

Provisions for Peace on the Korean Peninsula and the Northern Limit Line

Choe Chang Man

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Introduction

I published a report last year entitled “The Conclusion of Peace Treaty is Imperative.”¹ What I emphasized in this report is that adopting a peace treaty is an urgent task for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and a practical means to prevent yet another war and accomplish the task of clearing the legacy of the Cold War on the peninsula.

At that time, I expected that I might be able to paint a picture in which peace is settling down on the Korean Peninsula, if I were to write another essay. In other words, I hoped to draw a blueprint for a peaceful future with emotional relief that the DPRK’s proposed talks to replace the Korean Armistice Agreement (KAA) with a peace treaty had started and were moving forward.

Contrary to my expectations, however, a dark cloud of confrontation and conflict has been hanging over the Korean Peninsula in the last year rather than it being blessed with a bright rainbow of peace. The back-to-back “Cheonan” and Yonpyong Island incidents brought the situation on the Korean Peninsula to the brink of war.

What I cannot unravel is why the Korean Peninsula should be exposed to the constant danger of war instead of seeing lasting peace and stability. What are the reasons behind the continued occurrence of confrontations and conflicts such as the “Cheonan” and Yonpyong Island? The purpose of this report is to get to the bottom of their causes and seek for the way to get rid of it. If I am to speak about it, I put myself in the shoes of a physician so that I could root it out.

I examined by fluoroscopy. What I got is that only malignant tumors remain on and around the Korean Peninsula, which could clearly trigger continued confrontations and conflicts and cause a flare-up of tension at any moment. The most malignant is the Northern Limit Line.

¹ Choe Chang Man, “The Conclusion of a Peace Treaty is Imperative: The North Korean Perspective,” Institute for Security and Development Policy, *Asia Paper* (October 2010), 27 pages.

Unilateral Interception Line

How did the Northern Limit Line (NLL) come into being? In order to uncover its true colors, we need to look back in history to the 1950s.

The three-year fierce fatherland liberation war led to the adoption of the armistice agreement between the Korean People's Army and the U.S.-led "UN forces" in July 1953. The Korean Armistice Agreement (KAA) is an indefinite armistice agreement that has the purpose of stopping hostilities and all armed actions in Korea until the time when the Korean question is resolved by peaceful means.

In the KAA, both sides envisaged holding a higher-level political conference three months after the ceasefire to discuss such issues as the withdrawal of foreign troops from Korea and on how the Korean question could be solved by the Korean people themselves. The KAA also dealt with, among other things, the issue of providing ceasefire conditions to stop hostile military acts as well as the issue of drawing a military demarcation line (MDL) and establishing a demilitarized zone (DMZ), all of which are aimed to make the ceasefire credible and reliable.

The KAA determined the military demarcation line on the ground and in the East Sea of Korea, but failed to do so in the West Sea of Korea. Article II 13-b of the KAA stipulated that all the islands lying to the north and west of the provincial boundary line between Hwanghae Island and Kyonggi Island shall be under the military control of the Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army and the Commander of the Chinese People's volunteers, except the island groups of Paengyong Island, Taechong Island, Sochong Island, Yonpyong Island, and U Island, which shall remain under the military control of the Commander-in-Chief, United Nations Command.² Thus, the KAA determined only the jurisdiction over five islands but not a military demarcation line in the sea. Accordingly, the relevant map

² On January 30, 1952, the U.S. army delegate at a staff meeting to discuss the third paragraph of the agenda for ceasefire talks recognized that "the meaning of this sentence" refers to "the only control of these islands." It is true that, after the KAA was signed, U.S. naval ships turned around the open sea when sailing to and from the five islands in the north of military demarcation line in the West Sea.

attached to the KAA (Map 3), which is one of 22 maps, marked only the control over five island groups but did not draw a demarcation line in the sea.

