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Introduction

In the 1990s, Ronda Hauben and Michael Hauben put together their book, *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet*. The book was published in 1997. In 2003, Ronda Hauben (hereafter Hauben) saw a headline, "Netizens Elect a President". That was Roh Moo Hyun, a political outsider who was elected in Dec 2002 as the President of South Korea with the overwhelming support of the netizens.

Hauben's interest in netizens drove her to learn more about what was happening in South Korea and the netizens there. She learned that an online newspaper, OhmyNews (OMN), had championed the netizen support for Roh Moo Hyun. By 2004, Hauben began to send articles to OMN which were translated into Korean. When OMN started OhmyNews International (OMNI) in English, Hauben became a columnist. Her articles were then published in their original English.

When in 2006, the South Korean politician and diplomat Ban Ki Moon was chosen to be the next UN Secretary General, Hauben asked OMN if she could be its regular reporter at the UN, OMN agreed and assigned her as the UN reporter for its international

edition.

Hauben covered Ban Ki Moon's first day (1/2/2007) and reported on it in OMNI, "At Lunch with Ban Ki Moon." The next day, the UN Security Council Sanctions Committee on North Korea met to find ways to enforce the sanctions voted by the Security Council after North Korea conducted its first nuclear test in October 2006. From then on, Hauben followed how the UN handled the two Koreas or other Korea related issues which she documented in her articles in OMNI. Her articles showed an unusual fairness toward North Korea and respect for the netizens and their movement for more democracy in South Korea.

In 2010, OMN ended its International (English) edition. That ended Hauben's coverage of the UN for OMN. But she continued her coverage with the netizens blog on the Tages Zeitung website. In a conversation, another reporter, Ann Charles, who covered the UN for Lithuanian media and was a good friend of Hauben, made an observation. She observed that Hauben was a rare, almost unique reporter because she covered both North Korea and South Korea fairly. This reporter urged Hauben to put her articles about North and South Korea together and have the collection published. We have tried to begin such a collection in this issue

[Editors Note: The following is a talk about OhmyNews given by Ronda Hauben at the 57th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (ICA) in San Francisco on May 26, 2007.]

The Participatory Nature of OhmyNews

by Ronda Hauben

Today I want to describe the creation and significance of OhmyNews as a model for a new form of journalism, for a journalism that is appropriate for the 21st Century, a journalism that has been made possible by the Internet and the netizens.¹

I plan to present three different examples of OhmyNews related experiences and then draw together their implications, toward understanding the participatory experience provided by OhmyNews.

As a featured writer for *OhmyNews International* I recently covered the 50th anniversary dinner in New York City of the Korea Society. One of the speakers at the dinner was Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill. He explained the problem of \$25 million in funds of North Korean money being frozen as part of a U.S. Treasury Department proceeding against a bank in Macau, China, the Banco Delta Asia (BDA). This is a problem holding up the implementation of the six-party agreement to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula. Hill committed himself to work on this problem until it was solved.

There were several Korean journalists covering the event for their publications. They were particularly interested in what Hill said, but Hill's talk in itself didn't seem to represent a newsworthy event.

In the next few days, however, it appeared that an important story was developing.

In the process of trying to unravel the unfolding developments I found one news organization that did a story about the legitimate activity the bank had engaged in for North Korea. The news organization was the McClatchy Newspapers. I also found links to some documents refuting the Treasury Department's charges.

I now had the documents in the case. The U.S. government's findings gave no specific evidence of wrong doing on the part of the bank. The bank's statements and refutation gave significant documentation refuting charges of illegal activity on the part of the bank. The refutation also made the case that there were

political motives for the allegations rather than actual illegal activity on the part of the bank. The U.S. government had targeted a small Macau bank to scare the many banks in China. "To kill the chicken to scare the monkeys," as the government document explained, quoting an old Chinese proverb.

At last I had the news peg for the story. I wrote an article, submitting it around 5 a.m. my time to *OhmyNews International* (OMNI), using the software OMNI provides for submitting articles. By noon the next day, my story appeared on OMNI.² That was May 18.

Also on May 18, the *Wall Street Journal* carried an Op Ed by the former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., John Bolton. The article scolded the U.S. government for agreeing to return the \$25 million to North Korea.

I wanted to share this experience here today in order to put the focus of the rest of my remarks about the Korean OMN, the English OMNI and the theme of citizen participation into an appropriate context.

OMN grew out of the experience of its founder, Mr. Oh Yeonho, and the vision he had for transforming the South Korean news landscape. For over 10 years, from 1988 until 1999, Oh was a journalist for an alternative South Korean magazine, the *Monthly Mal*. One experience Oh uses to help explain the impetus for OhmyNews is when he did a significant story which uncovered the facts about a massacre of South Korean civilians by U.S. soldiers that had taken place during the Korean War. Oh published his expose in 1994. The story had little impact. In 1999, however, some Associated Press (AP) reporters did a similar story. The AP story was picked up by much of the South Korean mainstream news media and treated like a breaking news event. The AP reporters won a Pulitzer Prize for the story.

Mr. Oh realized it is not enough to break a news story. What is judged as news in South Korea (and similarly in the U.S. I may add) is more dependent on the nature of the news organization reporting the news than on the newsworthiness of the story itself. Mr. Oh set out to change this situation by starting OhmyNews.

His goal was to transform the news environment in South Korea which at the time was 80 percent conservative and 20 percent progressive into an environment that was 50 percent conservative and 50 percent progressive. His objective was for the quality of the news to determine its coverage, rather than the finances of the organization publishing the story.

Mr. Oh describes how he recognized that the

desire of netizens in South Korea for political change in Korea was reflected in the campaign for the presidency of a candidate who was not part of the political mainstream. Oh was determined to give this story the political coverage it merited. OhmyNews was the means to achieve this goal. The conservative mainstream press was hostile to Roh Moohyun. Never in the past had someone won the presidency without the support of the conservative mainstream press. Nevertheless Roh Moohyun won a surprising victory in December 2002 due to the active election campaigning for him by netizens and OhmyNews. Mr. Oh describes how when the election was over, reporters from the conservative mainstream press called him and other OhmyNews reporters and congratulated them for having made the victory possible.

In his book *The Rights of Man*, Thomas Paine explains the problem of creating a government that will be democratic. The essence of democracy, Paine explains, is that the sovereignty of a nation lies in its people, not in the government officials. Democracy requires the participation of the people and also observation and control over a government by its citizens. The process of creating a constitution is to create the compact of the people that will be the basis for determining and overseeing the actions of government officials. Paine describes this lesson as the gift of the American revolution of 1776 and the French revolution of 1789.

We are looking at the same problem over 200 years later. It has become clear that the existence of a constitution is not adequate as a means for citizens to exercise their control over government officials. A peoples' or citizens' press is also needed as a means of exercising some of the desired control of citizens over their government.

A problem that has developed is that mainstream media organizations as Mr. Oh found in South Korea, often don't fulfill this important function of the press. Fortunately, there are many citizens today who feel the need for control over the abuse of power by government officials. These citizens are eager to participate in carrying out the role of the press as a watchdog over government officials.

In 2000 Mr. Oh was able to start the Korean language OhmyNews with a small staff of four reporters. By welcoming citizen reporters to write for OhmyNews, he was able to augment the content of the newspaper so it could be much broader than the limited finances and meager resources would have

otherwise made possible. The staff has since grown as have the number of citizen reporters participating in OhmyNews.

There's a lot more I would like to be able to say about OhmyNews if I had more time. While OhmyNews (OMN) is published in Korean, an English edition called *OhmyNews International (OMNI)* is available so those who cannot read and write in Korean but who want to know more about OhmyNews can participate and in this manner, learn more about the concepts and practice of citizen journalism as developed by OhmyNews.

Citizen journalism as pioneered by OMN is the continuation of what Michael Hauben described as one of the gifts of the Internet. He wrote that the Internet "gives the power of the reporter to the netizen."³

Mr. Oh's vision and practice in creating and developing the Korean OMN is an attempt to give the power of the news media to the citizen, making it possible for news stories citizens uncover to get the needed support and distribution so as to be able to impact the policy agenda and decision making processes of the government.

In this context, *OMNI* gives citizens and journalists from countries around the world a taste of what it could mean if they had an OMN in their countries. Its intent is to be a catalyst for the creation and spread of other OhmyNewslike sites in other countries besides South Korea and then to support the collaboration among these diverse OMN-like sites. (There is already a version of OhmyNews in Japan.)

There is not yet an OMN in the U.S. So my story about the connection of the U.S. government's policy toward China and the U.S. government actions against the Macau bank is not yet likely to be able to impact how the mainstream news in the U.S. frames the story with North Korea and the sixparty talks. But the need for a U.S. model of OMN becomes all the more urgent when one participates in *OMNI* and thus has the experience of exploring the potential of what it will make possible.

To sum up, Mr. Oh, describing citizen journalism at the *OMNI* forum in South Korea last July said:⁴

Though we are an open platform accessible to everyone, not everyone can write a news story. Only those reporters who are passionately committed to social change and reporting make our project possible. The main reason that citizen journalism has not grown and spread more rapidly is the diffi-

cult task of finding and organizing these passionate citizen reporters in waiting.

Notes:

1. The url for the Korean language OhmyNews is:
<http://www.ohmynews.com>
 2. Ronda Hauben, "Behind the Blacklisting of Banco Delta Asia Is the policy aimed at targeting China as well as North Korea?", *OhmyNews International*, May 18, 2007.
 3. Michael and Ronda Hauben, *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet*, IEEE Computer Society, 1997, distributed by John Wiley and Sons,
<http://www.columbia.edu/~hauben/netbook/>
 4. Oh Yeonho, "Welcome to Korean and OhmyNews," reprinted in the *Amateur Computerist*, Vol. 15, No 1,
<http://www.ais.org/~jrh/acn/ACn151.pdf>, pp. 2-3.
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[Editor's Note: The following article first appeared in *OhmyNews International* on December 15, 2006.]

Ban Ki-moon Inaugurated

by Ronda Hauben

In the ceremony inaugurating him as the new Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon from the Republic of Korea promised to uphold the interests of the United Nations above any national interests and "not to seek or accept instructions in regard to the performance of my duties from any government or other authority external to the Organization." The Secretary General designate will take office on Jan. 1, 2007.

The inauguration ceremony to administer the oath of office to Ban was held at a session of the UN General Assembly on Thursday, Dec 14. Spokespeople of the regional representatives presented short speeches to thank the outgoing Secretary General, Kofi Annan, for his service to the United Nations and to consider some of the highlights of the events of the past 10 years during the course of Annan's tenure as Secretary General of the UN

In his remarks thanking Annan, Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo of the Republic of South Africa, speaking for the regional group of 77 and China, expressed his sentiments that Annan will be missed. Among the achievements of the outgoing Secretary General, Kumalo noted, "You always spoke softly but your voice was loudest when you fearlessly told the truth to the powerful, reminding them never to forget

those who are called, 'the least among us.' Even when circumstances forced you to stay quiet, your silence was even louder."

While only a few brief references to specific events during Annan's tenure in office were mentioned during the speeches, the ceremony led me to recall two important developments which were not included.

One was the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) held in Geneva in December 2003 and in Tunis in November 2005.

The WSIS event was unusual for the United Nations as it reflected the pressure of the people of the world to benefit from the technical and communication advance that the Internet makes possible. Heads of state from a number of nations were present. and the summit was asked for a commitment that people around the world not merely be treated as victims or as customers, but rather be empowered to speak for themselves and have their voices enter the global conversation.

The second event which stands out was the U.S. invasion of Iraq. The U.S. and Great Britain had come to the UN asking for a resolution supporting their planned invasion. The UN did not support their attack on the sovereign nation of Iraq, but neither did it condemn the invasion. The power of the U.S. government in the Security Council was a force that limited the UN's ability to condemn the aggression against Iraq.

While none of the speeches about Kofi Annan's term in office spoke to these events, the General Assembly ceremony presents the occasion to think back over the past 10 years of developments at the UN and to project ahead to what the future may bring.

In his speech in honor of Annan, Kumalo reminded his audience that the issue of Palestine was not solved. "I also dare say that on 31 Dec. 2006 when you leave office," Kumalo said to Annan, "the light of hope for the people of Palestine who live under occupation will shine even less bright."

Ban Ki-moon's short speech after his inauguration was directed to what seemed administrative matters with regard to the UN operation and toward the general problem he referred to as dissension or lack of trust within the UN.

When asked about this focus later at his short 30-minute press conference, Ban said there were two aspects to his goal to restore trust in the UN system. One had to do with UN efficiency, the second had to do with distrust among member states and between

member states and the UN. Since he did not elaborate further, one can only speculate about what he was referring to.

Other questions asked at the press conference were helpful in adding specifics to the pressing world issues that Ban will have to broach when he takes office officially in January 2007.

