s" was "blocked" from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the ADB by the U.S. and Japan. However, they argued that the DPRK was unlikely to have agreed to the information disclosure and economic reform required of these organizations' members.[282]

Entering 1995, reports about the state of the DPRK's economy in this period continued to be bleak. Although, many of the sources of this news were institutions in the Republic of Korea. In June 1995, Deutsche Presse-Agentur reported claims by the Bank of Korea that the DPRK lost 1.7% of its GNP from 1993 to 1994 to reach an estimated 21.2 billion dollars. External trade in 1994 had fallen by over a half of a billion dollars

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278 Ibid, Kim notes that the Rajin-Sonbong park generated only $120 million of investment between 1991 and 2000.

279 Marcus Noland, *Korea After Kim Jong-il*, "Policy Analyses in International Economics", #71, Institute for International Economics, Washington, DC, January 2004, 54-57.

280 Dick K. Nanto, "North Korea's Economic Crisis, Reforms, and Policy Implications," in *North Korea: The Politics of Regime Survival*, ed. Young Whan Kihl and Hong Nack Kim, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 135.

281 Ibid.

282 Ibid. Also, Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard, *Famine in North Korea*, 30-31.

(20% decline) from the previous year, and had dropped from 4.72 billion dollars in 1990 to 2.11 billion in 1994. The article is careful to note that there was "no independent confirmation of the account."[283]

The United Nations Development Program, present in North Korea since 1981, ranked North Korea 101st in the world in its 1994 human development index.[284] To be sure, 101st place in pre-flood 1994 is quite a ways from that year's first place Canada, but also a world apart from last-place Guinea, whose 1992 life expectancy was over 25 years lower than that of the DPRK. In fact, the DPRK is listed as a "medium development" state overall, but ranked it at a level of "high human development" in terms of its citizenry's daily calorie supply (123% of requirements in 1991 versus the high development standard of 122%). However, there is no data on the DPRK's overall poverty rate, only listing a rural poverty rate of less than 2 percent and 15,000 deaths of children under the age of 5, both for 1992.[285] In the 1995 report, the DPRK's overall human development was still listed at "medium development", but its global human development rank rose to 83rd. In the 1995 report, much of the data was, like the 1994 report, from 1992. However, the DPRK reported a GDP per capita that ranked 97th. As in 1994, the DPRK did not report energy or human security data (sanitation, health care, child malnutrition numbers) for the 1992 numbers and only gave long-term comparisons favorable to the image of the nation (i.e., the falling infant mortality rates since 1960).

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283 "North Korea's economy shrinks for fifth year in a row, Seoul says," Deutsche Presse-Agentur, June 20, 1995, retrieved from LexisNexis Academic.

284 United Nations Development Program, "UNDP in the DPRK – Who We Are", retrieved from http://www.undp.org/dprk/who-we-are.shtml, The author of this thesis is not verifying this data. Rather, the data gives insight as to how the DPRK's struggles may have been seen.

285 United Nations Development Program, "Human Development Indicators", 1994 *Human Development Report*, retrieved from http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_1994_en_indicators1.pdf.

They released some nutritional information, stating that, in 1992, the daily calorie per capita supply was 2,834, a number that would have nearly reached the standard for "high human development."[286] Despite the use of 1993 data in the 1996 report, the DPRK's human development index remains ranked 83rd.[287]

This data lags considerably behind events (the 1995 indicators rely on 1991 and 1992 data, while the 1996 report relies on 1993 data), and is mostly self-reported by national agencies. However, it gives some context about what information the world is being presented about the DPRK in this period. While it would make requests to other nations in the period leading up to the flooding, it did not entirely present a public image of poverty or need. In the period immediately following the start of the flooding, North Korea would formally request assistance from the world community.

The initial estimates about the state of the DPRK after the beginning of the 1995 floods came from the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA). The DHA had its United Nations Development Program (UNDP) official take a fly-over tour, and sent a Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team to North Korea. The DHA served as a coordinating body and produced "situation reports" in order to inform the outside world about the nature and the extent of the damages that followed the floods in North Korea. Andrew Natsios wrote that the refugee and defector accounts that he saw seemed to contradict the NGO and UN field reporting, which he calls "contradictory and ambiguous."[288] These reports, however limited in scope and detail, are useful in that they

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[286] United Nations Development Program, "Human Development Indicators", 1995 *Human Development Report*, retrieved from http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_1995_en_indicators1.pdf.

[287] United Nations Development Program, "Human Development Indicators", 1996 *Human Development Report*, retrieved from http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_1996_en_indicators1.pdf.

[288] Andrew Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine*, 55

reflect an important piece of the information that was relied on by international agencies and others in the initial stages of the famine, and detailed the official appeals to which the world community would respond.

The Flooding Begins in North Korea

By late July 1995, the catastrophic rainfall had begun to fall in North Korea. On August 25, the first flood situation report declared that the DHA was launching a relief appeal, and that a team of investigators would arrive shortly. The second such report, released three days later, began the effort to discover the scope of the problem. It notes that the DPRK government declared that it rained heavily (583mm-600mm in less than two hours in some areas) and without cessation from July 26 until August 9 in 145 counties and 12 provinces. This had consequences for approximately 5.2 million people.[289] Report #2 also emphasizes the damage that took place in North Pyongan and South Pyongan in the west, and Kangwon provinces, located in the southeast. It also notes the prior year's hailstorms.[290] However, a flood situation report several days later reported that the DPRK government asserted that flooding was more extensive than first reported, consisting of three periods – July 7-15, July 26 - August 12, and August 17-20 – impacting nearly three quarters of the nation's counties, particularly in the north and western parts of the DPRK, and damaging food and crops, medicine, hydroelectric dams, and telecommunications amongst other things.[291] These flood reports were produced until early January 1996, detailing the damage observed by the response teams in the provinces

[289] United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, "DPR Korea - Floods Situation Report #2," August 28, 1995, hosted by ReliefWeb, accessed at http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/OCHA-64C5HM?OpenDocument&rc=3&cc=prk

[290] Ibid

[291] United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, "DPR Korea - Floods Situation Report #3," August 31, 1995, hosted by ReliefWeb.int

they visited. This damage included not only homes and farms, but institutions including schools and hospitals, and critical infrastructure, including bridges, irrigation pumps, and electricity supply systems.[292] Subsequent reports indicate that the emphasis in this early stage was on providing adequate clothing, shelter, food and medicine to those survivors directly impacted by floods. Report #6 notes that because of the damage to agricultural systems and the food supply from the 1994 hailstorms and the 1995 floods, agricultural production and food would be "an intermediate to long-term problem." The report noted that damage to industrial equipment and infrastructure would harm the DPRK's economy. These reports also kept tabs on estimated loss of life and missing persons numbers, to the extent possible. On September 5, 1995, the UN DHA report summarizes what was known at the time – 500,000 people were believed homeless, and 60-70 were missing, "feared to have been drowned."[293]

Report #7 detailed the initial appeal to UN member governments, seeking about $7.5 million USD for the World Food Program (WFP) to purchase rice and vegetable oil to feed 500,000 North Koreans for 90 days, $4.46 million USD for the United Nations Children s' Fund (UNICEF) for immunization and rehydration projects, $2 million USD for the DHA and the UNDP to provide blankets and "family kits" to 100,000 flood victims, and $2 million for the World Health Organization (WHO) for sanitation equipment and medical supplies. After this initial assessment by the UN DHA, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization arrived in North Korea to investigate.[294] In this period,

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[292] United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, "DPR Korea - Floods Situation Report #5," September 5, 1995; hosted by ReliefWeb, last accessed on September 24, 2010 at http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/ACOS-64BUWW?OpenDocument&rc=3&emid=ACOS-635NTU

[293] "DPR Korea - Floods Situation Report #5", September 5, 1995

[294] "DPR Korea - Floods Situation Report #7", September 13, 1995

situation reports noted that the WFP was working with the DPRK's Ministry of Food Administration (MFA) and National Flood Damage Rehabilitation Committee (NFDRC). The reports also state that the initial effort was serving mostly farm families not covered by the Public Distribution System who lost their crop.[295] Further complicating matters, the rebuilding of infrastructure was hampered by a lack of fuel and cement.[296]

In December 1995, the team from the WFP and FAO produced a report of its visit that would better contextualize the evidence provided by the Flood Situation Reports. This report details the state of nutrition in the DPRK in late 1995. The expected ration norms were established for a nine-tier age and occupation based ration system, with the highest amounts to heavy laborers and the lowest amount to kindergarten-aged children. The system was then reduced to a three-tier, age-based ration system. This report noted that there was a "grave food supply problem," with children and pregnant and nursing women at greatest risk. Even this simplified model's objectives were not met, and the government was reducing its standard for daily food requirements.[297] This average daily intake number was about 200 kcals lower than the 1994-1996 average daily diet posited by DongHo Jo and Namsoo Chang above.

Also, conditions continued to deteriorate on the ground. The weather remained uncooperative and systems continued to decline. Suk Lee noted that, in January 1996, the

[295] United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, "DPR Korea Floods Situation Report #11," December 18, 1995; last accessed on September 24, 2010 from ReliefWeb at http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/OCHA-64CH23?OpenDocument&rc=3&cc=prk;

[296] United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, "DPR Korea Flood Situation Report #10," November 24, 1995, last accessed on September 24, 2010 from ReliefWeb at http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/ACOS-64D38E?OpenDocument&rc=3&cc=prk.

[297] United Nations World Food Program and Food and Agriculture Organization, "Special Report – FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," December 22, 1995, retrieved from www.fao.org.

Public Distribution System (PDS) would suspend food provision until May. The government also announced that the death penalty would be enforced for the theft of food.[298] On March 29, 1996, the DPRK makes a second appeal for food aid to the United Nations.[299] That May, the WFP's Special Report #267 noted that matters were far worse than expected, as donations fell short and the DPRK was unable to import food from commercial markets as was anticipated. The "lean" period between May and September looked particularly grim, despite a shipment of food aid from the US, Switzerland, and Australia in April of 1996. Special Report #267 went on to argue that the PDS faced "considerable strain," citing the severe declines in imports, grain from China and agricultural production as reasons for this weakening, with flooding amplifying the problems. The report observed that deep cuts in rations took place. The harvest share of farmers was halved and put at a level that is calorically inadequate.[300]

To add to this dilemma, more flood rains fell in North Korea for five days in July 1996. September 1996's Special Report #270 observed that Kaesong, North Hwanghae and South Hwanghae provinces were hardest hit, with some damage to areas near Pyongyang. The rainfall was reported to be 2-4 times the normal expected rainfall in those regions for those five days. This report pointed out that while estimates of crop loss could only be fully understood at harvest, the flooding struck at a vulnerable time, overflowing irrigation systems, flooding lowlands, and producing a high level of damage to both the rice and maize crops. Flooding and smut disease hindered the chances of the

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298 Suk Lee, *The DPRK Famine of 1994-2000: Existence and Impact* , 10. Suk Lee cites the December 22, 1995 WFP/FAO report and a Yonhap News Agency report on January 3, 1996.

299 Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 374.

300 United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and World Food Program, "Special Report #267," May 13, 1996, retrieved from http://www.fao.org/docrep/004/w1302e/w1302e00.htm

crops being salvaged.[301] The report detailed the strains on the public distribution system, as 5 million collective farmers, once exempt from the PDS, became dependent on it for sustenance. Despite some success with foreign barter, exchanging cement, gold and other products for food, the international response to the second appeal fell 40 percent short.[302]

The public distribution system faced even greater challenges from mother nature. 1995's catastrophic weather would be followed by further flooding in 1996, and drought and a typhoon in 1997 and 1998. As these phenomena interacted with the environment and the physical, economic, and political infrastructures, underlying problems were worsened. Hazel Smith asserts that the breakdown of the system was such that many urban workers were not receiving an adequate ration, and that food availability became inconsistent, with shrinking rations and temporary PDS office closures starting in 1995.[303]

A December 1996 WFP/FAO report finds that the 1996 floods, while less devastating than those of 1995, harmed agriculture and infrastructure. It reiterates its earlier finding that the pattern of decline would exist, even without flooding. It also points out that the DPRK was incapable of importing the high yields of fertilizer that its plans required, and that, even if they could get it, their soil is no longer able to really put it to use. On top of this, the DPRK could not import enough fuel, heavy machinery or pesticides.[304] The report also observed that the 1997 food deficit was greater than that of 1996, and that July-September 1997 would be "lean" times that require greatest support.

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301 United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and World Food Program, "Special Report #270,". September 6, 1996, retrieved from http://www.fao.org/docrep/004/w2706e/w2706e00.htm.

302 Ibid.

303 Hazel Smith, *Hungry for Peace*, 84.

304 Food and Agriculture Organization Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture, "Special Report: FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission, The Democratic People's Republic of Korea," December 6, 1996, retrieved from www.fao.org.

305 Ibid.

Despite reports of strain, this report praises "the institutional importance and effectiveness of the Public Distribution System (PDS)," and opines that "it is appropriate that the PDS be used as the principal channel for food assistance."[306]

By late 1996, North Korean officials were starting to make public statements to advance their requests for aid. DPRK officials were publicly addressing the crisis, discussing international market participation and noting that the nation faced economic collapse.[307] This outreach included Kim Young Nam giving an interview to German TV in December 1996 in which he said that the DPRK was "facing economic collapse" and the government "would take all possible actions to avoid it."[308] Lee also notes a DPRK media report of 1996's low grain production: 2.5 million metric tons. This was said to be the lowest production year since 1948.[309]

The WFP/FAO reports would get even grimmer. Over the course of 1997, assistance would increase. However, the DPRK would take further hits, as the weather continued to change radically. North Korea faced a typhoon, then a drought that would last into 1998. The June 1997 FAO/WFP report estimated dates on which the PDS would run out of food in various regions, as well as detailing the estimated total cereal shortage. It detailed cuts that led the PDS to give only 100-200 grams of food per person, despite a minimum daily requirement of 450 grams. The report noted that individuals have turned to "alternate foods."[310] That September, the FAO/WFP described how ill-timed drought

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306 Ibid.

307 Suk Lee, *The DPRK Famine of 1994-2000: Existence and Impact*, 11, citing North Korean Policy Trend (1997: No.1 p.1 and 1996: No.6 pp.56-7).

