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Refugee Issues Relating to Three Scenarios for the Future of the Korean Peninsula

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Introduction

This chapter addresses refugee issues that could arise in three possible scenarios proposed by the Institute for International Economics for the future of the Korean peninsula. The possible effects of each scenario on economic integration of the Korean peninsula were to be assessed. The chosen scenarios—(1) integration as a result of the military defeat of North Korea, (2) integration through collapse of North Korean institutions, and (3) gradual normalization with or without complete integration—pose significantly different challenges in terms of potential population displacement and associated humanitarian response. Addressing the full range of possibilities and characteristics for each scenario would require an extremely lengthy discussion; instead, past humanitarian interventions in Iraq and Rwanda are here used to put potential Korean population displacements in context. The salient policy issues will then be addressed, with an emphasis on mitigative measures the South Korean government might find useful for dealing both with the short term (emergency phase) and the longer term (recovery phase) scenarios of a humanitarian intervention on the Korean peninsula.

Each scenario could produce potential refugees (more accurately identified, depending on the scenario, as "famine-related displacees," or

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"economic migrants") numbering in the tens of thousands to millions. Certain characteristics of population displacements would vary considerably with the different scenarios, and, while these characteristics may be largely beyond South Korean control, South Korean policies that produce certain postwar or postcollapse expectations in the North Korean population could affect pressures for mass migration from north to south.

The relevant characteristics of population displacement, which may vary according to scenario, include

- rate of arrival of refugees—thousands per day, tens of thousands per day, or hundreds of thousands per day;
- time of year and environmental/weather conditions that will affect shelter requirements and the physical condition of arrivals;
- physical and psychological condition of arrivals (hunger, injury, shock, and mortality/morbidity experienced during flight); and
- disruption of families and social structures prior to and during flight.

The following section will briefly discuss these characteristics of population displacement and relate potential Korean challenges to actual humanitarian challenges of the past.

Scenario-Dependent Characteristics of Potential Korean Refugee Movements

Numbers and Rate of Arrival of Refugees

The potential rate of arrival of displaced North Korean people at the border, or coasts, of South Korea could vary from hundreds per day to hundreds of thousands per day depending on (1) the conditions leading up to displacement, (2) the scenario that initiates displacement, and (3) whether the displacement results from flight or from a more controlled migration.

When faced with a humanitarian emergency involving millions of refugees, the international relief regime has demonstrated its capability to rapidly decrease morbidity and mortality, responding, for example, with little strategic warning (and a few days of political hesitation) in the mountains along the Turkish and Iranian borders with Iraq and, with more strategic warning (but less urgency and commitment), in the hills of eastern Zaire.[1] These Kurdish and Rwandan refugee relief expe-

1. Humanitarian responses to the emergencies of northern Iraq and Rwanda were complicated by political obstacles that delayed intervention and caused many preventable

riences, of 1991 and 1994, are useful for putting a potential rapid Korean migration into context. They posed significant challenges regarding (1) the environment (extremely cold mountains with death occurring from hypothermia versus less deadly weather but greater disease potential in sub-Saharan Africa); (2) accessibility (lack of adequate airfields close to the refugees, great distance from the nearest seaports, and general logistical challenges associated with the remoteness of the displaced people); and (3) security (need to provide both relief workers and refugees protection from Iraqi soldiers and defeated Hutu soldiers/militia).

In the Kurdish case, even in an extremely remote and challenging environment, and with a population physically weakened by Iraqi repression and external economic sanctions, the international humanitarian response succeeded, once it was mobilized, in rapidly reducing deaths from approximately one thousand per day to fewer than ten per day. After some early miscues, food, water, and shelter were adequately provided under very difficult circumstances. Fortunately, aid did not have to be provided during actual combat conditions (although it took several days to ensure that Iraqi soldiers would not interfere with relief efforts).

