

## Searching for Peace in East Asia and Vision of South-North Korean Cooperation



민족화해협력범국민협의회

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— **KOH Yu-hwan** As North Korea regards its nuclear arms as the ultimate safeguard for its regime, it will be difficult to make it abandon them. There should be a measure to guarantee the security of the Kim Jong-Un regime and its socialist system through such institutionalized mechanisms as a peace treaty. The North traditionally used to cite its confrontation with the U.S. for its nuclear armament. During the Cold War era, it could maintain its regime under the nuclear umbrella of the Soviet Union amid the bipolar system of the U.S. and Soviet Union, but after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it pushed for the development of nuclear arms to brace for confrontation with the U.S. However, as China and Russia joined the UN Security Council sanctions led by the U.S. on North Korea, the North defined the recent development around the Korean Peninsula as a standoff between the allied imperialist forces and itself, and concentrates its efforts on “weaponizing the nuclear devices” under a policy to pursue both economic development and nuclear armament. Con-

cerning the nuclear issue, there were some positive developments, on the other hand, such as the move by South Korea, the U.S. and China to admit to the urgency of the denuclearization of the North and confirm the principle, not to tolerate a nuclear armed North, while the South and the U.S. gave up on their anticipation of the collapse of the North Korean regime. The only notable difference among the three countries is that South Korea and China prefer a gradual and comprehensive solution and simultaneous actions under the Sept. 19 Joint Statement to the measure of enforcing the North to abolish its nuclear arms in advance, while the Trump administration of the U.S. wishes for the Complete, Verifiable and Irreversible Dismantlement(CVID) of the nuclear program.

As the Moon Jae-in government has settled for “denuclearization after the prevention of sophistication of the nuclear arms” during the presidential election campaign and suggested a comprehensive deal seeking nuclear disarmament and a peace treaty

as its ultimate goals, it is likely to pursue a package deal for a freeze on the nuclear program in the North; a declaration of peace; a temporary agreement; and a declaration of the end of the war as preparatory steps toward a peace treaty between the North and the U.S. As international society’s sanctions on the North continue, it is difficult for the Moon’s government to resolve inter-Korean issues. However, it should try to restore dialogue channels with the North immediately by reopening the South-North liaison office to prevent additional acts by the North worsen the situation. It also needs to put contingencies under control with its policy to pursue both sanctions and dialogue, and explore ways to restore normalcy to inter-Korean relations.

— **JIN Shizhu** As part of the strategies of the One Belt One Road(OBOR) initiative, China is trying to use its northeastern province as a bridgehead for advancing to the northern maritime route. For North Korea, the OBOR project is an economically important factor, given its connectivity with the world, but it has yet to show any response to it. For the North to join the OBOR project, it has to abandon its nuclear arms, and this would be possible only when the U.S. provides such an environment for the North to do so. Though Japan has had a conflicting interest with the OBOR initiative of China, so far, it has begun to see the possibility of gains from it, and thus is considering ways to join the project. Also, there is a move by Japan to cooperate with Russia in the project to link the Japanese railway system to the Russian continent. If this is realized, South Korea might face the risk of being treated as an island country. Russia is out to develop its maritime province in the northeastern region, while trying to link Vladivostok with Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces for joint economic development of the area with China. Mongolia is also actively joining the project eyeing its possible connection with the land Silk Road, while China seeks to utilize it as a midway route for the OBOR project, fanning prospects of more active cooperation with Mongolia.

South Korea used to actively join the OBOR proj-

ects of China, but recently there were more cases of South Korea being excluded from projects possibly due to the dispute over the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense(THAAD) missile deployment. The objective of the Chinese project with a historical motive originating from the ancient Silk Road is to develop economic partnerships among countries along the Belt and establish a regional community of shared interests, fate and responsibility through mutual political trust, economic integration and cultural tolerance, which is compatible with the theme of the Jeju Forum’s “Peace and Prosperity of East Asia.” Because of its geopolitical location, the East Sea rim area has a painful history as a battleground for neighboring powers. To heal the scars, the countries around the region should respect each other and be ready to put themselves in each other’s position. To this end, I suggest that they learn from Élysée Treaty concluded by Germany and France in 1963.

