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The Future of Korea and Northeast Asia: Russian Concerns.

Russian concerns in regard to complicated situation on the Korean Peninsula, dynamics of its development might better be understood via at least short excursion into evolution of Russian-Korean relations of recent time.

The new crisis over the North Korean nuclear problem demanded increased attention of the Russian leaders and political elite to the situation on and around the Korean Peninsula, introducing new challenges and opportunities to Moscow.

Analysis of the Russian outlook on the Korean Peninsula may be subdivided into several main blocks - dynamics of relations with Republic of Korea (RF), development of interconnections with the DPRK, and evolution of Moscow's policy towards problems of stability and security on the Korean Peninsula. Of course, this partition is relative and made for the sake of research while in actual life they are objectively intertwined.

In real diplomacy Russia's policy towards Korean peninsula is an integral phenomenon closely inserted into global strategic line of the Russian state that takes into consideration specifics of her relations with two different Korean states, dynamics and character of the international political environment around Korean Peninsula, role and place of the Korean problem in the regional and global political formats.

It is based on the Russian national interests in the Korean Peninsula area, Northeast Asia as a whole. Their main element is to secure stability and peace in this region that will create favorable external conditions for economic development and reforms in Russian Far East, Russian Federation as a whole, strengthening state and territorial integrity of Russia, advancing economic cooperation with the Northeast Asian neighbors on bilateral and multilateral grounds, diminishing if not extinguishing outside military-political threat, damages due to the conflict on the Korean Peninsula. Basically they are in accord with the national interests of other major players in the Korean Peninsula area - United States, China and Japan that creates favorable external atmosphere for keeping situation here more stable.

Russian-South Korean interactions: from euphoria to reality.

The transformation of relations between Russia and Korea appears to be touched by controversial, some sort of surrealistical overtones. At the beginning of 90s Russian-South Korean relations seemed to develop on a break-neck speed, and examining official statements and documents one may come to conclusion that practically overnight former enemies became semi-allies.

Establishment of diplomatic relations was followed by signing of the Treaty on Basic Relations Between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Korea in 1992 that provided consultations on a regular basis between two countries on bilateral relations as well as international and regional issues of mutual interest. In political-diplomatic practice it indicates close if not confidential relations between two states.

Economic sphere, including investments, was declared to occupy prominent place in hierarchy of priorities of bilateral cooperation. The Russian-South Korean joint statement cited agreement to support implementation of 74 joint projects in various branches of industry and sciences. Attention was focused on large development projects in Siberia and Russian Far East – about 23 of them were named.

During Kim Young Sam visit to Russia in 1994 it was announced that Russian-South Korean relations progressed to a qualitatively new level: they were officially termed as "turning into constructive and mutually complementary partnership".

Official Korean statistics showed 20 times increase of the trade turnover between two countries - from \$191 million in 1992 to \$3.8 billion in 1996¹ though the qualitative aspect of Russian-South Korean trade looked less attractive.

However the positive surface layer of official Russian-South Korean relations , their initial energy did not have deep enough roots. And subsequent course of events in their relations, especially in economic ties, turns us to old and well beaten truth that declarations whatever noble aims they proclaim, cannot surrogate the substance of relations.

Lacking real stuff, real "beef" Russian-South Korean relations could not withstand problems they were encountering, and in the second half of the 90s there appeared clearly shaped downward trend in their intercourse.

The paradox of the case is that the end of "cold war", Russia's transition to democracy and market economy, democratization of social life in Republic of Korea served to eliminate ideological substance that made two states bitterly opposed each other. But these far going changes were not adequately reflected in their immediate ties, especially in economic field - they looked shallow and frozen.

This phenomenon teaches a lesson of wider theoretical-philosophical character - the mere change of ideological orientation, however important it is, does not lead automatically to filling them with real essence. Realization of this task demands often long-term, consistent, tedious, every day efforts of correlating and inter knotting of mutual interests and strives.

By the end of 90s majority of the Russian-Korean ties watchers considered them to be in the point of stalemate. The character of their political relations were far from "constructive partnership". Moscow found itself excluded from major international arrangements related to the course of international affairs on the Korean Peninsula (settlement of North Korean nuclear program, KEDO, four-party talks).

What are the main roots of instability of Russian-South Korean relations? Since the first encounter Moscow and Seoul had assymetrical aims and tasks in establishing and developing their relations, and grossly overestimated abilities of the partner to affect, contribute to realization of its own objectives and ends.

Moscow stressed the priority of pushing economic ties with South Korea, trying to cover mounting problems in the national household ahead on the perestroika way, while grossly overestimated Korea's ability to be a donor to domestic economy.

The main field of expectation was considerable South Korean capital investments. Russian political and business people had been expecting much more investments from Korea than \$106 million spread over 80 projects by the end of 1996, more active support for economic reforms in Russia, often nourishing dependency feelings instead of introducing strong measures to make investment climate more favorable.

Republic of Korea once considered establishing of diplomatic relations with former Soviet Union a center of the foreign policy line. By normalization of relations with Russia Seoul would like Moscow to exercise influence over Pyongyang in a favorable for itself way, hopefully getting a privileged position in dealings with North Korea, and finally, promoting unification of Korea on favorable for South Korea terms. But soon it became clear that Moscow does not entertain the level of influence on North Korea that Seoul expected Moscow to have.

Kim Dae-jung Policy towards Russia.

