

The Conclusion of a Korean Peace Treaty and the U.S. Strategy in the Asia Pacific Region

Ho Hak Rim

ASIA PAPER
December 2011



Institute for Security &
Development Policy

The Conclusion of a Korean Peace Treaty and the U.S. Strategy in the Asia Pacific Region

Ho Hak Rim

The Conclusion of a Korean Peace Treaty and the U.S. Strategy in the Asia Pacific Region is an *Asia Paper* published by the Institute for Security and Development Policy. The *Asia Papers Series* is the Occasional Paper series of the Institute's Asia Program, and addresses topical and timely subjects. The Institute is based in Stockholm, Sweden, and cooperates closely with research centers worldwide. Through its Silk Road Studies Program, the Institute runs a joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center with the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute of Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies. The Institute is firmly established as a leading research and policy center, serving a large and diverse community of analysts, scholars, policy-watchers, business leaders, and journalists. It is at the forefront of research on issues of conflict, security, and development. Through its applied research, publications, research cooperation, public lectures, and seminars, it functions as a focal point for academic, policy, and public discussion.

The opinions and conclusions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute for Security and Development Policy or its sponsors.

© Institute for Security and Development Policy, 2011

ISBN: 978-91-86635-22-0

Printed in Singapore

Distributed in Europe by:

Institute for Security and Development Policy
Västra Finnbodavägen 2, 131 30 Stockholm-Nacka, Sweden
Tel. +46-841056953; Fax. +46-86403370
Email: info@isdpeu

Distributed in North America by:

The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute
Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies
1619 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel. +1-202-663-7723; Fax. +1-202-663-7785
E-mail: caci2@jhuadig.admin.jhu.edu

Editor: Dr. Bert Edström

Assistant Editor: Elliot Brennan

Editorial correspondence should be addressed to Dr. Bert Edström at: bedstrom@isdpeu

Contents

Introduction5

The U.S. Standpoint on the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty.....6

**Intensification of Tensions on the Korean Peninsula
and the U.S. Strategy in the Asia Pacific.....13**

About the Author22

Introduction

Today the world is making headway towards peace, prosperity and development. Countries that have been hostile in the past have disentangled their long-tied contradictions and conflicts and are now on the road to joint prosperity and development through cooperation and compromise. The DPRK wants to move forward with the international society by concentrating on economic development in a peaceful environment. It has been incorporated in the DPRK's proposal for a conclusion of a peace treaty set out early last year.

Peace is the desire of human kind.

The Korean nation lost its sovereignty to foreign forces in the early twentieth century and was forced into colonial slavery. It also had to suffer the horrors of war not long after it regained independence. The painful past has given the Korean nation a renewed desire for peace.

The current century has witnessed every country locked in a hot race to increase its national power through peaceful development, which made Koreans ever more desirous of peace. But why has the Korean Peninsula, contrary to this desire, been haunted by the ghost of war for more than half a century? For whom and for what is the increased tension on the Korean Peninsula needed?

The U.S. Standpoint on the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty

In order to get at the root reason for the lack of peace on the Korean Peninsula, we have to look back on how the U.S. has responded to the issue of replacing the Korean Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty.

The DPRK's efforts to replace the armistice agreement with a peace treaty date back to 1953 just after the ceasefire. The restricted armistice treaty cannot play an adequate role in eradicating the root of increasing tension and war. The subject of solving the Korean issue in a peaceful manner was included in Paragraph 60 of the Armistice Agreement. According to this paragraph, both sides were expected to hold a political conference of a higher level within three months after the agreement had been signed and come into effect. This conference was to include in its discussion the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Korea and the peaceful settlement of the Korean issue.¹

A preparatory meeting was held in Panmunjom from October 26, 1953 to January 14, 1954. At this meeting, the U.S. side violated the provisions of the Armistice Agreement to hold a political conference of the countries concerned on both sides and stubbornly made absurd suggestions to include the U.S.S.R. in the conference, describing it as belligerent. The U.S. deliberately created obstacles by taking up the issues of rights of the neutral states to attend the political conference and the agenda. They did nothing but intentionally obstruct the meeting and left the meeting on December 12, 1953. Consequently, the political conference ended in its preparatory stage and did not enter the plenary session. Shortly after the rupture, a Foreign Ministers' Conference of the U.S., the USSR, the United Kingdom, and France took place in Berlin in January 1954. At the conference agreement

¹ Paragraph 60 of the Korean Armistice Agreement states: "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 (3) 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."

was reached to open a meeting in Geneva to discuss the peaceful settlement of the Korean issue.

