

# HISTORICAL PROGRESS OF U.S.-CUBA RELATIONSHIP: IMPLICATION FOR U.S.-NORTH KOREA CASE

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Cuba and North Korea have many similarities in their political systems and foreign relations with the United States. However, the two countries have chosen diverging paths in recent years.

The United States and Cuba moved to end five decades of hostility and agreed to revive diplomatic relations in December 2014. And, on April 11, 2015, political leaders of the two countries, Barack Obama and Raúl Castro, finally had a historical meeting at the Summit of the Americas in Panama. The restoration of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba will contribute to the political and economic prosperity of each country and stability of the regional security environment.

In contrast with Cuba's case, U.S.-North Korea relations have exacerbated. Pyongyang is keen on normalizing its diplomatic relationship with Washington but the bilateral relationship has remained without any progress with a longstanding security issue, North Korean nuclear development and a new issue, North Korean human rights problems.

This study aims to find an answer as to why Cuba and North Korea are walking different paths, even if they operate in a similar international environment. Therefore, this paper briefly touches on Cuban and North Korean foreign policy and seeks implications for the North Korea-U.S. relationship through the

study on the development of the U.S.-Cuba relationship.

## CUBA'S FOREIGN RELATIONS

### Fidel Castro's Era

In the beginning of Fidel Castro's era, Cuba's foreign relations concentrated on enhancing relations with Latin American countries and maintaining diplomacy with non-aligned third-world countries based on anti-imperialism under the following three foreign policy principles: (1) avoidance of political, economic, and cultural dependency; (2) decrease in the economic gap between developed and underdeveloped countries; (3) increase of autonomy in domestic politics based on non-intervention and equality among countries.<sup>1</sup> However, in the post-Cold War era, the U.S. diplomatic and economic embargo against Cuba, which aimed at international isolation of Cuba, were intensified and the fall of socialist countries in the early of 1990s deepened economic crisis in Cuba because its economy had been heavily dependent on trade with the Soviet Union and East European countries. In the unfavorable international and domestic environment, the Cuban government tried to diversify its diplomacy in order to overcome the economic difficulties and to limit the impact of the U.S. economic embargo, as follows: (1) enhancement of relationship with existing friendly countries such as China, North Korea, and Russia; (2) maintenance of pragmatic relationship with European countries such

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1. Kyung-hee Kang, "Progress and Perspectives of Cuban Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era," (in Korean) *The Korean Journal of Unification Affairs*, Vol.45, (2006), p.317.

as Spain, Germany, Turkey, and the Netherlands; (3) strengthening of reciprocal diplomatic relationships with Venezuela and underdeveloped countries in Latin America; (4) bolstering political, cultural, and economic cooperation relationships with African countries, especially lusophone countries. At the end of the Cold War era, to escape economic and diplomatic isolation, the goal of Cuba's foreign relations was to open up its economy, to be included in global economic system, and to pursue solidarity among Latin America countries.<sup>2</sup>

### **Raúl Castro's Era**

Since Raúl Castro took power in 2006, Cuba's foreign policy has had two key features: first, Cuba has tried to further diversify its international economic relations to avoid economic dependence on just one country, like in the Cold War era. Second, Cuba has tried to build diplomatic support both regionally and globally through constructive participation in international organizations.

Even in Raúl Castro's era, the United States' embargo against Cuba has been the biggest obstacle to Cuba's foreign relations and to overcome this unfavorable environment, Raúl's regime focused on diversifying international economic relations and strengthening the relationship with counter-balancers of the United States, such as Russia and China.

Cuba has bolstered its relationship with Venezuela, which became the biggest trade partner providing Cuba with investment and subsidized oil. In 2007, trade with Venezuela totaled \$2.9 billion, almost 30% of Cuba's total trade and 5.6% of Cuba's GDP.<sup>3</sup> In 2012, Cuba's largest trade partner was Venezuela (exports: 45%, imports: 44%).<sup>4</sup> Regarding oil, Cuba has not paid full price for the oil it receives,

subsidized by almost \$3 billion from Venezuela. In return for subsidized oil, Cuba has sent almost 40,000 doctors, educators, and sports trainers to Venezuela.<sup>5</sup>

Brazil has maintained a close relationship with Cuba and has criticized the U.S. embargo against the island. Both countries have signed a series of agreements and Brazil has become one of most important investors in Cuban infrastructure and sugar industry.<sup>6</sup>

