



QUADERNS DE RECERCA (Bellaterra)

MÀSTER UNIVERSITARI EN INTEGRACIÓ EUROPEA

Núm. 12 / Curs 2011-2012

**The European Union in North Korea:
Current Realities and Paths for Future Engagement –
A Qualitative and Quantitative Study**

Francesc Pont Casellas

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ISSN 2014-153X

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Les llengües de treball son castellà, català, anglès i francès

Esta colección recoge una selección de investigaciones realizadas por estudiantes del Máster Universitario en Integración Europea. Previo a su publicación, los trabajos de investigación han sido tutorizados por profesores con grado doctor de diversas especialidades y han sido evaluados por un tribunal compuesto por tres docentes distintos del tutor.

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Langues de travail: catalan, castillan, anglais et français

THE EUROPEAN UNION IN NORTH KOREA: CURRENT REALITIES AND PATHS FOR FUTURE ENGAGEMENT – A QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

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Edició 2011-2012

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ABSTRACT:

Despite the DPRK's geostrategic relevance and destabilizing role in the most economically dynamic region of the world, the EU lacks a clear strategy for involvement in and engagement with this country.

Combining qualitative and quantitative analysis, this thesis aims to unveil both internal contradictions hindering the definition of a coherent and effective EU foreign policy vis-à-vis the DPRK, and discrepancies between the perceptions of EU actors and those of external stakeholders.

Important coherence shortcomings and expectation gaps were detected, both among insiders' views and between them and those of South Korean future leaders – even affecting the promotion of human rights.

RESUM:

Malgrat la rellevància estratègica i el paper desestabilitzador de Corea del Nord a la regió econòmicament més dinàmica del món, la UE no compta amb cap estratègia clara per involucrar-se amb aquest país.

Combinant tècniques d'anàlisi qualitatives i quantitatives, aquest treball pretén descobrir possibles contradiccions internes que impedeixin la definició d'una política exterior europea coherent i efectiva amb respecte a Corea del Nord, així com discrepàncies entre les percepcions d'actors interns de la UE i les d'actors externs.

S'han detectat importants diferències d'expectatives i mancances en termes de coherència, tant entre les visions expressades pels actors interns com entre les opinions d'aquests actors i les dels futurs líders sudcoreans enquestats – diferències que fins i tot afecten la promoció dels drets humans.

KEYWORDS:

north korea, dprk, northeast asia, eu-dprk relations, eu-korea relations, expectation gaps, cfsp, human rights, coherence and cohesion

corea del nord, república democràtica popular de corea, nord-est d'Àsia, relacions ue-corea del nord, relacions ue-corea, diferències d'expectatives, pesc, drets humans cohesió i coherència

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1. Introduction

It is undeniable that the Western press and publics have a soft spot for North Korea, the small country that is also the great unknown of Northeast Asia. A month never goes by without some fresh news or speculation on the latest exploits, trends, threats or abuses from the Pyongyang regime, including speculation about both the status of the young lady who had been seen next to the new leader, Kim Jong-un,¹ or the possible political implications of the apparent expansion in the use of miniskirts and high heels by fashion-conscious Pyongyang young women.²

Even if the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is one of the most challenging countries that European Union (EU) policy could be directed towards (Barabesi, 2009), the EU's North Korea policies do not hit the headlines, despite tensions running high in the most economically dynamic and one of the most politically unstable regions of the world and the fact that EU External action, under the auspices of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), its security arm, the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), the newly-minted European External Action Service (EEAS) and the related European Commission Directorate Generals (DGs), such as TRADE, DEVCO or ECHO, should be one of the key features of an increasingly powerful and coordinated European Union (Berkofsky, 2009).

Favoring less-developed nations and helping them reap the benefits of globalization and modernization while promoting values such as democracy, human rights, good governance and sustainable development can be distinguished as a relevant feature of the European Union as an international normative actor, one able to make something previously exceptional the norm in international relations (Manners, 2002).

¹ The mystery was finally resolved in July 25, when the Korea Central News Agency reported that the lady was Ri Sol-ju, Kim Jong-un's wife. Despite sounding irrelevant to most casual observers, this news item could well be considered historic because the regime had never previously shown the leaders with their wives in public – secrecy in those issues went as far as never explaining the public if Kim Jong-il was married or had children before Kim Jong-un was introduced as the heir apparent in 2010.

² Both news items made headlines during the month of July 2012. For a more detailed account, see “Who is North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's 'mystery woman'” (Williamson, 2012) or “North Korea Experts Can See a Lot in a Hemline” (Choe, 2012a).

In fact, the EU could also be considered as one of the few international actors capable of exerting both relational and structural power via its foreign policy, the former – a concept loaned from the Lockean tradition – referring to the power of a given actor to get another actor to do something it would not otherwise do, and the latter referring to the authority and capacity to set or shape the organizing principles and rules of the game and to determine how others will play that game (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan, 2008: 24). Moreover, further from this rule-setting role, the EU should also strive to act both as a global rule negotiator – in other words, an player in international negotiations, including in complex and distant regional setups such as Northeast Asia’s – and as a global rule implementer – the instrumental role the EU should play to fulfill its stated desire of developing effective multilateralism.

After 9-11, the EU came to see East Asia not only as the most lucrative emerging region but also as a cluster of political and strategic partners in a rising multipolar international system. The translation of this realization was the 2001 document *Europe and Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Cooperation*, which highlighted six key objectives of the EU in relation to East Asia (Ohn, 2009): i) the promotion of peace and security and the region and globally; ii) mutual trade and investment flows; iii) development of the less prosperous countries of the regions by addressing the root causes of poverty; iv) human rights protection, spreading of democracy, good governance and rule of law; v) global partnerships and alliances with Asian countries; and vi) strengthen the awareness of Europe in Asia and vice versa.

With its numerous states and different economic, political and social systems, Asia represents an interesting challenge for the EU in its quest to effectively, consistently and uniformly developing its foreign policy (Barabesi, 2009). A crucial political, economic and cultural partner for the EU, it accounts for more than half of the world’s population, a quarter of the economic wealth created every year, and is home to four of the twelve largest economies in the world (Japan, China, India and South Korea); yet countries such as North Korea remain among the poorest in the world.

Despite developing a pragmatic and supposedly proactive engagement policy to maximize soft power efficiency,³ the EU still lacks appropriate foreign policy instruments, chiefly in the security and political areas, which would allow it to influence international politics in the region. Ohn (2009) also points out that one of the defining traits of EU policy towards East Asia in the post-Cold War era has been a growing interdependence and partnership. There is, however, one clear exception to the rule: the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.⁴

Despite its Strategic Partnership with the three great economic powers of the region and the enhanced visibility it should afford (Grevi, 2012), the EU is not a major political actor in the present situation of tension and confrontation in Northeast Asia, as it is not located near the region in question nor does it have vested interests in North Korea. It is nonetheless involved and remains a player that tries to bring a constructive approach to the problems that afflict North Korea, both internally and externally (Barabesi, 2009).

Back in the early 2000s, the climate was one of widespread but moderate optimism. A strategy paper for North Korea was drafted in 2002 by the European Commission. In 2003, when EU cooperation with North Korea was still rather active – at least compared to current standards –, Berkofsky still argued that EU-North Korea relations “do not make headlines,” even adding that the EU’s role right before Pyongyang revealed it pretended to acquire nuclear weapons in 2002 was “marginal.” Meanwhile, EU policy-makers and officials stressed that their “quiet diplomacy” approach was based upon policies and initiatives that would complement South Korea’s “Sunshine Policy” (Berkofsky, 2003). These policies gravitated around humanitarian assistance, food aid and technical assistance, together with the EU-DPRK political dialogue set up in the late 1990s.

³ This particular approach, incomplete as it might appear, has been praised as the most effective and efficient by many East Asian leaders, who allegedly believe that a more prominent and visible European engagement in Asian “hard security” issues could never be as constructive and promoting security as Brussels’ “soft security” policies in Asia (Berkofsky, 2010).

⁴ In that sense, despite growing disputes and uncertainties in what increasingly looks like a deadlock situation with China and, in particular, regarding the long overdue drafting of a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, relations – both economic and political – and overall engagement with Beijing has increased exponentially since the end of the Cold War.

Lack of economic and political progress, combined with North Korea's nuclear program, instantly and severely hurt any attempt at enhanced cooperation the EU might have tried. Nowadays, it remains unlikely that Brussels will resume the ambitious and comprehensive economic engagement course and policies formulated and partly implemented in the early 2000s. As argued by Berkofsky (2009), Brussels would de facto have to start from scratch engaging North Korea economically should the Commission one day decide to resume these programs.

But what is currently going on in North Korea that might prompt the EU to enhance its cooperation with the unruly regime? Progressive economic modernization might be one possible answer: Kim Jong-un's appointment as the new leader has seemingly been accompanied by a stated emphasis on improving agricultural productivity and boosting light industry, as well as developing the now-decrepit Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the north of the country in order to lure foreign direct investment. Kim Jong-un has also stepped up his high-profile activities designed to focus attention on the economy and domestic policy. His actions have stressed the importance of keeping up with "global trends" in the areas of technology and light industry (Gause, 2012).

However, ambivalence and doubts remain. After a rather promising start, culminated with the Leap Day agreement they reached with the U.S. on 29 February 2012, the failed launch of a long-range missile (camouflaged as a space rocket) and scaled-up anti-ROK rhetoric have put the international community back at the defensive and prompted the U.S. to declare the deal, which was to provide substantive food aid to Pyongyang, to be void. Moreover, the DPRK has revised its constitution by early 2012 to add three new sentences, one of them being "National Defense Commission Chairman Kim Jong-il has turned our fatherland into an invincible state of political ideology, a nuclear-armed state and an indomitable military power, paving the ground for the construction of a strong and prosperous nation" (Yonhap News Agency, 2012).

Apparently, young leader Kim Jong-un is making all the necessary adjustments to consolidate his grip on power. On 15 July 2012, North Korea announced that powerful Vice Marshal Ri Yong-ho had been removed from his posts. Just three days later, Kim Jong-un was given the title of Marshal. Before being promoted to chief of the General Staff, and then the Politburo in 2010, Ri had run the Pyongyang Defense Command, an

army unit responsible for regime security, a sensitive job that requires the absolute trust of the Kim family (Gause, 2012).

The completely unexpected change at the top of the all-powerful North Korean army might well be a power play by Kim Jong-un – or even his uncle Jang Song-taek – to reassert control over the military. However, another possible interpretation is that Kim is distancing himself from the regime's most powerful institution (Gause, 2012) and that the young leader might have some further, unexpected changes in store, despite the fact that the Supreme People's Assembly kept defense spending fixed at 15.8% of total state budget. In other words, the recent regime change and the less-hermetic leadership style exercised by the younger, Swiss-educated Kim might offer some glimpses of hope to the international community, including the EU, but deep shadows, doubts and misinformation are still the rule when it comes to the Hermit Kingdom.

1.1. Exploring the future of EU-North Korea relations with an ad-hoc theoretical framework

Such an unusual and complex topic called for an equally unusual and complex approach. With the main interest of this thesis lying in analyzing how the European Union could eventually engage with North Korea taking into account its contradicting internal interests and those of relevant external stakeholders, no conventional international relations or political science theoretical framework seemed to fit with the lines followed herein.

On the one hand, while certain theories within the different international relations schools can be useful to explain the EU's external action and foreign policy as it happens/evolves or as it has happened/evolved, none would be able to offer satisfactory explanations for the case at hand, as current bilateral EU-DPRK relations, shaped by and framed within a comprehensive, UN-sponsored sanctions regime, range from the negligible in economic terms to the openly negative in political and institutional terms.

On the other hand, political science theories utilized to measure policy effectiveness would still be useless for the very same reason: to yield reliable results, they need tangible indicators and data from past and/or current policies. While it is obvious that

policies must be evaluated to avoid continued implementation of ineffectual policies, the goal of the current thesis does not reside in evaluating the effectiveness of the negative conditionality that currently dominates EU policies vis-à-vis North Korea, but in “pre-analyzing” which policies could eventually have more chances to be effective thanks to enjoying overwhelming support among all key stakeholders and actors.

Therefore, this research project is based upon the pre-selection of several issues and areas that are usually considered to fall within the scope of EU foreign policy pre-evaluate their eventual application to the North Korean case via the reactions they would arise among both internal and external stakeholders.

Three basic criteria are followed in order to prepare this initial selection. The first one is an in-depth analysis of past and current EU engagement with North Korea, with special emphasis on the current status. This allows for a realistic assessment of both the available instruments and capabilities and the geographical, economic and political limits thereto.

Second, the selection of criteria are also informed by previous unpublished work of this author studying the framework of currently comprehensive EU relations with two formerly isolated countries that share several key characteristics with North Korea – Cambodia and Vietnam⁵ – in order to put forward a set of proposals for future relations with a willing DPRK.

The third and final criterion applied to pre-select the study topics was specific personal knowledge of and interest in the realities of both North Korea and South Korea, both as a temporary resident and as a visitor, has been streamlined to rationalize and optimize the choices of criteria to be studied in order to reflect as comprehensively as possible the realities the EU faces in the Korean peninsula, as well as to selecting a given methodology involving extensive direct interaction with and feedback from future

⁵ As indicated in Pont (2011), by analyzing the relations between the EU and two former Communist countries, both situated in South East Asia, consumed and impoverished by long wars during the last third of the 20th century and living under the direct sphere of influence of the Chinese giant, we can try to “single out exportable structures and instruments, but also detect and take into consideration key differences that will give a unique personality to any future cooperation framework between the EU and North Korea.”

South Korean leaders and its advanced statistical treatment – a skill that this author coincidentally acquired during his academic stay in South Korea.

Departing from this analysis of the current situation and selection of discussion topics, this thesis ultimately aims to discover potential consensus and dissent points both among the views expressed by what we could consider internal EU actors – including actors who are very close to the EU, its policies, institutions and choices for professional reasons – and those of external stakeholders who would have an indirect but remarkable interest in how EU-North Korea relations take shape.

In order to reach this stage, three questions related to the present trends and future evolution of EU-North Korea relations will have to be answered first, starting with known what current EU-DPRK relations are like. In order to explore this issue, the above-mentioned comprehensive analysis of the legal, institutional and sectorial facets of current bilateral relations between the European Union and North Korea, including a timeline-based review of historical high and low points and relevant facts and doubling as an ad-hoc literature review, will be performed.

The next step should involve looking into discovering what the chances are that bilateral relations improve in the mid-term, and how they could improve. To answer this double-barreled question, whose aim is presenting so-called insider views about what the EU might be willing to do in the context of a power transition and the chance for modest reform in the DPRK, four in-depth interviews with relevant actors have been performed: a Seoul-based European diplomat with close ties to North Korea, a South Korean scholar and expert in the European Union, a Member of the European Parliament who is also a member of the Delegation of the European Parliament for Relations with the Korean Peninsula, and a representative of an European non-profit organization (NPO) working actively in North Korea.

Finally, the third baseline research question lies around the views of future South Korean political and business leaders regarding EU involvement in North Korea. How do they see it? How do they consider it can influence EU-South Korea relations? And, more importantly, how would they like it to evolve? In order to answer these interrelated questions, a survey was performed among South Korean elite university

students, with the overarching goal of comparing the views of such relevant stakeholders⁶ with those offered by the interviewed insiders and experts. Therefore, any expectation gaps between what the EU might be willing to do and what South Korean future leaders would like to see should be detected and highlighted.

Two exhaustive chapters will be devoted to explaining and commenting the outcomes and analyses of the interview and survey data, respectively, with all relevant results held intimately connected and eventually tied together in a final section that will shed some light on the internal and internal-external levels of consensus the EU might be able to reach when defining a North Korea policy.

1.2. Main hypotheses: horizontal and vertical inconsistencies and expectation gaps

As a logical extension from the overarching research question and the three auxiliary/baseline questions formulated herein, this thesis aims at proving or refuting the following two basic hypotheses regarding the views of both insiders/experts and South Korean stakeholders:

Hypothesis 1:

There will be a certain internal debate within the EU and related actors between those opting for a view limiting the possibility of engagement and underestimating the possible implications of the EU's role in North Korea, and those arguing that the EU should increase humanitarian aid, reinforce institutionalized dialogues and adopt a more proactive approach to endorse the EU's position and identity values in the region.

Hypothesis 2:

There will be a certain degree of dissonance and expectation gaps between the South Korean publics and EU decision makers and related actors. Moreover, we can define three further, interrelated secondary hypotheses as follows:

⁶ Obviously enough, the ideal situation should have involved North Korean citizens, as the real direct beneficiaries of any EU policies towards the DPRK. However, accessibility reasons make it almost impossible for foreign researchers to perform such field work in North Korea.

- Engagement with North Korea could affect South Korean perceptions of the EU.
- South Koreans would clearly prefer certain forms of EU engagement with North Korea over others.
- There will be certain links between engagement preferences stated for South Korea and those desired for the European Union. Moreover, preferences and views of EU engagement with North Korea will also be correlated with political ideology and other socio-demographic factors, such as age, sex or reported ties with EU citizens or institutions.

1.3. A dual methodology: combining qualitative and quantitative research

Each research method has its strengths and weaknesses, and certain concepts are more appropriately studied through some methods than through others. However, the best study designs normally use more than one research method, taking advantage of their different strengths (Babbie, 2004: 110).

Based on these premises, this thesis will follow a dual methodological approach for greater insight and consistency, combining an extensive review of EU-North Korea relations with an assessment of future possibilities using both qualitative (in-depth interviews) and quantitative (surveys) methods.

The aim of this dual methodological approach is to logically combine the limited access to experts and insiders, authoritative figures able and willing to provide relevant and extensive information on the chosen topic with the wider access to non-experts who are asked to provide their personal views on the given issue. This allows for a more comprehensive research project which is able to describe the views from both sides and to compare them for possible discrepancies or expectation gaps.

Further details about the methodological choices will be provided in the relevant sections of this thesis, which will now proceed with an analysis of the reasons why the EU should and/or could be interested in deepening its relations with North Korea, serving as a theoretical background to the research project.

2. From normative power to strategic vision: why the EU could pursue further engagement and strengthen institutional relations with North Korea

“Literature and analysis of EU-DPRK relations is very limited. Analysis on EU-DPRK relations going beyond the description of current or planned EU contributions to the economic and social development in North is even harder to find. The information on EU-DPRK relations published by the EU does usually not reveal information beyond official declarations either.”

“Press coverage on EU-DPRK relations is equally rare and the EU’s policy towards the DPRK usually only makes it to the news when an EU high-level delegation travels to Pyongyang or the EU Commission decides to provide North Korea with humanitarian aid and food assistance when nobody else does. However, this lack of literature and press coverage does not necessarily mean that the EU is an irrelevant actor.”

Berkofsky, 2003

Despite being written at a time in which EU-DPRK relations enjoyed a relative honeymoon, Berkofsky’s words still have full validity almost a decade later, and make for an unbeatable introduction to this section, aimed at exploring the reasons why the EU could – or even should – be a relevant actor in North Korea.

Given the objective lack of a strong theoretical background or relevant literature supporting the concepts being explored in this thesis, it is of essence to clarify the reasons why North Korea should matter to the European Union and, consequently, why exploring the chances of and perceptions about future engagement is worth the effort.

Seven main reasons that could grant a higher EU involvement in North Korea have been identified: i) geostrategic and security reasons; ii) smoothening complex EU-China relations; iii) deepening relations with a rising South Korea; iv) economic opportunities, both for the European companies and for the development of North Korea; v) value promotion (human rights, democracy and regional integration) via European soft power; vi) enhancing and giving visibility to the role of the EU as a benign power in Northeast Asia; and vii) the advancement of a more coherent, proactive and strategic CFSP.

2.1. Geostrategic and security reasons

As already discussed in the introductory section, despite strong economic and business interests in Asia, there is near consensus amongst scholars and analysts that the EU remains – reluctant and probably unable – to develop a security profile in Asia (Berkofsky, 2010). EU states have only three aircraft carriers, their submarines never travel to the North Pacific Ocean, there is no integrated EU command and control and the EU has no meaningful ground forces that could be deployed to the Asia-Pacific for any length of time (Kelly, 2012). Consequently, North Korean elites do not perceive the EU to be a hard or security power they should care about.

Additionally, Brussels' absence from the 6 Party Talks de-facto excluded the EU from having a role in security and nuclear issues on the Korean Peninsula, limiting the EU's current engagement in North Korea to the occasional (and by EU standards very modest) provision of humanitarian and food aid (Berkofsky, 2009), as we will further discuss later on. This undermines Brussels' credibility and impact as global security actor in general, and in Northeast Asia in particular, posing a striking contrast to the economic and political engagement policies towards North Korea of the early 2000s.

Standard rationalist thinking dictates that the security of the Korean peninsula is not a direct concern of the EU for at least four reasons. First, the Union's most acute security interests lie in Europe and its direct neighborhood, so there is no strategic interest or ambition strong enough to force the EU to act (Lee, 2012). Second, the key players in the region are the two Koreas, the U.S., Japan, China and Russia, all of them directly and immediately concerned with pending security issues between them, while the EU only occupies a marginal, non-conflictual position. Third, as far as global security is concerned, the EU plays a subordinate role to the U.S. and NATO, which have consistently taken the initiative in addressing a variety of global and regional issues in the international community. Fourth, the very nature of the EU's security policy means that, under the current CFSP and CSDP, the Union will preferably address soft security issues and only act as a force for good when its role does not conflict with the national interests of the member states (Hyde-Price, 2006).

However, East Asia has been undergoing a drastic transition toward a post-Cold War context of democratization and globalization. Although there still remain some interstate confrontations, and even if the impact of globalization and democratization on the region differs from state to state, this transition seems irreversible and is creating a new security environment in the region (Kim and Lee, 2011). The EU's decision not to get too involved in hard security issues like the North Korean missile and nuclear crisis undermines the credibility of Brussels' global foreign and security policy vision, and runs against the spirit and goals of the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS), through which the EU assigned itself a global role in international security, including in Korea (Berkofsky, 2009). Therefore, the EU, as a global structural power, could adopt a more active, constructive role in the context of East Asian security, especially regarding the situation in the Korean peninsula.⁷

One needs to look no further than the latest update of the Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia to discover why North Korea should matter both for geostrategic and security reasons to an European Union that should strive to develop "a stronger voice on regional foreign and security policy issues" (Council of the European Union, 2007). While the opening sentence of the document states that "East Asia is a region of especially dynamic change in which the EU has substantial interests," the list of key security challenges – valid for East Asia and the wider world – already make it clear that the North Korean regime is a deal breaker that goes against all defined goals, such as: i) the preservation of peace and strengthening of international security, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations; ii) the promotion of a rule based international system; iii) the promotion of regional integration; iv) the development and consolidation of democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; v) the promotion of cooperative and sustainable policies to meet global challenges such as climate change, energy security, environmental protection, poverty, economic imbalances, and health issues; and vi) the promotion of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

⁷ According to Berkofsky (2010), there is also a certain level of agreement amongst Asian policymakers and analysts that a more prominent and visible European engagement in Asian "hard security" issues could never be as constructive and promoting security as Brussels' "soft security" policies in Asia.

As also clearly stated in these Guidelines, East Asian security and stability is a precondition for the region's continued economic success and, therefore, threats to regional security – such as the DPRK's nuclear programme and the related risks of proliferation – have a direct bearing on the interests of the EU. The EU should, therefore, develop its cooperation with all regional partners on issues such as non-proliferation of WMD, among others, as well as demonstrate its willingness to cooperate in the context of a future broader Northeast Asia regional peace and security mechanism (Council of the European Union, 2007).

This document ends with a full subsection devoted to the Korean Peninsula and, more specifically, to North Korea's nuclear programme. According to these guidelines, the EU should “i) maintain its insistence on the verified full dismantlement of the DPRK's nuclear weapons; ii) request the DPRK to return to the NPT and sign and ratify the CTBT; iii) support the integration of DPRK into the non-proliferation regime and explore the potential for EU assistance activities to this effect; iv) continue to express its willingness to gradually deepen and widen relations with the DPRK in exchange for verifiable progresses from the Korean side; v) stress its continuing support for the 6 Party Talks and maintain close cooperation with its key players while reiterating that proliferation is a serious threat to global security; vi) urge the DPRK not to pursue sales to countries of concern, and encourage appropriate international cooperation to prevent such sales taking place; and vii) build up dialogue with the players, especially the Republic of Korea, on the issue of the broader stability of the Korean Peninsula, on humanitarian assistance to the DPRK and on human rights and on practical areas in which the EU could provide assistance” (Council of the European Union, 2007).

Since 2004 and 2005, respectively, the EU is discussing East Asian security issues with the U.S. and Japan on an institutionalized level. These exchanges are the so-called *EU-US and EU-Japan Strategic Dialogues on East Asian Security*, taking place every six months.⁸ The North Korean nuclear crisis and the 6 Party Talks are part of these dialogues, but their relevance for the resolution of the nuclear crisis on the Korean

⁸ According to Berkofsky (2009), the real motive for Washington and Tokyo to start discussing East Asian security issues with the EU on a regular basis was to de-facto institutionalize pressure on the EU not to lift the weapons embargo imposed on China in 1989 – successfully, as it turned out, as the embargo is still in place and not anywhere near the top of the EU's China agenda. In fact, the U.S. and Japan were never planning to coordinate their respective North Korea policies with the EU.

Peninsula has been very limited, not even resulting in any joint North Korea policies or policy initiatives so far.

The participants of the 6 Party Talks – the U.S., Japan, Russia, China, South Korea and North Korea – have not encouraged the EU to join the forum, and the EU is seemingly satisfied with this non-role in security and nuclear issues in North Korea, limiting itself to offer verbal “political support” for the talks.⁹ Then again, not being invited to Beijing is not necessarily a disadvantage: the last session was scheduled for December 2008 but was unilaterally cancelled by Pyongyang and, after North Korea’s 2009 nuclear test, they have yet to resume.

Therefore, we can conclude that, despite existent low-intensity engagement in security matters, and contrary to the claims of irrelevance to the EU’s physical and national security stated by some scholars as Kelly (2012), security issues in the Korean peninsula should matter for the EU, both as a major trading partner in this politically unstable area and also for the direct security implications tied to proliferation in sensitive areas such as the Middle East via North Korean sales and technical assistance. A deeper EU-DPRK relationship would not only help increase national security of valuable EU partners, but also have positive effects for its own internal security and raise the prestige of the EU as an international actor.

⁹ For instance, on October 2006, then EU Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner announced that the EU was offering political support for the 6 Party Talks. However, she failed to quantify and qualify what kind of “political support” the EU is willing and able to offer (Berkofsky, 2009).

2.2. Counterweight in the complicated EU-China relations

A further argument for enhanced EU engagement in North Korea would be its use as a lever to improve EU-China relations and help create a truly distinguishable strategic partnership between the two powers.

The idea of a strategic partnership between the EU and China first appeared in 2003, when the joint statement of the China-EU summit saw this as a consequence of “the expanded intensity and scope and the multi-layered structure of China-EU relations” (Council of the European Union, 2003a). The 2003 European Security Strategy also included China among the EU’s six strategic partners (European Council, 2003). Finally, the parties indicated a strategic partnership had been achieved in 2005. However, although there are sufficient shared strategic interests, and despite the official rhetoric, the EU and China do not really enjoy a working strategic alliance.

It could be argued that strategic partnerships are what the involved parties make of it. While Beijing seems set on engaging Europe as a function of its own relationship with the United States and not as a main partner in the international arena, Europe recognizes China as a key actor, but continues to see the U.S. as its main international partner. Therefore, we can agree with Holslag (2011) that the strategic partnership between the EU and China has yet to materialize in practice. There is indeed a clear gap between China’s belief that cooperation should depart from normative diversity and joint interest and Europe’s assumption that differences in interests can be resolved by a consensus over certain universal political rules.

The EU and China started to negotiate a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) in January 2007. Key objectives of the EU were “to improve access to the Chinese market for European exporters and investors beyond WTO commitments and to enhance cooperation in political matters and human rights issues” (Bersick, 2008). Progress, however has been slow and inconclusive, mainly due to ongoing problems in trade relations (blocking progress from the European side) and the continuing European arms embargo against China (blocking progress from the Chinese side).

Based upon joint statements made after annual EU-China summits, common interests are relatively few and not very well defined, and bilateral relations are essentially dominated by the economic and commercial spheres (Holslag, 2011). One of the few security issues to appear consistently in such joint statements is stability in the Korean peninsula and North Korean proliferation. However, the EU has failed to coordinate its aid strategies regarding North Korea with China (Holslag, 2011).

The only direct attempt of the EU to engage China concerned the situation of North Korean refugees in the border area, but Beijing did not allow the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to enter the country to supervise the situation, as the EU requested.¹⁰ Despite this failure and the limited formal dialogue between the parties on the North Korean nuclear issue, the European Union can still play a legitimizing role for China's pragmatic diplomacy in the wider Northeast Asia. More precisely, and in line with China's realist worldview, it can act as a valuable go-between against the U.S. regarding North Korea, thus helping improve bilateral China-U.S. and China-DPRK relations.

At first sight, this argument could be considered unrealistic or even counterproductive, given the current status of China as sole protector of the North Korean regime. However, according to Cha (2012), the relationship between Beijing and Pyongyang is not nearly as cordial as the popular press believes: both countries are indeed caught in a "mutual hostage relationship," as the Chinese need the North Korean regime not to collapse for both political and security reasons. As a recent New York Times article pointed out, shortly after Kim Jong-un took over, a Chinese vice minister of foreign affairs, Fu Ying, visited Pyongyang and clearly warned him not to proceed with a ballistic missile test. As is widely known, the new Korean leader went ahead anyway (Perlez, 2012).

North Korea not being the most serious or fundamental challenge to China's national security and strategic interests, Beijing chooses to muddle through (Cha, 2012), despite

¹⁰ In separate démarches at various levels, the EU has also continuously asked Beijing, so far to little avail, to show permissiveness to DPRK citizens who cross the border into China in search of food, and to reconsider its policy concerning these refugees, who might be sentenced to death or forced labor if returned to the DPRK.

strong internal policy debate, while hoping that economic reform will bring about a North Korea modeled after China. However, as warned by Sun (2012), “China might change its strategic calculation if North Korea launches new provocations and drags the region into a military conflict.”

In any case, the EU should also be aware that, despite China’s frustration with its poor and unruly neighbor, it will never abandon it, as shown by the fact that, right after the younger Kim assumed power, Beijing gave North Korea 500,000 tons of food and 250,000 tons of crude oil (Perlez, 2012). China needs North Korea not to collapse, both for foreign policy reasons – keeping a security buffer against a U.S.-backed South Korea¹¹ – and internal political and economic goals – trade with North Korea and via its ports as a key to develop the poor Northeast of China, Jilin and Liaoning provinces, its former rust belt. According to Cha (2012), as the only patron of the regime, China is more powerless than omnipotent, as the regime livelihood lies entirely in its hands.¹² Therefore, North Korea is clearly an important issue for China, and Europe’s willingness to play a greater, more constructive role in the isolated and impoverished North Korea could definitely help improve EU-China relations by partially defusing China’s dependency on the unpredictable regime.¹³

Although the EU has the ambition to persuade China to join the liberal international order, these attempts are doomed to fail unless a “grand bargain” with the rising Asian power is stricken (Howorth, 2010a).¹⁴ Additionally, the idea that the EU will continue

¹¹ This vital link is perfectly exemplified by Stapleton’s (2012) assertion that “Beijing disapproves of every aspect of North Korean policy, including the dynastic succession arrangements and North Korea’s self-destructive economy”, quickly adding that “Beijing has an overriding security interest in maintaining influence in Pyongyang and in not permitting other powers to gain the upper hand there.”

