

Don't Help Kim Jong-un's "Military First" Regime

Tsutomu Nishioka

New regime is unstable

North Korea held a military parade on April 15 to celebrate the centennial birthday of Kim Il-sung, displaying what seemed to be an intercontinental ballistic missile. During the parade, Kim Jong-un delivered a speech vowing to take over his father's "military first" policy to continue nuclear missile development and anti-South maneuvering even at the cost of citizens' livelihood. After being named supreme commander of the armed forces last year, Kim Jong-un was appointed as first secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea on April 11 and as first chairman of the National Defense Commission, becoming North Korea's supreme leader.

But the new Kim Jong-un regime is still unstable. Within the Workers' Party of Korea, he named three security leaders to key posts, indicating his worries about his opponents. Cui Long-hai, secretary for the General Political Bureau of the Korean People's Army, was appointed Politburo Standing Committee member. Kim Won-hong, minister of State Security (i.e., head of secret police), and Ri Myong-su, minister of People's Security (i.e., head of national police), were named as Politburo members. North Korea's missile launching failed with the missile exploding in a few minutes after firing on April 13. South Korea's leftists, on which Pyongyang places great expectations, lost general elections. Though being shocked by these developments, the new regime must address a difficult challenge to raise some \$1 billion in foreign currency funds annually to maintain the dictatorship.

Fight continues against leftist groups in S. Korea

In South Korea's general elections on April 11, the ruling Saenuri Party won a majority of 152 seats. Only one month ago, the ruling party, also known as the New Frontier Party, had been expected to suffer a crushing defeat in the elections, with forecasts focusing on whether the opposition group would take 200 seats required to pass a constitutional amendment.

But the situation has turned around as conservative newspapers and Internet news portals reported a money scandal of former President Roh Moo-hyun and his family, a condemnation of the Navy as pirates by an activist against the Cheju Island naval base construction project, and Pyongyang-backed underground forces behind the opposition camp. Another development contributing to the turnaround was a hunger sit-in that a South Korean National Assembly woman lawmaker conducted before the Chinese embassy in Seoul in protest to China's deportation of North Korean defectors.

Saenuri Party leader Park Geun-hye, who had emphasized welfare pork barrel spending in response to the opposition camp's anti-conglomerate campaign, began to criticize the opposition camp for its pro-Pyongyang attitude. In the final

stage of election campaigns, a young political commentator who ran as a unified opposition candidate in Seoul was reported as having made remarks discriminating women and elderly people and condemning Christianity. These developments helped reduce votes for the opposition camp in closely contested districts, allowing the Saenuri Party to enjoy the dominant victory.

But a pro-Pyongyang candidate is still possible to win December's presidential election. Such development could lead to a nightmare where South Korea would provide the Kim Jong-un regime with abundant hard currency funds.

Japanese government supporting North Korea

While condemning North Korea's missile firing, Japan's government has left the pro-Pyongyang General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, known as Chongryon, to provide North Korea with funds and technology for nuclear missile development. The government's anti-North condemnation fails to be persuasive. At present, Chongryon executives, excluding Responsible Vice Chairman Ho Chong-man and five others, can freely travel between Japan and North Korea. Other Chongryon vice chairmen overtly lead delegations to North Korea every month. While visitors to North Korea from Japan are required to report any plan to carry 100,000 yen or more in cash, no limit is imposed on cash they can bring to North Korea. Reports to the Ministry of Finance indicate that as much as 130 million yen in cash was brought to North Korea between December and February.

Even under current law, the government can decide to impose sanctions to stop human and money flow from Japan to North Korea. Nevertheless, the Democratic Party of Japan administration has not invoked any additional sanctions even after the missile firing. Abnormally, Japan is supporting the Kim Jong-un regime's "military first" policy.

Tsutomu Nishioka is Planning Committee Member, Japan Institute for National Fundamentals and Professor at Tokyo Christian University.