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A Creative Three-Phase Roadmap Initiative for Denuclearization and Peacebuilding on the Korean Peninsula

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Tae-Hwan Kwak

Abstract

Inter-Korean relations are now at their worst in recent years, and the Korean Peninsula is, indeed, in a state of the worst crisis situation. The DPRK continues to engage in its military provocations.

North Korea's test launches of four ballistic missiles in protest of the US-ROK joint military exercises were conducted on March 6, 2017, clearly violating the UN Security Council's resolutions. The US military began deploying the THAAD system in South Korea the same day. Full deployment will be delayed pending environmental impact assessment.

The North Korea's military provocations poisoned deal-making and peace-making processes to resolve the Korean Peninsula issues. If North Korea wants to improve relations between North Korea and the United States and improve inter-Korean relations, it is necessary for North Korea to refrain from its demonstrations of military force. However, in my view, more surprising things could happen because of the strong opposition to the US-ROK joint military exercises in 2017.

The author would like to address the following questions: First, what should be done to find an exit strategy for reducing high tensions while working towards a peace regime between the Koreas? Why has the DPRK wanted to be a nuclear power, continuing strengthening its deterrent? What are core conditions for North Korea's nuclear abandonment? What is to be done to achieve a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula? This paper will analyze these questions in detail.

Keywords: North Korea's siege mentality, motives of North Korea's nuclear armament, core conditions for nuclear abandonment, a three-phase roadmap, a Korean peninsula peace treaty, parallel strategy, US-China cooperation, ROK's best choice.

INTRODUCTION

Following North Korea's fourth nuclear test and long-range rocket launch in early 2016, the United Nation Security Council(UNSC) adopted stronger and more comprehensive sanctions against North Korea. U. S.-ROK joint military exercises – Key Resolve and Foal Eagle – were then staged from March 7 to April 30, 2016. Soon after, on July 8, the United States and the ROK announced their decision to deploy the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system to South Korea, an advanced anti-missile system against North Korea. North Korea tested its fifth nuclear bomb in September, and the UNSC adopted its stronger Resolution 2321 against Pyongyang.

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Inter-Korean relations are now at their worst in recent years, and the Korean Peninsula is, indeed, in a state of the worst crisis situation. The author would like to address the following questions: First, what should be done to find an exit strategy for reducing high tensions while working towards a peace regime between the two Koreas? Why has the DPRK wanted to be a nuclear power, continuing strengthening its deterrent? What are core conditions for North Korea's nuclear abandonment? What is to be done to achieve a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula? These questions will be discussed in detail in this paper.

A NEW APPROACH TO THE NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR ISSUE

The U. S. and the ROK need to design a new roadmap for resolving North Korea's nuclear issue by abandoning the denuclearization-first policy, i.e., denuclearization of North Korea first and peace treaty talks later. It is desirable that North Korea's nuclear issue be discussed at the Six Party Talks (SPT). At the same time, a peace regime issue at the Four Party Talks should be discussed, involving the U.S, China, South and North Korea. In this way, it could be possible for an agreement on denuclearization and the development of a Korean Peninsula peace treaty to be made. China recently made a similar proposal, in calling for simultaneous discussions and the resolution of peace-denuclearization issues. Notably, the DPRK also proposed a peace treaty with the United States, just a few days before the Jan. 6, 2016 nuclear test. The Obama administration reportedly considered the peace talks proposal and made a counter-proposal for denuclearization as part of peace treaty talks.¹ However, the DPRK rejected it, and then it conducted the fourth nuclear test.

On February 18, 2016, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi proposed to hold new peace treaty talks with North Korea in tandem with denuclearization negotiations. Nevertheless, the United States rejected that suggestion, maintaining that the denuclearization issue remains a top priority.

¹ Alastair Gale and Carol E. Lee, "US Agreed to North Korea Peace Talks Before Latest Nuclear Test," *Wall Street Journal*, Feb.21, 2016. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-agreed-to-north-korea-peace-talks-1456076019> (searched, Feb. 23, 2016); Ben Ariel, "Who rejected United States-North Korea peace talks?" *Arutz Sheva* 7, Feb.2, 2016. http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/208363#.VtQDT_krIgs (Searched, Feb. 23, 2016).

The U. S. has stressed that North Korea should talk about its nuclear program with peace talks.² As a result, it appears both China and the US seem to support Korean Peninsula peace talks in tandem with denuclearization talks when North Korea is willing to take denuclearization measures prior to talks. But neither China nor the U. S. has spelled out how to denuclearize the DPRK and to build a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula in detail.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi proposed on March 8, 2017, that the DPRK freeze nuclear and missile programs in exchange for a halt to US-ROK joint military exercises to defuse tensions on the Korean Peninsula. But the proposal was rejected by the U. S. and South Korea. Wang said the priority in the dispute over North Korea's nuclear program was now "to flash the red light and apply brakes." China's "suspension for suspension" proposal "can help us break out of the security dilemma and bring the parties back to the negotiating table," he said.³

The Trump administration is in a big dilemma as to how to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue. It has considered many options: US recognition of North Korea as a nuclear state, South Korea's nuclear arms building, US tactical nuclear weapons redeployment in South Korea, and a pre-emptive/preventive strike against North Korea. Preemptive/preventive attacks on North Korea only increase the possibility of nuclear war on the Korean Peninsula. Both the nuclear arms building of South Korea and the tactical nuclear weapons reintroduction on the Korean Peninsula can poison the denuclearization process of the Korean Peninsula. Ultimately, the 9.19 agreement through the Six-Party Talks will be dead, and structural changes in the security landscape in Northeast Asia will eventually lead to a nuclear war rather than peace-making on the Korean Peninsula. The hardline measures will not be a good way to solve the North Korean nuclear issue.