¹² Chinese internal sources estimate that if China cut out its aid to North Korea, the regime could only survive for a few months, or maximum one year (Cha, 2012).

¹³ In fact, the communication EU-China: Closer Partners, Growing Responsibilities (Commission of the European Communities, 2006), widely considered as marking an important shift in EU attitudes towards China, already touched on China’s internal stability, touting it as the key driver for Chinese policy, while also calling on the EU and China to cooperate more closely in regards to East Asia policies and related challenges, including non-proliferation on the Korean Peninsula (Cameron, 2009).

¹⁴ EU leverage vis-à-vis China is also limited by the competition between Member States seeking to build stronger bilateral relations in order to favor national companies looking for business opportunities in China – an approach wisely encouraged and exploited by Beijing and leading to European inability to translate its remarkable economic capital into political leverage. These internal differences also spill over the desirability to prioritize human rights concerns, with smaller Member States and the European

to fail to deliver as a strategic player is becoming more and more common among Chinese (Holslag, 2011). This dangerous trend must be reverted if Europe wants to be an important political player in the economically vibrant East Asia: seeking wider and stronger cooperation on the North Korea issue with China could only help in that score.

Parliament advocating a tougher stance than Germany, France and the UK, which are largely responsible for the EU's decreasingly critical attitude (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan, 2008: 321).

2.3. Deepening relations with a natural rising partner: South Korea

Many experts consider Seoul to be Brussels' natural partner of choice in Northeast Asia, one that shares most of the EU's core values and priorities, also regarding the future evolution of the North Korean regime. As detailed in the website of the Delegation of the EU to South Korea, this bilateral partnership is based on reciprocal intentions, like-minded values (democracy, plurality, human rights and freedom) and common global objectives (climate change, security, development cooperation, peacekeeping, denuclearization, the G20 and the reform of global financial institutions), with a high-performance trade component as its backbone, as demonstrated by the landmark EU-South Korea Free Trade Agreement (KOREU FTA), the first of its kind for the EU in East Asia.

Normative discourse and policy practice between the European Union and South Korea are also closely aligned, even more so than with other "natural" strategic partners. Moreover, even if it might not yet be considered a global power, South Korea performs a lynchpin role in certain regional or even global issues (Grevi, 2012), as demonstrated by the celebration of the 2011 G20 Summit and the 2012 Nuclear Summit in Seoul.

Relations between the European Union and the Republic of Korea (ROK) have come a long way since bilateral diplomatic relations were established in 1963, undergoing a substantive change during the last two decades. The 1990s, the era of the "Asian tigers," saw the start of a progressive enhancement of EU-ROK, as shown by the opening of the European Commission Delegation to Korea in 1990 and the adoption of a Korea Strategy Paper in 1993 by the European Commission.

This still lukewarm mutual interest received a dual boost in 2009. On the one hand, the bilateral Framework Agreement, which was first signed in 1996, was retooled and updated in 2009, considerably upgrading the bilateral relationship. On the other hand, after just three years of negotiation rounds, the Republic of Korea and the European Union concluded a free trade agreement, which entered into force on 1 July 2011.

The KOREU FTA is arguably the most important completed to date for both parties (Lee-Makiyama, 2010), and lays a foundation on which to build a relationship beyond

sheer trade (Kelly, 2012). Even with its limited scope in the fields of agriculture and services, it is expected to double the already substantial EU-North Korea trade: in 2010, before the FTA went into effect, South Korea was the EU's eight biggest importer and tenth biggest export destination, while the EU was Korea's fourth biggest importer and second biggest export destination (Kelly, 2012; European Commission, 2012a).¹⁵

Outside trade relations, EU interest in Korea had been traditionally quite low, and CFSP literature says little on Korea (Krotz and Maher, 2011; Kelly, 2012). Similarly, South Korea has had little need for a specific EU policy in its history. This all may be changing: the growing clout of a rapidly modernizing and highly competitive Chinese economy and the United States' strategic shift to Asia might push Seoul towards a hedging strategy and, therefore, higher engagement with other partners. Common values and interests, coupled with a lack of historic animosity and/or territorial disputes make the European Union an ideal ally for Seoul to solidify its status in the complicated East Asian puzzle. As argued by Kelly (2012), deepening its non-trade relations with a visible and prestigious actor such as the EU will allow South Korea to solidify its status as a rising middle power while effectively reducing its still growing dependence from a rising China and a still hegemonic United States.^{16,17}

Despite ongoing territorial and historical rifts with regional neighbors, stark nationalism and apparently limited interest in sovereignty losses for the regional good, Kelly's (2012) assertion that South Korea is deeply attached to a rather classical Westphalian conception of the nation-state is being put into doubt by the ongoing Free Trade Agreement negotiations with China and Japan, already in an advanced stage (MOFAT, 2012), and the limited but relevant defense agreement signed in June with historical enemy Japan.¹⁸ Therefore, Seoul can perfectly become the "Asian bridge" for the

¹⁵ Contrary to the wide acceptance among the South Korean public enjoyed by the KOREU FTA, the even more recent signing and ratification of a Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. (KORUS FTA) has spurred considerable protests and debate among the citizenry and the major political parties, with the main opposition party threatening to revoke it and ask for its renegotiation had it won the April parliamentary elections.

¹⁶ As asserted by most analysts and commentators, beyond North Korea, South Korea's primary security concerns are the rise of China, suspicion of lurking Japanese revisionism and possible U.S. decline.

¹⁷ However, as warned by Kim (2010), should alienation from the United States because of a tilt towards the EU arise, South Korea would probably shed or scale back its relations with the EU.

¹⁸ It must be noted, however, that implementation of the agreement has been suspended by the Republic of Korea in retaliation to the visit of Japanese lawmakers to the disputed Dokdo islets in August 2012.

promotion of not just liberal democracy in a non-European context, as argued by Kelly (2012), but also a beacon of regionalization.

A third factor, beyond commercial interests and hedging against Chinese and U.S. hegemony, that could push South Korea even closer to the EU would be prospects of reconciliation and eventual reunification with North Korea. Although South Korean openness towards North Korea will not happen until after the departure of conservative President Lee Myung-bak,¹⁹ whoever succeeds him after the December 2012 election is likely to be willing to renew contact with the DPRK, with companies such as Hyundai, Samsung and Posco believed to be making contingency plans for business with Pyongyang (The Economist, 2012). In the run-up to this eventual heightened economic cooperation, commercial exchanges between the two Koreas increased by 36% in the first months of 2012 compared with the same period in 2011 (La Vanguardia, 2012).

There are currently no leading politicians on either side of the 38th parallel wishing immediate reunification. Both sides have, over time, proposed different confederation models, headlined by Kim Dae-jung's, former President of the Republic of Korea, who proposed a three-phase unification model later translated into his "Sunshine Policy": confederation (pacific coexistence), federation (pacific exchanges) and reunification (pacific unification), all spanning over several decades.

Clearly enough, no immediate economic or political stimulus would be achieved by the South Korean government if reunification was pursued, as it would entail an extraordinary economic cost for South Korea. According to Cha (2012: 393), there was a silent but practical motivation for the "Sunshine Policy:" fear of unification,²⁰ or a

¹⁹ Despite much negative publicity regarding his unwillingness to defuse tensions with North Korea, Cha (2012: 404-405) details two engagement proposals the Lee Myung-bak administration had put forward for inter-Korean cooperation, and that were duly rejected by Pyongyang. The first was the "Denuclearization and Opening 3,000", in which South Korea promised to raise North Korean income per capita to \$3,000 per year within ten years if Pyongyang agreed to abandon nuclear weapons and open to the world. The second proposal was a "Grand Bargain", announced at the UN General Assembly in September 2009, in which Lee promised to make massive investments in North Korean infrastructure and to end the era of North-South strife if the DPRK committed to denuclearization and addressed human rights concerns.

²⁰ In fact, Kim Dae-jung ordered that the word "unification" be removed completely from the government's policy toward the North. Instead, he began to use words like "constructive engagement policy" to avoid fomenting North Korea's fear of being absorbed by its stronger southern counterpart (Cha, 2012).

hard landing in which South Korea would have to foot an insurmountable bill. The goal was, therefore, to achieve a soft landing, a slow and controlled process of integration via decades-long engagement. Moreover, North Korea will also insist on the fact that any settlement with the South regarding unification should initially give a guarantee of two countries, two systems, and not a real unification in which the economically stronger Seoul clearly takes the lead and de facto absorbs the North (Ford, 2012).

Whatever shape the eventual reunification process might take, Seoul will look to the EU and its experience with the reunification of Germany in the early 1990s. Despite the enormous differences between the two processes – with North Korea being much poorer relative to its more modern neighbor than East Germany was by the end of the Cold War, and also with a population amounting to almost half of South Korea's, a far greater proportion than that of East Germany compared to the Western *Länder* –, insights and expertise, as well as practical help and probably aid, would be extremely welcome.

As the official written statement released just before the 6th EU-Republic of Korea Summit, which was held in Seoul on 28 March 2012, points out: “The EU attaches great importance to maintaining stability in the region and reducing tensions on the Korean Peninsula. North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile programmes as well as the human rights situation remain a grave concern” (European Council, 2012). South Korea seeks support from the European Union in its relations with North Korea. If the EU was willing to take its commitment on the resolution of the North Korean issue and follow Seoul along what will probably be a more cooperative line vis-à-vis Pyongyang in 2013, South Korean perception and sensitivity towards the EU – already widely positive due to real shared interests and goals – could receive a big boost.

2.4. Economic opportunities: how economic cooperation could benefit North Korea and the EU

The argument behind boosting EU-North Korea trade can easily be looked at from a dual perspective: that of European companies wishing to invest in what could, in due time, become a promising emerging market, and that of the North Korean economy, which would highly benefit from progressive economic aperture and foreign direct investment flows.

Analyzing what drove the North Korean economy into its current state of disarray is well beyond the scope of this thesis.²¹ While many developing countries thrived in the post-Cold War globalization process and increased trade flows, North Korea's 1990s were characterized by negative economic growth, with an average rate of -4% from 1990 to 1998. North Korea ended up isolated from the globalized world, with crumbling infrastructure, technological obsolescence and uncompetitive industries (Park, 2009). Today, after failed agricultural and industrial reforms, undertaken in 2002 and 2003 respectively, North Korea remains trapped in an aid-dependent economy with rampant corruption and negligible (legal) foreign trade.

This dire situation, compounded by severe draught during the Spring and massive floods during the Summer of 2012, prompted young leader Kim Jong-un to confide that “developing the economy and improving livelihoods, so that the Korean people lead happy and civilized lives, is the goal the Korean Workers' Party is struggling towards” to Wang Jiarui, head of the Chinese Communist Party's International Department and Beijing's key interlocutor with the North (Buckley and Park, 2012). Only a few weeks later, and amidst news of a fresh agricultural reform that would increase market access for peasants, the North's state-run Korean Central News Agency reported that Jang Song-taek, a powerful figure in the DPRK's government and uncle of the young leader,

²¹ A simplified explanation of some key economic decisions that could explain how North Korea fell to the current depths is offered by Cha (2012). In his book, he points to five bad macroeconomic choices as leading North Korea to its current pitiful economic state. In chronological order, those are the excessive focus on heavy industry in the 1950s, the *Chollima* movement – based on using ideology and not technology to improve production – in the late 1950s and 1960s, the accumulation of debt and eventual default during the 1970s, the failed big-scale projects undertaken in the second half of the 1980s in response to Seoul's Olympic nomination and the poor management of Soviet abandonment since 1990, converting the country into an economy dependent of external aid to survive.

had traveled to China to discuss building and developing the joint industrial complexes on their borders, the Rason and Hwanggumphyong economic zones (Choe, 2012b), something several analysts consider a game-changing move.²²

Are those modest signs of economic changes relevant enough to be optimistic about the prospects of change? The jury is still out. While The New York Times asserted that the new leader has shown no interest in following the advice of China to open up the economy, even in a modest way (Perlez, 2012), Haggard (2012) suggests adopting a cautious, critical approach towards recent agricultural and economic reforms – in his opinion, echoing the failed moves of 2002.²³ In several chapters of his book, Cha (2012) also argues that, instead of progressively liberalizing markets, Kim Jong-un is likely to adopt a policy of *neojuche revivalism*, combined with a less extreme version of Kim Jong-il's *songun* (military first) policy. In other words, a militarized return to a conservative and hard-line self-reliance ideology based on the golden age of the DPRK, namely the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Therefore, according to both Cha and Korean scholar Kim Yong-hyon, the regime is indeed seeking tighter internal control rather than economic reform, and is doing it via tactical actions borne out of temporary need or halfhearted attempts at inviting trade and investment.

China is, by and large, North Korea's largest trade partner. According to some estimates, there are roughly 150 Chinese companies operating in North Korea and more than 80% of consumer goods sold in the DPRK originate in China (Berkofsky, 2010). It can be argued that North Korea has systematically avoided foreign direct investment not coming from China and neglected international trade relations because of its distrust of foreign powers and fear of being exploited by Westerners (Park, 2009).

²² In line with that strategy, the Joint Venture and Investment Commission (JVIC) was established a little over a year ago to deal with inward investment, and it has the stated goal to see that the DPRK attracts investors looking for a low wage, skilled labor force. FDI protection agreements to prevent dual taxation have been signed with around 30 countries, and new investment laws, passed in 2010 and amended in January 2012, provide for the creation of three different kinds of joint ventures: equity joint ventures, contractual joint ventures and exclusively foreign-owned business (this one only possible inside SEZs).

²³ According to Haggard (2012), three counties have been picked to test a new system of small farms, under which farmers will be allowed to keep 30% of their production quota and any excess. Kim Jong-un has reportedly also complained about the way the country's resources are being sold off on the cheap. However, this could be seen as a move to recentralize economic control, as any economic relaxation is hampered by the fear of losing political control. This is backed by a recent news piece published by the official North Korean news agency, which asserted that expecting reform and opening was nothing but a "foolish and silly dream, just like wanting the Sun to rise in the West" (Haggard, 2012).

Further barriers to foreign trade and investment include: local trading companies which are subsidiaries of or affiliated with the government, the military or the Communist party and, therefore, not guided by purely economic incentives (Park, 2009); rampant inflation, only accentuated by the failed, anti-market currency reform of November 2009; the dual exchange rate systems, which impede international trade and FDI flows; higher tax rates than those of other competing FDI recipients (Park, 2009); foreign firms' dependence on labor pools arranged by government agencies; and slow bureaucracy – Park (2009 citing Jung, 2008) reported that it took 65 days to obtain business approval in North Korea, as opposed to only 45-55 days in Vietnam.

Many studies have shown that trade is an engine for development and economic growth for small open economies (Park, 2009 citing Balassa, 1989; Baro, 1991; Frankel and Romer, 1999), and a rapid increase in exports would not be possible without foreign direct investment (FDI). North Korea has a geographical advantage in promoting its trade relations because it is surrounded by several big or rich economies (Park, 2009): a recent report by Bank of America-Merrill Lynch states that North Korea's integration in the international community could translate into yearly growth rates between 10 and 12%, sustainable over time. However, such growth prospects would only be feasible within the context of a gradual integration of North Korea in the regional Northeast Asian economy.²⁴

From the EU perspective, current trade figures between the DPRK and the European Union are almost negligible – with North Korea ranking as the 154th most important trade partner for the EU in 2010. According to Eurostat data, trade amounted to just €167 million in 2010, with figures hovering between a high of €280 million in 2006 and a low mark of €120 million a year later. However, the EU was North Korea's 4th most important trade partner in 2010 – right behind Egypt and India –, and it consistently enjoys a trade surplus with the bloc. North Korea mostly exports minerals, manufactured articles (mostly clothing) and chemicals to the EU, while it imports agricultural products, fuels, chemicals and machinery.

²⁴ At the same time, a developing North Korea could also be a mid-to-long term boon for South Korea, as it would have access to cheap and willing labor and a country in dire need of capital influxes.

Sanctions aside, trade between the European Union and North Korea is shaped by two relevant issues. First, North Korea is not a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and does not benefit from the privileges granted to imported goods from developing countries under the EU's General System of Preferences (GSP).²⁵ Second, being a state and not a market economy, trade with the EU is regulated according to Council Regulation (EC) 519/94.²⁶ However, the EU applies Most Favored Nation status to North Korea (European Commission, 2002),²⁷ only strictly regulating and limiting imports of textile products, which are specifically covered by Regulation (EC) 517/94,²⁸ as duly amended by up to 26 Council and Commission Regulations.

Despite the difficult environment, European business does not shun North Korea completely. A European Business Association Pyongyang (EBA) was founded in 2004, and recent European-North Korean business cooperation examples include the PyongSu pharmaceutical joint venture, which produces generics for the North Korean market, a Polish-North Korean shipping joint venture and a partnership in IT services between the Korea Computer Centre (KCC) and a German partner company. The most successful joint ventures to date, however, are tobacco and beer factories (Berkofsky, 2009).

Meanwhile, a remarkable business opportunity in North Korea for European companies would be related to mining and processing rare earth metals²⁹ and other minerals, including coal, iron ore, gold ore, zinc ore, copper ore, limestone and graphite.³⁰ South

²⁵ In fact, even goods produced in the Kaesong Industrial Complex will not be considered as originating in the Republic of Korea, pursuant to the rules of origin of the EU-Republic of Korea Free Trade Agreement (Delegation of the EU to the Republic of Korea, 2011).

²⁶ Council Regulation (EC) 519/94 of 7 March 1994 on common rules for imports from certain third (State-trading) countries and repealing Regulations (EEC) 1765/82, 1766/82 and 3420/83 (OJ L 67, 10.3.1994, p. 89)

²⁷ At the time of writing, the EU was the only major trading power allowing the application of the Most Favored Nation clause to North Korea. However, tariff rates under this clause are higher than those under the Generalized System of Preferences (Park, 2009).

²⁸ Council Regulation (EC) 517/94 of 7 March 1994 on common rules for imports of textile products from certain third countries not covered by bilateral agreements, protocols or other arrangements, or by other specific Community import rules (OJ L 67, 10.3.1994, p. 1)

²⁹ China can be seen a case in point in that respect: prior to 2004, it had no mining-related investments in North Korea. Nowadays, more than 40% of Chinese joint ventures in the DPRK are in extraction industries. In 2010, top export items from North Korea to China were already iron ore, coal and copper (Cha, 2012: 337).

³⁰ In fact, among the three key reasons cited by European businesses present in North Korea, two are related to the country's resources, "to secure a part of the rich mineral resources the country possesses"

Korean estimates put the North's mineral resources figure at over \$6 trillion (Abrahamian & See, 2012). North Korea expert Leonid Petrov (2012) argues that the country's rare earth deposits could enrich the country without reforming the economy, and that South Korea is cooperating with North Korea to exploit its rare earth deposits. However, the processing technology for rare earths metals is still extremely complicated, with only China, Japan, and a few European countries having the necessary processing plants (Haggard, 2012).

The role of trade and development aid as a key instrument of EU foreign policy to facilitate internal reforms must not be understated. As asserted in the 2003 European Security Strategy: "Trade and development policies can be powerful tools for promoting reform. As the world's largest provider of official assistance and its largest trading entity, the European Union and its Member States are well placed to pursue these goals" (European Council, 2003). Reforms and changes already detected in the 2001-2004 North Korea Country Strategy Paper (European Commission, 2002) still hold valid nowadays:

"The authorities need to establish an environment that will attract foreign capital and trade partners in order to mobilize the capital and build markets for North Korean industrial recovery and growth. Creating this environment requires addressing questions of macroeconomic stability and management, external debt management, laws and regulations for investment and trade, labor training and management, the administrative capacity of government, and an effective legal system."

According to former Member of the European Parliament Glyn Ford, North Korea is eager for advice. It wants to learn from the West and the rest but it wants to do this in its own way (Ford, 2008: 124). The EU, together with the U.S., generates around 80% of the international norms and standards that regulate international markets (Zielonka, 2011). It is precisely this overwhelming structural power in trade issues what converts the EU in the perfect partner for North Korean economic opening and eventual revival. European experts have presented experiences of economic transition in other parts of the world and outlined options for reform, including improving the climate for inward

and "to be present in the basic industries of the country", the last one being "to tap the potential of North Korea as an hypothetical emerging market" (Park, 2009).

investment, economic transition based on the example of Central and Eastern Europe, creating SMEs and attracting FDI (Ford, 2008: 208-209).

Therefore, if the EU (and, above all, the Commission) is really interested in having a role in the (at least potential) recovery of North Korea's economy – thus indirectly benefiting European businesses –, it should continue to promote and advocate economic reform in North Korea through existing and new institutional links and exchanges.

2.5. Value promotion via European soft power: human rights, democracy and regional integration

“The European Union is founded on a shared determination to promote peace and stability and to build a world founded on respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. These principles underpin all aspects of the internal and external policies of the European Union.”

Council of the European Union, 2012b

Over the last two decades, the European Union has actively tried to promote the so-called European values as part of its foreign action. The EU, more than any other international actor, has inserted the principles of democracy and human rights in the structures and policies of its foreign policy and external relations and has matched its commitment with those values by creating tools for promoting them (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan, 2008).

Since the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, EU foreign action has, with a varying degree of coherence and cohesiveness, revolved around human rights. However, only with the Lisbon Treaty has this become an explicit obligation weighing on the Union in its external action. Article 3(5) of the Treaty on European Union now provides that:

“In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens.”

This “missionary principle” is also reflected in Article 21(1) of the Treaty on European Union, which provides that:

“The Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the

principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.”

In other words, Chapter 1 of Title V of the Treaty on European Union provides that the Union shall define and pursue common policies and actions, and shall work for a high degree of cooperation in all fields of international relations, in order to – among others – consolidate and support democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the principles of international law.

Moreover, Article 21(2) of the Treaty on European Union, concerning the Union’s external action, specifies that:

“The Union shall define and pursue common policies and actions, and shall work for a high degree of cooperation in all fields of international relations, in order to:

- (a) safeguard its values, fundamental interests, security, independence and integrity;*
- (b) consolidate and support democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the principles of international law;*
- (c) preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, with the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and with the aims of the Charter of Paris, including those relating to external borders³¹”*

The fact that the Treaties now explicitly oblige the European Union to promote its values in the wider world, together with the strengthening of the coherence principle, entails that the Union is effectively given less leeway when framing its external policies: there is now a formal obligation of framing them in such a way that they will further promote a set of values that are not only important as an external objective but also as an (internal) identity objective, thus shaping a distinct international identity for the EU as a values-driven normative power (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan, 2008).

³¹ Further specification of several of the Union’s values may be found in its Charter of Fundamental Rights, in the case-law of the Court of Justice and in secondary legislation such as the European Consensus on Development.

In line with those changes, the EU adopted, on 25 June 2012, its brand new Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy, building on a previous joint communication adopted by the European Commission on 12 December 2011 following a proposal by High Representative Catherine Ashton. This new strategy sets out principles, objectives and priorities, all designed to improve the effectiveness and consistency of EU policy as a whole in the next ten years (Council of the European Union, 2012b).

According to the Strategic Framework, the EU will promote the universality of human rights via all its external policies – on the basis of the aforementioned Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union – in a coherent manner and both through bilateral partnerships and multilateral institutions. In the document, it is claimed that “the EU will place human rights at the centre of its relations with all third countries” and “promote human rights in all areas of its external action without exception,” while also clarifying that “the EU’s policy on human rights will be carefully designed for the circumstances of each country,” including through the development of country human rights strategies and via human rights dialogues and consultations with partner countries (Council of the European Union, 2012b).

Tied to the strategy, an Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy has also been adopted, covering the period until 31 December 2014 (Council of the European Union, 2012b). Among the 97 planned actions, the plan to create a toolbox to integrate human rights principles into EU operational activities for development by 2013 should be highlighted (Council of the European Union, 2012b).

What could this updated and upgraded legal framework mean for prospective relations with the DPRK? As a matter of fact, Kim Jong-un’s North Korea could, with the right political will in Europe and a certain degree of commitment towards aperture from the Korean side, become a prime candidate to put into practice the EU’s relational and structural power as far as value promotion is concerned.

The strategy adopted by the EU has mostly been based upon the “carrot and stick” concept, and unruly North Korea has not been an exception: humanitarian aid has been offered on a consistent basis (albeit in a varying degree) since the end of the 20th

century; aperture has been rewarded with financial incentives, while provocations have prompted sanctions, mostly in response to UN Security Council resolutions. A decade ago, Brussels policymakers believed that EU “soft power” in forms of technical assistance, generous economic, humanitarian and financial aid would offer enough leverage to help convincing Pyongyang to give up its missile and nuclear programs. While it was obviously not enough to stop Kim Jong-il’s proliferation strategy, they could have a positive effect on his successor.

In many instances, the EU pursues the promotion of human rights through its cooperation and assistance programmes. Therefore, it seems natural for the EU to provide humanitarian aid as part of the endeavor to promote human rights in North Korea (Lee, 2012). Moreover, integrating human rights issues into trade and external assistance is indicative of its basic position: the answer to the North Korean issue lies with a soft approach that stresses gradual and peaceful reform, rather than belligerent gestures (Lee, 2012 citing Bridges 2008: 227).

Fostering regional integration – including North Korea in the process – would also be positive to further advance EU identity values, while also being clearly in line with the Regional Strategy for Asia 2007-2013, whose main stated priority was to encourage cooperation and regional integration (European Commission, 2007). To achieve this, the EU supports work and dialogue with the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the Trans-Eurasia Information Network (TEIN), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Despite its failure in balancing the depth of the US-Europe or the US-East Asia bonds (Kelly, 2012) and deepening or spurring integration (Kelly, 2012 citing Yeo and Hofmeister, 2010), the EU could revitalize the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) as a tool for inclusive regional integration by making inroads – conditions allowing – in still isolated Asian countries such as North Korea.³²

³² The EU also participates in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which has ironically helped further diplomatically isolate the DPRK (Kelly, 2012).

Differences on values such as democracy and human rights, as well as the perception that Asian countries and people were the victims of European exploitation during the colonial era have been a constant source of friction between the EU and Asian policymakers defending so-called “Asian values,” and thus hindered the development of the ASEM process (Fitriani, 2011). However, the EU represents a package of philosophic ideals, economic wealth, physical comfort, democratic practice, and cultural status to which many Asian countries aspire.

While promoting such values in North Korea might seemingly be a dead end, the fact that South Korea does not share such negative perceptions about the EU with most of its Asian neighbors could open a window of opportunity for the EU to become a “benevolent preacher” of such values in North Korea. This role would certainly be welcomed by Seoul and also be received with less hostility from Pyongyang, as the Kim regime already considers the EU to be a benevolent actor with no hidden, self-interested agenda in regime destabilization.

We could conclude by using Lee’s (2012) suggestion that the EU should continuously pressure the North Korean leadership through mechanisms as political and human rights dialogues, along with emergency humanitarian assistance, to abide by the international human rights standards, while also making efforts to integrate North Korea in the international community. That would be clearly in line with the EU’s capacity as a structural power and also with its core values, doubling as the basis defining its role in the international arena.

2.6. The European difference: the EU as a benign power in Northeast Asia

“North Koreans see Europe as a valuable alternative to the US in politics, trade, and security. The EU can play a very positive role in helping North Korea through economic cooperation and training programs.”

Leonid Petrov, 2009

“The prospects for an economic upturn and for genuine social development in North Korea are limited if the country continues to remain secluded and largely deprived of international assistance.”

European Commission, 2007

The dual reality of EU-DPRK relations is perfectly expressed by those two sentences – the latter belonging to the Strategy Paper drafted for another poor and, until very recently, highly isolated Asian country, Myanmar: the EU could be better positioned than other major powers to play a key constructive role in North Korea’s development, but Pyongyang should first show its willingness to cooperate with actions and not only with words.

It is often argued that the EU is a peculiar if not unique international actor: it is a largely civilian power promoting universal norms in its vast neighborhood and beyond (Zielonka, 2011). Europe’s polycentric system of governance is more suited to creating institutional structures and setting up the rules of legitimate behavior than to bold and swift power projection abroad, while also making it less vulnerable to accusations of pursuing selfish ambitions at the expense of others³³ – as much as it hampers its ability to project it in a strategic fashion.

Additionally, experience tells us that coercive diplomacy over North Korea to change its external behavior and domestic policies will be rather ineffective (Ohn, 2009), both due to the domestic constraints of the autocratic Kim regime and also to the historical state-centric and nationalistic tendencies in East Asia.

³³ In the concrete case of North Korea, this has prompted Lee (2012) to assert that “institutionalized contact and economic aid for North Korea relations are motivated not by strategic ambition or economic interests but as a manifestation of moral traits that the EU has embraced to develop.”

Therefore, the Union's civilian power, one that tries to gradually reform through economic and legal engineering, with a more technical than ideological goal in mind, tends not to cause animosity among third countries (Zielonka, 2011). This perception of non-contradiction with any of the racial and historical posits upon which rests the ideology of the regime,³⁴ also extensively cited by Ford (2008), coupled with Europe's sheer physical distance from the Korean peninsula and the fact that no EU country poses a direct military threat to the regime, would explain why Pyongyang could see the EU as a "valuable alternative."

The EU and its Member States are already the biggest donor of global humanitarian, food and development assistance (providing more than 50% of the total) and its capacity-building policies – including technical assistance, technology and know-how transfers, among others – in many Asian countries have without a doubt contributed to peace and stability in Asia in recent decades (Berkofsky, 2010).

The establishment of EU-North Korea diplomatic relations has not yet led to increased EU influence on politics and security in North Korea, as it was hoped in Brussels in the early 2000s – most notably in 2001, when the EU briefly tried to normalize relations with North Korea after dialogue between Washington and Pyongyang was suspended (Lee, 2009) –, in part because Brussels did not turn into a counterweight of U.S. policies towards North Korea, as it was initially hoped in Pyongyang (Berkofsky, 2010). However, while sharing the basic foreign policy values and objectives emphasized by the U.S., the ways in which the EU has pursued them in the international arena have been more acceptable to many East Asian nations (Ohn, 2009), thereby opening a window of opportunity for further engagement with the DPRK via the quintessential European soft power.

