

The Conclusion of a Peace Treaty is Imperative

The North Korean Perspective

Choe Chang Man

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Foreword

It is a great privilege to introduce this publication and the cooperation between the Institute for Security and Development Policy in Stockholm and the Institute for Disarmament and Peace in Pyongyang. This is a result of an extended period of cooperation between IDP and ISDP that has recently been strengthened with an exchange of scholars and joint research. The author of this publication is one of the first guest researchers that has visited Sweden in an effort to strengthen the already established cooperation. It is our hope and belief that the research conducted by the North Korean scholars, both in and outside of North Korea, will enhance our understanding of the North Korean position but also to provide a stronger base of cooperative efforts.

Niklas Swanström

Director, Institute for Security and Development Policy

Introduction

Brighter light casts a deeper shadow behind the illuminated object. The long-standing Korean nuclear issue has been under an intense spotlight ever since its inception, as a result of which the more fundamental issue of securing peace was obscured by its shadow. The core of a plethora of issues on the Korean Peninsula is national reunification and the securing of peace. In particular, to secure peace is a crucial matter, the importance of which is far greater than that of the nuclear issue; it would be a fool's errand to try to downplay its significance or write it off altogether.

The year 2010 marks the 60th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War. It is high time that the shadow obscuring the importance of the issue of securing peace was cleared. The Korean people love and value peace more than anyone else because they suffered heavily from the catastrophic war that broke out sixty years ago. The international community wants to see peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, one of the most dangerous war-prone hot spots in the world. The conclusion of a peace treaty on the Korean Peninsula is an urgent task that should be addressed without a moment's delay.

The Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula: An Urgent Task

The conclusion of a peace treaty is an urgent task for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. No one can deny that it is impossible to resolve the nuclear issue without first securing peace. The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula consists of blackmail towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) posed by the United States since the Korean War in the early 1950s; introduction and deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons in south Korea after the conclusion of the 1953 Armistice Agreement; south Korea's attempts at nuclear development in the 1970s; the DPRK's withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and possession of nuclear weapons in the 2000s.

It is clear even from these facts that the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula is a product of the hostile policies of the U.S. towards the DPRK amid the unending state of ceasefire between the two who confront each other; every phase of the evolution of the nuclear issue, ranging from its inception to the rise of the DPRK as a nuclear-armed state, has a direct bearing with the fundamental issue of war and peace.

The history of direct nuclear threats to the Korean nation posed by the United States can be traced back to 1950s, when the DPRK and the U.S. were at war against each other. On November 30, 1950, the then U.S. President Harry S. Truman publicly mentioned the use of atom bombs in the Korean War. Subsequently, on the next day, an order was issued to the U.S. Strategic Air Command, requesting it to "put bombers on stand-by for an immediate atom bomb attack in the Far East."

In December 1950, General Douglas MacArthur, the then Commander of the U.S. Forces in the Far East, made a saber-rattling remark, saying that a "radioactive corridor will be set up in the northern part of Korea covering the area between the east coast and the west coast. No living thing will be found in this area for 60 to 120 years." It was in this context that nuclear weapons were covertly transported to a U.S. aircraft carrier positioned off the coast of Incheon: carrier-borne aircraft loaded with nuclear weapons were waiting for the final order for take-off.

The United States set about the plan for atom bomb attacks on the battlefront of the Korean Peninsula in earnest for the second time in the spring of 1953. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was sworn in as the 34th U.S. President as the successor of President Truman, made an announcement soon after his inauguration, to the effect that he would not hesitate to resort to atom bomb attacks on the Korean Peninsula. On March 30, 1953, he said, "If we are to take substantial actions in Korea, we would have to carry the war beyond the boundary of Korea and use atom bombs."

The then U.S. Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, implied that the United States might resort to nuclear weapons if the peace talks at Panmunjom proved unsuccessful. Later, both Dulles and Eisenhower argued that this was an important factor that forced north Korea to accept the terms of ceasefire.

Another plan for nuclear attack against the DPRK was drawn up at the highest level in the days of the Nixon administration. This detailed plan was finalized after the U.S. spy plane EC-121 that violated the territorial air of the DPRK on an espionage mission had been shot down by a Korean People's Army (KPA) aircraft on April 15, 1969. Immediately after the incident, Henry Kissinger, the then U.S. presidential aide, advised President Richard Nixon to bomb KPA assets in retaliation and mount an attack with atom bombs if north Korea struck back. Recently declassified U.S. documents once again revealed the U.S. plan of nuclear attack against the DPRK in 1969 in the wake of the EC-121 incident. In "retaliation" for DPRK's resolute action of self-defense, the Pentagon drafted and submitted to the White House three different versions of nuclear strike plan targeting the DPRK which included "plan of attack on 12 targets in north Korea with 0.2 to 10 kiloton nuclear weapons," "plan to annihilate north Korean air force by attacking its 16 airports with 10 to 70 kiloton nuclear weapons" and "plan to neutralize north Korea's ability to launch attacks."