If and when North Korea simultaneously launches four or more missiles against the South, will the THAAD system intercept them? The answer is No. The security rationale for justifying the US-ROK's decision to deploy the THAAD to South Korea is officially North Korea's nuclear/missile threats. The basic assumption for this security logic seems an error: North Korea will initiate a nuclear war. If North Korea will launch a nuclear missile toward South Korea, it means a nuclear war against the US and South Korea. This insane and ludicrous act is a suicide and self-annihilation. The reason why North Korea strengthens its nuclear deterrent in terms of self-defense is that it intends to prevent a nuclear war. If the nuclear deterrent fails, nuclear war will occur, which means that the THAAD system will become useless and unnecessary. North Korea simultaneously launched four ballistic missiles on March 6, 2017. I wonder whether the THAAD

² "U.S. says no talks with N. Korea without focus on denuclearization," *Yonhapnews*, Feb., 23, 2016. <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2016/02/23/0401000000AEN20160223000200315.html> (Searched, Feb.23, 2016).

³ Chris Buckley and Somini Sengupta, "South Korea Rebuff China's Proposal to Defuse Korea Tensions," *The New York Times*, March 8, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/08/world/asia/china-north-korea-thaad-nuclear.html?_r=0 (Searched date: March 12, 2017).

can intercept them if North Korea launches four or more at the same time. Experts say this is not the case. Then, the rationale for justifying the THAAD deployment to South Korea seems to be less persuasive.

The THAAD deployment in South Korea infuriated China. China's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Geng Shuang said, "I want to emphasize that we firmly oppose the deployment of THAAD," and "We will resolutely take necessary measures to defend our security interests." at a news briefing in Beijing on March 7, 2017.⁴ China perceives the antimissile system as a threat to its core interests and has imposed its non-military retaliation against South Korea, thereby deteriorating China-South Korean relations at the lowest point since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two in 1992. Why has China fiercely opposed the THAAD deployment to South Korea? China seems to have two important reasons.⁵ First, the THAAD system has AN/TPY-2 X-Band radar, the most sophisticated radar capabilities, covering almost the Northeast region of China, that could be used to track China's own missile systems, potentially giving the United States a major advantage in any future conflict with China. Beijing has already suggested the U. S. replace it with a cheaper, smaller radar that only covers North Korea. Washington refused. From this, Beijing appears to believe that Washington may use X-band radar to contain China in the first place. Second, China argues that the United States may use both South Korea and Japan to join the missile defense system (MD) in order to contain China's rise.

So what are the alternatives? It will be a peaceful 'big deal' with North Korea. We must solve the North Korean nuclear issue through dialogue and negotiations through a step by step on issues to be discussed. US and ROK governments must break with the outdated strategy of "the denuclearization first and a peace regime later," which they have so long maintained, and it is desirable for the two to simultaneously pursue denuclearization and a peace regime building. The Trump administration should soon come up with a new policy toward North Korea. The most serious issue of the new administration could be the creative resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue. If President Trump will pursue a more rigid policy than President Obama's North Korea policy, it is doubtful whether he will be able to contribute to "America First" policy and the long-term national interest of the United States. Therefore, I would like to make a creative

⁴ Emily Rauhala, "China's anger over U.S. antimissile system poses challenge to Trump," *The Washington Post*, March 7, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/china-warns-of-consequences-over-deployment-of-us-anti-missile-system/2017/03/07/dd5ca494-0319-11e7-a391-651727e77fc0_story.html?utm_term=.da5f6467339e (Searched date: March 10, 2017).

⁵ Adam Taylor, "Why China is so mad about THAAD, a missile defense system aimed at deterring North Korea," *The Washington Post*, March 7, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/03/07/why-china-is-so-mad-about-THAAD-a-missile-defense-system-aimed-at-deterring-north-korea/?utm_term=.5bdce2b0cc14#comments (Searched date: March 10, 2017).

proposal for a new US policy toward North Korea that the Trump administration should seriously consider.

There have been growing voices calling for a new US policy toward North Korea, and influential foreign policy and security experts, and research institutes have proposed creative ideas and proposals for seeking an exit strategy in the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue. President Trump expressed his willingness to engage in dialogue with North Korea during the election campaign, and I am very encouraged by his willingness to offer constructive dialogue and negotiations with the North.