Taking into consideration domestic and external realities, Kim Dae-jung administration introduced changes, new elements into its foreign policy course, towards Russia as well.

Reassessment of the stance towards Russia was based on understanding that despite its problems Russia may contribute to establishment of stability and peace mechanism on and around the Korean Peninsula. During his visit to Moscow in May, 1999 President Kim said in a speech at Moscow

State University: "Russia's peacemaking role on the Korean Peninsula is crucial in that it has friendly relations with both the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea... Russian can become a most effective mediator between the two Koreas."²

The Kim Dae-jung review of its Russian policy was crowned by the summit meeting with Russian President Boris Yeltsin in May 27-30, 1999. It was done as part of its diplomatic line towards four major powers with the major stakes in the future of the Korean Peninsula. The Russian and Korean sides pronounced closeness of general vision of the problems of peace, stability and security in Northeast Asia, on the Korean Peninsula. Russia supported Kim Dae-jung administration line on establishing inter-Korean contacts, dialogue between South and North termed "sunshine policy". South Korean side underlined Russia's constructive role, and weight in supporting peace and security in Northeast Asia, including Korean Peninsula. Both sides welcomed initiatives on formation multilateral negotiation mechanism with participation of RK, DPRK, RF, PRC, USA and Japan in Northeast Asia on the issues on security and cooperation in this region.³

Probably, the main significance of the Kim Dae-jung new policy line towards Russia was that it made an effort to stop sliding down in the Russian-South Korean relations, to better their atmosphere.

Today's Russian relations correspond to the basic of their opportunities and limits, abilities of each side. Political dialogue is going on with V. Putin visit to South Korea in 2000. During his visit alongside with agreement to cooperate in settlement of the Korean problem there went economic deals, including supplies of Russian arms and other goods amounting to \$700 million partly in settlement of Russian debt. An understanding on the TransKorean Railway (TKR) connected to TransSiberian Railway (TSR) was reached marking signs for trilateral economic cooperation.⁴

Moscow hailed election of Roh Moo-hyun as an opportunity for further cooperation in bilateral relations as well as in international affairs, taking into consideration his call for "peace and prosperity" with the North, his attention to Russia's role in Korean problem settlement.

Considering South Korea an important player on the international arena of the Korean Peninsular, Northeast Asia, Russia's main concern is to keep relations with South Korea going on, if possible, strengthening their economic component, preventing them from sliding down as it happened in the second half of the 90s.

In political field both countries may be interested in investment into evolvement of policentrist regional and world orders that opens wider field of maneuver in realization of their goals on the international arena. An important element of this concept may be continuation of participation in six party talks on North Korean nuclear program with coming to broader scheme of multilateral dialogue on ensuring peace and stability in Northeast Asia, Korean Peninsula as a focal point of the area,

without diminishing importance of bilateral talks on these issues. This idea was not once introduced by political figures in both countries.

Russia and North Korea: Emerging New Collaboration.

Russian-North Korean intercourse had traversed along complicated, windy, bumpy road from practical standstill to coming back to Treaty relations, though considerably different from those of the Soviet time, especially their initial period. Their present state is the result of the interaction of various, multi-facet factors, external and domestic, but it might be fair to say that Russian foreign policy line towards North Korea was predominantly shaped by Russian social developments.

Thus the story of Russian-North Korean relations roughly reflected two distinct periods in Russia's domestic life when the country traveled from the time of "shock therapy" economic reforms and Western oriented foreign policy course to more pragmatic and realistic assessment of its domestic and external tasks and needs.

The frozen relations. After the demise of the Soviet Union Russia's new liberal and market economy oriented political elite chose a policy of distancing Moscow from Pyongyang for ideological reasons. New political leaders were convinced that all remaining communist regimes in the world would soon follow examples of the USSR and Eastern European countries, and they should distance themselves from "regimes of the past" not to be compromised in the eyes of the world democracies and the future leaders of Korea.

No intention was expressed to support them through economic ties that were considered unprofitable. Due to mounting domestic difficulties Russia curtailed all types of aid to Pyongyang that had been provided in the past for ideological and political reasons, and there was no desire to supply the DPRK with weapons as well as to be linked to North Korea's security by any guarantees or other steps.

Pyongyang saw this line as actual continuation of the act of "betrayal" by Soviet Union leaders of "perestroika" time, who did not care to properly coordinate act of diplomatic recognition of South Korea with its ally, and answered in kind. Negative feelings toward Moscow were reinforced by aggravating economic situation in North Korea that, in the eyes of North Korean leaders, was caused to a considerable extent by cessation of former ally's assistance.

By the second half of 1992 there came first signs of certain sobering up from both sides. Pyongyang decided that it was necessary to keep channels open with a big neighbor state upon which North Korea still depended in several ways - half of the DPRK's trade volume was of Russian origin. North Korean officials became more businesslike with Moscow representatives, stressing the traditional bonds that should be saved.

Moscow seemed ready to reciprocate by restoring working relations while trying to underline that expansion of links with Pyongyang was advantageous to everyone, including South Korea, as it gives Russia certain leverage to influence North Korean politics. At the end of summer of 1992 it seemed that Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs started to advance thesis that Moscow should seek balanced relations with both South and North Korea.

Some changes in the atmosphere of Russian-North Korean encounters became visible - battle of "hot words", highly politicized pronouncements seemed to be pushed to the backstage, but they could not eliminate basic differences in approach to key issues of international situation, domestic developments of both countries.

