

The Helsinki Process and Civil Society Activities with the DPRK

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Hearing on Resolving Crises in East Asia through a New System of Collective Security: the Helsinki Process as a Model

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Chairman Cardin, Co-Chairman Smith, and distinguished members of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, it is an honor for me to appear today to discuss Resolving Crises in East Asia through a New System of Collective Security: the Helsinki Process as a Model. I appreciate the opportunity to testify, and applaud the Commission for exploring this approach to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Northeast Asian region.

I have been the executive director of the National Committee on North Korea (NCNK) since February 2006. The NCNK creates opportunities for informed dialogue about North Korea among experts from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences in an effort to foster greater understanding in the United States about the DPRK. We address all aspects of U.S. policy toward the DPRK, including security and human security issues.

I appreciate the opportunity to reflect today on the conditions in the United States and Europe that generated the Helsinki Final Act, and the differences and similarities with conditions in Northeast Asia today, which will inform the first part of my testimony. In the second part of my testimony, I will discuss U.S. and international private sector, nongovernment or civil society activities in the DPRK. My first opportunity to visit the DPRK was in 1998, and my most recent visit was this past October. During this period, I have been able to witness the creative programming non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society organizations have been able to implement in the DPRK.

I will be making three key points. First, the history of the two regions and the historical moments are very different, and to implement a Helsinki-like process in Northeast Asia would take considerable U.S. and regional government investment and a policy consistency that is currently lacking today. Second, despite limited government support, admirable and productive work inside the DPRK and with North Koreans is taking place in humanitarian, education, and medical fields, and the United States can contribute to these efforts by delinking security policy from what the Helsinki process called Basket III, or humanitarian exchanges. Finally, exchanges on topics of genuine regional interest may contribute to a foundation for regional problem-solving and should be encouraged both for the immediate practical benefits they can bring and in order to begin laying a pattern of cooperative regional behavior for the future.

1970s Europe and Northeast Asia Today: Similarities and Differences

As the Commissioners know, the Helsinki Process did not represent a single moment in history and the outcomes of the Final Act were not fully anticipated in 1975. The Helsinki Process was not designed to undermine the Soviet bloc. To the contrary, the Act underscores that signatory states “will respect each other's sovereign equality and individuality as well as all the rights inherent in and encompassed by its sovereignty” and “respect each other's right freely to choose and develop its political, social, economic and cultural systems as well as its right to determine its laws and regulations.”¹ Nevertheless, the Helsinki Process is sometimes credited with contributing to the changes that swept through the region a decade and a half later, and the OSCE is perhaps best known today for its ongoing work on human rights and democratization. For these reasons, the DPRK would likely look at a Helsinki Process designed for the Northeast Asian region as a Trojan Horse, synonymous with a covert strategy for regime change.

Yet the Helsinki Final Act as it was originally conceived -- a regional process with the primary goal of increasing regional stability by addressing the most salient interests of the opposing forces – may have merit. Therefore, in exploring whether or not it is possible to apply its lessons to the problems Northeast Asia currently faces, we should consider the Final Act’s initial goals and the basis on which they were reached, not the impact it has come to represent. From this

¹ Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe Final Act Helsinki 1 August 1975.
<http://www.hri.org/docs/Helsinki75.html#Introduction>

perspective, it is useful to examine the similarities and differences between Europe in the mid-1970s and Northeast Asia today.

Territorial Disputes and Arms Races as Possible Triggers of War

Cold War Europe, like East Asia today, contained several territorial hotspots that threatened to trigger a broad conflagration. The U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms race and the posture of conventional forces on the Continent added to this tension. At several points in the early years of the Cold War, the contested status of Berlin nearly led to conflict between the two blocs. However, by the time the Helsinki process got underway, the security situation in Europe had become more stable, with détente leading both sides to a greater acceptance of the status quo and arms control agreements stabilizing the dynamics of mutually assured destruction.

In contemporary East Asia, in contrast, longstanding points of regional tension have only gotten more heated in recent years, raising the fear that small incidents could spiral out of control and lead to military confrontations. Disputes over history and conflicting territorial claims to small outlying islands have raised nationalist fervors in the region. While tension between Japan and China over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands has been very high over the past year, it is the inter-Korean maritime dispute over the Northern Limit Line in the West Sea that has actually led to military clashes on several occasions. North Korea's continuing progress in developing nuclear weapons and long-range missiles deeply threatens the security of the region, while South Korea's recent vow to retaliate against a new North Korean provocation by striking "not only the origin of provocation and its supporting forces but also its command leadership"² further increases instability and the risk of war by misadventure.

Prioritization of Foreign Policy Issues

Throughout the Cold War, the top foreign policy priority of the United States was unambiguous: mitigating the geopolitical threat of the Soviet Union. In this bipolar power system, the Helsinki Process was just one of the tools by which the U.S. used diplomatic engagement to manage and reduce the risks posed by the USSR. For example, in addition to the Helsinki Process, the U.S.

² Maj. Gen. Kim Yong-hyun, quoted in Choe Sang-hun, "South Korea Pushes Back on North's Threats," *New York Times*, March 6, 2013.

pursued rapprochement with China, engaged in arms control negotiations, and authorized commercial activities such as grain exports to the USSR.

Today, the U.S. does not have such an overriding policy priority, and Northeast Asia is just one of several regions of strategic importance to the United States. While U.S. troops have withdrawn from Iraq and will soon withdraw from Afghanistan, events in the Middle East continue to receive the most high-level attention from policymakers. The U.S. rebalance to Asia is focused more on Southeast Asia than on Japan or Korea, and as instability has increased on the Korean Peninsula, the State Department has eliminated a high-level staff position working on North Korea.

Yet Northeast Asia now faces three major points of tension – on the Korean peninsula, in Sino-Japanese relations, and to a lesser extent in South Korean-Japanese relations – that could potentially interact with each other in ways that could cause spikes in tensions and make it harder to ensure that crisis situations do not spin out of control. Furthermore, as the center of the global economy shifts toward Asia, the geo-economic considerations of regional instability are profound. A Helsinki-like process could shift the emphasis from regional bilateral relationships to regional multilateral solutions, but getting to this point will require the sustained attention and effort of the United States.

Multiple Agreements Prior to the Helsinki Final Act Created Momentum

During the Cold War, several gradual steps between the two Germanys (German rapprochement was an essential component of greater regional initiatives) and between the two blocs created the conditions that allowed for the CSCE dialogue to begin in 1973 and conclude with the Final Act in 1975. These steps included early cultural and educational exchanges, and gained pace in 1963 with the Limited Test Ban Treaty and the Christmas border pass agreement in Berlin. Beginning in the early 1970s, the two sides reached a series of diplomatic breakthroughs, including the abandonment of the Hallstein Doctrine blocking third countries from establishing diplomatic relations with both East and West Germany,³ the Four Party Agreement on Berlin in 1971, the 1972 Salt I agreements, and the Basic Treaty between the two Germanys, ratified in 1973. By

³ The U.S. and the GDR established diplomatic relations in 1974.

defusing specific points of tension and quieting the arms race, these agreements set the stage for broader engagement on security, trade, and humanitarian issues between East and West.

