Russia and the Korean Crisis of 2013:
What Russia and the ROK could do for Security Cooperation

Georgy Toloraya (MGIMO University)

Abstract

Most Russian experts and politicians hoped that the finalization of the power system of Kim Jong-Un, who in 2012 crushed the military opposition and shifted the axis of power to the party, controlled by his uncle, would make it possible for Pyongyang to start moderate reforms and to engage in a cautious dialogue with his adversaries. The South Korean Presidency of Lee Myong Bak left much to be desired, as President Lee was perceived as an unsuitable partner for Pyongyang. Perhaps, a more moderate approach led by the ROK’s new President, Park Geun Hye would help re-start an inter-Korean dialogue as well as reduce tensions and help promote multilateral economic projects, which is important for Russia’s advancement into North East Asia,

Despite these constructive possibilities, in 2012 Kim Jong-Un unleashed a “psychological war” and aggressive high-profile PR-campaign, aimed at the West to solidify his power and also force concessions out of the U.S. Russia
grew frustrated with Pyongyang’s behavior, responding by moving away from its previous policy of trying to avoid criticizing Pyongyang. Bilateral relations, thus, cooled down in the wake of Russia’s support of the UN Security council resolution that aimed to add sanctions onto the DPRK for its nuclear tests. However, the reality is that Moscow cannot afford to antagonize Pyongyang, needing to instead work out political and diplomatic ways to solve the crisis in order to help ensure a long-term ‘roadmap’ for a joint Korean settlement in full synchronization with other major world partners. Therefore, increased cooperation with South Korea under the new leadership is of special importance as this would help substantiate the ‘strategic partnership’ between the two countries.

Key Words: Russia-North Korea, Russia-South Korea, Korean Nuclear Problem, Trilateral Projects in Korea, Six-Party Talks, Security System in North-East Asia
I. Unexpected Crisis

The end of 2012 and early 2013 unexpectedly turned out to be a worrisome time for Korea. The usual pattern, as observed for many decades, is that of a pendulum motion: after a more or less acute crisis, accidental or man-made, there is a period of detente and dialogue. Many Russian experts\(^1\) expected that after the end of the conservative rule of President Lee Myong Bak, the “dust will settle down.” In other words, North Koreans, who detested President Lee and would spare no effort to spoil the situation in the Korean Peninsula, would pause in the wake of the South Korean presidential election in December, given that the newly elected President Park Geun Hye had pledged early on to take a softer line and pursue the “trust policy” during and after her election campaign.\(^2\) The hope was given for a re-start of the North-South dialogue, followed or in parallel with the DPRK-USA dialogue, along with the eventual emergence of the Six-Party talks in a new format.

Thus the overwhelming mood in Russia was its expectation of the resumption of the inter-Korean dialogue in 2012, increasing cooperation between Moscow and both Pyongyang and Seoul among other things. This

\(^1\) Николай Сурков, Южная Корея на пороге смены курса; \(\text{http://www.ng.ru/world/2012-12-19/8_korea.html}\),

\(^2\) Audrey Yoo, “What a Park Presidency Means for South Korea’s Foreign Policy”; \(\text{http://world.time.com/2012/12/27/what-a-park-presidency-means-for-south-koreas-foreign-policy/#ixzz2TXaoJKs1}\),
is essential for the implementation of the Russia’s trilateral projects in the Korean peninsula (more on that later).

Russia is supportive of the dialogue as long as it reduces tensions and also lessens the domination of foreign powers in the neighboring Korean peninsula: Russia would not like to regard it as a competing ground between the U.S. and China. Therefore Russia supports the two Koreas with the stance of having the biggest roles in solving the problems of the peninsula. It also presumes that Russia should “stand on both legs” in the peninsula and maintain good relations with both of the Koreas,

Russia has done well to maintain good relations with North Korea during the rule of Kim Jong-Il, especially due to his good personal relations with Vladimir Putin. However, these rather warm bilateral relations cooled down a bit during President Dmitry Medvedev’s tenure, due to the North Korean nuclear and missile experiments, the ongoing North-South tensions (including Cheonan and Yongpyongdo incidents), as well as the breakdown of the Six-Party Talks, which used to be an important channel of Russia-DPRK interaction on security issues. Nevertheless when it became clear Putin would resume power, Kim Jong-Il made some steps to bring back the more constructive relations of past years.

These policy shifts were brought to bear during the August 2011 Ulan-Ude summit between Kim Jong-Il and President Medvedev, which turned out to be the last foreign visit of North Korean leader, after a 9 year hiatus in his travel to Russia.

Central to summit talks were security issues regarding the Korean peninsula: North-South confrontation and nuclear issues, Pyongyang publicly declared the readiness not only to adhere to the Six-Party basic agreement
but also to discuss the uranium enrichment program and to consider moratorium for nuclear and missile activities as well as the issue of accepting inspectors.\textsuperscript{3) It was a big diplomatic success for Russia that the North Korean leader used Russian soil to personally declare that North Korea was ready to resume the talks without any preconditions alongside being prepared for a moratorium of nuclear tests and production of nuclear materials something the world had requested for quite a long time.\textsuperscript{4) Another important outcome of the meeting was the agreement on trilateral economic projects (Russia, North and South Korea) including those gas pipelines and the trans-Korean railroad. The most widely discussed item of the summit was in fact the gas pipeline, meant to supply Russian natural gas from Sakhalin to the ROK through the territory of the North.\textsuperscript{5) All that was left was to wait for the change of government in South Korea from a conservative to a more liberal one.}