Cuba and Russia's relationship, which had diminished in the aftermath of the Cold War, has been overhauled since the inauguration of Raúl Castro. In 2008, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev visited Havana and Raúl Castro visited Russia in 2009 and in 2012. When the current Russian President, Vladimir Putin, visited Cuba in July 2014, both countries signed a new cooperation and investment agreement in the military field, as well as on oil exploration, tourism, etc. In addition, Russia announced that it would forgive 90% of Cuba's \$30 billion debt from the Soviet era.<sup>7</sup>

Relations with China have been enhanced in recent years with increasing trade and investment. Both countries did not share a close relationship during the Cold War. However, with Cuba adopting the China model named "Model for separating economy and politics" as its development model, both countries have become very close. Since 2004, trade volume between two countries has continuously increased, and in various sectors like oil prospecting, infrastructure, and military, both countries have cooperated. In July 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Havana and said that "China and Cuba being

2. Jaime Suchlicki, "Castro's Cuba: More Continuity than Change," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Winter 2000), p.127.

3. Daniel P. Erikson & Paul Wander, "Raul Castro and Cuba's Global Diplomacy," *Cuba in Transition—Volume 18, ASCE 2008*, p. 392.

4. Mark P. Sullivan, "Cuba: U.S. Policy and Issues for the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress," *CRS Report*, July 31, 2014, p. 17.

5. Erikson & Wander, *Raul Castro*, p. 392.

6. Carmen-Cristina Cirliq, "Cuba: Foreign Policy and Security Aspects," *At a glance* (European Parliamentary Research Service, EPRS), April 2015.

7. Sullivan, *Cuba*, p.17.

socialist countries, we are closely united by the same missions, ideals, and struggles.”<sup>8</sup>

## NORTH KOREA’S FOREIGN RELATIONS

### Kim Il Sung’s Era

Two keywords, “encampment diplomacy” and “dependence diplomacy” epitomize North Korea’s foreign policy in the Kim Il-sung era during the Cold War. North Korea during this period was part of the communist camp, and pursued “encampment diplomacy” confronting the West. With the Soviet Union deeply involved in the state-building process in 1948 and China’s involvement in the Korean War, North Korea became politically, militarily and economically dependent on these two nations and its “encampment diplomacy” was inclined towards the Soviet Union and China, and hostile toward the West, including the U.S.

However, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, North Korea’s relations with anti-communist Russia deteriorated, and the DPRK-Russia alliance ended after Russia announced that it would not renew the alliance treaty with North Korea in September 1995.<sup>9</sup> After the democratization in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, North Korea relied more on China, a country with whom it shared ideological homogeneity.

North Korea’s foreign policy in the post-Cold War in brief can be termed as “survival diplomacy” and “brinkmanship diplomacy.” As the Eastern bloc and Soviet Union collapsed, North Korea sought to open its doors and to improve relations with the West, including the U.S. and Japan, for the cause of overcoming economic hardship, avoiding diplomatic isolation, and minimizing security threats.<sup>10</sup> But, believing that the opening up policy might threaten its regime preservation, Pyongyang radically overturned its policy, suspended talks and openness to-

wards the West, and chose hard-line foreign policy characterized as “brinkmanship diplomacy,” utilizing the nuclear option as its diplomatic means.

### Kim Jong-il’s Era

The foreign policy principles under Kim Jong-il can be summarized as “omni-directional diplomacy” and “*songun* (military first) diplomacy.” Having succeeded to power after his father’s death in July 1994, Kim Jong-il focused on internal regime stability through “*songun* politics” because his domestic power base was unstable. Having succeeded with the consolidation of power in the late 1990s, the Kim Jong-il regime actively engaged in foreign affairs. North Korea held political dialogues with the EU in December 1998 and November 1999 and, at the 54th UN General Assembly, DPRK Foreign Minister Pak Nam-soon went forward with “omni-directional diplomacy” for the survival and development of the regime through foreign ministers’ talks with 20 other members.<sup>11</sup> Afterwards, beginning with Australia, North Korea normalized diplomatic ties with Southeast Asian countries, such as the Philippines; beginning with Italy in 2000, it established diplomatic relations with all EU states (15 at that time), except for France and Ireland. Moreover, Kim Jong-un paid a visit to Shanghai on January 15, 2001, observing the venue for Chinese reforms and openings. This led to North Korean-style opening policy, such as establishing a Special Economic Zone in Sinuiju, a city on the border with China. Nevertheless, the “omni-directional diplomacy” and opening policy ends by the inauguration of the Bush administration in 2001.