These documents also laid bare the plan of the U.S. to launch nuclear strikes against the DPRK and a number of areas in northeastern China in 1954, soon after the Korean War. It is yet more evidence testifying to the fact that the United States has always pursued a "policy of power" towards the DPRK and tried to use nuclear weapons whenever possible. The nuclear threat to the DPRK posed by the U.S. finds its clear expression in the protection south Korea enjoys under the "nuclear umbrella" offered by the U.S.

The US-south Korea “mutual defense treaty” was concluded on October 1, 1953. In 1955, Arthur W. Radford, the then Chief of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, announced the U.S. commitment to protect south Korea with nuclear weapons if necessary. Consequently, the U.S. relocated tactical nuclear weapons that had been deployed in Japan to south Korea in 1957; it was followed by deployment of nuclear artillery shells and rockets armed with nuclear warheads in south Korea in 1958.

The number of nuclear weapons deployed by the United States in south Korea steadily increased. In the middle of the 1970s, more than 1,000 U.S. nuclear weapons found their way into south Korea. The United States is in possession of the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons in the world. Furthermore, the U.S. not only maintains a military presence in south Korea and Japan but also stages nuclear war exercises on a regular basis involving nuclear-armed warships and aircraft.

Both south Korea and Japan are as good as nuclear-armed because they are under the protection of the “nuclear umbrella” offered by the United States coupled with the presence of massive numbers of U.S. troops. However, that is not the case with the DPRK. There is no “nuclear umbrella” for the DPRK to cope with the nuclear threats posed by the U.S.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, neither the DPRK nor the Russian Federation is bound by legal obligation of any kind as regards mutual assistance should an emergency arise. In 1961, China was a non-nuclear country at the time of the conclusion of the DPRK-PRC Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, which means the treaty has nothing to do with a “nuclear umbrella.” Furthermore, China pursues the policy of maintaining only “the minimum nuclear deterrence,” the aim of which is to protect China alone. As a matter of fact, it is well known that the size of the Chinese nuclear arsenal is not large enough to offer protection to other countries;¹ it is no match to that of the U.S. nuclear arsenal that poses a threat to the DPRK.

In conclusion, the Korean Peninsula and its neighbors were practically littered with nuclear weapons and covered by a nuclear umbrella. The only exception was the DPRK. When a party, either nuclear-armed or under

¹ The latest report released by the Federation of American Scientists stated that the U.S. is in possession of 9,400 nuclear weapons out of the global stockpile of 22,400 pieces, while China is in possession of a mere 240.

the protection of the “nuclear umbrella,” confronts another party, neither nuclear-armed nor under the protection of the “nuclear umbrella,” the risk of war is greater than ever.

The nuclear balance in northeast Asia finally recovered its equilibrium, albeit only rudimentary in nature, with the possession of nuclear weapons by the DPRK. Consequently, the risk of war was reduced by a considerable extent. It goes without saying that the root cause of an issue should be eliminated if the issue is to be resolved. It follows that if the Korean nuclear issue is to be resolved, the hostile policy of the United States towards the DPRK – the root cause of the issue – should be done away with. Furthermore, it follows that the hostile relations and the state of ceasefire which lie at the root of this policy should be put to an end. The hostile relations between the DPRK and the U.S. along with the state of ceasefire are the structural causes that gave rise to the nuclear issue; the efforts aimed at resolving the nuclear issue continue to run up against a brick wall because of them.

The DPRK spared no efforts to counter the nuclear threat of the United States by trying to establish a nuclear-free zone through peaceful dialogue and negotiations. In 1959, the government of the DPRK proposed that an atomic weapon-free peace zone be set up in Asia. In 1981, it put forward the proposal of establishing a nuclear-free zone in northeast Asia. In 1986, it proposed that the Korean Peninsula be denuclearized and made active efforts to this end.

On January 10, 1984, the government of the DPRK offered to hold tripartite talks that would include south Korean authorities in the DPRK-U.S. talks aimed at removing the danger of nuclear war. On June 23, 1986, it released a government statement and solemnly declared that it would not test, produce, store and bring in nuclear weapons, that it would not tolerate the installation of any foreign military bases including bases for nuclear weapons and that it would not allow the passage of foreign nuclear weapons through its territory, airspace and territorial waters.

The DPRK acceded to the NPT, hoping that it would help reduce the U.S. nuclear threat. When the United States promised to suspend the “Team Spirit” series of joint military exercise for nuclear war, the DPRK, pursuant to relevant provisions of the NPT, actively cooperated with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in six ad hoc inspections during the period between May 1992 and February 1993.

However, the United States began to voice so-called “suspicion on nuclear development” even before the completion of these ad hoc inspections and rigged up the “Resolution on special inspection” that targeted not only nuclear facilities but also sensitive military installations by instigating foul forces within the IAEA. In an attempt to force a “special inspection” on the DPRK, the U.S. openly threatened the DPRK with nuclear weapons by resuming the “Team Spirit” series of joint military exercises it had been temporarily suspended. In the long run, even international law failed to stop the arbitrary acts of the U.S. To make matters worse, it was clear that international law had been abused as a tool to justify the high-handedness of the US.