Despite such progress, Kim Jong-Il’s sudden death in December 2011 changed the equation. Russia had little doubts about the scheme of succession and hoped that after a period of consolidating his power, Kim Jong-Un would be more open for reforms, economic development and modernization in the North all of which would increase the chances for reconciliation in Korean peninsula and give room for greater Russia-DPRK cooperation.\textsuperscript{6) Russian experts also suggested that the 60th anniversary of

\textsuperscript{3) <http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20110315/wl_nm/us_korea_north_uranium_1>}
\textsuperscript{4) <http://www.rg.ru/2011/08/24/korea-anons.html>}
\textsuperscript{6) Северная Корея – ключ к ATP; <http://russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id_4=859#top>
the end of the Korean war (July 2013) would be a good time to propose some new initiatives, aimed at the North and South as well as global actors, so as to assist in easing tensions. These initiatives, for example, include the start of practical preparation of some kind of new peace treaty.

At the same time, the change in administration in Seoul gave room for bringing some substance into the relations and exchanges between Russia and the ROK. A new and more liberal administration, as Russian policy-makers hoped, would be more receptive to Russian approaches and would help promote Russian national interests in Korean peninsula in greater harmony with that of both Koreas, Russia also hoped bilateral cooperation would also be useful for deeper participation of Russia in regional integration.7)

However the reality struck, seeming to throw Russian experts’ hopes for the better. The unexpected ‘crisis’ in Korean peninsula burst into the arms of the global mass media, with headlines suggesting that it was the single most dangerous development in March-April 2013. These developments were not totally unexpected, though. The man-made ‘crisis’ became the culmination of the hardline policies of North Korean leadership which became obvious since the fall of 2012, although Russia tried to persuade itself as well as other parties in the wake of Kim Jong-Un’s power that the situation was in fact normal.

II. A Shift in Russian Policies with regard to North Korea in the Era of Kim Jong-Un

Starting of the emergence of tensions in Korea, which dashed a hope for the improvement, raised by the February 29th, 2012 DPRK-US agreement, Russia tried to take a balanced approach to North Korea. For example, while criticizing North Korea’s rocket launch in April 2012, Foreign Ministry stressed that it has “never put to doubt the DPRK’s sovereign right” for peaceful space research, while trying to prevent excessive pressure and sanctions on Pyongyang and stressing “political and diplomatic means” although (although unofficially some members of the political elite could not conceal their frustration with Pyongyang leaders, saying the rocket launch was an action by “crooks and liars.”) Experts suggested that the game should be fair and legitimate concerns of the DPRK, while not tolerating unacceptable behavior.

However by autumn 2012, when the hopes for reforms and positive changes in North Korea did not materialize, Russia’s expert community and later official positions began to change. Experts concluded that something happened in Pyongyang in summer and early autumn of 2012; that forced Kim Jong-Un to make a sharp turn to conservative policies and "tighten the screws", both in internal policies and with respect to North Korea’s

adversaries. Some suggest that the cause was the open revolt of the opposing faction within the ruling elite, challenging Kim Jong-Un’s power, such as an attempt to assassination.\(^9\) Some suggest there was a culmination of the factional struggle between the “party” (embodied in the figure of Jang Sung Taek) and the “military” (Lee Young Ho), that made it pivotal to take drastic measures.\(^10\) With this logic, the young leader and his supporters had to crush the opponents and consolidate power by, first, returning to the “Kim Il-Sung values” to please elder supporters from the party. Second, they introduced the “besieged fortress” mentality to the public to consolidate them around the leadership in the face of a seemingly imminent war and to shelve the expectations of an improvement in economy and personal liberties.

These tensions in Korea from the end of 2012 are well documented chronically. The analysis of both official and unofficial Russian reaction to the crisis may help us draw several conclusions.

First, Russia is increasingly frustrated with the erratic behavior of Pyongyang, after the advent of Kim Jong-Un and his less desire to communicate with Moscow about its policies. This is amply demonstrated in the Russian official statements on Korean issue that is immensely critical, as it’s different from its original support of North Korea. In addition, North Koreans themselves demonstrate their dissatisfaction with Russia, calling


them “betrayal,” as seen in the cooling of official relations and contacts during last months as well as in the tone of North Korean propaganda.

Second, Russia still cannot afford to be straightforward to Pyongyang, as it is anxious of not letting the crisis on its borders escalate, much less allowing a conflict or the collapse of North Korea and the absorption by the South. Russia believes such a scenario would mean a drastic change in the geopolitics of the Far East and deteriorate its security positions of this area. Therefore Moscow consistently calls for political and diplomatic solution to the existing problems on a multilateral basis, implying its active participation in the process. The fear of being sidelined is a long-standing concern, making Moscow’s position dubious, as it has to keep the channels of communication with North Korea open and not give Pyongyang pretext of ignoring Moscow. In this sense, the sorrowful experience of 1990 is relevant, Moscow supported West and the U.S. in general on North Korean nuclear crisis, resulting in cooling of relations with the DPRK. Thus, Russia effectively marginalized itself from the process of Korean settlement, relating to vital nuclear issues and economic projects. North Korea as well as Western powers disregarded Russia, saying it had “no influence” on Pyongyang. This incident left a unforgettable lesson to Russia.