Northeast Asia does not have a strong historical tradition of multilateralism, although the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Asia-Europe Meeting, ASEAN Plus Three, the Shangri-La Dialogue and the East Asia Summit could serve as a foundation for future regional organizations with broader capacities. In addition, the annual China–Japan–South Korea trilateral summit holds hope for improving trilateral coordination among the three countries and increasing cooperation and peace in the region.⁴

However, many of the security agreements underpinning diplomatic relations in Northeast Asia face significant challenges. The treaty establishing diplomatic relations between South Korea and Japan in 1965 did not address the issue of comfort women during World War II, or the status of the Dokdo/Takeshima islets – two disputes that haunt ROK-Japan relations today. Similarly, Japan’s treaty establishing relations with the PRC ignored the Senkakus/Diaoyu dispute.

Security arrangements on the Korean Peninsula are particularly problematic. The Korean War never officially ended: each half of the Korean Peninsula claims sovereignty over its entirety, and the U.S. has not established diplomatic relations with the DPRK. Earlier this year, North Korea declared the Armistice Agreement that ended fighting in the Korean War “completely nullified.”⁵

Several of the major agreements on the Korean Peninsula, such as the September 19, 2005 Joint Statement on Denuclearization or the joint statements from the two inter-Korean summits, demonstrated initial successes. For example, the Northeast Asia Peace and Security Working Group established as part of the Six Party Talks created a set of guiding principles, agreed to by all six parties, that included parameters for developing peace-building and confidence-building mechanisms which were based to a large extent on the Helsinki Final Act, the UN Charter and

⁴ In 2011 a Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat was established in Seoul, making it the regional forum with the most well-established support structure.

⁵ “US, S. Korea to be Held Accountable for Catastrophic Consequences: CPRK,” *Korea Central News Agency*, March 11, 2013.

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁶ However, none of the major agreements on the Korean Peninsula have been fully implemented and they have therefore lost momentum; in many cases both sides have failed to live up to their obligations. The critical question is why and how these agreements have lost momentum, and how to change that calculus moving forward.

Foreign Policy Consistency

The development of a consistent, nonpartisan West German policy toward East Germany was a necessary element of rapprochement between them. Ostpolitik, a policy to improve West Germany's relations with East Germany, Poland, and the Soviet Union, was developed under the leadership of Social Democrats, including Chancellor Willy Brandt. It initially faced many challenges from opposition parties, particularly the Christian Democratic Union. However, Brandt was re-elected in 1972 and the Berlin Treaty was ratified in 1973. Helmut Schmidt, also a Social Democrat, became Chancellor in 1974 and signed the Final Act the following year. After the West German opposition regained power in 1982, Chancellor Helmut Kohl pursued a similar policy line toward the GDR, maintaining continuity in inter-German relations. U.S. policy in support of German rapprochement also remained consistent in spite of increasing tension with the Soviet Union over security and human rights issues.

In contrast, South Korea's North Korea policy has been partisan and inconsistent. South Korean policy changed drastically between the conciliatory "Sunshine Policy" of President Kim Dae-Jung and the succeeding "Peace and Prosperity Policy" of Roh Moo-Hyun (1998-2008) and the more confrontational approach of President Lee Myung-Bak (2008-2013). President Park Geun-Hye has vowed to seek a balanced approach,⁷ and some hope that she will ultimately be able to forge a policy that garners greater support throughout the Korean Peninsula and that can be sustained through future administrations.

U.S. policy toward North Korea has also seen dramatic shifts, particularly when new administrations have taken office. Skeptical of the Clinton administration's diplomacy with North Korea, the Bush administration announced a North Korea policy review early in its tenure,

⁶ Frances Mautner-Markhoff, personal communication, December 8, 2013.

⁷ President Park's strategy towards the DPRK is known as *trustpolitik*. For further reading see, Park Geun-Hye, "A New Kind of Korea: Building Trust Between Seoul and Pyongyang," *Foreign Affairs* (September 2011).

and took an anti-engagement approach for several years before adjusting its policy during Bush's second term. And as the Obama administration's former NSC staffer Jeff Bader recounts in his book, he rejected in early 2009 a proposed message from Secretary Clinton to North Korea that "focused mainly on the policy pursued by the Bush administration in its final weeks, so as to provide the North Koreans with a sense of continuity in policy." Bader argued that "the new president and the new national security team... deserved a chance to consider the direction we were going in before the bureaucracy attempted to tie us to existing processes and policies."⁸ No regional process has a hope of succeeding until U.S. and South Korean policy have a chance to last beyond a presidential administration.

Regional Commitment to Economic Integration

The momentum created in Europe by the Helsinki Process persisted and had a profound impact on how the region viewed itself, even after Cold War tensions began to flare up again in the early 1980s. The process of gradual economic integration between Western Europe and the Eastern Bloc created a set of overlapping interests that rusted holes into the iron curtain. Western European governments, for example, stood firm in their support for an energy pipeline linking Europe and the Soviet Union despite criticism of the project, calculating correctly that the USSR's economic motivations would outweigh the possibility that it would begin using the pipeline for political leverage.

Growing economic ties between the countries of Northeast Asia, however, have not dampened political tensions in the region – a problem that President Park Geun-Hye has called the "Asia Paradox."⁹ North Korea is the outlier in the region's economic success story, although China's economic ties to the DPRK are deepening and inter-Korean trade is also rebounding after the restoration of the Kaesong Industrial Complex (though not yet to pre-suspensions levels). Given the U.S. emphasis on sanctions, there has been some friction between the U.S. and its partners in the region over economic engagement with the DPRK, and if the Park government succeeds in its goal of expanding inter-Korean economic relations, more of this tension can be anticipated in

⁸ Jeffrey A. Bader, *Obama and China's Rise: An Insider's Account of America's Asia Strategy* (Brookings Institution Press, 2012), Google Play edition, 70. Bader sought a policy toward the DPRK that was more consultative with the other four parties in the Six Party talks.

⁹ President Park Geun-Hye, "Speech to Joint Session of Congress," May 8, 2013. Accessed on December 6, 2013 at http://www.ncnk.org/resources/publications/President_Park_speech_at_US_Congress.pdf/

the future. Nonetheless, a multilateral process that pursues regional economic cooperation could be a stabilizing force. Rail or pipeline infrastructure connecting the two Koreas to their neighbors would be in the economic interest of all parties in the region; although current levels of mistrust on the Peninsula run too deep for this sort of large-scale project to be feasible today, it stands as an example of what could be accomplished if some security concerns were alleviated.