But by 1993 relations between the two countries had slide back to practically hostile nature. Sharp controversy grew up around the issue of Pyongyang's compliance with Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), its nuclear program. Moscow expressed intention as a last resort to support US initiated international sanctions against Pyongyang, and at the height of the North Korea's nuclear program crisis it stopped atomic energy cooperation with North Korea. Pyongyang replied in kind.

Russia's new approach to DPRK. The second half of 90s saw the trend of gradual restoration of relations between the two countries on the UN universal principles of international relations.

The change of the Moscow's posture vis-a-vis DPRK was determined by Russia's domestic trends, internal evolution of Russia's society. As reforms in Russia suffered serious difficulties Western-oriented course in foreign policy was changed for less ideological and more pragmatic, more national interests oriented one.

The change of the general diplomatic line could not help affecting Russia's foreign policy stance towards Korean Peninsula. Stronger became voices who said that one-sided orientation to South Korea did not bear adequate fruits, undercut means of Russia's influence on Pyongyang and thus diminished weight of Russia in Seoul's eyes, and as a whole weakened Russia's positions on the Korean Peninsula.

The year of 1994 seemed to produce certain initial signs of Russian-North Korean relations coming out of dead end. Recognizing differences in domestic and foreign policies of both countries, Moscow and Pyongyang agreed to develop relations between Russia and North Korean on the basis of good neighborhood, and mutual benefits, taking into consideration new realities and national interests of both countries.

Since 1996 the level of Russian-North Korean official contacts were upgraded. In April of this year, the first meeting of the Russian-North Korean Commission on economic, trade and technical

cooperation was held after a considerable delay that signed protocol summing up an exchange of views on the possible fields of economic cooperation between the two countries. The progress was made in restoration of inter parliamentary contacts between the two countries, dialogue between foreign policy bodies became more active.

But the real change in Russian-North Korean relations was demonstrated by conclusion of the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Good Neighborhood in Pyongyang on February 9th, 2000.⁵ This act signaled a serious shift in North Korean approach-not only to Russia, but also to the entire world. It seemed that Kim Jong-Il decided not only to try to have Russia on his side in inevitable confrontation with United States, but contemplated Russia to be instrumental in breaking the shell of diplomatic isolation of North Korea. As well, Russia was considered to be a traditional, known partner.

The Treaty was the first document signed by the DPRK, which proclaimed adherence to the UN Charter and international law. Thus it differed in principal from "Alliance" Treaty of 1961 based on the notion of "proletarian internationalism" and contained chapter actually making Moscow hostage of dangerous military actions which might be initiated by Pyongyang. The Treaty stressed the necessity to eliminate the split between the North and South on principles of independence, peaceful unification and national consolidation which were first agreed by North and South in July 1972. They were later confirmed by Kim Jong-Il and Kim Dae Jung during their historic summit in June 2000.'

President V. Putin changed noticeably approach to the relations with North Korea, considering them an asset in conducting his regional and global policy. On visiting North Korea in July 2000 on the eve of the G-8 Summit in Okinawa he tried to show his Western partners initiative character and reserves of the Russian foreign policy course in dealing with "hot issues" of international politics, in this case in dealing with the Pyongyang missile program that was an urgent issue of international agenda. Normalization and development of relations with Pyongyang would make more influential Russia's stance on the Korean Peninsula.

The encounter between two leaders had a number of unprecedented aspects. It was first visit ever done by a Russian or Soviet head of state to North Korea. That was the first official negotiations by Kim Jong-Il with a foreign leader and the Russia-DPRK Declaration was the first international document, signed by him. The document was based on UN norms on international intercourse and emphasized its role, condemned international terrorism and separatism.

The DPRK announced that its "missile program does not threaten anyone, and is for strictly peaceful purposes" - this formula was agreed by Putin and Kim Jong-Il during eye-to-eye talks. Reportedly, Kim Jong- II mentioned that if anybody would launch two or three satellites for DPRK, it would not need its own long-range missiles.

As a result of the visit Moscow tried to show its domestic critics and international community that Pyongyang is not an unpredictable player whom "cannot be dealt with", and suggested that there is an alternative to the "stick and carrot" tactics vis-a-vis Pyongyang - a policy of dialogue on an equal footing. That was laid into basis of Moscow's forthcoming policy line towards Pyongyang.

The return visits by Kim Jong-Il in the summer of 2001 and August 2002 were becoming less sensational and more business-like. He would like to see with his own eyes what is going on in the post-communist society and, may be learn some lessons for his own very cautious and slow economic reforms.

In foreign policy realm reportedly there were consultations on opportunity of Pyongyang starting dialogue with US and Japan, while it seemed that Pyongyang's goal was to strengthen position in interactions with these countries.

Differences did exist in approach to important issues on the international situation on and around Korean Peninsula. Kim Jong-Il confirmed a missile moratorium during his Moscow visit. But at the same time North Koreans insisted on inclusion into the declaration of the "need for withdrawal of US troops from South Korea" The Russian side expressed understanding, not support of it.

On the agenda of the two leaders was the project of TransKorean railroad to be connected to Transsib. The concept of trilateral cooperation was eventually accepted by both the North and the South. It is aimed not only on achieving economic benefits, but also at providing opportunity for North Korea to move along the road of integration into international division of labor, as well as serving to create stable and predictable environment in Northeast Asia.