While North Korea approached the U.S. with friendly gestures, such as criticizing the September 11 terror, it found it difficult to take soft-line stance as the Bush administration defined North Korea as one of the “axis of evil” and based its North Korea policy on

8. Marc Frank, “Chinese President Ends Regional Tour in Cradle of Cuban Revolution,” Reuters News, July 23, 2014.

9. Won-sik Kang, *The Russian role in the unification process of Korean Peninsula*, (in Korean) (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 1997), pp. 3–4.

10. Gye-dong Kim, “North Korean policy toward the United States: trying change from hostile relations to cooperation relations” (in Korean), *The Korean Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (1995), pp. 71–97.

11. Gye-dong Kim, “Foreign Policy: a change from offensive diplomacy to survival diplomacy,” in Association for Research on System Integration, ed., *North Korean system and policy: Change and Maintenance*, (in Korean) (Seoul: MyungIn Publishers, 2014), p.146.

rigorous terms of reciprocity and transparency. As a response, North Korea once again resorted to the nuclear card as a diplomatic means, like in the Kim Il-sung era in 2002, carrying out “*songun* diplomacy,” a coercive diplomatic policy demanding the recognition of its nuclear weapons and the regime to neighboring countries. Adopting *songun* diplomacy as the core foreign policy principle in the Kim Jong-un era, North Korean diplomacy once again set its eyes on the relations with the U.S. similar to the early 1990s.<sup>12</sup>

### **Kim Jong-un’s Era**

Since December 2011, when Kim Jong-il died, his successor Kim Jong-un has focused on domestic problems, with the task of overcoming the disadvantages of three generations of hereditary succession, to strengthen his ruling capacity and to stabilize the regime. Thus, he maintained “*songun* diplomacy” as the foreign policy principle and sought modification within the same line of thought rather than through a different principle. Kim Jong-un’s North Korea has set “*byungjin* (two fronts) line” as its foreign strategy goal, implying that it will develop both nuclear arms and the economy. To this end, North Korea has experimented with the following foreign policy.

First, despite the heightened tensions in DPRK-China relations from the Chinese condemnation of North Korea’s nuclear test and missile launches, Pyongyang strives to maintain its traditional alliance with Beijing because not only is China North Korea’s largest trade partner, it is also still a significant diplomatic agent for North Korea. Second, North Korea has keenly approached Japan, understanding that both countries have shared interests—North Korea needs financial assistance to overcome the economic hardship, and Japan hopes to solve the issue of the abduction of Japanese nationals. Third, Pyongyang has expanded relations with European states as well as third world countries, including those in Asia. Since Kim Jong-un took office, North Korea has endeavored to improve relations with these states and diversify its

diplomatic relations for its survival, such as Korean Workers’ Party Secretary for International Affairs Kang Sok-ju’s visit to Europe. Unfortunately, these efforts are not yielding any positive outcomes, with the international community’s diplomatic isolation still in place; “nuclear possession” lies at the center of the differences. After agreeing to suspend long-range missile launches and nuclear tests soon after Kim Jong-un’s regime was inaugurated, North Korea dumped the deal by proceeding with missile launches and nuclear tests. As a result of these betraying behaviors and military involvement in foreign policy, North Korea has not built diplomatic trust with the West, including the U.S., and the isolation lingers on.