In 1991, the Kurds experienced the world's most rapid and largest population displacement—until the Rwandan movement of 1994. Unlike the Kurdish case, in Rwanda some prior planning for large-scale displacement had been done by UN agencies prior to April 1994. But the rapidity and scale of the mid-April movement of more than 4 million Rwandans into southern Rwanda, Zaire, and Burundi exceeded all expectations. Shelter was not nearly as problematic as it had been in the mountains of Iraq, but the number of refugees requiring assistance was greater. Even so, food was provided in sufficient quantity and quality to preclude starvation within the refugee population. However, water was inadequate in quantity and quality to allow proper sanitation practices in the overcrowded areas allotted for the refugees, resulting in the well-publicized cholera epidemics that cost some 80,000 lives.

Given similar numbers of refugees, the logistical challenges of responding to mass population displacements are far greater in the mountains of northern Iraq and the hills of eastern Zaire than they would be in South Korea, a country with an advanced transportation infrastructure of ports, roads, and railways. While the scale of a potential refugee flow from North to South Korea is difficult to predict with any degree of accuracy, it can be stated with a high level of confidence that once the

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deaths. Once the political obstacles were overcome, errors of both omission and commission, especially in the case of Rwanda, resulted in notable suffering within the refugee population. The international humanitarian regime recognized the shortcomings and preventable errors in the Rwanda emergency and, since 1995, has taken significant actions to correct deficiencies.

political decision to involve the international aid regime in a humanitarian intervention in South Korea was made, the regime could provide adequate food, water, shelter, and health care with a rapid and unexpected movement of approximately 2 million refugees (as in Iraq); given prior warning and strategic preparation (prepositioning of aid resources), a movement on the order of 4 million refugees (as in Rwanda) could be handled.

Time of Year of Displacement

While the winter season and the monsoonal period would pose greater difficulties than spring and fall, providing shelter for a large and rapid population displacement on the Korean peninsula is within the capability of the international aid community, with or without military assistance. Organizations such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and national elements of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent can respond rapidly with adequate shelter for millions of refugees in areas much less accessible (in terms of port, airfield, and internal infrastructural capability) than South Korea.

Physical and Psychological Condition of Arriving Refugees

The mental and physical health of arriving refugees could vary considerably in the different scenarios. Hunger, injury, and shock have been the norm in forced migrations of the post-Cold War period. Harsh Iraqi repression of the Kurdish uprising in the aftermath of the Gulf War, Hutu brutality associated with the initial population displacements of the Rwandan episode, and the psychological and emotional trauma suffered by peoples in the former Yugoslavia have stretched (and consequently increased) the capacities of the humanitarian regime for dealing with such conditions in the preflight and flight phases of humanitarian emergencies. The UNHCR and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) such as Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and OXFAM (Oxford Famine Relief) have demonstrated their ability to respond rapidly and effectively to emergencies that involve more than 2 million refugees and that include widespread physical and psychological trauma.

Mass population displacement of the proportions possible in Korea under conditions of actual combat has not been experienced since World War II, and war-making technology within the North Korean military can potentially bring about destruction and casualties similar to what armies of that era caused. This most difficult scenario—humanitarian

response during combat conditions—is the area of expertise of the International Committee of the Red Cross, an organization among the most proficient at rapid response; its staff is experienced in all areas of humanitarian aid: security, shelter, food, water, sanitation, and health care. Other humanitarian relief organizations have demonstrated both the will and the ability to provide aid under essentially modern combat conditions—albeit less destructive than would be possible in a Korean scenario—in Chechenya and Afghanistan; and they would, with the permission of the South Korean government, be present during a Korean emergency involving actual conflict. Prior coordination and delineation of roles and responsibilities among these international groups would enhance emergency response capabilities.

Disruption of Families and Social Structures prior to and during Flight

Once again, the experiences of the Kurds and Rwandans are useful for putting large-scale population displacement in context. The rapid onset of genocide in both Iraq and Rwanda resulted in an almost complete collapse of the social structures and institutions that frame society. The sudden breakdown of these institutions, and the brutality and loss of life that prompted flight, caused widespread disruption of families, which in turn produced (especially in the Rwandan case) thousands of unaccompanied children and (especially in the Kurdish case) thousands of widow-headed families.