Third, Moscow tends to let China be the spearhead on the discussions when it comes to the Korean issues and triggers the negative consequences of “defending” the DPRK. In addition, Russia, most of time, passively supports the international resolutions on Korea, but agrees in a tough tug of war between China and the U.S. When China is not present at the discussion, such as G8 meetings, Russia becomes even more passive on Korean issue and does not try hard to challenge the consensus. For
example, during the discussions on Korea with the U.S. (during Lavrov-Kerry talks in April 2013), Russia publicly tried to flatten the differences and leave the impression of similar perspective, which was a sharp contrast with countries like Syria. 11) The tone of Obama Putin statements on Korean issue during their meetings on the sidelines of G8 summit in Ireland and G20 summit in Mexico in June 2013 was the same: US and Russian leaders pledged to “continue joint efforts to achieve the verifiable de-nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in accordance with the joint declaration.” 12)

Initially, when the crisis just began to unfold and the North Korean satellite-launching plan became unveiled in the end of 2012, Russia’s reaction was its irritation with North Korean plans, but understanding at the same time. However Russian position quickly turned to more negative, with increasing the international concern about North Korean plans.

Russian Foreign ministry commented on the rocket launches “deep regret” in December 12th, 2012, accusing the DPRK of violating the UN’s decision despite its UN membership. They mentioned, “Chief organ responsible of international peace and security” and noted this “would not contribute to the

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11) Sergei Lavrov noted on the discussions with USA on the situation on the Korean Peninsula as follows: “We have a common position here—we need to comply with UNSC resolutions. At the same time, we understand that it is impermissible to artificially discharge confrontation from any part. Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the inadmissibility of steps that will prevent from solving this task is our common task. While there is a chance to renew six-party talks, we need to seek for making it happen. In any case Russia and the USA advocate for a political and diplomatic settlement of the current situation,” <http://www.mid.ru/BDOMP/Brp_4.nsf/arh/4D1FBC40221CD262457B4B005CB955?OpenDocument>

12) Putin, Obama Call on North, Korea to Meet Six-Party Commitments; <http://en.rian.ru/world/20120619/174111133.html>
strengthening of stability and will have a negative influence to the situation in North East Asia.” The Foreign Ministry especially made a note that it would be an obstacle to the implementation of multilateral projects.\(^{13}\) This statement is considerably stronger on the DPRK rocket launches than during the previous cases, as the DPRK’s right on space research used to be recognized and stressed. Such an accent appeared despite the successful test in space research with the satellite to the orbit and the test was conducted against South Korean efforts, which Russia assisted, in the similar space launch.

The UN Security Council resolution on the launch, the text of which was in fact agreed from the U.S. and China, without Russia’s active interference, turned out to be much harsher for Moscow. It was unexpected for surprising concessions from Beijing, which grew increasingly wary with Pyongyang’s provocative behavior, Russia was worried of taking its position of beating from Pyongyang, unlike China, even though they are not directly responsible for toughening international reaction. On an attempt to move away from this embarrassment, the Russian Foreign Ministry called Pyongyang to “accept the consolidated will of international community,” at the same time to appease the DPRK while appealing to all the countries involved “not to undertake actions, raising the tensions in Korean Peninsula and North East Asia.” This tendency clearly hints the efforts of the U.S. and South Korea to increase pressure on North Korea, Russia also resumed its call to continue the work for forming the system of peace and security on

the basis of Russian initiatives within the Six-Party Talks.\(^\text{14}\)

However, further actions from Pyongyang almost brought Russia’s patience to the limits. The Foreign Ministry’s statement on the DPRK’s nuclear test on February 12th, 2013 was unprecedentedly critical. It described Pyongyang’s behavior as “ignoring the norms of international law.” Thus, “contempt to the decisions of UN” is “incompatible with international coexistence criteria, which require condemnation and adequate reaction on the part of world community.” It also in fact reproached Pyongyang of betraying positive heritage of bilateral relations, as it expresses “double sorrow” that the state in case had a long history of “good neighborhood relations” with Russia. To sweeten the pill, the statement called not to use the situation for the “increase in military activity around Korean peninsula,” again called for creation of an effective regional peace preservation mechanism, based on the “equal security principle.” The statement also suggested the joint efforts of the Six-Party Talks member states.\(^\text{15}\)

Russia also became very critical on the Pyongyang’s position after the nuclear test in March 2013, which caused unprecedented rise in tensions. Moscow expressed concern with the decisions of the March WPK Plenum, which legally confirmed the situation that pointing-it-out blocks the way for the resumption of Six-Party Talks, if the DPRK holds a nuclear power. Foreign Ministry called it a “fragrant contempt” by Pyongyang of the UN


\(^{15}\) Заявление МИД России в связи с осуществлением в КНДР нового ядерного испытания: <http://www.mid.ru/BDOMP/Brp_4.nsf/arh/C3174O8CE16955EF44257AFC0D4321B3?OpenDocument>
Security Council decisions, which was “categorically unacceptable to Russia.”

Further developments, including inflammatory military rhetoric of Kim Jong-II’s regime and demonstratively provocative PR actions, ranging from moving missiles to the firing positions, and declaring the “war-like state” brought Korea to the forefront of Russian public attention. Russian press and some Russian public, especially the population of those who neighbor Far East, was hysterical about the “imminent war” in Korea. However the large part of more informed people did not take this situation seriously, understanding that there was no need for the U.S. or South Korea to go to war in the peninsula, while North Korea had no possibility or capability to start a conflict, in spite of military hysteria.