## **RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES**

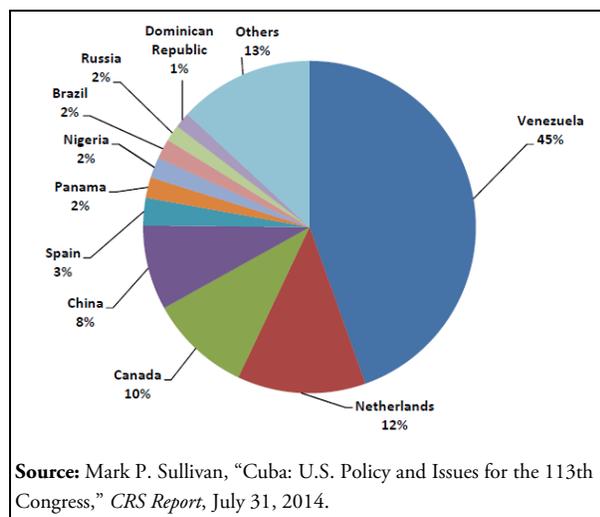
### **Cuban Case**

After more than a half century of hostility, in December 2014, United States President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raúl Castro declared an end to hostility between the two countries and normalization of diplomatic relations. And, in 2015, both countries agreed that they would reopen embassies in each other’s capitals by July. Although the U.S. and Cuba have declared the full normalization of diplomatic relations between two countries, they still have unsolved problems based on deep mistrust associated with long-standing hostility. The U.S. is concerned about Cuba’s human rights violations and the U.S. Government needs to overcome U.S. domestic opposition about diplomatic normalization with Cuba. And, Cuba is demanding the end to the U.S. economic embargo, the return of Guantanamo, where the U.S. military has its base, and the end of U.S. broadcasts aimed at Cuba.<sup>13</sup>

Even though the U.S. and Cuba have many issues that must be solved, they chose to end hostilities and undertake historic diplomatic normalization. Why did they choose the restoration of diplomatic relations? Why did the United States choose to pursue

12. Gye-dong Kim, “Foreign Policy,” pp. 155–161.

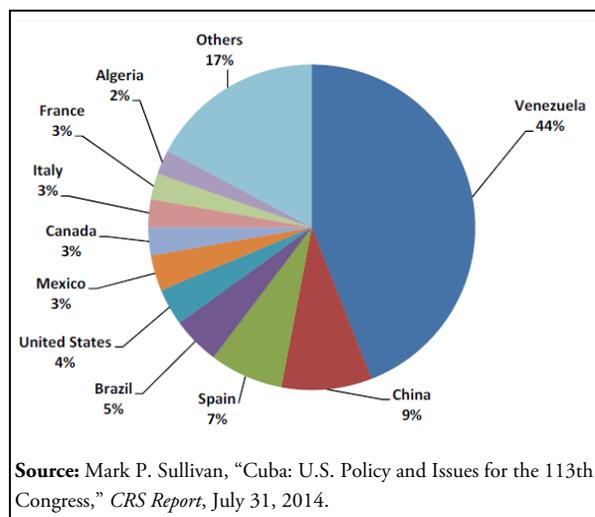
13. Korea Herald, “U.S., Cuba declare end of hostility,” July 2, 2015 <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150702000770>, Accessed July 18, 2015.

**Figure 1. Cuban Exports**

normal diplomatic relations with Cuba instead of continuing the 50-year standing embargo?

First, it is a question of effectiveness of the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba. From the start of Fidel Castro's era, Cuba has tried to diversify its international economic relations to overcome the U.S. embargo. And, in Raúl Castro's era, the diversification of international economic relations with Latin American countries like Venezuela, Brazil and Mexico, Russia, China, and European countries like Spain and the Netherlands has strengthened (see Figures 1 & 2).

Furthermore, Raúl Castro's regime has implemented other measures such as introduction of Cuban style property rights, legalization of sale of second-hand cars, and the support of own account businesses. The regime has allowed free travel for Cubans as well as foreigners residing in Cuba since 2013 without the need for exit permit. Likewise, the U.S. has lost the rationale to continuously uphold sanctions when Cuba seeks to attract foreign investment and has accepted liberalization and openings along with the diversification of its diplomacy.

**Figure 2. Cuban Imports**

Second, China's influence has been dramatically increased in Cuba as well as Latin American countries such as Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, and Ecuador. Overall, Latin American countries have already received \$22 billion in loans from China in 2014 alone, taking the total up to \$119 billion from 2005 onwards.<sup>14</sup> Like other Latin America countries, Cuba has had a very close economic relationship with China since the 2000s. Cuban-Chinese relations have developed based on trade and investments since the 1990s and have rapidly strengthened in the 2000s and China is now Cuba's second largest trading partner. When Chinese President Jiang Zemin visited Cuba in 2001, he offered an interest-free credit line of \$6.5 million, and a loan of \$200 million to modernize local telecommunications.<sup>15</sup> And, in November 2008, when Chinese President Hu Jintao visited Havana, he offered extensions on the repayment of previous loans, a donation of \$8 million for hurricane relief, and a credit of \$70 million for health infrastructure.<sup>16</sup> In addition, Cuba and China signed an array of 29 cooperation agreements when Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Havana in July 2014. Among the deals were China's Bank of Import and

14. Agustino Fontevicchia, "Obama is using Cuba to counter Russia, Iran and China's growing influence in Latin America," *Forbes*, April 16, 2015. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/afontevicchia/2015/04/16/obama-is-using-cuba-to-counter-russia-iran-and-chinas-growing-influence-in-latin-america/> Accessed July 15, 2015.

