

## Policy Recommendations Toward North Korea and Its Nuclear Development

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### The Changing Policy Environment Surrounding the North Korean Nuclear Issue

One of the most difficult problems facing the newly inaugurated South Korean administration is the task of formulating new policy on North Korea and its nuclear program. The North Korea nuclear problem, which at this point has a history of 24 years, has entered a new phase.

First, as North Korea's nuclear capabilities have increased, it has, of course, become a direct threat to South Korea and other surrounding countries. In addition to the development of transport means for missiles together with nuclear ballistic missile submarines and the mass production of nuclear missiles, the regime's development has reached the level of large-scale surface-to-air and surface-to-surface interception capable of neutralizing South Korean missile defense systems. Just since the emergence of the new South Korean government, the DPRK has already conducted two successful launches of a Hwasong-12 missile and Pukkuksong-2 missile, and announced that it successfully developed an effective long-range missile as well as atmospheric re-entry technology. North Korea is expected to possess 100 nuclear warheads by 2020, and its odds of successfully developing intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) are increasing. It is extremely urgent that we block, and ultimately completely eliminate, North Korea's nuclear and missile development.

Second, the development of North Korea's nuclear missile capabilities was a matter of survival for South Korea and the central problem of Northeast Asian international relations. However, North Korea's development of an ICBM threatens United States territory, and with its acquisition of the ability to threaten Chinese territory with nuclear missiles, it has emerged as a security issue for not only China and the US, but also Japan and Russia. This change offers both an opportunity and a threat to the new South Korean administration. All affected countries, including China and the US, who are facing this urgent North Korean nuclear issue, will jump wholeheartedly into the diplomatic arena to try to resolve the matter. However, owing to the limits of Chinese sanctions towards North Korea and Kim Jong Un's rigid "dual line" policy of nuclear and economic development, it is challenging for Trump and Xi Jinping's governments to find an approach to resolving the issue. Within this

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scenario, if South Korea is to take the lead in finding a solution, it must surpass the simple theories of autonomy and cooperation and push for a more prescient, co-evolutionary approach.

Third, with the strengthening of international sanctions against North Korea in response to its nuclear missile tests, it will be difficult for South Korea to push for North Korean engagement policy on its own. At the same time, as the North Korean regime of Kim Jong Un has already achieved a significant degree of development in its nuclear missile capabilities, North Korea will not easily give up its dual line policy of nuclear and economic development even though the surrounding countries have increased their sanctions. Accordingly, the new administration is currently facing the great challenge of needing to deal with North Korea by commanding a strategy of policy towards the US and Inter-Korean relations that differs concretely from the way that past administrations dealt with the Kim Jong Il regime.

Fourth, the new government is embracing the difficult task of creating policy towards North Korea and its nuclear program that is founded on the cooperation of both the progressives and conservatives. As neither the progressive policy of cooperation nor the conservative policy of sanctions toward North Korea have been able to halt the country's nuclear missile development and military provocations towards South Korea, the new administration must find a new type of complex North Korea policy that combines both pressure and cooperation. However, the Kim Jong Un regime's ongoing and consistent development of nuclear missiles and provocations towards the South is narrowing the gap between the progressive and conservative perspectives on the North. This can be seen as an opportunity for the new administration to overcome the trials and errors of the past and map out a fresh, new approach to North Korean policy.

## Disentangling the Parallel Dilemmas of Pressure and Engagement

The top priority for the new government is the creation of a set of 'Complex Principles of Pressure and Engagement' to facilitate the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue in a manner that allows all stakeholder countries to cooperate. Countries affected by the North Korea nuclear issue agree in principle that denuclearizing the Peninsula requires a combination of pressure and engagement. The Trump administration of the US is proposing a new North Korea policy along these lines, and Xi Jinping's government is emphasizing a push for a parallel policy of denuclearization and a peace regime through the halting of both North Korea's nuclear missile development and US-South Korea military exercises. On the other hand, North Korea advocates denuclearization following the establishment of a peace regime. The question is whether denuclearization should come first, occur simultaneously, or happen after the establishment of a peace regime, as well as whether the surrounding countries will be able to cooperate over what denuclearization and a peace regime will actually entail.

The new administration must first be able to synchronize the pressure and sanctions from the international community to maximize the cost the nuclear development incurs. Then it needs to be able to offer the possibility for a denuclearized North Korea to survive and develop while building Inter-Korean trust before finally putting forth a new plan for cooperation over true denuclearization and a peace regime on the Peninsula. At the same time, the new administration must be able to lead the countries surrounding North Korea in order to facilitate cooperation around the realization of this plan. This type of effort must appear to be a more complex and co-evolutionary policy that is distinguished from both the Sunshine and pressure policies.