Willingness to Compromise

The Helsinki Process began with a proposal from the USSR to finalize post-WWII boundaries and guarantee territorial integrity, a proposal which was initially viewed with suspicion by the West. Neither the U.S. nor its allies were eager to set boundaries, but because the dialogue included topics that were primarily in their interest, such as human rights and economic engagement, the West was willing to negotiate. All participants in the Helsinki Process were there not to engage in dialogue for its own sake, not to appease the other side, but to further their own goals.

In order to apply a Helsinki-like process to East Asia, the mechanism will need to bring everybody's concerns to the table. Doing this will require compromises, and will not always be easy politically. First, the U.S. and China will need to find more common ground in their stances toward North Korea – currently, there is an overlap in many fundamental interests, but not in priorities or tactics. Second, the U.S. and its partners in the region need to re-examine the incentives that have been offered to the DPRK in exchange for denuclearization, and be willing to find creative ways to break out of the current stalemate on the issue.

Political Will

Although the Helsinki Process is today seen as a successful initiative, it is worth recalling that the Final Act was controversial in its time, and the Cold War tensions that re-emerged in the years afterwards cast doubt on its relevance. In signing the Helsinki Accords, President Ford withstood criticism from Congress and the public on human rights and border issues, and this gambit paid off in the long run. Similarly, the development of a multilateral security framework in Northeast Asia will be a long-term process, and there will undoubtedly be bumps along the road. It will entail taking political risks to get a meaningful agreement and implementation of

that agreement, but merely continuing to go along with the status quo in Northeast Asia would ultimately be the far greater risk.

It is also important to recall that U.S. allies in Western Europe played a more central role in moving the Helsinki Process forward than did the United States. This didn't make the U.S. security commitment to Europe any less credible or its political influence less relevant, but rather reflected a strong partnership and trust among allies as well as the European experience prior to World War II. As Northeast Asia is less integrated as a cohesive region than Europe, the U.S. may play a larger role in shaping a multilateral security dialogue. However, the impetus for such a process needs to come from within the region as well. President Park's call for a "Northeast Asian Peace and Cooperation Initiative" that would initially focus on regional confidence-building measures is a good start, and the U.S. should strongly signal its support for such a mechanism.

Asia Today

The Helsinki Process spurred an uptick in private society initiatives and exchanges, and this may be the most important lesson we can look at today: what civil society initiatives are already taking place in the DPRK, and how can we support their expansion. The U.S. should support private sector and civil society initiatives by regularizing its visa process, remaining open to perspectives gained through Track II dialogue, lending support to humanitarian initiatives and person-to-person exchanges, and supporting regional initiatives.

Private Sector Activities: People-To-People Exchanges

President Ford's comments before leaving for Europe to attend the OSCE Conference where he would sign the Final Act in 1975 reflected a confidence in the positive impact and power of people-to-people exchanges:

The fact that these very different governments can agree, even on paper, to such principles as greater human contacts and exchanges, improved conditions for journalists, reunification for families and international marriages, a freer flow of information and

publications, and increased tourism and travel, seems to me a development worthy of positive and public encouragement by the United States.¹⁰

By that time the U.S. and the Soviet Union had been participating in academic and cultural exchanges for two decades, while science and technology exchanges began in the 1972-74 period. The Final Act aimed to facilitate an expansion of such activities.

Less than two years after the Final Act was signed, the U.S. Helsinki Commission convened a hearing to assess its implementation. Joseph Duffey, Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs, noted that other Final Act provisions broke new ground, but that since educational and cultural exchanges were already taking place the most significant impact was to expand exchanges at the nongovernmental level:

The Final Act has confirmed, on a high political level, the legitimacy of these programs which we have been conducting for the past 20 years. Since the signing of the Final Act, we have sought to expand these activities for the most part under bilateral arrangements with these countries... We have assisted private American institutions in establishing exchanges, working closely with them, providing advice when it has been sought, and in some cases, partial funding through grants-in-aid... The most promising development is direct contacts between universities in the United States, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.¹¹

While the U.S. had a gradually growing array of private contacts and exchanges with the Soviet Union throughout most of the Cold War, there was only a minor presence of NGOs or UN agencies in North Korea until 1995 and 1996, after North Korea issued its first appeal for

¹⁰ Gerald R. Ford, "Text of Remarks at a Meeting with Representatives of European Background Concerning the Conference and Security and Cooperation in Europe," July 25, 1975, in Gerald R. Ford, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1975), Book Two, 1033. <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/ppotpus/4732052.1975.002/103?page=root:size=100:view=image;q1=Gerald+Ford>.

¹¹ Joseph Duffey, Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Volume III, Information Flow, and Cultural and Educational Exchanges, May 19, 24 and 25 1977*, 95th Cong., 1st sess., (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1977), 16-18

international assistance.¹² Humanitarian aid efforts expanded rapidly in the 1990s in response to the North Korean famine, and in following years a handful of U.S. and other NGOs remained in the DPRK developing agricultural, medical and capacity-building programs.

Ongoing Civil Society Initiatives in North Korea

The Engage DPRK mapping initiative is a tool that demonstrates the range of private sector activities that have taken place in North Korea. It was recently developed by Jiehae Blackman to “help those who want work inside the country by illustrating the different foreign engagement activities that have taken place inside the DPRK.” According to the www.EngageDPRK.org website, “By identifying the various foreign activities throughout the country, ranging from noodle factories and retail stores to goat farms and vaccination programs, we endeavor to gain deeper insight into the living conditions of local communities, the kinds of projects that are possible, and the types of working relationships between foreigners and the DPRK government and citizens that make for successful, sustainable projects.”

The initiative draws mainly from publically available information and therefore cannot be considered comprehensive; there are a number of activities that take place with little or no public profile. Even so, the results may be surprising to most Americans: for the 18 years covered by this project (1995-2012) the initiative was able to identify 4,4000 activities implemented as part of approximately 1,100 discreet projects carried out by 480 organizations coming from 29 different countries as well as the UN and other international agencies. These projects include humanitarian relief (assistance meeting immediate needs in health, nutrition, and emergency relief/rehabilitation), development assistance (meeting long-term needs), educational assistance (addressing educational needs for the general public), professional training (standalone introductions to new thoughts and principles, separate from capacity building), and business activities. Sports and cultural exchanges were not included in this project.