15. Daniel P. Erikson and Adam Minson, "China and Cuba: The New Face of an Old Relationship," *Hemisphere #17*, (September 22, 2006), pp. 12–15. <http://www.thedialogue.org/PublicationFiles/Cuba%20China%20Fall06.pdf> Accessed July 15, 2015.

Export loan to Cuba of \$115 million for modernization of Santiago's port, Cuba's second-largest port. And, China Minmetals Cooperation will be spending \$600 million in buying Cuba nickel ore.<sup>17</sup> Through transactions such as these, China's economic and political influence in the world has grown, and Beijing has expanded its economic and diplomatic presence in Cuba.

China's increasing its influence in Latin America, once known as the U.S. backyard, is troublesome for the U.S. in terms of maintaining its hegemony. Particularly the rapidly increasing influence of China in Cuba, 90 miles from the U.S., appears to be an appalling situation for the U.S., a reminder of the Cuban Missile Crisis in the 1960s. In response, it was deemed beneficial for the U.S. to remove sanctions and rather assist Cuba emerging as a major agent in Latin America, which expands U.S. influence and restrains Chinese influence.

Third, the U.S. isolation policy against Cuba has been gradually condemned by more and more countries around the world, and brought about U.S. diplomatic isolation in the Americas regional diplomatic stage. In the United Nations (UN), the General Assembly annually votes on a resolution condemning the U.S. embargo on Cuba. Since the resolution was first introduced in 1992, the United States has lost every vote, for 23 years in a row, by increasingly wide margins. In 2014, 188 member states voted in favor of an end to the U.S. economic, commercial, and financial embargo against Cuba and only the U.S. and Israel voted against it.

Additionally, Cuba was expelled from the U.S.-led OAS, which was established after the Second World War, when the U.S. economic embargo began in 1962, and although it the OAS invited Cuba to rejoin the organization in 2009, Cuba was unable to participate in OAS Summit of the Americas due to U.S. opposition. Under these circumstances, Latin American countries attempted to bolster regional co-

operation excluding the U.S. and established the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) in 2008 and Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in 2011. As such, there have been calls from these organizations to end the U.S. embargo. Through the new measures, the U.S. intends to embrace Cuba, to restrain anti-Americanism, and to restore its spot at the center of regional diplomacy and its influence in Latin America.

### North Korean Case

As mentioned earlier, Cuba diplomatically achieved historic progress by the announcement of the intention to achieve normalization of diplomatic relations with the United States in December 2014. However, North Korea, a state with similar traits with Cuba in terms of suffering from U.S. sanctions and adhering to a socialist system, has not yet achieved a breakthrough in relations with the U.S. and the confrontation remains. Then, is it possible for North Korea to improve relations with the U.S. and reach the stage of establishment of diplomatic relations, as Cuba has done? In a nutshell, the following reasons indicate why North Korea faces difficulty in establishing diplomatic relations with the U.S., at least in the short term.

First, the military lie at the heart of North Korea's foreign policy, playing the nuclear weapons as a diplomatic card, dissimilar to Cuba's foreign policy which is based on economic pragmatism. Conventionally, North Korea's foreign policy goal is summarized as achieving class liberation by succeeding in the revolution in the Korean Peninsula and the entire world based on anti-imperialism and autonomy. North Korea during the Cold War distinguished between the imperialist bloc led by the U.S. and the international democratic bloc led by the Soviet Union. It claimed that concerted action among socialist and communist states would be significant in bringing down imperialism. However, as the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc collapsed and the global struc-

16. Adrian H. Hearn, "Cuba and China: Lessons and Opportunities for the United States", Commissioned report for the *CubaInfo Series*, (June, 2009), p. 4. <https://cri.fiu.edu/research/commissioned-reports/cuba-china-hearn.pdf> Accessed July 15, 2015.