The international community has adopted a variety of sanctions in order to entice North Korea to give up its nuclear program. These sanctions are not intended to make the regime collapse, but rather to push it into replacing the high-cost nuclear path with the low-cost denuclearization path. However, with North Korea choosing to engage in brinkmanship, this type of pressure will never lead the regime to abandon its nuclear weapons. Because Kim Jong Un thinks that nuclear weapons are the “sword of state” that allows his regime to survive, North Korea must face a reality where the possession of nuclear weapons will not ensure the regime’s survival, but rather endanger it. Only then will they abandon their nuclear weapons. In the end, only when Kim Jong Un reaches a crossroads where the choice is between the continued development of nuclear weapons and the death of the regime will he be forced to choose the abandonment of full-scale nuclear weapons. If he is not presented with this dilemma, the regime will continue in its attempts to receive recognition as a nuclear weapons state, its military threats against its neighbors, and the pursuit of economic development through the dual line policy.

However, it will not be easy to make North Korea reach this particular crossroads. The likelihood that China, which exercises the greatest amount of influence over North Korea, will exert the kind of pressure that the US and South Korea expect, is almost nonexistent. This is because Xi Jinping’s administration still perceives a collapsed North Korea to be a bigger threat than a nuclear North Korea, even though it is not pleased with the North’s ongoing nuclear missile tests. Furthermore, although the Trump administration is capable of placing the military option on the table in its negotiations with North Korea, the actual exercise of this option is not easy. North Korea, well aware of these vulnerabilities in its opposition, continues to employ brinkmanship while hardly ever facing that crossroads. Regardless, maximizing the costs of the nuclear path and minimizing the costs of denuclearization has been

identified as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition. Thus, the new administration must create international sanctions that are stronger than any before and then carefully examine how it will lead this sanctions strategy in the future.

### **Building Inter-Korean Trust and Creating a Roadmap for Engagement with the North**

As the new administration goes forward with pressure and sanctions against North Korea’s continued nuclearization, it must at the same time propose an extremely careful and step-by-step roadmap for engagement over North Korea’s denuclearization. South Korea must make it clear in a variety of ways to both the Kim Jong Un regime and the North Korean people that what it desires is not unification by absorption, but rather the normalization of a denuclearizing North Korea and the stabilization of Inter-Korean relations. In order to dispel the North’s worries of unification by absorption, South Korea must put forth a formal unification plan that reaffirms a gradual and peaceful three-step process, as well as a 21st century unification plan if needed. In addition, South Korea must make it clear that the plans for North Korea’s denuclearization proposed by both the US and China are unrealistic. China’s proposal that North Korea suspend its nuclear and missile activities in exchange for a suspension of US-ROK military exercises lacks a concrete path to denuclearization and a peace regime. At the same time, the recent strategy put forth by the Trump administration of engagement and pressure overestimates, as usual, the leadership of China in strong sanctions against North Korea and underestimates the degree of pressure needed to bring North Korea to the table for talks. For these reasons, it will be difficult for this plan to succeed.

The South Korean government must first clarify its willingness to stabilize the situation on the Peninsula through an engagement strategy towards North Korea and cooperation on Inter-Korean



exchanges. After doing so, they will be able to initiate exchanges and the provision of humanitarian support that cannot be used for military or political purposes, meetings of separated families, and social and cultural exchanges. Following this they will be able to begin the process of economic cooperation first through low-level economic exchanges, followed by full-blown economic exchanges and then complete market integration. Of course, the expansion and deepening of these incremental exchanges will be accompanied simultaneously by denuclearization and negotiations on a peace regime. South Korea must fine-tune the vague roadmap for engagement that is currently in the minds of the US, China, and the international community by taking the leading role and then facilitating engagement with North Korea under the cooperation of the international community.

True cooperation on denuclearization must arise through the step-by-step process of negotiations over a nuclear freeze and a settlement, reporting and inspections along with a return to the NPT, the disabling of existing nuclear facilities, and finally the complete abandonment of the North's nuclear program. When the irreversible step of nuclear abandonment is reached, a full-scale inter-Korean economic exchange may be initiated. Thus, the first step for the new administration is to prescribe precisely the terms of engagement with North Korea with the cooperation of the international community while continuing to uphold international sanctions against the North. If progress is made on true nuclear freeze negotiations, South Korea and the surrounding stakeholder countries can begin to discuss economic support for North Korea and cooperation on Inter-Korean exchange can get back on track so that eventually denuclearization can take place.

