

Letter from the President and Chairman

Strong political crosscurrents had a profound influence on trends within Northeast Asia during 2001. President Kim Dae-jung's meeting with President George W. Bush in March made it clear that a new American approach to North Korea was being developed, and that the Bush administration was not going to take up where the Clinton administration had left off in terms of its approach to P'yongyang. A North Korea policy review was undertaken in Washington. Upon completion it validated a continuation of the U.S.-North Korea dialogue, and paid tribute to President Kim's Sunshine policy. The agenda for a resumption of talks set by the Bush administration, stressing immediate discussion of conventional troop deployments along the DMZ, did not hold immediate appeal for North Korea, and no response was forthcoming to the U.S. offer to resume dialogue. The 9/11 terrorist attacks upon the U.S. rendered the question moot, and U.S.-North Korea relations were frozen for the remainder of the year.



While President Bush was bolstering his popularity and solidifying his grip on the presidency by his strong leadership of the war against terrorism, President Kim was suffering the "slings and arrows" of the sometimes outrageous bickering among South Korea's political factions. Undercut by Washington's change of attitude toward North Korea, and let down by some of his political appointments, who proved to be woefully inadequate, corrupt, or both, President Kim was also accused of having been too accommodating toward North Korea, as he pursued his Sunshine policy. An embarrassing by-election defeat in October, wherein President Kim's party lost all three contested seats, led to his resignation from the ruling party in order to take responsibility for the election setback. The end of the year found President Kim clearly in a "lame-duck" status, facing unusually strong political challenges.

The Korea Society continued its full spectrum of activities during the year, and added a significant new dimension. Efforts were made to develop personal relationships with members of North Korea's mission to the United Nations. American business executives with an interest in possible investments in North Korea were introduced, and North Korean officials were entertained in New York City and at my home. By the end of the year, a warming pattern of relations had become evident, which was to play an important role during 2002.

Within South Korea final preparations were under way for the 2002 World Cup, and the astonishingly successful new airport at Inch'on was opened with hardly a glitch. In a variety of ways, therefore, 2001 was a transitional year laying the foundation for significant trends and events that are taking place in 2002.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Donald P. Gregg". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Donald P. Gregg