308 Ibid.

309 Ibid, 10. Lee does not cite a particular media body for this claim.

310 Food and Agriculture Organization, "Special Alert #275: FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," June 3, 1997, retrieved from www.fao.org.

and a typhoon impacted agriculture at critical times. August 1997's Typhoon Winnie broke down sea barriers and exposed rice paddies to sea water contamination. The September report noted that regardless of further rainfall, large declines were expected in maize (down 1.25 million) and depending on rain, rice production could fall between 340,000 and 630,000 tons. The report noted that the food outlook for 1998 was "considerably worse" than in 1996 and 1997, with North Korean-grown cereals expected to meet less than half of the need. The report also estimated that, by the end of July, the public distribution system's reserves were exhausted, and the system "ceased normal operations" and was left entirely dependent on imports – commercial or aid. No estimates at death totals from the famine are made.[311]

After all of this catastrophic weather, critical elements of North Korean economic and agricultural life were swept away, elements whose absence delayed recovery and hindered aid. There was serious harm done to physical infrastructure, domestic production, transportation, and material resources (i.e. coal). These floods caused an energy shock, as mines, infrastructure and coal supplies in many places were destroyed.[312] The loss of these energy sources hindered transportation, delaying relief.[313] The authors agree that infrastructure deteriorated, but offer different causes. C. Kenneth Quinones and Jack Tragert remark that a push for domestic weapons production, starting in the 1970s, may be responsible for priorities that shifted industry away from light industry and transportation.[314] Bruce Cumings notes that a cause of the deterioration of infrastructure

[311] Food and Agriculture Organization, "Special Alert #277: FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," September 11, 1997, http://www.fao.org/docrep/004/w6300e/w6300e00.htm.
[312] C. Kenneth Quinones, "Nuclear Standoff and Economic Shortfalls," 90.
[313] Hazel Smith, *Hungry for Peace*, 70.
[314] C. Kenneth Quinones and Jack Tragert, *Understanding North Korea*, 182-83.

was that the DPRK could no longer trade exports to the USSR for petroleum.[315]

There were a range of findings as to number of excess deaths caused by the famine. On the high end, Andrew Natsios and Nicholas Eberstadt each supported estimates of 3 million or more North Koreans dead due to the famine. The low estimate by the United Nations based on North Korean estimates of their mortality rate was 220,000.[316] The famine in North Korea is now best estimated to have killed between 600,000 and 1 million North Koreans between 1994 and 2000. This number is agreed upon by Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, supporters of the idea that entitlement failures caused the famine, and Meredith Woo-Cumings, a skeptic of entitlement theory. This number comes from a 2001 study by Daniel Goodkind and Lorraine West from *Population and Development Review*.[317] This study uses child nutrition survey data from North Korea and death rates from the Great Leap Forward famine to estimate a range of excess deaths from famine between 600,000 and 1 million.[318]

Suk Lee conducted an extensive review of these estimates and is highly critical of the early numbers, writing that "previous perceptions of the food crisis were not well-founded: they were based on unreliable rumors, biased data, superficial observations, and even prejudicial hypotheses." He challenged the estimates made by the Korean Buddhist Sharing movement, Nicholas Eberstadt, and others, whose estimates placed famine losses as high as 3 million.[319] Lee, despite challenging the methodology of the Goodkind and

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315 Bruce Cumings, "U.S.-North Korean Bilateral Relations," in *Korean Security Dynamics in Transition*, 106.

316 Hazel Smith, *Hungry for Peace*, 73.

317 Daniel Goodkind and Loraine West, "The North Korean Famine and its Demographic Impacts," *Population and Development Review* Vol.27, No.2 (2001), last accessed on September 11, 2011 from JSTOR,

318 Ibid.

319 Lee asserted that election laws did not provide for firm population to delegate ratios in the year (1998) that Eberstadt relied on Supreme People's Assembly electoral results, and assumed a population loss of 3 million based on projected birthrate and assuming a proportion of 30,000 North Koreans per delegate. Suk Lee, *The DPRK Famine of 1994-2000: Existence and Impact*, 18-28.

West study that arrived at the 600,000 to 1 million estimate, came to a similarly-ranged estimate.[320] He used the official 1993 DPRK census and compared it to expected population growth rates, finding a range of excess deaths between 579,000 and 691,000.[321] He then compared the 1993 census data to a crude death rate drawn from comparing Children's Nutrition Surveys of 1998 and 2002 with others in Asia to arrive at a estimated total of between 632,000 and 1.102 million excess deaths. He used these estimates to find that the previous estimates of 3 million deaths were too high.[322]

In 1996 and 1997, precise scientific calculations of damage and death totals were not forthcoming. The Goodkind and West estimate was released in 2001. Lee's data sample for his variable for his estimate based on crude death rate was only available in full in 2002. Decision makers had to rely on news accounts, intelligence reports, international relief agency reports and estimates, the most well-known of which were the United Nations WFP/FAO reports, and refugee accounts. The data provided about North Korea prior to the floods is largely derived from South Korean sources. That said, it is consistent in its message: the DPRK is having difficulty growing and importing food, a message confirmed by the WFP/FAO reports. After the floods, the UN agencies' reports indicate severe damage to infrastructure and community institutions, a decline in the ability of the DPRK government to import needed materials, and show a long-term decline in agricultural production that began with soil fertility problems and was further driven down by devastating weather. However, these UN agency reports did not give much information in the way of mass deaths or the precise distribution patterns of

[320] Lee cites the study as follows: Goodkind, D. and West, L., "The North Korean Famine and its Demographic Impacts." *Population and Development Review*. Vol.27, No.2, 2001, p.229

[321] Suk Lee, *The DPRK Famine of 1994-2000: Existence and Impact*, 40-43.

[322] Ibid, 44-47.

agricultural resources and entitlements within the country. In a rapidly changing political and diplomatic environment, North Koreans faced emerging internal crises and governments had to decide on their level of intervention on the basis of limited information, the behavior of the DPRK government, and the priorities each government held in its humanitarian and East Asia regional policies.

Chapter 3: The Response to the Famine and Its Political and Diplomatic Contexts

As North Korea simultaneously faced economic, energy, agricultural and nutritional crises, the international community responded in stages, conditioned by political, diplomatic, economic and informational factors. Non-governmental organizations, international agencies (including United Nations agencies), foreign governments, and North Korean officials and citizens would all serve critical roles in relief efforts. These responses included food aid, energy resources, financial contributions, in-kind goods, such as clothing and medicine, and technical expertise and personnel. The external response to these needs can be best divided into 1) contributions by NGOs, international organizations, foundations and private citizens and 2) responses by national governments. This chapter will explore the context of the decisions made by the Japanese, South Korean and American governments about aid in the period between the initial United Nations North Korea appeal in 1995 and the larger U.S. food gifts of 1997. It will discuss, to the extent possible from the record, the complex interaction between the external relief effort and North Korea's conditions and efforts. It will also discuss, within the limits of available information, the complex regional diplomatic relationship and its effects on giving.

While this thesis explores relief and the decisions that surrounded it, the literature is not unanimous that NGOs selflessly sought to assist starving citizens of the DPRK. Historian Cormac O Grada asserted that NGOs, on several occasions since 1980 alone, have promoted worst-case scenarios that have not come to pass. O Grada criticizes NGOs, writing that “their interventions have typically lagged behind, rather than led,

media reports. Instead of being positioned to rapidly dispense previously accumulated reserves, they have used famine as a pretext for soliciting additional aid."[323] Meredith Woo-Cumings wrote that Western governments frequently gave famine aid to achieve strategic results, citing the response to Ethiopia as an example of an attempt to use aid to overthrow a government.[324] Lola Nathanail, who would report on the North Korean famine for Save the Children, wrote of the effort in a November 1996 article that NGOs, while providing aid, often followed the lead of donor governments. She argued that North Korea required support for its economy, but that governments had no faith in and would not provide "structural, bilateral support" to the Kim government.[325] This contrasts with the open discussion of development aid during the U.S. Congress' Select Committee on Hunger hearing on famine in Africa in 1985 discussed in chapter 1.[326] This was not an option in the North Korean case due to sanctions, politics and doubts of the DPRK's trustworthiness and capabilities.

Global humanitarian challenges became numerous and increasingly complex in the years before the flooding began in North Korea. The 1995 annual report of U.S. AID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) defined "complex emergencies" as "manmade" crises with political and military components and state institutional breakdown that even impair humanitarian responses. The report notes that, from 1986 to 1990, there were 43 such "complex emergencies," sixteen (16) percent of cases

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323 Cormac O Grada, *Famine: A Short History*. 222-224.

324 Meredith Woo-Cumings, "The Political Ecology of Famine,"13.

325 Lola Nathanail, "Small Fish in a Deep Dark Sea: NGO's Response in North Korea," *Humanitarian Exchange Magazine* Issue 6 (November 1996), http://www.odihpn.org/report.asp?id=1139

326 "Famine and Recovery in Africa: The U.S. Response", Joint hearing before the Select Committee on Hunger and the Subcommittee on Africa of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, Ninety-ninth Congress, 1st Session, Washington, DC, December 6, 1985, Serial No. 99-11, Washington, DC: printed by the Government Printing Office, 1986.

worldwide. From 1991 to 1995, there would be 100 of them, 32 percent of cases worldwide.[327] In 2001, Bruce Cumings found a similar trend between 1993 and 2001.[328]

Other foreign policy crises that had emerged during Bill Clinton's first term included the war in the former Yugoslavia, the intervention in Haiti, and the police action begun by Clinton's predecessor, President George H.W. Bush, in Somalia, to name a few. The Somalia intervention became a political disaster for the Clinton administration, as the images of deceased American soldiers being paraded through the streets of Mogadishu reached international media and widespread consciousness. However, relief efforts in a number of nations also facing complex emergencies received aid from U.S. AID. Somalia did not bring humanitarian assistance to an end. Examples of complex emergencies where non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private voluntary organizations (PVOs) received aid from the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance in the mid-1990s included Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, and Liberia.[329]

At the time of the North Korean floods, the U.S. government was principally concerned with the DPRK as a nuclear threat, and its humanitarian and foreign policy attentions were divided. The Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance noted that it prepared reports for twelve "major disasters." Of these, all but one were listed as a "complex emergency." The exception was North Korea, whose problems were listed as "Floods/Food Shortage."[330]

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[327] United States Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, "Annual Report FY 1995", 10-11. http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/disaster_assistance/publications/annual_reports/pdf/AR1995.pdf

[328] Bruce Cumings, "U.S.-North Korean Bilateral Relations," in *Korean Security Dynamics in Transition*, 108.

[329] United States Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, "Annual Report FY 1995", 10-11. http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/disaster_assistance/publications/annual_reports/pdf/AR1995.pdf

[330] U.S. Agency for International Development/Bureau for Humanitarian Response/Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, "Annual Report FY 1996," Washington, DC, 21.

Prior to the flooding of 1995, neighboring states took the early lead in giving food aid to North Korea. In June 1995, Japan and the Republic of Korea responded to the DPRK's requests for food aid, with each contributing 150,000 metric tons of food that June. This announcement was made during North-South inter-governmental talks in Beijing, with another round of meetings held in July to determine the precise use of the aid.[331] Chung Oknim wrote that "several inter-Korean incidents" would help lead to the ROK government ordering that aid only be directed through the Korean Red Cross.[332] South Korean government aid would drop from $232 million in direct food aid in 1995 to slightly over $3 million in aid to international organizations in 1996. It would rise to nearly $27 million in aid to international organizations in 1997. However, these inter-Korean disputes, domestic political issues, and acts of violence by the DPRK, challenged ROK governmental contributions for much of this early period.[333] Japan would contribute an additional 150,000 metric tons in 1995 beyond the joint gift, under the conditions that it would be paid for by North Korea at some point in the future, and that no Japanese aid would be diverted to the military.[334] In September 1995, Japan announced that it would also make a $500,000 USD gift to the UN Department of Humanitarian Assistance and other UN agencies to assist their efforts in North Korea.[335] Japan, in the years after its early major gift of 300,000 metric tons, would have an up-and-down role in relief efforts.

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http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/disaster_assistance/publications/annual_reports/pdf/AR1996.pdf

331 Chung Oknim, "The Role of South Korea's NGOs: The Political Context", in *Paved With Good Intentions: The NGO Experience in North Korea*, ed. L. Gordon Flake and Scott Snyder, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 83.

332 Ibid.

333 Chung Oknim, "The Role of South Korea's NGOs,", 83-87. See Appendix for known ROK contribution numbers. Marcus Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse*, 184-85.

334 Press Conference by the Press Secretary, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Terusuke Terada, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, July 11, 1995, http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/1995/7/711.html

335 Press Conference by the Press Secretary, Acting Spokesman Ken Shimanouchi, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, September 19, 1995, http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/1995/9/919.html

Before 1995, some in the US government were aware of the decline in North Korea's food supply.[336] By May 1995, at least some members of the executive and legislative branch were aware of food shortages in the DPRK, acute or otherwise. In May 1995 testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Rear Admiral T.R. Wilson, the Vice Director of Intelligence for the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that the DPRK faced "chronic food and energy shortages."[337] Rep. Gerald Solomon (R-NY), then-Chairman of the House Committee on Rules, gave remarks praising then-South Korean President Kim Young Sam on July 25, 1995. In these remarks, he noted amongst Kim's achievements the signing of the Agreed Framework and the June 1995 gift of 150,000 metric tons of food to "alleviate the critical food shortage in North Korea." Solomon said that "President Kim hopes that this measure, along with his previous efforts to gradually lift restrictions on South Korean business investment and trade with the North, will serve as an impetus for improved South-North political relations and thereby help lay a foundation for the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula."[338]

External Assistance Arrives in North Korea

As floods began to devastate North Korea, the DPRK government started to

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[336] In addition to the DPRK's reported request for food at Geneva, at least one Senator gave signs of knowledge that there were long-term food problems. On January 31, 1994, Senator Alphonse D'Amato of New York gave a speech in which he calls for the immediate deployment and operation of Patriot missiles in South Korea. In this speech, he introduces articles discussing North Korea. One of these articles, from the January 29, 1994 Washington Post, cites South Korea's Rural Development Authority as indicating that the DPRK's grain production "shows steady declines." Senator Alphonse D'Amato, "Patriot Missiles for United States Forces in South Korea: When?", Additional Statements, accessed September 17, 2010 from *Congressional Record Online* via GPO Access [wais.access.gpo.gov],

[337] Testimony of Rear Admiral T.R. Wilson, "Current Operations in Bosnia, North Korea, Haiti, and the Caribbean", Hearing before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 104th Congress, 1st Session, May 10, 1995, Washington, DC. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996, p.26. Much of the testimony is redacted from the printed record.

[338] Remarks of Representative Gerald B.H. Solomon, "Republic of Korea Kim Young Sam's Accomplishments in Office", July 25, 1995, accessed September 19, 2010 from *Congressional Record Online* via GPO Access [wais.access.gpo.gov],

formally ask the United Nations to appeal to its member countries for relief assistance. International agencies and non-governmental organizations made an early response and worked with North Korean government agencies. Foreign governments' efforts would be closely tied to cooperation with the work of these organizations, particularly those of the UN Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (UN BHA) at first, and then the UN World Food Programme (WFP). Chapter 2 discussed the "floods situation reports" and the initial UN Appeal that emerged from this desperate early phase. However, there was also a considerable response from non-governmental organizations. These organizations would interact and work in their efforts with a variety of Korean government agencies, including the DPRK's Ministry of Food Administration (MFA) and National Flood Damage Rehabilitation Committee (NFDRC).

Although the response after the flooding was the first mass concentration of relief workers in North Korea, C. Kenneth Quinones sees the NGO effort as part of a history of broad cooperation between Christian NGOs and U.S. AID efforts – going from China, to the Republic of Korea, to Vietnam and Cambodia (by way of non-resident work with the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) in Thailand on the border with Cambodia). Despite the suddenness of the flooding, the Korean-American community had been tracking food shortages since the 1990s.[339] For example, the Christian Association for Medical Mission, a collaboration between Korean-American doctors in the Detroit area that started in the early 1980s as a small group seeking to improve medical care in the Third World, was responsible for the construction of a major

[339] C. Kenneth Quinones, "The American NGO Experience in North Korea," 6.