Because at least 70 percent of most populations are women and children, it is normal to find them among refugees in the same proportion. More than 80 percent of population displacements that result from civil war may be women and children, with most male refugees being either elderly (and often dependent) or handicapped (and, therefore, not subject to conscription). The most vulnerable segments of refugee populations—women, children, widows, orphans, the elderly, and the handicapped—require more care and specially tailored programs in the areas of health, security, and education, as well as closer monitoring of conditions; these requirements often exceed host nation capabilities in both the short and longer term.

Numerous international organizations, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and several NGOs, specialize in providing both emergency and extended care for these groups. Once again, prior coordination and delineation of responsibilities among agencies can pay great dividends once an emergency arises. As refugees arrive, the most vulnerable must be identified, and those providing humanitarian relief must often make special provision for both short- and long-term care of vulnerable segments of the refugee population.

Major Policy Considerations for the Government of South Korea

If it can be agreed that the primary South Korean goals for dealing with mass migration from North to South Korea would be (1) humane and efficient reception and care of the refugees (minimizing mortality and morbidity and emphasizing the dignity of the affected population) and (2) successful reintegration of the displaced population as productive members of the Korean economy and society (leading to individual and familial self-sufficiency, and the promise of intergenerational socioeconomic improvement), it then follows that all policies should be aimed toward achieving these immediate- and longer-term goals. If the goals for successfully dealing with short-term (humanitarian) and long-term (economic) challenges are consistent for all three proposed scenarios, then the policy issues facing both humanitarian and economic planners should be fundamentally the same, with only the technical aspects of the humanitarian response and reintegration efforts varying by scenario.

Policy issues that are important to the success or failure of humanitarian intervention, and that can thus affect the socioeconomic future of the Korean peninsula, include

- choosing which ministry or agency is responsible for refugee policy and decisions;
- choosing who will coordinate relief activities and how much international involvement will be desired or required;
- deciding who will fund relief and rehabilitation efforts and to what extent regional or international funding would be involved in the short term (emergency phase) and the long term (rehabilitation/reintegration phase);
- determining the best strategy (or strategies) for returning refugees to social and economic stability; and
- deciding on the technical characteristics of the humanitarian response, which include such diverse matters as environmental protection, refugee camp size, security requirements, and procedures for providing care and basic services to the displaced population.

Each of these issues requires a policy decision, or a series of decisions, by the South Korean government. The following sections examine factors that should be considered during that process.

Assigning Responsibility for Refugee Policy and Decisions

Certain aspects of humanitarian response to refugee crises require policy decisions that are crucial from the perspective of both the host government and the refugees themselves. The first and possibly most vital host government policy consideration for humanitarian intervention when a population is displaced is to assign responsibility for all aspects of refugee policy.

Humanitarian relief in emergencies such as those envisioned by the first and second scenarios would theoretically involve South Korean national agencies, several UN agencies, the Red Cross, and NGOs from numerous countries. United Nations conventions assign the responsibility for meeting the humanitarian needs of refugees, or similarly displaced people, to the host government—in this case, South Korea. However, UN agencies generally respond to the host government's requests for assistance. Those with mandates to respond to humanitarian emergencies are the UNHCR, the UN World Food Program (WFP), UNICEF, and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA).

A major policy decision for the government of South Korea will be to specify the extent of UN (mainly UNHCR and DHA) involvement in decision making and in coordinating international relief for a mass displacement from the North. A clear understanding of UN responsibility vis-à-vis government agencies, and of the policy implications of dividing responsibility (and accountability), would help all to avoid possible misunderstandings, friction, and confusion during a humanitarian crisis.

Designation of a single government ministry to oversee humanitarian assistance has proven effective in minimizing policy and coordination problems with UN agencies and NGOs. Where such responsibility has been divided among several government ministries, both emergency response and accountability have suffered.