Indeed, the EU's ability to act as a neutral facilitator of dialogue and peace in the region within the existing frameworks in which it participates might give it a great normative and de facto edge in pursuing a constructive, integrative policy vis-à-vis North Korea, in

³⁴ An accessible but comprehensive analysis of the complex philosophical-political-racial system of beliefs that orchestrates North Korea's monolithic ideology can be found in Myers' 2009 book *The Cleanest Race. How North Koreans See Themselves – And Why It Matters* (New York: Melville House).

a way loosely comparable to the much-touted Helsinki Process³⁵ and the mediation in U.S.-USSR relations in the 1970s.

As asserted by Cha (2012), even regimes like Pyongyang's might like to reform, but are afraid of undertaking changes because they witnessed the Arab Spring and fear that a slight opening could lead to total collapse. The EU could play an important role in that sense, using its soft power and benevolent image to promote gradual regime reform and opening. This would serve both the North Korean population, as it could enjoy increasing political and economic freedoms, and the perception of the EU as a global normative power with a positive influence that can extend to areas well beyond its borders.

³⁵ As Zubok states in his 2007 book *A Failed Empire*, the commitments to human rights embedded in the Helsinki Final Act "proved to be a time bomb under the Soviet regime."

2.7. Towards a more coherent, proactive and strategic Common Foreign and Security Policy

“The Union shall ensure consistency between the different areas of its external action and between these and its other policies. The Council and the Commission, assisted by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, shall ensure that consistency and shall cooperate to that effect.”

Article 21(3)(2) of the Treaty on European Union

As Yale Professor Jolyon Howorth stated in a keynote speech at the Royal Military Academy of Belgium on 13 July 2010, “we find ourselves facing a historical turning point, where failed states have become more worrisome than strong states, collective security becomes more relevant than territorial defense, human rights become as important as states’ rights, soft civilian instruments of intervention become as crucial as military instruments and multi-level bargaining trumps muscle-flexing” (Howorth, 2010b). In other words, the global context seems to be fit for the EU to take a more active, comprehensive and strategic role as an international actor.

However, in 2010, Berkofsky performed a comparative analysis of the EU’s relations with the two major Northeast Asian powers, China and Japan, and the unruly North Korea, concluding that relations in general, and security ties with Tokyo, Beijing and Pyongyang in particular, did not necessarily show common and recurring patterns of EU security policies towards Asia (Berkofsky, 2010).

According to Solana (2009), the EU was ahead of its time in 1999, initiating a new approach to international relations, responding to crises, instability and insecurity with effective crisis management instruments; however, it was lacking coordination and strategic thinking. One can easily argue that it is still lacking in those aspects nowadays, despite the fact that 25 out of the 62 amendments to the Nice Treaty included in the final version of the new Treaty on European Union deal with CFSP and CSDP (Charalampous, 2010).

Foreign relationships conducted at the EU level, a genuine CFSP, help establish the EU's still-contested global role (Kelly, 2012) and improve its bargaining position against Member States fighting to retain foreign policy-making authority (Krotz, 2009; Krotz and Maher, 2011). So far, the EU's CFSP remains mired in confusion, overlap, and turf conflict (Kelly, 2012). The outside world remains unsure if there is a true European foreign identity (Rosato, 2011), and the widening and deepening debt crisis may only worsen this tension.

Despite the risks involved for the EU in adopting a more proactive approach vis-à-vis the DPRK, tensions in the Korean peninsula give the EU grounds to prove its political maturity in a theater where it has yet to play a visible geopolitical role. Moreover, deeper engagement in the Korean Peninsula could serve the interests of Brussels' bureaucracy – vis-à-vis the rifts between Member States within the Council – and pro-European elites as it simultaneously serves the EU's general prestige (Krotz, 2009).

Coherence entails EU norms should be part of a widely applicable and holistic strategy for world peace, whereas consistence means its internal policies, external prescriptions and actions should be consistent when promoting norms (Manners 2008). Therefore, if the EU and its Member States want to preserve their influence in the increasingly challenging and multipolar global setup of the 21st century, it is imperative that they act in a coherent, consistent and proactive way in all relevant regional theaters – among which Northeast Asia should be considered *primus inter pares*.

3. Past and present EU-North Korea relations

After reviewing the key reasons why the European Union could be interested in pursuing a more active policy and eventually look for greater engagement vis-à-vis North Korea, the focus of this section moves to the past and current status of EU-DPRK bilateral relations.

This section is subsequently divided in two parts. First, a chronological overview of EU relations with North Korea, based on historical highlights – including those not directly involving the EU but that have had a direct effect on bilateral relations –, will be provided in the form of a table. In the second part, the current status of EU-North Korea relations will be presented, focusing on the following topics: i) the legal framework and the sanctions regime; ii) the human rights issue and institutional relations; iii) humanitarian aid; iv) non-proliferation and the North Korean nuclear program; and, given its past relevance and future possibilities, v) energy assistance.

3.1. Timeline of bilateral relations: from the hope of the 90s to the doubts of the leadership transition

The present section will succinctly present the most relevant historical dates and facts that have given shape to EU relations with the DPRK up to the present day. Starting in the Second Cold War years, EU engagement with North Korea has not followed a stable, upward path. The following table, mostly focusing on contemporary issues, aims to offer a better understanding of the key reasons behind the current troubled relation between an allegedly trying European Union and the hostile North Korean regime. To further help the reader, the events have been divided into two overarching typologies: those that signaled a rapprochement between the EU and the DPRK and those that complicated bilateral relations.

YEAR(s)	EVENTS FACILITATING ENGAGEMENT	EVENTS COMPLICATING ENGAGEMENT
1976-1988	The U.S.-Soviet Détente promoted a limited enhancement of the relations and cooperation between North Korea and then-CE countries.	
1989-1992	Initial political relationships were established, at a time in which the relations between North Korea and the former socialist states in Central and Eastern Europe took a more pragmatic nature. This was compounded by the fact that many of these former Communist countries established diplomatic relations with South Korea and stopped giving aid to North Korea. Additionally, in 1991, North Korea passed the Foreigner Investment Act and opened the Rajin-Sonbong free trade zone.	
1993		On 12 March, North Korea said that it planned to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and denied inspectors access to its nuclear sites.
1994	The Agreed Framework between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was signed on 21 October 1994, shortly after Kim Il-sung's death (8 July 1994). The objective of the agreement was the freezing and replacement of North Korea's own nuclear program with light water reactor power plants, and the step-by-step normalization of relations between the U.S. and the DPRK.	
1995	The Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), whose principal aim was to construct a light water reactor nuclear power plant in North Korea to replace North Korea's reactors, is constituted.	

	The EU officially began its involvement in assistance programmes and cooperation activities with the DPRK.	
1996	The European Union Chamber of Commerce in Korea also established a North Korea Committee as a bridge to help European enterprisers visit North Korea and to establish contact with economic bureaucrats of the North. It was succeeded by the EU-Korea Foundation in 2001.	
1997	The European Union became a member of the KEDO project.	The mortality peak of North Korea's <i>Arduous March</i> was reached. Widespread famine from 1994 to 1998 caused somewhere between 900,000 and 3,500,000 dead out of a total population of 22 million. First EU resolution on the issue of human rights in North Korea.
1998	Kim Dae-jung, the new South Korean president, implemented the "Sunshine Policy" of rapprochement with the North. The first official visit from a European Parliament delegation took place in December to assess the situation of the country in terms of food and energy. The first EU-DPRK political dialogue was also held in Brussels.	In August 1998, North Korea test-fired a long-range ballistic missile – allegedly a rocket to put a satellite in orbit – over Japan.
1999	A resolution was passed by the European Parliament in March calling for the establishment of diplomatic ties, a dialogue on human rights and assistance beyond food aid. The Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of North Korea also visited the European Parliament in April 1999, and a second EU-DPRK political dialogue was held in Berlin.	

<p>2000</p>	<p>Italy set up diplomatic relations with the DPRK in January. The UK followed in December.</p> <p>The historic Pyongyang Summit, between North Korean leader Kim Jong-il and South Korean president Kim Dae-jung, was held in June.</p> <p>The Korean Peninsula–European Union lines of action towards North Korea were published by the European Council in November. This document helped the Union to articulate the principles that Member States had to follow, while reiterating that the EU was not an outsider to the issues affecting the Korean peninsula (Kim, 2008).</p> <p>The EU’s approach towards the Korean Peninsula and the DPRK was defined in the Council Conclusions of 9 October and 20 November 2000, in which EU commitment to support the inter-Korean reconciliation process and to increase assistance to the DPRK was highlighted.</p>	
<p>2001</p>	<p>The Netherlands and Belgium established diplomatic relations with the DPRK in January 2001, followed by Spain on February and Germany, Luxembourg and Greece in March.</p> <p>On 14 May, after the official visit by Foreign Minister Person of Sweden, High Representative Javier Solana and EU Commissioner of Foreign</p>	

	<p>Relations Chris Patten to North Korea on 2-4 May, the EU established official diplomatic relations with the DPRK.</p> <p>The first human rights dialogue between the two parties took place between the EU and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of North Korea in Brussels in June.</p>	
<p>2002</p>	<p>The European Commission adopted the EC-DPRK Country Strategy Paper 2001-2004, in which it asserted that the “direction is clear and the process that is currently underway is considered by both parties as irreversible” (European Commission, 2002).</p> <p>A set of reforms introducing market economy elements to the command economy, the economic adjustment policy, was passed in North Korea. The Sinuiju Special Administrative Region, on the northwestern border with China, and the Kaesong Industrial Complex, not far from the border with South Korea, were also established.</p> <p>A second round of human rights talks was held in June, and Pyongyang dispatched a group of senior officials to Europe to learn about EU economic policies and models and welcomed the European Parliament’s initiative to establish (quasi)-institutional and – by North Korean standards – regular exchanges (Ford, 2008).</p>	<p>In October, the U.S. Government informed that a clandestine North Korean nuclear program had been detected. The European Council of November strongly demanded Pyongyang to suspend its uranium enrichment program and ordered the North to respect the NPT, announcing that “failure to resolve the nuclear issue would jeopardize the future development of EU-DPRK relations.” (European Council, 2002).</p> <p>During the KEDO Executive Board Meeting of 14 November, it was also decided to suspend heavy fuel oil deliveries as from December 2002.</p>

<p>2003</p>	<p>The 6 Party Talks between North Korea, South Korea, the U.S., China, Japan and Russia, were established.</p>	<p>On 10 January, North Korea became the first nation ever to withdraw from the NPT and, at the same time, unilaterally cancel all nuclear arrangements under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency. This prompted the EU to suspend official and large-scale humanitarian aid implemented under the aegis of the North Korea Country Strategy Paper.</p> <p>The EU also stopped providing its share of expenses for KEDO (with the light-water reactor project being eventually put on hold in November), suspended a planned technical support plan to be funded by the National Indicative Program (2002-2004) and paralyzed the scheme to support enlargement of the EU market towards North Korean products (Lee, 2009).</p> <p>The EU sponsored a resolution against North Korea at the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, which was adopted on 16 April. The changes in EU attitudes led the North Koreans to announce, during the meeting with the EU in December 2003, that they suspended the human rights dialogue.</p>
<p>2004</p>	<p>The European Parliament Delegation for Relations with the Korean Peninsula was established in September 2004. Yearly visits to both North and South are undertaken, often with return visits by both countries. Also starting in 2004, Commission delegations visited North Korea to hold seminars on EU-North Korea relations and economic reforms in North Korea.</p>	<p>The economic policy of partial liberalization started in July 2002 was gradually abandoned and old patterns of central economic planning, public distribution system, and strictly controlled market activity were being reintroduced. North Korean government officials and the army are told that market liberalism was a temporary phenomenon and would not be tolerated in the future.</p>

		The DPRK decided to suspend political dialogue due to the continued activism of the EU in sponsoring human rights resolutions at the UN level.
2005		At the request of the EU, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution condemning North Korea's human rights practices for the first time in the Human Rights Committee's 57-year history on November 17 (Kim, 2008; Lee, 2009).
2006		On July 1, KEDO's termination was announced. The reactors had cost the EU \$125 million (6% of the total and as much as the U.S. paid in heavy oil). ³⁶ Pyongyang conducted its first nuclear test in October 2006 and declared itself a "nuclear state". After the test, the UN Security Council passed two resolutions, 1695 and 1718, which imposed strict sanctions to the North Korean regime.
2007	As a result of the ongoing 6 Party Talks, the February 2007 agreement was reached, stating the provision of economic, financial and energy aid for North Korea in return for the verifiable and sustainable end of Pyongyang's nuclear programs and the eventual dismantlement of all North Korean facilities (Barabesi, 2009; Berkofsky, 2009). After the announcement, Javier Solana stated that the EU would request to be a "player" as opposed to only a "payer" in a post-nuclear North Korea.	

³⁶ According to Lee (2009), the EU's generous participation in the program can be in part seen as compensation to Japan for its support in the Balkan wars of the early 1990s.

<p>2008</p>		<p>The economic policy of partial liberalization started in July 2002 was gradually abandoned and old patterns of central economic planning, public distribution system, and strictly controlled market activity were being reintroduced.</p> <p>DG ECHO closed its Pyongyang office in May.</p> <p>The December round of the 6 Party Talks ended in disagreement. It would eventually be the last round of multiparty negotiations to date.</p>
<p>2009</p>		<p>In January, Pyongyang nullified a 1991 agreement with Seoul on reconciliation, non-aggression and co-operation, asserting it would no longer honor the Western maritime boundary between the two countries. This would later lead to the March 2010 <i>Cheonan</i> corvette sinking, in which 46 South Korean soldiers perished, and the November 2010 Yeonpyeong island shelling, with 4 civilian casualties.</p> <p>North Korea conducted a second nuclear test on 25 May, which led to the passing of UN Security Council Resolution 1874 and the subsequent reinforcement of existing EU sanctions against North Korea. In September, the DPRK officially acknowledged to the UN Security Council that it had a uranium enrichment program.</p> <p>Anti-market reforms in North Korea culminated with a failed currency reform in November, which subsequently led to uncontrolled inflation.</p>

<p>2010</p>		<p>After recovering from the stroke he suffered in 2008, Kim Jong-il accelerated his succession plans. In April, he gave his third son Kim Jong-un the post of vice chairman of the party's Central Military Commission (CMC). The junior Kim was also given the post of "first secretary" of the party, which doubles as the CMC chairman. Two days later, Kim Jong-un became the "first chairman" of the National Defense Committee (NDC).</p> <p>In December, Pyongyang revealed a fully operational uranium enrichment facility at Yongbyon to a reputed U.S. nuclear scientist.</p>
<p>2011</p>		<p>In December 19, 2011, Kim Jong-il died of a massive stroke. His third and younger son, Kim Jong-un, was named successor and swiftly moved to consolidate his grip on power. Civilian elites such as Kim Kyong-hui, a younger sister of Kim Jong-il, and her husband Jang Song-taek, were set to flex considerable muscle within the North Korean government. While the EU and the U.S. showed wariness towards the dynastic succession while offering half-hearted condolences to the regime, China promptly declared the legitimacy of the successor and vowed to stand behind him.</p>
<p>2012</p>	<p>The Leap Day Agreement between the U.S. and the DPRK was reached on 29 February. Under the tentative agreement, the U.S. would provide generous but strictly monitored food aid to the ailing North Korean population.</p>	<p>In April, the UN Security Council tightened sanctions on Pyongyang for its failed rocket/satellite launch, an alleged violation of a ban on ballistic missile testing. It also led to the suspension of the agreement reached two months earlier with the Obama administration.</p>

3.2. ¿What does the EU have now? The legal framework, the sanctions regime, limited unconditional aid and the non-proliferation of WMDs

The EU's current relative inactivity on the Korean peninsula issues somehow stands in contrast to the Union's economic and political engagement policies towards North Korea of the early 2000s. The present section will be devoted to analyzing the elements that characterize the current status of EU-DPRK relations. Shaped by the overarching role of the past and current legal framework of the bilateral relations and the strict sanctions regime imposed by the EU on Pyongyang, engagement possibilities are effectively limited both within the EU's external relations – i.e. trade relations, humanitarian aid, technical aid and development cooperation – and foreign policy toolsets. Still, as we will see, the EU has found ways to modestly help improve conditions in the field and to cooperate with other foreign powers in the fight to resolve the security and human rights issues that still plague Northeast Asia.

3.2.1. The legal framework and the sanctions regime

Up until 1997, there was no official channel of communication between the European institutions and Pyongyang. Only five out of 15 member states had diplomatic relations with the DPRK. (Ford, 2008: 193-194). In May 2001, the EU established diplomatic relations with Pyongyang and many EU Member States followed the EU example in 2001 and 2002. By 2012, 26 out of the 27 EU Member States (all except France) maintain bilateral diplomatic relations with Pyongyang.

Seven EU Member States (Germany, Bulgaria, Sweden, Romania, Great Britain, Poland and Hungary) maintain embassies in Pyongyang, the other Member States have themselves represented by either their embassies in Seoul or Beijing. Given that the EU itself does not maintain an embassy in Pyongyang – despite plans to open one after the establishment of diplomatic relations with the DPRK in May 2001, which have been consistently blocked by France – the seven embassies hold a rotating system of EU representation vis-à-vis the North Korean government and, depending on the issue and the political circumstances, the EU ambassador in Seoul can also act as EU representative in North Korea.

The EU approach towards the Korean Peninsula and the DPRK was set out in the Council Conclusions of 9 October³⁷ and 20 November 2000.³⁸ By underlining EU commitment to support the inter-Korean reconciliation process and to increase assistance to the DPRK in response to progress by North Korea in addressing the concerns of the EU and the international community in human rights, non-proliferation and security issues, progress in inter-Korean reconciliation, economic structural reform and social development (Barabesi, 2009), they endorsed the Commission decision to expand its assistance to the DPRK through providing additional market access possibilities for North Korean exports and launching a technical assistance program, while continuing the current humanitarian and food assistance to the DPRK and support for the KEDO project.

The establishment of diplomatic relations in May 2001 led to the adoption of a North Korea Country Strategy Paper (CSP) for 2001-2004 in March 2002 (European Commission, 2002). Based upon the aforementioned Council Conclusions, the CSP, together with the EU's National Indicative Program (NIP) for North Korea, laid out the framework and objectives for technical assistance projects in North Korea. The Commission's declared priorities concentrated on three main areas: i) institutional support and capacity building; ii) sustainable development and use of natural resources including access to sustain-able energy sources; and iii) reliable and sustainable transport sector and rural development. Moreover, the EU concluded that support for North Korea's industrial sector as opposed to support for the agricultural sector was crucial for a possible economic recovery in North Korea, whose economy was structurally similar to that of many Eastern European economies of the 1990s (European Commission, 2002).

However, the implementation of the paper was suspended and it subsequently expired. There are currently no indications that Brussels is planning to draft and adopt a new North Korea Country Strategy Paper as the basis and framework for an economic engagement course. On the contrary, current relations are shaped by EU negative conditionality in the form of sanctions, viewed as the primary means of addressing the

³⁷ Council meeting – General Affairs 2294th – Luxembourg, 9 October 2000 (PRES/00/364)

³⁸ Council meeting – General Affairs 2308th – Brussels, 20 November 2000 (PRES/00/435)

DPRK's vertical – i.e. the development of its own programs – and horizontal – i.e. selling technology to third countries – proliferation potential (Cha, 2012: 456-457).

International negotiations are costly and states can only enforce international cooperation to the degree that they negotiate an international agreement that authorizes sanctions upon defection (Downs, 1997), i.e. a set of actions aimed at reverting or reducing, to a higher or lesser degree, diplomatic or economic relations to spur changes in certain activities or practices, such as international law or human rights violations, or policies against the rule of law or democratic principles, engaged in by third country governments, persons or entities.

Scholastic debate about the utility of negative conditionality in the form of sanctions is still ongoing. Although analyzing wider perspectives is outside the scope of this thesis,³⁹ it must be pointed out that it is not difficult to find opposed views regarding the particular case of North Korea. On the one hand, we find views such as Cha's (2012: 456), who argues that sanctions imposed against North Korea are designed for counterproliferation and, therefore, should remain in place as long as Pyongyang maintains its nuclear capabilities. On the other, we find scholars as Stares (2010), who asserts that rather than making the verifiable and irreversible disarmament of North Korea's nuclear weapons program a precondition to all subsequent relaxation of tensions and progress in other areas, including sanctions, limiting the size and operational readiness of the existing arsenal could become the main objective – even without abandoning the ultimate goal of a denuclearized Korean peninsula. In fact, since the April 2012 failed missile test, North Korea's status as a “nuclear armed state” has been enshrined in the Constitution, another signal that the government has no intention of giving up its nuclear program.

The current EU sanctions regime is mostly based upon Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which provides a legal basis for the interruption or reduction, in part or completely, of the Union's economic and financial relations with one or more third countries, where such restrictive measures are

³⁹ For a theoretically reasoned argument on the level of sanctions states should choose to achieve international cooperation in an asymmetric power relationship, see Urpelainen's (2010) paper “The enforcement–exploitation trade-off in international cooperation between weak and powerful states.”

necessary to achieve the objectives of the CFSP (European Commission, 2012d).⁴⁰ These sanctions are implemented via Council Decisions and (prior to 1 December 2009) Common Positions, including those providing measures not detailed in any specific Regulation, such as restrictions on admission (European Commission, 2012).

The first Council Common Position concerning restrictive measures against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 2006/795/CFSP,⁴¹ was approved in November 2006, after North Korea made its first underground nuclear test in October of the same year. This Common Position, which implemented United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1695 and 1718, focused on the sale of all arms and weapons, nuclear- and missile technology-related materials, luxury goods, the entry or transit of certain individuals and a fund and asset freeze. It was further amended in July 2009 by Common Position 2009/573/CFSP,⁴² after a second North Korean nuclear detonation and with the goal of transposing UN Security Council Resolution 1874, which widened the scope of the restrictive measures by extending the arms embargo.

However, as thoroughly detailed in the latest available update of the Commission document on the European Union's Restrictive measures (sanctions) in force, the current EU sanctions regime is mainly based upon Council Decision 2010/800/CFSP,⁴³ which superseded Common Position 2006/795/CFSP (and, therefore, also Common Position 2009/573/CFSP). It provides for an extensive list of up to fifteen restrictive measures, including an embargo on arms and related materiel; a ban on exports of technology and luxury goods; a ban on new commitments for grants, financial assistance and loans to the DPRK; measures to prevent specialized teaching or training; the inspection of cargoes to and from DPRK; and restrictions on admission and the

⁴⁰ Before the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, sanctions were based upon Articles 60 and 301 of the Treaty establishing the European Community.

⁴¹ Council Common Position 2006/795/CFSP of 20 November 2006 concerning restrictive measures against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (OJ L 322, 22.11.2006, p. 32)

⁴² Council Common Position 2009/573/CFSP of 27 July 2009 amending Common Position 2006/795/CFSP concerning restrictive measures against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (OJ L 197, 29.7.2009, p. 111)

⁴³ Council Decision 2010/800/CFSP of 22 December 2010 concerning restrictive measures against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and repealing Common Position 2006/795/CFSP (OJ L 341, 23.12.2010, p. 32)

freezing of the funds and economic resources of the persons, entities and bodies listed in Annexes II and III (later amended by Council Decision 2011/860/CFSP⁴⁴).

Still in force is also Council Regulation (EC) 329/2007,⁴⁵ essentially banning exports and imports of certain goods and technology listed by the UN, exports of luxury goods, the provision of certain services and the freezing of funds of certain individuals and entities. It was amended by Commission Regulation (EC) 117/2008⁴⁶ and, most notably, by Council Regulation (EU) 1283/2009,⁴⁷ including an additional ban on exports and imports of certain goods and technology; the prior information requirement on cargoes to and from DPRK; measures to be applied by EU credit and financial institutions to exercise vigilance over their activities with banks domiciled in DPRK and their subsidiaries; the amendment of the provision concerning freezing of funds and economic resources; and the completion of Annexes I⁴⁸ and IV of the original Regulation.⁴⁹

Overall, we find a heavily curtailed scope for bilateral economic and commercial relations. However, current sanctions fall short of banning fruitful exchanges outside the provided limitations: being heavily targeted at certain persons, entities and goods – i.e. “smart sanctions” –, they are meant to spare the rest of the population and, therefore, allow for hypothetical aid flows and businesses exchanges that could alleviate the overall situation. This becomes clear when analyzing the wording of several articles of Council Decision 2010/800/CFSP: despite banning certain forms of trade, Article 2(1)

⁴⁴ Council Decision 2011/860/CFSP of 19 December 2011 amending Decision 2010/800/CFSP concerning restrictive measures against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (OJ L 338, 21.12.2011, p. 56)

⁴⁵ Council Regulation (EC) No 329/2007 of 27 March 2007 concerning restrictive measures against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (OJ L 88, 29.03.2007, p. 1)

⁴⁶ Commission Regulation (EC) No 117/2008 of 28 January 2008 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 329/2007 concerning restrictive measures against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (OJ L 35, 9.2.2008, p. 57)

⁴⁷ Council Regulation (EU) No 1283/2009 of 22 December 2009 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 329/2007 concerning restrictive measures against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (OJ L 346, 23.12.2009, p. 1)

⁴⁸ Annex I, listing goods and technology subject to ban on exports and imports (other than luxury goods), would be subsequently amended by Council Regulation (EU) 567/2010 (OJ L 163, 30.6.2010, p. 15).

⁴⁹ Annex V, listing the targeted persons, entities and bodies whose funds and economic resources should be frozen, was amended by Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 1355/2011 (OJ L 338, 21.12.2011, p. 39), passed just two days after the death of Kim Jong-il and the rushed transfer of power to his younger son Kim Jong-un.

clearly opens the door for wider trade; Article 2(2) also uses what could be qualified as ambiguous wording, failing to quantify the extent to which trade shall be limited; and Article 8 also limits training opportunities in a somewhat fuzzy manner.

Therefore, thanks to the non-exhaustiveness of the current targeted sanctions, the EU has managed to stay engaged with North Korea, albeit in a limited manner, as we will see in the next subsections.

3.2.2. The human rights issue: defining institutional relations

On 15 April 2012, the 100th anniversary of the birth of his late grandfather, Kim Il-sung, young leader Kim Jong-un addressed the North Korean masses. The contrast with his late father, Kim Jong-il, could not have been clearer. He spoke directly to the nation. His regime invited international television crews to film the festivities. It even admitted that a mission to put a satellite into orbit in honor of his grandfather had failed. Some commentators claimed to detect signals from the young ruler of a new openness in the regime (The Economist, 2012a).

However, the situation inside the country is as dire as ever. As asserted by Cha (2012: 8), “North Korea ranks seventh out of seven (lowest possible) on Freedom’s House 2012 Freedom in the World index, and is therefore one of just nine countries forming the group of ‘the worst of the worst’. It is in the 0th percentile for the World Bank’s Voice and Accountability index and ranks dead last in the Freedom of the Press index.” Reports about the victims of repression in North Korea tell us how ruthless the regime still is. Whole families, including children, are incarcerated for “guilt by association.”⁵⁰ There are no trials for those in the political camps. Crimes include not wiping the dust off a portrait of Kim Il-sung; having been a diplomat or student in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and having witnessed the collapse of socialism; having contact (usually in China) with South Koreans; or even being a Christian (Cha, 2012).

As already explored in the previous chapter, the promotion of human rights and democracy has been very high on the EU’s agenda. The EU has introduced over 200

⁵⁰ Under an edict from Kim Il-sung in 1972, up to three generations must be punished in order to wipe out the “seed” of class enemies (Cha, 2012).

resolutions on specific human rights situations in UN forums since 1991, and North Korea has been, since 1997, one of the main targets, including a resolution at the 53rd UN Commission on Human Rights to prepare the first formal UN assessment of North Korea's human rights conditions (Lee, 2012 citing Brantner and Gowan, 2008: 83).

North Korea participates in some international treaties on human rights. It is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), although in 1997 it decided to withdraw unilaterally after the first UN resolution regarding the human rights situation in the country (European Commission, 2002). It is also a signatory to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It has failed, however, to ratify its accession and, therefore, does not implement the relevant provisions.

Political dialogue between the EU and North Korea was initiated in 1998, with subsequent rounds coming in the following years. From the outset, they included a modest human rights element, which was reinforced after the May 2001 Troika visit to North Korea (see table on section 3.1.1), where the EU highlighted the importance of addressing human rights issues by telling their counterparts that further assistance would depend on the improvement of the human rights situation. Pyongyang subsequently accepted to hold a seminar on human rights (Kim, 2008).

The first human rights dialogue took place between the “troika” (consisting of Swedish Prime Minister and President of the European Council Goran Persson, the EU's Foreign Policy Representative Javier Solana, and the EC Commissioner for External Relations Chris Patten) and representatives of the North Korean Ministry of Foreign affairs in Brussels in June 2001 (Kim, 2008). Later in 2001, at the fourth political dialogue held in Pyongyang, the parties agreed to include humanitarian issues in the annual political dialogue instead of holding separate humanitarian talks. The second round of human rights talks, held in June 2002, was criticized as not producing any substantial results. The fifth political dialogue of June 2003 also fell short of expectations (Kim, 2008).

Admitting that moderate measures would not work to improve the North Korea's human rights situations (Berkofsky, 2003), the EU opted for multilateral engagement by tabling a resolution on human rights in North Korea at the UN Commission on Human

Rights (UNCHR) meeting in 2003.⁵¹ This led the North Koreans to announce, during the meeting with the EU in December 2003, that they suspended the human rights dialogue; political dialogue would also be suspended in 2004. Instead of backing down, the EU became more assertive on human rights issues, leading the passing of a resolution denouncing the North's human rights record to the UN General Assembly for the first time in November 2005 (Kim, 2008).

Despite a temporary pause in 2007, the multilateral efforts of the EU to deal with North Korea's human rights issue at the UN continued in 2008, 2009 and 2010.⁵² Political dialogue was also resumed in 2007 and held again in 2009, and the EU used it to voice its concern with the human rights situation and the denuclearization issue (Delegation of the Commission to the Republic of Korea, 2012).

According to the EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World in 2011, the EU remained "seriously concerned" over the violations of human rights in DPRK, and looked "to improve the situation" (European Commission, 2011b). Human rights concerns were also raised directly with the DPRK authorities by the resident ambassadors of the EU Member States in Pyongyang and during meetings with DPRK officials in Brussels and in other EU Member States (European Commission, 2011b).

Bilateral dialogue and institutional relations are complemented by regular meetings between senior officials from both sides and official EU visits to Pyongyang at regional director level, which are also used to request respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms and the recommendations of relevant UN Resolutions, while offering expertise and constructive cooperation if substantial dialogue is established.

Finally, the role of the European Parliament should not be dismissed. Featuring a Delegation for Relations with the Korean Peninsula, which also holds inter-parliamentary meetings with the Supreme People's Assembly of the DPRK on a non-regular basis (European Parliament, 2012), it has passed numerous resolutions

⁵¹ A second and third resolution on North Korean human rights conditions were also adopted in April 2004 and 2005, respectively.

⁵² As recently as 21 December 2010, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution initiated by the EU, Japan and the Republic of Korea on the human rights situation in DPRK.

concerning human rights in the DPRK,⁵³ expressing deep concern and criticism over the large scale human rights abuses taking place and urging Pyongyang to improve the situation.