Through consultations with both the North and the South in 2001-2002, Russia reached a general understanding on the concept of the project and completed feasibility studies of the reconstruction of a North Korean part of the line. In late 2002, Russia suggested creating a multinational consortium to realize the project and trilateral talks to finalize the route, gauge, general principles and other related issues.

To sustain development of cooperation between Foreign Ministries, countries as a whole, DPRK Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun paid official visit to Russia just months ahead of aggravating situation around North Korea nuclear program to reciprocate the visit to DPRK by Russian Foreign Minister I. Ivanov in February 2000. Nothing seemed to predict the coming crisis. As usual for the last years both sides "expressed firm desire" to further develop and strengthen bilateral relations in the spirit of Basic Treaty. Mutual orientation towards expanding trade and economic ties was reiterated "in accordance with the growing dynamics of political relations" that seemed to contradict somewhat to growing market economy basics of the Russian economy.

The two countries showed intention to confront international terrorism in accordance with UN Declarations, as well as to solve problems of international life through negotiations, by political means, including that of Northeast Asia, on the Korean Peninsula while Russia underlined its support for any moves to facilitate inter-Korean dialogue.

The sides confirmed steps to implement reconnections of the Korean railways with extension to TSR in order to create a transport corridor from the South of Korean Peninsula to Europe.⁶ However, the aggravation of political tension in Korea due to new North Korean nuclear issue, as well as change in the administration in Seoul postponed the progress of this endeavor.

Of interest might be observations on how strongly inbuilt are the basic forces of instability that erupted suddenly and forcefully the situation on the Korean Peninsula that seemed to be on the way to stability and certain predictability, at least on the surface.

A Russian scholar concern about relations between Moscow and Pyongyang is that the political statement by political leaders of both countries with their obvious importance are not supported by real substance, first of all in the form of economic ties. Pyongyang still entertains a certain kind of mistrust towards Russia's behavior, being disappointed with its not strong enough support of North Korea's foreign policy line. Russian political elite showed concern about Pyongyang extremist, from their point of view, actions in external political and military-political spheres.

Security Issues.

The paradox of the Russian policy towards Korean security issues is that Russia seemed to have keys to this matter, but finally lost opportunity for shaping an influential role in the structure of the international environment around the Korean Peninsula.

In early 1960s Russia helped to start a nuclear center in Yongbyon that became a vocal point of both crisis over North Korea's nuclear program. In December of 1985 Moscow and Pyongyang signed an agreement to build atomic power plants in North Korea on the condition that Pyongyang would join NPT. As soon as it was done Moscow sent a team of "Atomenergoexport" specialists to make feasibility studies and locate a site for the station. The work was completed by the end of 1992,⁷ choosing Kumho village, Shinpo area on North Korea's east coast to install 3 light-water reactors (LWRs). But as early as 1991 a deal was already made to deliver to Pyongyang the 660-megawatt plants valued \$4 billion.

So by the time the first nuclear crisis broke out, Russia may be considered as best informed about its background. Objectively it created ground for Russia's active independent policy on this matter, aimed as well as securing non hostile, influential position in relations with Pyongyang. But

Moscow decision-making circles seemed not to consider this opportunity valid and decided to occupy stand aside position.⁸

In the second half of the 90s the mainstream of Russian experts on Korea tended to reassess Russia's behavior during the first North Korean nuclear crisis.⁹ Recognizing Moscow's principled position towards Pyongyang's announcement of withdrawal from NPT, they considered the actual dealing with the problem, especially on the matter of sanctions against North Korea, as not flexible and independent enough, and too much US-oriented.

G. Toloraya who served as supervisor of Korean issues at the RF Ministry of Foreign Affairs said sardonically: "Let us say, facing all the danger of mass destruction weapons proliferation, it was hardly worth to try to be in the first row of opponents of the Pyongyang nuclear program that was not directed against us. The program that was considered only as a "means of containment" of uncertainties at the time when allies had disappeared."¹⁰

Often as an example of the pragmatic diplomacy, China was cited that stood against Pyongyang's stepping out of NPT, but at the same time managed to keep good relation with its ally.

Though Moscow tried to qualify sanctions against North Korea as last measure as the nuclear crisis heightened, Pyongyang considered this position as hostile, pro-American, even sub servant to Washington, and finally decided to turn for the solution of the nuclear problem to the United States which was considered the main decision maker of this problem.

As a result of above mentioned policy Moscow appeared without trumps at the final stage of negotiations around the North Korea's nuclear program. The Russian proposal to call international conference to ensure security and nuclear free status of the Korean Peninsula made on March 24, 1994¹¹ got only lip service support by Washington who sought to secure Moscow's backing for a UN tough sanctions against Pyongyang resolution.¹²

The two main players around the North Korea's nuclear issue - USA and DPRK decided to solve this matter on bilateral basis by concluding the Agreed Framework that froze North Korea's nuclear activities in exchange for supplying North Korea with proliferation-resistant light-water reactors (LWRs) by a target day of 2003 instead of former graphite-moderated reactors that might be used to produce weapons grade plutonium by staging Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO)¹³. Pending their completion US was expected to provide 500 000 tons of heavy oil annually. Article 2 of the Agreement envisaged US normalization of economic and political relations with North Korea – there was even talk about exchange of liaison offices between Washington and Pyongyang, while article 3 required “formal assurances” ruling out “the threat or use of nuclear weapons by the United States” against North Korea.