Clear delineation of roles and responsibilities—of host governments (where governments were functional) with respect to UN agencies, of UN agencies among themselves, and among governments, the United Nations, and NGOs—has been lacking in several recent humanitarian emergencies. The resulting confusion has contributed to inadequate preparedness and poor initial response; had roles and responsibilities been better defined and understood, some deaths in displaced populations might have been avoided.

For this reason, emergency preparedness measures should set forth organizational relationships in every aspect of dealing with humanitarian assistance, from reception to resettlement or repatriation. Emergency preparedness should include clearly defining responsibilities for policy as well as for operational issues such as security, logistics, health care, sanitation, social services, and education within the displaced population.

Planning and training are often especially weak areas in humanitarian emergency preparedness. One of the main problems in trying to link planning, training, and coordination is that while different actors—ministries, agencies, or organizations—are often responsible for planning and implementing different aspects of the response, usually none of them has a thorough understanding of the overall operation. If it has not already done so, the government of South Korea should develop the institutional arrangements needed to coordinate the planning and preparation for humanitarian emergencies involving massive and long-term population displacements from North Korea. Effective emergency humanitarian intervention also requires well-defined mechanisms for monitoring performance and correcting operational deficiencies before they come to the attention of world media and, worse, result in loss of life.

Because of the highly political and sensitive nature of a large-scale population displacement from North to South Korea, the closest possible coordination between the host government and all major international organizations taking part in the humanitarian intervention would be necessary. Many of the shortcomings of past humanitarian responses have been directly attributable to lack of coordination at the highest levels and to unclear lines of authority regarding institutional roles and responsibilities. (If I appear to be overemphasizing this point, remember that the lives of refugees, and the success or failure of humanitarian interventions, often hinge on it.) Adequate preparedness requires proper attention at the highest levels within the ministries, agencies, and organizations involved. To avoid confusion and competition for resources, the South Korean government must establish clear lines of authority and clearly apportion roles and responsibilities, especially for the emergency phase of humanitarian response.

Those planning a humanitarian relief effort that maximizes the security of South Korea and minimizes suffering within the displaced population should include representatives from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), UN agencies (particularly the UNHCR, the DHA, and the WFP), South Korean and allied military forces, and the Korean National Red Cross.

Funding Relief and Rehabilitation Efforts

International expenditures for refugees have increased from an estimated $544 million in 1990 to more than $1.3 billion in 1996. Humanitarian budgets began their extraordinary growth with the Kurdish crisis of 1991. Then came the crises in the former Yugoslavia, in Somalia, and in Rwanda. Competition for funds has continued to grow. In the last five years, the number of persons of concern to the UNHCR has jumped from 17 million to 27 million worldwide. Emergency relief has been funded from monies available for overseas economic development assistance

(ODA), which has decreased significantly since 1992. Because emergency relief funding is now, in effect, in competition with development aid, major donors have become highly selective in choosing where, by whom, and for how long refugee relief is provided. Media attention and national interest (or interest by influential segments of a donor nation's population) tend to draw and focus funding on whatever humanitarian emergency is most visible.

The United Nations normally coordinates international humanitarian assistance operations; such coordination includes estimating resource requirements and attempting to mobilize required funding through appeals. Nongovernment organizations often operate as implementing arms of the United Nations; they also act independently, whether with resources gained through their own efforts or with funds provided by national governments. Major donors such as the United States, the European Union, and Japan can in large part determine objectives and the roles played by the various organizations by controlling how funds are channeled (Overseas Development Institute 1993). Host nation governments in countries that contain large numbers of refugees have, on occasion, struggled to regain control of refugee policy when donors, or implementers through whom donors have chosen to channel funding, have assumed that prerogative. Agencies and organizations that exist to respond to humanitarian crises, and have a great deal of experience and expertise doing so, may naturally think that they are best qualified to make refugee policy, but such organizations may have little experience or knowledge of the culture, society, or customs—the psychosocial needs —of the affected population.

