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Our task is to inform public opinion by a broad hospitality to divergent views and ideas that promote cross-cultural understanding, tolerance, and the dissemination of knowledge unreservedly. Papers adopting a comparative, interdisciplinary approach will be especially welcome. **Graduate students are strongly encouraged to submit their work for consideration.**

* 'Asia Pacific region' as used here includes East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Oceania, and the Russian Far East.

North Korean Realities

by James McAdam, M.A.

Abstract

Despite the promise for constructive diplomatic engagement with the North Koreans so prominent only months ago, the political future of the Korean Peninsula today remains as unpredictable as it has been at any time since the end of the Korean War. While the eventual outcome of the current diplomatic stand-off between North Korea and its East Asian neighbors—and the United States—remains in doubt, a successful resolution is undoubtedly of critical importance to the geopolitical stability in East Asia, and to the eventual reunification of the Korean peninsula. The most pressing need—a negotiated solution—seems to remain frustratingly beyond the limits of compromise amongst all concerned.

And yet lost amidst the rhetoric of North Korea's nuclear provocations and repeated defiance of diplomatic accords, is the unimaginable daily struggle for survival facing the North Korean people—victims of chronic food shortages, insufficient medical services and a repressive blanket of political isolation. The need for international assistance to mitigate this growing humanitarian crisis becomes painfully apparent to those foreigners permitted to travel within North Korea. This paper details my own perceptions over the course of nearly two years of commercial engagement with the North Koreans, including three expeditions north of the DMZ.

My first impression upon breaking cloud-cover several miles above North Korea—my face pressed hard against the dusty window of the Russian-made North Korean Air Koryo aircraft—was a view eerily similar to approaching Denver's new international airport—a vast and barren landscape, punctuated by the occasional tree, intermittent scruffy shrubbery, a distant mountain range and very little else. Only when I began to comprehend what was missing from the terrain below did I realize that I most assuredly was not in Colorado! Absent were the telltale signs of modern civilization—no buildings, houses or roads—no power lines or telephone poles—no farm animals, or any sign of human existence. Suddenly, we were taxiing down the runway at Pyongyang's international airport—parading past the display of 1970's vintage Russian-made military aircraft that comprise North Korea's aging aviation capability—aircraft identical to the 30-year old craft that had transported our business delegation on the two-hour flight from Beijing.

Our flight had landed, but I don't recall the touchdown—completely absorbed in the realization that after nearly 12 months of complicated visa negotiations with my New York-based North Korean sponsors, my adventure to the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea—the DPRK—was about to become a reality. Slowly deplaning from the mobile stair platform—no fancy air-conditioned enclosed boarding ramp in sight—my awareness level switched into extreme sensory perception: armed guards posted in the hidden recesses throughout the airport—a sudden request for senior customs agents to process the unexpected American passport holders—x-ray inspection of all accompanied baggage and a final

search for cell phones—especially those that possess a global positioning device—and then, in the distance, the smiling faces of my sponsor-delegation waiting beyond the arrival lounge, accompanied by some not-so-friendly “tour guides”—undoubtedly members of North Korea's intelligence service.

After a 30-minute drive through pastoral farmland, past villages built of sod-homes and mud-framed dwellings, we approached the outskirts of Pyongyang. Traveling in an official government motor pool, we were whisked past the city's border guards and permitted to enter the “Model City.” Magically, the images of the Great Leader—the late Kim Il Sung—appeared everywhere; atop a replica of the Arc de Triomphe, a giant bronze statue in his image guarding the entrance to Kim's burial mausoleum and eventually past the equivalent of North Korea's “Red Square” and on to our private guest house which was to be our “supervised residence” for the duration of our visit.

Over the course of the next 18 months, I would make three separate journeys to North Korea in an effort to establish a containerized ocean transportation infrastructure to assist in the distribution of humanitarian aid shipments on behalf of the United Nations World Food Program and American President Lines, the company that I represent from our headquarters in Tokyo, Japan. The WFP Distributes food aid to more than 167 counties in North Korea—and only to those locations that allow independent monitoring, an effort to insure that food-aid is not diverted to military interests or brokered for hard currency. The WFP's work is vitally important to the health and welfare of the North Korean people, without which famine and chronic food shortages would likely reach unimaginable proportions.