Russia started campaign to deliver its own LWR to North Korea, and the offer was met with understanding by Pyongyang,¹⁴ But after complicated maneuvering, Washington's strong position in favor of reportedly US Combustion Engineering made reactor paid mostly by Seoul¹⁵, due to financial difficulties Moscow decide to occupy “wait-and-see” position, while seriously questioning US-North Korea's agreements to defuse Pyongyang nuclear program as well as KEDO practical realization.

Second North Korean nuclear program crisis: Russia’s approach

Since the beginning Moscow took new crisis situation around North Korean program very seriously. Official representative of the RF Ministry of Foreign Affairs, answering December 25, 2002 the question by Russian media on the ways of normalization of the situation on the Korea Peninsula, said: ”Events around North Korean nuclear program are of grave concern for Russia as it influences negatively situation on the Korean Peninsula in the close vicinity of our borders.”¹⁶

The crisis threatened to happen in the backyard of Russia, next to its Far Eastern borders, and in this case it demanded to divert resources from economic reform needs to military endeavors. If uncontrolled it might spread into wider area of Northeast Asia with higher intensity and spread, inviting additional burden and strain to Russian foreign policy capacity.

In case of realization, North Korea nuclear program might undermine global nonproliferation regime, it might create immediate pressure on South Korea, Japan and even Taiwan to acquire own nuclear weapons. But to keep and strengthen nonproliferation regime is a top priority on the agenda of Russia foreign policy. And unpredictable course of events might endanger Russia’s relations with the United States which are highly valued by the Russian President as indispensable instrument for keeping global stability.

Taking into consideration abovementioned conclusions it sounds natural that Russian diplomacy tried to occupy active policy in regard to evolving crisis situation, seeing at the same time an opportunity to get back as an active player in settlement of the Korean issue.

Since the early days of Korean issue being aggravated Moscow seemed to consider the roots of the crisis in serious change in US policy towards North Korea while the latter strongly overplayed the whole story.

New American administration terminated Clinton administration comprehensive negotiations with Pyongyang that were used by Washington to seek an end to the North Korean nuclear and missile programs while Pyongyang tried to get assurances that US would not attack it with nuclear and conventional weapons.

Pyongyang saw in Bush qualification of North Korea a member of the “axis of evil”, proclamation of the doctrine of preemptive reaction immediate threat to its sovereignty and statehood, and started, probably, too hurriedly, already tested “brinkmanship” policy.

Thus the main source of the emerging conflict was confrontation between United States and North Korea, and Russia tried to find compromise between the two opposing sides, curtailing flaming out, intensification of the conflict, advocating peaceful solution of the problem, preventing proliferation of nuclear weapons. Vice Minister A. Losuykov qualified such line as “intermediate efforts”.¹⁷

During the early stages of the conflict, at the end of 2002, Russia suggested an approach that could be described as "first freeze, then get back where you were." The approach presumed non-nuclearization of Korea; US-DPRK return to the Agreed Framework obligations while negotiating a new arrangement; restart of the dialogue between them aimed at a mutually beneficial "package deal"; without damaging North-South, Japan-North Korea and other dialogue formats around Korean issue.

On this basis Russia started to conduct intensive diplomatic talks with North and South Korea, China, US, Japan, and this position was introduced at the G-8 and the IAEA meetings. The “Joint Declaration of the Russian Federation and Chinese People’s Republic” which crowned the Russian-Chinese summit of December 2002, stated: “Both sides consider important for the peace and security in Northeast Asia to save denuclearized status of the Korean Peninsula, regime of nonproliferation of the weapons of mass destruction, and in this context underline extreme importance of normalization of relations between USA and DPRK on the basis of consecutive observance of previously concluded agreements, including the Agreed Framework of 1994, and constructive, equal dialogue in the interests of mutual concerns settlement.”¹⁸ At the Russian-American summit in St. Peterbourg in November 2002 Russian side presented Korean issue along the lines of the above mentioned formula.

These efforts did not prevent the situation around the North Korean nuclear program from being deteriorated rapidly. The US was on the way to increase pressure on Pyongyang without any concessions, while Pyongyang saw it as an evidence of US intentions to corner DPRK and bring it down. North Koreans answered by expelling IAEA inspectors and walking out of the NPT on Jan 10th 2003, playing in ambiguous way around plutonium nuclear devices, half admitting, half denying their existence. Moscow denounced North Korea’s moves to expel IAEA inspectors and reactivate its nuclear program,¹⁹ as well as expressed deep concern about official reports on DPRK intentions to get out of the NPT.²⁰

At the same time Moscow negatively reacted to the statements by “American official representatives that USA did not excluded military methods of solving so-called North Korean nuclear problem.” It is interesting that confirming its position on peaceful settlement of the problems on the

Korean Peninsula, Smolenskya square cited Joint Russian-Chinese Communique on situation on Korean Peninsula,²¹ probably to add power to its statement.

So it became clear that the rapidly developed crisis type events had overcome the initial Russian position on Korean issue. Both United States and North Korea accused each other of breaking Agreed Framework clauses, and it became clear that coming back to this agreement was highly questionable.

By this time became more clear the real gap between approach to North Korean nuclear program by Washington and Pyongyang. At the initial stage US demanded that DPRK stopped its nuclear program under strict verification as a precondition of negotiations on this matter, while North Korea demanded legal obligations from US to prevent acts of aggressions and interference into its sovereignty.

Taking into consideration new realities, Moscow decided to update its position towards Korean issue that was elaborated into the proposal for "package solution" which might be considered as an attempt to play the role of intermediary between two opposing sides.

