

Research on the Food Aid Project of the United Nations World Food Programme to North Korea (1996-2020)

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Abstract: *The World Food Programme is recognized globally for its significant role in providing humanitarian food aid to North Korea. For the past 28 years, since 1995, the WFP has been committed to addressing the dietary needs of millions of individuals who suffer from hunger and malnutrition in North Korea. The organization's contributions have effectively improved the nutritional conditions of the population. However, despite these efforts, North Korea's food crisis remains unresolved, highlighting the need to address the various challenges that impede preventive aid. This article aims to examine the progress of the WFP's aid to North Korea, investigate the political factors that hinder humanitarian organizations' aid, and analyze the obstacles faced by the WFP in assisting North Korea from the perspectives of both recipient and donor countries.*

Keywords: *Humanitarian Aid, The World Food Programme, North Korea*

1. Introduction

Throughout history, a country's survival has often been closely linked to the availability of food. In the mid-1990s, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) experienced a devastating famine. Though estimates vary, it is believed that approximately one million people died of starvation between the early 1990s and 1998, amounting to 3% to 5% of the total population ^[1]. The DPRK's policy of self-reliance and limited interaction with the outside world has made it challenging for the international community to fully grasp the extent of the country's domestic food shortage. However, after floods in July and August 1995, the DPRK government publicly appealed to the global community for humanitarian aid. In response, World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and various non-governmental organizations entered the DPRK to carry out emergency relief efforts. With the intervention of these groups, more and more people became aware of the famine situation in the DPRK. As the largest humanitarian organization in the world, the WFP provided an amount of food aid to the DPRK.

As a neutral humanitarian organization, the WFP has faced various restrictions from the North Korean government in providing aid to the country. On the other hand, the funding for its aid efforts depends solely on the donor countries' will, without any coercive force. Unfortunately, the United States, Japan, and South Korea - the prominent donors of the North Korean project - have complex political relations with the DPRK, which often affects the WFP's grain aid to the country. Political considerations often mix with food donations from these countries, making the issue of food aid more than just an agricultural one.

The present article intends to conduct a comprehensive review of the historical process of the WFP aid to North Korea while analyzing the political factors that influenced the WFP's food aid from both the recipient and the donor country's perspectives. Particular attention is paid to the purposes of these donors and how they interweave food aid with traditional security issues. Through a rigorous analysis of official documents and data of the WFP, this article seeks to provide insights into the complex and dynamic nature of the WFP's food assistance programs and the challenges posed by political factors in such humanitarian interventions.

2. Development path of UNWFP food aid program in DPRK

The primary objective of this chapter is to delve into the development report of the WFP's aid to the DPRK, with a focus on the collection, analysis, and summary of the data. The authors have divided the 25-year aid process into three stages, and each step involves the collection of a vast amount of research reports and aid data, which are then analyzed and summarized. Our specific focus is on the evolution of the WFP's contribution to North Korea's aid and the process behind the changes. We aim to provide insights into the reasons for the changes, particularly the shifting objectives of the major donor countries, the measures they have taken, and the outcomes.

2.1. Expansion phase of the project (1996-2001)

In the expansion phase, the WFP made the emergency action project EMOP5710(1996-1997)ⁱ and emergency action project EMOP5959 (1998-1999)ⁱⁱ. From 1995 to 2000, the number of the WFP international officials in the DPRK increased from 3 to 46, and the WFP access area also expanded from the original western coastal area to 167 of 211 counties in the DPRK. At the end of 2001, the seven counties of Hamhung City in the DPRK and South Hamgyong Province were merged into two counties, and the total number of counties in the DPRK became 206ⁱⁱⁱ. In 2001, the WFP's assistance to the DPRK reached its highest level in history, with 930,000 tons of food aid^{iv}.

Table 1: World Food Programme 1995-2001 food aid to the DPRK (unit: tons)

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Food Aid	5,140	54,375	432,044	400,015	610,052	450,471	930,012

Source: The World Food Programme DPRK, Review of Operations in 2001, pp.11

Table 2: North Korea's food production and demand (unit: 10000 tons)

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Food Production	410	280	260	350	350	290	350
Food Demand	600	540	460	480	480	480	500

Source: The World Food Programme DPRK, Review of Operations in 2001. p.5

According to Table 2, the WFP evaluated the DPRK's food demand to be 6 million tons in 1995, which was the highest before 2001. However, in Table 1, we can see that the amount of food aid from the WFP is not so much, only 5140 tons. Only after 1996 did the WFP's food aid to DPRK enter a stage of rapid development. The reason for this is that the WFP did not receive a large number of donations from the international community. The WFP's independent account funds are limited, so aid to the DPRK is only a tiny amount.