On March 12, 1993, the DPRK declared that it would, pursuant to Article 10 of the NPT, withdraw from the NPT in order to safeguard national sovereignty and security and duly notified its decision to the depositaries of the NPT. On June 11, 1993, the government of the DPRK stated in the DPRK-U.S. joint communiqué that it would take unilateral action to temporarily suspend the entry into force of its decision to withdraw from the NPT as the United States consented to hold the DPRK-U.S. talks.

The DPRK-U.S. Agreed Framework was signed on October 21, 1994 in the days of the Clinton administration. However, the Bush administration that later came to power unilaterally scrapped the Agreed Framework. President George W. Bush even accused the DPRK of forming “an axis of evil” in his State of the Union Address on January 30, 2002. That the country with the world’s largest nuclear arsenal showed enmity of such strength to another country means that the latter faces the most serious nuclear threat.

In March the same year, the U.S. government published the “Nuclear Posture Review” that included the DPRK on the list of “Targets for Nuclear Pre-emptive Strike.” It endangered the security of the DPRK in the extreme; calamities of a nuclear war loomed large for the DPRK. It was clear, at this point, that all our efforts, be it through dialogue or invoking international law, had failed. The unique conditions of the Korean Peninsula called for a unique approach. The only choice left for the DPRK was to “counter the threat of nuclear weapons with nuclear weapons.” In short, the extreme nuclear threat posed by the United States forced the DPRK to go nuclear.

On January 10, 2003, the government of the DPRK took a resolute measure of self-defense by lifting the ten year-long moratorium on its decision

to withdraw from the NPT, and thus finally pulled out of the NPT. No longer bound by the NPT, the DPRK changed its policy direction, on an utterly legitimate basis, by weaponizing the entire portion of plutonium extracted from the pilot nuclear power station that had been generating electricity. In the meantime, the government of the DPRK continued to make efforts to resolve the nuclear issue in a peaceful manner through dialogue and negotiations between the DPRK and the United States; it showed great generosity and took appropriate measures in good faith.

The commencement of the Six-Party Talks in August 2003 was attributable to sincere efforts of the government of the DPRK. The year 2005 saw the adoption of the September 19 Joint Statement. However, the implementation of the September 19 Joint Statement was interrupted; as a result, the threat of a nuclear war on the Korean Peninsula did not diminish at all but increased steadily; it compelled the DPRK to build up its nuclear deterrence.

The DPRK conducted its first nuclear test in October 2006 and the second one in May 2009. The DPRK had no other choice but to conduct these nuclear tests as a measure for self-defense; it meant to safeguard its sovereignty and dignity. The history of repeated frustration and failure in the Six-Party Talks tells us that it is impossible to find a solution to the issue without building confidence between the parties involved. Even at this moment, the Six-Party Talks are stalling in the wake of sanctions imposed on the DPRK – another illustration of mistrust. It follows from this that priority should be given to the work of building confidence between the DPRK and the United States – the key parties to the nuclear issue – in order to put denuclearization efforts back on the right track.

In order to build confidence between the DPRK and the United States, it is imperative that a peace treaty be concluded so as to put an end to the state of war – the root cause of hostile relations between the DPRK and the U.S. As long as the parties involved are in a state of war whereby they have daggers drawn, it is impossible to expect them to trust each other. Further, one can hardly hope that talks will proceed smoothly, if the issue of denuclearization is ignored. Any agreement that fails to address the fundamental issue of war and peace is doomed to failure and frustration.

What we can do is to learn a lesson from the failure of the Six-Party Talks and readjust the order of actions accordingly in view of the fact that the September 19 Joint Statement states that the parties directly related should

negotiate a permanent peace regime. The September 19 Joint Statement stipulates that “coordinated steps” should be taken to ensure denuclearization, normalization of relations, energy compensation and establishment of a peace regime. No article of the Joint Statement stipulates that the negotiations for a peace regime should commence only when the denuclearization efforts are in progress. The only principle stated in the Joint Statement is the principle of “commitment for commitment, action for action.”

For the past six years, the DPRK has had the grace to allow the negotiations for denuclearization to precede the talks for a peace regime, giving due considerations to the request of the United States. In 2008, the international community witnessed the blowing up of the cooling tower of the nuclear facility at Nyongbyon. The progress in the denuclearization efforts was so remarkable that even the U.S. decided to rescind the application of the “Trading with the Enemy Act” as regards the DPRK and remove the designation of the DPRK from the list of state sponsors of terrorism.

However, the negotiations for the conclusion of a peace treaty was nowhere in sight despite all these efforts; in the long run, the denuclearization process was reversed. It meant the failure of the approach in which the denuclearization process was allowed to precede the negotiations for a peace regime. Practical experience has shown that to push ahead with the denuclearization efforts in the absence of trust between the parties is like building a house without foundations.