These include the issue of North Korea's nuclear weapons and the complaint of North Korea that there are economic and security issues by other countries that led them to act as they did with regard to developing nuclear weapons. Ban expressed his support for the return of the parties to the six-party talks, to begin Dec. 18. He noted that he will place a high priority on following the developments. Also he added that he would think about what he needs to do to facilitate the negotiation process.

Other questions referred to the problems in the Middle East, the Security Council discussion about Iran's nuclear program, Israel's recent admission that it possesses nuclear weapons, the problem in Darfur, and other pressing issues. In a number of his responses, Ban said he would endeavor to consult those involved in the conflict and others in the troubled region in his efforts to help make progress on solving problems.

Another question raised was how he felt about the desire of a number of member states to see the permanent membership of the Security Council expanded to include two African and two more Asian members.

Ban's response was that this was by far the most important issue at the UN and that it is necessary to have expansion and reform of the Security Council. He promised that he would try to facilitate consultations to help this to occur.

The press conference was dominated by questions from reporters for large mainstream media organizations. Ban has by now had two press conferences at the UN but the range of questions he has been asked has been limited by the short period of time provided for the press conference after Ban makes a statement.

Originally, Ban promised to be available to hear from the many people involved in disputes and problems and to take into account their viewpoints. While it is still early in his assumption of the office of the Secretary General, this pledge suggests that he will also provide time to hear from the press, and from a broader set of the media than primarily from main-

stream commercial outlets. How often the Secretary General-designate will be available to hear from reporters and to respond to their concerns and questions will provide a measure of how seriously he takes his promises in practice.

The inauguration of Ban Ki-moon as the 8th Secretary General of the United Nations provides a challenge to the people of the world to put the needed pressure on the UN so that his tenure in office will merit similar or even greater words of praise than that of the Secretary General in whose footsteps he follows.

[Editor's Note: The following article first appeared on *OhmyNews International* on January 2, 2007. The author was a reporter for *OMNI* from Oct 2006 until *OMNI* ended its English edition in 2010.]

At Lunch with Ban Ki-Moon

by Ronda Hauben

Today, Tuesday, Jan. 2, (2007), was the first working day at the United Nations for the new Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, since Jan. 1, was an official UN holiday.

At lunch time I was in the UN cafeteria and noticed that Ban and his information officer Choi Soung-ah were coming into the seating area of the cafeteria with their trays.

As they were near where I was sitting, I invited Ban and Choi to join me. Ban sort of smiled and looked around for where to sit. He and Choi sat at the next table. Several UN staff people sat at the other end of the table he had chosen. As there was an empty seat near him I joined them.

A few people nearby greeted Ban saying "Ann-yong Haseyo." One person remarked that there should be kimchi in the cafeteria. Ban agreed.

I introduced myself to Ban telling him that I write for *OhmyNews International*, which is a South Korean newspaper, and I gave him my card. He said that he knew OhmyNews. He remembered that he had been interviewed by OhmyNews a few years before. As part of the brief conversation I wondered if he was excited about the new position. I got the impression that he realized that it was a difficult challenge.

I gave him a card I have for the book I am co-author of, *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet*. I mentioned that I have been

impressed by how many South Korean netizens have been active trying to use the Internet to understand problems and to solve them.

I mentioned that there are many people who want a better world and that if there were a way to tap the potential of this resource, it would help to deal better with the kinds of problems the UN faces in the world. I explained how the Internet and netizens are a beginning of a way to do this.

I left, but later when I was in one of the press areas at the UN. I saw a video of Ban going around to different offices in the New York headquarters building, and speaking with the people who work in these different offices. They in turn would explain what happened in their areas. He went into an area where there were some shops with various tools to do repairs. In another area that he visited, there was a printing facility. They were printing a 2007 calendar with the photos of all the UN Secretary Generals including the photo of Ban Ki-moon.

It was good to see that Ban was acquainting himself with the people and activities at the UN.

Earlier in the day, he had arrived at the UN at 9:30 a.m. Shortly afterwards he held a brief press conference. He made a short statement, and then took a few questions. Several of the questions reporters asked focused on Ban's view of the recent execution of Saddam Hussein. The new Secretary General said that each nation decides if they will have capital punishment. Several reporters pointed out that the position of the UN had been opposed to capital punishment.

At noon there was a press briefing with Michele Montas, who is Ban's newly appointed spokeswoman. She had been a well known Haitian journalist, who with her husband Jean Dominique, ran the pioneering Creole radio station Radio Haiti. Jean was assassinated in April 2000 and Montas fled to New York in February 2003 after she received several death threats. She has worked at the UN for several years since then.

At the press briefing with Montas, several reporters again brought up Ban's earlier statements regarding the execution of Saddam Hussein. One person pointed to a statement from the UN that Saddam's trial was not credible. Other reporters referred to a statement from the UN's representative in Iraq raising questions about the appropriateness of executing Saddam. Another journalist pointed out that given the situation in Iraq, some people were saying that executing Saddam was a war crime. Montas promised to look into these issues and in a few days

clarify the Secretary General's position.

Other questions raised included the position of the new Secretary General on the continued military activity by Ethiopia in Somalia, whether the Secretary General would encourage discussion by the Security Council members with those it was bringing sanctions against before the sanctions were imposed, what the Secretary General's plans were with regard to North Korea, and how he would proceed with regard to the situation in Darfur. Several questions concerned the new staff appointments the Secretary General was planning. (A video of the press briefing is online here [no longer available].)

Ban Ki-moon's first working day at the UN was an example of the challenge he faces. There are many places in the world where there is a need to have an intervention by the moral authority vested in the UN Secretary General in order to help challenge the forces of injustice. Also, there will be pressure on the new Secretary General by those in power to allow them to exercise their power without any restraint. Will the new Secretary General be able to speak out in favor of justice? How can those who want to see a better world provide a counterweight to the pressure that will be exerted by those who want to exercise unbridled power?

There are institutions and procedures that have developed in the course of the UN's operations that make it possible for the powerful to act without any consideration for the views and needs of those with less or no power. Such institutions or practices can discredit the UN as an institution if they are allowed to dominate the activity of the organization. There is clearly a struggle within the UN over whether the power of governments like that of the U.S. will be allowed to dominate the organization. The new Secretary General has said that he wants the U.S. to be active in UN activity. Can there be constructive activity on the part of the U.S. that takes into account the needs of the people of the U.S. and of people around the world, rather than activity geared to the interests of the multinational corporations and other powerful sectors of U.S. society?

Ban Ki-moon faces a significant challenge in the problems referred to during his first working day at the UN. The role to be played by the press is very important in the challenge he is facing. Will the press be a public relations echo chamber for what is being done at the UN? Will the reporters from news organizations representing powerful interests be given access to exert

pressure in the interest of those they represent? Or will the new Secretary General find a way to activate the people and the press from all corners of the globe to be part of the discussion and consideration of the problems that are pressing at the UN? Can there be broad ranging public dialog to help to clarify where the public interest lies and how it can prevail?

This is the difficult challenge facing the new Secretary General of the UN. This is a problem that a broad ranging use of the Internet and a welcoming of participation by netizens can help to solve.

[Editor's Note: The following article first appeared in *OhmyNews International* on June 30, 2007 which marked the first six months that Ban Ki-moon held the position as Secretary General of the United Nations. The following is the first of a two-part article that was an effort to look at the role of this Secretary General and some of the challenges he faces.]

Ban Ki-Moon's Role of UN Secretary General [Part 1]

by Ronda Hauben

Introduction

Ban Ki-moon's nomination by the Security Council to be the 8th Secretary General of the United Nations was sent to the General Assembly on Oct. 13, 2006. Ban succeeded in winning the nomination after a difficult and contested campaign.¹ But his trial by fire was only just beginning. Ban had succeeded in winning the votes of China and of the U.S. His achievement winning the votes of these two nations, who are permanent members of the Security Council, was seen by a number of commentators as the critical step needed to win the nomination for Secretary General.²

Would this very achievement, especially the achievement of winning the vote of the U.S. government in the Security Council, become a handicap that would negatively affect Ban's ability to succeed in the position as the 8th Secretary General of the United Nations?

Goals Expressed in *Hankyoreh* Interview

An interview with Ban Ki-moon on Oct. 30, 2006, shortly after Ban won appointment by the General Assembly as the new Secretary General, and in the interval before he would assume the office in January

2007, offers a rare glimpse of how the soon-to-be-appointed Secretary General viewed his hopes and goals for his new position.

The interview was conducted in the offices of the Korean newspaper *Hankyoreh*, by Moon Chung-in, a Professor at Yonsei University and an Envoy for International Stability.³ The interview was done in Korean, and translated and published in the English edition of *Hankyoreh*. The goals Ban outlined in this interview provide a yardstick to measure how successfully he is in fulfilling the obligations of his new position.

In the interview, Ban describes a recent visit to the White House shortly after he won the appointment as Secretary General. President Bush greeted him as "Mr Landslide" congratulating him on his victory. The plan had been for Ban to see Steve Hadley, the U.S. National Security Advisor and if time permitted, to briefly meet Bush. Instead he spoke with Bush for more than 20 minutes.

Ban recounts how he and Bush spoke about UN reform and the North Korean nuclear program. "Bush," Ban says, "requested that I drive forth with UN reforms, assuring me that the U.S. would actively lend its support." In the interview, Bush promised to work with the South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun to peacefully resolve the North Korean nuclear problem.

Ban also visited China. He describes his meeting with the Chinese President Hu Jintao on this visit. Hu told Ban that "the role of a newly appointed Secretary General is very important and that China would be of active assistance." Ban revealed that during his campaign for the nomination, China "could not make public its support," but that it had "actively helped out behind the scenes." Though it is not yet apparent how China's support for Ban's nomination affects Ban's actions as Secretary General, U.S. support for Ban's nomination appears to have a significant effect on his activity as Secretary General.

During the *Hankyoreh* interview Ban expressed a belief he has reiterated many times since, that the U.S. is "the UN's most important member." Ban proposed that the UN needed the "proactive participation" of the U.S. in order to function properly, just as he believed the U.S. needed the UN for its interests.

Also during the interview, Ban expressed his commitment as Secretary General to work to help resolve the problems with North Korea. "I will appoint a politician or diplomat," he asserted, "with the confi-

dence of the international community, someone who has the trust of both North and South Korea to actively push the issue forward. This envoy,” he explained, “must be one to impel the six-party talks to action when they stagnate, and must be prepared to play a direct role when necessary. I am ever ready to intervene directly when intervention is called for.” Ban also proposed that the UN had to find a means to help with transforming the cease-fire that was signed by the U.S. and North Korea at the end of the Korean War into a more permanent peace agreement.

Ban promised to present a blueprint for what he hoped to accomplish in his first 100 days, in his first year, and in his five year term. His priority, he explained, would be in the appointments he would make for UN personnel and that these would “raise morale and cultivate professionalism.”

Ban’s goal at the end of his five year term or ten years if he were to win reappointment for a second term, would be “to create a UN reborn as an organization that enjoys much greater international confidence. I will make the UN into a body fit for the challenges and theme of the 21st century,” he promised. To obtain this objective, he proposed to support “development”, especially, “development in Africa and the Millennium Development Plan.” His aim would be to “make certain that the UN has a role at the center of multilateral diplomacy.”

In the interview, Ban also describes how Roh Moo-hyun and the South Korean press helped his candidacy to succeed by “campaigning for me at every opportunity while meeting with foreign heads of state.” The South Korean media “also helped a great deal,” Ban notes. Ban was aware, too, that it was a particular source of pride for Korea that the 8th Secretary General would be from Korea.

Comments on Ban’s 100-day Anniversary

By Ban’s 100 day anniversary, April 10, media commentary on his accomplishments documented the frustration he had experienced. Comments from several diplomats were testimony to the mistakes made as he and his advisors rushed to put their reform agenda into effect.

The Chinese Ambassador to the UN, Wong Guangya commented on how Ban tried to impose changes in the structure of the UN Secretariat, only to meet opposition from a number of countries, observes,

“His intentions are good. He is trying to make the Secretariat work more effectively. But personally I feel he’s a new comer and he does not understand the culture and the environment in this house. You have to identify who are the stakeholders and how to test the temperature before jumping in. He hasn’t done that and he has felt the heat.”⁴

Similarly, South African Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo is quoted as being frustrated by Ban’s “‘decide first, consult afterward’ behavior.”⁵

Even the American Ambassador, Alejandro D. Wolff, who originally replaced John Bolton, said that there were those “convinced that Ban was ‘essentially responding to American demands.’”⁶ This impression, Wolff explained, helped to generate distrust in the reforms Ban is trying to implement.

Role of Secretary General

The role of Secretary General has a number of constraints. It also is a role that carries certain obligations. During his inauguration, Ban took an oath that he would uphold the interests of the United Nations above any national interests and “not to seek or accept instructions in regard to the performance of my duties from any government or other authority external to the Organization.”⁷

In a “Report to the Preparatory Commission of the UN 23 Dec 1945”, a set of duties and responsibilities are elaborated as a means of stating what is explicit and implicit in the Secretary General’s role as provided for by the UN charter.