Russian establishment resented North Korean declarations of “war-like situation” and “all-about nuclear war.” At the same time, relevant statement singled out the large-scale military maneuvers on the South with the participation of strategic bombers, capable of carrying the nuclear weapons as a major factor of increased tensions. Russia expressed negative attitude to “all statements and actions, which lead to escalation of tensions” and once again called on the partners of his six-party process “to avoid the events being carried beyond the limits of the political and diplomatic framework.”

17) [http://lenta.ru/news/2013/03/30/war_KNDR объявila войну Южной Кореее]; [http://ambler.ru/18482419/].
During the acute phase of the crisis, when North Korea demanded the withdrawal of diplomatic personnel from the country and suggested that foreigners should leave South Korea to avoid a military conflict, Russia took a balanced approach, calling the “line on pressing the war hysterics” “categorically unacceptable,” thus openly criticizing Pyongyang for its campaign to frightening its opponents. Russia stressed that there is “no alternative to the political and diplomatic solution” and called on all the parties to keep calm.19)

Summarizing Russia’s approach to the crisis, Foreign Minister Seregei Lavrov noted in April 2013:

"It is certainly unacceptable when a state in this case DPRK, UN member openly and provocatively breaches a UN resolution, […] At the same time we are convinced that the situation is already very serious, because nuclear explosions, launches of missiles are not jokes. However, declamations play not less 'harmful role,' because at one time or another mutual accusations, threats and warnings can be drawn to a head, when people will paint themselves into a corner, and they will need to act, to present something to the voxpopuli, […] To that end, a cancellation of any measures related to demonstration of one’s military might is a positive step, […] We work together with all participants to Six-Party talks DPRK, the USA, Japan, Republic of Korea, as we closely coordinate our actions with our Chinese neighbors, […] On one hand, that the price of self-esteem manifests itself in a discharge of declamations or even worse wrongful actions, And the other hand, I would not like to push the situation into a corner because of the aspirations to prove that we can call everybody to order, There is no need to act by force or threats here, but rather by appeasing

19) Комментарий Департамента информации и печати МИД России в связи с ситуацией вокруг КНДР: [http://www.mid.ru/BDOMP/Brp_4.nsf/arh/64D0B563F1BF5B3244257B440045206D?OpenDocument].
It was a relief for Russia, when the acute phase of the crisis was over, due to the change of Pyongyang’s aggressive approach. Thus, Russia welcomed certain rapprochement between North and South in May-June, including its suggestion for government-level talks, which was unprecedented. However, the failure of agreement between two sides on the composition of their delegations (seemingly because of the South Korean newly appointed officials’ lack of understanding of the North Korean hierarchy), disappointed Moscow Russian experts sincerely hope the dialogue between North and South will restart as a long-lasting “peace offensive” phase in Korean affairs.

III. The Basics of the Future Russian Policies towards Korea

In this new situation, how can Russia and the ROK find common language on Korean issue and work hand in hand for security and stability, in the wake of the new leadership from both Koreas?

Russia's basis to the Korean security issue is fixed since Russian foreign policy in 2013, which is considerably harsher to the West in a comparison to the previous 2008. It says,

"Russia seeks to maintain friendly and good neighborly relations with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea on the basis of mutually beneficial cooperation and to better use the potential of those relationships to speed up regional development and support inter-Korean political dialogue and economic cooperation, which are fundamental to peace, stability and security in the region. Russia has always been in favor of the non-nuclear status of the Korean Peninsula and will fully support a step-by-step progress in the area based on the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, including within the framework of the six-party talks.”

This position should be understood against the Russia’s global policies, as well as desire to advance in Asia and the Pacific both economically and politically, which in fact became quite obvious in the last several years, especially in connection with APEC meeting in Vladivostok in 2012. Also, the Northeast Asia, which is closest to Russian borders and home for three most important economies of Asia as well as leading Russia’s political and economic partners, is pivotal for Russia’s deeper involvement into Asia. Korean peninsula in this context is the key to Asia. It is of simultaneously bilateral, regional and global significance for Russia, and her influence is much more than other parts of Asia. Korean problem is probably within the “top ten” Russia’s foreign policy agenda. It became a standard part of the menu of talks in almost any high-level international meeting with Russia’s presence.


22) To see more: Georgy Toloraya, "The Korean Peninsula: Gateway to a Greater Role for Russia in Asia"; (https://www.globalasia.org/45151/V7N2_Summer_2012/Georgy_
Korean issue in fact remains an irritant in relations of Russia vis-à-vis Western countries, especially the U.S. and Japan. These major partners demand that Russia should take a more firm position towards North Korea in general but especially on its nuclear program; this issue is being raised at practically every high-level bilateral contacts. Russian officials have to make excuses on its policy towards Pyongyang (causing, inter alia, displeasure of those from Russian foreign policy establishment, who oversee global problems and relations with their consideration on the West, not like the Korean regional issues). However Russia stands firm that North Korean legal interests should be observed and this country should not be the object of pressure or isolation. Russian views resemble that of China, with which discussions on Korean issue are brisk and sincere; however, Russia is wary that it would be completely overshadowed by China about Korean affairs. Therefore Russia supports DPRK-US dialogue, including initiatives of both sides to re-start without preconditions.

The basic underlying theory of Russian policy-makers is that of the need for peaceful co-existence in Korean Peninsula. There are no reasons to believe that North Korean system would burst from inside any time soon. The Arab Spring events are irrelevant, for the difference of North’s origin. The public has little access to information and any opposition is severely dealt with. There are so far no expectations of the economic deterioration, which could bring about the fall of its regime, although no proper changes would possibly increase.