We do not oppose the Six-Party Talks; we have no reason, none whatsoever, to delay the process. The absence of confidence between the parties involved led to a situation whereby launching of an artificial satellite for peaceful purposes gave rise to a contentious issue. Countries who trust each other never took issue with the launching of artificial satellites. The discrimination against the launching of an artificial satellite for peaceful purposes was an extreme case of encroachment on sovereignty; the response that followed was a nuclear test; subsequent reaction was sanctions; these sanctions, in turn, resulted in the breakdown of the Six-Party Talks. It was indeed a vicious cycle of mistrust.

The DPRK’s proposal for the conclusion of a peace treaty meant to put an end to this vicious cycle of mistrust and build confidence between the parties concerned so that the denuclearization process could be further accelerated. A mere meeting of the parties at the negotiations for the conclusion

of a peace treaty will suffice to mark the starting point for the building of confidence. As long as the parties involved including the United States have sincere attitudes with the intention of resolving the Korean issue *bona fide*, there is no problem with the conclusion of a peace treaty; consequently, the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula will gain greater momentum.

The conclusion of a peace treaty is not a matter of one party conferring benefits upon the other or giving compensation; it is a matter of political significance that will benefit all the parties concerned, including the DPRK and the United States, as well as the international community; it will contribute to the denuclearization of the world and to global peace. The DPRK's proposal for the conclusion of a peace treaty is a just, fair and open-minded proposal with flexibility, giving due consideration to all factors involved – i.e. the urgency of the nuclear issue, specific features of the current situation and intentions of the parties concerned. Anyone who wants peace and the resolution of the Korean nuclear issue can readily approve this proposal that is not only flexible but also reasonable.

Practical Means for the Prevention of Yet Another War on the Korean Peninsula

The conclusion of a peace treaty is a practical means for the prevention of yet another war on the Korean Peninsula and the reduction of tension. The Korean Peninsula has been in a state of war for several decades and is the scene of the world's most serious military conflict. The grueling arms race in and around the Korean Peninsula stems from the conflict of strategic interests of major world powers. It increases the risk of war. The Korean Peninsula is literally a powder keg – a danger zone where massive numbers of troops are deployed; joint military exercises of an extremely dangerous nature are an everyday occurrence here.

On July 27, 1953, the very day the Korean Armistice Agreement was signed, the United States called a meeting of representatives of countries that had sent troops to the Korean front and issued The Declaration of 16 Nations, which affirmed the will of those countries to send troops and war equipment should the U.S. launch another invasion against the DPRK.

The National Security Council in the United States came up with the so-called “updated policy,” the aim of which was to launch an invasion of the DPRK. This policy was formulated into “Radford Strategy” that called for blitzkrieg tactics aimed at implementing the policy before Asian countries including the DPRK gained greater strength. Under this war doctrine, the United States turned south Korea into a supply base for a new war against the DPRK and continuously updated and supplemented war plans by staging war exercises on an almost daily basis and aggravating tension on the Korean Peninsula. Subsequently, the aggressive features of post-war U.S. plans were further enhanced; the “OPLAN-5027” that stipulated that “occupation” of the DPRK was a prime example of war plans drafted by the U.S. in 1980s; the “OPLAN-5027” further evolved into far more sophisticated “OPLAN-5027-92” and “OPLAN-5027-94” in the 1990s; to top it all, the “OPLAN-5027-98” which embraced the extremely dangerous concept of a “nuclear pre-emptive strike” was launched in 1998. The United States has a vast array of detailed war plans against the DPRK on the basis of different scenarios – allegedly to cope with the so-called “contingency” and

“emergency” – such as “OPLAN-5029”, “OPLAN-5030” and “OPLAN-5012”, to name just a few. Joint military exercises such as “Focus Retina,” “Freedom Vault,” “Team Spirit,” “RSOI,” “Key Resolve,” “Fool Eagle,” and “Freedom Guardian” are nothing but dress rehearsals of the above war plans.

The United States conducted different kinds of war exercises on countless occasions in south Korea since the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement in 1953, including more than one thousand U.S.-south Korea joint military exercises. The U.S. reduced the size and scope of military exercises in other regions of the world after the Cold War, but continued to fan the flames of war hysteria on the Korean Peninsula and staged military exercises on an annual basis just as in the days of the Cold War. The only change, if any, was the change of label; the “Team Spirit” series of military exercises was revived in the name of “RSOI” in 1994. Since 2002, the “RSOI” was conducted in close connection with “Fool Eagle” that focused on field maneuvers and special operations. In 2008, “RSOI” was renamed “Key Resolve.” The United States alleges that the U.S.-south Korea joint military exercises are annual events of a “defensive” nature and tries to downplay their dangerous features. This is nothing but a preposterous argument. The logic of the U.S. is that the DPRK may look on with folded arms because these war exercises are “annual” events. But we are talking about the Korean Peninsula; this is where foreign troops occupy one half of the country; this is where the DPRK and the U.S. are at war against each other; this is where a life and death war did not end. No one will buy the logic of the U.S. This is none other than a provocation, wantonly violating the Armistice Agreement.