The initiative provides a public interactive map on its website identifying the locations where these projects are being implemented throughout the country. Each project has been broken

¹² For more information on humanitarian assistance to North Korea see, Karin J. Lee, “The United States Humanitarian Experience in the DPRK, 1996 to 2009 - U.S. NGOs, the U.S. Administration and Congress,” November 2007. http://www.ncnk.org/resources/publications/Humanitarian-Conf-2009_Karin-Lee_US_Humanitarian_Experience.pdf

down into “activities,” which are what users are able to see on the interactive map. Information was only uploaded when complete data was available; if data was missing (for example, the starting and ending dates), information about the activity was not included on the map. Because of this, information is less readily available in the early years covered by the initiative. Furthermore, only a fraction of Chinese businesses were included because information on their activities was incomplete.

As can be seen in the screen shots in the appendix of all non-business activities shown on the map, there has been a high concentration of activities in areas such as Pyongyang, South Pyongan, North Pyongan, North Hwanghae, South Hamgyong, and Kangwon Provinces. Such areas typically have high concentrations of population, are particularly vulnerable to flooding, or experience greater food insecurity because of lack of access to farms or markets. Many of the concentrations of activities also represent sites where an NGO, INGO or UN agency has worked long term with a particular community, farm, orphanage, hospital or clinic on projects to enhance food security (such as through an agricultural project or a food production facility) or on a medical project.

As noted, this map captures some of the private sector activities from 29 countries, including the United States. Here are a few examples.

World Vision: Access to Clean Water

World Vision’s community development project in Dochi-Ri, a community of 12,000, increases access to clean water through building water systems and providing solar energy to provide electricity for the school and clinic as well local residents. World Vision also works to reduce malnutrition by providing school children with daily lunches. World Vision began its work in the DPRK in 1995 in response to a DPRK request for aid. Since then, they have provided noodle factories with equipment and supplies to produce meals for thousands of people, helped agriculture and health systems recover following the 1998 floods, and built greenhouses to improve vegetable production.¹³

¹³ World Vision Website, <http://www.worldvision.org/our-impact/country-profiles/north-korea>; Victor Hsu, “A DPRK-Shangri-la,” January 2009. <http://www.ncnk.org/resources/newsletter-content-items/ncnk-newsletter-vol-2-no-1-a-dprk-shangrila>

American Friends Service Committee: Improving Farming Techniques

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) works with the Academy of Agricultural Science and four farms on programs tailored to the specific conditions of each farm, with an emphasis on experimenting with different farming methods to increase food production and to protect soil fertility. Most recently, AFSC has been training farmers in a new cultivation method that requires 25% of the seed and fertilizer normally used for seed-bed preparation and that also decreased the labor input needed for transplanting. The new method increases yields by 0.5 to 1 ton per hectare. Like other U.S. NGOs, AFSC has built unheated greenhouses, which can grow crops even in winter, bringing variety to the diet; the extra vegetable harvests also generate income for the farm, which is used to purchase necessary inputs such as tires and fuel. AFSC also brings farmers to China for study tours to introduce new farming methods. A farm manager notes that the cooperative farms with which AFSC works are the “model farms” in their counties: “The government does field trips to our farms, we have visits by other farmers – so our country has ways of disseminating new ideas and ways of sharing knowledge.”¹⁴

Pyongyang University of Science and Technology

Founded by Korean-American Chin-Kyung “James” Kim, the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology (PUST) is the first private university in the DPRK. Originally conceived in 2001, its construction took nearly a decade. According to its Facebook page, President Kim started the school “with a group of evangelical Christians who have a heart and prayer to make an eternal impact in North Korea by educating its future leaders”;¹⁵ it is funded by churches and received a one-time donation from the South Korean government of one million U.S. dollars.

The 230-acre campus, with 17 buildings, held its first classes in October 2010. PUST currently has three schools: Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Industry and

¹⁴ AFSC Website: <https://afsc.org/story/strawberries-winter-afscs-program-north-korea>; <https://afsc.org/video/improving-rice-production-north-korea-dprk>; <https://afsc.org/story/bringing-sustainable-farming-farmers-together-china>.

¹⁵ PUST Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/pustkp>.

Management (IM), and Agriculture, Food and Life Sciences (AFL).¹⁶ Plans for a new School of Public Healthcare were discussed at the second international conference at PUST this past October, which featured researchers from the UK, Australia and the United States, as well as PUST graduate students presenting “their interdisciplinary research integrating medical science, public health, and their own discipline in science and technology.” All academic offerings have been designed to apply to purely civilian applications.

PUST currently has about 400 undergraduates and 110 graduate students and plans to eventually expand enrollment to 2,000 students. A handful of PUST graduates have studied abroad or are currently studying at Sweden’s Uppsala University and Britain’s University of Westminster and Cambridge University.

University of British Columbia Knowledge Partnership Program

The University of British Columbia (UBC) established the Canada-DPRK Knowledge Partnership Program (KPP) in 2010, the first and only academic exchange program with North Korea in North America of its type. Each year the KPP brings North Korean university professors to UBC for a six-month study program at UBC on topics such as modern economic theory, finance, trade, and business practices. The North Korean professors also study English and attend culture classes. The North Korean scholars have come from Kim Il Sung University, Wonsan Economic University, the University of National Economy and the Pyongyang University of Foreign Studies. UBC Professor Kyung-Ae Park, who founded the KPP program, noted in an interview with the Korea Times that “It is too early to measure the overall impact of the KPP as it is only in its third year. The KPP provides a non-political forum for open dialogue with North Koreans on a variety of issues to build North Korea’s confidence in engagement with educational institutions and allow the formation of meaningful personal and institutional relationships.”¹⁷

Track II Dialogue

¹⁶ Michael Alison Chandler, “Private University in North Korea Offers Lessons in Science and World Peace,” *Washington Post*, October 7, 2011.

¹⁷ Chung Ah-young, “NK crucial for expanding Korean studies.” *The Korea Times*, October 27, 2013.

Because official dialogue with the DPRK is sometimes strained or impossible, the nongovernment sector also engages with North Koreans on security matters in Track II or Track 1.5 dialogue.¹⁸ A handful of these dialogues have been taking place for over a decade, with several organizations hosting them at regular intervals. Some programs are primarily bilateral or focused on the DPRK, such as several dialogues held this fall which sought to test the possibility of the resumption of negotiations over the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs. Others are multilateral, such as the Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD), which brings together academics and officials from each of the Six Party Talks countries to informally discuss regional issues and cooperation, including issues related to the DPRK. The Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), another multilateral forum that includes the DPRK, similarly addresses regional security, but involves participants from a wider range of countries and covers a broader scope of issues.

Some Track II dialogues have turned out to be valuable adjuncts to official diplomacy: for example both DPRK and US diplomats credited the June 30-July 1, 2005 National Committee on American Foreign Policy meeting with helping to restart Six Party Talks. U.S. Special Envoy Joseph DeTrani thanked organizers for playing a critical role in "getting this process back in motion," and North Korea's Ambassador Han Song Ryol said the meetings "provided [the] decisive breakthrough for the resumption of the nuclear six-party talks."¹⁹ On some occasions, Track II activities have also been used for sending important messages, such as North Korea's revelation in 2010 of its surprisingly advanced uranium enrichment program.

