

Current situation on the Korean Peninsula and the Plan of South Korean Peace Movement

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Korean Peninsula: a Conflict-Ridden Region

The explosion of PMD series mines in the De-Militarized Zone (DMZ), the retaliatory broadcasting messages South Korea sent across the border through the loudspeakers to the North, the artillery fight between the two Koreas along the border, the fourth nuclear experiment launched by North Korea in January 2015, the launching of a long-range rocket by North Korea, the South Korean government's decision to close down the Kaesong Industrial Park, the UN Security Council's resolution on sanctioning North Korea, the combined ROK-US military exercises, the simulations of the US nuclear submarines and B-2 and B-52 fighter jets over the Korean Peninsula, North Korea's launching of the Hwaseong-10 (Musudan), mid-to-long range ballistic missile rocket, the South Korean government's announcement of the plan to build the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in Korea, the launching of North Korea's submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM), and the fifth nuclear experiment by North Korea in September 2016—

Look at this. You would not believe that all these dramatic events of military tension took place on the Korean Peninsula in the span of this year. The peninsula is still a troubled region with an ongoing conflict. The Korean War broke out in 1950, leading the two Koreas to sign a ceasefire agreement three years later. Over six decades have passed since then, yet both Koreas still remain in a ceasefire, rather than armistice, state. South Korea is still preparing for yet another possible war with its neighbor to the north.

The existing armistice and division of the Korean Peninsula are the unfortunate outcome of the World War II and the Cold War. The armistice system of the Korean peninsula not only caused pains of the Koreans but also is a fundamental cause of unstable peace in the region. The divided Korean peninsula is the world's most heavily militarized zone and the powder keg in East Asia where the world's largest military exercises are conducted.

The entire region of East Asia and the Pacific is, in fact, home to a number of countries with the world's highest military spending, including the United States (first), China (second), Japan (eighth), and South Korea (tenth). Asia-Pacific is a region heavily saturated with armaments. Let me relay to you some of the events sustaining such a high level of tension in the region.

Nuclear Crisis in Korean Peninsula

As you all know, North Korea launched its fifth and latest nuclear experiment on September 9.

The Choson Nuclear Weapons Research Institute of North Korea boldly announced to the world that Pyongyang “went ahead with a new nuclear explosion test, designed to measure the strength of its nuclear warhead.” Only eight months had elapsed since the fourth experiment Pyongyang conducted in January this year. The Kim Jeoung regime had declared in January that it had successfully conducted its first hydrogen-bomb test. The governments of neighboring countries, including South Korea, are quite worried that the North Korean project of minimizing the sizes of its nuclear warheads is progressing more rapidly than expected.

North Korea have made it clear again that they are going to maintain their regime using nuclear weapons. In 2012, North Korea has already declared that it became a nuclear state by revising its Constitution. During the 7th Congress of the Worker’s Party of North Korea, which was held for the first time in 36 years, they set forth in the party regulation the nuclear-based economy, called Byungjin Track, which promotes the development of both economic and nuclear power. Because North Korea is a country with the Party-State system, the party regulation, rather than its Constitution, becomes the basic guideline on how to maintain its regime.

Aside from nuclear testing, North Korea has recently repeated testing of various rockets and missiles to strengthen their ability to launch nuclear bombs. On June 23rd, North Korea claimed, “We have secured the definite capability to attack the US practically and comprehensively,” while announcing that they have successfully launched the mid-to-long-range ballistic missile, Hwaseong-10 (Musudan). If this is true, the US military bases in Guam and the entirety of Japan will be inside North Korea’s missile range.

ROK-US-Japan military alliance & THAAD Deployment

The missile defense(MD) system led by the US is also strengthened even more on the grounds of North Korean nuclear tests. Regardless of the concerns and the oppositions from China, Russia, and other surrounding countries, South Korea and the US announced that they are deploying THAAD(Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) to South Korea on July. The US and South Korean governments continue to argue that deployment of the THAAD in South Korea is a response to the existence of North Korean nuclear weapons and missiles. Should the THAAD system be indeed established in South Korea, it will mark the first instance, first US base of the system’s offshore deployment outside the US.