On August 30, 1953, more than one month after signing the ceasefire, Mark W. Clark, the then Commander-in-Chief of the United Nations Command, defined the NLL as the line linking 11 coordinates which were to set the stage for U.S. warships and planes to conduct a patrolling mission and declared it in his own name; he had only informed the south Korean navy about it as part of the internal rules for its military operation. This is how the 150-mile NLL linking the mouth of the Han River to Paengyong Island was unilaterally drawn.

The NLL does not hold any ground in international law and is an illegal line that was unilaterally established by the United States. The NLL totally goes against the KAA's Article II 13-b stipulating that the island groups of Paengyong Island, Taechong Island, Sochong Island, Yonpyong Island, and U Island shall be under the military control of the Commander-in-Chief of the United Nations, while the rest of the island groups and their waters are under the military control of the DPRK side.

Even the United States and South Korean authorities recognized the illegality of this NLL. In a now declassified cable to the State Department on December 18, 1973, Francis Underhill, the then U.S. ambassador to south Korea expressed his deep concern saying that "if an incident were to occur in this area ... the ROK and the U.S. might appear in the eyes of a significant number of other countries to be in the wrong." In another also declassified cable two days later, he went on to say "we have protested, as armistice agreement violations, intrusions within three mile contiguous waters of UNC controlled islands. However UNC has not protested NLL intrusions since the line is not specially mentioned in armistice agreement."

On December 22, 1973, Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Rush stated, in a now declassified "Joint State/Defense Message" to the U.S. Embassy in Seoul, that "we are aware of no evidence that NLL has ever been officially presented to North Korea. We would be in an extremely vulnerable position of charging them with penetrations beyond a line they have never accepted or acknowledged. ROKG is wrong in assuming we will join in attempt to impose NLL on NK."

In February 1975, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger wrote in a confidential cable, now declassified, that the "Northern Patrol Limit Line does

not have international legal status. NPLL was unilaterally established and not accepted by NK. Furthermore, insofar as it purports unilaterally to divide international waters, it is clearly contrary to international law and USG Law of the Sea Position.”

Herein lies the reason why the United States has yet to inform the DPRK side of the existence of the NLL even after the passage of time, let alone reveal its existence to the world. This also does not keep the political, academic and social circles in south Korea from raising their cynical voices about the NLL describing it as “a hot potato” which “does not hold water logically” and entails “serious and practical controvasial points.”

Despite this, the south Korean authorities made painstaking attempts to defend the illegal NLL at any cost. They admit that the NLL is a line established unilaterally by Clark.³ However, they still insist that this line has contributed towards preventing conflicts between the north and south and that the north Korean side has so far connived at it without raising any objections for decades.

However, the DPRK, from the beginning, did not recognize this illegal NLL, which was secretly drawn in another’s sea without getting approval from its owner. The DPRK declared 12 nautical miles as its territorial waters on March 5, 1955, one and half years after the United States drew an illegal NLL. It also declared 200 nautical miles as its economic waters on July 1, 1977 and has never tolerated the south Korean side entering it.

The DPRK solemnly declared that it would establish a military demarcation line in the West Sea of Korea through a Special Report of the General Staff of the Korean People’s Army (KPA) on September 2, 1999.

The DPRK based itself strictly on the KAA and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea⁴ in declaring that the boundary line in the

³ In October 2007, the then south Korean president Roh Moo-hyun said that “we need to admit that the NLL was drawn unilaterally by [the United States and south Korea] with no bilateral agreement reached.”