So I firmly believe that the Trump administration's new North Korea policy can be different from that of the Obama administration. If we understand the fundamental motives of the North Korean nuclear armament from a new perspective, we firmly believe that the North Korean nuclear issue could be resolved peacefully. The key issue that the US government does not want to admit in the past is whether the United States is willing to create a favorable environment for getting rid of the anxiety of North Korean regime security, thereby liberating North Korea from its "siege mentality."

BASIC MOTIVES OF NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR ARMAMENT

The DPRK has succeeded in miniaturization, light weight and diversification of its nuclear weapons through five nuclear tests, and has also been successful in launching short- and intermediate-range missiles tests such as Pukguksong-2, SLBM (submarine-launched ballistic missile). The DPRK has developed its second strike capabilities, and by the year 2020, it is the opinion of many experts that North Korea will have a nuclear power status. Understanding the causes of North Korea's nuclear development will make it easier to find solutions to give up the North Korean nuclear weapons. Also, if we understand the logic of North Korea as a nuclear power, we know that North Korea cannot easily abandon its nuclear program. Understanding the root causes of North Korean nuclear armament will allow North Korea itself to find ways to give up its nuclear weapons. However, some argue that North Korea will never give up its nuclear weapons, but it does not seem convincing.

Korean Workers' Party Chairman Kim Jong Un emphasized that "the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" was the legacy of his grandfather Kim Il Sung and his father, Kim Jong Il. Kim Jong Un said that if he assures survival and security of the North Korean regime, there is no need to have nuclear weapons. Meanwhile, North Korea has consistently made more nuclear weapons, because it has no choice but to strengthen its nuclear deterrence to the highest level by "self-defense" measures for the survival of the North Korean regime.

Therefore, I hope the Trump administration must understand that the UN sanctions and pressure on North Korea cannot persuade North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons so far. When Kim Jong Un recognizes that there is no need to possess nuclear weapons on its own, North Korea

seems to ultimately give up its nuclear program. The fundamental motivation for North Korea to become a nuclear armament comes from the survival and security instability of the North Korean regime.

At the 71st UN General Assembly Disarmament Committee held in New York on October 6, 2016, North Korea stated, "The strategic decision to confront the continual nuclear threat of the United States against nuclear deterrence is self-defense for self-defense and protection of the right to survival, "It is the absolute unchanged position of the DPRK to end the nuclear war by the United States on the basis of its strong nuclear deterrent." The North Korean leadership suffers from a siege mentality of being surrounded by hostile nations.

Then, how to heal North Korea's siege mentality? How can the international community such as the United States, South Korea, and Japan resolve it? Without a deep understanding of the North's siege mentality, we may not find a solution to the North Korean nuclear issue.

The essence of the North Korean nuclear resolution is the abandonment of the international community, especially the US "hostility policy" toward North Korea, which I have argued in my columns for the last several years as a shortcut to healing North Korea's siege mentality. Therefore, in order to induce North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program, I have urged US-ROK governments to forgo their sanctions and pressure on North Korea and to map out a new roadmap for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and peaceful cooperation in Northeast Asia.

Meanwhile, North Korea emphasized the position to resume the Six-Party Talks without preconditions and discuss the issues on the Korean Peninsula, strongly stressing, "The abandonment of hostile policies by the United States is a prerequisite for the resolution of the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue." If favorable environment and conditions for voluntarily abandoning nuclear weapons are created, North Korea will not feel the need to have nuclear weapons and denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula can be realized. If such an analysis is reasonable, it is desirable that the US-ROK governments shift a new policy in this direction.

I would like to emphasize again. What is the basic motivation for North Korea to become a nuclear power? The author maintains that the root cause of North Korea's nuclear armament stems from the North Korean leadership's siege mentality: North Korean leaders are believed to be surrounded by hostile forces (especially the United States, Japan and South Korea), and they suffer from a siege mentality. In other words, it is a problem that North Korea perceives that the international community is very negative and has a hostile intention toward North Korean society.

What should be done then? We expect the participants of the Six-Party Talks to play a key role in ensuring that the North is free from North Korea's siege mentality. It is necessary and desirable to reexamine whether the measures to induce North Korea's change in the strong North Korean sanctions and pressure policies of the hard-liners will be effective. Therefore, the ROK and the

US will have to design a new road map because North Korea can give up its nuclear ambitions by healing North Korea's siege mentality and resolving security anxiety through constructive dialogue and negotiations rather than coercive diplomacy.