Dialogue and institutional relations have a particular significance, especially when the existing environment would not allow the parties concerned to directly address human rights issues, as is the case of the DPRK (Lee, 2012). Therefore, even if limited by the current political situation, shaped by North Korean hostility and EU negative conditionality, maintaining channels of communication open at all times is still considered an essential feature of EU-DPRK bilateral relations.

⁵³ With European Parliament Resolution of 23 March 1999 on relations between the European Union and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (OJ C 177, 22.6.1999, p. 51) being the first and European Parliament Resolution of 8 July 2010 on North Korea (OJ C 351E, 2.12.2011, p. 132) the latest so far.

3.2.3. Unconditional humanitarian aid

For as long as human rights have existed, the right to food has been an inseparable part of the concept. Article 25 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “all have the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care” (UN General Assembly, 1948). Article 11 of the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which North Korea acceded in 1981, recognizes “the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger” (UN General Assembly, 1966). However, North Korea has consistently been unable guarantee these basic fundamental rights to its citizens since the mid-1990s.

When it became clear to the international community that North Korea was suffering a catastrophic food crisis, donors moved quickly to bring some relief to the country’s people. In 1995 and 1996, the World Food Programme (WFP) delivered over half a million metric tons of food aid per year. The years 1997 and 1998 saw over 900,000 metric tons and almost 800,000 metric tons, respectively. From 1999 to 2002, the WFP annually donated more than 1 million metric tons of food aid to North Korea, peaking at 1.5 million metric tons in 2001. In total, since the program started working in the country, it has delivered over 12 million metric tons of food to the North Korean people (Cha, 2012).

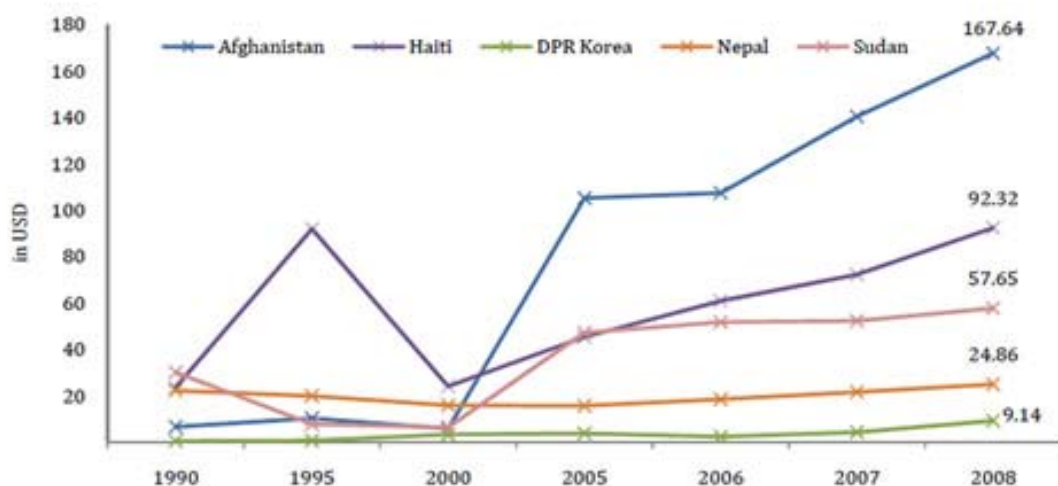


Figure 1: Net ODA received per capita (in USD). Source: International Development Statistics Database, OECD (2012).

Still, as Figure 1 clearly demonstrates, levels of aid received by North Korea are extremely low compared to those of other countries facing severe humanitarian issues. The World Food Program estimates that around 16 million North Koreans (2/3 of the population) still depend on the old official Public Distribution System (Cha, 2012). Actual rations delivered are well below the official minimum of 573g of cereals per person per day, with estimates for 2011 putting the figure around 250g.⁵⁴ Consequences on public health are obviously nefarious and punctuated by the fact that, although a decent health service system is in place, it lacks medicines and equipment. North Korea's ratio of arable land to population is among the lowest in the world, and agricultural production requires ongoing imported inputs such as fertilizer and irrigation, that subsequently depends on a reliable electricity supply for pumping (European Commission, 2002).

The EU has been providing significant humanitarian aid in a non-conditional fashion: since 1995, it has destined more than 370 million euro⁵⁵ in aid to the DPRK, consisting of food, medical and sanitation assistance, as well as the supply of agricultural equipment. Unlike other major donors, interactions between the EU and the DPRK can only be understood upon the EU's ongoing decision to separate security from humanitarian issues (Berkofsky, 2003). For instance, while U.S. humanitarian aid fell into a sharp decline after the 2002 nuclear crisis, the EU did not follow the same path. The reconstruction of water and sanitation facilities, as well as actions in the health sector initiated from 2003, continued with the allocation of relief funds for sudden emergencies, such as the 2004 Ryongchon train explosion (Barabesi, 2009 citing Dawson, 2004). Intermittent and sporadic aid was also offered even after the missile test in 2005, which derailed the relationship between the EU and North Korea.

With the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union has been given, via Article 214 TFEU, explicit powers in the field of humanitarian aid. Moreover, the provision refers to "third countries," thus encompassing both developing countries and countries that, for

⁵⁴ According to Cha (2012), NGO groups that visited rural areas of the country in early 2011 included a question asking when it was the last time the respondent had protein in their nutritional surveys. Virtually every respondent could remember the exact date when they last had an egg or a piece of meat, revealing the dire state of undernourishment.

⁵⁵ It should be noted that transport costs to and distribution costs in North Korea are usually included in these totals, which significantly reduces the funds available for actual food and humanitarian aid.

whatever reasons, do not fall into that category. As stated by the EEAS on its website, current EU activities vis-à-vis North Korea “are mainly oriented towards support for the agricultural sector and are financed under the Food Security Thematic Programme of the Development Cooperation Instrument” (European External Action Service, 2012a).

After the closure of the Pyongyang office of DG ECHO in May 2008, the EU’s multilateral, longer-term cooperation instruments have been managed by EuropeAid’s⁵⁶ Coordination Office, and funds have been provided to six international NGOs active in North Korea. The EU funded projects worth 7.4 million Euros in 2008 and 8.4 million Euros in 2010⁵⁷ (Lee, 2012), mostly targeting people and communities at the local level⁵⁸ and focusing on agricultural self sustainability and education in environmental management – including education in erosion, deforestation, pest management, sloping land management and agricultural techniques (Barabesi, 2009).

NGOs, relabeled “EU Project Teams” for political reasons, carry out their projects using funds from the Food Security thematic program, granted after bidding in calls for proposals, and enjoy the support of a consultant office, which is sometimes perceived as an EU representation office despite having a very different role: it is used by contractors to discuss project interests and, only to some extent, to bring up issues with the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Projects focus on health – including a project for people with disabilities under a different budget line – and food and water security. Several NGOs have provided specific technical assistance, offering courses to candidates selected by the North Korean government in economics, agriculture, and capacity building. Some have advised North Koreans on water, sanitation, seed improvement, and soil erosion prevention projects. Others have offered North Koreans officials study-abroad opportunities and/or classes in English language (Taylor and Manyin, 2011).

⁵⁶ It must be noted that, since January 2011, EuropeAid is part of the new Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation – EuropeAid (DG DEVCO).

⁵⁷ The aid amount was however reduced to 2.5 million Euros in 2009 due to North Korea’s second nuclear test.

⁵⁸ According to Ford (2011), the EU focuses its assistance in the Northeast of the country and to children under five hospitalized with malnutrition or in residential care, pregnant and breastfeeding women, hospital patients and the elderly.

On top of the long-term development cooperation instruments, DG ECHO has also responded to humanitarian needs. When floods devastated part of the Northwestern provinces of North Korea in the summer of 2010, ECHO also provided 200,000 Euro to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to help about 100,000 affected people (European Commission, 2011a). Most recently, the Commission decided, in July 2011, to provide emergency food aid worth of 10 million Euros to protect 650,000 North Koreans at risk from dying of malnutrition (Lee, 2012).

The Commission has repeatedly assured that this limited aid will be available no matter the political situation, as it acknowledges that technical aid is one of the long term solutions to the causes of many problems in countries it works in. The Commission, now with the assistance of the EEAS, in charge of developing aid policy on the field, is also ready to intervene if natural disasters or famines occur again in the future. However, direct development aid, under the Development Co-operation Instrument (DCI), will not be offered to the DPRK until the nuclear crisis is settled (Barabesi, 2009). Moreover, if monitoring distribution is not possible, EU aid will not be delivered and, in case the aid is being diverted from its intended recipients, the Commission will not hesitate to end its humanitarian intervention, as Commissioner Georgieva made clear in 2011 (Ford, 2011).

To summarize, we see a complex scenario in which, despite the current international political climate and the harsh sanctions imposed on North Korea, limited but valuable EU aid is consistently and non-conditionally provided to the ailing North Korean population, albeit usually in an indirect fashion.

3.2.4. Non-proliferation and the North Korean nuclear program

The EU has, since 2003, a Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (Council of the European Union, 2003b), considered a complement to the 2003 European Security Strategy and initially including the appointment of a Personal Representative of the High Representative on non-proliferation of WMD – a post that disappeared with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the revamped CFSP. The implementation of this strategy, complemented by two additional Council documents – the updated list of priorities (Council of the European Union, 2008a) and the new lines for action (Council of the European Union, 2008b) –, is reviewed by six-monthly progress reports.

As stated in the latest progress report, the guiding principle and overall aim of the EU in the field of proliferation is the promotion of the universality of international treaties, conventions and other instruments by means of all available instruments and financial resources, including the CFSP budget and the Instrument for Stability (Council of the European Union, 2012a). For instance, the EU has committed more than €30 million to the Nuclear Security Fund, as well as €25 million to the IAEA's Low Enriched Uranium Bank through the Instrument for Stability. Moreover, the EU aims to address non-proliferation issues in the bilateral relations with all relevant countries – obviously including the DPRK.

In this regard, the EU has strongly condemned the attempted missile/rocket launch conducted on 13 April 2012, has continued to urge the DPRK to abandon all its existing nuclear and ballistic missile programs in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. In June 2012, it demarched the DPRK urging it to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and to refrain from any further provocative acts, in particular in the form of new nuclear tests (Council of the European Union, 2012a).

However, the strategy cannot fully conceal the enduring internal divergences on nuclear issues, namely the gap between the views of the two nuclear powers (France and the United Kingdom) and those of the remaining Member States. According to Keukeleire and MacNaughtan, the EU faces a serious credibility issue in pressuring third countries to sign and respect the NPT, to renounce their nuclear ambitions and to accept non-

proliferation provisions in any relations with the EU. This is further compounded by the inability of the EU's nuclear powers to provide a credible security guarantee to these third countries, which often pursue nuclear capability due to their shaky security situation (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan, 2008: 168).

Additionally, in terms of the two most recent successful non-proliferation initiatives, the Libyan model – relinquishing nuclear capability in exchange for integration into the international community – would not work because North Korea needs aid before access, while the Ukrainian model – in which nuclear capabilities would be given up for multilateral security guarantees and economic inducements – fits the bill but does not suit the interests of the past U.S. and current South Korean administrations.

The recent Libyan experience – with Gaddafi's regime being toppled with NATO help a few years after renouncing to its nuclear program – means that there is very little chance that Pyongyang agrees to surrender its nuclear weapons. Currently, the DPRK sees nuclear deterrence as a *sine qua non* condition for the protection of its national sovereignty (Ford, 2012). A very graphic example of this approach is given by Cha (2012), as he quotes a North Korean negotiator as saying: “You will never attack us because we have nuclear weapons. Afghanistan did not. Iraq did not. Libya gave them up. That's why you attacked them, but not us”.

According to Cha (2012: 301-304), North Korea seeks a deal similar to the one the U.S. accepted with India and Pakistan: full acceptance as a nuclear state in exchange for coming back into the IAEA safeguards and monitoring, plus the permission to run a civilian nuclear energy program and to control a portion of its nuclear armament as a deterrent and a generous package of economic development aid and energy assistance. Ford (2008) agrees with this posture, stating that the only basis for any settlement must be the guarantee of non-intervention by the United States – something Cha calls a “regime security assurance”.

North Korea has the notion that nuclear weapons are the only guarantor of national security and the most reliable means of deterrence against military provocation from hostile governments (Park, 2010). Therefore, we have to wonder how strongly the EU's words can resonate in North Korean ears if the incentives for the regime to progressively give up its nuclear capacity are not dramatically heightened.

3.2.5. Energy assistance

Although non-existent at the time of writing, EU-DPRK cooperation in the energy field is not unprecedented. As already detailed on section 3.1, the EU took part in the now-defunct KEDO project. The EU participated in the project almost from its inception: it joined the Executive Board in 1997, accelerating its participation from 2001 and halting it after North Korea's missile tests and self-exclusion from the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2003 (Ohn, 2009). It did so probably on the grounds that it was in line with its goal of strengthening non-proliferation and contributed to regional security, but also because Japan, South Korea and the U.S. needed a strong and neutral member (Lee, 2009). However, the EU probably would not accept playing such a role again – i.e. being a “payer” that is not a real “player.”

Energy supply is maybe the crucial bottleneck for the North Korean economy at the moment. Outside of privileged Pyongyang and some limited number of industrial sites, electricity supply is limited to 3 or 4 hours a day. The Korean regime is trying to boost power production, especially from renewable sources. Such efforts are, however, insufficient: beyond boosting domestic production, the DPRK needs energy imports.

North Korea must meet virtually all of its oil demand through imports, even if it amounts to just 6% of total energy consumption (Ford, 2008). The discussed Gazprom proposal to build a gas pipeline across North Korea to supply natural gas to South Korea would allow the North Korean to apply transit duties and bleed a percentage for its own use. A memorandum of understanding was signed between the North Korean Ministry of the Oil Industry and Gazprom in September 2011, setting up a working group, but further intergovernmental agreements have failed to materialize, as there should be some serious guarantees from the DPRK regarding security of supply to the South.

The fact that no projects are currently active on this particular field should not mar its historical importance and its relevance for the future development of North Korea. Probably focused on new sources of renewable energy – wind and tidal energy could be prime candidates –, future cooperation in this field could prove beneficial for all involved parties. Its eventual feasibility and desirability will subsequently be explored in the following section of this thesis.

After reviewing this analysis of the past and current status of EU-North Korea relations, the focus will fall on the expected and/or desired evolution of these relations, both in the eyes of directly involved actors and relevant stakeholders.

In order to achieve that, a double methodological approach, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, has been adopted and will be presented in the next two chapters. On Chapter 4, the focus will be on the qualitative element: a series of in-depth interviews with relevant actors, directly or indirectly related to the European Union, its policymaking and its relations with North Korea. Chapter 5 will revolve around the quantitative part of the research project, conducted via a statistically relevant number of survey answers collected among South Korean university students.

Finally, the results presented in both chapters will be merged and analyzed in a combined fashion to detect any possible expectation gaps between the two subsets of stakeholders in order to assess the validity of our initial hypotheses.

4. The insiders speak: a qualitative approach to future perspectives on EU-North Korea relations (I)

4.1. Overview

The design of the first part of this study is partially guided by the qualitative method in social science, with the goal of constructing descriptive inferences based on the collected and analyzed data. It includes a combination of historical, inductive, and interpretive approaches to better reveal the factual realities and the insights of the interviewees. Therefore, this part of the thesis is mainly based on interview data, sometimes complemented with relevant contextual information obtained from other relevant sources.

Opinions and reflections from interviews with relevant professionals who are directly and indirectly involved in the relations between the European Union and North Korea provide rich information and “close to the ground” insights. The choice of interviews is meant to offer the widest possible scope, from the views of a Seoul-based Korean academic expert on the European Union and those of a Member of the European Parliament’s Delegation for Relations with the Korean Peninsula, to the insights of a Seoul-based European diplomat and those of a representative of an NPO working in the field in North Korea.

An interpretive method is used in the interview data analysis in order to separate and interpret the collected opinions based on the profile of the interviewees and their contexts. Thus, who said what and why he/she said it might matter. Moreover, the researcher may add his own value in the interviews and his own values may interfere when being confronted by multiple interpretations of the data. In addition, the author realizes that this analysis may not represent a holistic picture of EU-North Korea relations. However, as a multidisciplinary study controlling for such factors is so far absent in the literature, this research can help fill some of the gap – while precisely aiming to explain perception and expectation gaps.

To that end, four in-depth interviews have been performed, two of them in person and the remaining two via e-mail. The choice of participants was carefully designed to

ensure maximal exposure and relevance concentration in a reduced number of interviews, representing academia, European diplomacy, European decision making and field work in North Korea.

The first interviewee was Dr. Daewoon Ohn, Vice-Dean of the Graduate School of International and Area Studies and Chair of the European Studies Department at the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, as well as a frequent collaborator of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea. Dr. Ohn, as a top representative from academia, offers the rare combination of advanced knowledge of both the European Union and North Korea. The interview was conducted on 11 May 2012 on the premises of the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. In the case of this face-to-face interview, the discussion was recorded upon approval of the interviewee, and later analyzed for the purpose of evaluation.

The second interviewee was a senior European diplomat based in Seoul that has requested anonymity due to the political sensibility of the discussed information. As a high-ranking diplomat, this person has had direct contact with North Korean authorities and is fully familiar with the EU's current engagement and relations with North Korea, as well as being a knowledgeable source to discuss future perspectives. This interview was conducted in person on 15 May 2012 in Seoul. No verbatim or recording thereof is available, due to the anonymity requests of the interviewee.

The third participant is Mr. Lucas Hartong, a Dutch non-affiliated Member of the European Parliament and member of the Delegation of the European Parliament for Relations with the Korean Peninsula. The interview was conducted per e-mail. A questionnaire was sent to Mr. Hartong on 2 July 2012, and he answered the questions in written form on 26 August 2012.

Even if the European Parliament is not considered an important actor in EU foreign policy, it does indeed play a key role in external relations issues – albeit indirectly⁵⁹ –

⁵⁹ In that respect, the main roles of the European Parliament with implications for the EU external relations are its budgetary powers and its power not to ratify international agreements which, even if seldom used, give it considerable leverage in negotiation processes and add relevance to its consulting role.

and in human rights promotion, as it establishes strong conceptual links between human rights, the Union's global position. Moreover, its existence as the only democratically elected EU institution and its oversight of CFSP and EU external action make Mr. Hartong's views – in his double status of representative of the Parliament and expert in Korean issues – extremely relevant for the current research project.⁶⁰

Finally, in line with the fact that the EU channels most of its aid to Pyongyang in an indirect fashion (see section 3.2.4), the fourth interviewee should represent some relevant European organization working on the field with North Korea – independently of the fact of directly receiving EU funds or not. A relevant representative of one of the more active non-profit organizations (NPOs) in the Korean peninsula, with direct and very recent experience in North Korea, agreed to answer an in-depth questionnaire per email, which was sent on July 2, sending his answers back to this researcher on 20 August 2012. For confidentiality reasons, the name of the respondent, as well as that of the relevant NPO, are kept secret.

The chosen interview method depended on how it was ultimately conducted. In the case of the two live meetings, a semi-structured interview was conducted in order to guarantee an open framework allowing for focused, conversational, two-way communication. A base questionnaire was prepared for both interviewees, and it was subsequently modified on the go, according to the answers given and the particular interests of the interviewee.

As far as the interviews performed per e-mail are concerned, the method used was a structured questionnaire framework, where detailed questions are formulated ahead of time. The lack of two-way communication is offset by the detailed answers and the possibility that the interviewee carefully prepares his/her answers. In this case, two different questionnaires were prepared, one aimed at the Member of the European Parliament and the other focusing on the insights that a lead representative of an NPO

⁶⁰ We must, however, acknowledge that the political nature of the Parliament makes it impossible that the views of just one of its members represent those of the wider political spectrum. Efforts were made to contact other members of the Delegation of the European Parliament for Relations with the Korean Peninsula representing other political options and views, but interviews were politely refused on grounds of lack of time by the relevant MEPs or their assistants. Consequently, future research on this topic should strive to incorporate a wider variety of political views for greater reliability and representativeness.

working in North Korea could offer. All questionnaires can be found in Appendices II and III, respectively.

For improved coherence and relevance of the results, a similar set of questions and concerns was addressed in both the qualitative interviews and the quantitative surveys. Therefore, and based upon the main topics that were dealt with, both the current and the following sections are essentially divided into relevant topics in order to present the answers and findings in a clear and orderly way.

In order to facilitate comprehension and processing, the analysis of the information given by the four interviewees has been divided along three major thematic lines: i) possible changes in the North Korean regime; ii) possible changes in EU engagement with North Korea; and iii) hypothetical areas for increased cooperation. These three major blocks will be further subdivided in thematic subsets to better distribute the collected insights and align them with the statistical results of the survey, detailed in the next section of this thesis.

This will be followed by two tables. First, a table summarizing the key points of view expressed by each participant will be provided for further clarity. Next to it, a second table with the same structure will visually present the postures of each interviewee on a positive-negative color-coded scale. Elaborated using an ad-hoc modification of content analysis, focusing on overall tone and content instead of keywords, it will also allow for easy assessment of the degree of consensus (or lack thereof) on the issues and topics.

Finally, a brief set of observations related to the degree of consensus (or lack thereof) achieved in the responses given by the interviewees will be presented.

4.2. Possible changes inside the North Korean regime

4.2.1. Social and economic systems

One of the major question marks surrounding the new North Korean leader, as already discussed in the introductory chapter, is his willingness and/or ability to introduce market-oriented reforms and to progressively open up the economy of the hermetic country and, therefore, ameliorate the living conditions of an ailing society.

This is an issue that prompted quasi-unanimous optimism, in that the four interviewees consider that reforms are “possible” or even “probable.” However, they differ in the timeframe of the reforms and the reasons that will eventually define the depth and scope of any changes.

According to the Seoul-based European diplomat, the New Year’s editorial of 2012 was remarkably shorter because the new government wants to leave things relatively open. For the time being, a high degree of continuity should be expected, because young Kim Jong-un does not yet have the power base or the experience to implement real changes. Even so, the diplomat notes that he spoke directly to his people on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Kim Il-sung’s birthday, something that Kim Jong-il did just once in his 17 years in power.

This diplomat also asserts that, if Kim Jong-un really wants to run the country, he can “hardly continue” down the path set by his father. He might be inclined to doing some incremental economic reforms, highlighted by the revival of SEZs, to bring foreign direct investment into the country and probably improve living conditions for the people. Kim Jong-un has to ensure income to buy off his inner circle and eventually enlarge it. Plus, average North Koreans are becoming aware they don’t live in a paradise, as they see Chinese businessmen and they can figure out that they are better off, and seeing Chinese “comrades” doing well is profoundly different in quality to seeing “evil” rich Westerners.⁶¹

⁶¹ Remarkably enough, the views expressed by the South Korean academic expert – who expressed that North Koreans might be more inclined towards doing business with the Chinese for historic-political and

Additionally, there is a growing local elite that benefits from capitalism, black markets and corruption: inequality fuels tensions in a society emphasizing equality, and the government is failing in controlling the society and even its own officials the way it would like to. The risk of regime collapse is, nevertheless, minimum, as the country lacks the social infrastructure to ignite a revolutionary movement. The regime has survived under very trying circumstances for more than 20 years, and China will do its best to keep it alive as long as possible. The greater risk could come from internal power struggles.

Dr. Daewoon Ohn mostly agrees with the posture expressed by the diplomatic source, only dissenting on the main sources of Kim Jong-un's behavior. While the diplomatic source focuses on internal factors to explain why changes will not be forthcoming, Dr. Ohn asserts that the reason why Kim Jong-un will not implement substantive changes in 2012 is as much external as it is internal.

Despite openly acknowledging that there is no quick fix to the pressing domestic problems the regime faces – and the opening up versus regime preservation dilemma –, Dr. Ohn stresses that the new North Korean leader has chosen to adopt a “wait-and-see” approach. In other words, Kim Jong-un needs a clearer vision of how upcoming political developments in South Korea (with the December 2012 presidential elections), China (with its impending and convulse power transition) and Russia (with Vladimir Putin's controversial return to power) unfold before embarking on a reform path.

However, Dr. Ohn also points out the importance of the Kaesong industrial complex as a “test ground” for the North Korean regime and as a model that could be further replicated and extended. He considers that comparisons with China's gradual economic opening during the decade of the 1980s, highlighted by agricultural reform and the creation of Special Economic Zones, are not off the mark. Therefore, he also stresses the key role that SEZs may play in any future economic opening, something that the North Korean regime seems to confirm with its plans to revive now-decrepit SEZs near the Chinese border.

cultural reasons – seem to contradict the views of the Western diplomat, therefore underlining a what can be a perception heavily influenced by the culture of the respondent.

Tied to that, the representative of the NPO interviewed for this project also mentions the role SEZs could have in eventual economic development as he asserts that “the main task of the current DPRK leadership is to improve the living conditions of its people,” while also warning that reforms will be limited by the regime’s prevailing security concerns. Therefore, he considers that it is impossible to define a timeframe for reforms.

This opinion is shared by Mr. Hartong: the independent MEP considers reforms to be possible, but also that a timeframe for those changes cannot be predicted so far, while warning that foreseeing the support such measures would have from the all-important military apparatus is also hard to gauge due to the utter lack of reliable information emanating from the country.

4.2.2. Denuclearization

All the consulted experts consider denuclearization to be highly improbable for lack of will on the North Korean side. However, their relative pessimism is punctuated by the engagement possibilities and paths to progress that they foresee.

According to the European diplomat, nuclear weapons are the regime's only guarantee for survival, thus agreeing with Cha (2012) or Ford (2011). Even if they are not yet operational due to unreliable missile technology, nuclear weapons serve both as a deterrent and a status symbol. Therefore, North Korea would only relinquish its nuclear status if it obtains all the concessions it would be asking for, namely for the U.S. forces to abandon South Korea and reunification on their own terms.⁶²

By leaving the Non-Proliferation Treaty, North Korea defied the international community, and this case cannot be compared to what happened with Pakistan a few years back, basically on strategic grounds – therefore, once again agreeing with Victor Cha’s views (see section 3.2.5). The international community now requests verifiable steps towards denuclearization – freezing enrichment programs, letting inspectors into the country, etc. – and not just empty promises. The idea of a grand bargain, as put forward by South Korean President Lee Myung-bak, is quite unrealistic, as the North

⁶² In fact, this diplomatic source even went as far as asserting that North Korea's dream would be becoming an ally of the U.S. against China's rise.

Korean side would never accept it. Moreover, the evident lack of trust between the involved parties has also severely hindered denuclearization talks.

As far as the EU role in denuclearization is concerned, this diplomatic source asserts that Brussels clearly supports denuclearization talks and condemns military provocations, but does not see a role for the EU within the 6 Party Talks negotiation framework: nobody seriously advocates for the EU to join the talks and the EU does not see value in being there. As far as a neutral brokerage role for the EU is concerned, he does not think Brussels is powerful enough to convincingly influence the parties.

Dr. Daewoon Ohn agrees in assessing the nature of the issue as “very complex and risky,” with the potential to escalate and affect the whole Northeast Asia, setting a “vicious cycle” of proliferation. Therefore, he agrees with the European diplomat in asserting that the EU should strive to maintain a consistent, principled approach in demanding North Korea to abide by international norms and to return to the NPT. However, he differs in that he sees the possibility of a “grand bargain” as feasible, one including economic enticements for the regime to open up and cooperate.

Therefore, Dr. Ohn suggests that, despite the need for criticism to pressure for denuclearization, the international community should find a suitable compromise solution, one that the North Korean leaders might find relevant and attractive, letting them join the international community with confidence. The current setup will not allow denuclearization to take place: “carrots” and not just “sticks” must be offered in order for the regime to open up, and rewards (both economic and security-related) would spill over to the regional and international levels.⁶³

Finally, Mr. Lucas Hartong considers that North Korea has no will to denuclearize at all. He also considers that the EU has no role to play in multilateral negotiation setups

⁶³ Dr. Ohn’s assertion partially echoes the view expressed by another relevant scholar, Axel Berkofsky, who suggested that the EU could have continued its engagement towards North Korea in spite of the nuclear revelations, thus offering North Korea and the international community an alternative approach of how to deal with a failing state on the brink of going nuclear (Berkofsky, 2010). Therefore, it seems safe to assert that scholars tend to view engagement postures more favorably than those experts from the political and diplomatic spheres.

such as the 6 Party Talks and asserts that only China, which he labels North Korea's "big brother," could force the DPRK to change its mind.⁶⁴

Therefore, while pessimism on this issue is widespread, the size and the shape of the window of opportunity seen by each interviewee differs greatly: from the optimism about effective multilateral incentives shown by Dr. Ohn and the suggestion that North Korean requests can never be reasonably met made by the diplomat, to the overarching influence of China on the DRPK and the role it could eventually play for regional security.

⁶⁴ No opinion on this issue was registered from the NPO representative.

4.3. Possible changes in EU-North Korea relations

4.3.1. A more proactive EU and the eventual lifting of sanctions

Another of the theoretical pillars supporting this research project is the possibility that the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy could offer much-desired signs of proactivity in the North Korean theater (see section 2.7).

Dr. Daewoon Ohn asserted that “increasing possibilities for interaction might be possible soon,” but was also quick to add that the EU needs a different approach vis-à-vis the DPRK to change some perceptions on the North Korean side. This should entail devising a non-threatening representation of the EU which resulted appealing to the regime, including the use of positive conditionality instead of the current negative conditionality (i.e. sanctions). However, Dr. Ohn also admits that this could probably run against EU principles and goals, including its commitment to effective multilateralism, international law and the promotion of good governance.

It is for this reason that he suggests adopting a dual-track approach: while the EU should not relinquish its open criticism of North Korea's nuclear program and keep requesting its unconditional and verifiable end – and, therefore, maintain current sanctions in place –, it should also strive to engage, independently of progress in the denuclearization issue, in low-key, track-two diplomatic maneuvers and negotiations to offer enticing conditions (and eventual guarantees) for the regime in exchange for incremental opening and reform.

This should be done in close cooperation with the EU's strategic partners in the area, especially South Korea and China, and the initiative should not be openly taken by the EU – at the risk of alienating its partners, who would not want to be seen as bandwagoning on an EU-led initiative in their own backyard. Any momentum-creating actions should be performed in a discreet way and in close coordination with the aforementioned partners.

Dr Ohn's insights raise the question about the possibility that an approach based on incentives – i.e. positive conditionality – towards improving human rights conditions in

North Korea, combined with enhanced aid, would be more effective than the multilateral condemning resolutions have proven to be. However, Dr. Ohn coincides with the analysis made by Kim and Friedhoff (2011), who stated that, due to North Korea's insularity and East Asia's complex and delicate geopolitics, any movement on Korean relations is assumed to require the involvement of other countries.