North Korean hospital, and assumed a broader humanitarian role after 1995.[340] Over time, organizations worldwide became involved with food relief, agricultural and infrastructure projects, the supply of medicine, and other work. American NGOs were limited in their ability to provide food aid, providing only 2.4% of total NGO food aid to the DPRK between 1996 and 2001.[341] They focused instead on projects in non-food relief and services, including the rehabilitation of farm land and the provision of medical care.[342]

Organizations from the US, Japan, Europe and the Republic of Korea would play a significant role in the relief efforts. As C. Kenneth Quinones and Andrew Natsios both observed, these efforts come in two categories: 1) direct relief and instruction and 2) advocacy and information. Quinones, who had visited North Korea as an employee of the United States Department of State, and worked on this issue as an employee of Mercy Corps, an American NGO, asserted that, despite the good intentions of many relief workers, great political challenges prevented a lot of work from being done, as bureaucratic rules, licensing, and inefficiencies built frustration and delays into the service experiences of NGO employees and volunteers.[343] Many of the obstructions were political and physical in nature, and were not the result of singular, simple decisions, but of complex circumstances. Quinones wrote that because of the distance, the absence of reliable shipping to the DPRK and the nature of the licensing and bureaucracies involved with shipping through China and the ROK to the DPRK, the delivery of food aid by NGOs was both ineffective in helping needy North Koreans and too costly in terms of

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340 Suk Hi Kim, North Korea at a Crossroads (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2003), 141-42.

341 L. Gordon Flake, "The Experience of U.S. NGOs in North Korea," in *Paved with Good Intentions: The NGO Experience in North Korea*, ed. L. Gordon Flake and Scott Snyder, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003),pp.15-46, p.33-36

342 Ibid.

343 C. Kenneth Quinones, "The American NGO Experience in North Korea," 6-7.

funds and personnel. Gifts from South Korea were challenged by political changes.[344] Religious and humanitarian organizations were eventually able to establish a substantial and organized presence in the DPRK. Interaction, an organization of American non-governmental organizations, sought to organize the efforts of U.S. NGOs operating in North Korea. This would lead to the founding of the Food Aid Liaison Unit (FALU).[345]

The effort was not without political complications in the DPRK itself, where there was already suspicion of NGO workers. The DPRK government did not want to admit relief workers who spoke Korean, the relief workers were watched by North Korean handlers, and North Koreans were also required to report any contact with foreigners to the government.[346] Monitoring was demanded by donor governments and NGOs, but that the DPRK required the site visits of the monitors to be approved in advance, causing tension between the DPRK and the NGOs and international agencies providing relief.[347] Quinones wrote that U.S. relief workers in East Asia had never before had to explain their intentions to the host government to whose citizens they were providing relief.[348] The question of access would also be important to the debate within the U.S. government as to whether it should or could provide aid under these conditions. That is, agencies disagreed as to whether these limits allowed for adequate monitoring to ensure delivery to appropriate civilian recipients without an unacceptable level of military diversion. Still, NGOs also became a key source of information about the DPRK and its food crisis.[349]

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344 Ibid, 7.

345 Mi Ae Taylor and Mark E. Manyin, "Non-governmental Organizations' Activities in North Korea," Congressional Research Services, March 21, 2011, 4-5, last accessed on September 1, 2011, hosted by the Federation of American Scientists, http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41749.pdf.

346 L. Gordon Flake, "The Experience of U.S. NGOs in North Korea," in *Paved with Good Intentions*, 18-24.

347 Ibid.

348 C. Kenneth Quinones, "The American NGO Experience in North Korea," 7.

349 Andrew Natsios, Hazel Smith and C. Kenneth Quinones all detail this to some degree.

After some time, these organizations began to find that their efforts alone could not satisfy the immense needs as the food crisis worsened, and that they required government help.[350] Many American NGOs would shift their attention to advocacy and coordination.[351] They would eventually become involved in an effort to persuade governments to help finance and provide food aid. This advocacy is reflected in the press releases by NGOs about North Korea's needs. These show a mix of approaches in showing the need and making asks. For instance, a press release from the Mennonite Central Committee highlights the shortage itself, while some NGOs would promote successes in this period.[352] For example, the International Red Cross sought aid in 1996 while highlighting that it previously raised over 80% of the needed aid in its own appeal, and the United Methodist Committee on Relief, which had received a license from the U.S. Department of Commerce to send food and non-food humanitarian goods to the DPRK.[353]

U.S. Government Aid: Motivations and Challenges

While the U.S. would eventually become the leading provider of food aid to the DPRK for a time, major gifts of American aid were not a foregone conclusion. C. Kenneth Quinones asserted that skepticism, particularly at the Department of Defense

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350 C. Kenneth Quinones, Hazel Smith, L. Gordon Flake, Scott Snyder, and Andrew Natsios detail the immense challenges facing non-governmental organizations as they sought to deliver aid and services, and as they eventually turn some of their attention towards gaining government assistance.

351 C. Kenneth Quinones, "The American NGO Experience in North Korea," 8.

352 Mennonite Central Committee, "World response inadequate to North Korea's desperate plea for food," press release, April 26, 1996, accessed via ReliefWeb, http://reliefweb.int/node/26186, last accessed on June 30, 2011

353 International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, "Food aid for North Korea," March 22, 1996, last accessed on September 18, 2011 via ReliefWeb, http://reliefweb.int/node/26075; United Methodist Committee on Relief, "UMCOR Shipment to Help with Food Shortages in North Korea", Press Release, April 9, 1996, last accessed on September 18, 2011 via ReliefWeb, http://reliefweb.int/node/26163; Andrew Natsios' The Great North Korean Famine addresses these efforts, including the March 1997 formation of the "Stop the Famine Committee," a coalition of NGOs and other organizations, and its efforts to press for aid. Andrew Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine*, 153-56.

(DOD) and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and inter-agency disagreements impacted the response of agencies within the executive branch of the American government to the famine in this early phase. Individuals at the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) rejected the validity of a tape filmed by the United Nations Development Program representative in North Korea from a North Korean helicopter, claiming that the footage was instead from the Korean War.[354]

Andrew Natsios' core question centers less on why gifts were given in 1997, and more on why these gifts were not given in 1996. For Natsios, several factors worked against the involvement of executive branch agencies of the U.S. government in providing aid. These included the standing opinions and cultures of the bureaucracies, North Korea's status as an enemy of the United States, fear that food aid would be diverted, and a debate over the definition of famine. Natsios asserted that only "presidential leadership or media pressure" could have overcome these obstacles to providing aid, but that these were not forthcoming. This allowed objections to providing aid in the Department of Defense and, eventually in late 1996 and 1997, reservations within the Department of State, to override the wishes of the National Security Council and USAID.[355] He sees these factors, and a desire to afford the State Department flexibility in using the prospect of food aid to diplomatic results, as having led the U.S. government to drag its feet. He rejected the rationale of a White House staffer who told him that "the contradictory evidence provided insufficient grounds for a major relief program."[356] Natsios asserted that, despite possessing "sufficient intelligence to act" in

[354] C. Kenneth Quinones, "The American NGO Experience in North Korea," 7.
[355] Andrew Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine*, 143-48.
[356] Ibid, citing Natsios' interview with Richard Regan, NSC Staff, Washington, DC, June 1998.

June 1996, President Clinton failed to apply pressure to get the foreign policy apparatus to pledge substantial food aid to the DPRK until July 1997.[357]

Marcus Noland, in his 2000 book Avoiding the Apocalypse, argued that the United States government, amongst others, strategically used pledges and gifts of food aid as a means to influence North Korean behavior towards compliance with agreements and international norms and towards attendance at and participation in Four Party talks.[358] There was a transformation from the smaller 1996 gifts (February's announcement of $2 million in food, and June's $6.2 million in food). Noland wrote that these were motivated by a desire to "encourage" North Korean behavior, and the larger gifts of 1997-1999 that were, in Noland's view, examples of "*quid pro quo*" for North Korean pledges of particular behaviors and participation.[359] Some support for this argument includes statements made by then-U.S. Congressman Bill Richardson, and the timing of gifts in 1997 and 1998. Andrew Natsios views the *quid pro quo* element of the American policy on North Korea's food crisis as having violated a core principle of food aid by tying this aid to strategic objectives, citing the response to Ethiopia as an example of separation.[360] Several documents from the U.S. State Department confirm that this positive inducement was a part of that agency's approach prior to 1997's larger gifts.

The public record does not show clear consensus as to when evidence of ***famine's*** existence or imminent arrival was available. L. Gordon Flake, executive director of the

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[357] Ibid.

[358] The Four Party Talks were a series of formal diplomatic talks held between the United States, the two Koreas and China to discuss regional relations and arms control.

[359] Marcus Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse*, 182-191.

[360] This theme would be reiterated by Tony Hall and Scott Snyder, with Hall arguing, like Natsios, for this as an immutable principle, while Snyder asserts that the DPRK's desire to act conditionally so as to receive food aid made this principle hard to maintain. L. Gordon Flake and Scott Snyder, introduction to *Paved with Good Intentions*, 3.

Mansfield Center for Public Affairs, noted that the academic community was divided on the extent of the food crisis in North Korea, long after the famine was in fact underway.[361] Sue Lautze's report for U.S. AID asserted that, as of May and June 1996, the DPRK still had the opportunity to avert humanitarian disaster by increasing barter, using its small foreign currency reserves to buy food, and collecting on outstanding insurance.[362] Even throughout 1997, many were uncertain as to whether North Korea was facing a famine, or its current or potential extent. Robert Gallucci, former Ambassador at Large for North Korean matters and Assistant Secretary of State, stated in a March 1997 speech that North Korea had grown "a great deal weaker" since the signing of the Agreed Framework, but is unsure of the extent of the weakness. The term "famine" is not used to describe what is going on. This speech does not deny famine, but reflects uncertainty. Gallucci stated that "The continuum goes from a North Korea that is experiencing a certain amount of malnutrition, to the other end of the continuum, a North Korea that is about to experience a famine. The North is, in fact, somewhere along that line, I am just not sure exactly where they are, but I tend to believe it is more rather than less serious."[363] Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard argue that the DPRK did not display "unambiguous signs of distress," and the lack of clear, agreed upon information led to uncertainty about how deep and widespread the food crisis in the DPRK truly was, even well into 1997.[364]

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[361] L. Gordon Flake, "The Experience of U.S. NGOs in North Korea," in *Paved with Good Intentions: The NGO Experience in North Korea*, ed. L. Gordon Flake and Scott Snyder, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 42.

[362] Andrew Natsios disputes this piece of Lautze's argument. Sue Lautze, "North Korea Food Aid Assessment," prepared for the United States Agency for International Development, May-June 1996, hosted by ReliefWeb, http://reliefweb.int/node/26028. The end of this report seems to be missing.

[363] Robert L. Gallucci, "The U.S.-North Korea Agreed Framework and the Korea Policy of the United States," in *The Two Koreas and the United States: Issues of Peace, Security, and Economic Cooperation*, ed. Wongmo Dong, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000). 179-183.

[364] Marcus Noland and Stephan Haggard, "Hunger and Human Rights: The Politics of Famine in North Korea", 15-16.

Even Natsios, who believes that there was sufficient evidence to act as early as 1996, recognized how different some reports about North Korean conditions were even in 1998. He discussed reports indicating Russian skepticism about famine, and refugee reports, including some from the Korean Buddhist Sharing Movement, that told of horrific conditions in the DPRK. He also noted that relief workers, isolated and facing manipulation, were often confused about with what they were dealing.[365]

However, Natsios is correct so far as that information was available at this time that could lead one to forecast at least food ***troubles*** in the DPRK. North Korea's solicitations of international aid, its loss of import capacity, and the reports of food and infrastructure losses begin in 1995 at the latest. Press accounts describing the DPRK's food needs began in the early 1990s. While the flood damage reports do not tell of large losses of life, they indicate that 500,000 people were homeless, women and children were at risk, and that flood damage had made agriculture "an intermediate to long-term problem."[366] Reports in 1995 and 1996 detail at-risk populations, deeply damaged crops, and projected shortfalls.[367]

In 1995 and 1996, in the narrow realm of American policy towards North Korea, North Korea's humanitarian situation was overshadowed by the nuclear issue. While Natsios argues that it was a deficit in Presidential leadership that produced delays, Congress was and is a coequal branch of government. As Carol Lancaster notes,

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365 Andrew Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine*, 36-40.

366 "DPR Korea Floods Situation Report #6", September 6, 1995; retrieved from ReliefWeb, United Nations World Food Program and Food and Agriculture Organization, "Special Report – FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea", December 22, 1995, retrieved from www.fao.org.

367 i.e., Food and Agriculture Organization Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture, "Special Report: FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission, The Democratic People's Republic of Korea", December 6, 1996, retrieved from www.fao.org

Congress was and is capable of using its role as originator of legislation, earmarks and directives, to ensure and set conditions on the delivery of aid, however conditional.[368] A small set of members were advocates. Robert Hathaway and Jordan Tama correctly observed that Congress provided no substantial resistance beyond rhetoric, and provided funds for aid.[369] This is correct for the early stage of the famine. On the other hand, Congress did not attempt as a body to get ahead of the White House on policy and provide leadership in the direction of providing aid in the early years of the famine. Right or wrong, neither major U.S. political party provided strong, unified public advocacy for large-scale food relief to the DPRK at this time.

There were challenges to aiding North Korea that went beyond a lack of information or certainty. The DPRK's resistance to IAEA inspections and possession of fissile material led to tensions with the US, ROK and Japan, with the nuclear issue at the center of political and diplomatic discussion about North Korea. The DPRK also was a difficult fit for imports and standard U.S. government international humanitarian assistance. Under American law, it was held to be a state sponsor of terrorism, a Communist nation, and a nation at war with the United States for the purposes of the Trading With the Enemy Act. These resulted in sanctions. The efforts that followed would involve not only persuading policymakers to permit U.S. government contributions of aid, but required finding programs under which North Korea could receive the humanitarian aid that it needed while meeting legal requirements and avoiding political opposition. There were also serious logistical and organizational challenges.

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[368] Carol Lancaster, *Foreign Aid*, 95, 99.

[369] Robert Hathaway and Jordan Tama, "The U.S. Congress and North Korea during the Clinton Years: Talk Tough, Carry a Small Stick," 715.

In late 1995, more information about North Korea's agricultural and nutritional situation had become available. This was bolstered by the DPRK's requests for assistance after the flooding. This flooding was only one of many issues, including the rise of China, trade and economic relations, and the DPRK's compliance with the Agreed Framework, shaping East Asian regional relations. For instance, on October 10, 1995, Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord answered North Korea's appeal for aid by declaring that a disaster was taking place in the DPRK.[370] On October 11, Lord gave public testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations committee's East Asian and Pacific Affairs subcommittee to talk about US-China regional relations. Consistent with the centrality of the nuclear issue in the testimony, the DPRK was discussed so as to establish that DPRK compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was a priority of the U.S. and China alike.[371]

In response to the floods, the U.S. government gave $225,000 to UNICEF for North Korea in 1995 by way of its Office for U.S. Foreign Disaster Relief.[372] The first $25,000 was a September 1995 gift from the OFDA for children's measles vaccinations, while the $200,000 gift from OFDA to UNICEF was intended for a "supplemental feeding program for children."[373] The initial U.S. contribution was comparable to the gifts

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[370] U.S. Agency for International Development/Bureau for Humanitarian Response/Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, "Annual Report FY 1996," Washington, DC, 39-40, http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/disaster_assistance/publications/annual_reports/pdf/AR1996.pdf

[371] Testimony of Winston Lord, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, "U.S. Policy toward China: Security and Military Considerations," before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Asia and Pacific Affairs Subcommittee, October 11, 1995, accessed at http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/ERC/bureaus/eap/951011LordUSPolicyChina.html

[372] United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, "Floods Situation Report #12," December 21, 1995, retrieved from ReliefWeb, http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/OCHA-64BV85?OpenDocument&rc=3&cc=prk; last accessed on September 24, 2010

[373] U.S. Agency for International Development/Bureau for Humanitarian Response/Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, "Annual Report FY 1996", Washington, DC, 39-40, http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/disaster_

of Norway ($220,000 USD) and the United Kingdom ($234,190).[374] The "floods situation reports" noted that the cash response to this appeal was falling short of the need, but showed solid in-kind contributions.