While the Report specifies administrative and executive functions for the Secretary General, it also states that “He is the channel of all communication with the United Nations in any of its organs. He must endeavor, within the scope of his functions, to integrate the activity of the whole complex of United Nations organs and see that the machine runs smoothly and effectively.”⁸

Along with the obligation for internal smooth functioning of the UN, the report proposes an external function. It says, “the Secretary General, more than anyone else, will stand for the United Nations as a whole. In the eyes of the world, no less than the eyes of his own staff, he must embody the principles and ideals of the charter to which the organization seeks to give effect.”⁹

Elements for Creating a Vision

Shashi Tharoor, one of the other candidates for the nomination by the Security Council for the position of Secretary General maintained that emanating from the job description for the Secretary General that each Secretary General wrote for himself, “must shine the vision of the incumbent of the office,” a vision which transcends the more practical aspects of the job.¹⁰

Describing the nature of the job, Tharoor proposed that what was needed was a person with the ability and talent to respond to a wide range of issues “and to know where to go for expert judgment when he or she feels unqualified or uninformed on specific issues. Somebody who recognizes he does not have all the answers but trusts himself to ask the right questions.”¹¹

Tharoor, who had worked at the UN for almost 28 years, said that for him the UN was more than a job. “It has always been a cause For me the UN is far more than an institution... . It represents the vision and foresight of the leaders of the world who wanted to make the second half of the twentieth century better than the first.”¹² He described how the UN was formed in response to a world that had experienced two world wars, a number of civil wars, several instances of mass population displacements, genocide, the holocaust, and Hiroshima. “The UN was part of an attempt to genuinely make a better world and I believe for all its limitations and failures, it did succeed in doing so,” he noted.¹³

When Ban outlined the beginning elements for the new role he was to assume in the *Hankyoreh* interview, he planned for the UN to play a constructive role in helping to facilitate the six-party talks between North Korea, South Korea, China, the U.S., Japan, and Russia. He had expressed his determination to appoint an envoy to help overcome obstacles that might impede the six-party process. This provided an example of a goal he was bringing to his new role at the UN. How he would be able to carry out this goal would be a concrete sign of whether he could be guided by a vision for his role as Secretary General.

[To be continued in the next article]

Notes:

1. See for example: Ayca Arlyoruk, “Korean Minister Likely Candidate to Replace Kofi Annan, but Will the General Assembly Approve?”, UNA-USA.

Ban was chosen as Secretary General in a process that is basically secret with voting by the members of the Security Council that is not public. The five Permanent members hold the ability to veto a candidate at a certain stage in the process. Questions have been raised about what criteria are used and what is traded with whom is left as an open question.

Also there were allegations that the South Korean government used grants and various financial rewards to gain support for its candidate from several of the nonpermanent nations that were on the Security Council at the time of the voting for the next Secretary General. See for example:

Richard Beeston, Richard Lloyd Parry, and James Bone, “Millions of dollars and a piano may put Korean in UN’s top job,” *Times Online*, September 29, 2006.

Tran Van Loi, “ROK Buying UN Post: Times Millions of dollars have been spent in lobbying for Ban ki-moon, says British newspaper”, *OhmyNews International*, October 1, 2006.

2. See, for example, Restoring the Vitality of the United Nations. Luncheon Speech by H.E. Ban Ki-moon at the Council on Foreign Relations. May 31, 2006 New York, video at:

<https://youtu.be/9J5gy91HE0I?t=285>

3. [Interview] Next UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. in conversation with Moon Chung-in, translated by Daniel Rakove, *The Hankyoreh*. November 3, 2006.

4. Maggie Farley, “New Secretary General Is Still Finding His Footing at the UN”, *LA Times*, April 9, 2007.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ronda Hauben, “Ban Ki-moon Inaugurated, Pledges to uphold the interests of the United Nations above all else”, *OhmyNews International*, December 15, 2006.

8. “Report to the Preparatory Commission of the UN 23 Dec 1945”, in *Secretary or General: The UN Secretary-General in World Politics?*, edited by Simon Chesterman, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007, p. 243-244.

9. Ibid. p. 245.

10. Shashi Tharoor, in *Secretary or General: The UN Secretary-General in World Politics?*, edited by Simon Chesterman, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007, p. 46.

11. Lydia Swart, “Shashi Tharoor Sees his 28 Years at the United Nations as an Asset”, Center for UN Reform Education, interview done 12 July 2006.

12. Ibid,

13. Ibid.

[Editor's Note: June 30, 2007 marked the first six months that Ban Ki-moon held the position as Secretary-General of the United Nations. The following is part 2 of an article looking at the role of Secretary General and some of the challenges he faces. Part 2 appeared on *OhmyNews International* on July 4, 2007. Part 1 of this article also appears in this issue.]

Ban Ki-Moon's Role of UN Secretary General [Part 2]

by Ronda Hauben

How has the role of the press affected the actions of the new Secretary General? There is an important example that has developed which helps to demonstrate the impact that the press has had on Ban Ki-moon.

In the interview with *Hankyoreh* before he took office,¹ Ban described how he would act to support a solution to the problem of relations between North Korea and the Northeast Asia region, and the disarmament of the Korean peninsula.

On January 19, 2007, just a few weeks after Ban became Secretary General, there were news reports of a breakthrough in negotiations between the Christopher Hill for the U.S. and Kim Kye-gwan for North Korea.² The International Herald Tribune reported:³

"The movement toward a possible breakthrough came during the talks in Berlin between Hill and Kim, Chosun Ilbo reported, citing unidentified officials in Seoul and Beijing."

Timed, it appeared, to coincide with the breakthrough, however, was the publication in the *Wall Street Journal (WSJ)* of an article "United Nations Dictator's Program" by Melanie Kirkpatrick. A similar article was published by Fox News. These articles alleged that North Korea was manipulating funds from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in North Korea. These press accounts reported that UNDP funds were being used by Kim Jong-il, for whatever he wanted, including "his weapons program."⁴ No proof was provided for this accusation. The articles included other unsupported allegations.

While most of the press reports in the U.S. just repeated or exaggerated the original allegations, a few Korean publications provided a different perspective. The Korean newspaper *Voice of the People* pointed out that the allegations of UNDP mismanagement appeared just as the North Korean and U.S. representatives had had productive negotiations in Berlin.⁵ The *Voice of the People* asked why the U.S. Mission to the

UN was raising these issues "at this time."

"Despite the totally unfounded allegation by the hawks," the editors write, "it has a political effect for freezing (the) bilateral relationship between Washington and Pyongyang."⁶

Ban Ki-moon's response to the *WSJ* and Fox news articles was to call immediately for an audit of all UN programs. The audit was to start with an audit of all programs in North Korea. A few days later the call for an audit of all UN programs was dropped. The audit was to be of North Korea's UNDP program.⁷

Some Background

A difficult period for Ban's predecessor, Secretary General Kofi Annan was caused by the "Oil for Food Scandal." Annan had refused to support a U.S. backed Security Council resolution authorizing an invasion of Iraq. Annan held that such an invasion would be a violation of the UN's charter. Reports say that in response, right wing neoconservatives in the U.S. government brought forward accusations that there had been corruption in the UN's administration of the "Oil for Food" program.⁸ This program had been created by the Security Council supposedly to alleviate some of the harmful effects on civilians of the Security Council sanctions against Iraq.

While the "Oil for Food Scandal" investigation recommended systemic reforms, there was little evidence of corrupt activity by members of the UN Secretariat. The investigation created, however, a difficult environment for Annan and other UN officials.

When the *WSJ* articles appeared in January 2007 alleging corruption in the UNDP program, they brought up memories of the difficult situation created for the UN during the "Oil for Food Scandal."

South Korean Press Responses to Allegations

Several articles appeared in the South Korean press which analyzed rather than just repeating the allegations of mismanagement in the UNDP program in North Korea. One article in *JoongAng Ilbo* on January 22, for example, described what happened after the news reports appeared on January 19. Ban met with the Associate Administrator of the UNDP, Ad Melkert, and "vowed a thorough investigation."⁹ The *JoongAng Ilbo* article, in addition, however, noted that this accusation came at a "sensitive time in negotiations" between the U.S. and North Korea.

The article also noted that this action by the UNDP “might be considered another financial sanction by Washington against North Korea just as the six-party anti-nuclear talks were expected to resume.” The reporters reminded readers that the “financial sanctions brought by the U.S. treasury office on Banco Delta Asia which led to freezing \$24 million of North Korean funds” had become a “major sticking point” causing a deadlock in the six-party talks.

Similarly, the article in *Voice of the People* on January 30, 2007, asked, “Now we have to see who’s intriguing against whom because somebody is suffering from pain for it. We should not listen to the shameless and unscrupulous who are trying to curtail humanitarian aid for those who are in need of food.”¹⁰

An article in *OhmyNews International (OMNI)* and a report by the Civil Network for a Peaceful Korea (Peacekorea) explain that UNDP administrators had denied that there were violations of UNDP policy in the North Korean program.¹¹ Both articles referred to the fact that the Resident Coordinator of the UNDP Program in North Korea had the authority to decide the financial practices to follow. Another report by Peacekorea noted many people think that Ban is “kind of pro American.”¹²

Peacekorea advocated support for restarting the six-party talks and not letting the U.S. accusations against North Korea divert from support for the unification of the Korean peninsula. Such a policy is presented as a long term vision. Also the report explains that development aid to North Korea is preferable to humanitarian aid, as development aid sets a basis for self sufficiency, while humanitarian aid is expended after it is given.¹³

The six-party talks did resume and came to an agreement on February 13, 2007. Peacekorea offered a critique of the conservative South Korean newspapers which “made comments devaluing the agreement.”¹⁴ The report explained, “Korea’s major newspapers spread a hostile perspective of North Korea on the Korean peninsula. This is not helpful toward gaining denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.” The report proposes that “Under Kim Jong Il’s dictatorship, North Korea, a weak nation, has developed nuclear weapons as a deterrent against the threat of an American attack, as exemplified by the Iraq war, and as a diplomatic tool for bilateral contact with the U.S.”¹⁵

Alternative Approach to Ban’s Policy on Korea

Such accounts in the South Korean press demonstrate an alternative approach to the policy that the Secretary General is implementing regarding the North Korean situation. For now Ban is not carrying out the policy he had proposed in the *Hankyoreh* interview with regard to the Korean peninsula. To the contrary, in response to pressure from the U.S. press and the U.S. government, he has adopted a policy which has allowed the politicization of the UNDP program that was in North Korea. This has resulted in an audit of previous UNDP programs in North Korea and the ending of the current UNDP program in North Korea.

Similarly, for more than four months, from February through the end of June, the six-party talks hit a deadlock over the decision by the U.S. government to find a small bank in Macau in violation of provisions in the U.S. Patriot Act. The bank complained that it never saw the evidence against it nor did it have a chance to refute the evidence.¹⁶ Yet by using Section 311 of the Patriot Act against this bank, the U.S. Treasury Department was able to freeze \$25 million of North Korean funds and impede North Korea’s access to the international banking system.

Much of the U.S. press has been promoting a hostile policy toward North Korea.¹⁷ Some of the South Korean press echo what appears in the U.S. press, or reprint articles from the conservative interests who are trying to impede further negotiations. Other South Korean publications, however, provide a critique of the hostile attitude of the U.S. press toward North Korea. For example, an article by Tim Savage in *OMNI* documents the internal struggle within the U.S. government between the interests which are hostile to negotiations with North Korea in contrast to the efforts at negotiations by Christopher Hill.¹⁸

Though he has occupied the office of Secretary General for over six months, Ban has yet to implement the program he proposed before taking office, the program of active UN support for a negotiated agreement in the six party talks. Ban’s original plan was to appoint a diplomat or politician who would be available to intervene when needed to keep the negotiation process on track. Instead the UN’s Secretariat has become embroiled in the controversy generated by unsubstantiated charges from the U.S. mission to the UN about the UNDP funding of North Korea’s UNDP program.

'We Can't Prove a Negative'

The U.S. press continues to echo the U.S. government's unsubstantiated charges against North Korea and the UNDP, in a way reminiscent of how the same press supported the unsubstantiated and inaccurate U.S. government claims that Iraq possessed "Weapons of Mass Destruction". The unsubstantiated allegations being spread by the U.S. press about the UNDP, have the effect of politicizing the UNDP program rather than providing the public with the accurate information that is needed to understand the problems and challenges faced by such a program.

David Morrison, the press spokesman for the UNDP, explained that "the point I'm trying to make is we can't prove a negative,"¹⁹ at a press conference held to answer the June 2007 set of unsubstantiated allegations made by the U.S. mission against the UNDP program in North Korea. This set of allegations appeared in the U.S. press just before the beginning of the June UNDP Executive Board meeting in a way reminiscent of how the previous set of allegations first appeared in the U.S. press just before the January UNDP Executive Board meeting.