The official spokesman of Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Alexander Yakovenko in the press release on January 12, 2003 introduced the basic elements of this position as follows:

First is nuclear-free status for the Korean Peninsula, strict observance of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty while all the parties should meet their obligations arising from other international agreements, including the Agreed Framework of 1994;

Second - constructive bilateral and multilateral dialogue between concerned parties, one of its results should be security guarantees for the DPRK;

Third - resuming humanitarian and economic programs that were previously operated on the Korean Peninsula.²²

The "package" solution proposal demonstrated priorities of Russia's foreign policy priorities towards Korean problem. First of all it was safeguarding nuclear nonproliferation regime that was a main element of President Putin driving for strategic stability. Security guaranties for DPRK as a result of peaceful dialogue, economic programs to support North Korean economy were an important part of Russian President's new approach to evaluation of North Korean variable in the Korean equation. Noticeably was absent mentioning of verification of the progress towards a complete, permanent nuclear weapons free Korean Peninsula that was a core of American line in regard to settlement of North Korean nuclear program crisis.

Russian President's special envoy A.Losuykov brought "package solution" proposals to North Korea on January 18-21, 2003, and introduced them to Kim Jong-Il and other DPRK leaders.²³ Reportedly they contained strongly expressed Russia's stand in favor of non-nuclear Korea, while

Pyongyang stressed its position in favor of dialogue with the United States. Day later V. Putin in a phone talk with G. Bush informed him on the outcome of Losuykov's visit to Pyongyang, stressing that results of this meeting might be considered as a good basis for productive dialogue with DPRK in order to reduce the sharpness of the crisis.²⁴ On the same day extended information on the talks in Pyongyang as well as "elements" of Russian "package" plan were forwarded to US Deputy Secretary of State R. Armitage.²⁵

On coming back from Pyongyang Vice Minister A. Losuykov said that the "package" plan is the assembly of principles, aims and tasks to be fulfilled as well as concrete suggestions on so called small steps done by the countries involved into the crisis to realize its settlement.²⁶

The above mentioned Russian stand on the North Korean nuclear problem remained the same in its basic elements until nowadays. It did not produced breakthrough in settlement of the crisis, and probably did not intended to do so due to restricted ability to influence course of events on the Korean Peninsula, but its elements could be traced in positions and actions by some participants of the maneuvering around North Korean nuclear crisis. In an interview to Russian press agency ITAR-TASS A.Losuykov during his visit to Pyongyang January 20, 2003 remarked: "The crisis should be first of all decided at the North Korea – American contacts, but we in our turn have certain opportunities to influence the situation..."²⁷ Certain elements of the Russian "package" were present in the North Korean proposals at the three party talks in April 2002 in Beijing. And finally Moscow's multisided contacts and exchange of views brought her to multilateral talks on the Korean issue.²⁸

Different, fragmented and multifaceted was disposition of forces, attitudes to Moscow's "package" proposals among the countries involved into activities around the North Korean nuclear issue was. Basically its position was shared by various degree by the states which advocated the evolutionary way of dealing with the DPRK that promoted slow internal changes in the country leading to more openness but without threatening its sovereignty. That did not mean that its provocative external behavior could be tolerated, or that the deterioration of North Korea socio-economic stand could be overlooked.

On this way Russian was looking, first of all, for cooperation with China which opinion was most heard in regards to crisis situation. Important was the joint Communiqué on the situation in the Korean Peninsula of February 28 2003 that emphasized a peaceful and just resolution of the situation on the Korean Peninsula, denuclearized status of the Korean Peninsula, constructive and equal dialogue between the USA and the DPRK, as well as the position stated by the DPRK on the absence of intention to create nuclear weapons.²⁹ But behind the general principals pronouncements Beijing in practical terms would like to

follow its own interests feeling that United States consider China to be a main player in North Korean nuclear crisis, as well as being satisfied with trilateral format of talks (China-US-North Korea) that were held in Beijing in April of 2003.

Political figures of South Korea were to more or less extend shared basics of the Russian proposal and it seemed that Seoul is inclined to attach more importance to Russia's role in the Korean issue, as they consider the Chinese behavior as becoming to self servicing one.

Moscow highly evaluated visit by Prime Minister Koizumi to North Korea as an important step in starting dialogue that might help to look for settlement of the problems, including the concern about nuclear and missile programs of North Korea. But Russia did not support Japan's efforts on introducing issue of Japanese citizens abducted by North Korean special services into talks with North Korea, probably, considering it off side of the mainstream of interactions with Pyongyang.

North Korea was strongly standing for bilateral dialogue with United States to get formal assurances of its security and sovereignty. Even three party talks in Beijing in April of 2003 were considered by Pyongyang as a cover for immediate dialogue with United States. Russia supported its position though it looks like another paradoxical feature as Moscow was advocating for a long time idea of multilateral, six-party approach to solution of Korean issue.

Washington considered Russian stand towards North Korea as too "soft", did not want to talk with Pyongyang on bilateral basis refusing to give a "prize" for its breaking the nonproliferation regime, while preferring a dialogue in a multilateral format which will contain an element of multilateral pressure on North Korean. Differences of approach to North Korean issue became noticeable at the replies by Russian President V. Putin and his counterpart American President G. Bush to media questions after the talks at Camp David on September 27, 2003. Bush strongly urged North Korea to completely, verifiably and irreversibly end its nuclear programs, while V. Putin believed that ensuring nonproliferation regime should be accompanied by extending to North Korea guarantees in the sphere of security.³⁰

Failure to get any progress in settlement of North Korean nuclear program crisis that tended for aggravation, international developments paved way for main opponents –North Korea and United States to modify their positions and through Beijing "shuttle diplomacy" the six-party talks on the situation on the Korean Peninsula were held at the end of August in Beijing.

