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TO: The Secretary  
FROM: INR - J. Stapleton Roy *SR*  
SUBJECT: Pyongyang at the Summit

There is much that is new in the recent North-South summit, but Pyongyang is carrying out policies that have been much discussed in the leadership and, in some cases, were formulated and partially deployed years ago. What appears to be a new, more lively North Korean approach is really a return to familiar patterns, temporarily suspended after the death of Kim Il Song.  
(C)

\* \* \*

The basic DPRK decision to accept the "legitimacy" of the ROKG as a negotiating partner was made in the 1980s. Kim Il Song blessed the notion of a North-South summit in 1985. In 1992, Kim Il Song--as DPRK President--received the ROK Prime Minister in Pyongyang, and inquired as to the well being of then-ROK President Roh Tae Woo. These were precedent-shattering gestures, and the North Koreans never backed away from them. (C)

Following Kim Il Song's death in July 1994, inter-Korean relations fell backwards, in large part because ROK President Kim Yong Sam quickly and publicly made it known he thought the regime of Kim Jong Il could not last long, and that he would seek to hasten its demise. Kim Jong Il, in turn, decided that he would not deal with Seoul while Kim Yong Sam was in power. (C)

As soon as Kim Dae Jung was elected, the North signaled that it was prepared to reengage with Seoul. The question became not whether but when. On two occasions since Kim Dae Jung took office, the two sides came close to reopening government-to-government talks, but the South Korean side, for internal reasons, fell back at the last minute. (C)

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*Secretary's Out Box*

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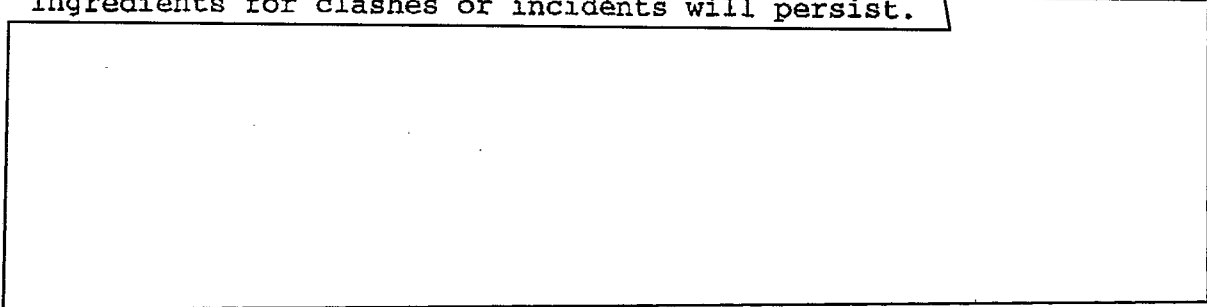
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Continued competition. The North-South summit and beginning of a new dialogue transforms, but does not end, North-South competition. The North Koreans knew they had lost the economic race with the South by the early 1980s, and soon after, the race for international recognition. But Pyongyang has continued to believe it could match the South in a politico-moral competition about who could claim the mantle of post-war legitimacy as the most truly "Korean." Evidence that the ROK need have no concerns on this score notwithstanding, many South Koreans remain surprisingly unconfident.



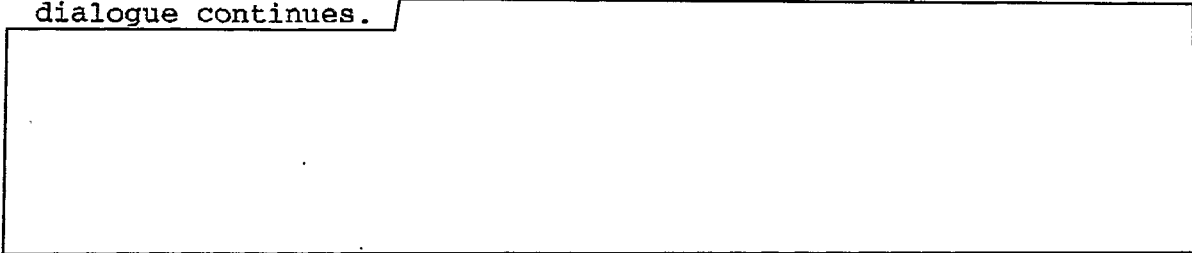
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We should expect that, even with the new environment, some of the old forms of the struggle will continue, and many of the ingredients for clashes or incidents will persist.



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Moreover, a familiar cycle is likely to emerge as the dialogue continues.



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Rhetorical openings. Although the North continues to put reunification high on its rhetorical list of goals, this issue has not been a driving force behind DPRK policy for many years. In fact, several times over the past 20 years Pyongyang has redefined and made more elastic the term "reunification," allowing itself increasing flexibility to deal with the South while still claiming progress towards reunification.(C)

On the question of U.S. troops, the North's rhetoric has been somewhat more cautious. Any fiddling with the official formulations on this issue would have an immediate and wide-