Placing a priority on multilateral consultation, the United States sought to honor its relationship with South Korea while still achieving strategic objectives and delivering some food aid. In January 1996, Thomas Hubbard, then-Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Affairs, suggested talks with the DPRK on missile proliferation.[375] North Korea agreed to participate at least in part due to the U.S. government's decision to provide food aid.[376]

However, the ROK government, which had made a large contribution to relief in the DPRK in 1995, opposed further food aid for North Korea. South Korean government officials both downplayed the crisis in the DPRK and expressed that food aid should be conditioned on North-South talks.[377] The ROK's then-National Reunification Minister Kwan O-Kie said that the DPRK had 3 million tons in food reserves and "will not collapse immediately without food aid."[378] In January 1996, South Korean President Kim Young Sam declared his opposition to providing further food aid at that time, charging the DPRK with using its own resources on its military.[379]

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assistance/publications/annual_reports/pdf/AR1996.pdf

374 United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, "DPR Korea Floods Situation Report #12," December 21, 1995; retrieved from ReliefWeb

375 Narushige Michishita, *North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns 1966-2008*, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2010, 119; citing Evan S. Medeiros, "U.S., North Korea May Hold Talks on North's Missile Sales, MTCR Status," *Arms Control Today* vol.26, no.1 (February 1996), p.25. Michishita is an Assistant Professor at the Security and International Studies Program at the National Graduate Institute for Public Policy Studies (GRIPS) in Tokyo, Japan.

376 Ibid.

377 Ibid, 374.

378 Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts*, 1998 Postscript, 317. Becker, writing for the *South China Post*, was a proponent of food aid. Becker contrasted this by telling of defector accounts of infanticide and hungry soldiers.

379 Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 373-74.

Chung Oknim wrote that South Korean political issues, including resentment amongst hardliners over the bilateral nature of the Agreed Framework talks, an incident in which a South Korean relief ship was forced to fly the North Korean flag, and issues with other nations, led to delays in South Korean assistance. The ROK would shift to a policy where giving to the DPRK would only go through the Korean Red Cross.[380] This left South Korean religious NGOs to fill the void.[381] Don Oberdorfer wrote that Kim Young Sam's opposition to food aid came in part from serious election losses for Kim's party in midterm elections, and, citing then Ambassador to the ROK James Laney, Kim's desire to be the President who reunified Korea. His opposition included, according to a State Department source, telling President Clinton and Vice President Gore that North Korea's collapse was inevitable.[382] The *New York Times* reported that February that Kim Young Sam and his administration would face more political problems as the result of economic setbacks and a corruption scandal.[383]

In February of 1996, USAID, by way of its Bureau of Humanitarian Response and Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, made a gift of grants without conditions.[384] These grants were split between that United Nations Childrens Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme appeal for North Korea. These funds also provided for a "Food Program Observer" to monitor how food aid was being distributed.[385]

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380 Chung Oknim, "The Role of South Korea's NGOs: The Political Context," *Paved With Good Intentions*, p.83

381 "Isolated North Korea forced to seek help to fight famine", January 27, 1996, Cable News Network, retrieved from http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9601/nkorea_rice/index.html

382 Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 372-75.

383 Andrew Pollack, "South Korean Apologizes for Scandals," from Tokyo, *New York Times*, February 25, 1997, retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/1997/02/25/world/south-korean-apologizes-for-scandals.html?scp=4&sq=%22kim%20young%20sam%22%20relief&st=cse

384 Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 374.

385 United States Agency for International Development, "USAID/OFDA Factsheet #1," August 26, 1996, retrieved from http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/OCHA-64CA6N?OpenDocument

CNN would file another report in February 1996, this time from foreign correspondent Mike Chinoy, indicating that North Korea is on the "brink of famine." Both the January and February articles cite Trevor Page of the World Food Program as their principal source, with Page quoted in February's article as expressing confidence that aid is reaching needy recipients rather than the military.[386] In contrast to many official documents in this period, CNN uses the word "famine" in the titles and bodies of these articles to describe the food crisis or a potential scenario. While Marcus Noland would challenge Page's evidence, this article reflects information that was available from a mainstream news source, citing an official of a UN organization.[387]

Multilateralism's importance in Clinton's East Asia policy would again be confirmed by a February 8, 1996 speech given by Deputy Secretary Winston Lord to the Korea/U.S. 21st Century Council discussing this aid. Lord had emphasized regional cooperation when testifying in 1994 about regional relations and the prevention of a North Korean nuclear program. Despite reports of ROK opposition to further gifts of aid, Lord tells the Council that:

> The humanitarian aid issue which has received so much media attention recently is, contrary to what some have written, a good example of allied collaboration. Before deciding to extend $2 million of humanitarian assistance, my colleagues and I conducted very close consultations bilaterally with the ROK and trilaterally in Honolulu with the ROK and Japan.[388]

In March of 1996, a ship containing aid from the United States, Australia and Switzerland was launched. Sadly, it sank in the Taiwan Straits, killing 15 people. The joint gift of aid

[386] Mike Chinoy, "North Korea on brink of famine," Cable News Network, February 27, 1996, http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9602/nkorea_famine/index.html

[387] Marcus Noland wrote that some experts challenged the reports of Trevor Page as exaggerated, but acknowledges that Page may be proven correct in spite of a lack of evidence at the time of his claim. Marcus Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse*, 176.

[388] Winston Lord, Asst. Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, "U.S. Policy Towards the Korean Peninsula," speech to the Korea/U.S. 21st Century Council, February 8, 1996, hosted by the Federation of American Scientists, http://www.fas.org/spp/starwars/offdocs/s960208a.htm.

would be fulfilled, as 8,200 metric tons of rice arrived on another ship in April 1996.[389] However, one week after March 29th's second UN appeal, members of the Korean People's Army had entered the "Joint Security Area" in the demilitarized zone bearing arms not approved under the armistice.[390]

On April 15, 1996, the United States and the Republic of Korea jointly proposed four-party peace talks to the DPRK. Nicholas Kristof of the *New York Times* reported that South Korea had wanted bilateral talks with the North, while the DPRK wanted bilateral talks with the United States.[391] In a partially redacted and classified document, the U.S. Department of State (ca. April 1996) discussed its preparation for Four Party talks between the US, the People's Republic of China, the ROK and the DPRK. The memo pointed out that the DPRK wants the U.S. to unilaterally debrief them, while the U.S. insists on a joint debriefing in coordination with the ROK. The goals stated in the document include rejecting bilateral peace talks with the DPRK, placing the Koreas in charge of their own relations, and setting up a framework by which to reach a "permanent peace agreement." This memo also noted that the U.S. was "committed to moving toward the full normalization of our political and economic relations," and asserted that the Four Party Talks can help the DPRK to enhance security.[392]

On May 21, 1996, Douglas Coutts, North American representative of the WFP, gave an interview to Public Broadcasting System (PBS) in which he described the people

[389] United States Agency for International Development, "North Korea Floods/Food Shortage – Fact Sheet #1, " August 26, 1996, hosted by the Center for International Disaster Information, last accessed June 30, 2011, http://www.cidi.org:8080/disaster/96b/0008.html.

[390] Ibid, 375.

[391] Nicholas Kristof, "North Korea Says It's Weighing a Proposal for 4-Party Peace Talks," *New York Times*, April 19, 1996, byline Tokyo, August 18, 1996, http://www.nytimes.com/1996/04/19/world/north-korea-says-it-s-weighing-a-proposal-for-4-party-peace-talks.html?scp=4&sq=four%20party%20talks&st=cse

[392] United States Department of State, "Four Party Proposal Briefing", ca. April 1996, from the National Security Archives, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB164/EBB%20Doc%208.pdf

as sacrificing harvest activities in other to gather roots and wild vegetation. He refers to such gathering as among "pre-famine indicators." Collective farmers are said to be the most vulnerable as they are outside the coverage of the public distribution system. Coutts also refers to the DPRK government as "extremely well organized," and asserted that the WFP had free access to the rural area. Coutts said that the DPRK government was aware of the gravity of their national situation. He also said that self-reliance is a strong value at "all different levels of government," and that some who cannot get sufficient food have begun to barter with China.[393] The next day, a New York Times editorial refers to conditions in North Korea as "Near-famine conditions," and notes that the ROK requested that "further food aid be suspended until North Korea accepts President Clinton's recent proposal for four-way peace talks involving the two Koreas, China, and the United States." The op-ed urged the Clinton administration to "put hunger above politics" and to mix military deterrence with humanitarian engagement.[394]

North Korea's government, in the face of the famine, would undertake what it called an "Arduous March." Dae Sook Suh wrote that, in this period, the official North Korean news source, *Nodong Sinmun*, made frequent reference to Kim Il Sung's "March in Distress" in 1938-39, a march by Kim Il Sung's guerrillas in Manchuria in the midst of a bitter winter, highlighting the extraordinary achievements of people despite economic struggle.[395] Kim Jong Il gave a speech in which he noted that the DPRK had economic and food-related problems, struggles that he compared with Kim Il Sung's "Arduous

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[393] Interview with Douglas Coutts, News Hour, Public Broadcasting Service, May 21, 1996, transcript at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/asia/may96/food_shortage_5-21.html

[394] "Famine Aid to North Korea", *New York Times*, May 22, 1996.

[395] Dae-Sook Suh, "Crisis Management by New Leaders in North Korea," 4-5.

March" as a guerrilla.[396] Jae Cheon Lim asserted that this Arduous March lasted from 1995-1998, and that Kim Jong Il's policies in this time were "blindly devoted to following his father's," and involved an increase in the authority of the Korean People's Army. Lim argued that this was the most difficult period for North Korea since the Korean War, and that the starving masses were not as enthralled with juche ideology as they once were.[397] A January 1, 1997 KCNA news report describes the effort as one necessary to defend the leader and the socialist economic system in the DPRK. It reads, "The central task of socialist economic construction this year is to tap and utilize the economic potentials to the maximum, decisively solve the food problem, radically improve the people's standard of living, promote land administration and lay a solid foundation for the prosperity of the country under the slogan of self-reliance." The economic plan is described as prioritizing "agriculture, light industry and foreign trade." The editorial also highlights the need to "increase the defence capabilities of the country as much as possible."[398] Elements of this "Arduous March" would be described throughout 1997's KCNA press reports, with articles detailing efforts in construction, or acknowledging difficulties in industries like timber.[399] Despite the work of American and South Korean NGOs, and prior U.S. and Japanese government gifts of aid, DPRK rhetoric remained confrontational. A KCNA editorial from January 1, 1997 also stated

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396 Jae Cheon Lim, *Kim Jong Il's Leadership of North Korea* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2009), 110 citing Kim Jong Il, 'Munhak yesul pumun esŏ myŏngjak ŭl tŏ mani ch'angjak haja' [Let's create more masterpieces in art and literature], 26 April 1996, *Kim Jong Il sŏnjip*, 2000, 14:174

397 Jae Cheon Lim, *Kim Jong Il's Leadership of North Korea*, 111-115

398 "New Year editorial calls for stepping up general onward movement of Korean socialism," *Korean Central News Agency*, January 1, 1997, hosted by Korea News Service, Tokyo, http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/1997/9701/news1/01.htm#2

399 "Achievements made during 'Arduous march'," *Korean Central News Agency*, March 13, 1997, hosted by Korea News Service, Tokyo, http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/1997/9703/news3/13.htm#7; "National meeting of activists in forestry", *Korean Central News Agency*, May 6, 1997, hosted by Korea News Service, Tokyo, http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/1997/9705/news5/06.htm#47

that, "Our revolutionary army will never pardon any provocateur wherever he may be. In case the enemies unleash war, our army will strike and wipe out the U.S. aggression forces before anyone else and uproot the source of war on the Korean Peninsula."[400] The DPRK government declared that this "Arduous March" came to an end in 1999.[401]

Hazel Smith argues that in the mid-1990s, the DPRK began to prioritize its human security, making offers to eliminate missile exports in exchange for food.[402] During this period, North Korea also made an attempt to purchase grain commercially from an American company. However, this attempt was less than successful. In 2006 that Cargill, in 1997, sent a cargo ship of wheat to the DPRK to exchange for zinc. When the DPRK did not give them the zinc, Cargill took the ship and the wheat to Indonesia instead.[403]

A review of the *Congressional Record* from January 15, 1996 through July 1, 1996 reveals that public advocacy for U.S. aid to the DPRK was indeed lonely turf in the Congress.[404] On May 22, 1996, Senator Paul Simon (D-IL) gave a speech in which he highlighted the need for food aid. Simon argued, consistent with the views of liberal Tony Hall and conservative Andrew Natsios that, "During the cold war, when we looked at other nations as enemies, we made clear that our differences with those nations were with their governments and not with their people. The same should be true of North Korea

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400 "New Year editorial," *Korean Central News Agency*, January 1, 1997; hosted by Korea News Service, Tokyo, http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/1997/9701/news1/01.htm#2

401 Nicholas Eberstadt, "Disparities in Socioeconomic Development in Divided Korea: Indications and Implications," *Asian Survey* Vol. 40, No. 6 (Nov. - Dec., 2000), pp. 867-893, 892, University of California Press; last accessed on September 11, 2011, retrieved from JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3021193

402 Hazel Smith, *Hungry for Peace*, 167.

403 Heidi Brown and Susan Kitchens, "Trading With the Enemy," *Forbes.com*, February 27, 2006, retrieved from http://www.forbes.com/global/2006/0227/046A.html.

404 A search for the keywords "North Korea" AND "food aid" for this period in the Congressional Record recalls six hits – the referenced Simon speech from May 22, 1996, further remarks for Simon on the matter during that year's budget debate on May 15, and comments from Senator Murkowski in March of that year wondering why the United States does not insist on POW searches in North Korea when it gives aid.

today." Simon praised the aforementioned $2 million gift, but cited worsening conditions and argued that the U.S. needed to do more. Simon also introduces the May 22, 1996 editorial from the *New York Times*.[405] On May 23, 1996, on the heels of Simon's remarks and the New York Times editorial urging additional aid, Assistant Secretary Lord penned an Action Memorandum recommending that the United States government provide $6.2 million in PL480 Title II Emergency Food Aid funds for North Korea. He recommended that this aid be given to the World Food Program in the form of rice and corn soya blend. Lord notes the gravity of the agricultural and nutritional situations in the DPRK, and explains that the proposed contribution would meet about 18% of the WFP's food request. This memo shows the dual nature of the proposal, remarking that the gift would both meet a valid humanitarian need and aid policy objectives with regard to the DPRK. It makes further reference to the DPRK's past positive response to the February of 1996 food gift. Lord writes, "We believe that an unconditional contribution to this new appeal could encourage further progress on bilateral issues and also act as an inducement for a positive DPRK response to the Four Party Peace Proposal." Consistent with Marcus Noland's assessment of the early gift motivations, the tone here is one of positive inducement, rather than one of pure conditionality or compulsion. Lord noted that major gifts must come from South Korea.[406] This would be a key point of change leading into the large gifts of 1997 and 1998. While the language stopped short of declaring a famine,

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[405] Remarks of Senator Paul Simon, Congressional Record: May 22, 1996 (Senate), [Page S5502-S5503]; retrieved from www.gpo.gov; last accessed on September 30, 2010, citing "Famine Aid to North Korea", *New York* Times, May 22, 1996.