The largest donors were the United States, followed by Japan. After 1996, the WFP received substantial food aid from the United States to the DPRK. The Clinton administration changed its policy toward DPRK and mainly used food aid as leverage for the four-party talks and inspection of underground nuclear facilities in Kumchang-ri. During the period from 1996 to 2000, when Clinton served, the US government shipped 1,201,694 tons, worth more than 300 million dollars, to the DPRK through the WFP's food aid program.

In December 1999, Japan formed a super-partisan parliamentary group to visit the DPRK. The two sides reached three principles for improving and developing bilateral relations and held preliminary talks on the normalization of diplomatic relations. To create an atmosphere for negotiation, the Japanese government announced that it would provide the DPRK with a 100,000-ton curtain based on a humanitarian standpoint and decided not to include the "kidnapping of Japanese people" issue in the negotiations on the normalization of relations held in April 2000 to break through the deadlock. In October 2000, Japan announced another 500,000 tons of food aid to DPRK through the WFP. In 2001, it received 50 tons of assistance from Japan, which was the largest donor in the WFP's assistance to the DPRK's food program.

ⁱ WFP, WFP Standardized Project Report (1997 Korea), Democratic Republic Emergency Food Assistance Following Floods, p.3.

ⁱⁱ WFP, WFP Emergency Operations of Democratic People's Republic of Korea-5959.00 and 5959.01, 2000. p.4.

ⁱⁱⁱ WFP, The World Food Programme DPR Korea, Review of Operations in 2002. p.12.

^{iv} The World Food Programme DPR Korea, Review of Operations in 2001, p.11.

2.2. *Difficult phase of the project (2002-2010)*

In 2002, due to the impact of disasters such as spring drought and summer floods, the DPRK experienced a considerable food shortage and continued to need assistance. Nevertheless, the international community reduced its contributions^v. The WFP's service to the DPRK is inadequate, from food in kind to funds and from grain to non-grain (oil, soybean, sugar)^{vi}. Insufficient food aid has severely affected the WFP's emergency relief project in DPRK, where food used for food-for-work projects was only a third of that in 2001^{vii}. In the local food production plan, the factory was forced to reduce production or even shut down due to a lack of raw materials. The school feeding plan for the school-age children's policy was also suspended in March 2003. In this challenging phase, WFP completed the emergency action project EMOP10141 (2002-2005), the long-term relief and recovery action plan PRRO104880^[1](2006-2008), the emergency rescue operation EMOP107570^{viii} (2008), and the long-term relief and recovery operations PRRO20114^{ix} (2010-2012). From 2002 to 2010, because aid donor fatigue occurred in various donor countries, the WFP finally completed only 44% of the project plan^x. The biggest obstacle at this stage is the North Korean government. Some aid workers in DPRK claimed that the food delivered to the property insurance was not actually given to the people in need, but was transferred to the army or the black market^{xi}. The second is policy changes in significant countries. After the 9/11 attacks, the United States included the DPRK in the "axis of evil" and implemented a strict policy against it. As the US policy toward the DPRK changed, humanitarian food aid began to decrease rapidly. Food aid through WFP assistance has been suspended. Moreover, Japan was affected by the hostage incident. Despite significant food aid to the DPRK in 2001, there has been no further launch of humanitarian assistance. It is evident that the quantity of food aid to the DPRK is still determined by major donor countries, dependent on changes in the nation's core interests. Lastly, the second North Korean nuclear crisis has led to increased international calls for sanctions against DPRK, which has also impacted the WFP's efforts to encourage nations to provide more humanitarian assistance to DPRK.

2.3 *Recovery phase of the project (2011-2020)*

The project recovery phase refers to the recovery of aid after the most challenging period before 2010. Although some assistance from the United States and Japan has been reduced at this stage, assistance from other countries such as Canada and Sweden have been increased. A total of four recovery aids and one emergency aid were provided by WFP. In this recovery phase, WFP completed a series of operations, including Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO)200114 (2011-2013)^{xii}, Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) 200532 (2013-2016)^{xiii}, Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) 200907 (2016-2018), Emergency Food Assistance to Vulnerable Groups in DPRK, EMOP 200266 (2011-2012)^{xiv}, and so on.