Deployment of THAAD to South Korea signifies that South Korea will be sucked into the US-Japan MD, which targets not only North Korea but also China, as a subsidiary partner, and that the Korea-US-Japan military cooperation system will become official.

The South Korean government has been insisting that because the distance between North and South Korea is very short, they have developed an independent KAMD(Korean MD), which focuses on the low altitude MD, and they are not participating in the MD led by the US. But it is a lie.

Since 2012, South Korea has already been participating in multi-national MD exercise,

such as Pacific Dragon and Nimble Titan, and many of the reports from the US Department of Defense have clearly identified these exercises as MD exercises. Moreover, on June 28, Korea, US, and Japan conducted their first missile alert exercise to detect and track North Korean missiles on the sea.

The main purpose of THAAD in South Korea will be to use the AN/TPY-2 radar to identify and trace in the early stages any mid-to-long range ballistic missile from China or North Korea heading to the US mainland or US bases in Japan or Guam. Based on information provided by the South Korea to the US and Japan, the rate of interception by the US MD strategy will increase.

Do you recall any moments in history in which the leaders of two nations together voice their objection to the deployment of a weapons system? The Chinese and Russian governments have so far together released two joint statements, raising their objection to the THAAD deployment to Korea and denouncing the US' MD strategy. Beijing, for its part, has even warned that, should the THAAD be deployed to Korea, it would have to change its military strategy accordingly. Moscow has also threatened that it might relocate its missile forces to the Far East.

Deployment of THAAD in South Korea will make it more difficult to resolve nuclear issues on the peninsula, especially due to the strong opposition from China. China has been managing North Korea's brinkmanship diplomacy through coordination of the Six-Party Talks and support for or even pressure on North Korea. Deployment of THAAD in South Korea will remove the motivation for China to play an active role in continuing to manage North Korea's nuclear activity or play a constructive role in reopening the 6-party talks.

An Unrealistic Resolution Ended in Failure: Hostility and Containment

For several years, the US and South Korea have concentrated more on imposing sanctions against North Korea rather than solving problems through dialogue. However, the so-called "Strategic Patience," led by the US, did not play any effective role in encouraging North Korea to change their attitudes and submit to the sanctions. Meanwhile, North Korea developed their nuclear weapons and missile launching capabilities, which provided the US with greater opportunities to justify its construction of MD systems in Asia and its Pivot to Asia policy. As a result, this vicious cycle is trampling any sprouts of peace on the Korean Peninsula.

The history of conflicts that have developed around North Korea's nuclear program demonstrates that when dialogue and negotiations were pursued, Pyongyang slowed or suspended its nuclear program. The 20 years of history surrounding the North Korean nuclear issue provides a different lesson, in that the greater the sanctions imposed on North Korea, the greater the provocative actions and words Pyongyang responds with. The North Korean leadership regards economic hardship caused by sanctions as the price they have to pay for protecting their security and sovereignty, and the leadership and its society are getting accustomed to sanctions by inventing multiple means for overcoming this hardship. The North Korea has carried out five series of nuclear tests in defiance of sanctions. In order to

elicit a positive response from North Korea, new methods must be applied. We need to bring into a new level of dialogue the kinds of bold, constructive proposals that are acceptable to both sides

A New, Comprehensive Solution: Signing a Peace Treaty, Normalizing Relations, Establishing a Nuclear-Free Zone

Above all, we must present comprehensive solutions that will link the transition from the current armistice system to a peace system on the Korean peninsula, normalize relations between North Korea and the US, and between North Korea and Japan, and eliminate North Korea's nuclear program. This is because the nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula originated from the unstable armistice system. Once that is understood, the first step toward resolving the nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula is to start talks among the states concerned to conclude peace treaty and to start bilateral talks to normalize relations between North Korea and the US, and between North Korea and Japan, based on six-party agreement on a joint statement.