[406] Memorandum, Winston Lord to Secretary Warren Christopher, Subject: PL 480 Title II Emergency Food Aid for North Korea, May 23, 1996 [FOIA Release], retrieved from the National Security Archive at The George Washington University; retrieved from http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB205/Document%20No%208.pdf

it asserted that significant challenges existed to food security in North Korea. In this May memo, much of the section dealing with the reactions of Japan and the ROK is redacted, so it is impossible to report the full context of the document. However, in a distinct, complete paragraph, Lord writes that the United States, if it is to provide further assistance, must consult with South Korea's government, and assure it that the U.S. is giving "emergency assistance," and that it "would not undercut ROK leverage, since Seoul would still be the only country that could immediately provide large scale food and economic assistance to the DPRK."[407] The memo goes on to urge consultation with Congress to address questions about the DPRK's agricultural shortfall and the question of whether DPRK soldiers had or would divert food aid. It highlighted that the Department of State, prior to the January 1996 decision to give, consulted with members of Congress, including Rep. Ben Gilman (R-NY). Gilman is said to have expressed concerns over this question of diversion as well as the confirmation of the DPRK's agricultural shortfalls, but that he and others were accepting of the gift and the "monitoring plan" that accompanied it.[408] This provides support for Hathaway and Tama's claim that Congress, despite its rhetoric towards North Korea and Clinton policy towards it, ultimately supported food aid.[409] Going forward, the memo recommended that efforts to persuade Congress focus on the House and Senate committees dealing with agriculture and foreign relations, as well as legislators with a high level of interest in the DPRK, including Jay Kim (R-CA), Tony Hall (D-OH), Bill Richardson (D-NM) and others.

In June 1996, in line with Assistant Secretary Lord's recommendation, the United

[407] Ibid
[408] Ibid
[409] Hathaway and Tama, 715.

States, the Republic of Korea and Japan would each make pledges of aid to the Second United Nations appeal for North Korea. The United States and Japan each pledged $6 million in aid, while the ROK pledged $3 million. Overall, the appeal sought $43.6 million.[410]

American food aid itself was down in this period. Dean Carol Lancaster wrote that the end of the Cold War marked "the loss of a major rationale for foreign aid," noting that this, combined with a desire for budget reduction and decline in people's belief in the effectiveness of aid as a development strategy, made it easier to reduce foreign aid. Furthermore, foreign aid was not a high priority to the Clinton White House, and, as a discretionary spending item was easier to cut.[411] From 1986 to 1995, the Food for Peace program's contributions were consistently around 2,000,000 metric tons annually (ranging from a low of 1.895 million in 1989 to a high of 2.115 million in 1991). However, in 1996, there was a substantial drop in overall agricultural exports to the program. In 1996, the contribution was down to 1.695 million tons, dropping further to 1.665 million tons in 1997. 1997 was an unusually low number in terms of gross value of these contributions – ($1047.2 million in 1996, $937.3 million in 1997, and back up to $1152.4 million in 1998).[412]

Japan's June 1996 decision to give came after months of declining to make further contributions. It also reflected the logistical issues involved with sending relief to North Korea, and the debate over the nature and the extent of the food crisis. The Ministry of

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410 Sohn Jie-Ae, "North Korea receives aid to avert famine," June 11, 1996, Cable News Network, http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9606/11/south.korea/

411 Carol Lancaster, *Foreign Aid*, 83-86.

412 Office of Food for Peace, United States Agency for International Development, "Celebrating 50 Years of Food for Peace: Bringing Hope to the Hungry 1954-2004", brochure, 13, http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/ffp/FFP_50thAv_Brochure.pdf.

Foreign Affairs answered a number of media questions about food aid to North Korea at various press conferences in 1996. On January 30, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hiroshi Hashimoto answered a question about potential Japanese food aid by noting that, at the tripartite meeting in Honolulu, the consensus was that North Korea was dealing with a food crisis, but was not yet faced with a famine. He also remarked that the reserve rice stocks used for the June 1995 gift no longer existed. A reporter at this press conferences observed that even if famine did not exist at that point, it may be too late to stop it once it is observable. Spokesman Hashimoto replied that Japan made a $500,000 gift in response to the first UN appeal, and that the Americans rather than the Japanese were then still studying making a contribution – a contribution Hashimoto expected to be smaller than this prior Japanese gift.[413] A February 2, 1996 Ministry of Foreign Affairs press conference, however, notes that not all of the pledged rice aid was delivered to Korea, but rather an unknown amount was sitting near docks waiting for the DPRK to send ships to pick it up. MOFA spokesman Hashimoto also asserted that the Honolulu meetings showed agreement amongst the US, ROK and Japan that the food situation was "critical," but had not become a famine. He also said that no new appeals had emerged since Japan's last gift in December 1995.[414] A February 6, 1996 press conference restates the official position of the Ministry as expressed on January 30 – he asserts that the Japanese government has already contributed 150,000 metric tons of rice (and has no more such surplus to give) and gave $500,000 to the United Nations Department of Humanitarian

[413] Press Conference by the Press Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, January 30, 1996, retrieved from Ministry of Foreign Affairs website; http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/1996/1/130.html

[414] Press Conference by Press Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, February 2, 1996; retrieved from Ministry of Foreign Affairs website; http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/1996/2/202.html

Affairs in December, and had no plans at that time for further gifts to North Korea.[415] At a March 1 press conference, Spokesman Ken Shimanouchi said that the official position on North Korea remained unchanged, and that the government would continue to watch matters.[416]

By June 14, 1996, the ministry reversed policy and pledged $6 million dollars to the World Food Program ($5.25 million) and UNICEF ($750,000). Spokesman Ken Shimanouchi said that this was in response to the United Nations appeal in close consultations with the U.S. and ROK. A reporter, much like legislators in the United States, had questions about the diversion of food aid from civilians to the military. Spokesman Shimanouchi replied that he had heard no stories of diversion, but he referenced stories about the use of reserves and of soldiers who are malnourished.[417]

After the July 1996 Joint Gift

For the United States in the Clinton years, multilateral action was seen as critical to the success of policy objectives in East Asia. The preservation of the alliance with Japan and South Korea was seen as a vital interest by both the executive and legislative branches. A document from the U.S. Department of State (via George Washington University's National Security Archive, which places the date of the document as "ca. 1996") estimates the DPRK need in a 12 month period at 5.9 million tons, and the harvest only yielding 4 million tons of rice and corn. Furthermore, this estimate is noted to be

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415 Press Conference by the Press Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, February 6, 1996, retrieved from Ministry of Foreign Affairs website; http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/1996/2/206.html

416 "Press Conference by the Press Secretary of MOFA", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March 1, 1996, retrieved from Ministry of Foreign Affairs website; http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/1996/3/301.html

417 "Press Conference by the Press Secretary of MOFA", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 14, 1996, retrieved from Ministry of Foreign Affairs website; http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/1996/6/614.html.

subject to downward revision, depending on weather, illness and fuel availability.[418] It states that the "political ramifications of such assistance" must be discussed before humanitarian aid is issued. It asserts that the government should "reconfirm consensus" that South Korea would "take the lead on any large-scale food assistance." This memo notes that the U.S. government could, if it so chose, directly provide aid to North Korea, reading, "We reserve the right to respond on a bilateral basis to an international call for food aid."[419] This would prove to be an important option.

Meanwhile, KEDO, the organization at the center of the regional collaboration to prevent North Korea from developing nuclear arms, would face obstacles from its very beginning. KEDO was the offspring of the controversial Agreed Framework, and meeting responsibilities within this agreement would require large expenditures and deliveries of heavy fuel oil to the DPRK. It would also require substantial cooperation amongst and financing from Japan and the Republic of Korea. It would also require some funding from the United States. Karin Lee and Adam Miles wrote that building friction with Congress over funding for the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization led to prohibitions and restrictions that limited Clinton's ability to negotiate with the DPRK.[420, 421] The legislative branch of the United States started to place further conditions on energy assistance.[422] In dealing with North Korea, North Korea's nuclear situation, energy

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418 United States Department of State, "North Korea's Food Situation", ca. 1996, hosted by the National Security Archives, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB164/EBB%20Doc%207.pdf

419 Ibid.

420 According to 2005 Congressional Research Services report, this waiver enables the President of the United States to direct up to $50 million to any nation, overriding certain statutory limitations. See Mark E. Manyin, "Foreign Assistance to North Korea," Congressional Research Services report for Congress, May 26, 1995, retrieved from http://congressionalresearch.com/RL31785/document.php?study=Foreign+Assistance+to+North+Korea.

421 Karin Lee and Adam Miles, "North Korea On Capitol Hill," *Asian Perspective* Vol.28, No.4 (2004), pp.185-207, p.188-90, http://www.asianperspective.org/articles/v28n4-h.pdf

422 Ibid.

crisis and food crisis were often examined together. In no small part, the Congress sought to avoid what it saw as potential diversion of either oil or food by the North Korean government or military for sale or military ends. In July 1996, the United States Senate debated the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1997. In this debate, Senators Lieberman and Murkowski agreed that KEDO should be fully funded at $25 million. Senator Murkowski acknowledged Senator McConnell's prior attempts to make the provision of fuel aid conditional, and called for food aid monitoring. These senators sought with Amendment 5078 to fund KEDO, and with Amendment 5089 sought to set conditions on the provision of funds to KEDO. Amendment 5089 required the President to certify several conditions, including DPRK adherence to the Agreed Framework and that the North Koreans have not diverted food aid, and reports that must be presented to the Congress before funds can be granted for KEDO. The bill and amendment allowed for a national security exception.[423]

As discussed in chapter 2, floods further devastated the agricultural base of the DPRK in July 1996, as five days of flood rains struck North Korea. The 1997 Annual Report of the Office for U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance highlights "$1.7 billion in damages to crops and infrastructure."[424] The September 1996 WFP report stated that flooding occurred at a "critical stage in development at which they were most susceptible to adverse conditions."[425] The report also documented the difficulties faced by the public distribution system, as 5 million collective farmers began to rely on it for nutrition. Also,

[423] Debate surrounding Amendment #5078 to Senate Bill entitled " Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1997", retrieved from Congressional Record at www.gpo.gov. Last accessed August 25, 2011. Sen. Murkowski introduces Amendment 5089 to amend Sen. Lieberman's amendment 5078.

[424] Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance, "Annual Report 1997," 38-39.

[425] United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and World Food Program, "Special Report #270," September 6, 1996, retrieved from http://www.fao.org/docrep/004/w2706e/w2706e00.htm

the report noted that the international response to the appeal did not meet the goals.[426]

The Congressional advocates for food aid remained vocal in the second half of 1996, but, when North Korea was featured in a subcommittee hearing, the humanitarian issues were considered alongside security issues. Senator Paul Simon and Representatives Tony Hall and Bill Richardson remained vigilantly involved with the issue, often by themselves.[427] On September 12, 1996, the East Asian and Pacific Affairs Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing to discuss the state of affairs in North Korea. Senator Craig Thomas, the chair of the Subcommittee, would raise several themes in his opening remarks. He emphasized that little was known about North Korea's "intentions or motives," as well as its "history of dangerous unpredictability," its retrograde economic and political systems (referring to the former as the "ruinous juche philosophy" and the latter as "Stalinist").[428] There is little questioning by any Senators but Thomas, but the hearing reveals the state of the information being presented on the record to Congress by experts at this time. Then-Rep. Hall testified about his visit to the DPRK at this hearing. Hall would detail the hunger that he witnessed and the stories that he heard. Hall spoke of the rarity of animals and pregnant women in the DPRK, and the omnipresence of exhaustion and weight loss. He asserted that, despite good distribution, the population was only receiving an average of 600-700 calories per day. He acknowledged the flaws of the North Korean agricultural system, as well as the deforestation and flooding. In this testimony, Hall noted that while

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426 Ibid.

427 Natsios reports a May 1996 trip by Congressman Bill Richardson in which an offer is made to the North Koreans with the approval of the National Security Council, but reports that the author was withdrawn under pressure from the Department of Defense. Andrew Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine*, 146

428 Statement of Senator Craig Thomas, Ibid, 1. This language is consistent with the "mad" perspective of North Korea as an unknowable actor outlined by Hazel Smith in Hungry for Peace.

governments should do more, the key to progress would be the response of private organizations.[429]

This hearing provides insight into the positions of those seen by the Congress as experts at this time. It also gives a view of what information was reaching Congress and what views it prioritized with regard to North Korea. There were a few key themes. The contention over North Korea's nuclear matters was central to the hearing, with experts noting the linkage – deliberate or otherwise - of the success of food aid and the success of strategic objectives.[430] These experts were divided on whether aid should be provided as a humanitarian obligation independent of strategic and regional interests. Representative Hall, Stanley Roth of the United States Institute for Peace and Ambassador Robert Gallucci support de-linking food aid from strategic objectives, while former U.S. Ambassador to the ROK James Lilley disagreed. Roth testified that it was possible that a desperate DPRK could come to view violence as a means by which to acquire funds and goods, sparking regional conflict.[431] He noted that aid may be a way for the U.S. and its allies, then unprepared to deal with the possibility of collapse and refugee exodus to "buy time" to build to towards a "softer hard landing" for the DPRK. He wrote that this may serve as an incentive to bring the North Korean government to the table.[432] Ambassador Robert Gallucci testified that progress had been and was being made on matters related to

[429] Testimony of Congressman Tony Hall, "North Korea: An Overview", S. Hrg. 104-662, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 104th Congress, 2nd Session, September 12, 1996, Washington, DC. Printed by the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1996, pp.2-8

[430] Steven Bosworth, the then-Executive Director of KEDO, took questions on that organization's progress.

[431] This is especially emphasized in the testimony of Stanley Roth, the then-Director of the Research and Study Program of the United States Institute for Peace, who testifies on the issue as a private citizen. Testimony of Stanley O. Roth, Ibid, 29-30.