My journey to the DPRK has been a fascinating experience and undoubtedly one of the most challenging of my career. Throughout the nearly three weeks that I have spent in country, I have been allowed almost unrestricted access to nearly all of the locations I requested to visit—including remote villages deep within rural North Korea—places where few, if any, Americans have likely traveled since the end of the

Korean War. Our delegations have been received by senior-level ministerial representatives in Ministry of Trade, including an official reception at the Peoples Parliament in Pyongyang. Members of North Korea’s diplomatic and commercial organizations assigned to coordinate our delegations were generally experienced international business people who spoke exceptionally good English—most of whom had been posted to DPRK embassies in former Stalinist-states such as Cuba, or in Eastern Europe, and, surprisingly, Malaysia. Doing business with the North Koreans is not without risks—nor without obstacles—but our experience to date has been quite rewarding and productive-- apart from the financial aspects of our relationship, our efforts in support of the WFP are making a real difference in the lives of the North Korean people.

	North Korea	South Korea	China	Russia	Japan
Population (m)	22.3	47.7	1,270	144.2	126.5
GDP (us\$bn-mkt.ex)	15.7	422	1,200	310	4,100
GDP Growth (%-Q2)	3.7	6.3	8.1	4.1	-0.7
Per Capita GDP (US\$)	706	8,870	910	2,140	32,705
Trade Balance (US\$bn)	-1,021	9.9	29.1	42.6	86.5

Yet today, only 9 months since my last visit, North Korea has once again become embroiled in a web of geopolitical events that have decimated the constructive political capital that was achieved in the years following the fragile accords of the Clinton Administration, which culminated in Secretary of State Albright’s visit to Pyongyang in 1999. Gone are the headlines proclaiming a renewal of diplomatic relations with the European Union, along with several major Western democratic nations—replaced with well-publicized incidents of trafficking in illicit narcotics, missile exports, the kidnapping of Japanese citizens and most ominous, the North’s recent admission of the renewal of its clandestine nuclear weapons ambitions.

Despite the promise for constructive diplomatic engagement so prominent only months ago, the political future of the Korean Peninsula is today as unpredictable and uncertain as it has been at any time since the end of the Korean War nearly 50 years ago. While the eventual outcome of the current political and diplomatic challenges confronting relations between the DPRK and their East Asian neighbors—and the United States—remains unresolved, a successful conclusion is undoubtedly of critical importance to the geopolitical stability in East Asia, and to the eventual reunification of the Korean peninsula. I would like to share my personal observations from my commercial engagement with the North Koreans in the hope that they might provide some insight into the seemingly insurmountable political differences that separate the DPRK from most of the world’s developed economies. I will begin with a brief overview of North Korea’s political structure—as it may help to put recent

geo-political events into their proper perspective, and then follow with a perspective on the social and economic conditions confronting the North Korean nation, and conclude with a summary of the most critical issues that continue to impede progress in US-North Korean relations.

North Korean-Political Ideology

The initial leg in our quest to secure approval for a US-delegation to visit North Korea began in an unlikely setting--a formal meeting with the DPRK Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York. After a review of our trade objectives and desired itinerary--and what I presume were exhaustive background checks on the members of our proposed delegation-- we were invited to apply for visas to visit the DPRK. The visa process is complicated and opaque—often taking 3 months or more to secure an initial “verbal” approval from your KOMT sponsors. However, a formal visa for American citizens can only be issued by the DPRK’s embassy in Beijing, a risky proposition for first-time travelers who may have reservations about the credibility of a North Korean verbal commitment.

Our delegation decided to take the risks and made plans to regroup at the DPRK’s embassy in Beijing the following week. When I arrived at the consular section in Beijing, I encountered a scene right out of the movie “Casablanca”—with dozens of delegations of various nationalities simply “waiting, waiting and waiting” for the promised final visa approval. Ultimately, many travelers were disappointed, their visa approval process having broken down within the dysfunctional bureaucracy of Pyongyang. This can be a very expensive lesson in the commercial realities of dealing with the nascent North Korean market-oriented economy.

More surprises awaited us as we moved on to the Air Koryo Beijing office, where our air-tickets to Pyongyang supposedly awaited our arrival. Only those who survive the visa process are permitted to purchase and confirm seats on the once-a-week flight from Beijing to Pyongyang—and with tickets on a first-come first-served basis, there is no assurance that your reservation won’t be given to someone who only 10 minutes before had been standing in front of you in the long queue at the DPRK Beijing embassy.