Kim Jong-Un guidance has more or less complete with much greater role
of the Party and with diminishing political role of the military, which seem to reflect the new reality. Kim Jong-Un’s legitimacy is intrinsically based on North Korean society, because he inherits Kim Il-Sung from the third generation. It should be admitted with regret, that the wisest policy for the young Kim at the beginning is not about introducing major changes to build a stable power system. However, from his age and education, he represents a completely new generation of North Korean policy, which has developed after the fall of world communism and has little illusions on communist system. At the same time, this North Korean generation is not indifferent to South Korean nationalism and ideas of “independence,” but they are still concentrated on personal agenda, rather than state ideals.

To become a true leader, Kim Jong-Un should accommodate the desires of his generation to lead a more comfortable and free life and to be more affluent. To do this, the change in economic policy should be overdue, and the crucial issue for Kim-junior is how it can be implemented without endangering its political regime.

The market-based unofficial system is now predominating in North Korea, comprising all layers of society. The primitive capitalist model now gives new livelihood to the most part of population, which would be hard to eradicate. The logical step for the new leadership would be to legitimize it, thus getting real support from the grass-root level. The leadership of North Korea, however, remains a hostage of the system, and the logic of their behavior is wholly dictated by the task of self-preservation but not by development. In contrast to other former socialist countries, a fall of the regime means not only a change of the political system and the ruling elite but also a threat to the statehood of North Korea: the North will be
immediately assimilated to South Korea, and the present-day ruling bureaucracy and their families will find themselves at the bottom of society, maybe they will be even subject to political persecution.

However, any reforms undertaken without preliminarily resolving the issue of external security come with the threat of disrupting the balance of the political system and ruin of the state.

At the same time, there are several scenarios of ‘peaceful’ development of the regime. The safest way for the elite is the conservation of existing system (as Kim Jong-Il’s experience since 1994 has amply shown). However, the nature of developing modern technologies and information technologies in particular would bring the country to a complete loss in competitiveness. Therefore, a certain gradual modernization in economy and subsequent liberalization in political life would be needed. And it leaves in Russia’s own interests to help it. Russia, for example, has made a big step of waiving the DPRK’s $11 billion of debt to former Soviet Union, thus opening the way of investment and cooperation.23

Of course the relations between North and South are not “equidistant” as some critics in South Korea put. They simply fail to understand the essence of the Russian approach. Although there are sharp divisions on Korean issue even within Russian politics (liberals vs. communists and nationalists) and any opinion, that suits a foreign researcher, would be readily available, the policy is formed by the moderates, guided by the Russia’s own vision, based on decades of analysis dating back to 19th century and 70-odd years

interaction with North Korean communists. The central question is: what are the chances for disappearance of the DPRK due to Korean unification?

In principle, in the long run, a unified friendly Korean state, without any foreign dominance, though sandwiched between China and Japan, could be a powerful "balancer" to Russia for being in the crucial Northeast Asian region. It would also enormously help Russia's economy advance in Asia, as it would make Russia a significant player in energy sphere and logistics, as well as in reconstructing North Korea. Therefore Russia supports both inter-Korea reconciliation and eventual unification, except its costs. Peaceful unification, the only acceptable method to Russia, seems not to be on the agenda and a forceful "absorption" of the North by the South could be harmful both to Korean nations and regional security, which would probably be opposed by both Russia and China. At the same time "collapse" or "soft landing" of the DPRK are not imminent, as the third generation's power transfer is going smoothly.

Based on that, Russia cannot afford to quarrel with its neighbor, let alone press for its downfall, regardless of its actual feelings towards the brutal regime. Russia also does not desire a China-dominated North Korea, as it would be probably unstable and would cause "containment" efforts, conducive to China and increasing military tensions in the area.

Russia stresses the need to engage Pyongyang regime, not because it causes any warm feelings in Moscow, or is an important partner for Russia's advance in the East, but simply because this is essential for maintaining security near its borders. At the same time Moscow also hopes that engaging the DPRK, leading the regime out of isolation and cooperating with North Korea could bring change in leadership's manner.
Of course, the North Korean nuclear weapon program and WMD proliferation issues are vital and should be solved, but not at the cost of stability. Russia understands the concerns from the U.S. and Japan about North Korean development of nuclear missile capability. However there is no need for North Korea to use these missiles once her relations with these countries are normalized, and Pyongyang’s possession of these dangerous weapons is not a worst-case scenario, if responsibly handled. At the same time, the non-proliferation issue cannot be suitably solved without addressing broader security issues. Russian experts believe that the North Korean quest to get nuclear weapons resulted from the situation that during the Cold War, Korean security was guaranteed by the superpowers. The collapse of the USSR led to dangerous loss of equilibrium on Korean Peninsula to the extent of the possibility of the use of force. Hence the agenda of the diplomatic process should be comprehensive and not be concentrated solely on “North Korean nuclear problem,” but address comprehensive security issues, including that of the DPRK and normalization of relations between all the parties. The solution to the Korean issue should be found through political and diplomatic means, preferably within a multiparty diplomatic process, which should not be regarded as a “zero-sum game.” A new security system in and around Korean Peninsula should take into account the legitimate interests of all the parties and not use for purposes other than maintaining peace and stability as well as achieving development.