[432] Ibid, 30-35. Roth lists several assumptions on which his suggestion hinges, including that famine could expand, no development aid would be given, that the Korean People's Army was not in possession of its own stockpiles, that there was adequate monitoring allowed by the DPRK, that there was no diversion of food to the military, and that the United States would not be a major donor of food.

the Agreed Framework. He concurs with Roth that food aid should be "de-linked" from other elements of the policy towards North Korea.[433] Lilley, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank, at the time of the hearing, argued in his written remarks that North Korea's investment in armaments and wasteful monuments, and its unwillingness to open its economy to greater foreign investment attest to the need for food aid to be provided only with serious conditions. He also noted that the DPRK was reputed to have income streams related to insurance policies and sympathetic ethnic Koreans in Japan who belonged to the Chosen Soren organization.[434] Lilley challenged the statements of Roth and Gallucci supporting the "de-linking" of humanitarian aid from DPRK government behavior, asserting that this is ineffective, as it causes the DPRK to not respect the U.S. and does not resonate.[435]

Some experts, including Mark Minton, director of the Office of Korean Affairs of the State Department, reiterated the important role consultation with the Republic of Korea played in crafting U.S. policy.[436] Several experts endorse the full funding of the U.S. commitment to KEDO as a way to show the ROK and Japan that the U.S. government would stay firm and to give incentives to the DPRK to participate and to maintain its commitment to the Agreed Framework.[437] Minton would also note some cooperation between the U.S. and DPRK governments, as military personnel jointly searched in North Korea in July 1996 for, and returned the remains, of an American

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433 Testimony of Hon. Robert L. Gallucci, Ibid, 34-40.

434 Testimony of Hon. James R. Lilley, Ibid, 24-28.

435 Testimony of Hon. James R. Lilley, Ibid, 40-42.

436 Testimony of Mark Minton, Director, Office of Korean Affairs, U.S. Department of State, Ibid, 12.

437 This includes former U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea James Lilley, then of the American Enterprise Institute, who supported firm accountability as a prerequisite for aid. Lilley also supported liaison offices and a loosening of economic sanctions. Testimony of Hon. James R. Lilley, Ibid, 21-23.

serviceman who was killed in the Korean War. Minton also expressed confidence that the humanitarian relief given to the DPRK was reaching its intended civilian recipients.[438] The experts generally acknowledged that the issues surrounding relations with the DPRK were very complex, and could involve political and economic collapse. This was accompanied closely by consideration of issues surrounding a mass exodus of refugees, and the impact that collapse and exodus would have on the DPRK, China, Japan and, most importantly to the panel, the ROK. This discussion would include how the policy of the U.S. and its allies towards the DPRK would be conditioned by, or directed towards producing, resisting, or accommodating so-called "hard" or "soft landings."[439]

In September and October 1996, militaristic disputes between the two Koreas created complications that hindered the willingness of governments to raise and provide energy aid to North Korea. A North Korean submarine ran aground on the east coast of South Korea. Its commandos fled the scene into South Korea, leading to firefights as these special forces were subdued or killed. Narushige Michishita wrote of the extensive fallout. First, President Kim Young Sam suspended ROK involvement in KEDO, with this suspension "delaying progress on the light-water reactor (LWR) project."[440] Also, the North Koreans prepared to test its No Dong missile, and released a "statement of defiance" on October 23, 1996. The North Koreans canceled the test in November of 1996, likely after being reassured by the United States of its continued commitment to the Agreed Framework, despite prior DPRK accusations that the U.S. had used the

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438 Ibid, 13.

439 "North Korea: An Overview", S. Hrg. 104-662, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 104th Congress, 2nd Session, September 12, 1996, Washington, DC. Printed by the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1996

440 Narushige Michishita, *North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns 1966-2008*, 119-20.

submarine incident as a "bargaining chip."[441] Donald Gregg, the former ambassador to the Republic of Korea, in March 1997, recalled that in early 1997, the North Koreans issued a "statement of regret" about the incident. He said that this was the first apology by the DPRK for an act of provocation, and was made possible because of the American troop presence and Team Spirit exercises.[442]

The 1996 Presidential debates between President Clinton and Kansas Republican Senator Robert Dole reflected a campaign centered on differing ideas about government's size and function, and focused principally on the economy and domestic policy. In the area of foreign policy, Clinton defended his record of humanitarian intervention in Bosnia and Haiti.[443] As for North Korea, there was little discussion in the debates, but the distinction between the two candidates was clear: Clinton supported the Agreed Framework and inducements to the DPRK, while Senator Dole was opposed to such projects. In May 1996, Dole had given a speech at the Center for International and Strategic Studies that accused the Clinton administration of "coddling" North Korea. Dole stated, "President Clinton should cease bilateral contacts with North Korea on proliferation and on diplomatic normalization until North Korea resumes direct discussions with South Korea as it committed itself to do five years ago."[444] Some of the rhetoric Clinton had used to criticize former President George H.W. Bush's China policy

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441 Ibid.

442 Donald P. Gregg, "The Two Koreas and Northeast Asia in the Post-Cold War Era," in *The Two Koreas and the United States: Issues of Peace, Security, and Economic Cooperation*, ed. Wongmo Dong, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 172-73. This book was from remarks given at a symposium at Southern Methodist University in March 1997.

443 "Presidential Debate in Hartford", President William Jefferson Clinton, Sen. Robert Dole, and Jim Lehrer, October 6, 1996, Hartford, CT, retrieved from http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=52060#axzz1WA7SQLnP

444 "Dole's Views on U.S. Asia Policy: Lost Credibility and Weak Leadership," *New York Times*, May 10, 1996, excerpts from May 9, 1996 speech. Transcribed by Federal News Service. http://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/10/world/dole-s-views-on-us-asian-policy-lost-credibility-and-weakleadership.html?scp=1&sq=%22Dole%22%20%22Korea%22%201996&st=cse

in the 1992 elections was being mirrored by Dole and used to criticize Clinton's engagement of North Korea. Dole addressed the DPRK briefly at the October 6, 1996 Hartford debate, stating "We shouldn't be doing any favors for North Korea. It's a closed society. We don't have any inspection. We don't know whether it's going to work or not. But we keep giving them these incentives – some would call them something else – incentives. We don't know what's going to happen."[445] In November 1996, President Clinton defeated Dole handily, and was elected to a second term.

1997: The Upgrade in Giving

Dae-Sook Suh, biographer of Kim Il Sung and professor of political science at the University of Hawai'i, noted that in February 1997, the DPRK suffered "four serious political setbacks." These include the defection of Hwang Jang Yop, the intellectual force behind *Juche* ideology, and the resignation of Kang Song-San, the premier of the Administration Council, and the loss of two other military leaders.[446] Despite this, the Korean People's Army was engaged in winter training exercises and mobilizations simulating the defense of Pyongyang and its citizens in the event of war.[447]

The United States, about seven months after its last pledge, would announce the first set of 1997's large gifts on February 19, 1997. This February gift consisted of $10 million in food to the World Food Programme. This contained a mix of corn soy blend, targeted for children, rice and corn.[448] In response, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs faced questions about potential Japanese aid for North Korea. MOFA announces

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445 Ibid.

446 Dae-Sook Suh, "Crisis Management by New Leaders in North Korea." 3-4.

447 Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 396.

448 "U.S. Humanitarian Assistance to North Korea," Press release, United States Agency for International Development, February 20, 1997, retrieved from http://www.usaid.gov/press/releases/970220.htm

throughout February and March that it will continue to study the issue, waiting for information from the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs.[449] On March 11, MOFA Spokesman Hashimoto said that Japan, the United States and the Republic of Korea discussed North Korea's deteriorating food situation, with the ROK and U.S. saying that gifts from Japan would help, but are at Japan's discretion.[450] On March 14, 1997, MOFA reiterated that it will wait for information from the DHA before deciding on food aid. However, important information is discussed. At this press conference, Spokesman Shimanouchi took a question about a girl named Megumi Yokota, who was abducted by North Korean agents in 1977. Shimanouchi said that the allegation was under police investigation, and that questions needed to be directed to the National Police Agency.[451] In April, however, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs acknowledged that, despite the situation in North Korea, Japan must consider several factors, including popular sentiment about the abduction case of Yokota and the state of Japanese wives of North Koreans living in the DPRK.[452] In May 1997, the Ministry clarified, as Spokesman Nobuaki Tanaka said, that while the foremost consideration is the occurrence of a UN appeal, other considerations play a role. These considerations included Japanese wives in North Korea, the abduction issue, and DPRK drug smuggling. The Japanese government denied "linking" food aid to these issues, but noted that it must consider public opinion.[453]

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449 Press Conference by the Press Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, February 25, 1997, http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/1997/2/225.html#4

450 Press Conference by the Press Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, March 11, 1997, http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/1997/3/311.html

451 Press Conference by the Press Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, March 14, 1997, http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/1997/3/314.html

452 Press Conference by the Press Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, April 18, 1997, http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/1997/4/418.html. Press Conference by the Press Secretary 22 April 1997", Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, April 22, 1997, http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/1997/4/422.html

453 "Press Conference by the Press Secretary 27 June 1997", Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, June 27, 1997, http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/1997/6/627.html

The second major American gift to the World Food Programme, a gift of 50,000 metric tons of food aid valued at $15 million, was announced on April 15, 1997. The *Los Angeles Times* reports that the gift was targeted for children under the age of 6. It also quotes State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns as saying that the gift was "not linked" to whether or not the North Koreans would agree to a US-ROK offer for talks.[454] Marcus Noland, however, attributes this gift to North Korean agreement to discuss missile proliferation.[455]

A May 1997 editorial in the *New York Times* by Korea expert Selig Harrison asserts that there was a diplomatic stalemate over an exchange of "food for peace," and that the U.S. should work out a deal to provide food aid in exchange for talks. Harrison argued that such a deal should have a schedule of food delivery and a plan for the DPRK to pull its artillery back from the border.[456] On June 30, 1997, the DPRK agreed to participate in four-party talks with the US, ROK, and China. Preliminary talks were agreed on, scheduled to begin on August 5, 1997.[457] On July 14, 1997, the Clinton administration formally declared that it would make a third such gift. This gift consisted of 100,000 metric tons of food valued at $27 million.[458] Noland referred to the gift as following the July announcement of North Korean participation in August preliminary discussions, a statement that came shortly after former Ambassador James Laney and former Georgia Senator Sam Nunn's visit to Pyongyang, as "inaugurating a policy of

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454 "U.S. Commits More Food Aid to North Korea," *Los Angeles Times,* April 16, 1997, http://articles.latimes.com/1997-04-16/news/mn-49191_1_north-korea

455 Marcus Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse*, 188.

456 Selig S. Harrison, "Get a 'Food for Peace' Deal With North Korea," *New York Times*, May 14, 1997, http://www.nytimes.com/1997/05/14/opinion/14iht-edsig.t.html

457 Steven Lee Myers, "North Korea Agrees to Join Four Party Talks," *New York Times*, July 1, 1997, http://www.nytimes.com/1997/07/01/world/north-korea-agrees-to-join-4-party-talks.html

458 Marcus Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse*, 188.

'food for meetings' that would continue to the present ."(2000, MPK add)[459] The Washington Post reported that this announcement was three weeks prior to a four-party meeting involving China, the U.S. and the two Koreas. The article does not note negative conditionality. However, it referenced the private opinions of officials that past gifts had helped "the political climate for the negotiations." It reported that the U.S. government officially denied a connection between the aid and the diplomatic progress. The article would note that the aid pledged by the U.S. in 1997 was "slightly more than half" of the appeal by the WFP announced on July 9, 1997.[460]

Although gifts would expand in this period, certainty about the existence of famine was still not unanimous. Some experts, when looking at the larger picture of North Korea in 1997, also attempted to address the question of the future of the Kim government and the North Korean economy. For example, Robert Gallucci, the lead negotiator for the Agreed Framework, noted in 1997 that, with the risk of North Korean weakness giving incentives for warfare, the United States "should be looking for ways of promoting that well-known soft landing. In other words, promoting the objective of transition in the North without suffering the consequences of a military conflict." He notes that tensions between the United States and South Korea were also on the rise in this period as there was "a rather sharp increase in South Korean suspicion, South Korean resentment, and South Korean unease with its ally, the United States."[461]

A July 1997 Intelligence Assessment from the Bureau of Intelligence and

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459 Ibid, 186.

460 R. Jeffrey Smith, "U.S. Says It Will Double Food Aid to North Korea," *Washington Post*, July 15, 1997, Page A15, retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/korea/stories/usaid97.htm.

461 Robert L. Gallucci, "The U.S.-North Korea Agreed Framework and the Korea Policy of the United States," in *The Two Koreas and the United States: Issues of Peace, Security, and Economic Cooperation*, ed. Wongmo Dong, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 179-183.

Research of the United States Department of State provided a summary of a June 25, 1997 roundtable discussion on the North Korean food situation held with experts from outside of government, relief workers, State Department personnel and other governmental experts. These experts came to several key conclusions. The report stated that "(t)he food crisis is real," while noting that the scope of the crisis was uncertain. In a key point, the assessment states that "there was debate...whether it would develop into a full-blown famine." This section acknowledges that "(a) significant percentage of the population is severely malnourished, and mortality rates have risen." The impact of the crisis has struck hardest with children, the elderly, and those living in "the mountainous areas of the interior," and that "(i)ndicators of acute humanitarian crisis" are visible, including pawning of personal items and people roving for food.[462]

The report finds, similarly to Natsios, Noland and Haggard, and Eberstadt, that the food crisis had its roots in economic and agricultural malpractice, and that reforms are necessary to end the crisis. None of the experts believed that the collapse of the North Korean government was "imminent" at that time, although they had a pessimistic view of the long-term future there without changes. The experts believed that there was "no sign" that the population could start a "revolution from below." However, they note that the breakdown of the North Korean public distribution system led to an increase in local autonomy. The roundtable reflected a considerable difference in opinion from the 1996 State Department memoranda that asserted that the South Koreans or the Japanese should take the lead, as the 1997 panel had "general agreement" that the United States should

[462] United States Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Intelligence Assessment, "Roundtable on North Korean Food Crisis," July 3, 1997, retrieved from the National Security Archive, George Washington University, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB205/Document%20No%2013.pdf

"take the lead in addressing the food crisis." The roundtable also asserted that the U.S. should continue to cooperate with the United Nations and the involved NGOs, opining that this was "consistent with other U.S. policy goals toward the peninsula," including peace, stability, reform in North Korea and "reducing the nuclear threat." Most at the table also agreed that American diplomacy had "achieved significant results" in this case, highlighting the value of the Agreed Framework, KEDO and then-"pending" Four Party Talks as providing value. However, the assessment notes some dissent on this point, as some present believed that North Korean participation in the Four Party Talks was a "tactical gambit to obtain food."[463]

Members of Congress and their staffers would gain greater exposure to the details, and would begin to make North Korea, this crisis, and a belief that the DPRK needed to reform its politics and economics more frequent topics of conversation. For example, on September 3, 1997, Rep. Porter Goss (R-FL) would report to the Congress of the visit to the DPRK of a Congressional delegation including himself and six other members of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. He asserted that the U.S. delegation made requests for increased monitoring. Goss also noted that the North Koreans requested additional unconditional food aid, as well as the lifting of U.S. sanctions against the DPRK. The North Koreans told the Americans that they would not negotiate with then-ROK President Kim Young Sam and did not discuss a need for reform, placing blame on external factors for their situation. Goss referred to the DPRK government as "dying," asserting that it was key to U.S. security to "prevent that process from

[463] "Roundtable on North Korean Food Crisis", United States Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Intelligence Assessment, July 3, 1997

undermining the security of the peninsula and threatening America's vital interests in the region."[464] This delegation issued a joint statement that emphasized North Korea's desire to maintain its existing systems, the desire of the delegation that the DPRK make its distribution of food aid more "verifiable," and the American position that the DPRK comply with the IAEA and Agreed Framework, amongst other things.[465]

The overall economic situation in Asia would change with the financial crisis that ravaged the region. The Republic of Korea was hit especially hard. By the end of 1997, the won and Korean stocks plummeted by over 40 percent. Ultimately, the ROK would itself encounter conditionality, as it required loans totaling $57 billion from the International Monetary Fund.[466] While South Korea was forced to focus on its own domestic economic problems, it did shift gears internationally with the election of longtime dissident Kim Dae Jung as President on December 18, 1997. By March of 1998, Kim would announce the "Sunshine Policy" - a policy of increased openness towards the DPRK.[467] The ROK's aid to DPRK famine relief would triple to $75 million in 1998, but would leap to over $3 billion in 1999, making it the top donor that year.[468]

Despite political tension in the United States and economic struggles in East Asia, the large-scale aid and diplomatic engagement would continue. On December 10, 1997, the "Four Party Talks" began in Geneva.[469] These talks would continue with March 1998's second set of such talks in Geneva. The *Washington Post* would report on January 6,

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[464] Remarks of Congressman Porter Goss, "Report on Codel to North Korea", September 3, 1997, hosted by Global Security, http://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/library/congress/1997_cr/h970903-dprk.htm

[465] Ibid.