Second: Following this, we should go beyond Korean denuclearization and seek a more comprehensive solution that would definitively eliminate all the nuclear threats facing Northeast Asian countries. Resolving the Korean peninsula nuclear crisis is not an end in itself, but a necessary component of dealing with the Northeast Asian and global nuclear crises. The most effective way to eliminate nuclear threats on the Korean peninsula and in the larger Northeast Asian region is to establish a nuclear-free zone in Northeast Asia, not only on the Korean peninsula.

Third: We should make an effort in order to change the various disputes and military conflicts on the Korean peninsula into reciprocal, cooperative relationships. The unstable, fragile armistice system resulted from historical conflicts created after World War II. If this historical context is ignored, allowing Japan to exercise its right to collective self-defense, and reinforcing ROK-US-Japan military cooperation using the justification of nuclear and missile threats from North Korea, it will intensify the already extreme military tension and accelerate the vicious cycle of the regional arms race. Key elements in creating an East Asian peace and cooperation system are the preservation of Japan's peace constitution and the conclusion of a Korean peninsula peace treaty.

The Plan of South Korean Peace Movement

The peace movement in South Korea is in its darkest hour today. The Tumen River valley in the Northern Hamkyong Province of North Korea has recently seen the worst flood in history, which resulted in the deaths of hundreds and forced 140,000 to flee their homes. The UN and other international organizations exhorted the international community to provide relief and aid for the victims immediately, but the South Korean government refuses to oblige. Although Seoul has consistently emphasized the need to solve the human rights crisis in North Korea through humanitarian aid first and foremost, it now turns a blind eye to the flood victims, citing the fifth nuclear experiment by Pyongyang as the reason. Seoul even forbids NGOs to provide

humanitarian aid. The current state of inaction attests to the rigidity of the South-North conflict on the Korean Peninsula today.

We must recall, however, that no state has ever collapsed due to economic sanctions in the history of humankind. The UN Security Council passed yet another resolution sanctioning North Korea, this time with an unprecedented level of severity, in the aftermath of the fourth nuclear experiment. The resolution did not stop the fifth nuclear experiment from taking place, but Seoul has no other recourse except to reiterate its commitment to sanctioning and pressuring. It is quite likely that Pyongyang will yet attempt at sixth and even seventh nuclear experiments. We have little time to waste. The peace activists in Korea continue to argue that the most effective solution to the current nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula can be found only in dialogue and compromise.

The peace groups in South Korea will continue to do their best to maintain civilian channels of dialogue open. The Ulaanbaatar Process, a civil-society initiative for building peace on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia, was launched last year. It marks a memorable achievement of the Northeast Asian Committee of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). The Ulaanbaatar Process, inspired by the proposal from the Mongolian government and civil society, will steer the 6+1 dialogue in the region, involving the civil societies of both Koreas, China, US, Russia, and Japan, toward mitigating the military tension in the region and increasing conversations. The Process will thus feature contributions from activists and civil society leaders of the six countries as well as Mongolia.

South Korean peace groups will also continue their solidarity with the residents of candidate regions for the THAAD establishment in Korea to oppose the deployment of the system to the country. Seoul and Washington have agreed to complete the THAAD deployment process before the South Korean presidential election next year. Just two days ago, the Korean government announced that it finally decided on the location for the THAAD system. Over 100 civil-society groups in South Korea have responded by launching a network of solidarity and nationwide campaigns opposing the THAAD deployment.

In 2009, the citizens of the Czech Republic and Poland successfully thwarted the US's implementation of its MD plan in their countries. Our goal is to help South Koreans realize that they can do the same. In order to put a stop to the expansion of the US's MD plan, intended to keep China and Russia in check, we need to depend on, and strengthen, international solidarity. We are preparing to host an international workshop so as to invite people from Europe and Japan to share their experiences with the MD-opposition activities with the Korean civil society and prompt discovery of new ways of international cooperation.

South Korean civil society calls for international solidarity to solve the military crisis in the Korean Peninsula, to end the Korean War, and to create a peaceful and sustainable community.

History shows us that any and all militaristic policies that have been attempted in the name of "realism" have all failed in the end. Until more and more people agree on the importance of

peace by peaceful means, we will continue with our work.

Thanks for listening my speech.