Russia in fact long called for the multilateral approach to Korean issue, as it gives her leverage in Korean affairs. Way back in March 1994, Russia was the first to suggest holding an international conference of security and
non-nuclear status of Korean Peninsula with the participation of Russia, USA, China, and Japan (both Koreas as well as representatives of the UN Secretary General and Director General of IAEA). In the wake of the second nuclear crisis in 2002 Russia suggested the “package deal,” which is essentially “peace for nukes,” under which multilateral security guarantees should be provided to North Korea in exchange for its denouncement of WMD. Russia still keeps reminding at every occasion that it wants the Six-party talks to be the major instrument to solve the Korean problem on a compromising basis. That position was again stressed, as the Spring 2013 tensions in Korea subsided: Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov confirmed the need for multilateral approach, suggesting that the work should be started from reviving the Working group on peace and security mechanism in North East Asia, chaired by Russia in the Six-party talks format as a first step towards resuming the full-fledged talks. However the U.S., Japan and South Korea so far remain lukewarm to this proposal, as it does not bring North Korea’s denuclearization any closer. Although China has sponsored the Six-party talks, so far it seems to prefer working with the U.S. on Korean issues with a bilateral basis, as the results of the meeting between American President Barack Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping

California in June 2013 demonstrated,

Obama and Xi “agreed that North Korea has to denuclearize, that neither country will accept North Korea as a nuclear-armed state and that they would work together to deepen cooperation and dialogue to achieve denuclearization.”27) This statement seems more like a joint pressure on Pyongyang than an appeal for talks.

It should be taken into consideration that the Russian vision remains at odds with that of North Korea’s opponents: the strategic decision to co-exist with this regime has never been taken in the U.S., the ROK or Japan. In the eyes of North Korea, the Korean War is not over. This might be worth considering, as both sides have not achieved their goals from the war and still want to have “the last word” in this conflict. North Korea’s walkout of the Armistice Agreement of 1953 underscores this situation, although it does not meant much for the real change in situation between the two Koreas.

At this point of time, when the DPRK officially declared itself to be a nuclear power (including it into the new version of its Constitution) denuclearization of Korea under the current rules of the game seem to be unattainable, especially in the wake of “Libyan and Syrian lessons.” Therefore we should silently presume that denuclearization is the aim for the distant future, and the more viable task is to rein in the DPRK’s nuclear potential to “manage the risks”.

IV. Proposals for a New Security System and Increasing Security Cooperation between Russia and the ROK

The above analysis shows that the most urgent issue on the agenda is to create a new peace and security management system in and around Korean peninsula. Only after that the issue of nuclear weapons and excessive militarization can be solved. Here is the place for Russia and the ROK to join their efforts.

How can such a system look like? Given the historic tensions and the experience, it is obvious that strictly bilateral agreements on the North Korean security related issues, simply do not work (take an example of South-North 1991 agreements and 2000 and 2007 Summit declaration, the US-DPRK 1994 Agreed Framework, and Japan-DPRK declarations etc.). Thus a durable peace regime should be a multilateral construction and include the chief actors related to Korea situation. In other words, Koreas, China, USA, Japan and Russia, as well as, probably, UN as the supervisor that could be called the development of the Package deal proposal, first suggested by Russia in early 2003 (that could be described by the formula “peace for nukes”).

Such a regional framework might include a set of bilateral treaties, concerning the security arrangements on Korean security between all the participants of the multilateral diplomatic process.

That means each country would sign legally binding agreements with the
five other members containing mutual understanding of the peace regime and verification mechanisms. The essence of these treaties would be basic principles of bilateral relations, implementation of UN charter principles in Korea, military-political arrangements, including armament sphere (with vital part of it being nuclear armament, missiles and other WMD, as well as strategic conventional arms), creation of verification regimes. The treaties are to be also approved by UN.

In a system like this every participant could control the implementation of agreements by all other participants, for example, China or Russia could question the implementation of agreements by the U.S. and the DPRK, while the U.S. could control the efforts by China-DPRK or Russia-ROK relations for securing peace, security, non-proliferation and other issues agreed upon. This would make the system solid and resistant to any unilateral actions. China-DPRK mutual assistance treaty, US-ROK security treaty, Russia-DPRK and Russia-ROK basic treaties etc. should be incorporated into this structure to preserve the status quo. This status quo can be changed later, as the conditions would mature for certain evolution of the situation.

Of course this process would require many stages and phases. The negotiations might start with creating a roadmap for that. The principles of multilateral peace and security mechanism proposed by Russia and approved by all the parties in the framework of the relevant Working group of the Six-Party Talks could be a starting point.

This “East Asian Westphalia system” could also give a start for implementation of ambitious regional integration projects and in the future serve a basis for a “Northeast Asia Security and Cooperation Organization-NEASCO”.

The first step is to be sure the re-start of Six-Party Talks with a new,
broader agenda not only about North Korean denuclearization, which tended to be the case in 2003-2008, but on Korean peninsula states security regime. Some preliminary meetings, both bilateral and multilateral, would be required as a starting point. US-DPRK and DPRK-ROK talks with the aim of finding a commonly understood compromise are of special importance. They are to precede multilateral talks.

I believe the new South Korean government could play a decisive role in it. After Kim Jong-Un finalizes his power system and does away with any challenges to his authority, he might cease to need the “image of enemy” for consolidating his rule. That would make it possible to resume North-South dialogue, maybe even hold a third North-South summit. In such a hypothetic case the summit agenda should be based on the decisions of the previous summits. It would be highly symbolic if the offspring of archenemies Kim Il-Sung and Park Jung Hee could have reached reconciliation. Russia would support such a prospect and would offer her good offices for facilitating such a process, including, inter alia, meeting at Russian territory, probably with the blessing and participation of Russian leader, if necessary.