Though the evaluation of the results of the six-party talks were different in Russia –from failure to more favorable estimates, official Moscow positively evaluated its results. In an interview after the speech at the Moscow State Institute (University) of international relations Minister I. Ivanov on September 1, 2003 said: " We consider the conduct of negotiations on the Korean problem

in the six-party format to be an important element in international community efforts aimed at creating stable situation on the Korean Peninsula.” According to him Moscow did not expect any break through at the meeting as it was a first round, and it stood for continuation of the talks.³¹

In remarks at the opening of six-party talks in Beijing on August 27, 2003

A. Losuykov exposed the basic points of Russian position on the North Korean nuclear stand-off, expressed consideration that this meeting would mark the start of a serious, meaningful multilateral and bilateral dialogue, as a negotiated settlement of the knotty issues on the Korean Peninsula is the only real way to solve the problems of this area. It was underlined that an aim of the talks is to create and strengthen by joint efforts favorable atmosphere for continuation of the inter-Korean intercourse.³²

Participation in six-party talks were important for Russia as it showed that Moscow had come back to the Korean Peninsula playing ground if not in the capacity of a heavyweight in an important player in the Korea equation.

In general the mere fact of getting together in the six-sides format was important as it was not the case for quite a long time if not for the first time in the newest history of international relations around the Korean Peninsula. It was significant to demonstrate that in case of necessity the major players around the Korean issue may find a common ground to get together to discuss pressing matters of mutual concern.

The Beijing encounter was valuable venue for the participants to expose and to explain positions of their countries, to compare, to see differences between them, to scale their deepness, to find compromise between them.

Beijing’s successful “shuttle” diplomacy to boost six-party talks, skilful presiding over them with a view of finding a compromise between conflicting positions, testified to its growing influence on the Korean, East Asian affairs as a whole. Though there is a certain concern among some Asian political circles about this influence might become overwhelming.

And there was certain measure of success in this field. Unanimous, including the North Korean representatives, was an understanding of keeping Korean Peninsula nuclear free. As a result of the Beijing negotiations there was emerging a feeling that in future such type of talks may address broader, security related issues.

Though six-party talks in Beijing failed to find compromise in far apart standing positions on the problem between North Korea and Washington, and, probably, nobody expected this job to be done, it basically indicated that it is better to have talks than not to have them. Confucius is believed to say: “It is better to light a candle than to damn darkness”.

A news in the press that the second six-party talk might happen in December – that is a good

news. Intensive consultations among the forthcoming participants of the encounter are going on with Losuykov recently visited Washington.

There are steps by both Washington and Pyongyang in the direction of compromise though distant one. President Bush recent suggestion to provide North Korea with written assurances that USA have no intentions to attack this country and the North decision to consider this offer prove certain basis though not so stable for negotiated solution of the current North Korean nuclear crisis. As often happens, without questioning the benefits of general principals, the devil is in the details.

Washington offer of multilateral security assurances stands on condition of “verifiable progress” toward the dismantlement of North Korea’s nuclear program. Pyongyang seems would like to have US written assurances first, and then go to the disbandment of the nuclear program. Thus the issue of verifications comes out. Also Pyongyang is not happy with the notion of multilateral assurances, as it does not want to have Seoul as legitimate participant when it comes to security issues on the Korean Peninsular.

In recent interview to Washington Times in Geneva two senior North Korean diplomats said that Pyongyang was prepared to give up its nuclear deterrent, stop testing and exporting missiles and allow international inspectors back into the country in exchange for economic reparations and a written security pledge from Washington.³³ The significance of this statement is that though economic side of nuclear issue was always important for North Korea its meaning has been becoming more pressing.

Recently United States, South Korea, Japan and European Union announced a decision to suspend construction of two nuclear reactors in North Korea. State Department spokesmen Adam Erelli went further on, saying on November 20, 2003 that the US position is that “there is no future for the reactor project.”³⁴

Taking into consideration disastrous economic situation in North Korea it might be worthwhile to consider other types of international economic assistance to North Korea in case it moves along the road of liquidation of the nuclear program.

Russia might be of some help in this matter. There is an idea of building energy generator in Russian Far East working on Sakhalin gas to supply electric energy both to North and South Korea, bringing oil and gas pipelines from Kovykta (East Siberia) and Sakhalin to North and South of the Korea Peninsula. As far as March 1999 RF first deputy Minister of Atomic Energy V. Ivanov proposed to construct atomic electric station in Primorie krai (region) to supply electric energy to North Korea,³⁵ though it seems too costly for Russia to go on with the proposal unilaterally.

Conclusion.

The international relations complex on the Korean Peninsula is both a challenge and an opportunity for Russia. It is a matter of concern for Russia that still the situation on the Korean Peninsula remains the source of potential instability, and probably this state of affairs will go on for some time. So destructive course of events may adversely influence situation in the Russian Far East, and may be considered as a threat to Russia's security in the Far East.

