

N. Korea's nuclear test destroys goodwill in South

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By Paul Wiseman, USA TODAY

SEOUL — Three months ago, many Seoul residents were furious when TV coverage of the World Cup soccer competition was interrupted for news reports that North Korea had test-fired seven missiles into the Sea of Japan.

They yawned at the latest provocation by the reclusive Stalinist state less than 50 miles to their north and waited impatiently for soccer to return to the air.

What a difference a nuclear test makes.

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Many South Koreans greeted with horror Pyongyang's claim Monday that it had joined the nuclear club by detonating a device underground.

Seoul banker Kim Young Joon, 53, didn't even complain when his favorite prime-time soap opera was replaced Monday by talking heads debating the nuclear crisis. He's worried that his son, a 21-year-old army conscript deployed along the border with North Korea, will be drawn into a war.

"Kim Jong Il doesn't have any other way to solve his problems except for war," says Hong Sa Duk, a former opposition legislator who now works with North Korean defectors. "He concentrates all his preparations on war."

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The first casualty of a nuclear North Korea is likely to be South Korea's "Sunshine Policy" of reconciliation toward the North. The policy was begun by former South Korean President Kim Dae Jung eight years ago and was continued by his successor, Roh Moo Hyun. In happier times, it led to the historic July 2000 Pyongyang summit between the leaders of North and South Korea — Kim Jong Il and Kim Dae Jung — and won Kim Dae Jung the 2000 Nobel Peace Prize.

The Sunshine Policy, however, has been undermined by North Korea's nuclear program, which violated agreements North Korea made with the United States and South Korea. It also has been weakened by a growing sense that perhaps \$2 billion worth of South Korean aid, delivered to North Korea with no strings attached, has done little to change the regime in Pyongyang. Kim Jong Il, for instance, never kept a promise to make a return trip to Seoul for another summit. And Kim Dae Jung was embarrassed by allegations that South Korea had to pay the North \$500 million to have the 2000 summit in the first place.

Roh's continuation of the conciliatory policies came under fire from politicians, the press and the public after reports of a nuclear test Monday.

He met with three former South Korean presidents over lunch. One — Kim Young Sam — called for an end to the Sunshine Policy and for the suspension of joint North-South Korean economic projects, including the Kaesong industrial zone and the Mount Kumgang tourist resort.

Roh's "incompetence and arrogance have resulted in allowing North Korea to be armed with nuclear weapons," the *JoonAng Daily* newspaper editorialized Tuesday. "President Roh should change his own perceptions on North Korea's intentions and strategies ... unless he wants to be remembered as the president who delivered pain and hardship to his people."

"After one year, two years, three years — we are helping North Korea continuously," says waitress Choi Young Sook, 29. "And all we get in return are threats."

Even Roh warned that "North Korea's nuclear test has left us with little or no room to continue engaging it." He told *The Korea Herald* on Monday, "I can assure you that our relations with North Korea will change drastically from this point on."

South Korea is not likely to reduce aid so much that it risks destabilizing the impoverished country, Scott Snyder of the Washington, D.C.-based Asia Foundation and other analysts say. But, says Chung Jey Moon, an adviser to South Korea's opposition Grand National Party: "The Sunshine Policy is on the way to death."

Banker Kim says he supported the Sunshine Policy until Monday morning. "I was surprised, embarrassed and perplexed," he says. "We helped them when they needed assistance. We really worked hard to help them, but we got nothing in return."

South Korean worries go beyond the immediate concern that Kim Jong Il has nukes and will be emboldened to make more demands and threats on his neighbors. They're alarmed, too, about the possibility that other Asian countries will respond by going nuclear themselves. "I'm worried about the domino effect — Japan, Taiwan," banker Kim says.

The North Korean test "reshapes Northeast Asian regional politics," says David Kang, a Korea specialist at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire.

"I am concerned about the future, especially about the response from Japan," says Seoul resident Hwang Ji Won, 26, who is studying for the civil service exam. "Nowadays, Japan is becoming more right-wing, and this test will strengthen the trend."

Japan — led by new Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who made his name taking a hard-line stance against North Korea — has more than 50 nuclear plants and enough plutonium to produce hundreds of nuclear weapons. A few years ago, right-wing politician Ichiro Ozawa famously declared that Japan could become a nuclear-weapon power "overnight."

Tuesday, Abe denied Tokyo would build its own nuclear arsenal, which would contravene its post-World War II constitution barring the use of force to settle international disputes. He also said Japan, the only country ever attacked by nuclear weapons, would stick to its policy of not producing, possessing or allowing nuclear weapons. "There will be no change in our non-nuclear-arms principles," Abe said.

Many Japanese agree. "We shouldn't" become a nuclear power, says Hisae Nakamura, 54, a nurse who works in Kasukabe city outside Tokyo. "Japan is the only victim of the atomic bomb. It might be difficult to imagine for people who have never had their country turned into a battlefield, let alone (hit by) the atomic bomb. ... Instead, we have to tell the world how terrible the nuclear damage was."

Contributing: Park Juyeon in Seoul, Naoko Nishiwaki in Tokyo, wire reports

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