The latest U.S.-south Korea joint naval exercise – the largest of its kind in history, conducted under the pretext of the issue around the warship “Cheonan” – lays bare the dangerous nature and purpose behind the endless array of the U.S.-south Korea joint military exercises. The venue of the latest joint naval exercise that commenced on July 25 and ended three days later was the East Sea of Korea; the size of naval forces and air forces involved in the exercise was at least ten times greater than those of previous exercises. USS George Washington of the US Navy’s 7th Fleet – a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier with an operational radius of 1,000 km and with an ability to make 150 sorties of fighter-bombers per day – sailed about the

East Sea of Korea for the sole purpose of a war exercise. Numerous aircrafts including the US Navy's F/A-18 Super Hornet fighter-bombers and E-2C Hawkeye, AWACS aircrafts, took off from the aircraft carrier.

Particularly noteworthy in this exercise was the participation of the F-22 Raptor – the latest model of air-superiority fighter; the U.S. did not operate this fighter even for the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan. This stealth fighter has a flight range of 3,000 km and operational radius of 700 km; it is capable of flying to any place in the Pacific Ocean at a moment's notice. It is alleged that this fighter has shown an "absolute supremacy" in simulated dogfight against F-16 fighter-bombers, currently the mainstay of the United States Air Force.

The United States and south Korea allocated a large quantity of military hardware to this exercise; some 200 military aircrafts including F-16 fighter-bombers, A-10 close-support aircrafts and KC-135 in-flight refueling tankers, more than 20 warships and 8,000 troops participated in this exercise. It was a military provocation reminiscent of the "gunboat diplomacy" in the last century. The Voice of America reported that it was the first massive deployment of U.S. troops on the Korean Peninsula in 34 years after the August 1976 "Panmunjom incident."² The United States and south Korea have already announced their plan to enlarge the scope of war exercises and stage joint military exercises, including anti-submarine drills, on at least ten different occasions until the end of this year. All these large-scale joint military exercises staged by the U.S. and south Korea on the Korean Peninsula are nothing but a prelude to yet another June 25.

The reckless moves of the United States and south Korea that drive the situation on the Korean Peninsula to the brink of war remind us of what they did 60 years ago to provoke a war against the DPRK. Heavy weapons are being brought into the southern area of Panmunjom; the "Watchcon" system – an intelligence surveillance mechanism targeting the DPRK – that previously operated at level 3 now operates at level 2. RC-135 strategic reconnaissance aircrafts and EP-3B electronic warfare aircraft that are based in Okinawa, Japan, flew to the Korean Peninsula on espionage missions.

² This refers to the incident at Panmunjom on August 18, 1976. The proximate cause of the incident was a clash between U.S. soldiers and KPA guards. When the U.S. soldiers, in their arbitrariness, tried to cut down a tree in the joint security area without advance notice and mutual agreement, the KPA guards demanded the U.S. stop. As the U.S. soldiers responded violently by wielding axes, it led to a greater clash.

What should not go unheeded is the fact that the U.S. Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State turned up at frontline areas along the DMZ and Panmunjom to incite war and did not hesitate to make belligerent remarks against the DPRK. This was exactly what happened in the last century on the eve of the Korean War. Bigwigs of the Pentagon and the U.S. Department of State traveled to Seoul; and John Foster Dulles, special envoy of the U.S. President, inspected the 38th parallel.

The U.S.-south Korea joint naval exercise in the waters of the East Sea of Korea and the ensuing development of the situation bear a striking resemblance to the eve of the Korean War in all aspects – the timing of the exercise, number of troops involved, venue and target of exercises, etc. At the same time, the U.S.-south Korea joint naval exercise is a part of a greater scheme the U.S. concocted to gain military supremacy in northeast Asia. The geographical features of the Korean Peninsula make it an area of great strategic importance because it shares a border with China and Russia that the United States consider its adversaries.

While the Korean Peninsula holds the key to the implementation of the U.S. strategy in Asia, south Korea is a military foothold that supports the United States. If the U.S. loses its grip on south Korea, it risks losing an outpost that plays a vital role in the implementation of its strategy on the Korean Peninsula and, for that matter, Asia. The foreign policy direction of the United States remains unchanged; the U.S. seeks to dominate the world by making south Korea a bridgehead in the implementation of its strategy. It is in this context that the US tries to tighten its military control over south Korea.

According to the “Quadrennial Defense Review” released on February 1, 2010, the form of the U.S. military presence in south Korea will shift from “forward deployment” to “forward stationing.” The United States seeks to complete the process of “forward stationing” in south Korea within three to four years so as to be able to commit its troops in south Korea to other areas across the world and give a stronger impetus to prompt implementation of its “global strategy.” The “transfer of wartime operational command responsibility” is rescheduled for 2015, as a result of which south Korea is now under an even tighter grip of the United States.