For the fortunate few who successfully secure both a visa and a plane ticket—and survive the two-hour flight to Pyongyang in a 1970’s vintage Russian aircraft—conditions improve dramatically upon your arrival in North Korea. Our North Korean sponsors were very attentive to our travel needs, having arranged for all of our hotel, food and transport arrangements before our arrival. We discovered almost immediately that North Korea operates on a “cash-now” basis. Our hotel arrangements required 50% up-front deposit, in US hard currency. The concept of a debit-card is still a long ways away for the North Korean economy! Later, as we tallied our out-of-pocket expenses for the five-day excursion, we were shocked to find that our accommodations came to nearly \$US 1,000 per day. Ultimately you are responsible to pay for everything that is provided during your stay, from gasoline for transportation, to the obligatory nightly banquets with your hosts, all hotel and communication expenses, and

the various obligatory “welcoming-gifts” purchased for your DPRK sponsors from the Beijing duty-free shops. Fortunately, we had been forewarned and arrived with an ample supply of crisp US\$100 bills—not surprisingly, there was not an ATM to be found in Pyongyang!

If everything goes according to plan, your delegation will conclude its mission and return five days later to Beijing. On our final night in Pyongyang, our sponsors hosted a farewell dinner and presented each of us with the official “Kim Il Song lapel-pin”, a memento of an economically promising initial meeting and a sign that we had obeyed the ground-rules during our first delegation. Stories abound of delegations that go dangerously amiss, with deportation the most desirable option for foreign offenders.



American citizens are reminded that there are no U.S. consular or diplomatic services available, aside from rudimentary support provided by the Swedish embassy for Americans who become ill or are imprisoned. But Americans' business interests are eagerly sought by the North Koreans, despite the fact that the US retains numerous commercial sanctions limiting bi-lateral trade with the DPRK, most of which were imposed immediately following the Korean War. The temporary thaw in diplomatic relations during the Clinton Administration eased a number of the commercial sanctions between both countries, including a resumption of permission for US commercial ocean and air carriers to make direct calls in the DPRK, and an allowance for US firms to resume exporting products to the DPRK. US exports must still conform to US Commerce Department licensing requirements, and avoid designation as “dual-use” commodities”—

items which could be modified to support military initiatives or weapons programs. Severe penalties are imposed on US firms found violating these provisions; our delegation went to great lengths to insure that our activity within the DPRK was within the scope of permissible activity for American citizens.

Life in Pyongyang; Survival in the Countryside

Pyongyang, the capital-city of North Korea, is best described as a controlled-access cultural façade constructed as a home to three million of the most fortunate North Korean citizens. Within it is a high-security enclave reserved for the families of North Korea's intellectual and military elite, who enjoy a life-style unimaginable by their countrymen living beyond the cities armed-border crossings. Despite its contrived normalcy, Pyongyang is an unexpectedly clean, orderly and disciplined city. It is a “sports-crazed” environment, with enormous “purpose-built” facilities for nearly every sport imaginable—from bowling to archery to gymnastics and table-tennis—including the grandest of all, the 150,000-seat “May-Day” Stadium. Architectural testaments to North Korea's military ambitions are impressive, as are the separate control centers for its various military and government ministries—including the Ministry of Trade, where many of our official meetings took place—complete with three story-high portraits to Marx and Lenin adorning its façade.

The citizens of Pyongyang live in modern apartments and condominiums, they appear well fed, dress in modern clothes, and enjoy the conveniences of electric street-cars and subway trains—at least until the power “black-outs” which happen quite regularly and then everything comes to a grinding halt. At sunset, the city's skyline virtually disappears—as electric power rationing darkens the landscape, leaving only candlelight visible in the windows of most homes and office buildings, or the solitary headlight of the lone automobile or city-bus still in operating condition, and permitted an extended curfew.

Memorials to the Great Leader Kim Il Song are everywhere—it is not unusual for visitors to be asked to make a mandatory visit to the enormous bronze statue of the Great Leader and lay a bouquet of flowers in his memory, or to visit his mausoleum and observe his preserved remains. Our delegation elected to politely decline both invitations. But beyond the carefully preserved artifacts of a more prosperous time in North Korea's troubled history, the city morphs into a contradiction of political ambition vs. economic reality. It transitions into an unnatural coexistence of human potential overshadowed by political repression: although there are numerous well paved streets and boulevards, there are few private automobiles and even fewer bicycles; there are modern apartment buildings, yet few stores or restaurants; several well manicured municipal parks, yet no office workers off on a mid-day stroll nor street vendors selling their wares; there are no pets nor animals visible, competition perhaps for the North's non-existent food stocks.