Just as the impossibility of proving a negative created a media environment in which the U.S. government could falsely claim they had a justification for a war against Iraq, so a hostile environment is being created to impede the six-party talks by the unsubstantiated allegations against North Korea and the UNDP.²⁰

Ban's original plan for the region provided a means to counter those interests which might impede a negotiated solution to the North Korean conflict. Much of the U.S. press has maintained a hostile attitude toward North Korea, even though there are signs that within the U.S. government there are forces interested in pursuing a negotiated settlement. The South Korean media landscape, however, presents a broader spectrum of opinion on what should be done with regard to North Korea, a spectrum of views which includes support for the policy that Ban originally proposed to implement for the region when he became Secretary General.

Conclusion

There are many people in Korea and elsewhere, who are watching Ban Ki-moon and are hopeful that he will do a good job as Secretary General. As the experience of former Secretary Generals demonstrates, however, there is a need for a vision to guide him if he

is to be able to fulfill on these expectations.

Notes:

1. [Interview] Next UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. in conversation with Moon Chung-in, translated by Daniel Rakove, *The Hankyoreh*. November 3, 2006.
 2. "US-DPRK talks end, no comments on resuming 6-party talks", CCTV.com Jan 19, 2007,
 3. "U.S. envoy confident in North Korea nuclear talks", *International Herald Tribune*, January 22, 2007.
 4. Melanie Kirkpatrick, "United Nations Dictator's Program", *WSJ*, January 19, 2007.
 5. "The U.S. Stands in the Way of Pyongyang", *Voice of the People*, January 30, 2007.
 6. Ibid.
 7. Ronda Hauben, "Hardliners Attack UNDP Aid to North Korea: Allegations of corruption seen as attempt to undermine engagement", *OMNI*, February 7, 2007.
 8. Thalif Deen, "Will the New UN Chief Stand Up to Big Powers", Inter Press News Agency, December 12, 2006.
 9. Nam Jeong-ho and Lee Sang-eon, "Report Says Kim Jong-il Cashed in on UN Office", *JoongAng Ilbo*, January 22, 2007.
 10. Ibid, *Voice of the People*.
 11. Ronda Hauben, "Hardliners Attack UNDP Aid to North Korea Allegations of corruption seen as attempt to undermine engagement", *OMNI*, February 7, 2007. See also: Soohyun Lee, "UNDP's Aid Toward North Korea", *peacekorea*, January 23, 2007.
 12. Soohyun Lee, UNDP's aid toward North Korea, *peacekorea*, February 13, 2007.
 13. Ibid.
 14. Ji-Hyun Lee, "The Ghost of Anti-communism Reflected in South Korean Media", *peacekorea*, May 7, 2007.
 15. Ibid.
 16. Ronda Hauben, "North Korea's \$25 Million and Banco Delta Asia: Another abuse under the U.S. Patriot Act (2001)", *OMNI*, March 21, 2007.
 17. The McClatchy Newspapers have been an exception. See for example articles like "Bank owner disputes money-laundering allegations" Kevin G. Hall about the BDA affair.
 18. Tim Savage, "Six-Party Talks Resume: Expectations high for progress in Beijing," *OMNI*, February 8, 2007.
 19. David Morrison, Press Conference, June 11, 2007, See Minutes: 38:46.
 20. Ronda Hauben, "Weapons of Mass Destruction Syndrome and the Press [Analysis] How does one prove a negative?", *OMNI*, June 24, 2007.
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U.S., North Korea Move to Open Ties

by Ronda Hauben

"This process, not unlike a video game, gets more and more difficult as you get to different levels," said Christopher Hill, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, speaking at a press conference held at the Foreign Press Center in New York City shortly after he had finished two days of meetings with North Korea's lead negotiator for the Six-Party Talks, Kim Kye-gwan. Hill is the chief negotiator for the U.S. The Six-Party Talks include the U.S., North Korea, South Korea, China, Russia and Japan.

Hill characterized the activities of the past two days as "good discussions" which were "very comprehensive." Both sides were optimistic that they would get through the first 60-day period's tasks that were outlined in the Feb. 13 agreement signed in Beijing.

A reason for the optimism, Hill explained, was that his talks with Kim not only discussed the issues that had to be resolved at this 30-day stage, but they also explored what they would need to do to go forward after the 60-day period, which will end in mid-April.

Hill explained that five working groups have been set up. His working group with Kim on normalizing U.S.-North Korean relations finished their tasks within the 30-day time schedule that they had set for the five groups to begin their process. Another group, the bilateral group between North Korea and Japan will meet in Hanoi and the three other groups will be meeting in Beijing.

Hill was interested in the efforts to get an agreement between the U.S. and North Korea in the 1990s and had learned some of the background from his discussions with Kim.

A focus of their talks, Hill explained, was on the upcoming meetings that would take place with the six parties in Beijing and how to make those productive. "The ministers from each of the six parties to the talks will be meeting in Beijing then and assessing where we will go the next 60 days," Hill said.

Hill was asked how this negotiation was different from previous ones with North Korea. He described how the tight deadlines were one aspect. Another was

that the agreement involved the six parties and the bilateral talks between the U.S. and North Korea and the other parties were within this framework.

Also Hill credited the close work between the U.S. and China for some of the progress. Not only did the U.S. and China have the common goal of denuclearizing the Korean peninsula, he explained, but also the two countries shared a similar strategy and even tactics. Negotiators from both countries worked closely together, even on the text for the agreement.

When he was asked, "What support will you have that will keep this on track?" Hill replied that he had tremendous support from Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. She kept on top of all the details and he would be briefing her shortly on the recent discussions. "I feel I've got a lot of support," he said, "and as long as I can show some results I'll get more support. Diplomatic negotiation is sort of like managing a baseball game. As long as you win, everyone's happy."

Hill emphasized that there would be the need to keep the process moving and showing some progress.

When asked if he had been invited to visit North Korea, Hill said that his counterpart had raised the idea in a general sense but nothing specific had been discussed as they focused on Beijing and the upcoming round of Six-Party Talks.

With regard to how to manage the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, Hill said they discussed how to get experts in on the matter. There would need to be some technical discussions. It was a good step, Hill said, that Director General Mohamed El-Baradei of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had been invited to North Korea and was planning a trip soon.

Hill indicated that the problem with Banco Delta Asia would be solved soon. The U.S. has committed itself to find a solution within the first 30-day period.

Hill stressed that the historical background of the particular situation with North Korea was important to keep in mind and not to draw too many analogies with other situations.

He compared the negotiations to someone always pushing a rock uphill, and the rock always seems to come down to the base of the hill. The discussion he just had with Ambassador Kim, Hill said, reflected the sense that "we can get through this." He had been encouraged by his counterpart to look ahead.

Because the negotiators are getting to know each other from so many different meetings, when issues

come up, they don't need to reiterate points. That way they are able to cover more ground.

The atmosphere in the room during the press conference captured some of the excitement that the negotiations between Hill and Kim were another step toward the fulfillment of the September 2005 Six-Party agreement. This represents significant activity toward the peaceful resolution of the hostility between the U.S. and North Korea that has lingered for the past 50 years, since the days of the Korean war.

[Editor's note: The following article appeared in *OhmyNews International* on March 21, 2007]

North Korea's \$25 Million and Banco Delta Asia

by Ronda Hauben

A little known provision in the U.S. Patriot Act (2001) has been used by the Bush administration against North Korea to freeze \$25 million dollars of its funds and to deny it access to the international banking system and to hard currency. Actions under this provision of the Patriot Act effectively stymied progress in disarmament talks between the U.S., North Korea, South Korea, China, Russia and Japan for over 18 months. North Korea says that only when the seized \$25 million and access to the international banking system are restored is it willing to continue negotiations under the Six-Party agreement concerning security and denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

The little known provision of the Patriot Act is Section 311. It is also known as the "International Money Laundering Abatement and Financial Anti-Terrorism Act of 2001."¹

The original purpose was allegedly related to the prevention, detection and prosecution of money laundering connected to the financing of terrorism. The law has rarely been used for its original purpose. Instead it has been used by the Bush administration as a means of unchecked political power against financial institutions like the Banco Delta Asia. This case has an impact on those nations or institutions who used the bank, like North Korea.

Two other sections of the Patriot Act currently under scrutiny, the use of the Patriot Act to illegally obtain personal information on U.S. citizens, and the use of a provision in the Patriot Act to replace U.S.

Attorneys, have been identified as being used by the Bush administration for expanding and abusing executive power. Section 311 provides another means for sidestepping international and national legal practices and substituting an ad hoc set of processes that leave the victims with no means of due process or defense.

Section 311 has been called by its supporters "a diplomatic sledgehammer that gets results" and by its critics a provision that denies the accused "due process and presumes guilt."

Critics say that this provision of the Patriot Act applies U.S. law to the financial institutions of other countries. In a proceeding under Section 311 of the Patriot Act (2001) the U.S. Treasury Department acts as accuser and judge, in international jurisdictions. Also, often the evidence used by the Treasury Department is classified and thus not available for examination by the accused so that it can't be refuted.

This provision gives the U.S. Treasury the ability to use an Executive Branch administrative procedure rather than a legal proceeding as a way to accuse a financial institution that is part of another nation's regulatory system of wrong doing, and then to find it guilty. Under this provision of the Patriot Act, the accused is denied knowledge of the evidence against it and is denied the right to speak in its own defense. Section 311 of the Patriot Act (2001) was used against the BDA, a small bank in Macau, to freeze substantial financial assets of North Korea and also to deny North Korea access to the international banking system.² The case against the BDA was instituted in September 2005 just after the U.S. had signed the Six-Party agreement.

The accused under Section 311 is presumed to be guilty and the burden falls on it to prove its innocence without being able to know the evidence or charges.³

Invoking Section 311 against the BDA effectively sabotaged the implementation of the Six-Party agreement of September 2005 for 18 months as BDA did not have a process to challenge the Treasury Department action, nor did those whose accounts at the bank had been frozen, like North Korea. It was only after North Korea conducted a missile test in July 2006 and the test of a nuclear device in October 2006, that the Bush administration was willing to agree to negotiations over the Treasury action.

Negotiations in Berlin between the U.S. government and North Korea in January 2007 and then in Beijing in February 2007 with the U.S., South Korea,

China, Russia and Japan, resulted in the Six-Party agreement announced on Feb. 13, 2007.

The difference that most analysts point to in comparing the Feb. 13 2007 Six-Party agreement with the Six-Party agreement of September 2005 is that the more recent agreement includes a series of processes and a time table. The critical difference that has been overlooked, however, is that a requirement of the Feb. 13 agreement was that the U.S. restore the funds that were frozen by the actions of the U.S. Treasury Department. Also North Korea's access to the international financial system was to be restored.

These requirements caused "intense friction" in Washington between officials in the State Department and "officials in the Treasury Department and in the Office of Vice President Dick Cheney who were said to favor maintaining maximum pressure" on North Korea.⁴ There were reports of urgent telephone calls between officials in the State Department and the Treasury. Assistant Secretary of State John Negroponte finally got a decision from the Treasury Department by Friday, March 16. The Treasury Department had ruled against the BDA. U.S. banks would not be allowed to do business with it. The U.S. government announcement said that it would be up to the Macau authorities to decide if they would unfreeze and restore some or all of North Korea's funds.

By the weekend of March 17, a behind the scenes drama continued to unfold. China announced that it regretted the U.S. action. The owner of the Macao bank said he would go to court to attempt to challenge the decision. Getting off the plane in Beijing on Saturday to attend the next stage of Six-Party Talks, Kim Kye-gwan, North Korea's lead negotiator for the Six-Party Talks, told reporters that all of the \$25 million had to be returned if North Korea was to go to the next step of the Six-Party Talks.

Hill announced that he would explain the settlement to the Chinese and North Korean negotiators. China announced that a settlement had been reached but that the details of it couldn't yet be revealed. Subsequently, there was an announcement that all of the \$25 million in funds would be returned to North Korea and deposited in China in an account held by the North Korea's Foreign Trade Bank at the Bank of China in Beijing. U.S. Treasury Secretary Daniel Glaser, in a press conference held with Hill, confirmed the U.S. government decision. It was unknown he said, when the funds would actually be put in the North Korean bank account.

Subsequently, diplomats who were in Beijing to continue the Six-Party Talks told reporters that North Korean diplomats said the funds had to be in the bank account for them to continue with negotiations.

Though there have been many newspaper articles reporting the standoff in the Six-Party Talks caused by the dispute over the use of Section 311 against North Korea, few of the articles provide an understanding of the underlying issues involved. A commentator on BBC, for example, demonstrating a serious lack of understanding of the use of Section 311 and the abuse of power it represents said this is an example of the high price that North Korea will extract for its cooperation in the talks.