The 2012 National Nutrition Survey confirmed that the nutritional status of children had improved since 2009, with chronic malnutrition falling from 32.4 to 27.9 percent^{xv}. Nonetheless, the WFP's 2014 mid-term review of PRRO 200532 revealed that 81 percent of DPRK's population does not have acceptable diversity in their diet^{xvi}. People consume 25 percent less protein and 30 percent less fat than required for a healthy life, according to international standards. One in three children under five years of

^v WFP, WFP DPR Korea Update No. 45, 31 Oct 2002.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-peoples-republic-korea/wfp-dpr-korea-update-no-45>

^{vi} The World Food Programme DPR Korea, Review of Operations in 2002. p.12

^{vii} The World Food Programme DPR Korea, Review of Operations in 2002. p.12

^{viii} WFP Standard Project Report 2009 DPR Korea, Single country EMOP 107570, Emergency Assistance to Population Groups Affected by Floods and Rising Food and Fuel Prices, p.6.

^{ix} Democratic People's Republic of Korea Long-Term Relief and Recovery Operation (20114), World Food Program, Rome, May 11, 2010, p.1.

^x WFP Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations-Democratic people's republic of Korea 200114, 2010.

^{xi} Report from RINA, information officer of WFP, at the seminar on the current situation of food and economy in North Korea held at Fudan University on April 17, 2010.

^{xii} WFP, Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) 200114 Quarterly M&E Bulletin, 2013, p.2. <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-peoples-republic-korea/protracted-relief-and-recovery-operation-prro-200114>

^{xiii} WFP, Democratic People's Republic of Korea Country Brief, 2016, p1.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-peoples-republic-korea/wfp-democratic-people-s-republic-korea-country-brief-april>

^{xiv} WFP, Emergency Food Assistance to Vulnerable Groups in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 2011, p.1. <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-peoples-republic-korea/emergency-food-assistance-vulnerable-groups-democratic>

^{xv} WFP, Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) 200114 Quarterly M&E Bulletin, p.2. <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-peoples-republic-korea/protracted-relief-and-recovery-operation-prro-200114>

^{xvi} WFP, Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) 200532, 2014, p1. <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-peoples-republic-korea/protracted-relief-and-recovery-operation-prro-200532>

age and almost half of the children between 12 and 23 months are anemic^{xvii}. In 2015, WFP conducted a Food Security and Nutrition Assessment among children in WFP-supported nurseries, which showed that the stunting prevalence in WFP-supported nurseries is at moderate to high levels with 25.4 percent^{xviii}.

In this phase, reduced funding has necessitated a reduction of assistance from the planned number of approximately 1 million people per month to 625,000^{xix}. Although humanitarian aid to the DPRK is exempt from sanctions, the WFP continues to monitor the impact of recently adopted United Nations and bilateral sanctions on its operation. At this stage, the United States did not make donations through the WFP. After the Cheonan sinking in March 2010 and the Bombardment of Yeonpyeong in November, the situation on the entire Korean Peninsula became tenser, the international community further strengthened economic sanctions against the DPRK, and the US aid plan for the DPRK was not raised again. On February 29, 2012, after three rounds of talks, the United States and DPRK reached an agreement on the suspension of uranium enrichment and missile launches and the provision of 240,000 tons of food by the United States^[2]. The plan is stranded again. The US government required US NGOs to send their team in May 2011 to assess the humanitarian situation. However, despite similar results found in the WFP above report, the United States has not announced an aid decision. The United States only made a symbolic contribution to the North Korean flood assistance in mid-September 2011^[3]. Washington has provided only 900,000 dollars in flood relief grants to the north through five US NGOs. On the other hand, South Korea insisted that in the late 1990s, there was no national food crisis that killed thousands of people. South Korea accused the DPRK of the Bombardment of Yeonpyeong, killing four South Koreans, and stopped providing direct assistance to Pyongyang in November 2010. A small amount of humanitarian aid through third parties such as the WFP^{xix} was maintained.