⁴ The two relevant articles in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea are: Article 3: Every State has the right to establish the breath of its territorial sea up to a limit not exceeding 12 nautical miles, measured from baselines determined in accordance with this Convention; and Article 15: Where the coasts of two States are opposite or adjacent to each other, neither of the two States is entitled, failing agreement between them to the contrary, to extend its territorial sea beyond the median line every point of which is equidistant from the nearest points on the baselines from which the breath of the territorial seas of each of the two States is measured. The above provision does not apply, however, where it is necessary by reason of historic title or other special circumstances to

West Sea is the Point of Equidistance lying between Point "Ka," an extension of the KAA's given "Ka-Na" boundary line of Hwanghae Island and Kyonggi Island, Tungsan cape at the tip of Kangryong peninsula under the jurisdiction of the DPRK side and Kulyop Island under the jurisdiction of the U.S. side. It also declared that the boundary line in the West Sea is the Point of Equidistance between the DPRK's Ong Island and Sogyolryolbi and Sohyop Islands under the jurisdiction of the United States. It went on to declare that the boundary line would be a line of linking the point of intersection of the sea boundary line to be confirmed between the DPRK and the People's Republic of China in the future. While declaring this, the DPRK side declared null and void the NLL, which had been randomly declared by the United States in the DPRK's territorial waters in the West Sea of Korea.

delimit the territorial seas of the two States in a way which is at variance therewith.

Origin of Escalating Tension

Disputed waters came to appear in the West Sea of Korea, where the danger of inter-Korean confrontation and conflict does not show any sign of letting up. All this is attributable to the fact that south Korean authorities, on one hand, persevere in preserving the NLL, a unilateral establishment by the United States, and the DPRK, on the other, categorically rejecting it.

As soon as this disputed water was formed, the south Korean authorities, using it as a springboard, tried to “invade the north single-handedly” while committing a series of criminal acts like an armed attack in the DPRK’s waters. The gravity of military provocation in this water at that time can be clearly understood through the fact that the Military Armistice Commission put as its first agenda of discussion the issue of military provocation in some regions, including waters in the West Sea of Korea, at its meeting held after the KAA was signed.

The south Korean authorities have been gearing up their military provocations from the 1950s through the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Such a provocation had become all too dangerous in the 1990s, going beyond control. This is well proven through the first naval battle in June 1999.

As the war in former Yugoslavia by the United States and its allies had come to an end, the south Korean authorities, setting up the DPRK as the next target, designated the West Sea of Korea as a tinderbox to ignite the second June 25 and put in action the already drawn-up “Operation Plan against the North.”⁵

The south Korean military authorities deployed 40 warships, including two large destroyers, twenty fast sailing ships, tank-landing ships, patrol

⁵ The Operation Plan against the North was worked out at the initiative of the Chief of the Staff of the south Korean army following discussion at an emergency meeting of army generals that was held in a room in south Korea’s defense minister on June 1, 1999. This plan contained the following: Date and time of launching operation: 10 a.m. June 4; Operation phases: 4 phases (induced, ship collision, preemptive firing, expended armed attack); Shuffling off responsibility to the north: frame up reports beforehand, make them public at home and abroad through mass media and inform to other countries through south Korea’s overseas missions; Confidentiality: keep those involved in the operation from staying out and going out and cordon off the sea of Yongpyong Island, operation waters, to keep confidentiality of the operation; Name of operation: “WS-99 Operation.”

ships, supply ships and rescue ships, together with their naval forces near the waters of Yonpyong Island and made an unprovoked firing first to our ships which were on a normal patrolling mission to defend the sea border.

However, the DPRK's naval forces dampened the enemy's attempted attack in a moment with their own immediate counter-attack, destroying ten south Korean warships and killing and wounding hundreds of its naval forces.

The south Korean authorities gave an order to enforce "Defcon-3" throughout their chain of command, vociferating about "a preemptive attack by the north" and rushed headlong to "an emergency battle posture" which is a simulation of a full-scale war. In tandem with this, the south Korean authorities put their police forces and civil servants on "a higher alert" by giving the former an order called "Emergency Operation No. 2" and the latter an order to "beef up service posture."