— **Mitsuhiro MIMURA** East Asian countries became underdogs, with North Korea and Taiwan being excluded from the hegemonic order, but it is necessary for East Asian countries to take the initiative in forging cooperation with each other for peace in East Asia. As regards the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the U.S., North Korea and China play central roles, with the South excluded from the issue, but it is more desirable for the two Koreas to take the initiative in the denuclearization in cooperation with the U.S., China, Japan and Russia. In the process of solving the North Korean nuclear issue, South Korea needs to play an active role based on its alliance with the U.S. by helping the U.S. and North Korea ease tensions with each other; agreeing with the North on a unification formula and schedule; and suggesting to the North the possibility of prosperity after national unification. The improvement and stabilization of inter-Korean relations are the pre-condition for nuclear disarmament by North Korea, and the South would be the main beneficiary of the solution of this. South Korea should administer consistent policies toward the North to help the North Korean people have positive perceptions about the South.

When North Korean nuclear arms is eased through the improvement of inter-Korean ties, it would help the East Asian countries cooperate with each other. Japanese companies shun installing factories in the Northeast Asian region for fear of the possible exports from the factories to North Korea. Japan also needs to improve its relations with Northeast Asian countries. If the South takes the lead in resolving the North Korean nuclear issue, it would benefit Japan. I would like to suggest that South Korea actively engage North Korea by presenting a unification policy based on universal values; making efforts to mend ties with the North in cooperation with its neighboring countries; offering policies appealing to North Korean people; and formulating unification discourse free from its domestic politics.

— **KIM Jinho** As regards THAAD, the Chinese leadership judges that the U.S. is laying siege to China with the missile defense system. The OBOR project has not only economic efficacy, but also elements contributing to peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. As long as the North Korean nuclear issue remains unresolved, the THAAD deployment is likely to continue to be a bone of contention between South Korea and China. Chinese policy toward the Korean Peninsula has now shifted its emphasis from its national security through the means of North Korea to exchanges with the South in consideration of the Chinese interest in the entire Korean Peninsula. Therefore, it should be noted that China considers inter-Korean exchanges and integration of the two Koreas in the light of its own interest without advocating the North unconditionally.

— **YOON Sung-Hak** The recent move of Russia with its new eastern policy was designed to respond to the rise of East Asian countries, including China, as an economic center of the world, and to the advance of the U.S. to the Eurasian continent as well as to develop its energy resources in the Far East region and diversify its export market, as to include the Northeast Asian region. The policy is largely divided into the fields of energy and natural resources; transportation and logistics; and industrial cooperation.

Russia is trying, first of all, to expand its exports to the Asian region by developing energy resources jointly with Northeast Asian countries. Emphasizing that the energy link will be the basic framework of cooperation with Northeast Asian countries, Putin proposed the establishment of an inter-governmental working group to consider a submarine power grid project linking Russia, Korea and Japan. He is also spearheading the integrated power grid project in Northeast Asia and proposing the Asian Energy Super Ring, which encompasses the power grids of Russia, North Korea and South Korea, and the Russo-Japan energy bridge project.

The Northeast Asian super grid project, started with the suggestion of the Asia Super Grid by Soft-Bank chairman, Masayoshi Son, is now expected to be realized in the near future. As the EU started as a steel-producing community, Asian countries are likely to form a regional community with the super grid project. Recently, Russia and North Korea are also strengthening their relations, with Russia seemingly poised to utilize the ties with North Korea in exerting more influence in Northeast Asia. Considering these moves, South Korea needs to involve Russia in resolving the North Korean nuclear issue and make it support the unification of Korea. To that end, South Korea should join the Far East development project Russian President Putin is pushing for, as well as cooperating with the Asian Energy Super Ring. One of the most promising fields of cooperation with Russia is power production, as Russia virtually has no gas to deliver to the South, and the railway linkage with Russia is not compatible with the existing logistics system. Gone are the days of importing energy resources to process them. To import the electricity, itself, is the most cost-effective and environmentally friendly. If the North joins the energy project, it may provide a phenomenal turning point to improve inter-Korean relations.