While funding relief operations for a population displacement of millions of North Korean people may require an international funding effort, nevertheless designating a single ministry, under strong leadership, to ensure that international funding supports South Korean government goals, and that short-term emergency relief efforts are consistent with long-term government goals, could help avoid problems that have plagued host nations in several past humanitarian emergencies. This suggestion is intended not as a criticism of any organs of the international refugee regime but as a warning to the government of South Korea that those who have a vested interest in the long-term social and economic effects of humanitarian interventions in that country should attempt to maintain control over humanitarian policy issues.

Strategies for Returning Refugees to Self-Sufficiency and Reintegration into the Korean Social and Economic Life

The three options (normally referred to as "durable solutions" by the UNHCR) for returning refugees to self-sufficiency include integration into the economy and society of the host nation, resettlement in a third

country (other than the country of origin or the host country), and repatriation to the country of origin. As numbers of refugees have increased from thousands to hundreds of thousands, opportunities for permanent integration in the host country, and for resettlement in third countries, have decreased. Voluntary repatriation is often the most attractive long-term "durable solution" for the majority of participants in a mass refugee movement. Truly voluntary repatriation, however, normally requires a significant change in political conditions in the country of origin to permit return with safety, dignity, and economic opportunity.

The duration of the refugee experience in the host country can depend on many factors. Some have remained with the status of refugee (i.e., not integrated) for a few weeks and some have continued to live as refugees for generations. Economic integration into host communities can be complicated when refugee families have been disrupted or when families lack a male member able to help provide for those unable to provide for themselves. It is reasonable to expect that in a scenario that included large numbers of displaced North Korean people, the government of South Korea would desire to repatriate many to the North as soon as the security situation made such movement possible. Given the current economic condition of the North, it is also reasonable to expect that aid, at least in terms of food, would need to be provided in order to make voluntary repatriation an attractive alternative to continued life as a refugee in the South. Furthermore, given the considerable differences in work and standards of living between citizens of North and South Korea, one might anticipate that a refugee (even in a camp) in South Korea could enjoy basic services superior to those experienced in the North. Voluntary repatriation to the North might, therefore, require that incentives include the promise of livelihood support.

Integration in the South, for numbers in the hundreds of thousands or more, would require expansion of institutions such as schools and health care systems. Those responsible for integration policy would also need to consider the potential long-term social and environmental effects of a rapid and substantial population increase.

Integration of refugees could prove economically beneficial to South Korea in the long term if the new citizens were properly located and were given opportunities to make positive contributions to the collective economic future of Korea, as well as to their individual and familial futures. The short-term costs of humanitarian intervention and economic rehabilitation might be more comfortably endured if one of the guiding principles of refugee policy were long-term development.

Refugee populations normally include those who avoid any degree of dependency on humanitarian relief and who successfully integrate themselves into the host country economy. These "self-settled" refugees are often assisted by extended family in the host country, or by agricultural or industrial host country employers. Encouraging such self-integration,

without involvement (or with minimal involvement) by the international relief regime, could produce substantial savings in both emergency relief and longer-term assistance funding. Refugee policy and plans that took into account the needs of South Korean employers, and that offered incentives for those employers who would assist in the refugee integration process, could also make the South Korean economy more competitive in the long term.

The Status of the Displaced Population

The legal status of "refugee" is strictly defined by UN convention. It applies only to those who "cross an international border due to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality or political opinion," according to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and 1967 Protocol to the Convention. However, the urgency of international humanitarian intervention is normally determined not so much by legal status as by whether the displaced population is pushed to a forced migration by factors beyond their control or is pulled to migrate by the promise of a better life in the host country. Populations displaced by being pulled rather than pushed are referred to as "economic migrants," "famine-related refugees" (more accurately "displacees," not "refugees"), or, when an international border has not been crossed, "internally displaced."

In any case, the status of displacees often is not as important as how critical seem the circumstances under which the migration occurs—what is the physical condition of those displaced, how many are involved and how rapidly are they moving, and how extensive is the media coverage associated with the event. The status (or label) associated with the displacees can, however, influence which elements of the international humanitarian regime respond and, in conjunction with the particular scenario being enacted, influence international interest and funding.