It was in the same context that the United States forced the Japanese Government to give up in regards to the issue of its military base at Futenma;

the U.S. successfully secured its permanent hold on Okinawa that plays an important role in its Asia policy. Hence, the U.S. has laid a solid political and military groundwork for the strengthening of the “triangular military alliance” between the United States, Japan and south Korea, an Asian NATO, by tightening its grip on south Korea and Japan. With this in mind, the latest joint naval exercise was an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the “strength” of the “triangular military alliance” in northeast Asia. It was the very reason behind the so-called “trinity” in the exercise; Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force boarded the USS George Washington that maneuvered together with south Korea’s largest landing vessel, “Dokdo,” and U.S. Aegis-class frigates.

The reckless moves of the United States and south Korea not only drive the situation on the Korean Peninsula to the brink of war but also disturb peace and security in northeast Asia. These facts tell us that to prevent a war on the Korean Peninsula and safeguard peace and security in the region is an urgent task that should be tackled without a moment’s delay. A small incident on the Korean Peninsula could inevitably spark off a hair-trigger crisis – a pattern repeated time and again. It adds to the urgency of the conclusion of a peace treaty.

As we look back upon the record of events since the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement, it emerges that stability on the Korean Peninsula, if any, was only a short-lived phenomenon. Different kinds of incidents and clashes between the warring parties such as the “Pueblo” incident³ and “EC-121” incident in the 1960s led to head-on confrontations whereby one side called for “retaliation” and a “nuclear strike in case of need” and the other side declared its willingness to take measures for self-defense by “countering retaliation with retaliation and an all-out war with all-out war.” The outbreak of the “Panmunjom” incident in the 1970s and the incident of a “gunfight at Panmunjom”⁴ in 1980s also led to a grave crisis; the axe the U.S. soldiers wielded almost chopped off the Korean Peninsula, if not a poplar tree, increasing the risk of a nuclear disaster. In May 1994, the United States prepared the so-called “surgical strike” against nuclear facilities in

³ It refers to the incident in which the armed spy ship USS Pueblo, on an espionage mission, was captured by KPA naval vessels after violating the territorial waters of the DPRK on January 23, 1968.

⁴ On November 23, 1984, U.S. soldiers opened fire on the KPA guards with automatic weapons in Panmunjom, killing and wounding several people.

Nyongbyon, the DPRK, in anticipation of a retaliatory strike by the DPRK, and issued a secret order to evacuate the Americans in south Korea. No less serious were events that followed three rounds of “West Sea skirmishes.”⁵ Starting from the late 1990s, these skirmishes almost dyed the blue sea red with blood and filled the air with thick smoke.

The development of the situation in the wake of the fabricated farce of the “Cheonan” incident is the latest example of serious confrontation on the Korean Peninsula; the incident of the sunken south Korean warship drove the situation to the brink of a dangerous nuclear war that could have easily sunk the entire Korean Peninsula, not just a single ship. Whenever there was an incident of some kind between the warring parties, massive numbers of troops, enough to conduct a war, were deployed in and around the Korean Peninsula, seriously jeopardizing peace and security. The following figures are more than enough to wake people up to the dangerous nature of confrontation on the Korean Peninsula.

U.S. troops deployed in and around the Korean Peninsula at the time of the “Pueblo” incident in 1968

- U.S. troops deployed in and around the Korean Peninsula at the time of the “Pueblo” incident in 1968:
- USS Enterprise, nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, with a displacement of more than 70,000 tons
- USS Ranger, aircraft carrier, with a displacement of more than 60,000 tons
- USS Yorktown, aircraft carrier, with a displacement of more than 33,000 tons
- A huge naval task force consisting of 25 warships including cruisers and destroyers
- Recruitment of soldiers in the reserve to commission 732 jet fighters, reconnaissance aircrafts and transport planes
- Cessation of retirement for 133,000 navy soldiers in reserve
- More than 300 military aircrafts deployed in military bases in Japan while the fleet of B-52 strategic bombers in the Far East increased to 72 bombers
- Forward deployment of 2 squadrons of jet fighters and numerous warships to south Korea

⁵ 1st “West Sea skirmish,” June 15, 1999, 2nd “West Sea skirmish,” June 29, 2002, and 3rd “West Sea skirmish,” November 15, 2009.

U.S. troops dispatched to the Korean Peninsula at the time of the “EC-121 incident” in 1969

- Four aircraft carriers (more aircraft carriers than the previous case of “Pueblo incident”) – USS Enterprise, USS Ticonderoga, USS Ranger, USS Hornet
- USS New Jersey, a battleship, joined the fleet of aircraft carriers
- Hundreds of bombers and fighter-bombers were deployed in south Korea

U.S troops deployed in and around the Korean Peninsula at the time of “Panmunjom incident” in 1976

- Task force of the US Navy’s 7th Fleet with the aircraft carrier, USS Midway
- 1,800 US Marines in Okinawa
- B-52 strategic bombers, A-4 Skyhawk supersonic jet fighters, F-111 fighter bombers, etc.