It is not without cause then, that in describing the process of the Six-Party Talks Hill compared the process to a video game. He warned: "This process, not unlike a video game gets more and more difficult as you get to different levels."⁵

Notes:

1. <http://www.ratical.org/ratville/CAH/Section301.html>.
2. "Treasury Casts a Wide Net Under Patriot Act." <https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2007/mar/18/treasury-casts-wide-net-under-patriot-act-20070318/>.
3. "The U.S. government has never publicly detailed evidence behind its charges. Nor has it sought to initiate legal action, relying instead on Section 311 of the Patriot Act, which critics say extends U.S. laws to cover other countries." "Bush Administration Plan May Unfreeze North Korean Funds." <https://www.mcclatchydc.com/latest-news/article24461644.html>
4. Warren P Strobel, "Administration Reconsiders Some North Korea Restrictions."
5. Ronda Hauben, "U.S., North Korea Move to Open Ties," *OhmyNews*, March 7, 2007, <http://www.ais.org/~jrh/acn/ACn16-1.pdf>, pp. 13-15.

[Editor's note: The following article first appeared in *OhmyNews International* on May 19, 2007]

Behind the Blacklisting of Banco Delta Asia

by Ronda Hauben

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, speaking at the Korea Society's 50th Anniversary dinner in New York City on May 15, said that he was determined not to "allow \$26 million or \$25 million get between us and a deal that will finally do some-

thing about nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula.” He promised that Kathleen Stephens at the Korea desk at the State Department was working on the problem and that “we are going to keep after this problem till we solve it.” His statement didn’t give further details about how this problem was to be solved, a problem that had interrupted the progress that seemed at last possible in the Feb. 13 Six-Party agreement.¹

Just two days later, on May 17, the U.S. Wachovia Bank announced that it is exploring a request from the State Department to transfer the funds from the BDA (Banco Delta Asia) to North Korea. Wachovia Bank reported that it would require the necessary approvals from bank regulators to do the transfer.

Until this latest announcement, banks have been unwilling to do the transfer because of the legal action that the U.S. government took against the BDA, by ruling that it was involved in criminal activity under Section 311 of the U.S. Patriot Act. Banks which deal with a bank that has been found guilty of such illegal acts risk losing their access to the international financial system. North Korea has said that the denuclearization and other aspects of the Six-Party agreement that it has been part of can only go forward when the BDA situation is resolved. “To make the money transfer possible freely just like before has been our demand... from the beginning,” a spokesperson from North Korea said.²

In his daily press briefing on May 17, Scott McCormack at the U.S. State Department said, “We all want to see the BDA issue resolved, obviously resolved within the laws and regulations of the United States as well as the international financial system, and we’d like to move on and get back to the business of the Six-Party Talks, which is really focused on the issue of denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula.”³

Whether this latest development with Wachovia Bank will provide the needed breakthrough, it is too soon to tell. But there are other developments which may provide the needed pressures on the U.S. government to decriminalize the \$25 million it has frozen of North Korean funds and restore North Korea’s access to the international banking system. Their access was severely impeded by the action that the U.S. Treasury Department took against the BDA.

The developments I am referring to are the release in the public domain of several documents related to the U. S. Treasury Department’s actions against BDA. One of the documents is a sworn state-

ment by the owner of the BDA, Mr. Stanley Au, in support of his petition to revoke the rule imposing the special measures taken by the U.S. Treasury Department against his bank. Another document is the petition in support of his case. Also the Treasury Department finding against the bank has been put online. These documents have been made available on the blog “China Matters.”⁴

In his statement, Au explains the history of his bank’s relations with North Korea and how there was only one experience, which occurred in June 1994, when there was a problem with counterfeit U.S. dollars. At the time, the bank reported this incident to the U.S. government. Agents from the U.S. government came to the bank and questioned Au. He answered their questions and asked if the agents recommended that the bank “desist from doing business with North Korean entities.” The agents said “they would like us to continue to deal with them as it was better that we conducted this business than another financial entity that may not be so cooperative with the United States government.”

Au explains that there was no further experience with counterfeit money showing up in the transactions of the bank. All “large value deposits of U.S. dollar bills from North Korean sources” were sent to the Hong Kong branch of the Republic National Bank of New York (which became HSBC) to be certified that they were authentic via advanced technology possessed by that bank. Smaller quantities of bills were examined in accord with common banking practices by the bank itself.

Au also explains that he had not been approached by U.S. government agents alerting him to any problem or illegal activity. The first he learned that his bank was being charged as a bank engaged in “illicit activities” came when he saw a report in the *Asian Wall Street Journal* in September 2005 that his bank was a candidate for a U.S. money laundering blacklist. He tells how “this news came as a bolt out of the blue – the Bank had never been informed by the United States that its practices were a cause of any money laundering concern, and the counterfeiting event that the media reported as the basis for the designation had occurred more than ten years earlier and had been promptly reported to the authorities by Banco Delta Asia.”⁵

Stanley Au’s statement is in sharp contrast with the account in the U.S. government’s Federal Register of the finding against the bank by the U.S. Treasury

Department.⁶

The Federal Register finding states that the bank had provided financial services for more than 20 years to multiple North Korean-related individuals and entities that were engaged in illicit activities. It provides no specific details of what such illicit activities were. It claims that the entities paid a fee to Banco Delta Asia for their access to the bank. The finding claims that the bank facilitated wire transfers and helped a front company.

In his statement, Stanley Au maintained that the BDA did not charge a fee for its services nor did it conduct illicit services for North Korea or any other customer. The bank was only one of the banks in Macau that did business with North Korea. The business his bank had with North Korea began in the mid 1970s and was to assist North Korea with its foreign trade transactions. Also Au described North Korea as a gold producing country and that in the late 1990s the bank had acted as a “gold bullion trader on behalf of the North Koreans”. Also the BDA bought or sold foreign currency notes for North Korea, including U.S. dollars, because North Korea had a limited banking system and so it couldn’t do such transactions itself (see Statement, pp. 3-4).

The petition submitted to the U.S. Dept of the Treasury to challenge the finding against BDA proposes that BDA was targeted not because of any “voluminous” evidence of money laundering but “because it was an easy target in the sense that it was not so large that its failure would bring down the financial system.”⁷

In the substantial and prolific analysis of the BDA problem that has been developed on the blog “China Matters”, there is the assessment that North Korea has legitimate financial activity and that the BDA was legitimately serving as one of the banks for that activity. Even with the UN’s sanctions, it was not appropriate to target for blacklisting the legitimate financial activities of North Korea. The sanctions that the UN-imposed against North Korea were to be aimed at its activity that was related to nuclear weapon development, not to normal financial transactions.

The author of China Matters blog writes⁸:

“The alternative view...is that legitimate North Korean financial activity does exist, BDA had a right to solicit North Korean accounts and handle North Korean transactions, and Stanley Au should be allowed to run his bank as long as he conforms to the laws of his jurisdiction – and

(the bank) not be used as a political football in Washington’s dealings with Pyongyang.”

To put it more succinctly, the blog China Matters quotes David Ascher, who had been the coordinator for the Bush Administration working group on North Korea and a senior adviser in East Asian affairs in the State Department, in testimony to the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade on April 18, 2007, explaining why Banco Delta was chosen to be blacklisted from the international banking system:⁹

“Banco Delta was a symbolic target. We were trying to kill the chicken to scare the monkeys. And the monkeys were big Chinese banks doing business in North Korea... and we’re not talking about tens of millions, we’re talking hundreds of millions.”

The purpose of the action against the BDA appears not only to have been to target North Korea and its access to the international banking system, but also to send a message to China.

Therefore it would appear that the action against BDA is a carefully crafted political action and that it will be necessary that there be public understanding, discussion and debate about what is behind this action in order to find a way to have the policy that gave rise to the BDA action changed.

Instead of the U.S. mainstream press carrying out the needed investigation about why BDA has been targeted and what is behind this action, there have been continual condemnations of North Korea. Fortunately there are journalists like those who work with the McClatchy News Service who have made an effort to probe what is happening behind-the-scenes in the BDA affair and blogs like China Matters which have taken the time and care to begin uncovering what the BDA affair is really all about. This is but one of the stories of what is really going on behind the scenes within the U.S. government that has been hidden from the public. This is one of the stories yet to be unraveled by bloggers, and citizen journalists.¹⁰

Notes:

1. Ronda Hauben, “North Korea’s \$25 Million and Banco Delta Asia,” OhmyNews, March 7, 2007, <http://www.ais.org/~jrh/acn/ACn16-1.pdf>, pp. 15-16.
2. “North Korea says work to transfer bank funds under way,” *AFP*, May 15, 2007. https://www.spacewar.com/reports/North_Korea_Says_Work_To_Transfer_Bank_Funds_Under_Way_999.html.

3. Scott McCormack, Daily Press Briefing, Washington DC, May 17, 2007.
 4. China Matters Blogspot, "Bank owner disputes money-laundering allegations."
<http://chinamatters.blogspot.com/2007/05/stanley-au-makes-his-case-for-banco.html>.
 5. Statement of Mr. Stanley Au in Support of Petition to Revoke Rule Imposing Special Measures Against Banco Delta Asia, p. 7. See also Kevin G. Hall, "Bank owner disputes money-laundering allegations," McClatchy Newspapers, May 16, 2007.
<https://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/article/24463246.html>.
 6. Department of the Treasury, 31 CFR Part 103/ RIN 1506-AA83, Federal Register, Vol 72, No. 52, Monday, March 19, 2007, Rules and Regulations.
 7. Petition of Mr. Stanley Au and Delta Asia Group (Holdings) Ltd. to Rescind Final Rule, p. 12.
 8. "Stanley Au Makes His Case for Banco Delta Asia," Tuesday, May 15, 2007.
<http://chinamatters.blogspot.com/2007/05/stanley-au-makes-his-case-for-banco.html>.
 9. "David Asher's Dead End," Saturday, April 28, 2007.
<http://chinamatters.blogspot.com/2007/04/david-ashers-dead-end.html>.
- See also "China's Proliferation to North Korea and Iran, and its role in addressing the nuclear and missile situations in both nations," Hearing, Sept 14, 2006, Nov. 2006, p. 115-116.
<https://www.uscc.gov/hearings/hearing-chinas-proliferation-north-korea-and-iran-and-its-role-addressing-nuclear-and>.
10. Ronda Hauben, "Bill Moyers and the Emergence of U.S. Citizen Journalism: Power of government creates need for investigative news."
<https://nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-0705/msg00006.html>.

The above article can be seen at:

<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-policy-forum/behind-the-blacklisting-of-banco-delta-asia/>

[Editor's Note: The following article first appeared on OhmyNews on July 12, 2006.]

Netizens Are Critical to Citizen Journalism

by Ronda Hauben

It is with a smile that I prepare today to go to Korea and the 2006 *OhmyNews International* Citizen Reporters' Forum.

When leaving the forum last year I remember having a conversation with one of the citizen reporters. She said she had been thinking and felt that perhaps one of the most important aspects of citizen journalism was that there are netizens, people online who have

find that the Internet is helpful in their efforts and desire to make the world a better place.

She felt that it was from the netizens that the significant aspects of citizen journalism will develop. She told me she wanted to be sure to share this with me before she left the forum.

I first came to learn about OhmyNews in 2003 when I saw an article in the Financial Times that said the "netizens" in South Korea had made it possible to elect the President of the country. This made me curious and I wanted to learn what I could about what had happened.

From Korean friends online and off I came to know about OhmyNews. A Korean friend showed me the Korean edition, which was all there was in 2003, and she translated some of the many comments there were on different articles.

She encouraged me to write to founder Oh Yeon-ho with my questions about OhmyNews.

I probably did try to write an email and sent it, but don't remember exactly and didn't at the time get an answer. Instead Mr. Oh, it seems, was preparing to do an English edition so that the many people who were interested in OhmyNews but who couldn't read Korean would still get an idea of the idea of citizen journalism.

A little while later, a netizen I met online said she would submit an article I had written about the Howard Dean campaign in the U.S. to OhmyNews. In it I compared Dean's election campaign to the campaign for the presidency of South Korea. She translated it into Korean, and it appeared in both English and Korean in an issue of the Korean OhmyNews in March of 2004.

This all raises an important question for me that I hope will be considered at the 2006 forum: How is the spread of OhmyNews and *OhmyNews International* connected to the fight for democracy? The fact that the birth of the Korean edition of OMN was connected to the continuing fight for democracy in South Korea seems an important aspect of any effort to spread the lessons from the Korean OhmyNews to other publications and to other countries.

The netizens of South Korea who contributed their articles as citizen reporters when OMN began and who continued to contribute the articles as it grew, are a factor that is to be considered and understood. Also, it seems there was a staff for the newspaper which not only encouraged the submissions, but who also helped to cover the developments in the fight for more democ-

racy in Korea for the young newspaper.

I have found that learning about and understanding the developments in the Korean fight for more democracy is an encouragement to continue working with OhmyNews. I often wish that OhmyNews would have more of the articles from the Korean version of the newspaper translated into English to be part of the English edition. That way there would be more knowledge of what is happening in Korea among those who read and write for the International edition of the newspaper.