Even stagnant Six-party talks are better than none because they are important to prevent recurrence of tensions, new provocations, which North Korea in the absence of diplomatic process uses as a leverage to promote its cause (the biggest goal of getting recognition of the USA, while sideling Seoul). Only through dialogue and compromise could the stability be provided, as well as at least some positive developments in WMD problem are gained.
V. Russia–ROK Strategic Partnership in Regional Cooperation

As a result of the security crisis in Korea and the start of work of the new government in Seoul the possibilities of the Russia-ROK multilateral and bilateral cooperation have increased in various areas. What could be the main points of increased the Russia-ROK interaction both on Korean security issue and also regional cooperation?

It should be noted that Russia and ROK in recent years exchanged many positive declarations but fell further apart on some of the crucial matters. They declared to enjoy relations of “strategic partnership”28 during the administration of Lee Myong Bak. However little has been done following this declaration to make the two countries really be strategic partners in the true sense.29) No major agreements were concluded during the half a dozen summit meetings while Lee Myong Bak’s presidency, no breakthrough in economic relations established, politically the two countries differed on most international issues as Russian policy grew more and more assertive vis-à-vis the West (the analysis of the voting pattern of the two countries in the UN explicitly shows that on most resolutions Russia and the ROK did not vote similarly), Russia opposed the Seoul’s efforts to increase

28) Россия и Корея - за стратегическое партнерство; ⟨http://actualcomment.ru/theme/1574/⟩
its capabilities to produce longer-range missiles, which could in fact reach Russian territory.\(^{30}\) Moscow warily looked at strengthening of the US-ROK alliance to the extent that Korea seemed to become a prolongation of the U.S. military might, including a respect to Russia’s strategic partner as China. In South Korea, Russia’s role in Korean affairs and Russia’s eagerness to be a positive actor are sometimes underestimated: among the “four big powers,” involved in Korean affairs, Russia’s positions and interests are in general least appreciated and sometimes ignored.

The representative example is that Lee Myong Bak during his presidency advocated strong-hand approach and in fact expected “capitulation” of North Korea and Russia was not happy about such a scenario and stood for diplomatic solution of the existing problems.\(^{31}\)

Now the time has come to change the situation, with a strong economic imperative. The Russia-ROK economic cooperation is progressing probably faster than any other relations with Asian country (except China) and this cooperation is vital for the Russian’s Far East. A multi-faceted cooperation is underway in many areas of economy and other areas, such as visa-free travel. In 2012, the bilateral trade has not fallen much despite the economic crisis and was valued at about $25 billions. In addition, during the latest Russia-ROK summit in September 2012, the agreement on increasing the trade up to $30 billions by 2015 was met.\(^{32}\) At the same time, Russia is concerned

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\(^{30}\) Южная Корея достигла новой договоренности с США по ракетам; <http://x-town.ru/index.php/component/option,com_dphones/Itemid,0/lang,ru/nuk_n,10203/>.

\(^{31}\) Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации Утверждена Президентом Российской Федерации В.В.Путиньм 12 февраля 2013г; <http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/6D894DEDEDBF7DA644257B160051BF7F/>. 
that it is perceived in the ROK only as a raw material source and manufactured goods market. But in fact Russia supplies not only raw materials, but also high-tech commodities like nuclear fuel and helicopters and space technologies. Russia is interested in increasing the ROK investment, especially in manufacturing sector in the Far East.

Now that Russia has joined the WTO, there are more possibilities in both for bilateral trade and investment and for regional cooperation, Russian experts even consider Korea as a bridge to complete the burgeoning East Asian “troika” future economic integrative structure. Russia could use South Korea’s good offices and mediating efforts to be more connected to China-Japan-South Korea integration process. It would be highly appreciated, if the ROK, as a country less biased to Russia, could assist Russia with understanding more about the evolvement of this framework and also with finding forms of cooperation of the developing trilateral free trade area. Besides bringing economic benefits that would also reduce security risks in the region by increasing economic interdependence, Korea, in its turn, might as well be interested in considering Russia as a gateway to the new Russia-initiated Custom union. Such union, consisted of quarter billion people, could be established in the future, if Ukraine would somehow join.

Apart from the steady growth in cooperation of Russia-ROK trade and investment Russia still sees the prospects for a long-term relations in trilateral projects, including the participation of the North.33) They are seen

33) С. Лавров: РФ, КНДР и Южная Корея заинтересованы в реализации тре
both as a source of mutual prosperity and the tool to help North Korean economy to modernize, as well as build mutual trust and improve political atmosphere. Russia would probably judge the degree of its policy’s success toward Korea, and especially the ROK’s new government, by the progress in trilateral projects.34)

The earliest and the most advanced project, initiated after the 2000 Kim Jong-Il’s visit to Russia, is the one of connecting Transkorean railway with Transsiberian railroad to transit cargoes from Korea and the Pacific to Russia and Europe. The joint between Russia-DPRK venture “Rasoncontrans” is now undertaking pilot project on Khasan-Rajin route (started in 2008) and this 50-odd km road is ready to operate from this year. However, the actual commercial operation could be postponed due to lack of desire from South Korea to participate. The new South Korean government could urge the business to be more active in this respect. One of Russia’s policy goals vis-à-vis Koreas is to revive the ‘big’ Tran Korean railway project.