Contrary to that view, in the opinion of the Seoul-based European diplomatic source, a higher degree of cooperation with North Korea would only be possible if there is certifiable progress within the framework of the 6 Party Talks – such as a verifiable freezing of the uranium enrichment program. In any case, the EU would not take the initiative but join in if the international community tries to enhance ties with the regime. Less tension and more engagement would be welcome and the EU “would play the game.” So far, however, the EU has been content to mostly follow South Korean policies (with the exception of the continued provision of limited humanitarian aid via select European NPOs).

This source also points out that such heightened engagement would also require a number of political conditions, including certain substantial policy changes in the DPRK, as its policy has historically been based upon playing off partners against one another.

According to this diplomat, the EU cannot really take a more proactive stance because it is not a matter of the EU to take the lead: all it could do would be encouraging regional powers to move forward, and even this approach would be highly controversial within the EU, as the staunchest defendants of the European human rights agenda would oppose any kind of engagement if there is no progress on that issue.

Despite the ongoing nuclear crisis, North Korea will continue to be nowhere near the top of the EU's external relations agenda. Consequently, the EU is very unlikely to increase the existing limited resources dedicated to deal with and work on North Korea

– unless there emerges an inter-European political consensus to increase the EU’s economic and political engagement after the resolution of the nuclear crisis.⁶⁵

Mr. Hartong also agrees with the view that the EU should not take the lead, but the reasons he states are quite different. First, analyzing the role played by the institution he represents, he sees a clear lack interest from the European Parliament side to engage in real and honest discussion with North Korea, including from the very Delegation for Relations with the Korean Peninsula. Second, while asserting that a multilateral approach is essential and that China, South Korea and the U.S. should be in the lead, he points out that he considers the EU to be very weak in active mediation and dialogue in general, a task for which individual Member States are better suited.⁶⁶

Regarding the status of the sanctions against the North Korean regime currently enforced by the EU, the interviewed MEP considers that they should remain in place as long as North Korea is not denuclearizing, is maltreating its people and is violating basic human rights. However, he also points out that targeting of the boycotts and sanctions should be improved.

Finally, the representative from the European NPO considers that, despite North Korean interest in expanding relations with the EU, unless political issues are solved and sanctions are lifted, engagement will remain limited.

Summing up, multilateralism and close coordination with (or subordination to) regional powers and not proactivity should be the key factor to any further EU engagement in North Korea, which is also seen as doubtful unless the current political climate changes.

⁶⁵ Therefore, this diplomatic source agrees with Berkofsky’s (2009) assertion that both the lack of resources and support from EU Member States “make it unlikely that Brussels will resume the ambitious and comprehensive economic engagement course and policies formulated and partly implemented in the early 2000s.”

⁶⁶ He underlines his skepticism vis-à-vis EU foreign policy by stating that “foreign policy is a task of the EU Member States; not of the EU.”

4.3.2. Institutional relations

According to the interviewed senior diplomat, although Pyongyang diplomats publicly argue that relations should be progressively upgraded, the North Korean regime is quite content with the current status, under which the EU provides some humanitarian aid independently of the internal political climate. There is no real possibility of progress if the country does not change and, in his own words, “as the regime muddles through, everybody muddles through.”

However, he openly supports the idea that the special status of the EU as a supranational, benign power makes it especially relevant for the North Korean regime. In the words of the consulted diplomatic source, the EU is not perceived as having an agenda or as being responsible of risks and threats by the North Koreans, a stark comparison with the major regional powers and the U.S.

In that he fully coincides with the views expressed by the NPO representative, who asserted that “conversations in South and North Korea have shown that the EU is primarily seen as a rather neutral actor who has no geopolitical interests in the Korean Peninsula.” Therefore, he considers that promoting dialogue and track-two exchanges, especially during politically challenging times – i.e. the last decade – and keeping channels of dialogue open is crucial for enhancing peace and stability.

Meanwhile, the high-ranking European diplomat also points out that Lee Myung-bak’s hard line stance has not been particularly helpful for Brussels: the EU was clearly happy with the Sunshine Policy. Additionally, this diplomatic source also expressed frustration with the changes in American policy in the past, including the failure of the KEDO project, which in most cases were motivated by domestic political reasons.

This last statement runs contrary to the views expressed by Mr. Hartong, who considers that the South Korean parliament has the democratic right to formulate its stance vis-à-vis North Korea and that the EU has no right to interfere in that respect. Regarding EU-DPRK institutional relations, Mr. Hartong highlights that the results of bilateral dialogue between North Korean delegates and Members of the European Parliament traveling to Pyongyang on visiting delegations is “very meager,” probably also due to

the poor preparation and a perceived lack of ideological plurality on the European side. In his opinion, there is a clear lack of mutual understanding, and the situation does not seem to be improving. However, he also considers that institutional relations with third parties would improve if North Korea stopped its military and rhetorical aggressiveness.

Adopting a completely different line of thought, Dr. Daewoon Ohn, who proclaims that unilateral or bilateral approaches towards institutional relations with North Korea do not work. According to him, the best strategic approach towards institutional relations with North Korea would be creating a multilateral network with overarching, structural goals and elaborate policies taking into account the psychology of the actors and the fears and aspirations of the regime. This should allow not just the EU but the international community at large to become more adaptive to changes in the situation, including unpredictable issues.

This multilateral network would ideally develop effective confidence-building measures to achieve incremental results and engagement. To illustrate it, Dr. Ohn used the functionalist example of Jean Monnet's conception of a Coal and Steel Community in 1951: contrary to the expectations, this apparently technical approach had the potential to become something much bigger. In other words, positive spillover effects from the multilateral approach would gradually smooth institutional relations with the DPRK and eventually incorporate it into the international community.

We can summarize that, while we see many similarities between the approach taken by the European diplomat and the NPO representative, Dr. Ohn and Mr. Hartong offer alternative views – the former rather optimistic, the latter quite pessimistic – of institutional relations with the DPRK.

4.3.3. Human rights

Only two of the interviewees, fittingly enough the Seoul-based diplomat and the Member of the European Parliament, fully expressed their views on the role human rights issues play in (and might play in the future of) EU-DPRK relations.

The senior European diplomat asserted that human rights dialogue has been systematically refused by the Korean side since the EU brings its human rights abuses to the UN. This begs the question of what would be the North Korean answer if the EU stopped denouncing its abuses. In 1994, the EU stopped sponsoring resolutions against China in exchange for bilateral dialogue, a staple of EU-China relations ever since, even if respect of human rights has not improved too much in China. Therefore, this probably leads the EU to the conclusion that any such efforts with North Korea would be pretty sterile, too.

Meanwhile, Mr. Hartong asserted that neither most Members of the European Parliament nor the EU as a whole were interested in bilateral human rights dialogue. His strong words merit literal reproduction:

“Chairmen of D-KOR⁶⁷ don’t like it when MEPs table critical questions and/or remarks to North Korean officials. Several times I have tried to bring human rights situations or the plight of North Korean refugees to China under the attention of the visiting officials, but was denied speaking time. [...] Especially the EPP fraction (Christian Democrats) MEPs block questions to North Korean visitors. I have complained officially to the president of parliament, Mr. Schulz, but he does nothing either.”

He went on to assert that despite the EU not being interested “at all” in a “real and honest” discussion on human rights issues with its North Korean counterparts, EU Member States should individually voice their concern over the issues of democracy and human rights in the DPRK.

Finally, the NPO representative also commented briefly on human rights issues by asserting that progress in that respect – coupled with progress in the nuclear issue – could trigger the allocation of EU official development assistance (ODA) to the beleaguered country. However, based on Mr. Hartong’s statements, we should wonder how important really is human rights promotion in North Korea for the EU if its democratically elected representatives do not actively seek to engage in dialogue or even block the efforts of those who try to.

⁶⁷ “D-KOR” stands for the Delegation of the European Parliament for Relations with the Korean Peninsula, of which Mr. Hartong is a member.

4.3.4. Effects on EU-South Korea relations

A further issue that was raised during the interviews was the effect greater EU engagement with North Korea – including denuclearization efforts – might have on EU-South Korea bilateral relations, a relevant collateral factor of deeper EU-DPRK relations (see section 2.3).

According to Dr. Daewoon Ohn, South Korea should develop a closer relationship with the EU on the issue of North Korea, as it is one of the best available partners, also in case conflict escalates. As he also wrote in a 2009 paper, in the case of a potential serious destabilization of the North Korean regime, the EU might initiate civilian and even military support missions for the restoration of peace and stability, obviously in conjunction with its strategic partners in the area (Ohn, 2009). Consequently, developing a close partnership in that sense would also attract other countries and spill over to wider EU-South Korea relations.

Contrary to Dr. Ohn's positive view, the interviewed NPO representative highlights the polarization – along the left/right political divide – of South Korean public opinion on the issue of engagement with Pyongyang.⁶⁸ Therefore, he concludes that mixed results should be expected in that respect.

Finally, Mr. Hartong adopts a strikingly different posture, considering that any engagement initiatives should be led by South Korea, in close cooperation with China, Japan and the United States, with the EU playing “no role.” Therefore, we can infer that, according to this independent MEP, any eventual EU involvement would be so negligible that no effects on EU-South Korea relations should be expected.

⁶⁸ For instance, as asserted by Cha (2012), South Korea's policy on human rights in North Korea is complex and highly politicized, and its approach towards denouncing Pyongyang's abuses has been quieter than the EU's, especially during the decade of the politically progressive Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations (1998-2007), when the country even abstained from voting on U.N. human rights resolutions on North Korea. Meanwhile, South Korean conservatives tend to consider that human rights violations reflect the impossibility of political reconciliation with the current regime in Pyongyang, as well as a barometer of real reform intentions.

4.4. Potential areas for increased cooperation and further engagement

4.4.1. Humanitarian aid

As already discussed in the previous chapter (see section 3.2.4), unconditional humanitarian aid is one of the staples that differentiate the EU from its partners when it comes the North Korean issue. It is therefore highly relevant to consider how the consulted sources see the future of EU food and humanitarian aid in the DPRK.

The European diplomat points out that, outside valuable emergency food and humanitarian aid, the EU mostly funds small scale projects he labels as “very useful inputs for the North Korean society.” He further underlines the indirect benefits for the North Korean people who work with European NPOs, which are able to learn new production and organization methods. As an example of such side benefits, he cites the North Korean farmers’ cooperatives growing vegetables in greenhouses and then selling the surplus in local markets or institutions; in this case, the EU induces a certain market orientation at the grassroots level without officially and publicly stating it, keeping away from government meddling as much as possible.

When asked about this same issue, MEP Lucas Hartong adopted a rather critical point of view. While underlining the usefulness of providing food aid to the needy North Korean population, Mr. Hartong quickly added that EU action in that respect lacks effectiveness due to insufficient oversight mechanisms, leading to huge amounts of aid being sold on the black market by corrupt officials or military officers. Moreover, he pointed out that EU Member States should closely cooperate with the U.S. in the provision of humanitarian aid.

Finally, the representative of the European NPO working on the field takes a more nuanced tone, in line with his outsider role representing an organization providing training – and not humanitarian aid – to the North Korean population. Therefore, he expects that, further from providing emergency food aid, the EU will continue to support community-based projects that improve the daily lives of the local people.

4.4.2. Development cooperation

As we already discussed in section 3.2.4, North Korea is currently not a beneficiary of the EU Development Co-operation Instrument. However, according to the senior European diplomat, EU cooperation with North Korea can currently be considered as being somewhere in between humanitarian aid and development cooperation, with no attached development strategy for political reasons: flagrant and systematic violations of all the principles and values defended by the EU make it possible to assert that the EU does not consider the current North Korean government to represent its people.

Dissent on future perspectives is maybe the most relevant aspect on this issue: while the diplomat takes a neutral approach focused on the current situation, the NPO representative highlights that while the EU has consistently supported development-oriented projects despite the unsolved nuclear crisis, any expansion of its programmes and the eventual provision of official development assistance will entirely depend on further progress in the denuclearization issue and on the eventual improvement of the human rights situation.

Mr. Hartong, the independent Dutch Member of the European Parliament, dismisses both views and states his frontal opposition to any official development assistance coming from the EU budget, thus indirectly underlining his overall posture opposing EU engagement in foreign policy issues when financial resources are involved.

Finally, it must be noted that, as was the case with the previous possible cooperation arena, this question was not explicitly discussed with Dr. Daewoon Ohn, thus explaining the lack of relevant input from his interview on this particular aspect.

4.4.3. Energy cooperation

North Korea has been facing an energy crisis that it has not been able to solve through internal means. While there is a desperate humanitarian need to provide North Korea with energy assistance, current energy assistance policies for North Korea do not provide a fundamental or a permanent solution. The outdated facilities and aging

infrastructure of the North Korean energy sector make direct energy transfer ineffective (Yi, Sin and Heo, 2011).

Renewable energy, and more concretely wind and solar power, which North Korea has already shown willingness to actively develop, might be the best sustainable energy solution South Korea – and, as a natural extension, other partners and donors – can provide to assist North Korea in overcoming its chronic energy shortage. This is the conclusion reached by Yi, Sin and Heo (2011) after consulting a panel of Korean and foreign experts, which overwhelmingly viewed security as the most important factor among the strategic criteria, followed by cost.

Moreover, the case of North Korea is also very special for South Korea, as it can prepare for the eventual unification of the peninsula as it constructs and upgrades North Korea's energy infrastructure (Yi, Sin and Heo, 2011). International help in such endeavors would also help improve relations with Seoul, in what would probably be a win-win situation for all involved parties.

Our sources, however, do not seem to share Yi, Sin and Heo's optimism. First, as the NPO representative points out, "the Wassenaar Arrangement (on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies) prohibits the export of dual-use technology to the DPRK, and the provision of technology for renewable energy to the DPRK may therefore be restricted." Moreover, instead of explicit government support, he points out that private sector investment should be sought. However, South Korean companies currently need explicit government permission to deal with North Korea, so opportunities are very limited. This leaves Chinese companies and Sino-North Korean joint ventures as the most viable alternatives to solving the energy issues.

South Korean scholar Daewoon Ohn is even less optimistic, ruling out the possibility of energy cooperation with North Korea on the basis of past failures. In his view, regardless of the energy assistance offered, the North Korean regime has consistently been reluctant to relinquish its nuclear weapons, which poses a serious problem for such an approach. Moreover, he also cites the nature of the technical assistance involved as troublesome, as strict restrictions in the transfer of double-use technologies should

always be taken into account. Therefore, he concludes that any engagement approach touching this issue will not be successful and end up in failure as the Agreed Framework, the February 2007 agreement and the 6 Party Talks.

The consulted diplomatic source considers that the energy problems the country faces should be solved by expanding local energy production, but he does not rule out external help. However, he discards EU participation in any such projects, at least in the current context of North Korean lack of transparency and accountability and financial crisis in the EU.

According to this diplomat, there is just one clear element regarding hypothetical energy-related cooperation initiatives: the EU would really want to be a player, and not just a payer, as former CFSP chief Javier Solana famously said. The EU is not going to pour money in just because South Korea, Japan and/or the U.S. have a certain project or policy going on and are passing the hat around, as it was the case with KEDO.

Rounding off this subset of negative views, Mr. Hartong asserts that eventual energy cooperation should not be a task for the EU: Member States should decide for themselves on economic and/or political grounds, after due consultation with all the relevant partners – especially South Korea.

Therefore, we must conclude that an active EU role in remediating North Korea's energy needs is neither feasible nor desirable.

4.4.4. Environmental cooperation

Despite the breadth of initiatives that environmental cooperation could entail, this might be the only proposed cooperation field in which relative consensus among the interviewees has been reached, with all of them⁶⁹ seeing it in a positive light. However, this shared positivity is punctuated by differences regarding the procedures to be followed and the ownership of the decision.

⁶⁹ Dr. Daewoon Ohn's semi-structured interview finally did not include any question on environmental cooperation.

The consulted diplomatic source asserts that there has not been any serious proposal on the EU table along those lines, but the EU would be willing to consider it if the right development framework is devised. However, Brussels would expect local powers – chiefly South Korea, a fully developed country by all standards⁷⁰ – to take the lead also on that issue, also on the grounds that many EU Member States would refuse such cooperation on the grounds of human rights violations.

After pointing out that projects funded by the EU to enhance food security in the DPRK already include valuable environmental components, such as sloping land management and natural resource management, the representative of the European NPO, asserts that, with food security probably remaining the top priority, indirect or instrumental cooperation in environmental issues should be expected.

Finally, the Dutch MEP considers eventual cooperation in environmental issues, disaster management and risk reduction a “good approach.” However, he insists once again on the prerogative of Member States to decide by themselves and not at the EU level, thus implicitly denying the EU its aspired role of coordinating the development cooperation policies of its Member States.

4.4.5. Trade relations and capacity building

As discussed on section 2.4, improving trade relations and assisting in building capacity in North Korea could have positive effects both for the beleaguered North Korean population and European businesses. Conscious of the importance of this particular field for engagement, all interviewees devoted considerable attention to the issue, agreeing in the fact that North Korea lacks a functioning, stable economy for European companies to invest there.

Additionally, three of the interviewees agreed upon the need to be active in capacity building and to promote economic reform in the DPRK, with a clearly multilateral

⁷⁰ This source also reports that the South Korean forestry administration is studying the possibility of helping North Korea earn emission reduction credits via the reforestation of the country. However, it is not clear that the North Korean side would be up to the bureaucratic challenges and the necessary reporting procedures.

approach in the case of Dr. Daewoon Ohn – an approach partially shared by the senior European diplomat, who instead of proposing engagement on an equal footing advocates for EU submissiveness to U.S. and South Korea initiatives.

Dr. Daewoon Ohn was especially prolific in analyzing this aspect of potential bilateral relations. In his opinion, there are two major barriers for the EU and European businesses to increase their trade relations with North Korea, the first being that EU trade policies pursue the maximization of commercial interactions, while the North Korean regime privileges being in control over the optimization of commercial flows. Their goal is to increase revenues in a way that does not threaten internal regime stability. Therefore, there is a clear expectation gap between the two parties' interests and views.

Additionally, he pointed out that the EU is also accustomed to staying in control of international trade and economic norms, a trend that is also reflected when dealing or negotiating with third countries. It is precisely this European “normative power” what causes most fear among North Korean bureaucrats: they cannot just cede the driver's seat to any foreign liberal power if they want to keep the regime in place.

The second obstacle highlighted by Dr. Ohn would be related not to the institutional and political procedures and features of the EU but to European business culture: according to this South Korean scholar, (Western) Europeans don't understand very well how to do business with a regime such as the North Korean. Experiences are quite limited outside some companies and businessmen from Central and Eastern Europe, who were used to dealing with Soviet-era Communist systems and thus have the required specific experience and know-how.

Added to that, Dr. Daewoon Ohn considers that European businesses are at a disadvantage compared to Chinese companies to operate in the North Korean market for three further reasons. First, close monitoring of all foreign business activity by the North Korean government, widespread corruption and the lack of legal guarantees and property rights laws combine to generate an extremely risky business environment in which capitalistic ventures can rarely operate. To partially overcome that, the Chinese government runs a special insurance scheme for its companies operating in North

Korea, something the EU would not be able to do for European businesses. As a second factor, he cites that most Chinese companies in North Korea are operated by ethnically Korean Chinese, cultural and ethnic proximity being a factor to consider a heavily nationalistic and xenophobic regime such as North Korea's. The third and final reason cited by this scholar is that North Korea can potentially feel threatened by foreign companies: they prefer to get much-needed foreign currency through trade with China, as it is less dangerous for the control of the information flows – also heavily regulated in China – and also for political and ideological reasons, with China's still nominally a socialist economy.

To overcome these important shortcomings for the EU and Western powers in general who would like to increase business exchanges with North Korea, Dr. Ohn also suggests the creation of an international consortium for entrepreneurial action in North Korea, with active South Korean, EU and U.S. engagement and including the respective civil societies and business leaders. This consortium should make sure to accumulate the necessary know-how needed to solidify trade relations with the DPRK without alienating it by going against the basic principles and norms of the regime.

While not going as far as suggesting the creation of a joint consortium, the consulted diplomatic source also states that improved trade relations and capacity building would only be possible only if the United States and South Korea took the lead. The EU would never do it against them, as it would be easily accused of betraying its partners just to get a market share.

The North Koreans ask for foreign investment and try to present themselves as a great market and a good partner; however, there are not many European companies willing to invest there – despite an European business association and chamber of commerce having some presence there and organizing the yearly Pyongyang fair –, as nobody has the impression that investment conditions are good enough in the country and also considering the ongoing financial sanctions against the regime. North Korea needs, according to this senior diplomat, credible market-oriented reforms, so that private operators could access the country and do business.

Meanwhile, the European NPO representative points out that fostering trade relations with the DPRK has been a political issue due to the sanctions and other trade impediments in place, including quotas for textile products. However, he values the positive influence of all dialogue and exchanges and considers that enhancing capacities would be both a valuable means and objective if done in an effective and sustainable way. This leads him to call on European companies to operate in North Korea and assist in the development of the country in case political relations improve and the DPRK makes “serious efforts” to modernize its economy.

Those views are mostly echoed by Mr. Hartong, who asserts that EU companies are not yet ready to operate in North Korea due to the lack of a stable political and economic surrounding to invest in but would positively value the EU making its considerable civilian and institutional resources available to assist with political and economic reforms.

4.4.6. Educational and cultural exchanges

A further element to be considered is the role that EU-sponsored educational and cultural exchanges and training opportunities for North Korean students, scholars or officials could have in eventually improving bilateral relations and helping in the economic and social development of the North Korean society.

Scientific or technical cooperation has historically been a good start to improve relations with politically hostile countries, and also an avenue towards future cooperation in more sensitive issues. The EU has experience linking funding to establish international research and education networks with its international aid programs (Na, 2009), and this know-how could prove extremely beneficial for the average citizens of a country badly struggling to adapt to the knowledge-based economy of the 21st century.

As was the case with improving trade relations and capacity building, the four interviewees value positively engagement in the field of education, nevertheless with diverging degrees of intensity and including some reservations. Thus, while the South Korean scholar mentions language training as a valuable tool the EU could use, the

diplomat asserts that this is already being done by individual Member States, but denies the possibility of future EU budgetary involvement.

Meanwhile, both the scholar and the NPO representative warn about organizational challenges and the need to define a clear framework before proceeding with any training activities. Finally, the MEP further limits educational engagement possibilities by highlighting the need to provide training in the field instead of via exchanges to prevent government meddling and candidate picking.

Thus, according to the consulted European diplomatic source, it is an implicit EU policy to promote the exposure of North Koreans to Western societies, and several Member States, such as Italy, Austria or the United Kingdom provide specialized educational and cultural exchange programs. However, there is no EU budget line to promote such exchanges, and it is not likely that it will be created in the future.

Contrary to that more pragmatic view, the consulted South Korean scholar considered that EU-sponsored educational opportunities and exchanges, including foreign language learning, would be a viable path for further engagement. However, he points out that a framework should clearly be defined, including reciprocal security assurances in order to build confidence and assure the correct functioning of any such program.⁷¹

With first-hand experience in developing training programs and seminars in North Korea, the NPO representative openly welcomes cooperation in the fields of education and culture, despite warning about the challenges tied to implementation. Consequently, he stresses the need to thoroughly assess the feasibility and sustainability of each project in advance and duly taking into account all relevant socio-political, cultural and organizational factors.

Finally, Mr. Hartong suggests sending European specialists and teachers to North Korea to work there among the “normal” population instead of promoting academic exchanges, as they normally only benefit select individuals chosen by the regime.

⁷¹ This prudent assertion is in line with Development and Cooperation Commissioner Andris Piebalgs thinking, i.e. that the EU will need to prioritize its interventions in order to have impact (ECDPM, 2010).

4.5. Summary tables and related findings

		South Korean EU-affairs scholar	Seoul-based senior European diplomat	Representative of a NPO active in North Korea	Member of the European Parliament
Changes in the DPRK	<i>Social and economic</i>	Probable but not immediate, for internal (stability) and external (political uncertainty in regional powers) reasons	Possible but not immediate, mostly for internal reasons (lack of reliable power base)	Possible but will have to comply with the regime's prevailing security concerns; impossible to sketch a timeframe	Possible, but unable to devise a timeframe or to foresee the support of the military apparatus
	<i>Denuclearization</i>	Highly improbable but multilateral "grand bargain" an option	Highly improbable and "grand bargain" not an option, also due to lack of trust between the parties No EU role in 6 Party Talks	-	No willingness on the North Korean side; only China could force them to do it No EU role in 6 Party Talks
Changes in EU-DPRK relations	<i>Proactive engagement</i>	The EU could join (but not openly lead) its strategic partners in a proactive strategy of "discreet engagement"	The EU should not take the lead: leave it to South Korea and/or China and follow, political conditions allowing Very unlikely to increase the existing limited resources dedicated to deal with and work on North Korea	Unless political issues are solved and sanctions are lifted, engagement will remain limited	Lack of interest from the EU (European Parliament) side to engage in real and honest discussion with North Korea EU very weak in active mediation and dialogue in general – individual Member States could do better

Changes in EU-DPRK relations			No increased role if no progress on denuclearization		Multilateral approach of the essence, with China, South Korea and the U.S. leading
	<i>Sanctions</i>	Should formally remain in place but multilateral track-two negotiations with “carrots” should be performed	Will remain in place as long as the DPRK does not take clear and verifiable steps towards denuclearization	-	Should remain in place as long as North Korea is not denuclearizing, is maltreating its people and is violating basic human rights Smarter boycotts and sanctions to clearly and exclusively target the elites
	<i>Institutional relations</i>	Adoption of a multilateral, network-based strategic approach to institutional relations EU seen as threatening due to its normative power Develop confidence-building measures to achieve incremental results and engagement	North Korea quite content with current status and no real possibility of progress if the country does not change EU not perceived as having an agenda or as being responsible of risks and threats by North Korea EU happier with the Sunshine Policy; also critical of U.S. policy shifts	Expansion of relations with Europe on various levels is therefore actively sought EU primarily seen as a neutral actor who has no geopolitical interests in the Korean Peninsula Promotion of dialogue and track-two exchanges during politically challenging times;	Results of bilateral dialogue with EP delegations “very meager,” probably also due to poor preparation and lack of ideological plurality on the European side Lack of mutual understanding The EU has no right to interfere in South Korean policies vis-à-vis the DPRK

Changes in EU-DPRK relations				keeping channels of dialogue open crucial for enhancing peace and stability	North Korea would be treated differently if less aggressive
	<i>Human rights</i>	-	The EU sponsoring human rights resolutions at the UN kills any possibility of bilateral dialogue; however, skeptical of what dialogue could achieve on the basis of lack of progress with China	Progress in that respect could help trigger the provision of ODA by the EU.	Despite the EU not being interested “at all” in a bilateral human rights dialogue, Member States should voice concern over democracy and human rights Direct dialogue on human rights issues with North Korean officials is not encouraged by the European Parliament, with questions from dissenting MEPs consistently being blocked
	<i>Effects on EU-South Korea relations</i>	South Korea should develop a closer relationship with the EU on North Korea Greater EU engagement would also benefit EU-South Korea relations	-	Public opinion in South Korea about how to engage with the North has been highly polarized; therefore, mixed results should be expected	South Korea has to lead any engagement initiatives in close cooperation with regional partners, like China The EU has no role to play. Therefore, no effects should be expected

Areas for increased cooperation and engagement	<i>Humanitarian aid</i>	-	<p>Aid currently offered somewhere in between humanitarian aid and development cooperation</p> <p>EU inducing market orientation at the grassroots level without officially stating it</p>	<p>Expects that the EU will continue to support community-based projects that improve the daily lives of the local people.</p>	<p>Food aid is important but lacks effectiveness due to insufficient oversight mechanisms – a lot is sold on the black market</p> <p>EU Member States should closely cooperate with the U.S. in the provision of humanitarian aid</p>
	<i>Development cooperation</i>	-	<p>Development strategy conditional to political changes</p>	<p>The EU has supported development-oriented projects despite the unsolved nuclear crisis</p> <p>Expansion of its programs and provision of ODA dependant on further progress in denuclearization and the improvement of the human rights situation</p>	<p>No to any formal assistance to North Korea from the EU budget</p>
	<i>Energy cooperation</i>	<p>Not a viable option due to proven past failures</p>	<p>Energy problems should be solved by expanding local energy production, probably with external help</p>	<p>Private companies should take the lead; however, limited opportunities outside Chinese companies</p>	<p>Not a task for the EU: Member States should decide for themselves on economic and/or political grounds, after consultation with</p>

Areas for increased cooperation and engagement		Technical assistance always a complicated issue, as strict restrictions in double-use technologies should be taken into account at all times	Conditional EU participation in South Korean-led multilateral projects only if the EU is a player and the current political and economic contexts improve	Provision of technology for renewable energy might be restricted due to current restrictions on the export of dual-use technology to the DPRK	relevant partners (especially South Korea)
	<i>Environmental cooperation</i>	-	EU willing to consider it if the right development framework is devised; however, local powers – chiefly South Korea – should take the lead	Projects funded by the EU to enhance food security in the DPRK already include environmental components Food security will remain the priority; therefore, indirect or instrumental environmental cooperation expected	Possibly a good approach Should be left to decide by individual Member States
	<i>Trade relations and capacity building</i>	EU businesses at a disadvantage (mainly to Chinese businesses) for lack of know-how and other factors (culture, political reasons, etc.)	EU trade relations with North Korea could only improve if the U.S. and South Korea take the lead	Enhancing capacities both a valuable means and objective, if effective and sustainable Trade relations with the	If the EU can help with political and economic reform to improve the situation of the North Korean people, it should be done

		Suggests the creation of a multilateral EU-U.S.-ROK consortium to promote business ties with North Korea	North Korea needs credible market-oriented reforms	DPRK a political issue Dialogue and exchanges mutually beneficial If relations improve and the DPRK modernizes economy, more engagement by European companies would be welcome	EU companies not yet ready to operate in North Korea due to the lack of a stable political and economic surrounding to invest in
	<i>Educational and cultural exchanges</i>	Provision of educational opportunities and exchanges, including foreign language training, would be positive An framework should clearly be defined, including reciprocal security assurances	Implicit EU policy to promote the exposure of North Koreans to Western societies Several Member States provide specialized educational and cultural exchange programs but no EU budget line to promote such exchanges and not likely to be created	Welcomes cooperation in the fields of education and culture; however, implementation is challenging Need to thoroughly assess feasibility and sustainability in advance considering socio-political, cultural and organizational factors	Suggests sending European specialists and teachers to North Korea to work there among the population at large Against academic exchanges because they only benefit select individuals chosen by the regime

Table 2. Summary of the views expressed by the interviewees. Own elaboration.

		South Korean EU-affairs scholar	Senior Seoul-based European diplomat	Representative of a NPO active in North Korea	Member of the European Parliament
Changes in the DPRK	<i>Social and economic</i>				
	<i>Denuclearization</i>				
Changes in EU-DPRK relations	<i>Proactive engagement</i>				
	<i>Sanctions</i>				
	<i>Institutional relations</i>				
	<i>Human rights</i>				
	<i>Effects on EU-South Korea relations</i>				
Areas for increased cooperation and engagement	<i>Humanitarian aid</i>				
	<i>Development cooperation</i>				
	<i>Energy cooperation</i>				
	<i>Environmental cooperation</i>				
	<i>Trade relations and capacity building</i>				
	<i>Educational and cultural exchanges</i>				

Table 3. Color-coded interpretation of the views expressed by the interviewees. Own elaboration.