Due to Russia's long-standing and deep-rooted involvement into Korean affairs, it looks unproductive to exclude Russia from what is going on the Korean Peninsula. So it seems natural Russia's coming back to the multilateral forum on North Korean nuclear program. Though the general principals of the crisis settlement looks acceptable to participants of six-party talks – devil is in the details. How to implement them into practical measures and linkages – how to link “security assurances” to N. Korea to “dismantlement of its nuclear program under strict verification”.

Reconciliation of the two Koreas presents opportunities for Russia's economic advance and deeper integration into Asia. Therefore, its strategy in Korea tends to be directed at the creation of a balance of interests for all the parties concerned, in order to build a solid foundation for peace and stability, and to provide room for cooperation for the sake of economic prosperity. But there is certain point of view that united Korea gives American troops direct outreach to Russian borders, producing security challenges to its interests.

The history of Russian relations with both Koreas taught a lesson. Declarations on good will, partnership relations with their unquestionable value, are not enough to have stable, solid relations. They should be “beefed” with real substance, and it might be done by strong willed political efforts, involvement in the their boosting by all layers of society of both countries – political, business, public on all layers.

¹ KOTRA Statistics.

² Korea Newsworld, June 1999, p.11.

³ "Sovmestnoe Rossiisko-Koeiskoe zayavlenie" (Joint Russian-Korean Statement), Rossiiskaya Gazeta, May 25, 1999.

⁴ G. Toloraya “Posle summita v Seule” (After the Summit in Seoul), Korus Forum, Moscow, # 4, 2001, pp. 7-13.

⁵ Bulletin mezhdunarodnyh dogovorov, (Bulletin of International Treaties), Moscow, 2001., No 4, p.51.

⁶ Press Release. On the Official Visit to Russian of DPRK Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun, 22.05.2002, internet version.

⁷ See A. Zhebin "Russia and North Korea. An Emerging, Uneasy Parnership" in Asian Survey, vol. XXXV, No. 8, August 1995, p. 730.

⁸ See interview by then RF Foreign Minister A. Kozyrev, Izvestia, June 18, 1994.

⁹ V. Denisov "The Problem of Nuclear Nonproliferation in Korea" in International Affairs, No. 8, 1994;

V. Tkachenko "Russian-Korean Cooperation to Preserve the Peace on the Korean Peninsula" in Far Eastern Affairs, No.2, 1999; G. Toloraya "Koreiskya politika Rossii na rubeze desyateletii" (Russia's Korean Policy on the Border of Decades" in *Rossia i Koreya na poroge novogo stoletia* (Russia and Korea on the Edge of New Century. Proceeding of the 3rd academic conference) Moscow, March 25-26, 1999.

¹⁰ G. Tolorya, op. cit., p. 164.

¹¹ A Kozyrev interview to Izvestia, June 18, 1994; Denisov, op. cit. p.42.

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- ¹² For an example see "U.S. Backs Russian Bid For North Korea Talks", International Herald Tribune, June 11-12, 1994.
- ¹³ For the text of the document see Arms Control Today, December 1994, p. 19.
- ¹⁴ Kommersant, February 23, 1995 p. 4.
- ¹⁵ Far Eastern Economic Review, December 29-January 5, 1995.
- ¹⁶ Diplomatichestki Vestnik (Diplomatic Herald) # 1, 2003, p. 116.
- ¹⁷ Diplomatichestki Vestnik (Diplomatic Herald) # 2, 2003, p. 47.
- ¹⁸ Diplomatichestki Vestnik (Diplomatic Herald) # 1, 2003, p. 19.
- ¹⁹ New York Times, December 30, 2002, internet version;
- ²⁰ Statement of the RF Ministry of Foreign Affairs in connection with the DPRK intention to go out of the NPT, January 10, 2003, internet version.
- ²¹ "On Situation around DPRK" Report by RF Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March 6, 2003, internet version.
- ²² Press Release. Alexander Yakovenko, the Official Spokesman of Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Answers a Russian/Foreign Media Question About a Package Solution to the Korean Problem, January 12, 2003, internet version.
- ²³ For materials of the Losuykov's visit see Diplomatichestki Vestnik (Diplomatic Herald) # 2, 2003, pp. 44-50.
- ²⁴ Official Internet-representation of the President of Russia, January 23, 2003.
- ²⁵ Joint Communique of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on the situation on the Korean Peninsula, February 28, 2003, RF Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Information and Press Department, internet version.
- ²⁶ Diplomatichestki Vestnik (Diplomatic Herald) # 2, 2003, p. 47.
- ²⁷ Diplomatichestki Vestnik (Diplomatic Herald) # 2, 2003, p. 45.
- ²⁸ Interview of the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs A.P. Losuykov published by the newspaper "Vremja Novosteyi" July 23 2003 under the title "Our Evaluations Do Not Suit USA as too Soft in regards to North Korea", RF Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DDDepartment of Information and Press" July 23 2003, internet version.
- ²⁹ Diplomatichestki Vestnik (Diplomatic Herald) # 2, 2003, p. 48.
- ³⁰ Remarks by the President of Russia and the President of the united States and Their Replies to Media Questions Following the Talks at Camp David, September 27, 2003, RF Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Information and Press Department, September 29, 2003, internet version.
- ³¹ Information Bulletin, RF Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 1, 2003, internet version.
- ³² Information and Press Department, RF Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- ³³ Washington Times November 15, 2003.
- ³⁴ Washington Times November 22, 2003.
- ³⁵ Izvestia March 23, 1999.