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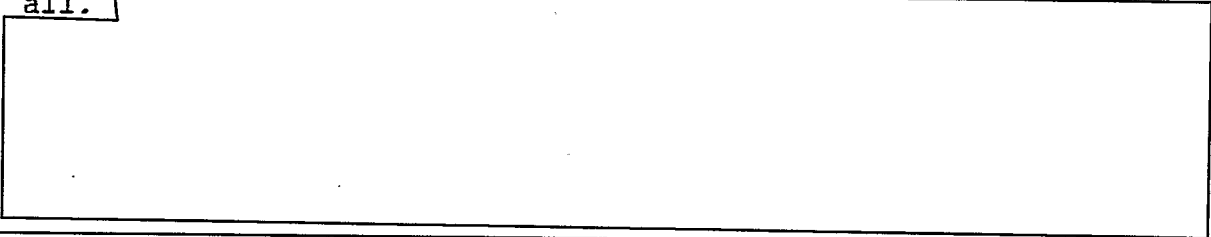
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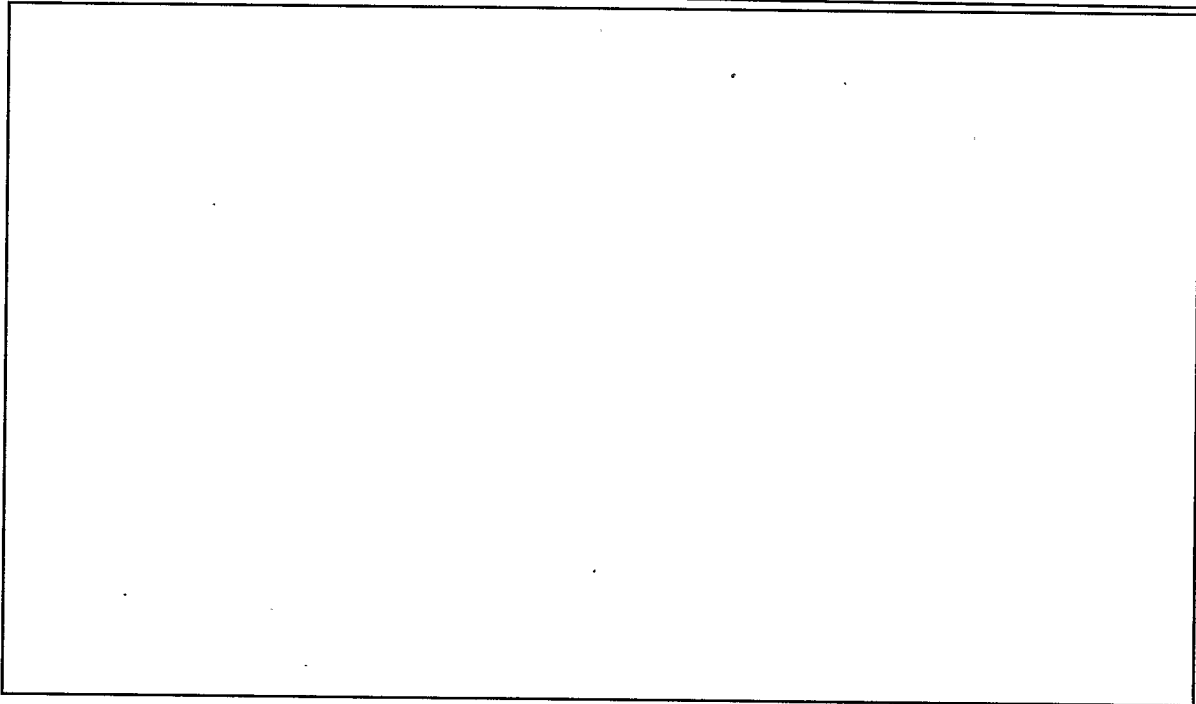
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ranging impact on other core DPRK security policies. Nevertheless, for well over a decade there have been steady, significant changes in approach, intended to give Pyongyang greater flexibility to deal with the issue. In the mid-1980s, the North moved resolution of the U.S. troops issue from the start of any process of tension reduction to the final, culminating step. In the early-1990s, they took another big step, moving from accepting a longer term presence of U.S. forces to accepting U.S. troops on the peninsula with no time line at all.

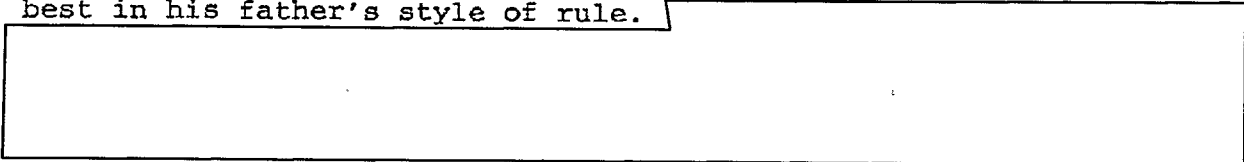


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On its toes. Although the common wisdom was that Kim Jong Il was not like his father, in fact he is very much like Kim Il Song. That should not be surprising. He underwent a lengthy (two decade-long) grooming period during which he worked in various parts of the power structure and observed what worked best in his father's style of rule.



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Rather than being a recluse, Kim has appeared frequently (about twice a week in media-reported appearances, more than that in public settings not reported by DPRK media) for the past several years. He has long followed ROK media and has kept himself well-informed on events in South Korea. He may well know more about South Korea than Kim Dae Jung knows about the North. (C)

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What we are seeing in the North is a return to the more lively style of diplomacy that Pyongyang practiced until Kim Il Song's death. The past four or five years have been the exception rather than the rule. The North Koreans have survived, independent and prickly, among their larger neighbors precisely because they have not had an ideologically rigid foreign policy. On the contrary, the policy has reacted to changing circumstances in and around the peninsula. Kim Jong Il was a party to that policy for many years, indeed, he helped shape it. (C)

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