While most Track II dialogues do not lead to such major developments, regular meetings with DPRK officials can allow for much more direct insight into North Korean thinking on foreign policy than one can get by reading statements published by the DPRK's state-run news media. For example, a Track II event held in the summer of 2012 accurately indicated North Korea's stance over the following year. Much of the benefit of Track II also comes from two sides

¹⁸ "Track I" refers to official meetings between or among official representatives from two or more governments. "Track II" is used to describe talks and meetings regarding policy issues at which there is no official government presence; Track 1.5 refers to unofficial dialogue with government officials participating in a non-official capacity. This section draws from Karin J. Lee, "NCNK Newsletter Vol. 1 No. 6: The DPRK and Track II Exchanges," November 6, 2008.

¹⁹ "The U.S. and North Korea: A Track II Meeting Brings Results" The Carnegie Reporter, Vol. 3, No. 3, Fall 2005. <http://carnegie.org/publications/carnegie-reporter/single/view/article/item/145/>.

establishing relationships and familiarity with one another over time. Short-term results in any Track II format (not only those involving North Korea) are rare, according to Dr. Ronald Fisher from American University; he says that “Most of the successful interventions in this field involve a continuing series of interactions or workshops over time – sometimes ten years or more.”²⁰

Government Support

One interesting point of comparison between the Eastern Bloc and Northeast Asia is the amount of U.S. government involvement in Basket III (humanitarian) activities. As noted above, government-sponsored programming with the Soviet bloc actually preceded the private-sector engagement proposed in the Final Act. Once the Final Act was signed, U.S. government and private sector officials could turn to the U.S. Helsinki Commission both for help overcoming obstacles and funding.²¹

In Northeast Asia, many governments, including the United States, have forged and continue to participate in exchanges – after all, the U.S.-China Ping Pong Diplomacy preceded the Helsinki Final Act by half a decade. The programs throughout the region are too numerous to review.

However, government-initiated exchanges with North Korea are much less robust, although EU countries have supported some development and training activities.²² Not all of these programs have endured. After providing humanitarian relief in 1995 in response to the famine, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation opened an office in Pyongyang in 1997, and began to implement a range of development projects, including running the Pyongyang Business School. But beginning in 2012, the SDC ended its development work and now implements “a purely

²⁰ M. J. Zuckerman. "Track II Diplomacy: Can Unofficial Talks Avert Disaster?" The Carnegie Reporter, Vol. 3, No. 3, Fall 2005. <http://carnegie.org/publications/carnegie-reporter/single/view/article/item/136/>.

²¹ Allan H. Kassoff, director of International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), commented that since IREX was founded in 1968 it had become a “major channel for advanced research between the US and the Soviet countries” but that obstacles still remained – primarily in regard to access to information for western scholars. Kassoff hoped that the Commission could help to resolve these issues. Hearings before the CSCE, *op cit.*, p. 72.

²² For example, Handicapped International’s work in the DPRK is supported by the Dutch Embassy, the Belgian Direction Générale de la Coopération au Développement, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and other sources. <http://www.handicapinternational.be/en/dpr-korea>; North Koreans have also attended SIDA’s short-term training programs, etc...

humanitarian programme” in the DPRK, which aims to “to improve food and income security, water supplies, waste water management and protection of the environment.”²³

The U.S. government was the major donor of humanitarian assistance to the DPRK during the famine years, and also provided some funding for exchange programs in the years immediately following the Agreed Framework. However, beyond that, U.S. support for Basket III-type exchanges has been inconsistent.

The most fundamental area where the U.S. government could support private exchanges is the issuance of visas for North Koreans to visit the United States. Whereas one of the key tenets of the Helsinki Final Act was that progress in one area would be delinked from progress in other areas, for most of the last two decades the U.S. policy has been to approve visas as an incentive or reward to the DPRK, while denying them to signal U.S. displeasure or to mete out symbolic “punishment.”

This practice of using visa approvals as part of the carrot-and-stick approach has been employed by both Republican and Democratic administrations, and has not been across the board; during some periods, for example, visas have been generally been routinely approved for humanitarian and academic programs. However, visas are considerably less routinely approved for political and cultural events, and approval of visits to Washington, DC has been rare.

Cultural exchanges provide a good example of the sharp contrast between U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union in the ‘60s and ‘70s and current U.S. policy toward the DPRK. The visit of the New York Philharmonic to Pyongyang in 2008 was the most-widely reported visit of a U.S. music group to the DPRK, although it was just one of many U.S. musical groups non-governmental organizations have brought to perform in the DPRK.²⁴ At the time of the New

²³ SDC website, <http://www.swiss-cooperation.admin.ch/northkorea/>

²⁴ Other U.S. musicians who have performed in Pyongyang include chamber music, blue grass, Christian rock (the twice-platinum Grammy-award band Casting Crowns won an award for their performance of Amazing Grace in Pyongyang), and a 150-man male chorus comprised primarily of ministers of music serving in Georgia Baptist Convention Churches, The Sons of Jubal. See Karin J. Lee, “The New York Philharmonic in North Korea. A New Page in US-DPRK Relations?” *Japan Focus*, March 11, 2008. http://www.japanfocus.org/-Karin_J_-Lee/2694#sthash.Hw4gpNdn.dpuf, also <https://castingcrowns.com/node/626> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOh6Hd9c3Qk&noredirect=1>.

York Philharmonic's performance, musicians and organizers in both countries hoped to arrange a reciprocal visit by a North Korean orchestra to the United States. However, although DPRK orchestras have performed in several European countries,²⁵ they have not performed in the United States because U.S. visas have not been granted.

U.S. government officials have explained that issuing visas is “one of the few points of leverage” the U.S. government has over the DPRK.²⁶ Yet the practice has had no effect on core DPRK policies. It has, however, undermined serious efforts to bring the fullest possible number of North Koreans to this country and introduce them to the realities of American society and culture.

The uncertainty of obtaining visas for North Koreans means that many civil society organizations will not invite North Korean groups to the U.S. unless they feel some confidence that visas will be issued; this dynamic has closed doors for exchanges in which North Koreans could have visited the United States and gained exposure to the breadth and diversity of the American experience.

Without a doubt, U.S. safety and security interests must be of primary concern. No North Korean should be allowed to enter the U.S. without thorough vetting. And there are specific, limited instances – such as requests to visit by DPRK officials at a particularly delicate time – when denial of visas may have symbolic and tactical utility. However, depoliticizing this issue would quietly remove a serious obstacle to broader and more regular exchanges at the interpersonal, cultural, educational, and professional levels.