Technical Issues That Require Policy Decisions

Security

The South Korean government has planned for population displacement pressures resulting from an attack by the North Korean military. Such a mass forced migration from north to south instigated by North Korea as a prelude to an attack, in hopes of complicating South Korean defensive measures or destabilizing order, could take several forms in terms of size, location, and result desired by the North Koreans.

In each of the three scenarios a policy decision might be needed to determine the acceptable level of compromise between procedures deemed

necessary for state security and for humanitarian relief. The level of security required within refugee populations can be difficult to determine (until serious incidents occur), but suffering among the displaced population is easy for the media to measure and to display to an international audience. Likewise, when displaced people are apparently treated harshly, as threats to the host nation rather than as sufferers in need of humanitarian relief, such treatment can complicate media and donor perceptions and jeopardize the state's international image.

Intelligence should be capable of determining if any aspects of a mass population displacement are prompted by ulterior motives, such as (1) attempting to destabilize the government of South Korea, (2) attempting to confuse and distract South Korea prior to an attack by North Korean military forces, or, in the manner of Fidel Castro, (3) disposing of some less desirable elements of the North Korean population and transferring the problems to the government of the South. (From a North Korean perspective, the less desirable elements of society could include those unable to provide for themselves or unable to contribute to the North Korean economy—the elderly, the infirm, the uneducated, or uneducable.)

The particular scenario will help determine if the balance between security and relief is an issue. Refugee reception could be designed to identify those members of the displaced population who might require, at least initially, an increased measure of observation; however, separation of individuals from their families for security reasons would almost certainly meet with objections from and resistance by members of the international humanitarian regime. If the scenario is that North Korean institutions collapse, a large segment of the displacees might be former members of the North Korean military. As there might not have been time for soldiers to reunite with their families, large numbers of former soldiers could arrive at the South Korean border en masse. If properly planned for, such an eventuality could ease security measures with respect to the displaced population in general.

Even without any perceived threat to host nation security from within a refugee population, security would still be required to protect vulnerable members of the displaced from other displacees, or from elements of the host nation. The fact that both populations share a common Korean culture should minimize the potential for such problems, but the social breakdown that often attends forced migrations sometimes produces behavior atypical of societal norms.

Environmental Concerns

Hundreds of thousands, or millions, of refugees can have a serious effect on the environment of the areas where they are located or through which they pass. Deforestation can occur rapidly if wood is the most accessible fuel for cooking or heating needs. The long-term effects of

reduction of forests can be devastating, increasing erosion and decreasing soil quality and productivity (especially its moisture retention), and can seriously damage water quality and public health. Likewise, taking sanitation measures to prevent disease within displaced populations—disease that can quickly spread into the host nation—and to prevent contamination of water sources is often the most challenging aspect of refugee assistance. Locations for sheltering and caring for large numbers of refugees must be carefully chosen, taking into account their potential environmental impact and their long-term potential effects on the livelihood and quality of life of the surrounding host population.

Refugee Camps or Alternative Arrangements

As the major international organ for protecting and assisting refugees, the UNHCR has the policy that "refugees do not belong in camps" (UNHCR 1995). There are, however, few ways available to efficiently and affordably provide for rapid influxes of huge numbers of refugees who can completely overwhelm local capacities and infrastructure. When the rate of arrival is not so rapid, other options present themselves. For example, in the former Yugoslavia, the vast majority of the 3.6 million beneficiaries of UNHCR support (as of late 1995) were hosted by families in towns and villages. Similarly, Afghan refugees have been hosted by local populations in Pakistan and Iran, and Liberian refugees were hosted locally in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. As governments, not the UNHCR, have the primary responsibility for refugees residing within their territories, the method of providing assistance is a government decision.