On the other hand, the United States gave an order to enforce "Watchcon-2" among its forces in south Korea professing that it "cannot tolerate the provocation by the north to raise tension on the Korean Peninsula." After that, it began to bring in to the territorial waters of the Korean Peninsula a great number of large scale warships of the latest type from June 16, which included the USS "Kitty Hawk," an aircraft carrier previously deployed in the Yugoslavia war, and the USS "Constellation," an aircraft carrier belonging to its 3rd Fleet, the Aegis-class cruiser "Vincennes" and the guided missile cruiser "Mobile Bay," which was staying in the Yokosuka base, Japan, and two of the latest type nuclear-powered submarines. Besides this, the United States put two squadrons of "F-18" fighters, "Patriot" missile commanding officers and 8 squadrons of "F-16" fighters on stand-by alert.

The south Korean military authorities, having gained strength from this, committed armed provocations, making their warships invade the DPRK's territorial waters on a daily basis. The warships that invaded our territorial waters 70 times from June 16 to 30 numbered altogether 200.

Having failed to make the first naval battle in the West Sea a tinderbox to ignite full-scale war, the south Korean military authorities provoked a second armed conflict in this territorial water in 2002, to be followed by a third naval battle in 2009.

After the Lee Myung-bak regime took office, the acts of invading our territorial waters by south Korean military authorities took on an explosive

nature. In 2010 alone, the number of invasions recorded was no less than 600 times, all of which were conducted under the pretext of so-called “interdiction of fishing vessels” and encountering with normal maneuverability of the DPRK’s naval vessels.

A typical example of that was the provoked artillery fire at Yonpyong Island, which occurred last November. On November 22, south Korea’s army staff drew up a plan to conduct its artillery fire targeting the DPRK’s territorial water for two days between November 23 and 24 in the sea near Yonpyong Island. This coincided with a time when the “Hoguk” exercises against the DPRK were being conducted throughout the south Korean region.

The Korean People’s Army (KPA) sent a telephone message to south Korea’s military at 8 o’clock on November 23 to prevent a military conflict in the sensitive waters and maintain peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. In the message, the KPA issued stern warnings to south Korea’s military, saying that it should immediately stop its reckless plan to launch an artillery fire against the DPRK’s territorial waters. It also warned that if south Korea’s military went against our warning, it would have to face a decisive physical strike from the KPA and be directly responsible for all consequences arising from it.

But south Korea’s military was defiant in the face of the DPRK’s warning and fired into the DPRK’s territorial water by mobilizing their forces of artillery fire deployed on Yonpyong Island. All told, Yonpyong Island became the base for a military provocation of launching a clumsy firing and could not avoid receiving its due punishment.

Despite the DPRK’s repeated warning and strong protests and condemnation from the peace-loving peoples of the world, the United States and south Korea staged their largest joint military exercises in the West Sea of Korea from November 28 to December 1 over the Yonpyong Island incident. A vast scale of war equipment was mobilized that would be more than enough to conduct a full-scale war. It included the task force of the U.S. 7th Fleet, such as the U.S. nuclear-powered aircraft carrier “George Washington,” missile cruisers, destroyers and the latest airplanes. It also included destroyers, patrol ships and anti-submarine planes from south Korea.

War exercises swarmed like bees near the military demarcation line of the West Sea of Korea and conducted both in the sea and the air created a

grave situation in which the Korean Peninsula has reached a war state of ultra-emergency and its peace and security is on the line.

The situation is not only confined to exercises. The south Korean authorities have reshuffled their defense minister and military personnel with trigger-happy elements and have reinforced the build-up of their huge armed forces on and around Yonpyong Island. After that, they made shooting sprees using bullets and bombs near Yonpyong Island for more than one hour on December 20 under the declared "emergency alert level."

Meanwhile, the United States misled public opinion over the military provocation of south Korea with its alleged "legality of artillery fire exercises," making it a possible military conflict between both sides a fait accompli and was in all readiness to deploy the U.S. troops in south Korea for that purpose.