Legend: **Red cells:** interviewee expressed openly negative views regarding possible changes or an eventual enhanced engagement.
Orange cells: interviewee expressed mixed views regarding possible changes or an eventual enhanced engagement.
Green cells: interviewee expressed he would mostly agree with an eventual enhanced engagement or considers changes are possible.

To conclude this chapter, a brief discussion of what these tables and the corresponding data tell us – and how it correlates with our first hypothesis – will be presented. As expected, the respondents with a professional profile not directly tied to European policy-making or diplomacy usually showed a more optimistic point of view, even calling for increased engagement and multilateral proactivity. Indeed, both the South Korean scholar and the NPO representative only expressed openly negative views on one of the explored issues, while expressing a rather positive attitude in three and four cases, respectively. On the other hand, both the senior diplomat and the Member of the European Parliament were highly critical or negative in six of the eleven explored subsets of changes and cooperation avenues.⁷²

It is noteworthy that all four interviewees expressed relative trust in the possibility that the new North Korean leader implements much-needed reforms to progressively open up the economy, even if they all expressed doubt about the timeframe and/or the scope of those reforms. Concerning possible enhanced cooperation possibilities, rather positive consensus was detected on the issue of expanding trade relations and capacity building, with the four experts expressing either positive or neutral views while also warning about the need for internal pro-market reforms before any further engagement is possible.

Near-consensus of a more neutral tone was also detected on the views on humanitarian aid, where positive assessments of current EU engagement combined with predictions of continuity instead of an eventual increase. Finally, the option of EU energy cooperation also generated consensus, but in this case the views were predominantly very negative. Albeit for different reasons – ranging from historic and technical issues to perceived lack of EU competence –, three of the four interviewees considered it was a closed avenue while the fourth, in this case the diplomat, expressed deep reservations.

⁷² It could be even argued that the independent Dutch MEP offered negative views on seven items as, when asked about possible avenues for cooperation that potentially involved using EU funds, he consistently expressed the view that it was not a matter for the EU to decide but for individual Member States. However, I have consciously decided to assign a neutral mark in the case of environmental cooperation as he openly expressed his agreement with the value of such an approach – thus partially offsetting the fact that he considers that any such engagement should be decided by the Member States.

The strongest endorsement of EU values came from the two actors directly working inside the European bureaucratic system, the diplomat and the independent Dutch MEP, who also strongly criticized the parliamentary chamber and the EU in general as not truly standing up to its principles of promotion and defense of universal values. Consequently, the fact that both offer negative views on the accounts of the possible cancellation of sanctions and progress on the human rights issue has to be ascribed to their deep trust in such values – either personal, as in the case of the MEP, or as a representation of the perceived views of the EU, as in the case of the diplomat.

We can thus conclude that, although both the diplomat and the MEP tended to adopt what we could label a more rationalist view, while the scholar and the NPO representative offered a more positive account of the situation, the sheer divergences between the views expressed by all four interviewees leads us to assert that i) their opinions were not only nuanced and influenced by their respective professional profiles and responsibilities but also their own beliefs, ideas and cultural background – and, consequently, the initial hypothesis is just partially validated;⁷³ and ii) further from the much-analyzed issues of horizontal (i.e. incompatibilities between measures, also due to interinstitutional battles) and vertical (i.e. incoherencies due to diverging actions by member states) coherence and cohesion, the sheer diversity of views, not only split by the conventional political cleavages – the left/right axis and, in some cases, also the centralist/federalist axis, with all their respective subdivisions – but also by deeply ingrained cultural and sociological factors, that are amalgamated under the common roof of the European Union makes it extremely difficult to formulate a cohesive and coherent approach towards foreign policy.

⁷³ Let us remind that the hypothesis stated that there would be “certain internal debate” between the actors “opting for a view limiting the possibility of engagement and underestimating the possible implications of the EU’s role in North Korea, and those arguing that the EU should increase humanitarian aid, reinforce institutionalized dialogues and adopt a more proactive approach to endorse the EU’s position and identity values in the region.” As we can see from the results, internal dissonances were found and two clear lines of thought, mostly aligned with the respective professional profiles of the respondent, were also detected, but did not fully align with the predicted values and options.

5. The public speaks: a quantitative approach to future perspectives on EU-North Korea relations (II)

5.1. Overview

The next and final data collection and analysis step of the current thesis is based on a quantitative and statistically relevant study of young South Koreans, viewed as indirect stakeholders and possible future actors in multilateral commercial, diplomatic or cultural EU-South Korea-North Korea relations and, of course, in EU interactions with the Republic of Korea.

The future-based approach adopted in this thesis – whose focus is to analyze not just current EU-North Korea relations but also the shape they could take in the next few years – is precisely the main reason behind the need to poll a key part of the South Korean public, namely future leaders, to better explore the chances the EU could have of breaking through as a major player in a hypothetical transformation and progressive or sudden opening up of the DPRK.

Consequently, the data collected via survey-based field research will be statistically analyzed to reveal general preferences and other valuable aspects that will put to the test the second hypothesis of this thesis: the fact that there will be expectation gaps between the studied South Korean publics and the views expressed by EU experts and actors, including in how EU engagement with North Korea can affect South Korean perceptions of the EU and regarding the preference for certain forms of EU engagement with North Korea over others. Analyses have also been run to prove if preferences and views of EU engagement with North Korea are indeed correlated with those expressed for South Korea-North Korea engagement and/or affected by the identified socio-demographic factors.

Additionally, and despite the fact that there is little empirical research dealing with the issue at hand and no previous examples of research on the specific topic and particular population this thesis focuses on, available studies will be used to benchmark our results and gauge their validity and relevance vis-à-vis other population tranches of the South Korean citizenry.

South Korean official sources and think tanks, such as the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, conduct both regular and ad-hoc assessments of the views the overall South Korean population maintains regarding their Northern neighbors. Among them, a recent, relevant study conducted by the Asan Institute on 20 December 2011, just one day after the announcement of Kim Jong-il's death, with 1000 respondents aged 19 or older and reported results divided by age groups, will be used as a benchmark for some of our findings.

Some of the results obtained in the current research project will also be compared with the outcomes reported in relevant scholastic literature, including a study conducted by Park and Yoon (2010) among a reduced number of members of the South Korean economic and political elites, as well as civil society, academia and media representatives regarding their views of the European Union.

This chapter will be organized as follows: after going through the necessary methodological considerations, the results and findings from descriptive statistical analysis will be presented, followed by the results and findings from bivariate analyses. The final section of this chapter will present unified and combined results of the current and the previous chapters of the thesis, in order to identify and comment on possible expectation gaps between the views expressed by the two subsets of stakeholders, including the possibility that the EU engages with North Korea in different ways than those employed until this moment, in order to assess the validity of our initial hypotheses (see section 1.2).

5.2. Methodological considerations

In order to precisely adapt to and accurately reflect the opinions of the desired target group of the overall South Korean population by using a mixed sampling technique, only South Korean nationals studying at the country's widely recognized top-three ranked universities – Seoul National University, Korea University and Yonsei University –, as well as at the top university for foreign language and international and area studies, the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS), were asked to answer the questionnaire.

Therefore, a combination of cluster and convenient sampling was used to collect a total of 444 answers from South Korean nationals who identified themselves as being students at one of the four selected universities, with the aim of detecting and gauging the opinion of “future South Korean leaders,” understood as current (full- and/or part-time) students at the top 3-ranked universities in the country and a fourth institution, top 10-ranked and a major source of qualified personnel for the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, among other relevant national and international institutions.⁷⁴

While non-probability, convenient sampling methods cannot fully guarantee that the observed sample will be representative of the whole population under study (Babbie, 2004: 186), in our particular case, risk of biases is minimized by the relatively high homogeneity of the respondents and the element of study – young, ethnically Korean students who are also South Korean nationals and are currently studying at top higher education institutions. This allows for a high degree of clusterization of the population (instead of the sample) that also limits variation as far as educational status and age are concerned. Moreover, in order to further randomize the sample, questionnaires were handed in different spots around the relevant Seoul campuses by the researcher himself, during the second week of May 2012.

⁷⁴ Consequently, we consider the opinion of HUFS students, whose chances to interact with EU organizations, governments, institutions and/or citizens in the near future is highly significant, to be as valuable as that of students from the top ranked universities.

The study, therefore, focuses on what we could consider an infinite population (of over 100,000 individuals), meaning that a sample of 444 respondents⁷⁵ guarantees a 96.5% confidence level and a +/- 5% margin of error with a relatively high level of representativeness, as its characteristics closely approximate those of the chosen population: while females are slightly overrepresented, accounting for more than 50% of the participants, the fact that over 75% of participants were undergraduate students closely approximates the latest South Korean figures this researcher could access (Lee, 2009).

The questionnaire (Annex 4) consisted of 21 questions, each of them receiving at least 400 valid and computable answers but the last one, regarding the income of the respondent's family, which has consequently been dropped from the data analysis. Respondents spent between 5 and 9 minutes answering the questionnaire, and the interviewer/researcher made himself available at all times to solve any doubts concerning the questions.⁷⁶

The combined use of closed-ended questions and statements (standardized using the Likert scale format) gave extra flexibility in the design of the questionnaire items. Closed-ended response categories were designed to be as exhaustive as possible, including an "Other, please specify" category when needed. Moreover, mutual exclusivity was also assured unless otherwise clearly indicated.

Double-barreled questions have been systematically avoided despite the complexity of the subject matter and the apparent length of some questions. No matrix questions have

⁷⁵ While 400 respondents should have been enough to guarantee the desired confidence values, the number was increased by 11% for two reasons: i) the experimental use of an iPad device to collect 10% or 44 answers and ii) asserting there would be at least 400 valid answers to all questions.

⁷⁶ The questionnaires were not translated into Korean for three reasons: i) to further guarantee that the students were highly qualified individuals able to read in English; ii) to further emphasize the international approach of the survey; and iii) to guarantee smooth communication between the interviewer/researcher and the respondents. The risk of misunderstanding the questions was minimized in two ways: i) by asking the respondents if they felt confident enough to answer in English; and ii) by volunteering to resolve any doubt or question the respondents might have while answering. Although the first measure had the undesirable effect of scaring off a number of potential participants, thus apparently reducing the randomness of the sample, i) the number of "drop-outs" was not statistically significant; and ii) it created a sample that reflected even more closely the profile this researcher was looking for, namely a highly qualified, young South Korean individual who was able to effectively engage with an EU citizen using a widely spoken foreign language.

been used in the Likert-format items due to the inherent complexity of the questions and the high risk of fostering response-setting among time-pressed respondents.

For greater convenience, and also taking into account the highly uniform features of the studied population, some socio-demographic and educational data that would allow for the use of continuous variables (i.e. age and degree being pursued) have already been collected in the form of discrete variables (i.e. age ranges and knowledge field), thus excluding the need to recode the answers.

Given that the goal of this research project is gauging the opinions of South Koreans on certain issues related to the European Union and North Korea, and then comparing them with the opinions expressed by the interviewed experts (see Chapter 4), but not to explain why they might express one point of view or another, descriptive statistics will mostly suffice for this purpose. However, occasional bivariate and partial correlation analyses have been run to assess possible relationships between the key dependent variables – i.e. stated cooperation preferences vis-à-vis North Korea – and the relevant independent variables. To that aim, the following socio-demographic values of the sample doubled as independent variables:

Political orientation: The concept of political orientation has been operationalized via a variable we could codify as “vote intention.”⁷⁷ Participants were asked to assert which possible candidate/party they would be inclined to vote in the upcoming presidential election. 18.6% (N = 82) proclaimed they would vote the Conservative (Saenuri) party; 14.0% (N = 62) indicated they were inclined to vote the Liberals (Democratic United Party, DUP); 31.4% (N = 139) said they favored a well-known independent candidate, professor and businessman Ahn Cheol-soo; 30.1% of participants (N = 133) said they were still undecided; and the remaining 5.9% (N = 26) declared having no interest in politics. For the purposes of our research, only the students reporting affinity with one of the major parties and/or the independent candidate will be taken into account in bivariate analyses.

⁷⁷ As the data was being collected, the 2012 South Korean presidential election was just 6 months away, while the legislative election had been held barely one month before. Therefore, it the adequacy of using this variable to operationalize the relevant concept was an even more natural choice than usual.

Connections with the EU: Just 26% of the consulted students (N = 114) reported having personal and/or academic connections with EU institutions and/or citizens, while 74% of them (N = 324) said they did not have any such connections.

Gender: The sample was composed of 47% male (N = 207) and 53% female (N = 233) respondents.

Age range: Age data were already collected using discrete variables based on the year of birth⁷⁸ and grouped according to the following two criteria: i) reasonable age ranges for university students; and ii) historical/generational relevance of the year of birth. Therefore, 61.5% of respondents (N = 273) reported being born in 1989 or later,⁷⁹ 29.1% (N = 129) said they were born between 1988 and 1984, and the remaining 9.5% (N = 42) reported being born in 1983 or earlier.

Educational level: 77.6% of respondents (N = 340) were undergraduate students, 19.4% (N = 85) were graduate students, and only 3.0% (N = 13) reported being at the PhD level. Education was coded from 1 to 3, with the higher the education level, the higher the score. Given the very low number of PhD students in our sample – and, therefore, its dubious representativeness of the actual views of this collective –, correlations concerning this group of students will not be reported in the body of text of this thesis.

Knowledge field: 27.5% of respondents (N = 121) were pursuing a degree in the pure, applied or life sciences field; 37.0% of them (N = 163) were social science students; 23.9% (N = 105) were studying a degree in the humanities field; and 11.6% of the surveyed students (N = 51) were pursuing a degree in law or business.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ This was done to avoid any confusion related to the specific Korean age calculation system, according to which one calculates his/her age from the moment of conception and adds a year to his age every time the natural calendar changes years. Therefore, it could happen that someone who was really 23 years old, according to international standards, reported being 24 or 25 years old – therefore being miscoded into a wrong subgroup.

⁷⁹ With 1988 being the year when South Korea finally became a democratic country, this group represents the first generation of “sons of the democracy.”

⁸⁰ Although law and businesses should technically be considered part of the social sciences, their explicit separation from other specialties is justified for two reasons: i) the nature of their future qualifications is the one more often found among business and political leaders; and ii) their probability to significantly interact with either North Korea or the European Union during their professional careers might be remarkably high.

Additionally, the mixed nature of the variables used in this survey, obviously due to the complex nature of the issue at hand, calls for the usage of different statistical analysis techniques depending on the particular questions. Thus, Pearson's correlation bivariate analyses have only been performed for the five Likert-format items offering interval-level values, while the selected independent variables were combined with variables at the nominal level using cross tabulation techniques. All data was processed and analyzed using version 19 of the IBM SPSS Statistics software application.

Descriptive statistical analyses will be presented and commented first, with results conveniently distributed along three overarching thematic subdivisions. Results from bivariate analyses will be presented and discussed in the last subsection of this chapter.

5.3. Descriptive statistical analyses and related findings

5.3.1. Perceptions of North Korea and North Korea-South Korea relations

Before assessing their views on EU-North Korea relations, it is important to analyze what the respondents to the survey had to say about South Korea-North Korea relations.

To that end, four different questions were asked to the participants in the study. Two of them were directly related to Korean reunification, the second dealt with security consequences of a North Korean collapse, and the last one presented them with a multiple choice selection of possible engagement avenues with the DPRK.

When asked if they would favor Korean reunification – nowadays a highly contentious proposition, especially among younger South Koreans –, 57.4% of the participants (N = 255) responded affirmatively, while 32.2% (N = 143) took the opposed view. The remaining 10.4% of respondents (N = 46) said they did not have a clear position or did not care about the issue.

The answers received to the question measuring the degree of probability the participants attached to an eventual Korean reunification in a mid-term scenario also showed clear divisions: while 23.4% of respondents (N = 104) said they were pretty sure Korean reunification would take place within the next 25 years, 28.8% (N = 128) denied this possibility, with an even larger group (47.7%, N = 212) expressing their uncertainty about any of the two possible outcomes.

Combined, these results can be interpreted as proof of the younger generation being less attached to North Korea, due to reduced personal, family and emotional ties to the North and a more individualistic and consumption-oriented mentality.

To test the perceived risk posed by an unforeseen collapse of the North Korean regime, a Likert scaled question was used. Students were asked about their degree of agreement with the statement “A sudden collapse of the North Korean regime would put South Korea’s security at risk.” 81.5% of respondents (N = 361) said they completely agreed

or somewhat agreed with the assertion, while only 11.3% (N = 50) expressed some degree of disagreement.

While these results are not fully comparable with those obtained by the Asan Institute for Policy Studies December 2011 instant poll, whose population was South Koreans of all age ranges, it is interesting to point out that 56.5% of respondents to that poll said that a collapse of the North Korean regime would worsen South Korean security, while 34.6% asserted that it would improve Southern security. However, younger respondents were especially pessimistic: 63% of people in their 20s said it would make things worse. Therefore, we can assert that the population selected for this research project strongly tends to consider instability in North Korea a threat to their own security – something that should be taken into account when considering their views of enhanced EU involvement in the North Korean theater.

Respondents were also asked to assess the degree to which they approved Lee Myung-bak's hard-line policies vis-à-vis North Korea. A triadic selection was presented, also including the possibility to express support for even tougher policies – an option selected by 19.9% of respondents (N = 88). 31.2% of them (N = 138) considered current policies to be correct, while a considerable but not absolute majority (49%, N = 217) said that further dialogue and cooperation should be sought.

These results contrast with those obtained by the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in December 2011, when 64% of people in their 20s said they disapproved the policy (also including those who disapprove it because they would like to see even tougher stances), with just 20% of respondents approving it. However, results of that instant poll were surely affected by the uncertainty surrounding Kim Jong-il's death: while 45% of respondents in the same age range supported a stronger line in a November poll, the number had fallen to 26% by December.

The last question of this first thematic block asked participants to choose one or two cooperation areas they would approve of in case the South Korean government decided to alter current policies and seek engagement with Pyongyang – it what might be a very possible outcome of the December 2012 presidential election.

In order to properly process the answers to this question, two different variables were created. The options chosen by the participants were initially spread between them; they were later regrouped creating a single multiple response variable set. As shown in Table 4, the choices were widespread. However, two cooperation avenues stand out as the most desirable: food aid and humanitarian assistance, chosen by 47.9% of the respondents,⁸¹ and human rights and political dialogue, approved by more than half of the participants in the survey (54.4%). Academic and cultural exchanges also received widespread support, with trade relations and capacity building not far behind.

	N	Percent of cases
Academic and cultural exchanges	138	31,9%
Energy assistance	90	20,8%
Environmental protection programs	43	10,0%
Food aid and humanitarian assistance	207	47,9%
Human rights and political dialogue	235	54,4%
Trade relations and capacity building	112	25,9%
Other	6	1,4%

Table 4. Options selected for enhanced South Korea-North Korea cooperation. The most widely chosen options are highlighted. Own elaboration.

⁸¹ Remarkably, the Asan instant poll of December 2011 reported that just 47% of young South Korean adults would support sending food and fertilizer as aid to North Korea, while 50% of them would disapprove of the measure.

5.3.2. Views of EU engagement with North Korea

Perceptions of eventual increased EU engagement with North Korea were measured via a rather diverse set of questions, starting with a multiple choice question on the two foreign powers perceived by the respondents as being able to play a greater role in improving inter-Korean relations.

Not surprisingly, the surveyed students overwhelmingly chose China and the United States, with 90.1% (N = 390) and 73.7% (N = 319) of respondents respectively mentioning them. The EU failed to crown the dissenting responses, with only 7.6% of participants (N = 33) selecting it as a key partner, far away from Russia, which managed to obtain support in 13.9% of the cases (N = 60).⁸²

The discouraging results regarding the perceived importance of the EU's potential to improve relations between Seoul and Pyongyang were somewhat corroborated by the ambivalence showed vis-à-vis the suggestion that deeper EU engagement with North Korea could help improve the security level in the Korean Peninsula: just 37% of the participants (N = 164) responded affirmatively, with 32.7% (N = 145) choosing the opposite option and the remaining 30.2% (N = 134) saying they did not know the effects such developments might have.

Intimately tied to this question are the perceptions about the possible effects a higher level of EU cooperation with the DPRK could have on South Korea-EU bilateral relations. Respondents' answers were widely divided among the three possible answers, with 43.8% of them (N = 193) saying it would have a positive influence, 37.6% of the respondents (N = 167) predicting negative influence and a further 18.2% (N = 81) saying it would not have any effect on South Korea's relations with Brussels.

Participating university students were subsequently asked if the EU should intervene by sending military personnel, civilian experts and/or emergency aid in case of a sudden

⁸² In this case, results presented here do not strongly differ from those obtained by the Asan Institute in December 2011. When asked to name the country most important for South Korea to cooperate with to improve North-South relations, 51% of the respondents chose China, followed by the U.S. and Russia, with 35% and 5% of the responses, respectively.

collapse of the North Korean regime. Their responses, gauged using a Likert scale providing interval-level values, were slightly positive, with 47.4% of responses (N = 210) being either "completely agree" or "somewhat agree." However, 20.8% of the respondents (N = 92) had no clear opinion on the issue, and 31.8% of them (N = 141) expressed moderate or strong disagreement with this possibility.

A question regarding the possibility that Europe engages with North Korea in a proactive manner, cancelling some of the sanctions it applies to the regime even if the rogue state does not show clear willingness to abandon its nuclear program. This highly risky, complex proposal – that was openly rejected by the interviewed experts, who mostly called for a multilateral approach driven by South Korea and China – collected overall positive responses among the studied sample. Up to 58.8% of the respondents (N = 261) said they agreed completely or in part with the proposal, while an also high number (24.3%, N = 108) reported ambivalence towards it. Just 16.9% of respondents (N = 75) said they disagreed with the proposal.

However, the complexity of the question and the fact that up to 72.3% of respondents (N = 321) reported moderate agreement or neither agreement nor disagreement⁸³ calls for extreme prudence in assessing the validity of these particular results and effectively disqualifies them from further bivariate analyses.

The last question assessing the participants' views on future EU engagement with North Korea is the one offering the strongest direct link between the results of this survey and the information collected via the in-depth interviews with the four experts on EU-North Korea relations.

Coinciding with the request to indicate one or two preferred cooperation avenues for further South Korean engagement with North Korea, students have been asked to

⁸³ For cultural reasons, East Asians tend to disproportionately show moderate agreement or lack of knowledge on the issue when they are not sure about an answer. Reticence and humility are highly valued cultural traits, rooted in the Confucian tradition, and conformity has positive connotations of connectedness and harmony in East Asian culture (Kim and Markus, 1999). Therefore, conclusion about answers highly skewed towards moderate agreement and including very high levels of neutrality should not be taken at face value.

indicate which kind(s) of cooperation options they would like the EU to prioritize in case Brussels decided to deepen and widen the scope of its relations with North Korea. As shown in Table 5, the respondents showed a high degree of consensus in preferentially choosing two of the proposed options: food aid and humanitarian assistance (62.8%, N = 275) and human rights and political dialogue (65.1%, N = 285), which were also the preferred choices for South Korea-North Korea cooperation – albeit with a far lesser degree of consensus.

Also of note is the almost perfect tie for third place between three of the proposed options, with environmental protection programs – an option with relatively high acceptance among the interviewed experts – falling far behind the rest (8.2%, N = 36).⁸⁴

	N	Percent of cases
Academic and cultural exchanges	85	19,4%
Energy assistance	81	18,5%
Environmental protection programs	36	8,2%
Food aid and humanitarian assistance	275	62,8%
Human rights and political dialogue	285	65,1%
Trade relations and capability building	81	18,5%
Other	4	,9%

Table 5. Options selected for enhanced EU-North Korea cooperation. The most widely chosen options are highlighted. Own elaboration.

⁸⁴ Curiously enough, Park and Yoon (2010) reported that South Korean elites considered the EU as the most important and reliable defender and promoter of not just human rights and international development, but also environmentalism. This makes even more surprising the relatively low level of interest that the environmental protection option has arisen among respondents to the present survey and begs for the question of how results would have looked like in case participants had been asked to select up to three cooperation choices.

5.3.3. Broader perception of the European Union

Given their future relevance for bilateral EU-South Korea relations – and even multilateral relations involving the EU, North Korea and South Korea –, the broader perception elite South Korean university students have of the European Union has also been gauged via four questions, two of them strictly interrelated and measuring the relative weight participants give to South Korea-EU relations and the remaining two evaluating the degree of acceptance of the EU as a supranational organization fostering integration, both within its borders and immediate neighborhood and eventually in Northeast Asia.⁸⁵

The first subset of questions calibrated opinions on the international powers considered to be more relevant partners for South Korea, both at the time of performing the research and in a mid-term scenario reflecting the approximate timeframe in which current South Korean elite university students have greater chances to have leadership positions in their respective professional fields. This gives highly relevant feedback on the evolution of the international system foreseen by future South Korean leaders. Additionally, respondents were asked to select two powers instead of just one to better reflect the current and expected world affairs setup and that of East Asia in particular, shaped by growing China-U.S. bipolarity according to most experts and scholars.

Both when asked about current and future premiere partnerships, respondents massively aligned with both China and the United States. However, while the U.S. was the most prevalent answer when asked about the present (89.1%, N = 392), young South Koreans clearly see U.S. power declining in the next decades, as just 66.2% of them (N = 292) selected it as a top partner for the year 2040 – a 23% drop. Meanwhile, China goes from appearing in 76.6% of all responses (N = 337) to being mentioned by 85% of them (N = 375) when the timeframe is changed.

As far as the European Union is concerned, it consistently attains third place in both current and future rankings, even managing to increase its perceived future value to

⁸⁵ It must be noted that indexes of these questions were not created due to the lack of satisfactory results when performing the relevant factor analyses, meaning that the index would not be reliable due to the fact that the questions also measure other elements instead of just one factor.

South Korea: 61 respondents (13.9% of the total) mention it as a major partner in the present, but 74 of them (16.8%) do it when asked about future perspectives. However, other than China and the EU, emerging Latin America and Russia also experiment remarkable improvements, going from an almost negligible number of votes up to 34 (7.7%) and 31 (7%), respectively.

Therefore, we can assert that this particular population values the EU as a reliable international alternative to the two countries which are widely perceived to be most influential in the Northeast Asia region. While still far from the top two, the fact that an increasing number of respondents value the EU's potential for future crucial bilateral cooperation – thus not condemning it to the notable decline in importance the U.S. is perceived to experiment – has to be seen as a very positive development.⁸⁶

	N	Percent of cases
China	337	76,6%
EU	61	13,9%
Japan	40	9,1%
Latin America	5	1,1%
Russia	8	1,8%
US	392	89,1%
Other	7	1,6%

Table 6. Major perceived international partners for South Korea in 2012. Own elaboration.

⁸⁶ These findings partially align with those presented by Park and Yoon in their 2010 paper. In their case, although 85% of the interviewees considered the EU was a global power, only 55% of them said it was a leading political power and a wide majority considered it less relevant than the U.S., China and even Russia. A narrow majority of the interviewees also asserted that the EU was either important or very important for South Korea; however, when asked about future importance, nearly 90% of them agreed on the importance of the EU for their country.

	N	Percent of cases
China	375	85,0%
EU	74	16,8%
Japan	28	6,3%
Latin America	34	7,7%
Russia	31	7,0%
US	292	66,2%
Other	16	3,6%

Table 7. Major perceived international partners for South Korea in 2040. Own elaboration.

The second subset of questions aims at directly and indirectly gauging support for and approval of the EU model among the participants and the relevant population via two interrelated Likert-scaled items.

First, participants were asked about their views of regional integration along ASEAN or EU lines in Northeast Asia – thus indirectly evaluating perceptions of the European supranational integration process. Most responses were strongly positive, with 71.5% of respondents (N = 316) agreeing either completely or with some reservations to the idea that greater regional integration would be good for Korea, and just 11.3% of them (N = 50) taking the opposite view. 17.2% of respondents (N = 76) expressed neutrality towards the proposal.

In the next question, participants were told to directly rate their perception of the European Union. Results were also quite positive, with 68.7 % of respondents (N = 305) saying they had a positive view of the EU and just 7% of them (N = 31) expressing negative visions. However, only 13.1% of the total (N = 58) said their views were very positive, while a further 24.3% of respondents (N = 108) asserted that their perceptions of the EU were neither positive nor negative.

The combined analysis of these results, therefore, shows widespread reserves and/or doubts about certain elements of the European project and supranational integration, maybe influenced by recent economic trouble in Europe.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Despite having no scientific or statistical significance, some participants were eager to have first-hand information about the eurozone troubles, their causes and the possible solutions, thus directly inquiring the researcher about the issue.

5.4. Bivariate statistical analyses and related findings

After reviewing the descriptive information derived from the collected survey data, this section will deal with the outcomes of the performed bivariate statistical analyses, including cross tabulations and Pearson's correlation analyses, with special emphasis on those generating results that are relevant for this research.

In order not to unnecessarily split the information feeding from the three subtopics identified in the previous section, results arising from bivariate analyses are presented following a slightly different rationale from that used in the previous section. However, the basic order of the elements presented in the previous section has been respected to the maximum possible extent for greater internal coherence.

5.4.1. Correlations involving variables on Korean reunification and opinions on North Korea

The first cross tabulation analysis that generated significant results concerned the answers to the two questions regarding Korean reunification. Despite the fact that a Lambda distribution analysis yielded a statistically negligible relationship between the variables, when performing a cross tabulation of the two variables measuring the students' views on Korean reunification we see that students favoring reunification seemed clearly less liable to consider that reunification will not take place in the next 25 years and considerably more prone to assert it will. Contrarily, students who were opposed to reunification or did not care about it were notably more inclined to assert that reunification would not take place in the mid-term.⁸⁸

Additionally, students who favor reunification tend to disapprove of current government policies vis-à-vis North Korea far more than people who do not favor it and people who do not report interest in this issue. Coincidentally, support for even tougher stances

⁸⁸ Although, at first sight, correlations between the positions vis-à-vis reunification and those on engagement areas with North Korea would seem highly likely, the performed statistical analyses (cross tabulations) failed to show significant distinctions, maybe with the only exception of the higher degree of support environmental protection programs received from those students saying that they did not care about reunification. However, the correlation was extremely weak and, given that the amount of people asserting they did not care about reunification was relatively low, these results may be due to chance or other, non-explained factors.

regarding North Korea is strongest among this last group than among respondents who declared their opposition to reunification.

Also of note is that those students stating that the South Korean government should be even tougher with North Korea show moderately different choice patterns when asked about possible cooperation areas with the DPRK. Both in the case of South Korean and EU engagement with North Korea, they give above average weight to environmental protection programs and trade relations and capacity building – maybe the more politically neutral options available – and less to human rights and political dialogue, favored by just 47.7% of them (instead of the 54.4% average support) in the case of South Korea-North Korea relations, and by 59.3% (instead of the average 65.1%) in the case of EU-North Korea engagement possibilities.