Next Steps: Regional Networks

As the private sector considers next steps, one area for growth may be regional programming on a range of humanitarian and environmental issues. As noted above, one of the sharpest contrasts between Europe in the 1970s and Northeast Asia today is the negative trajectory of regional disputes. While governments in Northeast Asia obviously have the key responsibility for

²⁵ See for example David Ng, “Orchestras from North Korea, France perform concert in Paris.” *Los Angeles Times*, March 15, 2012.

²⁶ Personal communication, multiple officials on different occasions.

overcoming these divisions and resolving or at the least diminishing the intensity of territorial disputes, regional bodies working on apolitical topics of mutual interest may prove a way to build a foundation for regional collaboration at a higher level.

In this regard, some practitioners believe that scientific exchanges and “science diplomacy” may be of particular value in building bridges.²⁷ One key reason is that the value to every country is indisputable; participation takes place out of pure self-interest. Positive outcomes in improving cooperation and communication beyond the topic of the exchange or cooperation program would be a welcome ancillary benefit but is not necessary for the program to succeed. Thus, although activities such as these may start out as civil society efforts, they could evolve into initiatives involving support and participation from the U.S. government in the future.

Mt. Paektu/Changbaishan: Volcano Research

Environmental issues provide a rich area for exchanges, especially when linked to disasters that have the potential to cause cross-border destruction like typhoons, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Mt. Paektu, (also known as Changbaishan, Mt. Baekdu and Baitoushan), an active volcano which straddles the Chinese/North Korean border, provides a useful example of the kind of collaboration that is possible when all sides have an inherent interest in an issue.

As became obvious with the April 2010 volcanic eruption in Iceland, volcanic ash recognizes no borders. Mt. Paektu is “considered to be the most dangerous volcano in China due to its history of large explosive eruptions.”²⁸ Recent Chinese research has detected “anomalous activity,” resulting in a call for “further research on monitoring this active volcano to reduce hazards and risks of future eruptions.”²⁹ China would face the greatest threat from flood damage or “lahars” (a mixture of water and volcanic ash --the lake holds 2 billion tons of water and the outlet is on

²⁷ For useful discussions of science cooperation with the DPRK, see Stuart J. Thorson, Frederick F. Carriere, Jongwoo Han, and Thomas D. Harblin, "Notes on the SU-KCUT Research Collaboration and Exchange Program," and Linda Staheli, "U.S. Science Engagement Consortium," both in Gi-Wook Shin and Karin J. Lee, eds., *U.S.-DPRK Educational Exchanges: Assessment and Future Strategy*, (Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center Books, 2011). http://iis-db.stanford.edu/pubs/23213/US_DPRK_Educational_Exchanges.pdf.

²⁸ John Seach, Baitoushan Volcano. Volcano Live. <http://www.volcanolive.com/baitoushan.html>.

²⁹ Lingyun Ji, Jiandong Xu, Qingliang Wang, and Yuan Wan, “Episodic Deformation at Changbaishan Tianchi Volcano, Northeast China During 2004 to 2010, Observed by Persistent Scatterer Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar,” *Journal of Applied Remote Sensing*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (October 4, 2013).

the Chinese side of the border), and both sides are at risk from pyroclastic flows. Furthermore, depending on the season and the weather, volcanic ash could engulf North Korea and fall on Japan or Vladivostok.³⁰ A Chinese research paper from 2003 noted that Changbaishan, along with two other active volcanos in China, “pose a significant threat to hundreds of thousands of people and [would be] likely to cause substantial economic losses.”³¹

Mt. Paektu’s location straddling an international border makes it particularly appropriate for international scientific collaboration. Projects designed to characterize the volcano, monitoring efforts, and planning of future eruption scenarios require gathering and sharing data across political borders; comprehensive information sharing increases the chances of a robust response to any volcanic activity.

According to Dr. James Hammond, NERC Research Fellow, Department of Earth Science and Engineering, Imperial College London, “Because of the lack of politics involved in understanding a potentially hazardous volcano, this topic has already generated significant international cooperation, including North Korean participation in some bilateral and regional meetings.” For example, in 2011, under the Lee Myung Bak administration, the two Koreas held two “expert meetings” to discuss the volcano, although the proposed plans to hold a joint seminar and conduct a joint field trip to Mt. Paektu were never realized. That same year, the American Association for the Advancement of Science began a scientific collaboration project with the DPRK on Mt. Paektu’s seismic activity. The UK’s Royal Society joined the project in 2013, with participation by the Imperial College London and University of Cambridge.³²

Yet North Korea is not a regular participant in regional bodies focused on environmental disaster preparedness. For example, the Asia-Pacific Region Global Earthquake and Volcano Eruption

³⁰ Richard Stone and James Hammond, personal communications, December 7-8, 2013. See also Jiandong Xu et al., “Recent Unrest of Changbaishan Volcano, Northeast China: A Precursor of a Future Eruption?” *Geophysical Research Letters*, Vol. 39, No. 16 (August 28, 2012); and Haiquan Wei, Guoming Liu, James Gill, “Review of Eruptive Activity at Tianchi Volcano, Changbaishan, Northeast China: Implications for Possible Future Eruptions,” *Bulletin of Volcanology*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (April 2013).

³¹ H. Wei et al., “Three Active Volcanoes in China and Their Hazards,” *Journal of Asian Earth Sciences*, Vol. 21, No. 5 (February 2003), pp. 515-526.

³² Megan Phelan, “New Partners Keep Watch Over North Korean Volcano,” American Association for the Advancement of Science website, September 5, 2013. <http://www.aaas.org/news/new-partners-keep-watch-over-north-korean-volcano>.

Risk Management Hub, established following the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake, includes strong representation from most Asian nations, including both China and Taiwan, as well as representative institutions from France and the United Kingdom. However, the DPRK is not on the membership list.³³ A field trip of volcano experts to the Chinese side of Changbaishan/Mt. Paektu this past July did not include North Korean participants.

Dr. Un Young Gun, the Vice Director of the DPRK Earthquake Bureau, was the lead author of a paper presented at International Association of Volcanology and Chemistry of the Earth's Interior (IAVCEI), the world's biggest and most high profile volcanology conference. The paper had four other Korean authors along with authors from the United Kingdom and the United States.³⁴ However no North Koreans attended the actual conference, which took place this past July in Kagoshima, Japan.

Institutionalizing North Korea participation in regional and bilateral research would increase exchange of critical information and improve disaster preparedness, providing an immediate benefit to all countries concerned. Doing so could also provide an ancillary benefit of strengthening regional collaboration.