3. Assessments of the WFP's food aid to DPRK

3.1. The purpose of each donor country in the WFP food aid project to the DPRK

According to the realistic international political theory, a country's primary goal in assisting other nations is to promote its own fundamental national interests. Many different factors can influence a country's decision to provide aid, including its foreign policy, economic interests, relationship with the recipient country, and the political and economic conditions of that country. These factors can also impact the delivery of aid. Foreign aid can be motivated by three main factors: political security, economic development, and humanitarian concerns. These motivations are not mutually exclusive and often work together to serve the national interests of aid-giving nations. Of the three, political security is considered the most important. While recipient countries may receive aid for economic or political reasons, aid-giving countries are primarily motivated by diplomatic and political considerations. Economic development is the most common reason for countries to receive foreign aid, especially economic aid. By examining the types of aid given to North Korea by various countries, we can understand the motivations behind their assistance. In the case of North Korea, political and security concerns are the primary motivators for aid-giving countries.

World Food Programme relies heavily on government donations for aid materials. These donations can come in two forms: multilateral aid, where the donor country provides funds or resources directly to the WFP and leaves allocation decisions entirely up to the organization, and bilateral aid, where the donor country designates the intended purpose and location of the aid. In the latter case, the WFP is responsible for implementing the aid but cannot change its intended goal. Multilateral aid allows the WFP to remain politically neutral and flexible in its project implementation, while bilateral aid is subject to the political considerations of the donor countries. Unfortunately, most of the WFP's aid projects in North Korea fall under the latter category, particularly before 2010, with the primary donor countries being the United States, Japan, and South Korea. As a result, the WFP's assistance to North Korea is inevitably influenced by the policies and strategies of these countries.

Since 1996, the United States has provided the DPRK with 2.2 million tons of food aid, worth 800 million dollars, of which more than 90% of food aid is delivered to the DPRK through the WFP. Japan provided 600,000 tons and 125,000 tons of food to WFP projects in 2000 and 2004, respectively. Since

^{xvii} *Ibid.*

^{xviii} WFP, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 2015, p.1. <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-peoples-republic-korea/wfp-democratic-people-s-republic-korea-brief-reporting-1>

^{xix} WFP, Korea DPR Overview of Needs and Assistance 2012. https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/397/flows?order=directional_property_1&sort=desc&f%5B0%5D=sourceOrganizationIdName%3A%223049%3AWorld%20Food%20Programme%22

1996, South Korea has donated nearly 550,000 tons of food worth 127 million dollars to the DPRK through the WFP. The United States, Japan, and South Korea's assistance to the DPRK accounts for about 75% of the WFP's assistance to the DPRK. So why do these three countries prefer this type of aid? The reason is that these three countries' assistance to the DPRK has a clear diplomatic purpose, which mainly revolves around the North Korean nuclear issue and the missile issue. In other words, we can analyze the political reasons for the aid provided by these three countries to North Korea through the WFP.

U.S. economic assistance to the DPRK began with the "U.S.-DPRK Nuclear Framework Agreement" signed by the two countries in 1994. Its initial foremost goal was to prevent and oppose DPRK's development of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. This goal is related to the military posture between the countries and the balance of regional power. It is a traditional high-level political structure related to national defense issues and sovereignty issues. It is a matter of life and death for the country and the regime. They have always been considered to be the core issues in security ^[4]. As a recipient of economic aid, the DPRK has its particularity because the DPRK and the US belong to the relationship between hostile countries. This also determines that the means of US economic assistance to the DPRK are special. In addition to food aid of a humanitarian nature, many other aids have particularities for their political purposes, such as aided trade, financial assistance to find the remains of missing Americans in the Korean War, and significant central energy compensation assistance for the restriction of the DPRK's development of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, assistance for mitigating economic sanctions to promote the normalization of bilateral relations, *et al.* Even if it is food aid of universal significance, many are just under the slogan of humanitarian assistance, and in fact, have clear significance. The table below shows the United States' humanitarian aid to the DPRK through the WFP in response to the nuclear issue in exchange for dialogue and cooperation with the DPRK, which reflects the United States' motivation and intention.