[466] Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 406.

[467] Ibid, 407.

[468] Marcus Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse*, 127 (agrees with errata), Table 3.14

[469] Ibid, 393.

1998 that, between food aid and a fall harvest, the North Korean food situation had improved temporarily.[470] However, it would not be all good news. On August 20, 1998, a press conference was held by Congressional staff returning from a trip to North Korea. At this event, these staffers reported that at least 1 million people had died as the result of a famine. The *Washington Post* notes that estimate of the 1 million dead matches that of a Council on Foreign Relations report from May 1998 and a World Vision estimate from September 1997.[471] Less than two weeks later, on August 31, the DPRK launched a missile over Japan.[472] Japan would refrain from giving aid for North Korea for the entirety of 1998.

In the midst of these highs and lows, awareness of the deep problems facing the DPRK would grow, and the World Food Programme, while stopping short of using the term famine, would speak of worsening conditions and increases in death rates. It also noted that the United Nations would increase the amount of its appeal to $415 million for 1998.[473] American giving would escalate even further in 1998, contributing over $200 million in food to the World Food Program, nearly tripling even its 1997 levels and, although it would level off a bit in 1999, it would remain high that year.[474] However, the questions of diversion and adequate verification remained strong throughout this period. An April 1998 *Washington Post* story noted that access remained an issue, as relief

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[470] Kevin Sullivan, "Koreas' Ills Compete for Attention," Tuesday, January 6, 1998, *Washington Post Foreign Service*, p.A10, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/korea/stories/compete.htm

[471] John Pomfret, "Congressional Aides Report High Hunger Toll in N. Korea", Dateline: Beijing, August 9, 1998, *Washington Post Foreign Service*, August 20, 1998, p.A20, retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/korea/stories/famine082098.htm

[472] C. Kenneth Quinones, "Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO): A Bridge Too Far?," 182.

[473] Steven Mufson and John Pomfret, "N. Korea Hinders Efforts to Track Food Shipments", Monday, April 6, 1998, *Washington Post Foreign Service*, p.A18, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/korea/stories/food040698.htm

[474] Marcus Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse*, 122, Table 3.14.

workers could not go to Chagang and Rangang provinces in the northeastern part of the DPRK, and could only monitor 150 of 187 counties receiving food.[475]

In November 1998, the Clinton administration appointed Former Secretary of Defense William Perry to head up a study of U.S. policy towards North Korea. This report emphasized working closely with the Republic of Korea and a policy of engagement toward the North. It acknowledges the humanitarian crises, but is principally focused on advocating a strategy for ending North Korean proliferation of not only nuclear weapons, but long range missiles, as well. The report recommends against exchanging food for progress on nuclear issues, stating that this would encourage further "blackmail" from the DPRK and other proliferators. The report would, however, say reluctantly that "certain provocative behavior" could lead to the U.S. to "reevaluate current aid levels."[476]

In 1999, the General Accounting Office released a report that asserted that the World Food Program did not monitor food aid in a complete fashion. The 1999 report characterized the monitoring as inadequate due to a lack of random access that would produce a sample from which broader inferences could be drawn. The end destinations of food aid and other relief would prove to be a point of controversy. Distribution was monitored by a combination of WFP employees and non-governmental organizations. However, the adequacy of that monitoring would be in dispute, and the ultimate fate of much of this aid would be decided by North Korean officials in a manner that would be

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[475] Mufson and Pomfret, "N. Korea Hinders Efforts to Track Food Shipments," Monday, April 6, 1998

[476] William J. Perry, "Review of United States Policy Toward North Korea: Findings and Recommendations, Unclassified Report by Dr. William J. Perry, U.S. North Korea Policy Coordinator and Special Advisor to the President and the Secretary of State," Washington, DC, October 12, 1999, retrieved from http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eap/991012_northkorea_rpt.html

regarded as insufficiently transparent by some non-governmental organizations, as well as opponents of United States aid to North Korea. The Department of State and U.S. AID would argue that while access and monitoring of DPRK distribution were imperfect, the international community could not wait for perfect situations before giving aid.[477] Their dissents would be included by the General Accounting Office as appendices to their report.[478]

The United States was the largest single donor of aid to the DPRK from 1997-1998, with annual amounts ranging from 177,000 to 695,000 MT between 1997 and 2002 (an average of nearly 316,000 MT per year in that period). Ninety (90%) percent of this food aid was sent through the World Food Program, while the United States also sent a considerable volume of energy assistance through the aforementioned Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO).[479] Over the course of 1999, the Republic of Korea became the largest single donor, and Japan made a $1 billion contribution. In this response, non-governmental organizations and international agencies also played a vital role with not only food aid, but technical expertise, labor, and other humanitarian goods.

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[477] This frustration is discussed at length by Scott Snyder in *Paved With Good Intentions: The NGO Experience in North Korea*, and C. Kenneth Quinones in his article, "The NGO Experience in North Korea". In response to a report from the General Accounting Office criticizing monitoring of food aid to the World Food Program sent to North Korea, then-Assistant Administrator of the Bureau of Management at U.S. AID, Terrence Brown wrote that difficult humanitarian crises often have monitoring that is "less than ideal," but that require assistance to save lives. Brown listed Sudan, Somalia, East Timor and other crises as examples. Letter dated September 29, 1999, from Terrence Brown, USAID, to Henry L. Hinton, Jr., Assistant Comptroller General, General Accounting Office, included as an addendum to "Report to the Chairman, Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, Foreign Assistance, North Korea Restricts Food Aid Monitoring," General Accounting Office, October 1999, retrieved from Nautilus at http://www.nautilus.org/archives/library/security/NSIAD0035.pdf. Last retrieved on April 5, 2010.

[478] Ibid

[479] Mark E. Manyin, "U.S. Assistance to North Korea: A Fact Sheet," Congressional Research Services, January 3, 2007, hosted by http://www.nationalaglawcenter.org/assets/crs/RS21834.pdf

Conclusion

The North Korean famine of the 1990s and the response to it remain difficult topics to research and analyze due to the official classification or simple absence of some of the source material, and the shortage of official North Korean data from the period. A problem with making a singular argument that a given historical force drove the actions of the DPRK and its rivals, and led to a hesitant international response to a North Korean famine, is that vast changes took place in both North Korea's external relations and economic situation, and in the humanitarian priorities of the United States, Japan, and the Republic of Korea. A "perfect storm" of events, behaviors and circumstances limited the ability of the DPRK to support itself, and challenged the willingness of the international community to reply to their need. As not all records are declassified, I sought to detail the known changes and continuities in these relationships and policies, and to sketch the political and strategic environment in which the decisions, not all of which are transparent, were made.

That said, my provisional conclusion, based on a review of sources from the existing public record and noting the likelihood of future disclosures, is that policymakers that had to decide on whether to authorize assistance from their own governments for North Korea's civilians faced a stark, unenviable choice that had to be made based on insufficient information about the crisis, the recipient, and the likely impact of any gifts. The choice was to either provide aid resources to a government whose pursuit of material for nuclear weapons and whose desire to limit access to its population placed it at odds with not only the foreign policy objectives of the U.S., Japan and the ROK, but with the

requests and standards of NGOs and relief workers, or, to hope that nature, the DPRK itself, or other nations and institutions would be able to arrest a food crisis. Further complicating matters, North Korean provocation negatively affected the political climate in which aid was sought, leading the ROK and Japan to take significant hiatuses in giving.[480] Furthermore, it was not unanimously believed that the North Korean government was committed to the equitable and appropriate distribution of aid.

The first two chapters of the thesis focus on sweeping political and economic changes, both global and particular to North Korea. Over the course of less than two decades, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea went from a nation that was able to rely on two world powers for subsidized grain and energy, as well as markets for its goods, to a high-level recipient of humanitarian relief. After a period of significant economic and agricultural growth in the years following the Korean War, the DPRK would become increasingly incapable of maintaining its infrastructure and its agricultural and economic systems. North Korea would find its energy sector in significant trouble with the end of the USSR and its subsidies and China's change in policy towards the prices the DPRK paid for energy. This decline was then joined by drops in agricultural productivity and catastrophic weather.[481]

I am not trying to advance the discussion on famines themselves, and finding the cause of the famine is not at the heart of the thesis. Rather, Chapter 2 explores and presents existing scholarly arguments on the famine, and shows the events and trends that these scholars do agree occurred. The declining conditions show the environment in

[480] C. Kenneth Quinones, "Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO): A Bridge Too Far?," 182.

[481] Woo-Cumings (p.21-26), Ahn (p.1-2,5), Oberdorfer (p.370-72), and Natsios (p.13-16) describe the rise and fall of North Korea's agricultural modernization. Noland and Haggard discuss this decline in the DPRK's ability to acquire energy cheaply. Noland and Haggard, Famine in North Korea, p.32-33

which international agencies and relief workers had to respond. A consensus exists that there were multiple serious problems that limited the ability of the DPRK to grow sufficient food domestically, import an adequate volume of food commercially, and faced a decline in other services (infrastructure, medicine) that harmed the population. Experts acknowledge some degree of poor policy planning by DPRK, but are divided as to whether the preeminent cause of the famine is the supply shocks – whatever the cause(s) – or a distribution marred by malice, politics, and/or incompetence.[482] It is generally acknowledged that a food shortage rising to the level of a famine took place. This famine contains a supply problem, and there is evidence of failures and breakdowns that would interfere with even the noblest distribution plan. The consensus in the agency reports and secondary literature is that these problems did not spontaneously emerge in 1995. Rather, regardless of the level of responsibility ascribed to the DPRK government and its policies, the domestic supply problems were rooted in economic changes and agricultural problems that had been evolving for some time.

In 1994 and the pre-flood months of 1995, there was information publicly available about North Korea's condition. There were media reports of food problems. There were commercial transactions gone wrong.[483] There were private requests made of its rivals and other nations for food aid or barter.[484] It is clear that North Korea was undergoing serious economic difficulties and a decline in food supply, and that the outside world knew about it. However, there was no conclusive authority issuing a

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[482] Including Hazel Smith, *Hungry for Peace* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute for Peace, 2005), 63; Marcus Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse*, 171.

[483] Heidi Brown and Susan Kitchens, "Trading With the Enemy," Forbes.com, February 27, 2006, retrieved from http://www.forbes.com/global/2006/0227/046A.html

[484] Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 372; Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine*, 141.

verdict that a large-scale famine was ongoing or imminent.

Amartya Sen's position that democracies, substantive oppositions and free presses can all serve to prevent famines, makes a great deal of sense.[485] A free press and a democracy with a substantial opposition can provide logical avenues by which information can get to domestic and foreign public policy actors who can reverse course within a nation. This famine reveals, though, that even when such information becomes available, a response requires a receptive international community who believes the source of the information, has confidence that it can get results, and is willing to act in a way to make that possible. This in turn requires a degree of cooperation from the recipient nation.

From the American perspective, North Korea policy had elements that were viewed as East Asia regional issues, while other matters were seen as an international concern. Its pursuit of nuclear weapons capability and struggles with the International Atomic Energy Agency was an international concern, one that the United States in 1994 would deal with bilaterally. This would result in the Agreed Framework and the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO). Important to this settlement was the resolution of North Korea's energy shortfalls. When it came to humanitarian and cultural matters, however, North Korean issues were viewed as a regional concern. This is reflected by the early phase of the response to the famine. First, the Japanese and South Korean governments had made large contributions of food aid even before floods rains fell in the DPRK. A State Department memorandum shows that American policy in 1995

[485] Amartya Sen, "Democracy as a Universal Value," *Journal of Democracy* 10.3 (1999), 5

and 1996 was that South Korea was to be the principal source of major aid.[486]

Also, the extent of the problem was not certain at the outset. While the floods would raise alarms, United Nations agencies had arrived, and non-governmental organizations were on the ground. While food security issues are mentioned in some reports, the early "floods situations reports" from late 1995 are focused on the response to the relief of conditions specific to the flooding.[487] Over time, however, the UN's World Food Programme and Food and Agriculture Organization would, however, make requests for aid. The response to these appeals was underwhelming.[488] There was also no certainty that an intervention would result in the North Korean government responsibly managing and distributing aid to its vulnerable citizens.

While evidence existed of North Korea's food problems, the signals from official data were insufficiently clear. While the DPRK's UN Human Development Indexes for 1995 and 1996 used 1992 and 1993's data and showed a middle of the road economy, news and agency reports revealed malnutrition and the strain that shortfalls were placing on the DPRK's public distribution system and its ability to deliver adequate food supplies.[489] Information surrounding North Korea's economic and agricultural declines would become available in public documents and newspapers, academic journals, and in

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[486] Ibid.

[487] See the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs' "Floods Situation Reports" from late-1995 beginning in August. These reports are in the bibliography, and can be accessed at www.reliefweb.int.

[488] "DPR Korea - Floods Situation Report #7", September 13, 1995; United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and World Food Program, "Special Report #270,". September 6, 1996, retrieved from http://www.fao.org/docrep/004/w2706e/w2706e00.htm.

[489] "Human Development Indicators", United Nations Development Program, 1994 *Human Development Report*, retrieved from http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_1994_en_indicators1.pdf; "Human Development Indicators", United Nations Development Program, 1995 *Human Development Report*, retrieved from http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_1995_en_indicators1.pdf; "Human Development Indicators", United Nations Development Program, 1996 *Human Development Report*, retrieved from http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_1996_en_indicators1.pdf on June 9, 2011; United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and World Food Program, "Special Report #270", September 6, 1996

refugee reports.[490] However, starting in August 1995, "floods situation reports" would come back from the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and the World Food Program and Food and Agriculture Organization would give more detailed accounts in their "special reports."[491] However, as Andrew Natsios argues, as official reports of death totals and burial data were not available, it was difficult to establish the existence of a famine by solely relying on official data. He would use refugee accounts, amongst other information.[492] In the years prior to the release of formal refugee surveys, it was informal accounts from NGOs and visitors, and news reports from CNN and others that were available.[493] Legislators visited the DPRK, searching for the remains of American soldiers from the Korean war and meeting with North Koreans. Despite this, there was no broader impetus within either U.S. Political party to prioritize this issue, or to accelerate aid.

Foreign governments could only help to feed civilians in North Korea by acceding to certain North Korean conditions. These early stages of the famine relief effort required trusting the public distribution system and other parts of the North Korean government to distribute the donated food as intended, and trusting the World Food Programme, NGOs, and, later, the Private Voluntary Organization Consortium (formed in 1997) to monitor the distribution of the donated food, despite a limited degree of access. Disputes arose as to what level of monitoring was necessary as a condition for the provision of aid, and would remain a part of the debate throughout.