Medical Consortiums

Another particularly beneficial area for scientific exchange could be medical consortiums, as demonstrated by the Middle East Consortium on Infectious Disease Surveillance (MECIDS). This consortium, which was established by the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) in 2003, is composed of public health experts and Ministry of Health officials from Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian Authority. The initiative has been quite successful, and members have overcome political divides in order to address the common threat of infectious disease emerging in the region.³⁵ In 2006, the MECIDS network mitigated an avian influenza outbreak in just 10 days,

³³ <http://g-ever.org/en/institute/index.html>

³⁴ Un Young Gun, Ju Un Ok, Kim Myong Song, Ri Gyong Song, Ri Kyong Nam, James OS Hammond, Clive Oppenheimer, Kathy Whaler, Steve Park, Graham Dawes, and Kayla Iacovin, "The Mt. Paektu Geoscientific Experiment," IAVCEI 2013 Scientific Assembly, Kagoshima, Japan, July 20-24, 2013. http://www.iavcei2013.com/iavcei_hp/PDF/3W_3C-P23.pdf.

³⁵ NTI website, Middle East Consortium on Infectious Disease Surveillance, <http://www.nti.org/about/projects/middle-east-consortium-infectious-disease-surveillance/>. See also the MECIDS website, <http://www.mecidsnetwork.org/>.

and during the 2009 H1N1 outbreak, Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian health officials held an emergency teleconference to discuss a joint action plan two days *before* the World Health Organization (WHO) call for collaborative efforts to address the emergency.

Medical cooperation in Northeast Asia is weak, and the DPRK is not included in relevant existing medical networks. For example, the DPRK is considered to be a part of the WHO Southeast Asia Region along with India and Thailand, whereas China, Japan, Mongolia, and the Republic of Korea are all members of the WHO Western Pacific Region.³⁶ In addition to founding MECIDS, NTI founded two other regional networks, one in Southern Africa and one in Southeast Asia, which they have brought together under the Connecting Organizations for Regional Disease Surveillance (CORDS). However, no similar network has been formed in Northeast Asia.³⁷ And APEC economies participate in the Asia Pacific Emerging Infections Network (AP-EINet) convened to foster transparency, communication, and collaboration in emerging infections in the Asia-Pacific, but since the DPRK is not an APEC economy, it does not participate in the network.³⁸

Yet regional collaboration on infectious disease benefits citizens of all countries. Tuberculosis may be of considerable interest to Northeast Asia, especially given trends in the DPRK. WHO records showed fewer than 50 reported cases of TB per 100,000 people in the DPRK in 1994; by 2011 that number had risen to 380 cases per 100,000.³⁹ Only sub-Saharan Africa has higher reported TB rates. Up to 15% of those patients may have multiple drug-resistant (MDR) TB.

The WHO and the Global Fund are already active in treatment of TB in the DPRK, along with two U.S. NGOs (Christian Friends of Korea (CFK) and the Eugene Bell Foundation) and Stanford University. Since it was founded 15 years ago, the Eugene Bell Foundation has

³⁶ <http://www.searo.who.int/countries/en/>; <http://www.wpro.who.int/countries/en/>.

³⁷ NTI Website: <http://www.nti.org/about/projects/CORDS/>; http://www.nti.org/media/pdfs/CORDS-strategic-plan_confirmed-final_DL_6-29.pdf

³⁸ AP-EINetwork website, <http://blogs.uw.edu/apeccein/#.UqZAbPRDvmY>. See also Ann Marie Kimball, Melinda Moore, Howard Matthew French et. al., "Regional Infectious Disease Surveillance Networks and their Potential to Facilitate the Implementation of the International Health Regulations," *Med Clin N Am* Vol. 92 (2008), 1459–1471. <http://download.thelancet.com/flatcontentassets/H1N1-flu/surveillance/surveillance-2.pdf>

³⁹ As reported in Meagan Phelan, "Science Reporter in North Korea Investigates Efforts to Fight Tuberculosis." American Association for the Advancement of Science website, April 25, 2013. http://www.aaas.org/news/releases/2013/0425_korea_tb.shtml. The rise in cases reflects both increased susceptibility to TB during the famine years and improved reporting.

supported 80 medical institutions to allow them to diagnose and treat tuberculosis and improve general health.⁴⁰ In all the towns, cities and districts where they work – they are responsible for over one-third of the population in the DPRK – Eugene Bell has separate facilities for treating MDR-TB. Since 2008, the Eugene Bell Foundation has sent sputum samples from patients it suspects of having MDR-TB to Seoul for testing, and then treats patients accordingly.⁴¹

In addition to providing general medicines and vitamins needed to cure TB and treat other ailments associated with TB and hepatitis, CFK provides hospital equipment, greenhouses and other agricultural inputs, as well as food. They also participate in hospital and rest home renovations and technical upgrades.⁴² CFK has worked with the DPRK's Ministry of Public Health, CFK, and Stanford to establish a National Tuberculosis Reference Laboratory (NTRL) in Pyongyang capable of screening for MDR-TB; NTI was an early collaborator in this project. According to *Science Magazine*, “NTRL researchers can now diagnose TB cases that are resistant to first-line drug combinations, making it possible to spot patients who need more aggressive therapy. And the lab will soon add capacity to screen for extensively drug-resistant TB, known as XDR—the worst strains, some of which are close to impossible to treat.”⁴³ Stanford University microbiologist Kathleen England is continuing to train the NTRL researchers, hoping to achieve international accreditation, as early as 2015. Regional coordination and collaboration in this work could aid in treating TB in the DPRK and analyzing the spread of MDR-TB.

Conclusion

Enhanced multilateral cooperation is sorely needed to address the many security and humanitarian issues facing Northeast Asia, particularly in regards to North Korea. The historical experience of the Helsinki Process in Cold War Europe clearly demonstrates the many benefits such an arrangement, but the governments of contemporary Northeast Asia and the United States

⁴⁰ <http://www.eugenebell.org/english/main.asp?subPage=250>. See also “MDR-TB in North Korea: A Q&A with PIH’s Dr. JK Seung,” Partners in Health website, July 19, 2013. <http://www.pih.org/blog/mdr-tuberculosis-north-korea>

⁴¹ Richard Stone, “Public Enemy Number One,” *Science*, Vol. 340, No. 6131 (April 26, 2013), pp. 422-425.

⁴² Christian Friends of Korea website: <http://cfk.org/about-cfk/our-work/>

⁴³ Ibid.

must first take steps to build genuine and lasting trust, and to begin seeing each other as potential partners rather than as rivals or enemies.

Considering the current tensions in Northeast Asia, and especially on the Korean Peninsula, this is not an easy task. But given the risks of the status quo – with tension rising in the region, North Korea continuing its WMD development, and the prospect of an escalatory conflict breaking out on the Korean Peninsula – working toward this goal is strongly in the U.S. interest. Pursuing a regional process of dialogue and routinized cooperation would potentially be both stabilizing, and in the long run, even transformational.