17. Wu Jiao and Zhang Yunbi, "China, Cuba sign cooperation agreements during Xi's visit", *China Daily*, July 23, 2014. [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2014xibricssummit/2014-07/23/content\\_17907780.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2014xibricssummit/2014-07/23/content_17907780.htm) Accessed July 20, 2015

**Table 1. North Korean GDP: Real Growth Rate (in percent)**

1999	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2011	2012
1	-3	1	1	1	1	1.8	-1.1	3.7	4	0.8	1.3

Source: CIA World Factbook.

ture restructured around the U.S. hegemon, North Korea suffered from a double whammy: diplomatic isolation and economic hardship. Afterwards, Pyongyang's foreign policy goal altered to regime security for survival and weathering of the storm of economic hardship.

Historically, North Korea has regarded the U.S. as an external security threat. For North Korea, the U.S. accounts for the division of the Korean Peninsula and the defeat in the Korean War. Moreover, Pyongyang has perceived situations such as the basing of U.S. forces in South Korea, the establishment of the South Korea-U.S.-Japan triangle relationship, and the U.S. Asia-Pacific strategy hostile to North Korea, as the factors most threatening to the regime.<sup>18</sup> Thus, North Korea reflects militarism onto its foreign policy for regime security. The reason why North Korea handles militarism as a significant tool in foreign policy is internally to control unstable domestic politics following the three-generation succession as well as to raise the regime's prestige by countering U.S.-led "imperialism" and holding negotiations in the belief that this is advantageous for regime preservation. Hence, the North Korean regime realistically reckons that the military is the only force that can protect the regime, and the "nuclear arms" is the sole instrument that the regime has in confronting and negotiating with the leader of imperialism and a threatening force, the U.S. Nevertheless, from the U.S. perspective, North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons can never be accepted, so if North Korea persists in using militarism as main means in foreign policy, the U.S. has no reason or mandate to improve relations with North Korea.

Second, North Korea's excessive political and economic dependence on China acts as a stumbling block on the way towards diversifying its diplomatic relations. North Korea's economy is in a poor condition, recording very low or negative growth except for 2008 and 2009, when the economy grew, as Table 1 indicates. Also, according to the CIA World Factbook, North Korea's GDP was \$1,800 in 2013, which is ranked at 208th among 230 countries.<sup>19</sup>

Even though it is imperative to pursue economic growth to uplift this underdeveloped economy through diplomatic and economic diversification, North Korea relies more heavily on its traditional ally, China in economic and diplomatic terms because of the fear of reforms and opening policy and the economic sanctions caused by nuclear development (see Tables 2 & 3).

At this juncture, North Korea's economy will be directly affected by China when China's economic growth slows down, and North Korea will find it difficult to find alternatives to China since it has not diversified its diplomatic portfolio. As a matter of fact, bilateral economic activities noticeably declined in 2014. This is because the DPRK-China political relations aggravated by the execution by the North Korean government of Chinese reform-inclined Jang Sung-taek and nuclear development, combined with a decline in bilateral trade due to the slowdown in China's economic growth.<sup>20</sup> As a solution, Pyongyang has been bolstering economic cooperation with Moscow as a potential substitute for China. However, as the level of dependence on China stands high, trade volume with Russia cannot match the trade volume with China.<sup>21</sup> Henceforth, the larger the de-

18. Center for North Korean Research, Sejong Institute, *National Strategy of North Korea* (Seoul: Hanul Publishing Group, 2003), pp. 92–93.

19. CIA World Factbook, <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kn.html>>

20. Suk Lee, "Introduction: 2014 North Korean economic assessment and 2015 outlook", (in Korean) *KDI North Korean Economy Review*, Issue 1 (2015), pp. 8–9.

**Table 2. North Korea-China Trade: 2012–2014 (in million dollars & percent)**

Years	Exports to China		Imports from China		Total Trade		Trade Balance
	Amount	Rate of change	Amount	Rate of change	Amount	Rate of Dependence	
2012	2,484	0.8	3,527	11.5	6,012	88.3	-1,043
2013	2,914	17.3	3,633	3.0	6,547	89.1	-719
2014	2,841	-2.5	4,023	10.7	6,864	90.1	-1,181

Source: Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA).