Next year is the 20th anniversary of the victory of the 1987 revolution in South Korea. Perhaps in honor of this event OhmyNews can find a way to share more of the events of the Korean democratization efforts with those who can only read the English edition.

I often wonder if there is any way there could be an American version of OhmyNews which would be a champion in the fight against the conservative press and politics that dominate U.S. society. It seems so difficult to consider this possibility here in the U.S. as the conservative forces are so strong and pervasive.

It seems that they would find a way to impose the need to make money on whatever was created, rather than recognizing the need to have a social purpose as the critical thrust. This is why I feel it is so important to have some knowledge of how OhmyNews grew out of the progressive movement in South Korea. It is important to remember that an early goal of Mr. Oh was to create a media culture in which “the quality of news determined whether it won or lost,” not the power and prestige of the media organization that printed the article.

Last year’s forum was a very memorable experience. There are many special events I recall, but the most special was after I gave the brief talk I had been invited to give. Several citizen reporters for the Korean edition of OhmyNews came to embrace me and thank me for the talk. The talk I gave was about the online research of Michael Hauben in 1992-1993 which discovered that the Net was encouraging people to be able to participate as citizens in a way previously impossible.

This research – observing what was developing on the Net – resulted in the concept of “netizen.” The continuing spread of the Net and the netizens are symbolized by “netizens” I met during last year’s OMNI forum. They, in turn, are a tribute to and an encouragement for the spread of OMNI’s great experiment.

[Editor’s Note: The following article first appeared in *OhmyNews International* on October 24, 2006.]

The Future of the Korean Peninsula

by Ronda Hauben

A seminar about the problems of the Korean Peninsula with the Korean Ambassador to the UN, Choi Young-jin, was held at Columbia University in New York, on Thursday, Oct. 19.¹ Ambassador Choi opened the seminar by presenting what he proposed as a framework in which to understand the current problems facing the peninsula, the primary one of which is how to understand North Korea.

The world, Choi proposed, is divided into countries that are interdependent or isolated. The U.S. is the most interdependent country in the world. He gave North Korea as an example of an isolated country. What is happening in the Korean peninsula, he said, is a microcosm of the problems the world is facing in the 21st century.

There is a North–South divide, and the Korean peninsula is characteristic of this divide, only the characteristics that are represented by countries of the North and South are reversed. The divide is one of “haves” and “have nots.” North Korea is an example of the countries of the South, which are countries in economic difficulty. At the heart of the question of North Korea, Choi proposed, is the dilemma of “political survival and economic revival.”

North Korea’s factories are only running at 20-30 percent of capacity. Electricity production is a problem. North Korea, he explained, cannot survive such economic difficulties. How then is it possible to revive its economy? The only way, Choi explained, was to accept trade. Like Vietnam, North Korea needs to open up its society and accept trade with other countries. According to Choi, the threat for North Korea is an internal threat, the threat of self-imposed isolation.

Choi proposed, however, that North Korea, on its own could not choose to change this situation. That unless a peaceful means could be found to help change the situation, the problem faced by North Korea becomes the problem of the international community.

“How do you manage this complex problem?”

he asked. He proposed two different approaches, one that the U.S. was pursuing and one that China was taking. The U.S., he explained, is geographically distant from North Korea and so it would not be affected if there was a clash with North Korea. Thus the U.S. position was to promote "containment with engagement." The U.S. position is that North Korea cannot be accepted as a nuclear state. It advocated sanctions including the interdiction of North Korean cargo suspected of being related to its nuclear program.

What if, however, it was Mexico not North Korea that had become a nuclear state and threatened to sell nuclear technology to other countries? If the country the U.S. was dealing with was geographically closer to the U.S., what would be the U.S. policy then? Would the U.S. accept interdiction of suspected cargo if it could lead to a military clash?

Choi described the second approach, the approach that China was taking. Since China is so close, if a clash happened, the first victim would be China not the U.S. Similarly, South Korea is geographically close to North Korea. China and South Korea have a lot to lose if something happens. That is why China insisted that the sanctions not be military, but only under Article 41 of Chapter 7 of the United Nations Charter. Also China favored that the interdiction of suspected cargo would not be "mandatory" but "as necessary."

The situation, however, Choi explained, is murky. He asked if North Korea knows what it wants. Also for China and South Korea the desire is that North Korea not be a nuclear state. They want co-existence and that the Korean peninsula be a nuclear free peninsula. He also raised the question of whether the other countries who had been involved in the six-party talks had a strategy. No country appeared to have a clear strategy. The situation appeared dangerous because an explosion would affect the whole region.

The program was opened for questions from the people attending the seminar. The first question was about an article in the Oct. 16 issue of the German publication *Der Spiegel*. The writer quoted an anonymous source that said that North Korea had asked China to guarantee that if it were attacked, it would retaliate on behalf of North Korea. North Korea would have stopped developing its nuclear weapons if the Chinese had agreed to this request. The question was whether Choi knew anything about this report.

Choi's response was that he didn't know

anything about this report but that he didn't think that North Korea saw its major problem as security. His view was that North Korea wanted economic assistance, economic cash.

Professor Samuel Kim, who had introduced the speaker, disagreed that North Korea was not concerned with its national security. Kim referred to an account by Ambassador Charles "Jack" Pritchard. Pritchard said that he was struck by something that Kim Jong Il said to Madeleine Albright about the importance of security to North Korea. When comparing the experience of China and North Korea regarding economic development, Kim Jong Il explained that China had been able to focus its resources on economic development because it didn't face any security threat. North Korea, however, saw the U.S. as threatening its security and so could not focus its efforts on economic development. North Korea felt it was under a U.S. nuclear threat, and had been for the past 50 years, going back to the period of the Korean War.

Responding to a comment that North Korea had not supported coming to an agreement in the 2005 six-party talks, Professor Kim explained that it was the U.S. not North Korea that was the problem. No sooner was the ink dry, the U.S. imposed financial sanctions on North Korea. These sanctions created a financial stranglehold. Even during the talks, it was the U.S. that was the holdout. It took the U.S. a few days to sign the agreement reached during the six-party talks, and it only did so when it was threatened that the fact it was the U.S. which was delaying the signing of the agreement would be made public.

Answering a question about the fact that a significant percentage of the South Korean population sees the U.S. as responsible for the North Korean nuclear test, Choi explained that people in South Korea are divided over how to deal with the situation. The official position of the URI party in South Korea, is that the U.S. is to blame. Many people in South Korea think of North Korea as a brother. Others see the U.S. as an ally and North Korea as an enemy. The framework he gave at the beginning of the seminar, however, is intended to establish that there is a genuine problem and that the U.S. is forced to work within the context of this genuine problem.

Choi was asked whether it would help that the new secretary-general of the United Nations was from South Korea. He answered that he believed it would definitely help as South Korea has an understanding of the need to work with North Korea.

In response to the question whether any country had previously changed from pursuing nuclear ambitions because of sanctions, some examples were given of countries like Brazil and Argentina which responded to packages that included security guarantees and economic incentives. Another comment made by a participant in the seminar was that it was important that South Korea continue its economic relations with North Korea. It was important for North Korea to be able to make a legitimate living exporting legitimate products and not be forced by sanctions or a boycott to turn to military exports.

One of the problems raised during the question period was that North Korea is looking toward the U.S. not South Korea for a way to solve the problems. Criticism of the U.S. was mounting for not being willing to talk with North Korea. The North Korean focus on the U.S. could be seen perhaps as a fatal attraction.

Responding to the characterization of North Korea as having trouble making strategic decisions, Professor Kim expressed his disagreement. He pointed to the decision by North Korea in 1994 to enter into the Agreed Framework with the U.S., and then the decision to launch the missile test, and the test of a nuclear weapon. These were offered as examples that North Korea was quite capable of making what it deemed strategic decisions.

The seminar provided the participants with an opportunity to exchange views and concerns over what is happening in Northeast Asia. The issues were considered with a seriousness and concern that was encouraging. The discussion in the seminar resulted in recognition of North Korea's concern over the threat it perceives from the U.S., both militarily and economically. The actions of the U.S. toward North Korea coupled with the fact that North Korea therefore feels the need to have a way to respond to the hostile acts, results in a tense situation. The nations that share geographic proximity with North Korea find themselves faced with an increasingly unstable situation. The actions of the U.S. and the pressures from the U.S. on the countries that are in geographic proximity to North Korea, have as their result intensified instability rather than the amelioration of the instability.

The seminar demonstrated the importance of serious discussion among those who are concerned for the safety and stability of the Korean Peninsula. Ambassador Choi Young-jin, Professor Samuel Kim, and those who attended the seminar, all contributed to

creating an environment where fruitful discussion was welcomed. This is an encouraging sign that with the efforts of concerned people, perhaps the issues involved can be clarified, and the needed action can be taken to support a just resolution of the problems that have contributed to the current crisis.

[Editor's Note: The following article first appeared in *Telepolis* on August 13, 2006. The title on *Telepolis* is "The OMNI Citizen Reporter's Forum".]

Citizen Journalism, Past and Future

by Ronda Hauben

I recently returned from visiting Korea and attending the *OhmyNews International* Citizen Reporters' Forum 2006. It was the second such forum. (Read more here.) OhmyNews invited 60 citizen reporters or others who were involved with citizen journalism. The forum itself was held July 12-15.

The forum featured a range of speakers. Some like Timothy Lord of Slashdot.com and Craig Newmark of Craigslist.com are active in various online activities in the U.S., even if they are not directly connected with citizen journalism. Also, there were sessions of talks by citizen reporters from different countries around the world. All the formal sessions of the forum are online at the OhmyNews Website.

The context in which OhmyNews was created is important to keep in mind when thinking about the forum and the trend of citizen journalism that OhmyNews has pioneered. South Korea leads the world in the spread of broadband Internet access to its population. Over 80 percent of households have broadband connections at home. Online discussion and activity play a prominent role among Korean netizens and are a catalyst for offline actions. (Read more here.)

The South Korean struggle for democracy continues after its relatively recent victory in the June 1987 democratic revolution over the military junta. The creation of the Korean edition of OhmyNews in 2000 was seen as a part of the struggle for more democracy and against the conservative forces that continue to be active in Korean politics and society.

When I arrived in Korea on Wednesday, July 12, there was a major demonstration in downtown Seoul protesting the Korean-U.S. negotiations over a

bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The demonstration is said to have included 50,000 protesters despite the heavy rains and despite the fact that there were approximately 20,000 Korean police surrounding the demonstration site.

A week later the FTA talks in Seoul broke down temporarily to the relief of many in Korea. Opposition to the FTA is strong due to concerns about the harmful impact many believe a free trade agreement with the U.S. will have on the Korean economy. (Read more here.) The large anti-FTA demonstration was a sign of the continuing struggle for democracy in Korea.

When the *OhmyNews International* forum opened on Wednesday evening, we were told that citizen reporters from 20 countries were attending the forum. And that the number of countries in which OhmyNews has citizen reporters increased from 50 the previous year to 91. There are currently 1,200 citizen reporters for the international edition, and the most recent who registered at the time were from Lebanon and Cuba.

An investment in *OhmyNews International* by the Japanese company Softbank, announced a few months earlier, was intended in part to make it possible to spread the OhmyNews model to other countries. OhmyNews is planning to launch an OhmyNews Japan on Aug. 28 as its first effort to develop a version of OhmyNews in another country.

I later learned from the editor-in-chief of the international edition, Hong Eun-taek, that there is a thought about increasing articles from little reported areas of the world and offering OhmyNews as a news-wire to interested media. An announcement at the Wednesday evening session of the forum explained that the *International Herald Tribune* newspaper (*IHT*) will include feeds of three sections of OhmyNews in its online edition, the “sports” section, “entertainment” section, and the “technology” section. Also, 10 headlines from *IHT* appear on the front pages of OhmyNews.

On Thursday, the first full day of the forum, I was fortunate to have lunch with Professor Yoon Young-chul, a journalism professor from Yonsei University. He introduced me to one of his former students. She is a researcher doing her Ph.D. thesis on the role of the Korean edition of OhmyNews in initiating the candlelight demonstrations in 2002.¹

The role that OhmyNews has played in the democratic struggles in Korea and similarly the role

that the democratic struggles have played in the evolution of OhmyNews is an important factor in the origin and development of the online newspaper. This was the subject we discussed during the lunch breaks.

OhmyNews developed in Korea as an online media able to challenge the entrenched conservative press. What are the elements of OhmyNews that made it possible to succeed in this endeavor? One aspect I learned from the researcher, was the role played by Oh Yeon-ho, the founder of OhmyNews. When he announced he would start OhmyNews, she explained, he was already well known and respected by progressive people who were therefore willing to be part of the effort. (Read more here.) Hence he was a person who was able to get the needed netizen support for OhmyNews from its earliest days.

Oh Yeon-ho's opening remarks at the forum helped to highlight the democratic tradition of the Website. He explained that the key to spreading the OhmyNews model was to find citizen reporters who were “passionately committed to social change and reporting.” It is these citizen reporters, he said, who “make our project possible.”