For the more than 85% of the population prohibited from entering Pyongyang, life in rural North Korea is considerably less comfortable, a constant struggle for survival amidst the ruinous economic experiments of the last decade. Beyond the

gates of Pyongyang is where starvation and malnutrition is most severe, especially during the spring months when food-stores are most depleted following the harsh Korean winter. Here, the people often subsist on less than the minimum daily food ration—roughly 300 grams of grain or rice—with “wild foods” such as roots, bark and grasses often an unpalatable but unavoidable mandatory supplement to the daily government rations.

The WFP estimates that nearly 50% of school-aged children in the countryside are chronically malnourished. Most of the North Koreans that I encountered living outside Pyongyang were in obvious poor-health, clearly impoverished and unaccustomed to the sight of well-nourished Westerners. Our delegation was obviously a rarity—judging by the nervous crowds of onlookers that mysteriously congregated whenever we stopped to inspect a port facility or check on road and transportation infrastructure. Our hosts reminded us repeatedly that unauthorized interaction with foreigners is a severe offense in the countryside—with, I suspect, unimaginable consequences for the innocent offenders.

Daily life for those surviving outside of Pyongyang is a monochrome of hard labor and endless work-mobilization, supervised under the direction of the military and the Korean Workers Party—the ideological political power-base of the Kim Jong Il regime. Throughout my travels in the countryside, I witnessed numerous “work parties” engaged principally in agricultural tasks—planting and harvesting grain—and heavy construction infrastructure projects such as road construction, irrigation projects and the demolition of Stalinist-era outdated factories and power generating facilities. Work parties are often comprised of people of all ages and sizes, from young school-aged children to the elderly. Primitive tools accompanied each work-group—shovels, picks, and buckets; heavy equipment machinery such as tractors or mobile cranes were nowhere to be seen, usually abandoned long ago due to a lack of fuel and spare parts. It is not uncommon to see wood-burning trucks and lorries line-up in the port city of Nampo awaiting the arrival of humanitarian aid shipments. It is difficult to imagine a more primitive economic infrastructure anywhere in the world—especially considering that South Korea, now the 11th largest economy in the world, is less than a one-hour drive from the worst of North Korea’s depressed communities.

The mandatory structural and commercial improvements that must be achieved before the DPRK can advance its economy can only be secured through a complete rebuilding of the country’s devastated physical infrastructure. Such an undertaking is beyond the financial capabilities of any single nation, and too expensive for the private debt markets to adequately finance. The direct involvement of the World Bank and its subsidiary agencies will be necessary before the DPRK can make a credible entry into the 21st century.

However, World Bank funds have been denied the North Korean government, in part on the insistence of the USA, due to the DPRK’s labeling as a country sponsoring “state terrorism”—a designation that is well deserved, yet until recently appeared to be one that the North was trying to disassociate

itself from through constructive regional political engagement. Access to World Bank funding will come only following constructive engagement with the United States and its East Asian allies. Pyongyang must realize their dilemma, yet so far has not demonstrated a willingness to accept unconditional dialogue with the United States as a prerequisite to unlocking the funds necessary to rebuild their country.

Regional Geo-Political Implications and the Search for an East Asian Solution: South Korea

Given the heightened tensions surrounding North Korea’s recent revelations of its nuclear ambitions, regional geo-political relationships between the DPRK and its East Asian neighbors have become critically important in achieving a meaningful and lasting resolution. While the United States wrestles with the challenges of forging a diplomatic agenda for disarming the DPRK, the consequences of the threat of North Korea’s military ambitions lie at the doorstep of its East Asia neighbors. Ultimately, a regional approach to containment of the DPRK will likely be fostered through the political objectives of those nations within launch-range of the North’s most destructive weaponry.

Of the four nations surrounding North Korea, none is more important than its neighbor on the peninsula itself—South Korea. Both countries share the most heavily armed border in the world—with more than 1 million North Korean troops within the sight-lines of an estimated 700,000 South Korean Army soldiers and more than 37,000 American military personnel. For more than 49 years, diplomatic relations between the two nations remained at a dangerous standstill, with no lasting diplomatic progress until President Kim Dae Jung’s historic visit to Pyongyang in the summer of 2001. Kim’s “Sunshine Policy” initiatives have moved both nations far closer to a constructive reconciliation of post-war disputes, in the process earning Kim the Noble Peace Prize in the same year.