Table 3: The United States' motivation and intention

Time	Form	Diplomatic goals
1996.02	Food valued at 2 million dollars	Encourage the DPRK to abide by the 1994 "Framework Agreement."
1996.06	6.2 million dollars	Encourage the DPRK to participate in the preparatory meeting of the four-party talks
1997.02	Food which valued at 10 million dollars	Hope the DPRK participates in the preparatory meeting of the four-party talks between the United States and South Korea
1997.04	50,000 tons of grain	Hope the DPRK participates in the meeting on missile proliferation
1997.07	100,000 tons of grain	Hope the DPRK participates in the four-party talks
1998.02	200,000 tons of grain	Hope the DPRK participates in the special committee of the four-party talks
1998.09	300,000 tons of grain	It is hoped that the DPRK will participate in the negotiations on the missile issue. The Quartet has held three meetings to discuss the removal of DPRK from the list supporting terrorism.
1999.04-05	600,000 tons of grain, 1,000 tons of potato seeds	In exchange for the investigation of nuclear facilities in Kumchang-ri
2002.06	155,000 tons of grain	Enhance the supervision of the WFP
2003.01	50,000 tons of grain	If the DPRK dismantles its nuclear weapons program, the Bush administration promises to give the DPRK a lot of aid: 50,000 tons of food aid every year.
2008.05-2009.05	500,000 tons of grain	Encourage the DPRK to participate in the six-party talks. As DPRK continues to develop nuclear weapons, the final food aid to the DPRK is 169,270 tons.

From Table 3, we can certainly see that the intention of the U.S. economic assistance to the DPRK is not "aid" but a form of "constraint". That is, to "constrain" DPRK's research and proliferation of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction through economic assistance.

Japan, South Korea, and the United States have firm ally relations, and the US policy toward the DPRK inevitably affects the policies of Japan and South Korea toward the DPRK. Therefore, Japan and South Korea's aid to the DPRK has similar functional properties. Japan is the second-largest donor to the North Korean aid program of the WFP. The primary purpose of Japan's food aid to the DPRK is to normalize Japan-DPRK relations and solve the problem of the kidnapping of hostages. Before 2000, Japan was more inclined to use bilateral channels to provide food aid to the DPRK because the North

Korean government preferred this kind of non-strict control Conditional bilateral assistance. However, the United States and South Korea also influence Japan's relations with the DPRK. Therefore, its humanitarian aid to the DPRK will also cooperate with its allies' overall DPRK policy through the WFP. In addition, from the perspective of Japan's motives for aid to the DPRK, it can also be seen that there are obvious political motives. (As shown in Table 4)

Table 4: Japan's motivation and intention

Time	Form	Purpose
1997	67,000 tons of food aid worth 27 million dollars	Food exchange women ^{xx}
September 2000	500,000 tons of grain	Food for Japan-DPRK Talks on Normalization of Relations
2002-2004	\$10 million worth of medicines and 250,000 tons of rice	Aid in exchange for kidnapped Japanese

South Korea and the DPRK belong to the same nationality, so their aid policy to the DPRK has different considerations from the United States and Japan. According to Table 5, in addition to the concerns with the United States and Japan to prevent the DPRK from developing nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, South Korea will also provide assistance to the DPRK as a way to improve North-South relations, enhance national reconciliation, and lay the foundation for future reunification of the Korean Peninsula. Therefore, in terms of motivation, humanitarian aid and grants based on political security factors go hand in hand. In terms of assistance methods, the multilateral model and the bilateral model are equally important.

Table 5: South Korea's motivation and intention

Time	Form	Purpose
1994-1998	Intermittent food aid, through bilateral or multilateral aid	Kim Young-sam pursues "North-South reunification", hoping to use Kim Il-sung's death to trigger regime change to achieve the reunification.
1998-2008	Sustained and stable bilateral and multilateral assistance	Kim Dae-Jung implements the "Sunshine Policy" of peaceful coexistence, hoping to promote reconciliation between the North and the South
After 2008	Significantly reduce the form of multilateral assistance (in 2019, 50,000 tons of rice will be aided through WFP for the first time in nine years)	Leaders such as Lee Myung-bak clearly linked economic assistance to North Korea with the issue of North Korea's abandonment of nuclear weapons.

3.2. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the aid

3.2.1. The assistance provided by WFP to DPRK has dramatically eased the food crisis in DPRK, but the process and prospects are very difficult.

As the world's largest acute relief agency, WFP has been providing aid to the DPRK since 1995. Fourteen emergency aid projects and five restorative projects have been implemented. The aided counties cover 163 of the 200 counties in all North Korean provinces, and emergency assistance covers an average of 6 million people a year, saving countless lives^{xxi}. The continued relief activities of the WFP in the DPRK have considerably eased the food crisis in the DPRK and have made significant achievements in fighting the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. However, the aid work of the WFP in the DPRK has been hampered by the donor countries and recipient countries, which has hindered the deepening conflict. The obstacles are very helpless in the face of political and security factors.