Both sides, however, were not involved in the conflicts. Even in this situation, the United States, according to its prearranged plan, committed itself to the large scale joint exercises in the sea by dispatching posthaste to the narrow waters in the West Sea of Korea the flotilla of the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier "George Washington," with dozens of carrier-borne planes and "F-15" and "F-16" fighters on board. The flotilla was also beefed up by a cruiser, a destroyer, a nuclear submarine and landing ships.

This year alone, the U.S. and south Korean authorities backtracked on the DPRK's repeated proposals to hold a dialogue and held the "Key Resolve" and "Foal Eagle" joint military exercises from February 28 to April 30. The U.S. and south Korean authorities claimed that these two exercises do not pose a threat to anybody as they are "annually held" and have "defensive natures." However, these exercises are quite different from previous exercises and assume a dangerous dimension, being so provocative and aggressive.

It is provocative enough that these exercises were defiantly conducted as the international society was united in expressing serious concern over the acute situation on the Korean Peninsula. And it is the worst of provocations in terms of their purpose and nature.

Last year, the U.S. and south Korean authorities conducted "Key Resolve" exercises for 11 days and "Foal Eagle" exercises for 23 days. The period of "Key Resolve" exercises this year was the same as last year. But the

“Foal Eagle” exercises were conducted for 62 days, an extension of 39 days compared with last year.

The same is true in the case of the number of U.S. and south Korean troops in the exercises. Last year, it was thousands, but this year, it increased to the tune of 200,000.

Involved in these exercises for the first time were agents of the U.S. Army’s special unit, which was organized in 2004 with the mission of finding out and removing nuclear weapons and missiles in all parts of the world.

The U.S. and south Korean authorities mentioned “removing nuclear weapons and missiles” from somebody and conducted joint military exercises with a mobilization of forces more than large enough to wage a full-scale war. Added here also was the means of nuclear war.

All the facts show that the NLL, a random line drawn by the United States in the sacred waters of the DPRK, is the reason for all these conflicts and rising tensions and that, as long as it remains intact, peace and stability will continue to elude the Korean Peninsula indefinitely.

Implementation of the October 4 Declaration

What is essential in rooting out the cause of rising tensions is to withdraw the unilaterally drawn NLL and establish an above-board military demarcation line in the West Sea of Korea at the earliest date possible. The perceived viewpoint or stance towards the NLL can be called an acid test to determine who does or does not want peace in the West of Korea.

From the military viewpoint, the West Sea of Korea already remains open in military conflicts between both sides. Once an armed conflict is on the rise there, it would be expanded into a full-scale war covering the ground and the air and pose a grave threat not only to the survival of the Korean nation but to world peace.

The NLL is a ghost line of no sense at all if it is seen in the context of the demands of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea regarding the principle of respect of 12 nautical miles of waters by both sides, the demands of the Korean Armistice Agreement (KAA), and if it is taken into account that it was unilaterally drawn without the agreement of both sides.

Even the United States once marked an “imaginary border line” between north and south Korea far below the south of the NLL using the principle of equidistance, when it distributed the DPRK’s map to the participants in the UN meeting on the Law of the Sea which was held in the United States.

There are continued calls to redraw the NLL, not only from vast segments of international society, but also from the United States itself after the Yonpyong Island incident. According to Selig S. Harrison, Director of the Asia Program at the U.S. based Center for International Policy, who is an expert on Korean affairs, it is very easy to solve the West Sea conflict between south and north Korea. The United States has to reset the NLL, an extension of the military demarcation line (MDL) in the sea, in the dispute-ridden area a little southward. He goes on to say that the U.S. has the right to reset the NLL, as it was granted the right to nominate the commander of the UN forces in south Korea by the United Nations Security Council in November 1950. The Obama administration must discuss the issue of setting a new boundary in the West Sea of Korea with both sides in Korea, but must not grant the south Korean regime the right to refuse a new boundary if an agreement on it is reached, he points out.