— **JEON Young-sun** The effort to explore new approaches toward peace and inter-Korean cooperation is obviously underway since the inauguration of Moon Jae-in government in South Korea, along

with changes in the security conditions on the Korean Peninsula such as contacts between the U.S. and North Korea, although it is too early to expect any immediate changes to the status quo.

A two track approach in terms of security and peace is necessary to solve the crisis on the Korean Peninsula, in addition to a proper response to the missile and nuclear arms of North Korea. South Korea should implement a peace-building process in multilateral cooperation with the East Asian countries, based on its military alliance with the U.S. For the restoration of normalcy in inter-Korean ties, it would be more appropriate to start inter-Korean cooperation with humanitarian projects and to take an external approach, first, to the North Korean issue, based on a favorable international and domestic environment, before engaging with the North. Now, it is extremely difficult to bring any change to the stalemated inter-Korean relations, and it will take more time to create proper conditions for inter-Korean dialogue, as long as concerns over North Korean nuclear arms development linger.

It would be better to seek cooperation with the North, starting with exchanges in the academic, linguistic, healthcare, cultural assets, environment and purely scientific sectors, as well as family reunions, before addressing such thorny issues as the May 24 measures and the reopening of the Gaeseong Industrial Complex and Mt. Geumgang tour program. The exchanges should also be accompanied by the restoration of the cooperative ties on issues something easy to agree on; and the promotion of cooperation projects between local governments to develop local economies and civil projects.

— **PARK Ji-yong** Inter-Korean exchanges are important as they narrow the gap and make a connection between the Korean people in the South and North, thus laying the groundwork for national integration. These exchanges are oriented towards expansion of the basis for national community; changes of both societies through contact; lessening conflicts in the course of national unification; door opening and changes in North Korean society on the principle

of reciprocity and diversity of a democratic society; and voluntary changes in North Korean society. Civil participants in the exchanges should recognize themselves as responsible players engaging in a solution to inter-Korean issues and have patience until the new government of South Korea comes up with new policies to improve ties with the North on a firm basis.

The civil exchange projects also have the tasks to forge a social consensus on inter-Korean cooperation; to develop effective strategies to approach the North Korean people; to expand civil and academic exchanges by diversifying agendas; and to produce consistent policies for orderly and practical exchanges.



## Policy Implications

- As North Korea regards its nuclear arms as the ultimate safeguard for its leadership and regime, it is extremely difficult to make it abandon them. South Korea should explore a step-by-step and comprehensive solution to the nuclear issue by discarding strategic patience and giving up on the anticipation of the collapse of the North Korean regime, as the North has categorically precluded negotiations on its nuclear arms, while sticking to the policy to pursue economic development after securing nuclear deterrence.
- It is imperative for South Korea to play a leading role in defusing the nuclear crisis by improving its ties with the North. As the improvement of the inter-Korean ties will help Northeast Asian countries cooperate with each other, South Korea would become the main beneficiary of a solution to the nuclear issue. Therefore, the South should make efforts to assume a leading role in resolving the North Korean nuclear issue.
- As regards the role of neighboring countries in connection with the North Korean nuclear issue, South Korea should explore ways to cooperate with Russia, as Russia is increasingly becoming an important partner of North Korea amid the strain in the ties between North Korea and China. Russia may provide a nuclear umbrella to the North, and the North may secure its survival strategy with its ties to Russia.
- The Moon Jae-in government should make efforts to prevent the North from worsening the security condition on the Korean Peninsula under the principle of pursuing both sanctions and dialogue. It also needs to normalize inter-Korean relations by restoring contact points and a dialogue channel at an early date.