However, consistent with earlier expectations of a speedy roadmap to reconciliation, the Sunshine Policy was confronted with a series of diplomatic blunders that followed each positive proclamation. A series of Inter-Korea Ministerial-level meetings recently concluded in 2002, promised renewed commitments to increase family reunions, the development of cross-border industrial zones and economic funding to repair inter-Korean rail links that have remained severed since the end of the Korean War. Recent cultural exchanges have included allowing North Koreans to visit Seoul and Pusan to participate in the Asian Games. The North reciprocated by welcoming South Koreans to Pyongyang in the summer of 2002 for the Arirang Festival—a commemoration of the Kim Il Song legacy by an estimated 130,000 North Korean gymnasts participating in a mass choreography that combines military exercises with modern-dance—an event that I had the opportunity to witness during my most recent visit to Pyongyang. As the Arirang Festival drew to a close, a deadly naval gun battle erupted between the two Koreas off the eastern coast of the Korean peninsula, leaving several

South Korean sailors dead and both governments with yet another embarrassing diplomatic predicament.

Second only to the importance of inter-Korean relations is the growing influence of China, whose diplomatic persuasion is becoming increasingly apparent on the political and economic policy-making of the North Korea government and its engagement with the outside world. China shares the longest border with North Korea and has long been a commercial and military ally. A series of recent summit visits by Kim Jong Il to China, including a tour of Shanghai's growing industrial complex and a stop at General Motors' Shanghai industrial complex, may have led to Kim's decision to initiate a rudimentary form of economic liberation in the DPRK. Kim's China trip was quickly followed by an official visit by China's Jiang Zemin to Pyongyang and an inspection of the DPRK's less-developed manufacturing centers.

China's direct assistance may eventually force the DPRK into confronting the necessity of accepting a political compromise over nuclear arms in return for continued economic and humanitarian assistance. The DPRK desperately needs China's transfer of technology and capital investments in order to strengthen its primary industries—namely agriculture, electric power generation and its antiquated transportation networks. In return, China will seek visible signs that the DPRK is moving faster towards a restoration of inter-Korean relationship and a termination of its nuclear and weapons programs. It should not be surprising, therefore, to see China assuming a prominent diplomatic role in the current round of ministerial meetings underway between the United States, South Korean and DPRK governments.

Since the inception of the North's independence, Russia has had a major impact on the development of the North's political and economic policies. However, Russia's influence has waned considerably since the collapse of the Soviet Union and following the death of Kim Il Sung. Bilateral trade has fallen, as has direct economic aid and assistance that the North had become reliant upon to sustain its economic infrastructure. Russia shares a small border with North Korea on its North Eastern frontier which includes access to the Rajin special economic zone, but the economic focus is visibly shifting west to China and south to the ROK.

Recently, there are indications of renewed interest on the part of both nations to rekindle an economic and political relationship. As with China, Kim Jong Il has visited Russia several times in the last few years, and Russia's President Putin has recently concluded a summit meeting in Pyongyang. At stake is a role for Russia in the development of the Inter-Korea rail restoration project—a project which Putin has been quoted as stating could be worth several billion dollars in annual user fees to assist the underutilized Trans Siberian railway, and offer new markets to North Korea via the TSR's connecting corridor to central and eastern Europe.

Japan's interests lie principally in restoring regional stability and the promise of eliminating the last remaining cold-war relic as a threat to Japan's population and its economic recovery. Efforts to restore official diplomatic relations have been underway since the early 1990's, but with only minimal progress, hindered in part by a lack of progress

in resolving the issue of the abduction of Japanese citizens by the North Korean Army, and also war reparations that the DPRK insists remain unpaid.

Japan has historically been one of the largest donors of humanitarian cargo to the DPRK, and helped to broker the Agreed Framework between the US, South Korea and the DPRK. Japan continues to provide economic support to the KEDO project --The Korean Peninsula Development Organization—having already invested over \$3 billion to assist in the construction of two light-water reactors agreed on in exchange for promises from the DPRK to freeze further development of its nuclear testing program at the Yongbyon Nuclear facility. Amazingly, construction of the KEDO reactors continues despite the revelations by the DPRK of their on-going efforts to develop nuclear weapons and their brazen noncompliance with the KEDO principles.