FIVE CORE CONDITIONS FOR NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR ABANDONMENT

We need to take heed of DPRK's new policy statement issued on July 6, 2016, regarding denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Pyongyang made five demands for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula: "Firstly, all nuclear weapons of the United States, which it has neither confirmed nor denied after bringing them into South Korea, must be publicly disclosed. Secondly, all the nukes and their bases should be dismantled and verified in the eyes of the world. Thirdly, the US should ensure that it would never bring again the nuclear strike means to south Korea, which the US has frequently deployed on the Korean Peninsula and in its vicinity. Fourthly, it should commit itself to neither intimidating the DPRK with nukes or through an act of nuclear war nor using nukes against the DPRK in any case. Fifthly, the withdrawal of the US troops holding the right to use nukes from south Korea should be declared."⁶

The first, second, and fourth demands were considered in the 9.19 Joint Statement (2005) signed by the six parties and the 1992 Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula between the two Koreas. The third and fifth demands are new. The third demand has insisted on the cessation of US-ROK joint military exercises, realizing the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula under the 9. 19 Joint Statement. The fifth demand is significant. The DPRK's demand for a declaration of the withdrawal of US troops in South Korea, not an immediate withdrawal, appears a policy change in Pyongyang's stance on US troop withdrawal from South Korea. The new stance had confirmed Kim Jong Il's position on the US troop withdrawal issue when he said, "it is desirable to maintain US troops in the Choson Peninsula for the purpose of peacekeeping, and not for its antagonistic stance against us."

An exploratory, but strategic dialogue among the U. S., the DPRK, and ROK could begin with North Korea's five demands for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in the midst of a heightened crisis on the Korean Peninsula as an opportunity for the long-term resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue.

The DPRK has declared that it does not need to have nuclear weapons if an environment is created to abandon its nuclear weapons. Then we need to think about what kind of environment

⁶ 38 North / Robert Carlin, "North Korea Said It's Willing to Talk Denuclearization (But No One Noticed)," *The Diplomat*, July 13, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/07/north-korea-said-its-willing-to-talk-denuclearization-but-no-one-> (Searched date: March 13, 2017); Kelsey Davenport, "North Korea Shifts on Denuclearization," *Arms Control Today*, September 2016, https://www.armscontrol.org/ACT/2016_09/News/North-Korea-Shifts-on-Denuclearization (Searched date: March 13, 2017).

is needed and work together to create such an atmosphere. If the desirable structural change of the Northeast Asian system and the Northeast Asian environment that does not require North Korea to have a nuclear weapon are to be established, North Korea will heal a siege mentality and then will face a new phase of giving up its nuclear weapons.⁷

Therefore, I will propose to create the five core conditions for nuclear abandonment as follows: First, the most important condition is the normalization of South-North Korean relations through constructive dialogue. There is no need to reconsider that the South and the North should be the key players for resolving the Korean Peninsula issue. The normalization of inter-Korean relations cannot be achieved without negotiation through mutual concessions and compromise between the South and the North.

How will North Korea give up nuclear weapons without constructive dialogue between the two Koreas? The argument for current North Korean nuclear resolution through sanctions and pressure on North Korea seems to be less persuasive. In order to normalize the relationship between the ROK and the DPRK as a sovereign state, the two Koreas must sign a basic treaty between Seoul and Pyongyang. It is desirable for two Koreas to establish representative offices in each capital. Seoul and Pyongyang should develop into a normal relationship between the two Koreas.

Second, the cross-recognition between the two Koreas and the four powers (the US, China, Russia and Japan) should be completed. Although the South Korean government will be celebrating its 25th anniversary of the diplomatic normalization with China and Russia, normalization of diplomatic relations between North Korea, the US, and Japan is yet to take place. Normalization of diplomatic relations between the US, Japan, and the DPRK should be normalized, and cross-recognition between the two Koreas and the four major powers will be completed. If normalization of diplomatic relations between the two Koreas and the four powers is achieved, hostile and bellicose military provocations of North Korea will be resolved and will be transformed into friendly interactions. If and when cross-recognition is achieved, the balance will be stabilized in Northeast Asia, thereby increasing cooperative interactions in Northeast Asia.

Third, the most important variable for peace and stability in Northeast Asia is maintaining a cooperative relationship between the US and China. The US - China cooperation system is the most crucial variable for solving the Korean Peninsula issues as well as stabilizing the Northeast Asian system. In this regard, maintaining a US-China cooperation system can be a key variable

⁷ This section was drawn from the author's earlier article, see Kwak, Tae-Hwan, "Will North Korea ever abandon nuclear weapons?" *NK News*, March 27, 2017.

that allows North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons. The US - China conflict structure will remain an incentive for North Korea not to give up its nuclear weapons because of instability in Northeast Asia.

Fourth, it is urgent to transform the Korean armistice system into a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. The conclusion of "a Korean peninsula peace treaty" signed by the four parties (two Koreas, the US, and China) will be the key to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. In the near future, the four parties will simultaneously discuss the North Korean nuclear issue in exchange for a conclusion of a Korean Peninsula peace treaty at the four-party talks within the framework of the Six-Party Talks.

Fifth, the Six-Party Talks that have been moribund for the past eight years must be resumed. Thus, the Sept. 19, 2005, joint statement on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula signed by the U. S., China, Russia, Japan, and two Koreas, should be implemented. At the same time, the South and North Korea, the United States and China, under the 9.19 Joint Statement, should hold a peace forum on the Korean Peninsula and discuss the conclusion of the proposed Korean Peninsula peace treaty. This ultimately leads to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the conclusion of a peace treaty on the Korean Peninsula.

The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula can be realized through mutual concessions and compromise among concerned parties, particularly the United States, DPRK, ROK, and China. There will be no peace with North Korean nuclear armament, and there will never be a nuclear war on the Korean Peninsula. It is, indeed, no doubt that the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula will be a foundation for stability and peace in Northeast Asia.