5.4.2. Correlations involving the identified socio-demographic independent variables

Already focusing on what South Korean elite university students think of EU and its eventual involvement in North Korea, cross tabulation analyses combining all the relevant dependent variables with the identified independent variables have been run, together with a Pearson's correlation analysis involving the three reliable Likert-scaled items corresponding to this thematic subdivision of the quantitative study.^{89,90}

When assessing the relation of the socio-demographic values with the results of the question devoted to regional integration, we could only detect a slight negative correlation between being a student in the field of humanities and perceptions of regional integration, which tended to be less positive than the average, with just 65.7% of students agreeing with its benefits as opposed to 70.3% overall, as well as a lower amount of law and business students viewing it negatively (6.1% as opposed to the

⁸⁹ Given the previously explained doubts generated by the reliability of responses to the question “The EU should cancel some of the sanctions it applies to North Korea and advance cooperation even if the regime does not give clear signals of abandoning its nuclear program. Do you agree with this statement?”, results of this question have no longer been analyzed to find correlations, as they could have a negative effect on the reliability and generalization of the reported correlations.

⁹⁰ The results reported have been simplified (i.e. they neither include N values nor all the detailed percentage information for all involved variables and values) in this section for additional clarity. All analyses and cross tabulations are available upon request (in SPSS format).

average 11.4%). In line with these results, students in the humanities also showed less inclination to perceiving the EU in a positive fashion, as just 61% of them reported positive opinions, as opposed to an average of 69%.

Unlike the remaining possible political orientation values, affinity with the Liberal party (DUP) consistently proved to yield a modified distribution of the answers to the dependent variables, including a non-statistically significant positive relationship with pro-EU views, with 76.4% of students expressing their intention to vote for the liberal candidate in the next presidential election also having a good perception of the EU, compared with an average of 69% for the overall sample.

Pro-DUP students also were more inclined to assert that eventual EU engagement with North Korea could have a positive effect on bilateral EU-South Korea relations (51.6% of them said so, as compared to the average 44%), while also showing less inclination to predict negative effects (27.4% as compared to an average of 37.6%). Students favoring the liberal party also asserted that deeper EU engagement with North Korea would help improve the security level in the whole peninsula at a higher ratio (45.2%) than other students (37.2% average), while saying it would not ameliorate security less often (27.4%) than their colleagues did (32.9%). Affinity with this party was also tied to additional disagreement with the option that the EU intervenes directly in North Korea by sending troops and/or civilian experts in case of regime collapse, as 38.7% of potential DUP voters disagreed with it, while just 31.8% of overall respondents expressed disagreement with the proposal.

More remarkable is the strong relationship between having personal ties with EU citizens or institutions and reporting positive perceptions of the EU and its eventual involvement in North Korea. The previously mentioned overall EU approval rate skyrockets to 80.7% in the case of those reporting ties with the EU, falling to 65.1% among those who do not. Meanwhile, 44.7% of them said EU engagement would also increase security levels in the whole peninsula, while just 34.7% of those with no ties with EU citizens or institutions believed so. Personal connections with the EU also generated remarkably stronger support for an eventual EU intervention in North Korea, with an approval rate of 55.2%, as opposed to just 44.9% among those not reporting any ties with the EU.

EU intervention in case of regime collapse also showed widespread support within law and business students, with 58.8% of them expressing a positive view. Those same students also tended to express that enhanced EU relations with North Korea could have negative influences for EU-South Korea relations (52.9% as opposed to the 37.9% average); however, this trend did not subtract from the opposite view but from the neutral position (i.e. it would not matter), which was just supported by 3.9% of law and business students.

When controlling for the gender and age of the participants, it was found out that perceived positive influence of EU engagement with North Korea on bilateral EU-South Korea relations was substantially higher among males (50.2%) than among females (38.4%), and even higher among older students, with 69% of them saying engagement would also be positive for Brussels-Seoul relations and just 14.3% of them asserting it would be negative – as compared to 37.9% for the full sample. However, the significance of this last observation is modulated by the relatively low number of students born in 1983 or earlier included in the survey.⁹¹

Not surprisingly, males also tended to be more favorable to EU intervention than females (53.4% vs. 42.1%), and also to consider that deeper EU engagement with North Korean issues could improve security in the whole peninsula (44.4% as opposed to just 30.2% among females), probably a reflection of the martial culture instilled by the military authorities among young South Koreans, who are asked to spend almost two years in the army as conscripts and to interrupt their university students to do so. Additionally, the reported age of the participants was also related to believing that EU involvement in North Korea could increase security in the whole peninsula, with 47.6% of respondents born in 1983 or earlier saying so compared to just 37% overall.

Concerning possible correlations between the answers given in the relevant Likert-scaled questions related to views of the European Union, a Pearson correlation analysis has been performed. As shown in Table 8, responses to the three selected questions are

⁹¹ The situation is even more extreme in the case of the 13 surveyed PhD students, who also massively aligned with the idea that EU engagement with North Korea would also be good for EU-South Korea relations (84.6%, N = 11).

positively correlated between them, although not too strongly. The strongest correlation is found between the reported perception of the European Union and the views on regional integration ($r = .254$, $p = .000$), with the views on direct EU intervention in case of a sudden collapse of the North Korean regime also showing a relevant positive correlation with the variable on perceptions of the EU ($r = .188$, $p = .000$). Additionally, responses to the variable measuring perceptions of greater regional integration in Northeast Asia and the one measuring views of an eventual EU intervention in the DPRK are also positively correlated, albeit less strongly ($r = .152$, $p = .001$).

In short, strong evidence has been found to support the hypothesis that Korean students' perceptions of the EU and of the effects and/or benefits its eventual engagement with North Korea might have vary along the lines of several key socio-demographic features – most notably gender and personal ties with EU citizens or institutions.

		The European Union should intervene directly – by sending military personnel, civilian experts and/or emergency aid – in case of a sudden collapse of the North Korean regime.	Greater regional integration – in the lines of ASEAN or the EU – would be positive for Korea and Northeast Asia.	How is your perception of the European Union?
The European Union should intervene directly – by sending military personnel, civilian experts and/or emergency aid – in case of a sudden collapse of the North Korean regime.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 443	,152** 441	,188** 443
Greater regional integration – in the lines of ASEAN or the EU – would be positive for Korea and Northeast Asia.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	,152** 441	1 442	,254** 442
How is your perception of the European Union?	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	,188** 443	,254** 442	1 444

Table 8. Bivariate analysis (Pearson correlation) of Likert-scaled items related to perceptions of the European Union. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) and indicated with a double asterisk (**).

5.4.3. Correlations between the variables measuring cooperation preferences and the independent variables

To complete the analysis of the survey data, the preferences in possible cooperation areas for both South Korea and the European Union have been cross tabulated and compared, first between them and later using the previously identified socio-demographic independent variables.

As Table 9 clearly shows, there seems to be a strong correlation between the cooperation choices for South Korea and those for the European Union. In other words, many of the surveyed students that selected a given cooperation avenue to eventually improve Seoul's relations with Pyongyang strongly tended to choose the same option(s) when asked about the paths the European Union could choose to increase its engagement with North Korea.

This relationship is particularly strong, visible and relevant among the most widely chosen options, namely food aid and humanitarian assistance and human rights and political dialogue. For instance, 83.4% of the 205 respondents who chose food aid and humanitarian assistance as a preferred area of cooperation for South Korea-North Korea engagement also chose this option for European Union-North Korea relations. In line with that, 77.3% of the 233 respondents who selected human rights and political dialogue as a viable avenue for South Korea-North Korea cooperation also decided it would be a very good option for EU-North Korea cooperation. Moreover, cross-relation between these two options was also strong, as 67.3% of people selecting humanitarian assistance as a priority for South Korea-North Korea cooperation also chose human rights and political dialogue for EU relations with the DPRK, and 67.8% of those selecting human rights and political dialogue for further Seoul-Pyongyang engagement also went with humanitarian assistance and food aid when asked about the EU.

In other words, stated preferences for hypothetical South Korean engagement with North Korea have strong implications for the study of the perceptions of Brussels-Pyongyang relations, as they seem to strongly correlate with the preferred options for EU engagement with North Korea.

			EU Cooperation						Total	
			Academic and cultural exchanges	Energy assistance	Environmental protection programs	Food aid and humanitarian assistance	Human rights and political dialogue	Trade relations and capability building		Other
South Korea Cooperation	Academic and cultural exchanges	Count	48	24	15	76	78	21	3	136
		%	35,3%	17,6%	11,0%	55,9%	57,4%	15,4%	2,2%	
	Energy assistance	Count	12	37	11	42	50	18	0	90
		%	13,3%	41,1%	12,2%	46,7%	55,6%	20,0%	,0%	
	Environmental protection	Count	12	13	9	16	25	7	0	42
		%	28,6%	31,0%	21,4%	38,1%	59,5%	16,7%	,0%	
	Food aid and humanitarian assistance	Count	28	26	11	171	138	27	2	205
		%	13,7%	12,7%	5,4%	83,4%	67,3%	13,2%	1,0%	
Human rights and political dialogue	Count	40	29	14	158	180	35	1	233	
	%	17,2%	12,4%	6,0%	67,8%	77,3%	15,0%	,4%		
Trade relations and capacity building	Count	20	22	8	53	63	43	2	111	
	%	18,0%	19,8%	7,2%	47,7%	56,8%	38,7%	1,8%		
Other	Count	0	3	1	3	4	1	0	6	
	%	,0%	50,0%	16,7%	50,0%	66,7%	16,7%	,0%		
Total	Count	84	80	35	266	279	79	4	428	

Table 9. Cross-tabulation of the responses on preferred areas of cooperation with North Korea for South Korea and the EU. The options showing greater correlation appear highlighted. Percentages and totals are based on respondents. Own elaboration.

However, the fact that there seems to be a remarkable degree of correlation between the most popular choices for South Korea-North Korea and European Union-North Korea cooperation areas needs to be complemented by the analysis of the interaction between these two multiple choice variables and the selected independent variables.

Cross tabulation analyses started with the independent variable Political orientation, which showed no discernible effects over choices of preferred South Korean or European Union cooperation avenues vis-à-vis North Korea.

Even if not statistically significant, the independent variable Connections with the EU apparently showed a modest positive correlation with the choice of academic and cultural exchanges – 24.1% of people reporting personal connections with EU citizens or institutions supported this cooperation method, while just 19.4% of the overall sample and 17.6% of students with no personal ties with EU citizens or institutions supported it – as a preferred method of cooperation for the EU, while having no remarkable influence on the results for South Korea.

When controlling for the Gender of the participants, males were found to be more interested in EU cooperation in the field of energy than women – 22.3% compared to just 15.3% – but less approving of cooperation in the form of increased human rights and political dialogue – just 62.1% of males selected this option, which was chosen by 68.1% of participating females. Similar results could be observed in the case of South Korea cooperation choices.

As far as the effects of the independent variable Age are concerned, both younger and older students seemed slightly more inclined to favor EU energy assistance vis-à-vis North Korea than their counterparts in the intermediate age group, who tended to give more weight to food aid and humanitarian assistance. An even more remarkable difference occurs with preferred cooperation areas for South Korea, with students in the intermediate age group aligning with the provision of food and humanitarian aid at a much higher ratio than their younger and older counterparts (60.3% of respondents compared to just 42.3% and 46.3%, respectively). However, these variations would not be considered statistically relevant due to the skewness of the distribution of the variable: low number of older students and a very high number of younger ones make

any observed correlation less reliable and potentially more affected by chance or other factors (spurious relations).⁹²

No special effects on choices for EU cooperation were detected when controlling for the variable Educational level. However, in the case of preferences for South Korean cooperation, undergraduate students did tend to favor energy assistance more than their older counterparts, with graduate students being the group favoring food aid and humanitarian assistance the most and academic exchanges the least.

Some remarkable trends found when controlling for Knowledge field should also be highlighted. Concerning the choices of preferred EU-North Korea cooperation areas, pure, applied and life sciences students tend to favor academic and cultural exchanges (25%) and energy assistance (21.7%) more than their counterparts, while giving less relative weight to food aid and humanitarian assistance (56.7%). Social sciences students are the ones giving less weight to academic and cultural exchanges (14.8%), while surprisingly favoring energy assistance slightly more than their colleagues. Food aid was mostly favored by students in the humanities field (68.3%), while human rights and political dialogue was especially favored by law and/or business students (74.5%).

Finally, regarding South Korea-North Korea cooperation options, pure, applied and life sciences students showed more inclination for energy assistance (25.2%) and environmental protection programmes (15.1%), and less weight to trade relations (20.2%) than their counterparts did. Meanwhile, students in the humanities field favored food aid (52.9%) and human rights and political dialogue (56.9%) more than the rest of students, and law and/or business students fittingly showed additional interest in developing trade relations with the North (34.7%).

In conclusion, abundant evidence has been found to support the secondary hypothesis stating that some socio-demographic features would have an effect on the participants' preferred choices for engagement with North Korea.

⁹² Although there are usually statistical methods available to precisely evaluate the significance and potential spuriousness of correlations, limitations in processing combined sets of multiple-choice variables do not allow for their application in such instances.

5.5. Combined qualitative and quantitative results: analysis and major findings

After extensively reviewing all the information deriving from the collected and analyzed survey data and inferred from its statistical treatment, it is necessary that we connect it with the information and results obtained in the qualitative part of this study, allowing us to test the validity of the initial hypothesis regarding probable expectation gaps between the views expressed by experts and professionals directly linked to the EU and its activities in North Korea and those asserted by future South Korean leaders.

In order to efficiently and clearly present the combined findings, a summary table, partially following the format of those included at the end of Chapter 4, has been created with the aim of visually summarizing opinions and eventual consensus between EU “insiders” and “outsiders” on all the relevant topics. Overall opinions have been recoded and classified in two columns: EU stakeholders and future South Korean leaders. In the case of the first column, reflecting the results of the qualitative part of this research, the color coding used in each cell represents both the identified degree of consensus (total, shown by monochromatic coloring, or partial, identified by a double color coding within the same cell) and the direction(s) (positive, neutral or negative) of the overall opinions reflected. As far as the second column is concerned, views of the students have been coded as positive, neutral or negative according to the respective percentages, rankings and approval rates, as reported in section 5.3.

Given that they are predictions based on informed political analysis that can only be reliably provided by expert professionals, the topics related to possible social and economic changes in the DPRK and its eventual denuclearization have not been analyzed in the quantitative study and, therefore, do not appear in Table 10. Similarly, changes in institutional and diplomatic relations between the EU and North Korea have not been explicitly studied in the quantitative part of this thesis, and have also been excluded from this table.

	EU stakeholders		Future South Korean leaders
Proactive engagement	Red	Orange	Orange
Rescind sanctions	Red		Green
Effects on EU-South Korea relations	Green	Orange	Orange
Human rights and political dialogue	Red		Green
Food aid and humanitarian assistance	Orange		Green
Energy cooperation	Red		Orange
Trade relations and capacity building	Green	Orange	Orange
Educational and cultural exchanges	Green	Orange	Orange
Environmental cooperation	Green	Orange	Red

Table 10. Color-coded interpretive comparison of the results of the qualitative and quantitative studies. Own elaboration.

Legend:

- Red*: unanimous negative views regarding the issue / low support for the engagement option
- Orange*: unanimous mixed views regarding the issue / medium support for the engagement option
- Green*: unanimous positive views regarding the issue / high support for the engagement option
- Mixed colors*: mixed views regarding the issue

The first observation we can make from this interpretative table is that there is no perfect consensus in any of the proposed cooperation arenas, hypothetical engagement processes or expected effects, thus openly confirming one of the key hypotheses of this thesis: wide expectation gaps exist between the perceptions and preferences of eventual EU engagement with North Korea expressed by future South Korean leaders – i.e. external stakeholders – and the views expressed by the interviewed experts in EU-North Korea relations – i.e. the internal sources.

Especially worrying is the complete dissonance found in the case of human rights and political dialogue.⁹³ As already discussed in Chapter 4, the interviewed experts expressed mostly negative views about both the effectiveness of discussing human rights with North Korea and the real will to do so, even within the institution widely considered the beacon of democratic and universal values in a not always transparent EU, the European Parliament. Contrary to that, South Korean students, based on the widely-held image of the EU as a global force for good that actively promotes human rights and democracy, massively chose human rights and political dialogue as one of the most promising avenues for broader and deeper EU engagement with the DPRK.

A certain lack of consensus is also felt on the second option that was also widely chosen by the surveyed South Korean students as a preferred EU cooperation choice vis-à-vis North Korea: food aid and humanitarian assistance – selected by almost 63% of respondents, slightly behind the 65% of votes received by human rights and political dialogue. While in this case the views expressed by the three interviewees that commented on that issue was not negative, they all coincided in expecting current unconditional programs to continue but not to increase in breadth or scope, while also valuing their positive effects for the North Korean population but remembering that serious shortcomings in monitoring and effective distribution still exist. Therefore, while it could not be ruled out that aid was eventually increased with the right conditions, and while also acknowledging that the experts mainly focused on the present situation and not on future expectations (always conditional to verifiable changes in

⁹³ The table also clearly indicates completely opposite approaches concerning sanctions and their eventual cancellation. However, as already explained in section 5.3, we cannot take the results of this question at face value due to possible misunderstandings and undue influence of cultural factors. Therefore, no further conclusions should be drawn from that and, ideally, further research should be conducted to re-test this particular question.

North Korea), the interviewees did not seem to share the same degree of interest for this choice that South Korean students demonstrated.

Interestingly enough, dissonance is also particularly strong among one of the possible cooperation areas that obtained better reviews by the interviewed EU experts and policymakers: environmental cooperation, widely considered a low (political) risk, high (mutual) reward option. While not openly rejected by the surveyed South Korean students – who were asked to select their preferred options and not to discard the ones they disagreed with –, its “negative” coding is due to the extremely low number of votes it received, being supported by barely 8% of the respondents.

Dissonance is also found in the choice for energy cooperation: while EU experts warned about its impracticality for several reasons – ranging from limitations in technology imports to the lessons of recent history –, a reasonably large number of students (even larger among younger respondents) selected it instead of the more popular options, humanitarian aid and human rights and political dialogue.

Better alignment within a relatively neutral degree of interest was found in the fields of trade relations and capacity building and educational/academic and cultural exchanges. Again, the fact that the surveyed South Koreans did not overwhelmingly choose them as preferred EU-North Korea cooperation axis does not mean they reject them, but solely that other options were preferred by most. Therefore, those should still be considered valuable areas of cooperation with a relatively high level of alignment between internal EU preferences and external preferences.

Therefore, we can report that ample evidence of dissonance and disconnect between the opinions expressed by the interviewees in the qualitative part of this research and the predominant views and preferences among top South Korean students has been found. Nevertheless, and despite the fact that a remarkable expectations gap exists in such a sensitive issue for the EU and its perceptions among foreign publics as human rights promotion, some common ground can still be identified, thus eventually permitting the design of a limited, consensus-based policy of engagement that could incorporate the views of most stakeholders within the precepts and interests of the Union.

6. Conclusions and policy considerations

North Korea is a truly unique case for both students of international relations and political practitioners. Its political insularity, combined with its extremely relevant geographical location, cushioned between three of the EU's Strategic Partners and inside a key economic region where a fourth partner, the U.S., allegedly wants to shift its interest during the coming decades, make it especially relevant to conduct a study involving the opinions of foreign stakeholders to gauge the most viable cooperation avenues and possibilities for engagement.

This is precisely the basic reason behind this research project: North Korea matters and the EU should not be content to stay in the back seat or, as former High Representative Javier Solana famously said, to be a payer and not a player. However, in order to be a player, the EU must first define a comprehensive, effective and satisfactory policy, ideally aligned with all its core interests and principles but also with the interests of all affected stakeholders, including partners such as South Korea in its considerations.

In order to study the chances that such a policy might be aligned both with internal and external preferences and views, a comprehensive research has been developed, using a dual approach combining qualitative and quantitative methodology that allowed the performance of rich analyses of the abundant data collected and the eventual combination of the key results to evaluate the degree of consensus and dissonance between and among the views expressed by the two sets of participants.

As we have also extensively seen in this thesis, dealing with the North Korean regime seems as hard as ever, and any future engagement will be highly conditioned by an eventual improvement in the approach taken by the regime, both internally, vis-à-vis its blatant human rights violations, and externally, regarding its nuclear program and the threat it supposes not only to Northeast Asia's stability but also for global proliferation.

Moreover, as Berkofsky already argued back in 2009, it is probable that “despite the ongoing nuclear crisis, North Korea will continue to be nowhere near the top of the EU's external relations agenda” and that, as a consequence, the EU “is very unlikely to increase the existing limited resources dedicated to deal with and work on North Korea

unless there emerges an inter-European political consensus to increase the EU's economic and political engagement after the resolution of the nuclear crisis" (Berkofsky, 2009).

However, as argued in Chapter 2, there are multiple and potent reasons for the EU to eventually try to pursue a gradual increase of its engagement in the Korean peninsula, ranging from the more pragmatic – such as its geostrategic and security relevance and the economic opportunities it can represent – to the political – including eventually improving relations with regional Strategic Partners such as South Korea and even China –, all without forgetting the ideational goals, with North Korea potentially offering a prime chance for the EU to actively promote its core values, enhance its visibility as benign power in the greater East Asia and, also importantly, to help erase doubts about the lack of coherence, proactivity and strategic vision of its foreign policy.

As former Member of the European Parliament Glyn Ford asserted in his 2008 book on the DPRK, "to engage requires both a willingness to talk and a willingness to understand." Therefore, before focusing on future engagement paths, Chapter 3 was devoted to understanding both the past and the present of bilateral EU-North Korea relations. After the drama of the 1990s and the well-intentioned rapprochement strategy attempted at the turn of the century by the EU, the chain of events leading to the current situation of extremely limited engagement shaped by an overarching sanctions regime is punctuated by highly provocative and defiant acts performed by North Korea, most importantly those related to the completion of a successful nuclear program that has deservedly turned Pyongyang into an international pariah.

Consequently, one must not be surprised to see how current bilateral trade figures are utterly irrelevant for the EU, why EU businesses are reluctant to even consider investing in the DPRK or why political and human rights dialogues have so far failed to generate any results. Nevertheless, if the situation were bound to gradually improve, the EU should stand ready to define an effective, consensus-based policy focusing on issues and areas that were not only relevant in themselves but also to the Union as an international actor struggling to articulate a coherent foreign policy.

Unfortunately, the advance exploration of the eventual capacity to design a coherent, cohesive and consensus-based policy for engagement with North Korea, to which Chapter 4 was devoted, while partially confirming the initial hypothesis about divergence in views according to the nature of the actors, did not give us grounds to be overly optimistic. The scale of the divergences between the views expressed by the four interviewees leads us to the double conclusion that not only their answers were shaped both by their personal beliefs and inclinations and their respective professional profiles – in other words, a certain degree of dissonance that had to be expected – but also that, further from the often analyzed problems of horizontal and vertical coherence and cohesion, the sheer diversity of views that are brought together under the common roof of the European Union make it extremely difficult to formulate a cohesive and coherent approach towards foreign policy.

Still, green shots such as the emphasis on effective and proactive multilateralism – a staple of the EU’s stated strategic choices for the 21st century – and the relative consensus on the current value and the feasibility of implementing programs in some cooperation areas – such as food aid and humanitarian assistance, trade relations, educational exchanges and cooperation in the protection of the environment – modulate the negative perceptions and have also important implications as an indicator of what kind of internal consensus the EU is ready to achieve: not perfect by any means, but also not non-existent.

Of even more significance might be the relative consensus on the perceived will of the new North Korean government, led by young leader Kim Jong-un, to slowly initiate a reform and opening process partially based on that of China in the 1980s. The fact that EU stakeholders share this view is also important, as it could eventually become what we should label as some kind of “self-fulfilling prophecy”: growing international exposure could trigger domestic change (however slow), which may eventually create a new cognitive framework (both inside and outside North Korea), along with a wider change of policy preferences.

Many more important conclusions can be drawn from the results of the quantitative analysis on Chapter 5, starting with the high degree of alignment between Korean university students’ preferences for eventual cooperation of their own country with

North Korea and those preferred for the case of a foreign force like the European Union. Despite the relatively higher concentration of preferences in the case of the Union and the very specific nature of the selected population, this finding can be especially relevant for EU decision makers aiming at designing a policy of engagement with North Korea that would also consider the interests expressed by the citizens of the EU's most natural partner in the region, South Korea. If stated preferences for hypothetical South Korean engagement with North Korea can predict similar preferences for the case of the EU, results from similar future polls measuring items of this nature performed by South Korean research institutes and public authorities could be interpreted as also providing valuable information for the European Union.

Additionally, the fact that a strong relationship has been found between the views of regional integration in Northeast Asia and those of the European Union presents an interesting situation in which promotion or advancements on one side could spill over to its counterpart. In other words, successful steps towards regional integration in Northeast Asia perceived as positive by the local population or elites could eventually mean greater support for the European Union as a key partner. Consequently, and also based on the results of this study, EU efforts at promoting regionalization in East Asia and its very own image in the region could very well be tied to promoting interpersonal and interinstitutional exchanges with the local populations, as having personal ties with European citizens and institutions has shown to remarkably increase positive perceptions of the EU.

However, not all outcomes regarding the prospects for EU public diplomacy in the region were equally positive. In fact, what probably is the most serious, implication-loaded conclusion that we can reach from this study is closely linked to the general lack of alignment between the preferences and views stated by South Korean students and those of the interviewed experts; more precisely, the complete dissonance in the perceptions of human rights promotion efforts by the EU.

As we have seen, South Korean students put remarkable emphasis in the role the EU can play in promoting human rights in North Korea, choosing it as their preferred cooperation method for the EU vis-à-vis North Korea – even above food aid and humanitarian assistance. However, the interviewed experts were either neutral or openly

pessimistic about both the outcomes and effectiveness of EU-North Korea human rights dialogue and the real desire of the EU institutions, including the democratically-elected European Parliament, to actively promote human rights in North Korea and to exert pressure to the North Korean regime on this issue.

This misalignment could prove to have serious consequences for EU foreign policy, as expectation gaps, if not addressed, can transform into perceptual changes, that can prove hard to revert and would definitely need more than shrewd public diplomacy to offset. And, as pointed out by Zhang (2010), “the international image of the European Union is significant for its projection of public diplomacy and for playing an essential role in international and regional politics.”

As has been widely reported, the Common Foreign and Security Policy already suffers from widespread, hard to solve vertical and horizontal coherence problems, mostly due to the very nature of the European construct. If dissonance and ineffectiveness is added on yet another level, the Union risks losing the minds and hearts of those it wants to captivate with its unparalleled soft power. Effective public diplomacy should also entail discursive and operational coherence, and the pessimistic opinions on the real effectiveness – or even the desire – of the EU in promoting human rights and ideational values should not be taken lightly: the perception of expectation gaps in core stated values run the risk of severely challenging future EU credibility in perhaps the most economically dynamic region of our times. A merely declaratory “force for good” will not do the trick forever.

Moreover, if the accusations levied by Mr. Hartong are true, European citizens should start to question the true role of their elected Parliament in Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg. Within its very limited powers as regard the Union's foreign action, the Parliament still has the prerogative of inquiry and other tools (such as, in this case, the trips to North Korea of the Delegation for Relations with the Korean Peninsula) to defend the basic principles – which also double as the values that should guide EU foreign policy – enshrined in and transformed into law by virtue of the Treaty of the European Union. Failing to do so on a consistent manner and for sheer carelessness, as implied by Mr. Hartong's words, should entail political responsibilities for which Members of the European Parliament should respond.

The only positive reading we can make from this particular issue is that the strongest endorsement of EU values came precisely from the two actors directly working inside the European bureaucratic system, the diplomat and the Member of the European Parliament, who also strongly criticized the institution in which he works and the EU in general as not truly standing up to its principles of promotion and defense of universal values. As already argued in Chapter 4, their pessimism on this issue should be ascribed to their deep personal trust in such values, as in the case of the MEP, or considered a representation of the perceived views of the EU, as in the case of the senior diplomat.

Consequently, the fact that relevant individuals within the European bureaucratic apparatus still show their loyalty to these principles and voice their concern and frustration when experiencing their disregard or lack of effective transmission provides an explanation as to why the Union still enjoys the image of beacon of democracy and human rights among most global publics if internal dissonance and projection ineffectiveness are higher than desired.

An additional consideration about the role the EU could and should play in Korea must be pointed out. If the EU wants to be taken seriously as political and security actor in the Korean Peninsula, it is advised to specify what role it seeks to assume in North Korea in the future, i.e. after the eventual resolution of the nuclear crisis, or even the expected economic aperture of the regime.

So far, and in line with the results of this thesis, there seems to be no clear political or strategic line defining the steps the EU could or should take in its engagement with the Korean peninsula beyond boosting lucrative trade relations with Seoul. Despite their disparate professional backgrounds and specializations, the lack of consensus in the discourses of the four selected EU stakeholders, all demonstrating ample knowledge of EU-Korea relations, should serve as wake-up call for EU policymakers and decision makers if they truly want the EU to increase its influence in the troubled but bustling Northeast Asia region.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Along these same lines, the results obtained and conclusions reached in this thesis could be complemented by further research on the reasons behind the lack of a coherent, strategic and effective EU foreign policy. This should also take into account the particularities of the foreign policies of EU Member States and how they intermesh with common European goals, priorities and stated policies.

And there might be no better time to put words into practice than the next few months. The aftermath of the presidential elections in the U.S. and South Korea in December 2012 offers a window of opportunity for the resumption of a more constructive dialogue and an attempt to revive the spirit of the inter-Korean 2001 June 15 Declaration and its plan to work towards a confederation that would allow for the two political systems to coexist. Moreover, the leadership change in the North might also be a good opportunity to restore human rights dialogue.

The North Korean leadership faces a fundamental reform dilemma: it needs to open up the economy to survive, but in the process of opening up, a spiral of expectations and forces for change could be unleashed and end with the regime's demise (Cha, 2012). In fact, the overturning of systems like North Korea's occur not when things are at their absolute worst, but when they begin to get better: when an important part of the population stops worrying about dire survival, rising expectations are funneled towards popular demands and, eventually, insurrection.

As Berkofsky asserted, also back in 2009, there may be a role for the EU to play beyond picking up the bill. North Korea clearly perceives Europe as a separate actor from the U.S., with the potential to play its part in a multi-polar world, be it the part of a bridge or that of a catalyst.

The EU remains a viable candidate for playing a larger, more effective role in the inter-Korean reconciliation process, the resolution of the nuclear crisis and the improvement of the human rights situation. To do so, it needs wider multilateral political consensus and a verifiable willingness to change among the North Korean elites, but also the political will and vision to rise up to the challenge.