U.S. troops deployed in and around the Korean Peninsula at the time of 1st “West Sea skirmish” in 1999

- USS Kittyhawk, aircraft carrier that went to war in Yugoslavia
- USS Constellation, aircraft carrier of the US Navy’s 3rd Fleet
- USS Vincent and USS Mowle Bay, Aegis-class cruisers based in Yokosuka, Japan
- Numerous warships including 2 nuclear-powered submarines
- 2 squadrons of F-18 fighters, personnel of Patriot missile units and 8 squadrons of F-16 fighter-bombers on the mainland put on alert

It is not by accident that frequent clashes and incidents of all kinds on the Korean Peninsula almost always result in hair-triggering crises. It is an inevitable result of the long-lasting state of war and hostile relations on the Korean Peninsula. If the United States and the DPRK had not been at war against each other, the U.S. would not have sent USS Pueblo and EC-121 on an espionage mission that violated our territorial waters and airspace; if the U.S. and the DPRK had not been poised to fight in Panmunjom, no “Panmunjom incident” or the “gunfight at Panmunjom” would have occurred. Furthermore, if the temporary boundaries specified in the Korean Armistice Agreement had been defined correctly by a peace treaty, no guns would have been fired in the West Sea of Korea; if the U.S. and south Korea had not considered the DPRK as a “principal enemy,” they would not have accused

the DPRK to be a culprit with the unreasonable “who-else-but-north-Korea” logic.

As long as the state of war and hostile relations continue to exist on the Korean Peninsula, there is no guarantee that there will no longer be shocking clashes; further, there is no guarantee that these clashes will not lead to war. If any further incident is allowed to break out, it would entail greater risk and consequences that might result in an all-out war; an all-out war on the Korean Peninsula would easily escalate into a world war because major powers of the world have important stakes on the Korean Peninsula.

The key to the prevention of such a catastrophe is to rescind the outdated armistice agreement at an early date and replace it with a peace treaty so that a secure peace regime can be set up on the Korean Peninsula. The grim reality illustrates that to put an end to the state of war and hostile relations is a matter of crucial importance in the efforts to prevent armed conflict and ensuing tension on the Korean Peninsula and secure peace and stability.

Century-Old Task to Clear the Legacy of the Cold War

To conclude a peace treaty on the Korean Peninsula is a century-old task to clear the final legacy of the Cold War. More than half a century passed since the war on the Korean Peninsula ended; twenty years have passed since the Cold War came to an end.

The international community witnessed a number of positive changes since the end of the Cold War. Many countries have emerged from the haunting memory of conflict and confrontation and are now promoting reconciliation and cooperation. Countries and forces that fought against one another in the wake of deep-rooted animosity now show signs of reconciliation and rapprochement. The recent moves by some European countries that brought the “West European Union”⁶ – a legacy of the Cold War era – to an end drew the attention of the international community. However, the Korean Peninsula is the only place in the world where instability due to the outdated ceasefire regime – a legacy of the Cold War era – continues to exist. Ceasefire literally refers to temporary cessation of hostilities and war; it is, by no means, an end of the war; it cannot guarantee peace. Technically, the Korean Peninsula has been at war for over half a century – a unique phenomenon unprecedented in history.

Ceasefire agreements concluded between countries that took part in World War I were replaced by peace treaties within six to twenty four months; even conventions concerning the end of World War II were replaced by peace treaties in ten years. It is in stark contrast to the ceasefire status on the Korean Peninsula. To make matters worse, the Korean Armistice Agreement is now as good as waste paper because all of its key provisions have been practically scrapped.

⁶ On March 30, 2010, the UK Vice Foreign Minister expressed the intention of the UK to withdraw from the West European Union (WEU), saying that the WEU no longer fits into the current reality and European security structure. At the same time, France and other member states of the WEU decided to dismantle it. A spokesman of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed that the decision is a logical consequence of the successes won in the European integration process thanks to the entry into force of the “Lisbon Treaty.” Subsequently, the WEU, a result of post-World War II alliance of western European nations against the former Soviet Union, ceased to exist.

The United States systematically broke the Armistice Agreement and scrapped its key provisions despite the fact that it is a signatory to the Agreement.

The United States legitimized the stationing of U.S. troops in south Korea by concluding the U.S.-south Korea “Mutual Defense Treaty” on August 7, 1953. The U.S. scrapped the preliminary talks for a political conference on October 1953, and the Geneva Conference of Foreign Ministers on the Korean Issue in April 1954. All these actions constituted a breach of Paragraph 60, Article IV, of the Korean Armistice Agreement.⁷

The Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission was set up pursuant to Paragraph 36, Article II, Korean Armistice Agreement.⁸ However, on June 9, 1956, the United States forcefully deported the inspection team of Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission from south Korea because the team disclosed the U.S. violation of the Korean Armistice Agreement. Further, when the Military Armistice Commission met for its 75th session, the U.S. officially declared that it would unilaterally desert its obligations pursuant to Sub-paragraph D, Paragraph 13, Article II of the Korean Armistice Agreement.⁹

On March 25, 1991, the United States appointed a south Korean army general as its senior representative at the Military Armistice Commission: south Korea is neither a signatory to the Korean Armistice Agreement nor entitled and/or authorized to deal with issues concerning the Agreement.