The healing of North's "siege mentality" is essential to the denuclearization of North Korea

If North Korea's siege mentality is resolved by the conclusion of the Korean Peninsula Peace Treaty and a comprehensive security system is established in Northeast Asia, North Korea will lose the necessity of possessing nuclear weapons and will give up its nuclear armament. The Korean Peninsula Peace Treaty will be a much more binding multilateral international treaty than the North Korea-US peace treaty. Once the UN Security Council has ratified the Korean Peninsula Peace Treaty signed by the heads of the four nations and the process of registering with the United Nations Secretariat is completed, the legal and institutional apparatus for the peace regime on the Korean Peninsula is complete. The Korean war will be ended with the Korean Peninsula peace treaty which will ultimately guarantee the survival of the North Korean regime. This will be the only solution to let North Korea give up its nuclear status. The Korean Peninsula Peace Treaty is different from other peace treaties in that it has the character of a collective security system guaranteed by the United Nations.

The signing of the "Korean Peninsula Peace Treaty" is the key to resolving the North Korean nuclear issue. My conception of a "peace treaty on the Korean Peninsula" can be a prescription to cure the North Korean leadership's "siege mentality."⁸ To realize this vision, dialogue and communication among Northeast Asian countries are essential. Above all, it is necessary to have dialogue and negotiating will have related countries. North Korea must also show its willingness to give up its nuclear weapons. If North Korea does not need to have nuclear weapons and the right to survive of the North Korean regime will be guaranteed, it will give up its nuclear weapons. The Trump US administration is urged to seriously consider my creative initiative as a new resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue.

A THREE-PHASE ROADMAP INITIATIVE FOR PEACEBUILDING

Parallel Strategy of Denuclearization and Conclusion of a Korean Peninsula Peace Treaty

If the utility of the Six-Party Talks is still alive, there is no alternative to the Six-Party Talks to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue. The Six-Party Talks are the only multilateral consensus already reached by six parties for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. In the framework of the Six-Party Talks, normalization talks among the US, Japan, and the DPRK should be held. And the Four-Party Talks for the establishment of a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula should also take place within the framework of the Six-Party Talks. When the Six-Party Talks resume, it is desirable to conclude a "Korean Peninsula Peace Treaty" among the four members of the US, China, South, and North Korea, together with a resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue.

Given this deadlock, I would like to propose an alternative three-phase roadmap for the achievement of denuclearization and simultaneous building of a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.⁹

The First Phase: The search for an exit strategy is essential to the alleviation of the current crisis on the Korean Peninsula. It is therefore proposed that "Three Party Talks" involving the U. S., the ROK and the DPRK be convened to agree on a moratorium on U. S. -ROK joint military exercises in exchange for a North Korea's nuclear freeze and shutdown.

it is proposed to hold the trilateral talks among the United States, South, and North Korea. The talks will discuss the issue of reducing or suspending annual US-ROK joint military drills

⁸ For details of the "siege mentality" concept, see Daniel Bar-Tal, "Siege Mentality," *Beyond Intractability*, September 2004. <<http://www.beyondintractability.org>> (searched date: January 23, 2013); Tae-Hwan Kwak, "North Korea's Bellicose Behavior and Peace-building on the Korean Peninsula," *IFES Forum*, May 6, 2013, http://ifes.kyungnam.ac.kr/eng/FRM/FRM_0201V.aspx?code=FRM130506_0001 (Searched date: March 21, 2016).

⁹ For detailed analysis of a three-stage roadmap for denuclearization and a peace regime, see Tae-Hwan Kwak, "In Search of Denuclearization and a Peace Regime on the Korean Peninsula," *Journal of Peace and Unification*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Fall 2016, pp. 1-22.

proposed by North Korea on January 9, 2015, and early 2016, in exchange for a nuclear freeze of North Korea. In order to alleviate the current crisis on the Korean Peninsula, the three-way talks between South Korea, North Korea, and the US are more realistic than US-North Korea bilateral talks.

It is also desirable to start the trilateral talks aimed at freezing and nonproliferation rather than acknowledging North Korea's nuclear power status. It would also make sense for North Korea to reenter the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty) to promote North Korea's denuclearization. The important thing is to reaffirm and implement the February 29, 2012, US-DPRK Agreement (('Leap Day Deal')) in the first stage. The 2.29 agreement is crucial for North Korea to suspend its nuclear test and long-range rocket launch, and the United States will provide humanitarian and financial assistance to North Korea. The creative dialogue between Washington and Pyongyang should begin to respect, practice and implement the 2.29 agreement, and at the same time, an innovative inter-Korean dialogue should begin.

It is thus desirable that Washington is willing to suspend US-ROK joint military exercises, and more importantly that the Trump administration re-engages with North Korea. It is also desirable that the ROK government be willing to take initiatives to persuade the Trump administration to take a new, innovative approach to North Korea's nuclear issue.