Broad spectrums of the world, such as those in political, social and academic circles, have placed strong demands on the United States to come into the line of declaring the NLL null and void. It is a simple reflection of world public opinion that it is none other than the United States that should be responsible for drawing a new boundary line in the West Sea of Korea to ensure peace in this area of water, given the fact that the U.S. created a bone of contention for military conflicts and disputes while south Korean authorities are misusing that bone of contention for confrontation.

Reality shows that the most important and urgent task for the prevention of conflicts and disputes and the achievement of a lasting peace in the West Sea of Korea is to make sure that a new boundary line in the West Sea be properly established.

Because of their strategic and political interests, the U.S. and the south Korean authorities are now holding out for the NLL. The United States has its own strategic interests in maintaining military tension on the Korean Peninsula. During the Cold War period, the United States stationed huge armed forces on and around the Korean Peninsula to hold in check the "southward advance" by the Soviet Union and to dominate the Asia and Pacific region militarily. This afforded no interest at all to the U.S. in replacing the KAA with a peace agreement and rooting out the cause of tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

The post-Cold War time makes it more urgent for U.S. interests to maintain a confrontational status on the Korean Peninsula. After the end of the Cold War, the United States focused its global strategy on curbing the appearance of any power that could stand up to the U.S.

Russia had its own potential to become a rival to the United States in military strength. Thus, it continued to be a subject of containment by the U.S., while China became a new subject of containment as its economic power was on a steep rise. Especially, it became vital for the U.S. to contain China in its bid to maintain its hegemony. This was all conditioned upon the changed balance of power. The power of the U.S. weakened, whereas China is moving closer to the U.S. in its economic power as well as in its position.

The problem, though, for the United States is that it can hardly find any excuse to make its military presence felt in Northeast Asia, as its former archrival, the Soviet Union, has collapsed and the U.S. has moved towards forming alliances and strategic partnerships with all neighboring powers.

The one and only excuse it could find was a continued ceasefire status on the Korean Peninsula, and what was needed to put a positive light on it was to find a cause of tension such as the NLL. It sticks together with the political interests of the present south Korean authorities to defend the NLL. The south Korean authorities believe that they can maintain their ruling system only if the atmosphere of confrontation is sustained until next year's parliamentary and presidential elections. The U.S. and south Korean authorities are now clinging to defending the NLL out of their strategic and political interests. Such being the case, it is difficult to establish, forthwith, a new military demarcation line in the West Sea of Korea.

The DPRK government took all this into full consideration and was magnanimous enough in proposing the establishment of peaceful waters until a new military demarcation line was defined in the West Sea of Korea. It is the common will of our fellow countrymen to make the West Sea of Korea into a sea of national prosperity by creating peaceful waters there.

The October 4 Declaration carries such a will.⁶ To implement it to the letter is the fairest and most realistic way to get rid of the cause of tensions on the Korean Peninsula. This declaration clarified the principle issues in terminating military hostilities, easing tensions and ensuring peace on the Korean Peninsula. In particular, it sets forth the best option as being the establishment of a special zone for peace and cooperation, a joint fishing ground and peaceful waters in the West Sea of Korea.

Article 5 of the Declaration states: "The north and the south agreed to establish [a] 'special area for peace and cooperation in West Sea' covering the Haeju area and waters off its surrounding areas and positively push forward undertakings including the issue of setting waters for joint fishing and those for peace, construction of special economic zone, active use of Haeju Port, direct passage of civilian vessels through Haeju Port and joint use of the estuary of the River Rimjin." North and south Korea held a second round of talks between the Minister of the People's Armed Forces from the north and the Defense Minister from the south,⁷ as well as a fifth round

⁶ October 4 Declaration: "Declaration for Development of North-South Relations and Peace and Prosperity" adopted between Chairman Kim Jong Il and the then south Korean President Roh Moo-hyun.

⁷ The DPRK's Minister of People's Armed Forces and south Korea's Minister of Defense held talks in Pyongyang, November 27-29, 2007. The agreement adopted after the talks pointed out that the "North and South of Korea have agreed to take practical

of military talks at the general level⁸ to implement the October 4 Declaration. They agreed to prevent conflicts and take practical steps to ensure peace in the West Sea.