This issue was again raised during Session 7 held on Friday, July 14. In this session, there were presentations about two citizen reporter sites which had been inspired by OhmyNews.

The Danish site Flix.dk was started in 2003 after its founder, Erik Larsen, a journalist and writer, read an article about OhmyNews in *Wired* magazine. This was before the English edition of OhmyNews. Larsen went to a Korean translator to learn as much as he could about the site. In November 2003 he started Flix.dk with two colleagues. Flix.dk functions on a nonprofit basis though Larsen constantly faces the need to raise adequate funds to keep going. But Larsen is also wary of being tied to a business model. He feels it is important to be able to learn and build on the actual developments as they unfold on Flix.dk.

Also during Session 7, Michael Weiss presented his Israeli Website Scoop.co.il. Weiss started Scoop.co.il after he returned to Israel from the OhmyNews forum last year. He was able to get funding from a venture capitalist for his startup.

Both Larsen and Weiss said they planned to open an English section of their online sites. As soon as Larsen returned to Denmark after the *OMNI* forum, a small English section was set up.

Probably the most critical issue facing the Korean OhmyNews, according to people I spoke with,

was how the frustration among progressive people in Korea would affect OhmyNews' future. Low voter turnout in the recent local elections resulted in the victory of the candidates from the Grand National Party (GNP), a conservative coalition.

Many young people and other progressive forces were part of the democratic coalition that backed the relatively unknown politician Roh Moo-hyun for the presidency in 2002. OhmyNews played an important role in the successful election campaign. After Roh won the election, however, many of those who were part of his online election campaign were disappointed by the neoliberal policies of his administration.

For some in the progressive community in Korea, this disappointment may be translated into disillusionment with politics. Others, however, are actively considering what lessons can be learned from recent events.

The situation in Korea is dynamic. The widespread broadband internet access and cell phone use means that there is a vibrant online community. Previously many of the democratic forces utilized the Internet in their struggles challenging the offline institutions and their influence. More recently, however, conservative forces are more and more using the Internet. Thus some feel that the online environment is becoming ever more contentious.

Whether online media like OhmyNews can support and champion progressive news and opinion in the changing online environment is a question raised during some of the conversations I had while in Korea.

Another serious problem reflected at the forum was how to fund online media like OhmyNews or Flix and how the form of funding impacts the content and form. One of the strengths of *OhmyNews International* is that it pays a fee to citizen reporters. The fee is the equivalent of \$20 an article if the article appears on the front page. How to fund this and other expenses as *OhmyNews International* scales to encompass a worldwide audience is a problem that was raised.

One of the speakers at the forum, Dan Gillmor, recently announced the end of Bayosphere, his experiment in citizen journalism. Bayosphere was initially funded by a venture capital investment. Gillmor wrote that one of the reasons for its failure was the focus on the business model before the development of a viable online site.

Though there were no formal references to what caused the failure of Bayosphere during Gillmor's

presentation at the 2006 forum, some felt this subject would have been a helpful area of discussion.

The Korean edition of OhmyNews is funded in part by reader contributions, in part by advertising, and in part by the sale of content. Recently Softbank purchased a 12 percent share in OhmyNews in return for an \$11 million investment. This investment gives Softbank a role in the development of OhmyNews. How this will impact the continuing development of the site is an issue for continuing attention.

After the forum, I had dinner with some of the staff of OhmyNews, Alex Krabbe, an *OhmyNews International* citizen reporter from Germany, and Larsen from Flix.dk. We spoke about what kind of alternative news media is needed to respond to the crisis that the mainstream press is facing in countries like the U.S. and Denmark. What are the issues that need to be covered? Would it be possible for citizen reporters working together to cover important stories, especially stories where the voice of the powerless and the victims are ignored by the mainstream media?

While at the forum I spoke briefly with Oh Yeon-ho. I asked what he had been doing to recruit citizen reporters in Japan, as I wondered if there were lessons to learn to make it possible to start a version of OhmyNews for the U.S. Oh described giving talks to students in Japan and getting a favorable response. Also, he asked me for my definition of "netizen." I described how the concept grew out of the pioneering online research by Michael Hauben in 1992-1993, namely that it was a way of describing those online users who had adopted a social purpose and practice to spread the Internet as a participatory environment to all who wanted access. (Read more here.)

In response to my question about how to start an OhmyNews in the U.S., Oh suggested writing a proposal. This poses an interesting challenge for those interested in creating a U.S. version of OhmyNews, the challenge to develop a proposal for what would be desirable as a form of OhmyNews for the U.S.

A recent article in the journal, *Media, Culture and Society* about OhmyNews helps to identify the salient problem facing *OhmyNews International* editors and contributors.³ The article raises the question of how to view alternative media that are a hybrid of progressive and commercial practices. The authors caution against jumping to conclusions about whether a publication can maintain a progressive nature even if it is funded by a commercial mechanism like advertising.

Likewise they caution against automatically considering a publication progressive if it welcomes a broad range of content. Instead they note the tension experienced by alternative publications between the need to find a means of funding and the need to nourish progressive content and purpose.

An example of this problem was reflected in the talks given by different citizen reporters at the *OhmyNews International* forum. Ramzy Baroud, a Palestinian and Lily Yulianti from Indonesia, for example, gave talks describing the importance of accurate presentations in the media of the conditions of the Palestinians and of Muslims.

Baroud explained that he grew up in a Palestinian refugee camp. He told the story of his father who would listen to BBC radio whenever he could. It was very important to his father to hear what was being reported about the Palestinian struggle, though often the reports were inaccurate. Baroud explained how he had come to feel that having accurate reports of what was happening, of the situation, were critical to making it possible for there to be any improvement in the plight of those who try to oppose unbridled power.

Baroud also discussed the need for online media to provide a public sphere to oppose globalization and the crimes of globalization. These presentations provided a contrast to an earlier presentation by Gregory Daigle from the U.S. about how he was able to get over 50,000 hits on one of his OhmyNews articles when it was picked up by Digg.com and how citizen reporters should aim to gear their articles so they will get lots of hits.

The need for advertising dollars for alternative media like OhmyNews means that there is a tendency to focus on how to get more advertising. Yet there are already many publications focusing on getting lots of hits and lots of advertising dollars. If an alternative publication loses sight of the need to nourish its progressive content and purpose, however, it loses its reason for being.

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A week later the FTA talks in Seoul broke down temporarily to the relief of many in Korea. Opposition to the FTA is strong due to concerns about the harmful impact many believe a free trade agreement with the U.S. will have on the Korean economy. (Read more here.) The large anti-FTA demonstration was a sign of the continuing struggle for democracy in Korea.

When the *OhmyNews International* forum opened on Wednesday evening, we were told that citizen reporters from 20 countries were attending the forum. And that the number of countries in which OhmyNews has citizen reporters increased from 50 the previous year to 91. There are currently 1,200 citizen reporters for the international edition, and the most recent who registered at the time were from Lebanon and Cuba.

An investment in *OhmyNews International* by the Japanese company Softbank, announced a few months earlier, was intended in part to make it possible to spread the OhmyNews model to other countries. OhmyNews is planning to launch an OhmyNews Japan

on Aug. 28 as its first effort to develop a version of OhmyNews in another country.

I later learned from the editor-in-chief of the international edition, Hong Eun-taek, that there is a thought about increasing articles from little reported areas of the world and offering OhmyNews as a news-wire to interested media. An announcement at the Wednesday evening session of the forum explained that the *International Herald Tribune* newspaper (*IHT*) will include feeds of three sections of OhmyNews in its online edition, the “sports” section, “entertainment” section, and the “technology” section. Also, 10 headlines from *IHT* appear on the front pages of OhmyNews.

On Thursday, the first full day of the forum, I was fortunate to have lunch with Professor Yoon Young-chul, a journalism professor from Yonsei University. He introduced me to one of his former students. She is a researcher doing her Ph.D. thesis on the role of the Korean edition of OhmyNews in initiating the candlelight demonstrations in 2002.²

The role that OhmyNews has played in the democratic struggles in Korea and similarly the role that the democratic struggles have played in the evolution of OhmyNews is an important factor in the origin and development of the online newspaper. This was the subject we discussed during the lunch breaks.

OhmyNews developed in Korea as an online media able to challenge the entrenched conservative press. What are the elements of OhmyNews that made it possible to succeed in this endeavor? One aspect I learned from the researcher, was the role played by Oh Yeon-ho, the founder of OhmyNews. When he announced he would start OhmyNews, she explained, he was already well known and respected by progressive people who were therefore willing to be part of the effort. (Read more here.) Hence he was a person who was able to get the needed netizen support for OhmyNews from its earliest days.

Oh Yeon-ho's opening remarks at the forum helped to highlight the democratic tradition of the Website. He explained that the key to spreading the OhmyNews model was to find citizen reporters who were “passionately committed to social change and reporting.” It is these citizen reporters, he said, who “make our project possible.”

This issue was again raised during Session 7 held on Friday, July 14. In this session, there were presentations about two citizen reporter sites which had been inspired by OhmyNews.

The Danish site Flix.dk was started in 2003 after its founder, Erik Larsen, a journalist and writer, read an article about OhmyNews in *Wired* magazine. This was before the English edition of OhmyNews. Larsen went to a Korean translator to learn as much as he could about the site. In November 2003 he started Flix.dk with two colleagues. Flix.dk functions on a nonprofit basis though Larsen constantly faces the need to raise adequate funds to keep going. But Larsen is also wary of being tied to a business model. He feels it is important to be able to learn and build on the actual developments as they unfold on Flix.dk.

Also during Session 7, Michael Weiss presented his Israeli website Scoop.co.il. Weiss started Scoop.co.il after he returned to Israel from the OhmyNews forum last year. He was able to get funding from a venture capitalist for his startup.

Both Larsen and Weiss said they planned to open an English section of their online sites. As soon as Larsen returned to Denmark after the *OMNI* forum, a small English section was set up.

Probably the most critical issue facing the Korean OhmyNews, according to people I spoke with, was how the frustration among progressive people in Korea would affect OhmyNews' future. Low voter turnout in the recent local elections resulted in the victory of the candidates from the Grand National Party (GNP), a conservative coalition.

Many young people and other progressive forces were part of the democratic coalition that backed the relatively unknown politician Roh Moo-hyun for the presidency in 2002. OhmyNews played an important role in the successful election campaign. After Roh won the election, however, many of those who were part of his online election campaign were disappointed by the neoliberal policies of his administration.

For some in the progressive community in Korea, this disappointment may be translated into disillusionment with politics. Others, however, are actively considering what lessons can be learned from recent events.

The situation in Korea is dynamic. The widespread broadband internet access and cell phone use means that there is a vibrant online community. Previously many of the democratic forces utilized the Internet in their struggles challenging the offline institutions and their influence. More recently, however, conservative forces are more and more using the Internet. Thus some feel that the online environment is

becoming ever more contentious.

Whether online media like OhmyNews can support and champion progressive news and opinion in the changing online environment is a question raised during some of the conversations I had while in Korea.

Another serious problem reflected at the forum was how to fund online media like OhmyNews or Flix and how the form of funding impacts the content and form. One of the strengths of *OhmyNews International* is that it pays a fee to citizen reporters. The fee is the equivalent of \$20 an article if the article appears on the front page. How to fund this and other expenses as *OhmyNews International* scales to encompass a worldwide audience is a problem that was raised.

One of the speakers at the forum, Dan Gillmor, recently announced the end of Bayosphere, his experiment in citizen journalism. Bayosphere was initially funded by a venture capital investment. Gillmor wrote that one of the reasons for its failure was the focus on the business model before the development of a viable online site.

Though there were no formal references to what caused the failure of Bayosphere during Gillmor's presentation at the 2006 forum, some felt this subject would have been a helpful area of discussion.

The Korean edition of OhmyNews is funded in part by reader contributions, in part by advertising, and in part by the sale of content. Recently Softbank purchased a 12 percent share in OhmyNews in return for an \$11 million investment. This investment gives Softbank a role in the development of OhmyNews. How this will impact the continuing development of the site is an issue for continuing attention.

After the forum, I had dinner with some of the staff of OhmyNews, Alex Krabbe, an *OhmyNews International* citizen reporter from Germany, and Larsen from Flix.dk. We spoke about what kind of alternative news media is needed to respond to the crisis that the mainstream press is facing in countries like the U.S. and Denmark. What are the issues that need to be covered? Would it be possible for citizen reporters working together to cover important stories, especially stories where the voice of the powerless and the victims are ignored by the mainstream media?

While at the forum I spoke briefly with Oh Yeon-ho. I asked what he had been doing to recruit citizen reporters in Japan, as I wondered if there were lessons to learn to make it possible to start a version of OhmyNews for the U.S. Oh described giving talks to

students in Japan and getting a favorable response. Also, he asked me for my definition of "netizen." I described how the concept grew out of the pioneering online research by Michael Hauben in 1992-1993, namely that it was a way of describing those online users who had adopted a social purpose and practice to spread the Internet as a participatory environment to all who wanted access. (Read more here.)