When camps are deemed necessary, the UNHCR recommends no more than 10,000 refugees per camp. Overcrowded conditions (such as were found in Goma, Zaire, and other camps of the Rwandan emergency) can complicate sanitation measures, increase the chances of disease transmission, increase security risks, and severely stress the local environment. However, maintaining numerous 10,000-person camps could overwhelm the available international professional refugee relief providers. If camps are necessary, then in order to keep them adequately staffed at the recommended size (given hundreds of thousands or millions of refugees) training programs may be needed among South Koreans to rapidly provide a greater supply of professionals skilled in areas such as public health, medical care, social services, and elementary education. Refugee reception should also enable the rapid utilization of professional expertise from within the refugee population.

Refugee camps are expensive. "In many situations, the cost per refugee is more than the gross national product per capita of the host country" (Van Damme 1995). Once the initial emergency has been dealt with and conditions stabilized, policies should include the elimination of refugee camps as rapidly as practicable. In addition to monetary concerns, pro-

longed life under refugee camp conditions has negative physical, mental, and social consequences (Harrell-Bond 1986).

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to address the immediate and longer-term humanitarian policy issues and challenges posed by potential large-scale migration from North to South Korea. The three suggested scenarios pose different challenges in terms of population displacement and attendant humanitarian response. South Korean government policies for dealing with these possible scenarios should, however, be based on certain principles that remain central in any scenario. Such principles should shape all aspects of refugee policy. At a minimum, they include the humane and efficient reception and care of the refugees during the emergency phase of intervention, as well as timely reintegration of the affected population as productive members of the Korean economy and society.

Experience indicates that making one government ministry responsible for refugee policy and planning has proven effective in minimizing policy and coordination problems with UN agencies and NGOs. Emergency preparedness measures should address and clearly delineate roles, responsibilities, and organizational relationships for all aspects of humanitarian assistance, from reception to resettlement or repatriation.

Planning for a humanitarian response that maximizes the physical and economic security of South Korea, and that minimizes suffering within the displaced population, should include representatives from the United Nations—the DHA, the UNHCR, the WFP, the UN Development Program (UNDP)—the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and South Korean and allied military forces.

To be sure, there are mechanisms in place, the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) foremost among them, that prevent mass migration from North to South Korea. But a humanitarian crisis in the North, following a war or the collapse of northern institutions, could pressure a South Korean government either to produce ways through, or around, the DMZ or directly to provide security and humanitarian relief north of the DMZ. Therefore, although the chapter follows the scenarios in focusing on policies for humanitarian action in the South, responsibility for humanitarian action by the South Korean government might in fact extend beyond those refugees who reach South Korean soil.

While a large-scale migration from North to South Korea may not be guaranteed by a postwar or postcollapse scenario, refugees are well within the realm of possibility. The uncertainty of the future of the North following a war or collapse, combined with expectations of a better

economic future or enhanced security in the South, could powerfully urge individuals to move quickly should the opportunity present itself. Thinking about worst-case scenarios, planning and exercising for humanitarian emergencies, and getting national and international organizations together to discuss roles, responsibilities, and capabilities can save precious time if an emergency should occur; most important, such preparation can save lives.

The North Korean population is currently about 22 million. While the number of refugees, in need of humanitarian assistance, associated with each of the three scenarios—war, collapse, and gradual economic integration—cannot be predicted accurately, intelligence should be able to provide advance warning of numbers exceeding those displaced in the humanitarian crises of Iraq and Rwanda; there should be time to mobilize more relief resources than were initially available in those cases. Planning, preparation, and coordination of responsibilities in refugee movements can help offset both lack of strategic warning and lack of accuracy in the prediction of refugee numbers. While lessons from past refugee relief and reintegration experiences can be useful for policy formulation and planning, it is essential to recognize that every refugee experience is unique. Each forced migration occurs in a unique set of political, social, and cultural circumstances. Humanitarian interventions that are based solely on Western concepts may be as harmful in the long term as they can be helpful in the short term. Policies that contribute to successful humanitarian interventions will take into account the social and cultural background and needs of the refugees, along with the social and cultural strengths and weaknesses of the host population. Successful humanitarian interventions result when policies ensure that emergency relief practices contribute to the long-term socioeconomic and cultural benefit of both refugees and their hosts.

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