The Second Phase: If the first phase is successfully completed, the second phase will be to resume the long-stalled Six-Party Talks with a goal of implementing September 19, 2005, and February 13, 2007, statement and agreement, and at the same time for US-DPRK normalization talks and Japan-DPRK normalization talks to commence. The US-DPRK normalization treaty and Japan-DPRK normalization treaty will need to be signed to complete diplomatic cross-recognition among the six states (the U. S, China, Japan, Russia, and two Koreas) in Northeast Asia.

In the second phase, the Six-Party Talks will be resumed, and simultaneously normalization talks between the US and North Korea will start. If the Six-Party Talks resume, we can reaffirm and adhere to the 9.19 Joint Statement (2005), 2.13 Agreement (2007), and 10.3 Agreement (2007), which have been dying for the past eight years. First of all, we will begin negotiations with North Korea on verification of North Korean nuclear facilities that failed to reach an agreement at the last Six-Party Talks in early December 2008. Once US-DPRK and Japan-DPRK diplomatic relations are established through the normalization talks among the US, Japan, and North Korea as stipulated in the 9. 19 Joint Statement, a cross-recognition among the four powers and the two Koreas will be achieved.

The Third Phase: Realization of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the conclusion of a Korean Peninsula peace treaty.

Needless to say, essential issues at each stage of this proposal need to be resolved to achieve North Korea's denuclearization. However, the proposal is simply to introduce a macro-level

approach to resolving the North Korean nuclear issue, though further research on this issue is necessary. If this initiative is successfully implemented, the survival of the North Korean system will be guaranteed, inter-Korean relations will be friendly, and US-DPRK and Japan-DPRK relations will be normalized. As a result of such an outcome, the DPRK will be free from its siege mentality, and there will be no reason for Pyongyang to keep its nuclear weapons, leading to the denuclearization of the Peninsula.

In the third phase, the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and a Korean Peninsula peace treaty will be concluded. At this stage, it is important to develop a strategy to liberate from North Korea's "siege mentality." The Korean Peninsula Peace Treaty will be signed by the US, China, South and North Korea, replacing the 1953 Korean armistice agreement and realizing the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. In the Korean Peninsula peace treaty, there are four attached agreements: 1) the ROK-DPRK Peace Agreement, 2) the US-DPRK Peace Agreement, 3) the ROK-China Peace Agreement, and 4) the US-China Peace Agreement. Along with this, the status of the USFK (United States Forces Korea) should be transformed into a multilateral international peacekeeping force.

Overall, it seems a policy of pressure and tougher sanctions against the DPRK cannot alone resolve North Korea's nuclear issue. Thus, we must search for an alternative approach to the sanctions/ pressure policy toward North Korea. A new initiative of sequential measures in the proposed three-stage formula is therefore designed to resolve North Korea's nuclear issue via alternative means to the pressure policy toward the DPRK. Thus this approach is not supporting a U. S.-DPRK peace treaty, but moreover a Korean Peninsula peace treaty.

A KOREAN PENINSULA PEACE TREATY IS THE BEST FORMULA

If the deadlocked four-party talks can be reactivated, then the issue of building a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula can be discussed, though it is a formidable task to create a peace formula acceptable to four parties: the two Koreas, China, and the US.¹⁰

A creative formula for building a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula is therefore required, and political will of the highest decision-makers will be an essential condition. For no matter how good the formula may be, if there is a lack of political will to implement it, it remains unrealistic. Therefore, it would be necessary for the US, China, DPRK and ROK to meet at a Korean peace forum under the Sept. 19 agreement, setting the following six items on their agenda:

First, a peace agreement between the ROK and the DPRK would need to be discussed. The two Koreas would need to reconfirm their intent to implement Article 5 of the Basic Agreement and

¹⁰ For details of earlier version, see Tae-Hwan Kwak, "A Creative Formula for Building a Korean Peninsula Peace Regime," (Ch.2), in Tae-Hwan Kwak and Seung-Ho Joo, eds., *Peace Regime Building on the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asian Security Cooperation* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2010).

Article 19 of the Protocol on the Compliance with, and Implementation of Chapter I, South-North Reconciliation of the Basic Agreement, in order to transform the armistice into a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. In addition, Chapter II, South-North Non-aggression (Articles 9-14) of the Basic Agreement and its Protocol need to be implemented in good faith by South and North Korea. If the two Koreas sincerely implement the non-aggression provisions under the inter-Korean basic agreement, it would not be necessary to separately conclude a peace treaty between the two Koreas.

Second, a US-DPRK peace agreement should be placed on the agenda, for since 1974 the DPRK has consistently insisted on a peace treaty with the United States. A peace agreement (not a treaty) between the US and the DPRK must be concluded. The DPRK appeared to abandon a long-standing bilateral peace treaty between the US and the DPRK. In May 2004, DPRK deputy representative to the UN Han Song Ryol suggested that the best way to resolve its nuclear standoff with the US would be to replace the Korean armistice with a trilateral peace treaty ending the Korean War, to be signed by the two Koreas and the United States.¹¹ It is significant that the DPRK is also interested in concluding a multilateral peace treaty.