Another similar project, started in 2009, is a power line from Russia’s Far East to South Korea as an export market via North Korea. Similarly, due to deterioration of relations between North and South this project was also shelved, although Russia shows its commitment to the project.

However the real game-changer would be the gas pipeline to supply Russian natural gas from Sakhalin to the ROK through the North Korean territory. The idea is as old as Russia-ROK relations themselves. As for the North, it already showed the readiness to participate since 1990s, as this

34) Что ждать России от нового правительства в Южной Корее; (http://www.rg.ru/2013/01/13/kndr-site.html).
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project brings North Korea only benefits without any investments or concessions, or dangers associated with the “opening.” The project has been pursued since 2003 (when Russian ‘Gasprom’ state company and South Korean KOGAS signed the Cooperation agreement), but got into limelight after the August 2011 Ulan-Ude meeting between Kim Jong-Il and then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. In September 2011, the ‘roadmap’ was signed for construction (investment prognoses at $2.5 billions, the volume at $12 billions cubic meters per year).35)

The gas pipeline in Korea due to external (need to find a breakthrough to Asian gas market) and internal factors (need to diversify production and exports and use the capacity to build pipelines) is one of the most important Russian economic undertakings in Asia and the Pacific. It also became central for Russia’s Korean policy, as it fully corresponds with Russian desire to establish itself as a player in Korea and promote inter-Korean cooperation, guaranteeing stability, help the DPRK to improve its economic situation to increase chances for economic modernization of this country.

However this project also remains the hostage of political interplay, involving not only South and North Korea, but also the U.S. and China. North-South hostility, nevertheless, remains the main obstacle to the project, although negotiations continue and in due course would demand a political decision by South Korean government (Russia and the DPRK have already explicitly confirmed their readiness to implement this project).36)

35) КНДР интересует трехсторонний газовый проект: (http://actualcomment.ru/news/29051/).
36) Georgy Toloraya, “The Korean Peninsula: Gateway to a Greater Role for Russia in
The current tensions on Korean peninsula, being a challenge to Russian policies in Korea at the same time gives an opportunity to Russia and the ROK to have more coordination, once the goal is not undermining or isolating North Korea, but rather helping to set up a post-war security system, which is beneficial to everyone. The eventual summit between the two countries leaders in 2013 should open a new page in their partnership. This is a chance not to be lost.
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러시아와 2013년 한반도 위기:
러시아와 한국은 안보 협력을 위해 무엇을 할 수 있는가?

조지 톨로라야 (MGIMO 대학교)

국문요약

대다수의 러시아 전문가들과 정치인들은 2012년 군부의 반대를 누르고 권력의 중심축을 당으로 옮긴 김정은의 권력 시스템이 정착됨으로써 북한이 온건한 개혁을 시작하고 적대국들과 신중한 대화에 들어가기를 기대했다. 이명박 대통령은 북한과의 적합한 파트너가 아니라고 인식되었기 때문에 기대감이 크지 않았다. 아마도, 대한민국의 새 대통령인 박근혜가 주도하는 좀더 온건한 접근은 김장을 줄이고, 러시아의 동북아 진출에 중요한 다자간 경제 프로젝트들을 촉진하는 것을 도울 뿐 아니라 남북 간 대화를 다시 시작하도록 돕게 될 것이다.

이같은 건설적인 가능성들에 대한 기대에도 불구하고, 2012년 김정은은 서방으로 하여금 자신의 권력을 더욱 확고히 하고 미국으로부터 양보를 얻어내기 위한 목적으로 ‘심리전’을 개시하고, 공격적인 고강도의 선전운동을 펼쳤다. 이러한 북한의 행동에 대한 러시아의 불만을 커져갔고, 마침내 러시아는 북한에 대한 비난을 피하는 이전의 정책으로부터 벗어나는 방식으로 대응했다. 러시아는 북한의 핵실험에 대한 추가 제재를 목표로 하는 유엔의 부의 결정을 지지하였고, 이에 따라 양자 간의 관계는 냉각되었다. 그러나 현실적으로 러시아는 북한을 적대시할 수 없다. 반대로 러시아는 다른 세계 주요국들과의 조화로운 협조를 바탕으로 한반도 문제에 관한 장기 ‘로드맵’을 보장하기 위해서 이 위기를 푸는데 있어 정치적이고 외교적인 방법을 취할 필요가 있는 것이다. 그렇기에 새로운 리더십 하에 남한과 협력을 늘려가는 것은 양국 간 ‘전략적 파트너십’을 구체적으로 실현하는 것을 돕다는 점에서 러시아 입장에서는 특별히 중요하다.
주제어: 러시아-북한 관계, 러시아-남한 관계, 한반도 핵문제, 한반도 내 삼자간 프로젝트, 6자회담, 동북아 내 안보 시스템

조지 톨로리야 (Georgy Toloraya) ........................................................................................................

The Institute of Economics of the World Socialist System에서 경제학으로 박사학위를 취득하였고, 현재 러시아 MGIMO대학교에서 교수로 재직 중이다. 또한 그는 러시아 외교부 소속 외교관으로 한국과 북한에서 한반도 문제를 담당한 바 있다. 주요 연구 업적으로는 "Political Systems of Two Korean States, Fifty years without War and without Peace, "The Security Crisis in Korea and its International Context", "The Korean Peninsula: Gateway to a Greater Role for Russia in Asia" 등이 있다.