Brussels decision- and policy-makers must be conscious of the EU's major advantage in engaging with North Korea, one that its Strategic Partners in the region do not share: credibility. Even if Pyongyang is a profoundly objectionable regime, it gets the European Union nowhere to repeat it as if it was some kind of mantra instead of engaging and trying to foster internal change. The alternative was conveniently summarized by the European diplomat this researcher interviewed a few months ago in Seoul: "As the North Korean regime muddles through, everyone will muddle through."

Appendices

I. Questionnaire used in the interviews conducted in person

The sanctions regime

- In order for EU sanctions on North Korea to be suspended, should the North Korean regime firmly move towards denuclearization, or could we envision a nuclear-armed North Korea being reaccepted into the international community if it inverts its belligerent discourse and progressively opens up its economy? I base my assumption on the example of Pakistan, a non-signatory of the NPT which developed nuclear capability in a high-tension region of the world during a period of military rule but is still a major recipient of (U.S.) aid and bears neither UN nor EU sanctions.
- According to scholar Leonid Petrov, although North Koreans see Europe as a valuable alternative to the US in politics, trade, and security – meaning that the EU can play a very positive role in helping North Korea through economic cooperation and training programs – the EU will have to remain in a wait-and-see mode waiting for North Korea to denuclearize verifiably and for good to lift any sanctions. However, Axel Berkofsky (2009) suggests that “The EU could have continued its economic engagement towards North Korea in spite of the nuclear revelations offering North Korea and the international community an alternative approach of how to deal with a failing state on the brink of going nuclear”. Which one you consider the most accurate assessment, from the EU/EC/EEAS point of view? And personally?
- Do you think the EU could eventually rescind part of its sanctions regarding the North Korean regime unilaterally (i.e. independently of the UN and the U.S.), only with the support of South Korea (and, admittedly, China), to advocate for a conditional engagement (i.e. based upon positive conditionality and local ownership) and promote an alternative way of fostering development and change in North Korea, also considering that the relevant regional partners do not see the EU as a crucial entity towards solving hard security issues?
- According to several scholars, the suspension and termination of the early 2000s cooperation programs means that Brussels should have to start from scratch engaging North Korea economically, should the Commission one day decide to

resume extended engagement with the DPRK. Moreover, according to those same scholars, there are currently no indications that Brussels is planning to draft and adopt a new North Korea Country Strategy Paper as the basis and framework for an engagement course. Can you corroborate this assessment, or do you think that many elements of the previous plans could/will eventually be refitted?

Visions on denuclearization and opening up of the North Korean regime

- Back in 2001-2002, when EU-North Korea cooperation was at a higher point than it is right now, EU policy-makers and officials stressed that their “quiet diplomacy” approach was based upon policies and initiatives that would “complement” South Korea’s DPRK policy. Obviously enough, North Korea’s acquisition of nuclear capabilities clouded any such outlook. However, can you foresee a similar approach in the short- or mid-term?
- After a rather promising start to the Kim Jong-un era, with the Leap Day agreement reached with the U.S., the failed launch of a long-range missile (camouflaged as a space rocket) and recent unusually scaled-up anti-ROK rhetoric have put the international community back at the defensive (no aid, tighter sanctions). What are your personal views about Kim Jong-un and the new ruling elite in North Korea? Might a progressive opening-up be in their plans? Is North Korea rapidly becoming a Chinese puppet (albeit unruly) state?
- Can you see the EU taking a more active role mediating in East Asian conflicts in the future (e.g. North Korea, South China Sea, etc.)? It should be pointed out that inactivity should be considered to go against the Guidelines on the EU’s foreign and security policy in East Asia, as North Korea defies all the security goals stated by the EU (Section II.2).
- As Daewoon Ohn points out in a 2009 paper, in case of a sudden destabilization of the North Korean regime, the EU might initiate civilian and even military support missions for the restoration of peace and stability, in conjunction with and with the approval of its strategic partners in the area (namely China, South Korea, Japan and the U.S.). Can you foresee such interventions?

The European values

- Lee (2012) points out that “institutionalized contact and economic aid to North Korea are motivated not by strategic ambition or economic interests but as a manifestation of moral traits that the EU has embraced to develop.” Would you agree with this assessment?
- Do ideational factors (e.g. the genuine belief in democracy and human rights of European society as a whole and its promotion by the EU) play a major role in the relations with North Korea, or does the EU rather adopt a more pragmatic and rationalist approach towards relations with the DPRK (at least for the time being, given that human rights and political dialogue were abandoned)?

Development cooperation

a) Humanitarian and food aid

- Back in 2008, the EU maintained that North Korea’s current humanitarian and food situation did not require additional large-scale food aid, so the Commission’s DG ECHO effectively closed its Pyongyang office in May of that year. However, the assessment seemed to change in 2011, backed by relevant UN data, and new formulas of engagement in the field of humanitarian aid were reportedly explored (Wissenbach, 2011). Could you elaborate on those aspects? Have there been any improvements in the field? Could DG ECHO become active again in North Korea?
- According to information from 2009, EuropeAid had one officer in North Korea and worked with six NGOs in the ground, providing limited technical aid in building resilience in farms, self-sustainability and environmental management education, apart from providing direct aid in the form of fertilizers and farming equipment. However, the budget for such actions corresponded to the period 2007-2010. Was it renewed under similar conditions?
- Also back in 2008, the European Commission asserted that, even if no development aid would be offered, limited technical and humanitarian assistance would be available no matter the political situation in North Korea, and that it would also be ready to intervene if natural disasters or widespread famine struck again. (Barabesi, 2008). Do these words still hold full validity?

- Do the perceived insufficient capabilities to monitor and supervise the distribution of funds and implementation of humanitarian (and technical) assistance projects on the ground by the European Commission play a role in the limited humanitarian aid that is being dispensed to North Korea?
- The nuclear issues (among others) have been a major impediment to the EU's attempt to help North Korea in humanitarian terms. However, the EU has been among the largest and most consistent donors of assistance to alleviate the humanitarian consequences of the economic crisis in North Korea (Lee, 2012). In fact, despite aid being cut off by other partners such as the U.S. (already after 2002), Japan (after 2006, when the issue of kidnapped Japanese nationals surfaced, together with a first nuclear test by North Korea) and South Korea (since Lee Myung-bak won the 2008 presidential elections), the EU has maintained a relative amount of (indirect) aid provision to North Korea. Can we anticipate this trend to continue (or even be reinforced) in the future, even if North Korea's international behavior holds the current, threatening line?
- "Considering the limited amounts of international assistance that are provided and the limited number of development assistance partners in the country, a great opportunity exists to create an efficient system for donor coordination." This sentence, extracted from the Myanmar Strategy Paper, could maybe also be applied to the case of North Korea. Could it be a good way to move forward with making EU aid to North Korea more effective?
- Is there any chance the Non-State Actors and Local Authorities thematic programme (NSA/LA) – which specifically finances measures to strengthen the capacity of non-state actors to deliver services in partnership with local authorities – could also be applied to North Korea in the short or mid-term?

b) Energy assistance

- According to EU policy-makers back in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, EU involvement in KEDO helped make this initiative "more credible" (Berkofsky, 2003). However, the project was abruptly interrupted when North Korea withdrew from the NPT in January 2003 and detonated a first nuclear device in 2006. Do you think the EU would consider participating actively in any future multilateral structure to provide energy assistance to the DPRK?

- As the KEDO project also demonstrated, provision of heavy fuel oil and the always contested project to provide Pyongyang with light water nuclear reactors, assistance based on conventional energy sources might yield sub-optimal results. Therefore, several research papers (mostly focused on ROK-DPRK cooperation, but also applicable to other partners) have suggested focusing instead on renewable energies, chiefly solar panels and wind turbines. Indeed, some minor projects with external funds have already been developed. Would the EU consider funding any such projects (or larger scale ones), other conditions permitting?

c) Trade relations and capability building and economic reforms

- Recent South Korean estimates have put the value of North Korea's mineral resources at over \$6 trillion (Abrahamian & See, 2012). North Korea is rich in coal, iron ore, gold ore and copper ore, among others. Despite recent minor legislative changes in laws governing foreign investment, only Chinese companies seem to profit from the opportunities offered by North Korea. Do you know of any European mining company that might have interest in developing a project in North Korea? Could such an approach be discouraged by the EU/EC?
- There are a relative small number of North Korean-European joint ventures in the fields of pharmaceuticals, food and beverages, as well as some North Korean textile factories producing for European customers. In a recent interview, KFA President Alejandro Cao de Benós asserted that several European companies contacted him every year to set up businesses in North Korea. Does the EU indirectly assist in any of these commercial operations? Do you foresee any increase in the number of joint ventures between European and North Korean companies?
- According to Lee (2009), the European Union Chamber of Commerce in Korea established a North Korea Committee in 1996 and, by 2001, it was providing investment information to help the EU companies branch out into North Korea, acting as a bridge to help European entrepreneurs visit North Korea as a delegation of the EUCCK and contact with businessmen and bureaucrats of the DPRK. Moreover, a European Business Association Pyongyang was founded in 2004. Do these organisms still exist and/or work actively?

- As Berkofsky suggested, the EU could continue to promote economic reform in North Korea through existing institutional links and exchanges, especially involving the European Parliament. That was back in 2009, when former MEP Glyn Ford led the way. Do you still think this could be a valuable approach?
- Do you believe an approach similar to Vietnam's *doi moi* (progressive aperture) policy would be effective in North Korea, or is it already too dependent on China (and Chinese foreign direct investment) and, therefore, any economic apertures will be modeled and directed by China?

d) Technical assistance, incl. environmental protection/education

- The Regional Programming for Asia 2007-2013 is due for an update next year, in line with the new multiannual financial framework for the period 2014-2020. Do you foresee any major changes in the document itself and the regional programmes? We already guess that budgets won't be increased, but its allocation can vary (i.e. China and India will no longer benefit of the EU's development cooperation funds), and the food situation in North Korea is dire, according to the latest UN report.
- Given that a) the Commission is still offering some very limited technical assistance to North Korea; b) the provision of technical assistance might be an optimal way to differentiate the EU from other international actors; c) it would be fully in line with EU soft power policies aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the beneficiary populations (also helped by the fact that the North Korean propaganda apparatus does not disseminate harsh anti-EU rhetoric); and d) it would also reorient EU assistance towards a more proactive approach (a desirable change, as stated in other relevant Strategy Papers, such as Myanmar's), could a budget line dedicated to technical assistance to North Korea, along the lines of what was allocated in the 2002 Country Strategy Paper, eventually be revived?
- In a more precise note, building capacity in disaster management and risk reduction could be a productive and non-controversial field for cooperation. Would that be a cooperation area the EU might consider?

e) Educational and cultural exchanges

- North Korea is part of the Erasmus Mundus program, which sponsors student and scholar exchanges between the EU and third parties. Are there any plans to expand current cooperation levels in the educational exchange field?
- Also in the field of education, could aid in building a high performance research and education network connection to support science and technology be a possible way to bolster EU-DPRK relations? According to Na (2009), this politically non-controversial area could enable North Korea to accumulate academic capacities (leading to economic development), foster the creation of epistemic communities and even influence policy-making processes, while raising the exposure of some citizens to the outside world.

Political and human rights dialogue

- According to the Council Guidelines on Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia, the EU should build up dialogue with the Republic of Korea on the issue of the broader stability of the Korean Peninsula, on humanitarian assistance to the DPRK and on human rights and practical areas in which the EU could provide assistance. Along the same line, the recent EU-ROK summit included a section devoted to political dialogue on regional issues, including the situation on the Korean Peninsula. Can we highlight any aspects of this dialogue? Can we extract any conclusions? Were the EU and South Korea on the same page? Were any proposals made?
- Human rights dialogue (within political dialogue) was considered a staple element of EU attempts at engagement with North Korea between 1998 and 2002, before being suspended due to lack of visible progress and to the continued provocations of the North Korean regime. Is there any realistic chance that attempts to establish productive bilateral dialogue on human rights issues with North Korea are pursued by the EU, or will it rather keep exclusively using the instruments of the UN system to approach North Korea's human rights issues?
- In a related tone, do you think human rights dialogue with repressive dictatorships is useful? Several scholars, commentators and even EU insiders have criticized such initiatives by the Commission for their lack of transparency, benchmarks and structure (Barabesi, 2008).

- EU-DPRK political dialogue was resumed in 2007 and held again in 2009, and the EU used it to voice its concern with the human rights situation and the denuclearization issue. However, DPRK engagement and dialogue with other powers other than China was at an all-time low since the 2009 and 2010 provocations, until the Obama administration tried to engage them since July 2011, a rapprochement that concluded with the (now stalled) Leap Day agreement. Does the EU have any plans to reinstate bilateral dialogue in the near future?
- What about multilateral political dialogue via ASEM or with a renewed formula of the original 6-Party Talks (Six + EU dialogue)? Could it be effective to put extra pressure on the North Korean regime?

South Korea and engagement opportunities

- Do you think the Presidential Elections that will take place in November in South Korea will be important for any hypothetical engagement with North Korea? North Korean discourse towards current President Lee Myung-bak has, if anything, shown ever increased belligerence, so things could change from the perspective of the Kim regime come December.
- According to some policy analysts, anyone taking the place of Lee Myung-bak at the Blue House will probably show more willingness to engage and dialogue with North Korea. However, nobody can envision even a partial return to Kim Dae-jung era policies. Does also the EU – and its Delegation in Seoul – perceive that all potential presidential candidates share a certain view (i.e. supporting moderate and cautious engagement) regarding North Korea?
- Do you think that any proposal of further engagement with North Korea coming from the EU might clash with South Korean public opinion and, therefore, damage the image of the Union here? Or rather that positive conditional engagement proposals might be backed by a majority of South Koreans and thus bolster the perception of the Union as a reliable, innovative and powerful force for peace?

Reunification

- In its DPRK Country Report (2002), the Commission stated the EU's commitment to the inter-Korean reconciliation process. Would the EU nowadays support a (re)unification process of the two Koreas? If so, would it be ready to provide expertise and know-how based on the German model, while helping both parties avoid some of the mistakes made during the German reunification (chiefly the deficiencies of the Modrow plan or the relative mishandling of privatization processes by the Treuhandstalt, that proved unable to extirpate the control of many SOEs from the hands of former Communist bureaucrats and managers)?
- Is there any mainstream EU-view concerning Korean reunification? Is it supported or frowned upon, as it would be for relevant regional actors such as China and Russia (both key partners of the EU)? Would the EU apply political pressure either to South Korea or to North Korea to move towards reunification?
- Do you think changing the terminology (i.e. the term "unification") to address the issue and recovering Kim Dae-jung's reassuring proposal of progressive and constructive engagement would help desecuritize inter-Korean relations and, more importantly, the sense of vulnerability felt by the North?

II. Questionnaire sent to Members of the European Parliament Delegation for Relations with the Korean Peninsula

Political issues and the role of the European Parliament

Q: A European Parliament delegation visits North Korea almost once a year. Could you briefly explain the work done during those trips? Is there any visible progress in terms of mutual understanding that could fuel further cooperation and engagement?

A:

Q: Despite the numerous setbacks, EU-DPRK political dialogue has been a staple of bilateral relations since its establishment in 1998. Do you believe political and diplomatic relations between the EU and North Korea can and/or should be strengthened? Do you perceive a sincere willingness to improve political cooperation among your North Korean counterparts?

A:

Q: Thanks to pressure from the European Parliament, human rights dialogue was considered a key element of EU attempts at engagement with North Korea between 1999 and 2002, before being suspended due to lack of visible progress and to the continued provocations of the North Korean regime. Is there any realistic chance that the reestablishment of bilateral human rights dialogue with Pyongyang is pursued by the EU, or will it rather keep exclusively using the instruments of the UN system to approach North Korea's human rights issues?

A:

Economic issues

Q: In a rare interview, Yang Hyong-sop, vice chairman of the Supreme People's Assembly and a member of the politburo of the Workers' Party, said that Kim Jong-eun is studying cases of economic reform in other nations, including China, envisaging a "knowledge-based" economy. During the Kim Jong-il era, it was a very dangerous thing for any power elite to mention reform or openness in public. Do you believe the young leader will undertake some kind of low-level aperture, give greater autonomy to state firms and increase the number of special economic zones, even if reforms fall short of

Chinese-style market economy? If so, what timeframe should be expected for such reforms to materialize?

A:

Q: There is speculation that Kim Jong-un might introduce modest economic reforms in the short-to-mid term, including the reestablishment and strengthening of currently designated Special Economic Zones at Raseon/Ranjin and Sinuiju/Hwanggumpyong, together with the successful Kaesong Industrial Zone, monopolized by South Korean companies and currently expanding in both size and production. As renowned scholar Andrei Lankov points out, SEZs are acceptable to the North Korean government because they are relatively easy to control. Do you foresee EU companies playing an active role in any future SEZ developments?

A:

Q: As suggested by Berkofsky in 2009, in addition to political dialogue, the EU should continue to promote economic reform in North Korea through existing institutional links and exchanges, especially involving the European Parliament. Do you still think fostering trade relations and capability building could be seen as a valuable approach?

A:

Nuclear proliferation and the sanctions regime

Q: Diplomatic sources consulted by this researcher asserted that nuclear weapons are considered the regime's only guarantee for survival, as well as a powerful deterrent, bargaining chip and status symbol. Moreover, as former MEP Glyn Ford states in his 2008 book *North Korea on the Brink*, recent non-proliferation agreements (namely those of Libya and Ukraine) would not work for the North Korean case, as Pyongyang's economic and security needs are remarkably different. Therefore, the North Korean regime would only consider denuclearization if "impossible" concessions were made: total withdrawal of U.S. troops from Korean soil and reunification as equals with South Korea. Considering this information and the recent enshrinement of North Korea as a nuclear armed power in its revamped Constitution, do you think North Korean denuclearization is still possible?

A:

Q: In order for EU sanctions on North Korea to be suspended, should the North Korean regime firmly move towards denuclearization, or could we envision a nuclear-armed North Korea being reaccepted into the international community if it changes its belligerent discourse – including a freeze in the uranium-enrichment program – and progressively opens up its economy? I base my assumption on the example of Pakistan, a non-signatory of the NPT which developed nuclear capability in a high-tension region of the world during a period of military rule but is still a major recipient of (U.S.) aid and bears neither UN nor EU sanctions.

A:

Q: Do you think the EU could eventually rescind part of its sanctions regarding the North Korean regime unilaterally (i.e. independently of the U.S.) or only with the support of South Korea (and, admittedly, China), to advocate for a conditional engagement (i.e. based upon positive conditionality and local ownership) and promote an alternative way of fostering development and change in North Korea, also considering that the relevant regional partners do not see the EU as a crucial entity towards solving hard security issues?

A:

EU active mediation/intervention

Q: Do you envision the EU as having a proactive role encouraging greater regional cooperation and engagement with the North Korean regime? Could you foresee a favorable political climate among major stakeholders – attitude changes in the Kim Jong-un regime, a softer-line stance from the new South Korean president, renewed aim from the U.S. administration if Obama is reelected, etc. – in order for the EU to actively mediate and foster dialogue?

A:

Q: Answering a recent question by MEP Marina Yannakoudakis, High Representative Catherine Ashton asserted that despite not being directly involved in the Six Party Talks, the EEAS was working closely with its international partners towards a “complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement” of North Korea’s nuclear program, adding that the issue was discussed in all political meetings with the EU’s strategic partners and also directly with North Korea. Do you think the Six Party Talks

are a useful instrument to achieve progress towards reducing tensions and enhancing cooperation in the Korean Peninsula? Do you believe the EU should ask for a seat in the negotiation table, as suggested by former MEP Glyn Ford in his 2008 book, or embracing the role of a credible neutral broker?

A:

Q: Back in 2008, the European Commission asserted that, even if no development aid would be offered, limited technical and humanitarian assistance would be available no matter the political situation in North Korea, and that it would also be ready to intervene if natural disasters or widespread famine struck again. Do these words still hold full validity?

A:

Q: As South Korean scholar Daewoon Ohn points out in a 2009 paper, in case of a sudden destabilization of the North Korean regime, the EU might initiate civilian and even military support missions for the restoration of peace and stability, in conjunction with and with the approval of its strategic partners in the area (namely China, South Korea, Japan and the U.S.). Can you foresee such interventions?

A:

EU policies towards North Korea and their implications

Q: In its DPRK Country Report (2002), the Commission stated the EU's commitment to the inter-Korean reconciliation process. Would the EU still support a (re)unification process of the two Koreas, even if viewed reluctantly from Beijing and Moscow? If so, would it be ready to provide expertise and know-how based on the German case?

A:

Q: According to most analysts, the next South Korean president will most probably take a softer stance vis-à-vis North Korea than current president Lee Myung-bak. Would the European Parliament favor a less hostile official South Korean approach towards the North Korean regime? Would that also affect EU-North Korea relations? Would a return to an updated, upgraded, probably less naïve "Sunshine Policy" be welcomed by the European Union?

A:

Q: Do you think that any proposal of further engagement with North Korea coming from the EU might clash with South Korean public opinion and, therefore, damage the image of the Union here, or rather bolster the perception of the Union as a reliable, innovative and powerful force for peace?

A:

Q: Should ideational factors (e.g. the genuine belief in democracy and human rights of European society as a whole and its promotion by the EU) play a greater role in the relations with North Korea, or should the EU rather adopt a more pragmatic and rationalist approach towards relations with the DPRK (at least for the time being, given than human rights and political dialogue were abandoned)?

A:

Possible cooperation avenues moving forward

Q: Nuclear proliferation and human rights violations have been a major impediment to the EU's attempts to help North Korea in humanitarian terms. However, the EU has been among the largest and most consistent donors of assistance to alleviate the humanitarian consequences of the economic crisis in North Korea. A few months ago, coinciding with the failed launch of a rocket by the Pyongyang regime, MEP Anna Rosbach, Vice-chairman of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with the Korean Peninsula suggested that the EU immediately stop all funding and aid to North Korea, including food aid. What should we expect as far as aid is concerned if North Korea's threatening diplomatic stance does not change?

A:

Q: Given that i) the Commission is still offering some very limited technical assistance to North Korea; ii) the provision of technical assistance might be an optimal way to differentiate the EU from other international actors; iii) it would be fully in line with EU soft power policies aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the beneficiary populations (also helped by the fact that the North Korean propaganda apparatus does not disseminate harsh anti-EU rhetoric); and iv) it would also reorient EU assistance towards a more proactive approach (a desirable change, as stated in other relevant Strategy Papers, such as Myanmar's), could a budget line dedicated to technical

assistance to North Korea, along the lines of what was allocated in the 2002 Country Strategy Paper, eventually be revived?

A:

Q: How would you see any plans to expand current EU-North Korea cooperation levels in the educational and culture fields – i.e. by increasing the number of academic exchanges, fostering the learning of European languages or helping establish joint research networks? Should it be considered a priority?

A:

Q: Do you think the EU would consider participating actively in any future multilateral structure to provide energy assistance – similar to the failed KEDO project or otherwise – to the DPRK? In a related note, several research papers have suggested focusing assistance on renewable energies, chiefly solar panels and wind turbines, and some minor projects with external funds have already been developed. Should the EU consider funding any such projects, political and economic conditions permitting, or should this task be left to economically dynamic neighbors China and South Korea?

A:

Q: Should the EU prioritize providing environmental protection assistance to North Korea, in what could be seen as a win-win situation, both for its positive transnational implications and its low political risk? In a related note, building capacity in disaster management and risk reduction could also be a productive and non-controversial field for cooperation. Should that be a cooperation area the EU might as well consider?

A:

III. Questionnaire sent to representatives of European Non-Profit Organizations working in the field in North Korea

Q: Could you please summarize the key aspects and main focus of the work your foundation carries out in North Korea in one paragraph?

A:

Q: Related to your work in North Korea, which is the current role of the EU/EC/EEAS consultant office in Pyongyang? Does it allow contractors to have direct contact with North Korean top officials? Could you envisage an expansion of its role and scope?

A:

Q: Representing a German foundation with unambiguous political ties and being able to work on the ground in North Korea, do you believe the German *Ostpolitik* and reunification experience could successfully be exported to the North Korean case, or at least be partially applied?

A:

Q: Do you believe the EU should pursue a more active negotiating or mediating role in the Korean Peninsula? Does your foundation (implicitly) support greater EU engagement further from purely humanitarian aid and development cooperation?

A:

Q: Do you think that any proposal of further engagement with North Korea coming from the EU might clash with South Korean public opinion and, therefore, damage the image of the Union here, or rather bolster the perception of the Union as a reliable, innovative and powerful force for peace?

A:

Q: According to most analysts, the next South Korean president will most probably take a softer stance vis-à-vis North Korea than current president Lee Myung-bak. Would your institution welcome a less hostile official South Korean approach towards the North Korean regime? Do you think this would positively affect your work and

engagement possibilities? Would a return to an updated, upgraded, probably less naïve "Sunshine Policy" be welcomed by your foundation?

A:

Q: In a rare interview, Yang Hyong-sop, vice chairman of the Supreme People's Assembly and a member of the politburo of the Workers' Party, said that Kim Jong-eun is studying cases of economic reform in other nations, including China, envisaging a "knowledge-based" economy. During the Kim Jong-il era, it was a very dangerous thing for any power elite to mention reform or openness in public. Do you believe the young leader will undertake some kind of low-level aperture, give greater autonomy to state firms and increase the number of special economic zones, even if reforms fall short of Chinese-style market economy? If so, what timeframe should be expected for such reforms to materialize?

A:

Q: Nuclear proliferation and human rights violations have been a major impediment to the EU's attempts to help North Korea in humanitarian terms. However, the EU has been among the largest and most consistent donors of assistance to alleviate the humanitarian consequences of the economic crisis in North Korea. Can we anticipate this trend to continue in the future, even if North Korea's threatening diplomatic stance does not change?

A:

Q: As suggested by Berkofsky in 2009, in addition to political dialogue, the EU should continue to promote economic reform in North Korea through existing institutional links and exchanges, especially involving the European Parliament. Do you still think fostering trade relations and capability building could be seen as a valuable approach?

A:

Q: How would you see any plans to expand current EU-North Korea cooperation levels in the educational and culture fields – i.e. by increasing the number of academic exchanges, fostering the learning of European languages or helping establish joint research networks? Would you consider it a priority?

A:

Q: Several research papers have suggested focusing assistance on renewable energies, chiefly solar panels and wind turbines, and some minor projects with external funds have already been developed. Should the EU consider funding any such projects, or should this task be left to economically dynamic neighbors China and South Korea and any relevant Asian non-profits and companies?

A:

Q: Should the EU prioritize providing funds for environmental protection assistance to North Korea, in what could be seen as a win-win situation, both for its positive transnational implications and its low political risk? In a related note, building capacity in disaster management and risk reduction could also be a productive and non-controversial field for cooperation. Should that be a cooperation area the EU might as well consider for its partners on the field to implement?

A:

IV. Survey questionnaire used for the quantitative analysis

This is a survey to assess your opinions about some issues regarding North Korea. It is not a knowledge test, but simply asks for your opinions. There are no correct or incorrect answers. If you are not sure of an answer, just take your best guess. Unless the contrary is indicated, only one answer has to be given for each question. This survey is anonymous. Participation is voluntary. Your answers to the following questions are highly appreciated. Thank you!

Would you personally favor reunification with North Korea?

- Yes, definitely: Korea should be one country.
- Not really: it would be socially and financially painful.
- I don't care / I don't know.

Do you think Korean reunification will take place within the next 25 years?

- Yes, I am pretty sure it will.
- I can't really say.
- No, I don't think so.

A sudden collapse of the North Korean regime would put South Korea's security at risk. Do you agree with this statement?

- I completely agree.
- I agree somewhat.
- I neither agree nor disagree.
- I disagree somewhat.
- I completely disagree.

Which candidate or party do you favor towards the Presidential election that will be held in South Korea next November?

- Park Geun-hye or any Saenuri Party candidate
- Moon Jae-in or any Democratic United Party candidate
- Ahn Cheol-soo or any other independent candidate
- Still undecided
- Not interested in politics

Do you approve of the current South Korean government policies towards North Korea?

- No, they should be tougher.
- Yes, they are just about right.
- No, dialogue and cooperation should be fostered.

In case the South Korean government decided that greater cooperation with North Korea was needed, which priority areas would you consider the most beneficial? Please choose **maximum 2** of the following.

- Academic and cultural exchanges
 - Energy assistance
 - Environmental protection programs
 - Food aid and humanitarian assistance
 - Human rights and political dialogue
 - Trade relations and capability building
 - Other (please specify in English – thank you!)
-

Which international partners you consider more important for South Korea **right now**? Please choose the 2 most important partners in your view.

- China
- European Union
- Japan
- Latin America
- Russia
- United States
- Other (please specify in English – thank you!)

Which international partners you think will be more important for South Korea **by 2040**? Please choose 2 of the following options.

- China
- European Union
- Japan
- Latin America
- Russia
- United States
- Other (please specify in English – thank you!)

Which of these powers could be more important **to improve North Korea-South Korea relations**? Please choose 2 of the given options.

- China
- European Union
- Japan
- Latin America
- Russia
- United States
- Other (please specify in English – thank you!)

Greater regional integration – in the lines of ASEAN or the EU – would be positive for Korea and Northeast Asia. Do you agree with this statement?

- Completely agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Completely disagree

How is your perception of the European Union?

- Very positive
- Somewhat positive
- Neither positive nor negative
- Somewhat negative
- Very negative

The European Union should intervene directly – by sending military personnel, civilian experts and/or emergency aid – in case of a sudden collapse of the North Korean regime. Do you agree with this statement?

- Completely agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Completely disagree

In case the European Union decided to strengthen its cooperation and engagement with North Korea, do you think it would affect EU-South Korea relations?

- Yes, it would have a positive influence.
- Yes, it would influence them negatively.
- No, it would not matter.

Do you believe deeper EU engagement with North Korea would help improve the security level in the Korean Peninsula?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

The EU should cancel some of the sanctions it applies to North Korea and advance cooperation even if the regime does not give clear signals of abandoning its nuclear program. Do you agree with this statement?

- Completely agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Completely disagree

If the European Union decided to increase its cooperation with North Korea, which areas should be given priority? Please choose **maximum 2** of the following.

- Academic and cultural exchanges
- Energy assistance
- Environmental protection programs
- Food aid and humanitarian assistance
- Human rights and political dialogue
- Trade relations and capability building
- Other (please specify in English – thank you!)

Do you have any personal and/or academic connections with EU citizens and/or institutions?

- Yes
- No

Could you please indicate your gender?

- Female
- Male

When were you born?

- In 1989 or later
- Between 1988 and 1984
- In 1983 or earlier

What type of academic degree are you currently pursuing?

- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Ph.D.

Which knowledge field do your current studies belong to?

- Pure, applied and life sciences (engineering, medicine, etc.)
- Social sciences (excluding law and business)
- Humanities (languages, teaching, etc.)
- Law and/or business

Could you please indicate the yearly income of your household?

- Under 40 million KRW per year
- Between 40 and 80 million KRW per year
- Over 80 million KRW per year
- Don't know / I'd rather not say

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