⁷ Paragraph 60, Article IV, Korean Armistice Agreement: In order to insure the peaceful settlement of the Korean question, the military Commanders of both sides hereby recommend to the governments of the countries concerned on both sides that within three months after the Armistice Agreement is signed and becomes effective, a political conference of a higher level of both sides be held by representatives appointed respectively to settle through negotiation the questions of the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Korea, the peaceful settlement of the Korean question, etc.

⁸ Paragraph 36, Article II, Korean Armistice Agreement: A Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission is hereby established.

⁹ Sub-Paragraph D, Paragraph 13, Article II, Korean Armistice Agreement: Cease the introduction into Korea of reinforcing combat aircraft, armored vehicles, weapons, and ammunition; provided, however, that combat aircraft, armored vehicles, weapons and ammunition which are destroyed, damaged, worn out, or used up during the period of the armistice may be replaced on the basis of piece-for-piece of the same effectiveness and the same type. [...] The Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission, through its Neutral Nations inspection Teams, shall conduct supervision and inspection of the replacement of combat aircraft, armored vehicles, weapons, and ammunition authorized above, at the ports of entry enumerated in Paragraph 43 hereof.

As a result, the Military Armistice Commission was compelled to suspend its activities; at the same time, the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission was placed in a position whereby it has no partner.

On the other hand, personnel of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission from the former Czechoslovakia and Poland withdrew from Panmunjom; the fact that these two countries joined the U.S.-led NATO finally deprived the already nominal Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission of its “neutrality,” causing its collapse. In August 1953, the United States had unilaterally set up the “Northern Limit Line” in DPRK’s territorial waters without consulting the KPA, a signatory to the Korean Armistice Agreement; such an act was in gross violation of Sub-paragraph B, Paragraph 13, Article II, Korean Armistice Agreement.¹⁰ The “Northern Limit Line” lies at the root of armed clashes and war and the bloody skirmishes in the West Sea of Korea in 1999 and 2002 clearly prove this.

When the DPRK-U.S. military talks at general’s level was held at Panmunjom on July 21, 1999, the U.S. officers acknowledged that the “Northern Limit Line” was drawn unilaterally by themselves without mutual agreement. It was because of this unreasonable behavior of the United States that the Korean Armistice Agreement was made mere waste paper incapable of ensuring peace on the Korean Peninsula; it was because of this unreasonable behavior by the U.S. that the Military Armistice Commission was made a nominal body with no one to operate it.

Having nullified the mechanism of the Korean Armistice Agreement aimed at putting an end to military activities and easing tension, the United States not only deployed troops and introduced weaponry on the Korean Peninsula but also conducted war exercises without interruption. At first, the U.S. covertly brought its troops and weapons into south Korea in fear of being blamed for the violation of the Korean Armistice Agreement. However, as days went by, the U.S. did not follow the Agreement and openly deployed its troops and weapons. Now, massive task forces of the U.S.

¹⁰ The Sub-paragraph B, Paragraph 13, Article II, Korean Armistice Agreement, stipulated that all the islands lying to the north and west of the provincial boundary line between Hwanghae-do (Hwanghae Province) and Kyonggi-do (Kyonggi Province) shall be under the military control of the Korean People’s Army, while the island groups of Paengyong-do (Paengyong island), Taechon-do (Taechon island), Sochong-do (Sochong island), Yonpyong-do (Yonpyong island), and U-do (U island) remain under the military control of the United Nations Command.

armed with modern weapons including nuclear-powered aircraft carriers are deployed in south Korea and Japan. Unfortunately, we cannot but admit that the Korean Armistice Agreement plays no role, none whatsoever, as a mechanism to deter the rampant moves of the U.S. that reinforces its military presence in south Korea and drives the situation on the Korean Peninsula to the brink of war.

It is clear to all that the current ceasefire regime can no longer secure and keep peace on the Korean Peninsula. As a matter of fact, the outdated ceasefire regime – a legacy of the Cold War era – has never contributed to the efforts aimed at securing peace on the Korean Peninsula; simply put, it has provided nothing but evidence showing the kind of hostile relations between the DPRK and the United States.

Now that the Military Armistice Commission – the only body entitled to supervise the implementation of the Korean Armistice Agreement – has been rendered dysfunctional, it is imperative that the current security vacuum which threatens the security of the Korean Peninsula be filled immediately. The fact that the outdated ceasefire regime created in the 1950s continues to exist well into the 21st century should be considered abnormal. The ceasefire regime which is not only the legacy of the Cold War era but also an active volcano capable of erupting at any moment should be replaced by a new peace regime. Therefore the conclusion of a peace treaty is a matter of utmost urgency that should not be delayed any further; it is the only option when viewed in the light of the efforts to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula, prevent another war in Korea and achieve our nation's desire; it is in keeping with the global trends of our times as well.

About the Author

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