The DPRK also advanced realistic and principled proposals to implement this agreement. These proposals include the epochal ones that both sides should broadmindedly give up all of their previously-held assertions, work on conflicts and move towards establishing peaceful waters and common fishing round in the West Sea based on the already provided inter-Korean agreement and the KAA as well as on the internationally recognized legal requirements until a new military demarcation line is established in the West Sea.

The October 4 Declaration was adopted together with the proposal to prevent military conflicts and establish a special zone for peace and cooperation in the West Sea for the common prosperity of the nation and the agreement to provide a military guarantee to the establishment of common fishing ground and peaceful waters. All this came out of reflection of the unanimous aspiration of fellow countrymen. The whole nation expected and hoped to see the disputed waters in the West Sea, a cause of national shame and pain, be turned eventually into waters of peace and prosperity which would add to national pride and pleasure. But the expectations and hopes of the fellow countrymen failed to be realized.

Immediately after taking office, the present south Korean authorities adopted as their "state policy" a confrontational approach towards the same nation called "no nukes, opening and 3,000 dollars" and began to smash into pieces the inter-Korean agreements that were being implemented. The south Korean authorities classified the inter-Korean agreements, which

steps to prevent conflicts and ensure peace in the West Sea and seek mutual military cooperation to put an end to the present armistice mechanism and build a lasting peace arrangement."

⁸ Talks were held in the Tongil Pavilion in the northern part of Panmunjom, May 8–11, 2007. The joint statement issued after the talks states: "Both sides reached an identical viewpoint that it is an important and urgent task to prevent military conflicts and realize a joint fishery in defusing military tensions and ensuring peace. 1) Both sides have agreed to realize joint fishing activities in the West Sea from the principle of ensuring peace and promoting the prosperity and interests of the nation. 2) Both sides have agreed to continue consultations on how to prevent military conflicts and establish a joint fishing zone in the West Sea. 3) Both sides have agreed to discuss direct passage of the civilian ships to the Haeju port by north Korea's civilian ships as military trust builds in the West Sea."

were precious gains common to the nation, into categories based on their relative importance, such as “prioritized,” “to do next” and “not to do,” and they are now trying to phase out all of the inter-Korean agreements. The south Korean authorities went to great lengths to invalidate the proposal to prevent military confrontation and conflicts between the north and south and ensure the common interests and prosperity of the nation.

This is how the historical October 4 Declaration fell to the ground, inter-Korean relations went back to the confrontational status of the Cold War period, and the West Sea turned out to be, once again, a theater of military confrontation and conflict, and a forward, offensive and advance base to ignite a war against the north. Military conflict flared up further from the sea to the land when the gun was fired over Yonpyong Island. It is never easy to read the public sentiment of the south lamenting deeply over it. They deplored it, saying such a misfortune would have never happened if the historical October 4 Declaration were implemented.

If the October 4 Declaration had been implemented long before, defusing the tinderbox of confrontation and conflict, then the third naval battle of 2009 and the Yonpyong Island incident of 2010 would never have broken out and the situation on the Korean Peninsula would never reached the touch-and-go one of today.

If a special zone in the West Sea had been established, as was agreed in the October 4 Declaration, a peaceful rainbow would have been shining over the disputed waters which were thick with the smoke of gunfire.

All the facts prove that, in order to root out the cause of rising tensions on the Korean Peninsula, it is imperative that the U.S. and south Korean authorities retract their stance of defending the NLL and agree to establish a new military demarcation line in the West Sea of Korea. It is also imperative that the divided waters are turned into peaceful ones through the implementation of the October 4 Declaration before the U.S. and the south Korean authorities retract their stance.

If the U.S. and south Korean authorities truly want to see peace and security on the Korean Peninsula, they should no longer play for time and take a bold and decisive action to root out the cause of rising tensions.

About the Author

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