The assistance of the WFP Korean project mainly targeted the United States, Japan, and South Korea

^{xx} After the end of World War II, 1,831 Japanese women married to North Koreans settled in DPRK with their families. Because Japan has no diplomatic relations with DPRK, DPRK forbids these Japanese women to return home to visit relatives. From 1991, Japan and DPRK normalized negotiations, this issue has always been an important topic for discussion between the two countries. After several discussions, the two countries reached an agreement in late 1997 and early 1998 to provide food aid to the DPRK in exchange for the rights of Japanese women to return home.

^{xxi} The data comes from the official website of the WFP: <https://www.wfp.org/countries/democratic-peoples-republic-korea>

before 2010, but these three countries are hostile and confrontational with the DPRK. Their assistance to the WFP has explicit political and diplomatic purposes; therefore, how to balance the interests of donor countries and recipient countries is an important issue that the WFP needs to face. The difficulty faced by the WFP is not that the political factors for such assistance are getting stronger and stronger. Another more critical issue is the gradual reduction of DPRK's ever-increasing pace of developing nuclear weapons and missiles. This kind of restrictive intervention at the same time keeps decreasing. For this purpose, many countries have wholly stopped providing aid to the DPRK in the past decade.

In addition, another challenge facing WFP comes from the recipient country, the DPRK. As a recipient country, the DPRK does not fully welcome the assistance of the international community. Therefore, in the process of accepting help, some restrictive measures have been taken to implement the assisting party. The first is to restrict the flow of information. The DPRK has always been called the country of hermits and is one of the most mysterious countries in the world. Since its founding, it has been almost excluded from the international system. Few people can enter the DPRK to inspect its political, economic, and cultural conditions on the spot. Therefore, little is known about the DPRK. When the WFP entered the DPRK in the early days, some essential information necessary to implement assistance was not available, such as the DPRK's agricultural development status, total food production, farmland losses caused by floods, and the number of refugees. It was not until December 1995 that the WFP and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization conducted an agricultural assessment of the DPRK that the WFP obtained relatively reliable data^{xxii}. The second restriction from DPRK is the access restriction. When the WFP first entered the DPRK in 1995, under the WFP's policy of "No access, no food assistance", the DPRK reluctantly but gradually opened up the eastern coastal region. Until 2000, the WFP obtained access to 167 of the 201 counties in the DPRK. The third limitation is supervision change. Even in areas where access is allowed, WFP's oversight activities are restricted. The North Korean government has always adhered to the principle of autonomous delivery and distribution of food. It is forbidden for the WFP to redistribute items. Therefore, people often question whether part of the food has been transferred to the army or the privileged. From the perspective of the DPRK, there are specific internal reasons for these restrictions: because WFP needs to provide an assessment report to the aid countries after completing the rescue activities, and the relationship between these significant aid countries and the DPRK is not clear. The hypothesis is a possible intelligence infiltration, thereby threatening the security of the DPRK. In 2005, the DPRK directly announced that it would no longer accept emergency economic assistance but only development assistance. Many NGOs were forced to evacuate the DPRK, and the WFP had to change aid projects to reduce its offices and staff in the DPRK. The aid activities implemented by international agencies are in trouble.

Therefore, humanitarian assistance has become very difficult due to the influence of political factors in the donor and recipient countries.

3.2.2. The international community has not effectively achieved the political and security objectives of food aid to the DPRK-the denuclearization of the Peninsula

Using economic aid to "buy peace" is one of the methods frequently used by the United States. This policy has played a crucial role in the withdrawal of nuclear weapons and biological and chemical weapons in Ukraine, the Republic of Palau, and other countries, and has also played an essential role in the prevention of proliferation in Brazil, Argentina, South Africa, Sweden, Australia, Taiwan, and South Korea Influence^[5]. However, these countries or regions do not regard the United States as a direct threat, and they are willing to accept the United States' aid and remove their weapons project. But this is not the case in the DPRK. The DPRK has always regarded the United States as its main enemy and direct threat. Can the "Purchase of Peace Policy" achieve the purpose of the United States to urge the DPRK to abandon its nuclear weapons development plan and stabilize the situation on the Peninsula? In our opinion, the answer is no. As the DPRK itself has repeatedly stated in various talks and occasions, DPRK seeks sovereignty recognition, institutional preservation, and peace treaties. Only when the international community has genuinely eliminated the security threats to the DPRK, its government will be willing to abandon the development of nuclear weapons. Therefore, some scholars believe that this US policy only produces constant threats and extortion patterns and is a completely failed policy. However, such an evaluation is not entirely objective because, considering the particularity of the North Korean issue (erratic diplomacy) and the lack of other executable solutions, this policy has played partly a positive role. This policy has played partly a role in maintaining peace and stability on the peninsula. In fact, through the purchase of the peace model, the DPRK had temporarily given up its commitment to the