### **Creating a Complex Peace Regime on the Korean Peninsula in the Mid-Long Term**

When freeze negotiations for the purpose of denuclearization of the North are initiated, discussions on how to build a true peace regime on the Peninsula must begin at the same time. North Korea and its neighbors have in the past reached and implemented a basic agreement (the Agreed Framework of 1990 in Geneva) on denuclearization and a peace regime. The problem was that North Korea's neighboring countries have fundamental differences in their political intentions, and the reality is it will be extremely difficult for smooth cooperation to take place when trust has not been built. If coordination surrounding a two-track sequence and individual concrete steps for negotiation cannot be established it will be difficult for negotiations to proceed. At the same time, there must be a co-evolution of conditions outside the negotiating table supporting the negotiations.

The urgent problem of denuclearization talks is placing a condition on North Korea to suspend its 'development' of nuclear missiles. A stop on testing only runs the risk of North Korea continuing to engage in the nuclear development activities other than testing. If this occurs and negotiations break down, North Korea will further reinforce its nuclear weapons capabilities in response to this situation. If North Korea halts its tests and wants to demonstrate its sincerity in suspending all of its nuclear development activities, it must report and verify all current nuclear activities, open itself to complete inspections, and take the first practical step in denuclearization. Furthermore, North Korea must also at the same time dismiss all of its personnel involved in nuclear weapons development from the military. Once North Korea shows its sincerity in denuclearizing, it will be able to demonstrate its firm willingness to promote its continued existence and development through a peace regime. Even if South Korea and the US do not stipulate denuclearization from the beginning, there



absolutely must be a resolute freeze and halt in order to show their sincerity in denuclearizing. Finally, as a condition of putting a suspension to nuclear tests and negotiations over a nuclear freeze, the US and South Korea should temporarily suspend their military exercises, North Korea announce a stop to its military provocations and chemical weapons, and military trust building should occur, followed by a total denuclearization through a complete halt to North Korea's nuclear weapons development and facility inspections. This entire proposal must take place under the close cooperation of all neighboring countries, including China.

A plan should be designed at the same time regarding how to respond if negotiations fail during the first stage. After suspending its program, North Korea is going to demand the physical collateral of the withdrawal of US hostile policy towards North Korea before moving on to denuclearization. The US and South Korea must demand a verification system of complete nuclear abandonment following the nuclear freeze, inspections and the restoration of the non-proliferation regime. The problem is that North Korea is going to demand the inclusion of a provision in the DPRK-US peace agreement that includes a withdrawal of US forces in South Korea and a breaking of the military alliance as a precondition for its total denuclearization. However, in the past North Korea has encountered a brick wall in peace regime negotiations when it demanded this kind of comprehensive peace regime under the framework of the Three Revolutionary Capabilities. As trust between the two Koreas is extremely low, there must be a stage where political and military trust are built prior to a reduction of military power in order to have sincere negotiations over a peace regime. The key question is how to create a measure ensuring the survival of the North Korean regime without nuclear weapons that a North Korea on the path of denuclearization can trust.

During these difficult negotiations, there is always the risk that after North Korea develops an ICBM it

will think it has the advantage and negotiations will break down. Thus, the surrounding countries, including the US and China, must agree to prepare to return to the issue of North Korea's missile development in the event that this occurs. This type of decision is not only out of line with international norms, but will have an extremely negative impact on the regional order, peace, and stability. Thus, the affected countries must have a concrete agreement that North Korea will take responsibility for any breakdown in negotiations. Negotiations to denuclearize North Korea must be carried out under a comprehensive, step-by-step agenda, with total preparation for failures in the mid-long term in order to keep negotiations progressing according to plan.

When denuclearization negotiations are fully on track, a complex framework for peaceful coexistence that can be sustained into the mid-long term must be created. This will require active planning on the part of South Korea for peaceful coexistence and the completion of a South Korean-style peace regime that can win the support of the surrounding countries and international community as a whole.

A future peace regime on the Korean peninsula suited for the 21st century must arise from a complex system of South and North Korea, the neighboring countries of the Korean Peninsula, and international organizations. First, an overall peace agreement between the two Koreas based on a denuclearized Peninsula must be created, and the surrounding stakeholder countries must provide a complex guarantee of its effectiveness. The contents of the DPRK-US peace agreement may be included in this process. China's guarantee is also needed for North Korea's security. The Korean Peninsula must denuclearize and there must be an agreement to reduce conventional military arms that includes political and legal trust building. As a result, a complex peace regime made up of a variety of actors on the stage must be built. If the surrounding countries are all going to be able to agree on a Korean Peninsula peace



regime that includes the DPRK-US peace agreement advocated by North Korea, China's proposed peace guarantee for North Korean security, and the peace agreement that includes the surrounding countries advocated by South Korea, it is essential that the two Koreas and the surrounding nations put forth a co-evolutionary effort for the peace and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific regional order. ■

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