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490 For example, "Passing the Hat: North Korea Taps Supporters in Japan for Aid", Louise do Rosario, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 10, 1991; 154,41; ABI/INFORM Global, p.75

491 These reports are available at http://www.reliefweb.int, and the WFP/FAO reports are available from the agency site at www.fao.org.

492 Andrew Natsios, The Great North Korean Famine, p.63, citing the Food and Agriculture Organization and World Food Program's Special Report no.275 from June 3, 1997.

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Throughout the famine, there was frequent consultation between the United States, Japan and the Republic of Korea, and a high priority placed the maintenance of this alliance. From 1995 until mid-1997, the United States saw North Korea's food problem to best managed regionally by the Republic of Korea and/or Japan. The large initial gifts in 1995 by Japan and the ROK provided evidence of their capacity for large-scale giving. The February 1996 pledge of aid came after public declarations of opposition to increased aid by ROK President Kim Young Sam.[494] However, consultation in the midst of disagreement did not produce paralysis. The United States pledged a smaller gift that addressed some of the need. Japan was resistant to further giving following its large-scale gift. However, the United States, Japan and South Korea came together for a joint gift in June 1996. In both cases, however, the gifts were not covering the entirety of the UN's request, and officially left the matter principally in the hands of Japan and the Republic of Korea.

In 1997, the American government began to provide aid at a higher level, mostly by way of the World Food Programme and NGOs. Marcus Noland, Andrew Natsios and others would attribute this to a desire by the U.S. government to use food aid to secure talks on peace and nuclear issues. The DPRK itself would make similar overtures.[495] The U.S. government, however, denied that this was American policy.[496] While the timing of such gifts seems to fit the pattern, and reporting at the time showed support for positive conditionality, this author does not have sufficient access to the decision makers or their records to confirm or refute these 1997 decisions. Over time, despite domestic political

494 Don Oberdorfer, The Two Koreas, p.373-74
495 Andrew Natsios, The Great North Korean Famine, p.33
496 "U.S. Commits More Food Aid to North Korea", April 16, 1997, *Los Angeles Times,* http://articles.latimes.com/1997-04-16/news/mn-49191_1_north-korea

rhetoric, and uncertainty over the precise nature of this food crisis, U.S. aid to the DPRK would increase in 1997, with reports of when the Public Distribution System would run out of food in various places.[497] It would skyrocket alongside increasingly bad news about the humanitarian conditions in North Korea in 1998, and would stay high in 1999.[498] Even if one assumes that North Korean agreements to participate in talks spurred American gifts, 1997 and 1998 brought reports of even further deteriorating conditions in the DPRK, as food supplies diminished further.

In the early phase of the famine, the food crisis was a subordinate concern to the debate over how to prevent North Korea's nuclear development for both the American legislative and executive branches. Both political parties found, at different points, that there was a political benefit to be gained by rhetorically challenging diplomacy with a rival state. In the years prior to the large gifts, the centrality of the dispute over North Korea's nuclear program ensured that, whether or not humanitarian and strategic policies were deliberately linked, their implications were difficult for policymakers to separate.[499] As Andrew Natsios and Ambassador Tony Hall highlighted, the behavior of the DPRK government, including landing a submarine in South Korea and in limiting access to the DPRK and its citizens, often made it difficult for Americans to rally domestic political support to aid North Korea's starving people. The rhetoric shows a belief amongst some

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[497] Food and Agriculture Organization, "Special Alert #275: FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," June 3, 1997, retrieved from www.fao.org; Food and Agriculture Organization, "Special Alert #277: FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," September 11, 1997, http://www.fao.org/docrep/004/w6300e/w6300e00.htm.

[498] Ibid

[499] Mark Manyin, Marcus Noland, and Andrew Natsios all show, in different ways, the intertwining of the decisions related to this humanitarian crisis, and the overall policy towards the DPRK, with its emphasis on preventing the DPRK from developing nuclear weapons. Hazel Smith notes that some policymakers and experts found it difficult to separate the North Korean government from North Korean society. Hazel Smith, Hungry for Peace, p.13

legislators that material concessions without concrete, immediate returns were counterproductive and could encourage or tolerate non-compliance.[500] This logic was also seen in chapter 2's exploration of the arguments surrounding the nuclear issue and Agreed Framework. Doubt about a diplomatic strategy rooted in negotiation with North Korea was expressed even as the executive branch continued to negotiate and promote the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) and the Agreed Framework. This would carry over into the rhetoric of policymakers, and the advice given to Congress by some of the experts who would testify in 1996 before the Senate's East Asian and Pacific Affairs subcommittee about North Korea. This expert testimony shows that food aid in the early stage of the famine was a subordinate piece of overall US-DPRK relations, with the resolution of the nuclear issue as the top single priority. Food aid was considered from a humanitarian perspective, with Stanley Roth, then-Representative Hall and Ambassador Robert Gallucci, calling for relief to be decided on independently from North Korean behavior, but was discussed in light of what it could do to promote regional stability, security, and "soft landings."[501]

Large-scale American food aid would first arrive in North Korea in 1997, placing

[500] Hazel Smith ascribes this view to some in Congress, asserting that they saw the Agreed Framework as "nothing but appeasement of an evil regime." Hazel Smith, Hungry for Peace, p.194. This view of concessions is best seen in statements made by Sen. Christopher Bond (R-MO) in late 1996. Bond argued that the Agreed Framework made "major concessions" - including the reduction of sanctions and "the prestige of diplomatic recognition" - while not demanding anything substantial from the DPRK for the first decade. Bond went on to describe that North Korea's track record leads him to believe that the North Koreans were unlikely to comply with the conditions of the agreement. He also asserted that such an agreement wrongly committed American tax dollars to North Korea and that the agreement would be used by the North Koreans to produce delays. Remarks of Senator Christopher Bond, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, December 1, 1994, retrieved from http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library /congress/1994_cr/h941201-dprk.htm, last accessed on September 13, 2011

[501] The testimony of Stanley Roth, Representative Tony Hall and Ambassador Robert Gallucci call for food aid policy to be given independently of DPRK policy or actions. "North Korea: An Overview", S. Hrg. 104-662, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 104th Congress, 2nd Session, September 12, 1996, Washington, DC. Printed by the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1996

the United States as the leader in aid provided to the DPRK. North Korea would become the leading recipient of American aid in East Asia for a time. According to a Congressional Research Services report, 90% of the American food aid intended for North Korea would be given to the WFP.[502] Between 1995 and 2003, the United States government gave over $615 million worth of food aid, including nearly 2 million tons of grain.[503] The United States gave $400 million in energy assistance to North Korea in this period by way of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO). Over time, the Republic of Korea and China took their places as the key donors, while Japan made a $1 billion gift in 1999.[504]

The aid that was given would become a contentious subject of debate, as questions posed about North Korea's identity and nuclear policy compliance would be raised about the reliability and worthiness of the DPRK as a partner in famine relief. The rhetoric of monitoring and verification are constants across the nuclear and food issues, with these calls sounding in 1999 much like they did in 1992, although conditionality is far less pushed. The United States government also faced internal struggles. Some of this was partisan and intra- and inter-branch competition.[505] Some of what was in dispute were ideas about America's role in, and priorities with regard to, the world community. North Korean behavior in this period would include episodes of militarily provocative

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[502] Mark E. Manyin and Mary Beth Nikitin, "Foreign Assistance to North Korea", Washington, DC: Congressional Research Services, March 12, 2010, p.14, http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf&AD=ADA517307, last retrieved on June 30, 2011

[503] Mark E. Manyin and Ryun Jun, "U.S. Assistance to North Korea", updated on March 17, 2003, Congressional Research Services, Washington, DC, retrieved from Nautilus, http://www.nautilus.org/publications/books/dprkbb/uspolicy/CRSUSAidtoDPRK.pdf, last retrieved on July 8, 2011

[504] Marcus Noland, Avoiding the Apocalypse, Table 3.14 (errata), p.122-24

[505] The articles of Julia Choi and Adam Miles, and Robert Hathaway and Jordan Tama present analysis of the overall relationship between the Congress and the Clinton White House as related to DPRK policy.

and aggressive action. All of these considerations would combine to shape and place conditions on the political climate surrounding the DPRK and aid to feed hungry people in North Korea.

In the United States, food aid was considered differently from, but not separately from missile policy and energy aid. That is, although it was largely agreed that food aid to the DPRK was a valid public policy option, it was not unanimous that such aid should be unconditional. Also, Congressional subcommittee hearings in the early phase of the famine considered North Korean policy as a whole, and were not targeted to address the humanitarian issue discretely. Rhetoric on food aid was different from that on KEDO. Congressional discussion and expert testimony show that the provision of food aid was discussed in light of humanitarian values, but was also discussed in light of its potential role in changing the security environment. This was true even amongst those with humanitarian intentions (i.e., Andrew Natsios), as they felt that the security dynamic was such a powerful narrative that it was in the best interests of advancing aid to emphasize the security implications of a starving North Korea. To summarize, food aid's consideration also explored aid's potential role in 1) incentivizing North Korean government behavior, 2) improving the East Asian security environment, 3) bolstering, buffering, or easing towards collapse of the Kim government.

Japan, in the years after its early major gift of 300,000 metric tons, would participate in relief efforts as part of broader regional efforts, and its provision of aid was in tune with its strategic and domestic political interests. The statements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reveal that the Japanese government, like the Americans, placed a high

priority on consultation with the Republic of Korea on matters related to the DPRK. Its 1997 statements show that despite statements that food aid to the DPRK was not "linked" to issues such as DPRK abductions of Japanese civilians.[506] Officially, the Ministry would note that it was waiting for UN appeals or considering its options before giving again. However, these same press conferences would reveal that popular sentiment against the DPRK, especially related to abduction issue and the status of the Japanese wives of North Koreans living in the DPRK, affected the DPRK's decision on the matter. This consultation, and its restrictions, is consistent. It is present in the LDP's attempt to normalize relations with the DPRK, and placed into practice during early 1996's consultations and its June 1996 gift to the WFP alongside the ROK and the US.[507]

In summary, a profound lack of information made North Korea's famine difficult to identify, difficulty to classify, difficult to understand, difficult to solve, difficult to mobilize treatment for, and difficult to evaluate in retrospect. The food crisis was seen by many experts as a humanitarian tragedy that needed to be addressed independently from the nuclear issue. Still, the challenges of securing funding for KEDO, a contentious global situation with a growing number of complex emergencies, and a potential recipient nation that sought a nuclear program in opposition to prior agreements to the contrary combined to make the public promotion of large-scale aid politically difficult. That said, while the United States initially treated this as a regional matter, the United States in mid-

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[506] Testimony of Hon. Robert L. Gallucci, "North Korea: An Overview", S. Hrg. 104-662, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 104th Congress, 2nd Session, September 12, 1996, Washington, DC. Printed by the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1996, p.34-40

[507] Don Oberdorfer, The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History, p.220-22. "Press Conference by the Press Secretary of MOFA", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 14, 1996, retrieved from Ministry of Foreign Affairs website; http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/1996/6/614.html.

1997 would step to the forefront as either a) opportunity for missile talks knocked and/or b) conditions worsened in the DPRK, depending on your point of view. While documents show that 1996's decisions are motivated by a desire to give the DPRK positive incentives, this thesis author was unable to find documentation from 1997 articulating the underlying rationale of the policy behind 1997's increase.

Policymakers can draw several lessons from this famine and its response. First, it is important for aid advocates to emphasize potential aid recipients in hostile nations as civilians. That is, if the principal objective is to provide humanitarian relief to a population facing a food crisis, there is a strong chance that the government will not be one deemed pleasant by the U.S. public. It is important to ensure that there is a separation between the popular understanding of detestable or incompetent dictators on the one hand, and the average man or woman working and raising a family. It is also important to understand that situations may emerge in which the interests of a government in a nation with a food crisis may only represent a tiny minority of citizens, and operate contrary to the interests of, or even the lives of, a great number of people.

Second, regional responses would benefit from an establishment of shared standards and dedicated funds for humanitarian assistance. That is, while American policy seemed, for periods of time, to separate food aid from strategy and diplomatic objectives, this was not a value always shared by America's allies. Having dedicated funds that each nation commits in advance binds nations to the ideals of solving humanitarian crises even in hostile nations. Having shared standards provides nations facing trouble some sense of what will lead to the “sending of the cavalry.”

Third, nations sincerely seeking aid need to accurately and completely disclose their food crisis, and become their own best advocates for their populations. In this same vein, populations and subgroups who are not represented or protected by their government need to find allies in their overseas community and in the foreign press. Overseas groups are critical – the Korean-American community, despite mixed emotions, were a vital part of the relief effort.

Finally, there needs to be a happy medium between dismissing defector and refugee reports and trusting every word. In the case of the North Korean famine, Andrew Natsios and others remind us that, although the UN agencies were publishing data on the impact of the floods and food shortages, it was refugee accounts that painted an even grimmer picture of life in the DPRK.[508]

Again, the food crisis was seen by many experts as a humanitarian tragedy that needed to be addressed independently from the nuclear issue. Still, the challenges of securing funding for KEDO, a contentious global situation with a growing number of complex emergencies, and a potential recipient nation that sought a nuclear program in opposition to prior agreements to the contrary combined to make the public promotion of large-scale aid politically difficult.

[508] Andrew Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine*, 55

Glossary

Agreed Framework – Agreed Framework Between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea
BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation (UK)
BIR – Bureau of Intelligence and Research (U.S. Department of State)
CNN – Cable News Network
DHA – Department of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
DIA – Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA)
DPRK – Democratic People's Republic of Korea (also called North Korea)
ENSO – El Niño Southern Oscillatory System
FAD – Food Availability Decline
FALU – Food Aid Liaison Unit
FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization (UN)
FDMC – Flood Damage Measure Committee (DPRK)
GAO – General Accounting Office (since changed to Government Accountability Office)
GNP – Gross National Product
HCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UN)
IAEA – International Atomic Energy Agency
IOC – International Olympic Committee
IRC – International Red Cross
JSP – Japan Socialist Party (Japan)
KBSM – Korean Buddhist Sharing Movement
KCNA – Korean Central News Agency (official news of the DPRK, published on a Japanese website)
KEDO – Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization
KIEP – Korea Institute for International Economic Policy
KPA – Korean People's Army (DPRK)
KWP – Korean Workers' Party (DPRK)
LDP – Liberal Democratic Party (Japan)
MFA – Ministry of Food Administration (DPRK)
MITI – Ministry of International Trade and Industry (Japan)
MOFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan)
NFDRC – National Flood Damage Rehabilitation Committee (DPRK)
NGO – non-governmental organization
NSC – National Security Council (U.S.)
NPT – Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
OFDA – Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID)
PBS – Public Broadcasting Service (U.S.)
PDS – Public Distribution System (DPRK)
PRC – People's Republic of China
PVO – Private Voluntary Organization
ROK – Republic of Korea (also called South Korea)
UN - United Nations
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme (UN)

UNICEF – United Nations Children's Fund
U.S. - United States of America
USAID – United States Agency for International Development
USDA – United States Department of Agriculture
USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (also called the Soviet Union)
WFP – World Food Programme (UN)

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