^{xxii} The investigation team dispatched by the UN agency cannot enter all areas of DPRK to investigate, so the data obtained is still limited.

development of nuclear weapons and temporarily stabilized peace on the Korean Peninsula.

In addition to the same intention as the United States to prevent the DPRK from developing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, Japan's assistance to the DPRK is also aimed at normalizing Japan-DPRK relations and solving some specific problems between the two countries. However, judging from the results, Japan has only made progress on the issues of visiting relatives of North Korean Japanese women and the abduction of Japanese. Therefore, it can be said that Japan's aid policy to the DPRK has achieved partial success.

The reason for South Korea's assistance to the DPRK is to improve North-South relations, enhance national feelings, promote peaceful reunification of the Peninsula, and realize the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The last goal made significant progress in the implementation of the "Sunshine Policy" during the presidency of President Kim Dae-Jung and President No Mu-hyeon, but this political relaxation and the improvement of diplomatic relations did not prevent the DPRK from developing nuclear weapons but instead provided it to the DPRK. With sufficient time and space to develop and improve its weapon system, its aid policy has not achieved the desired results.

In general, from the perspective of donor countries, the political and security goals of the United States, Japan, and South Korea's attempts to provide WFP assistance through the WFP have not been achieved, and the efforts of the international community have suffered a relatively significant setback. The DPRK not only received a large amount of economic assistance but also successfully implemented two nuclear tests using the international community's "food for giving up nuclear" policy of purchasing peace, becoming a *de facto* nuclear country, which undoubtedly has an impact on the global nuclear non-proliferation system.

4. Conclusion

Since 1995, the World Food Programme's (WFP) food aid to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has experienced fluctuations over the past 28 years. The WFP's efforts have significantly improved the diets of millions of people suffering from hunger and malnutrition in DPRK. Through the WFP's reports, the international community has gained insight into the actual situation in the DPRK. The WFP's work in the DPRK has facilitated conversations between the DPRK, food donors, and other international organizations. Despite the limited resources of the WFP, activities such as providing food for work, feeding the vulnerable, and establishing local food processing factories have alleviated the difficulties faced by many Korean people. However, DPRK's food problem remains unresolved, and we must recognize the various challenges faced by preventive assistance. From a realistic perspective, foreign aid ultimately serves national interests, national power maintenance, capacity enhancement, or the projection of a country's influence. While the WFP is a neutral multilateral international organization, it has limited autonomy in project implementation due to the control of project funds. The policies of the U.S., Japan, and South Korea toward DPRK influence the steps taken in WFP's food aid projects. Additionally, the political relationship between donor countries and the DPRK significantly affects the success of WFP's projects in the DPRK.

Furthermore, the North Korean government's distrust has hindered the WFP's intervention in the DPRK. The lack of exposure to domestic economic and social conditions, as well as restrictions on information openness and access, have impeded the WFP's efforts. Aid fatigue has also been a significant challenge. Increased openness and cooperation from the DPRK could lead to significant success in the WFP's work. Most of the WFP's food aid projects for the DPRK are emergency aid projects, providing short-term relief but not addressing long-term food issues. To truly solve the DPRK's food problems, the WFP needs to develop more development assistance projects.

Our analysis has shown that humanitarian efforts in the DPRK have been a crucial source of food, with food shipments totaling 1.5 billion dollars. However, under current tensions in the Korean Peninsula, the DPRK still faces severe food problems. Encouraging more countries to participate in the WFP's assistance project to the DPRK is essential. While political factors cannot be eliminated from aid efforts, the WFP can enhance its independence by encouraging donor countries to expand non-designated projects, increase multilateral funding sources, and establish stronger independent funds. This approach would allow food aid to function fully, reduce poverty and hunger, and gradually minimize the influence of political factors on humanitarian aid.

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