Third, a peace agreement between the ROK and China may be on the agenda. The ROK established its diplomatic relations with China in 1992, but after twenty-four years of normalized relations, there is no legal document signed by the two to formally end the Korean War. It, therefore, seems necessary for the two countries to sign a peace agreement to formally end the Korean War.

Fourth, a peace agreement between China and the United States may also be placed on the agenda. China and the US were also belligerent powers during the Korean War, and yet the two powers have not concluded a peace agreement to formally end the Korean War. It is argued that there is a need to conclude a peace agreement between the two in view of the conflicting security interests of the two powers in the Asia-Pacific region. In this context, it is desirable that a US-China peace agreement could be concluded at a Korean peace forum.

Fifth, political and military confidence-building measures (CBMs) between the two Koreas should be placed on the agenda. The South-North Joint Military Commission needs to be re-activated to implement provisions of the non-aggression agreement as spelled out in Chapter II of the Basic Agreement, which was nullified on Jan. 30, 2009 by the DPRK. The Commission should also discuss relevant issues relating to inter-Korean arms control, CBMs, the reduction of

¹¹ Barbara Slavin, "North Korea suggests peace treaty to settle nuclear dispute," *USA Today* (May 12, 2004), http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2004-05-12-nkorea-treaty-usat_x.htm# (Searched date: June 20, 2014).

offensive weapons systems, chemical and biological weapons, long-range missiles and a verification regime.

Sixth, the establishment of an international peace observation mechanism should be placed on the agenda. This international body must enforce a Korean Peninsula peace treaty and manage the implementation of agreements among the four parties.

The six items as suggested above could be placed on the agenda at a Korean peace forum under the Sept. 19 and Feb. 13 joint agreements.

At least four connected agreements among the four parties may be agreed upon at such a forum: 1) an ROK-DPRK peace agreement; 2) a US-DPRK peace agreement; 3) an ROK-China peace agreement, and 4) a US-China peace agreement. These four connected agreements will be included in a Korean Peninsula peace treaty, which will legally and formally terminate the Korean War. No party will be allowed to demand war guilt, reparations, or the persecution of war criminals as usually demanded in a peace treaty.

Needless to say, the two Koreas would need to play key roles in transforming the Korean Armistice Agreement into a Korean Peninsula peace treaty. The four+ format of the UN formula (a Korean Peninsula peace treaty endorsed by the United Nations) should be signed by the leaders of the four parties at the four summit meeting. The peace treaty signed by the four would be based on the principle of a system of collective security, whereby a unification-oriented peace regime on the Korean Peninsula will be firmly established. The UN Security Council should endorse a resolution to guarantee the Korean Peninsula peace treaty, which should be registered with the UN Secretariat.

The four parties, Russia and Japan (all members of the Six-Party Talks) will jointly guarantee a Korean Peninsula peace treaty. The next stage would be to develop a multilateral Northeast Asian security body, including Russia and Japan. In this way, there will be a permanent, unification-oriented peace regime on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia.

U. S-CHINA COOPERATION AS A KEY TO PEACEBUILDING PROCESS

The security landscape in Northeast Asia will become more and darker as it enters the Rooster Year of 2017, and it will become a year marked by security and economic uncertainty, making it extremely uneasy for the future of the Korean Peninsula.

From the perspective of realist theory in international politics, a new structural change is taking place in the current Northeast Asian security system due to the conflict of national interests among the four powers (US, China, Russia, and Japan) around the Korean Peninsula. The struggle for power is being developed, and it is necessary to realistically face the rapidly changing Northeast Asian security landscape with the advent of the President Trump administration.

In accordance with the new structural changes in the Northeast Asian security system in 2017, the ROK government realizes that the Korean Peninsula is becoming a victim of the power politics of the great powers, and expects the South Korean government to pursue a wiser foreign and security policy.

Emergence of a New US-China conflict structure

The key to determining the future of the Korean Peninsula is the change in US - China relations. President Donald J. Trump, a businessman, is an experienced negotiator. It may be appropriate to say that his actions, as President of the United States committed to the slogan "America First," are unpredictable. It seems clear that the newly foreign and security policy will be pursued with the "peace through power" that is different from the foreign policy of Barack Obama administration that had pursued US foreign policy for the eight years.

The US - China security relationship foreshadows a big change. The Trump administration has been calling for a change in the US government's "One China Policy" principle with its China negotiation card, and Taiwan is understandably China's "core interest." The 'One China Policy' denunciation foreshadows that the US-China relationship can be driven into a serious conflict. To make matters worse, the range of conflicts between the US and China is getting bigger due to the declaration of 'trade war' with China, the THAAD deployment issue, the North Korean nuclear issue and the East/South China Sea issues.

In recent months, China and the United States are demonstrating their armed forces with their high-tech strategic weapons assets in East Asia. Looking at the budget for this year's defense budget, US-China arms race competition is realizing, and it is very uneasy. With this US-China arms race competition, the US-China confrontation structure will never help peaceful resolution of the Korean Peninsula issues. Central to the peaceful resolution of the Korean Peninsula issues, including the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue, is US-China cooperation and cooperation. US-China cooperation must be a necessary and sufficient condition for resolving the Korean Peninsula issues. However, if the confrontation structure between them deepens, it will be difficult to resolve the pending issues of the Korean Peninsula including the North Korean nuclear issue.