In response to my question about how to start an OhmyNews in the U.S., Oh suggested writing a proposal. This poses an interesting challenge for those interested in creating a U.S. version of OhmyNews, the challenge to develop a proposal for what would be desirable as a form of OhmyNews for the U.S.

A recent article in the journal, *Media, Culture and Society* about OhmyNews helps to identify the salient problem facing *OhmyNews International* editors and contributors.³ The article raises the question of how to view alternative media that are a hybrid of progressive and commercial practices. The authors caution against jumping to conclusions about whether a publication can maintain a progressive nature even if it is funded by a commercial mechanism like advertising.

Likewise they caution against automatically considering a publication progressive if it welcomes a broad range of content. Instead they note the tension experienced by alternative publications between the need to find a means of funding and the need to nourish progressive content and purpose.

An example of this problem was reflected in the talks given by different citizen reporters at the *OhmyNews International* forum. Ramzy Baroud, a Palestinian and Lily Yulianti from Indonesia, for example, gave talks describing the importance of accurate presentations in the media of the conditions of the Palestinians and of Muslims.

Baroud explained that he grew up in a Palestinian refugee camp. He told the story of his father who would listen to BBC radio whenever he could. It was very important to his father to hear what was being reported about the Palestinian struggle, though often the reports were inaccurate. Baroud explained how he had come to feel that having accurate reports of what was happening, of the situation, were critical to making it possible for there to be any improvement in the plight of those who try to oppose unbridled power.

Baroud also discussed the need for online media to provide a public sphere to oppose globalization and the crimes of globalization. These presenta-

tions provided a contrast to an earlier presentation by Gregory Daigle from the U.S. about how he was able to get over 50,000 hits on one of his OhmyNews articles when it was picked up by Digg.com and how citizen reporters should aim to gear their articles so they will get lots of hits.

The need for advertising dollars for alternative media like OhmyNews means that there is a tendency to focus on how to get more advertising. Yet there are already many publications focusing on getting lots of hits and lots of advertising dollars. If an alternative publication loses sight of the need to nourish its progressive content and purpose, however, it loses its reason for being.

This article was written for *Telepolis*.

NOTES

1. The demonstrations were against the decision of the U.S. military court marshal that acquitted two U.S. soldiers whose armoured vehicle had killed two Korean middle school girls. Also the demonstrations were against the agreement that the U.S. has with Korea that means that crimes committed in the course of military duty fall under the jurisdiction of the U.S. justice system, not the Korean.

2. Several months ago there was an online struggle over the scientific work of a famous Korean stem cell research scientist Hwang Woo Suk. When questions were raised about his research in a televised investigative report, an online fan club to support him was formed. The advertisers of the TV program were pressured by Hwang's supporters to withdraw their advertising from the program. A wind in support of him was stirred up online.

But also online were those who discussed his research and demonstrated how it was fraudulent. And there were those online who spread the understanding of the fraud. Thus despite a harsh attack on those challenging the scientific work, the fraudulent nature of the work was uncovered.

3. Eun-Gyoo Kim and James W. Hamilton, "Capitulation to Capitalism: OhmyNews as alternative media?", *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol 28, No. 4, p. 541-560.

[Editor's Note: The following article first appeared in *OhmyNews International* on October 17, 2006.]

The Problem Facing the UN

by Ronda Hauben

The official selection on Oct. 13, 2006 of Ban Ki-moon of South Korea as the new secretary general of the United Nations could not come at a more pro-

pitious time. Why, one may ask? Hailing from the Republic of Korea (South Korea), Ban will have before him the daunting task of bringing the best possible contributions from the international community to bear on many of the difficult problems that erupt in the world. Along with his appointment to the post at the UN this past week, and the congratulations from diplomats from many regions of the world at a ceremony held at the General Assembly, was the event that took place the following day: the imposition of Article 41, Chapter 7 sanctions on North Korea by the Security Council as punishment for the test of a nuclear device several days earlier.

Though Ban does not take office for his new position until Jan. 1, 2007, a crisis has already developed that will require the best efforts and resources he can muster. In congratulating him on his selection, several of the diplomats noted the great achievements of South Korea in having transformed itself from "the status of least developed country, to an industrialized highly developed nation" and "as the 11th largest economy in the world" (in the words of Gambian Ambassador to the UN Crispin Grey-Johnson). Speaking about Ban, Grey-Johnson, who is chairman of the African regional group at the UN, "the developments in his own region of the world call for wisdom and cautious diplomacy" in order to be able to "mediate this very complex security situation that is now unfolding in the Korean Peninsula."

In his acceptance speech to the General Assembly upon his appointment as the eighth secretary general of the UN, Ban acknowledged that he was following "in a line of remarkable leaders." That "each of the men in his own way, came on board at the UN at a critical juncture in the organization's history." That "each wondered what the coming years would require as they took over the leadership role of the preeminent international organization."

The secretary general elect expressed his respect for the role played by the current secretary general, Kofi Annan, and promised to build on his legacy. Explaining the need to hear the views and concerns of all the member nations of the UN, Ban pledged to consult widely in his preparations for assuming his new position. "I will listen attentively to your concerns, expectations and admonitions," he promised the 192 member states.

Congratulating Ban, South African Ambassador to the UN Dumisani Kumalo proposed that in order for the secretary general elect to be able to act in

the interest of the entire membership, he will need to “listen to the views of each and every member state.”

How the future secretary general can help to solve the problems that come before the UN is not only a critical question for the international community, but also a critical task in the face of the increased tension being experienced on the Korean Peninsula.

While several of the speeches at the General Assembly ceremony spoke to the need for wide ranging consultations and discussions in order to diffuse tensions and determine how to solve difficult problems, recent actions at the Security Council the day after the appointment of Ban demonstrate that a very different process is practiced by that body.

Only after an agreement was achieved among the five permanent members of the Security Council and supported by the 10 temporary members, and voted on, did the Council agree to hear the party to the problem that was before them. And only after hearing the views of all the permanent members of the Security Council – the U.S., France, Britain, China and Russia – and some of the temporary members about why they voted for the sanctions on North Korea did the council allow the representative from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea), Pak Gil Yon, to have a few minutes to speak. His talk was followed by a brief statement from the South Korean ambassador to the UN, who spoke in support of the sanctions.

In the brief opportunity he had to speak, Pak indicated that his country felt it was the victim of hostile acts by the U.S. and that it had a sovereign right to defend itself from such hostile acts. Also, he indicated that the process of the Security Council in mandating sanctions on his country was more like the activity of gangsters than an activity representing a legitimate means of investigating a dispute and determining how to diffuse a tense situation.

Thus, the speeches supporting discussion and investigation in the General Assembly on Friday, Oct. 13, and the closed decision-making process that culminated the following day in the issuing of sanctions against North Korea, are in stark contrast to each other.

The statements by several of the five permanent members of the Security Council, the members who have the power to veto Security Council decisions, emphasized that their resolution imposing sanctions against North Korea reflected the condemnation of the “international community” and that all the nations of the UN now had a legal obligation to carry out the provisions of the sanctions.

While the Security Council does indeed have the power to impose such sanctions on a country in the name of the UN, the process by which the sanctions were decided, is a sorry demonstration of power politics that involves very few of the 192 member countries that make up the UN

The chairman of the Latin American and Caribbean regional group, in his comments to the future secretary general, explained that there are important challenges for the UN in the role it plays in “today’s world.”

“International public opinion demands that the Security Council and other bodies of the organization should perform a much better job. There is a trend at this time for great and infinite opportunities as well as unprecedented risks,” explained Ecuadorian Ambassador to the UN Diego Cordovez.

“The United Nations, it is said, should be a base, a forum, a mode that would enable the international community to take advantage of those transcendental opportunities and foresee and neutralize potential risks,” Cordovez added. “For those reasons, it is important to insist on the need to reform thoroughly and deeply the organization and undoubtedly, that would be the main task and responsibility of our new secretary general.” (He was referring to the failure of the member countries to reform the Security Council.)

“It is inconceivable,” he said, “that we are discussing the reform of the Security Council for decades, preparing infinite numbers of formulas, doing report after report on that item, and yet it remains – immutable and impossible to the critics for its lack of representation and its parsimonious conduct to confront [the] world’s crises.”

The act of bringing sanctions against a member state by the Security Council, with no investigation into the grievances that motivated North Korea’s actions, stands as an egregious example of the failure of the obligation of the UN to hear from each member state and to provide a place where problems can be heard and discussed to find a solution.

North Korea says its problems are with the U.S. and that it has developed nuclear devices because of its need to defend itself from the U.S. That is a serious statement requiring investigation to see who has caused the problem and who merits the imposition of sanctions.

Another aspect of the current process that ended in sanctions is that the five permanent members

of the Security Council are powerful countries that possess nuclear weapons. These very countries have failed to meet their obligations under the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty to carry out disarmament.¹

Some scholars and diplomats explain that they are not surprised that North Korea believes it needs to develop a nuclear capacity in order to protect itself from danger. Given the actions of the U.S. government in branding North Korea as part of the “axis of evil” and attacking another, Iraq, which it had similarly branded, is but one of the reasons some scholars believe the U.S. government provided North Korea with a legitimate justification to develop nuclear weapons.² In its brief talk at the Security Council meeting, North Korea expressed one of its disappointments:

It was gangster-like for the Security Council to adopt such a coercive resolution against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea while neglecting the nuclear threat posed by the United States against his country.... The council was incapable of offering a single word of concern when the United States threatened to launch nuclear pre-emptive attacks, reinforced its armed forces and conducted large-scale military exercises near the Korean Peninsula.

It must be remembered that the five permanent members of the Security Council possess thousands of nuclear weapons.

Although commentators and scholars who feel there is justification for North Korea’s actions want to discourage the proliferation of nuclear weapons, they explain that punishing North Korea, while ignoring those countries who are in the club of nations possessing nuclear weapons, can only breed cynicism and hostility to nonproliferation and enforcement efforts.

That North Korea can claim that it felt compelled to develop a nuclear device, is a signal that the current regime of power politics is not working in a way that provides alternatives for a small nation that feels threatened by the nations that are nuclear powers. North Korea’s situation is a demonstration that there is need for serious discussion by the 192 member states of the UN to understand the problems that North Korea claims compel it to develop nuclear weapons as a means of securing its borders and protecting its sovereignty.

There is indeed an international community, and there is indeed a serious challenge facing it. The

five big nuclear powers who wield veto power on the Security Council can bring to bear punishment upon a small nation that endeavors to develop nuclear capability. This, however, will only compound the problem as it will only increase the hostility and resentment that the small nation feels from such unequal treatment at the hands of those who themselves possess nuclear weapons and who use the power this capability bestows on them in such a self-serving manner.

The two Koreas have brought to the world stage the need for a truly international organization, one that will consider all its members’ concerns and needs, and find ways to support serious consideration of the problems such nations have but are unable to solve themselves.

The urgent problem facing the UN at this juncture in its history is not whether North Korea has developed and tested a nuclear device. It is the breakdown reflected by the lack of participation and investigation by the international community into how a crisis will be handled once it develops, and whether the concerns and problems of those who are involved in the crisis will be considered as part of the process of seeking a solution. It is how the UN functions when tensions reach a point where serious attention is needed to help to understand and solve a problem.

Unfortunately for the world, and for North Korea, there was no such process in the decision to impose sanctions on North Korea. The decision to impose sanctions on North Korea was not made by the international community. It was the decision of a small set of nuclear countries. Who was responsible for the crisis was not explored before determining blame, and thus the proclaimed solution is likely only to worsen the problem rather than solve it. Yet the actual problem exists and the fact that people of the world recognize it is highlighted by a recent poll taken in South Korea, which showed that 43 percent of the population blames the U.S. government for North Korea’s test of a nuclear device, while only 37.2 percent blame the North Koreans.³

The actions in the Security Council to punish North Korea occurred without the needed exploration of what had motivated North Korea to turn to nuclear weapons as a means of self-defense. Can the UN be changed in the needed ways so that it will be able to handle such problems? This is the urgent issue facing the UN as the future secretary general takes over the post in January. This is one of the challenges facing Ban Ki-moon, member nations and people who are

part of the UN organization as it embarks on a new chapter in the history of this needed global organization.

Notes:

1. See "Pyongyang's Nuke Test Sparks Fission Over Response."
<http://us.oneworld.net/article/view/140740/> (No Longer Available)
 2. See "What About North Korea's sovereignty?"
<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=518268> (No Longer Available)
 3. See "U.S. Most Responsible for Nuclear Test: Poll."
<http://times.hankooki.com/lpage/nation/200610/kt2006101517230011990.htm> (No Longer Available)
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*The above article was put online at:
http://english.ohmynews.com/articleview/article_view.asp?no=323351&rel_no=1 [no longer available]. Reprinted at
<http://www.ais.org/~jrh/acn/ACn16-1.pdf> pages 2-5.

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