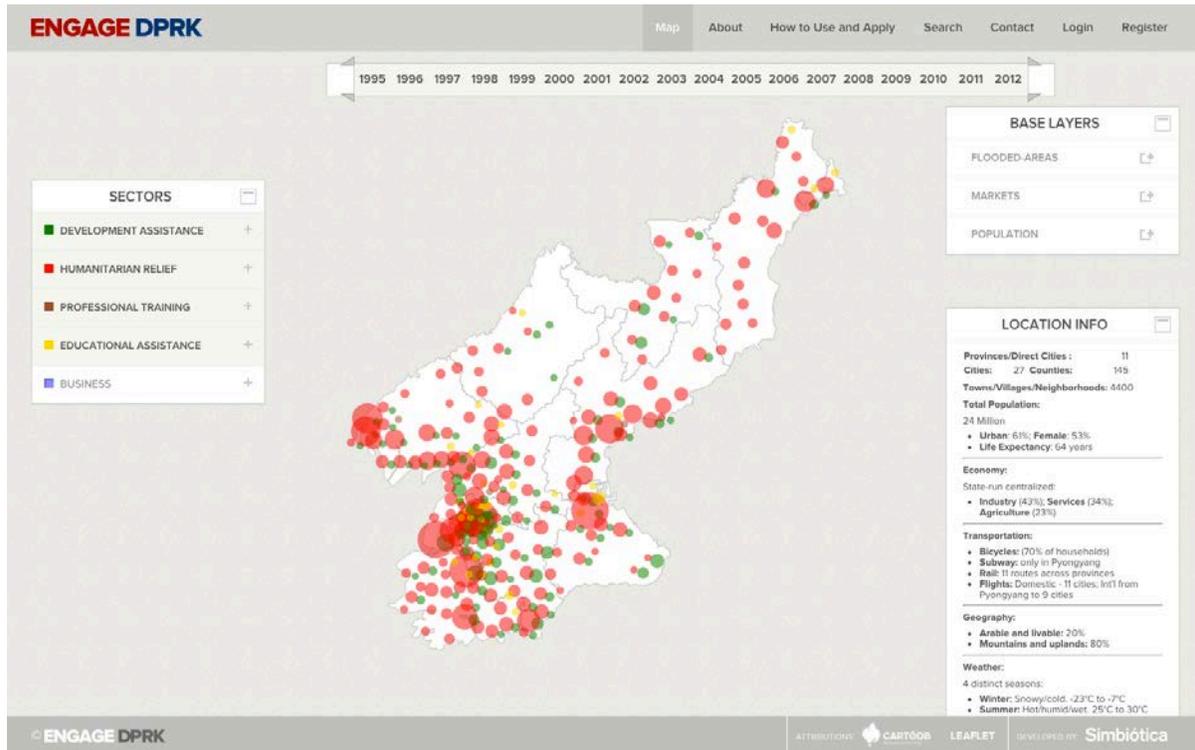
Encouraging greater person-to-person contact and exchanges is a low-risk, low-cost way of starting to move this process forward. NGO activities in the DPRK are addressing unmet humanitarian needs and contributing to the exchange of values and ideas. Cultural and educational exchanges add to the effectiveness of these ongoing efforts. If the Commission agrees with such an approach, then support for such activities in OSCE member countries, including a more regularized visa process in the United States, could be critical. Furthermore, if the countries of the region hope to succeed in establishing a dialogue on the many issues that divide them, cooperation on issues of mutual concern such as disaster preparedness or public health may be a way to build trust and initiate long-term cooperation.

Again, I thank the distinguished members of the Helsinki Commission for inviting me to testify today, and I look forward to your questions.

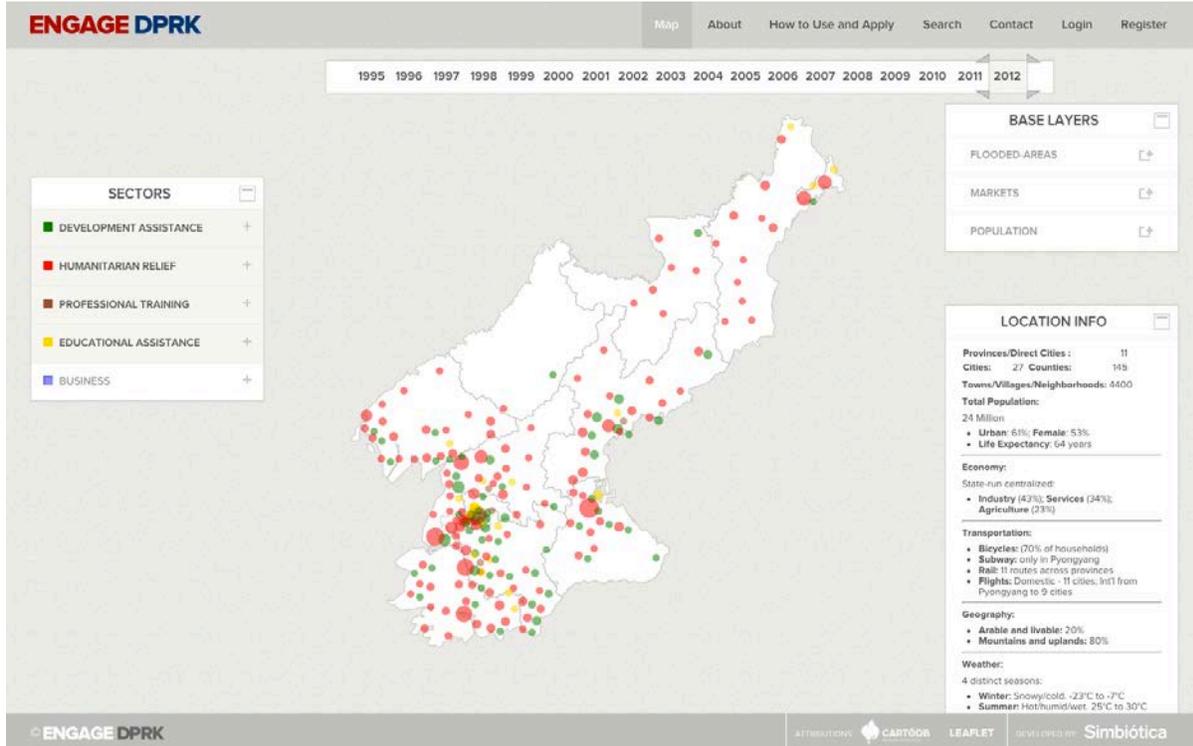
These remarks reflect my own views and are not necessarily the views of the National Committee on North Korea.

Appendix

Map 1: 1995-2012 non-business activity in the DPRK.



Map 2: 2012 non-business⁴⁴ activity in the DPRK.



*Source: Engage DPRK, <http://www.engagedprk.org/>

⁴⁴ Non-business activity includes: development assistance, humanitarian relief, professional training, and educational assistance.