President Trump, meanwhile, believes that China holds the key to the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue and has asked China to play an active role in resolving the North Korean nuclear issue through China's strong pressure on North Korea. However, if the US - China confrontation intensifies in the future, China will try to restore DPRK- China relations rather than comply with the Trump's request. Moreover, China has been opposed to the THAAD deployment on the Korean Peninsula since the beginning of the THAAD issue, and as the THAAD deployment became a reality, China's economic retaliatory measures against South Korea were severe, so the relationship between South Korea and China is getting worse beyond the Rubicon River.

The ROK government, which has fallen into a security dilemma, is advised to choose a rational diplomatic route in order to pursue its national interests in a US - China confrontation structure. Unfortunately, despite the China's strong opposition, the THAAD deployment is now under way as scheduled.

The ROK-US combined military exercises are being conducted this year as planned, with the most advanced strategic assets being the largest in history since March 1. North Korea has concluded that the ROK-US joint training is a "nuclear war exercise" and was dissatisfied with it and succeeded in testing and launching four ballistic missiles at the same time in the morning of March 6 to demonstrate that the THAAD deployment is useless. North Korea emphasizes the strengthening of nuclear deterrence in preparation for "nuclear - armed war between South Korea and the United States," and raises the military crisis on the Korean Peninsula. To make matters worse, on the same day, the US government has brought some of the launchers of the THAAD system for its early deployment into South Korea in full swing, and the clouds of war are gathering more and more on the Korean Peninsula.

ROK's best choice between China and the US

The present Northeast Asian security system can be defined as the 'G2 era' dominated by the US and China. Realist scholars, such as Professor John J. Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago, argue that the US-China conflict will be inevitable in the end. According to this diplomatic approach, as a result of the US-China conflict, the ROK may become a geopolitical victim of the balance-of-power politics in Northeast Asia.

On the other hand, scholars such as Professor Hugh White of the Australian National University do not consider the US-China conflict inevitable and suggest "power sharing," but it seems difficult to realize power sharing between the US and China in reality. The logic of both schools of thought is all right. While seeking economic interdependence and maintaining a realistic stance in terms of security, the US-China peaceful coexistence of common security and economic cooperation is a desirable direction for South Korea's national interests.

The resolution of the Korean Peninsula issues, including the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the establishment of a peace regime and the vision for Korean unification, is the necessary and sufficient condition for stability and peace in Northeast Asia. It is based on the structural characteristics of the Northeast Asian regime that it is impossible to be achieved without cooperation. Therefore, the ROK government needs to make an objective analysis on what diplomatic strategy should be pursued as the structure of Northeast Asian security system is changing rapidly. I would like to reiterate the need for harmonization between defense and economic security. In order to maximize the national interest of the Republic of Korea, it has been argued that it is desirable to pursue a balanced diplomacy with China and the United States.

The US-ROK alliance should be strengthened in the short term in preparation for the North Korean nuclear and missile threats, but the ROK should be wise to participate in the US-Japan

alliance system to contain China's rise. We must face the fact that our position is to create economic security and benefits from economic interdependence with China.

Therefore, I argue that it is desirable to actively pursue the new "balanced diplomacy" of "defense cooperation with the US and economic cooperation with China." Therefore, the ROK government should seek alternatives by holding a moratorium on THAAD deployment on the Korean Peninsula. Meanwhile, I urge the ROK and the DPRK to take the wise course to pursue the sanctions on North Korea and constructive inter-Korean dialogue in order to restore the frozen inter-Korean relations.

The Korean Peninsula is located in the center of Northeast Asia and lies between the maritime power of the United States and the continental power of China. However, it is time to demonstrate the capabilities of the Republic of Korea as the world's 11th middle power. South Korea should act as a bridge between the US and China in the G2 era to build a security and peace regime in Northeast Asia. At the same time, we expect Kim Jong Un to push forward the active balanced diplomacy to create an international atmosphere so that Chairman Kim can be drawn from international isolation and become a responsible member of the international community.

CONCLUSION

As discussed above, I presented a new theoretical framework for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the establishment of a peace regime. In order for this framework to be useful, a number of basic conditions must exist. The most important variables among them are the will of the South and North Korean leaders and the four major powers' will to build a peace regime. The other core variable is that the US-China conflict structure is the biggest obstacle to the denuclearization and the peace-building process.

In order to eliminate these obstacles, the strong will and determination of the North Korean leaders are needed. If the policy is changed according to the prescription suggested above, it will be probable to begin denuclearization and peacebuilding process. However, due to structural changes in the current Northeast Asian security landscape, inter-Korean deeply rooted confrontation, and the US-China conflict structure, the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the peacemaking process require long-term preparations and patience. If we endeavor to build peace on the Korean Peninsula in the long term, we hope that the peaceful era without war in the Korean Peninsula will come to the realization of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the peacebuilding process. <The End>