At present, diplomatic relations between the DPRK and



Japan are best described as delicate, if not completely unraveling. The DPRK remains deeply embittered by the horrors and atrocities committed during the 40-year Japanese occupation. I am frequently reminded by my North Korean hosts of the stories told by their parents of life under Japanese occupation, and reminded that the number of North Korean citizens "kidnapped" by the Japanese during WWII is far greater than that claimed by Japan against North Korea. Not surprisingly, North Korea has long demanded more than US\$ 10 billion in war reparations for Japan's past colonial rule—all the while continuing military aggression of its own via missile testing in the skies above Japan and the constant naval probes of the Japanese coastline. What seemed to have been the start of a promising détente between both countries immediately following last year's visit by Japan's Prime Minister Koizumi, has now deteriorated into an almost obsessive fear within Japan of the possibility of a preemptive strike by the DPRK against Japan's industrial centers; Tokyo and Osaka both lie a mere 1200 kilometers from Pyongyang, well within the range of the DPRK's missile capabilities. It is becoming increasingly apparent that a lasting resolution to the DPRK military build-

up will necessitate gaining some measure of closure to the century-old bitter emotional divide stemming from Japan's military occupation of the Korean peninsula, a treasure-trove of nationalistic sentiment amongst the North Korean people that Kim Jong Il continues to manipulate when its revival suits his political ambitions.

The Future

There is reason to be cautiously optimistic that the democratic free world will be successful in their efforts to resolve the escalating military tensions now threatening the Korean peninsula and somehow devise a strategy to integrate North Korea into the global community in the 21st century. For the people of the DPRK, there is no other pragmatic alternative. The twin evils of political desperation and mass starvation will eventually sow the seeds of the inevitable internal rebellion necessary to achieve political and economic transformation. Moreover, it is unlikely that the DPRK's neighboring countries will tolerate a return to the nuclear ambitions of the Kim Jong Il dictatorship once a resolution of the current diplomatic stand-off is achieved. There can be no return to the past for North Korea—political and social change, even if imperfect—must commence from this point forward.

Almost lost in the debate surrounding the North's resumption of its nuclear weapons programs has been the substantial progress made in promoting improvements in inter-Korea diplomatic and cultural relations. I have been present when two Korean citizens from opposite sides of the DMZ meet for the first time—and watched as awkward and suspicious introductions gave way to deep and mutual respect in just a few days time. The cultural bonds amongst the Korean people on both sides of the DMZ are not divisible by the geographic restraints of the 38th parallel. I also believe that there has simply been far too much productive interchange between North Korea and its East Asian neighbors for

this work to go to waste; the pace of economic activity within the DPRK today is perhaps more rapid than at anytime in the last two decades, involving the Chinese, the Russian, South Koreans and even the Japanese. Yet continued progress depends upon how and when the nuclear issues are resolved

Future dialogue between the DPRK and the international community will likely become more difficult in the short-run—and “promises” from all parties will be more closely monitored, with higher political stakes and potentially military consequences for those found to be in violation of their obligations toward achieving a lasting peace. Moreover, the military situation must be defused, and this will require a delicate balance between economic growth and broader social freedoms—ultimately evidenced by a more evenly balanced distribution of this new wealth to all North Korean citizens.

While the obstacles confronting North Korea today may seem insurmountable, recent experience in China, Russia, and Vietnam has proven that it is possible to achieve a nonviolent transition from a Communist-controlled central economy to one where wealth creation and private enterprise are openly encouraged. The fact that these former bastions of Communist ideology have buried their hammer and sickle and moved to embrace the new global economy is an achievement that has not been lost on the political consciousness of the senior political leadership within North Korea that I have often engaged during my journeys throughout the DPRK. I am eager to return to Pyongyang and ask them how long they are prepared to wait before they too accept that political isolationism and military repression are no longer synonymous with social liberation and victory of the oppressed. As the final resting place of Stalinist-communist ideology, the DPRK must one day accept that the international community will no longer tolerate the existence of this repressive regime, especially now that examples of a more sustainable social democracy are readily visible just across the border with China, Russia, and most significantly, the Republic of Korea.

James McAdam currently resides with his family in Tokyo, Japan where he leads operations for American President Line's North Asia region, encompassing Japan, North and South Korea and the Russian Far East. He graduated from USF's Master of Arts in Asia Pacific Studies program in 1998.