**Table 3. North Korea's Top 10 Trading Partners in 2014 (in million dollars & percent)**

Ranking	Country	Exports	Imports	Total	Share in World (%)
1	China	2,841	4,023	6,864	90.1
2	Russia	10.1	82.2	92.3	1.2
3	India	31.6	56.4	88	1.2
4	Thailand	19.1	57.8	76.9	1.0
5	Bangladesh	51.9	0.3	52.2	0.7
6	Singapore	0.1	48.6	48.7	0.6
7	Taiwan	40.3	3.6	43.9	0.5
8	Pakistan	17.8	16.1	33.9	0.4
9	Brazil	7.3	23.3	30.6	0.4
10	Germany	15.1	13	28.1	0.3

Source: Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency(KOTRA)

pendence on China, the deeper the diplomatic isolation of North Korea becomes. And even the economy has been falling into an uncontrollable situation. After more than 60 years of North Korea's dependence on China since the Korean War, the U.S. sees China not as a variable but as a constant in devising a policy on the Korean Peninsula and Chinese influence on North Korea cannot be seen as a factor inducing change in North Korea's policies.

Third, due to the political instability of the Kim Jong-un regime caused by the three-generation succession of power, North Korea's domestic political situation may negatively affect its foreign policy. In contrast to his father, who spent four years to complete power consolidation after Kim Il-sung's death (July 1994), Kim Jong-un completed official power succession in only seven months after the death of his predecessor (December 2011). Moreover, he purged the pro-Chinese reformist Jang Sung-taek in November 2013, removing potential challengers of power. At the moment, Kim Jong-un seems to dominate the

party and the military through a reign of terror, such as ruthless purges. However, in the absence of a charismatic supreme leader in North Korea, the party and the state are prone to confront one another rather than co-exist, and this party-military relations will be highly likely to steer the foreign policy. Up till now, the party and the military have resorted to co-existence rather than confrontation by Kim Jong-un's reign of terror, and foreign policy appears to move according to the supreme leader's policy direction. But, when the effects of the reign of terror wane in the future, and Kim Jong-un, a figure of relatively less charisma than his father and grandfather and with low political base, is unable to control the party and the military, North Korea's foreign policy might waver between the negotiation line led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the military-led hard-line policy. This unstable domestic political background created in part by the three-generation power succession, might hamper improving relations with the U.S. as Washington might sense difficulty in finding the counterpart for negotiating the normalization of diplomatic relations and the fulfillment of political and diplomatic agreements.

## CONCLUSION

The fact that U.S.-Cuba normalization of diplomatic relations signals the end of Cold War relations in Latin America provides meaningful implications for improvement of U.S.-North Korea relations, where the Cold War confrontation still holds. The diversification of Cuba's diplomatic channels, the nullification of economic sanctions by domestic reforms, the U.S. policy change in reaction to a fear of extending Chinese influence, the expansion of anti-U.S. sentiments in Latin America, etc., all encapsulate an inter-

21. Jong Kyu Lee, "North Korea's Foreign Trade: 2014 assessment and 2015 outlook", (in Korean) *KDI North Korean Economy Review*, Issue 1 (2015), pp. 52–61.

national political stimulus to the restoration of U.S.-Cuba relations. Nonetheless, unfortunately, the U.S. cannot capitalize on North Korea as a policy means to hold China in check, and because the confrontational structure in Northeast Asia surrounding the Korean Peninsula already is solidified since the Korean War in 1950, the regional environment is not a factor for the U.S. in considering its North Korea policy. Besides, the domestic political situation followed by the three-generation power succession provides a politically and diplomatically unreliable environment for the U.S.

Therefore, in order for North Korea to encourage the U.S. to cease its containment policy and to actively pursue the improvement of relations, Pyongyang

needs to create an environment that considers the following factors: First, Cuba withdrew missiles that threatened the U.S. and did not develop nuclear weapons. Second, although Raúl Castro inherited the regime from his brother Fidel, he has embraced pragmatism, economic reformism, and Chinese-style socialism. Third, Cuba gained political and diplomatic trust from the U.S. by policies, including gradual political reforms such as allowing direct voting to elect National Assembly of People's Power and economic opening policies. Therefore Cuba's case teaches a lesson to North Korea denoting that its foreign and domestic policies should take a different course from the present to approach the international community and improve relations with the U.S. in particular.