Even in the Geneva meeting, the U.S. insisted that its forces should not withdraw from south Korea, that Chinese troops should get out of north Korea and that a general election was needed only in the north since there already existed a "legal government" in the south. With these preposterous statements, the U.S. left the meeting after reading out the so-called "16 Nations Joint Declaration."

The U.S. not only intentionally destroyed conferences and meetings organized in order to replace the armistice agreement with a peace treaty but also perpetuated its military station in south Korea and incurred intensified tension by introducing military equipment and nuclear weapons on a great scale. Official announcements, as well as widely-known information, make it not so difficult to understand that the U.S. made undisguised maneuvers to make south Korea its base for aggressive war and intensify tension on the Korean Peninsula.

The U.S. concluded the "U.S.-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty" on October 1, 1953, thus breaching the Armistice Agreement and legalizing its military station in south Korea. Paragraph 4 of this treaty grants the U.S. the right to deploy the three military services anywhere in south Korea and Paragraph 6 "legalizes" the U.S. permanent stay in south Korea and its automatic intervention in case of "emergency" on the Korean Peninsula.

At the 75th Conference of the Military Armistice Commission held on June 21, 1957, the U.S. officially declared its unilateral resignation from the implementation of Paragraph 13(d) of the Armistice Agreement, which establishes the cessation of the introduction into Korea of reinforcing combat-aircraft, armored vehicles, weapons and ammunition and increased military deployments in south Korea. Referring to the U.S. announcements, nuclear weapons were brought in and deployed in south Korea in 1958 for the purpose of a war against the DPRK. On January 29, 1958, the United Nations Command officially announced the deployment of the nuclear missile "Honest John" in south Korea and on February 3, demonstrated a 280 mm atomic gun and the "Honest John" missile at the airport of the U.S. First Corps stationed in the administration compound as well as deployed the U.S. 4th Guided Missile Command equipped with nuclear weapons in Chunchon of Kangwon Province in south Korea.

The U.S. attempted to ignite nuclear war on the Korean Peninsula exploiting “the Pueblo incident” in January 1968 and “the EC-121 incident” in April 1969. When the DPRK captured the U.S. spy ship “Pueblo,” the U.S. deployed three aircraft carriers and a thousand air fighters around the Korean Peninsula and recruited hundreds of thousands of new soldiers.

The U.S. has launched joint military exercises such as the “Focus Retina” from 1969 and the “Freedom Guardian” from 1971. Thus, it has expanded its war exercises to also include nuclear weapons to be used in a war against the DPRK.

The efforts on the part of the DPRK to conclude a peace treaty in compliance with the 1953 Armistice Agreement have been faced with grave obstacles and the Korean Peninsula has become darkened with war clouds.

The DPRK had tried through the UN to prevent the escalating war threat of the U.S. and to ensure peace on the Korean Peninsula. Thanks to its efforts, the United Nations General Assembly in 1975 adopted Resolution No. 3390, which demanded the replacement of the Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty and the dissolution of the “United Nations Command.” However, the U.S. responded by playing up “the Panmunjom Incident” in August 1976 and driving the situation close to war with the large-scale nuclear war exercise “Team Spirit” together with south Korea. This joint military exercise is the world’s largest-scale war exercise and has been practiced every year from 1976 to 1993, with the exception of 1992.

The “Team Spirit” joint military exercise mobilized an extensive military force preparing for war. In earlier NATO military exercises, the U.S. mobilized an army of 15,000–19,000 men. However, more than 200,000 including 60,000–70,000 U.S. army forces were used in the “Team Spirit” exercise, which also mobilized around 70 warships and 2,000 warplanes including three infantry divisions, one marine division, aircraft carrier taskforce, amphibious taskforce, strategic bombers, fighter bombers, and assault planes from the U.S. and the Pacific region. These joint exercises have lasted between 70 to 80 days, which was long enough for a limited war.

This exercise was a preparation for war. The military operations used all kinds of combat styles and methods and covered all phases from the start of the war to the end. Some of the examples were: preliminary strike exercises at the beginning of a war aimed to raid major strategic sites of the north with a large number of air raiders mobilized from overseas bases; “air and

ground operation" exercises aimed to simultaneous front and depth attack in the course of a sea landing operation; paratroop operation exercises for securing its base deep in the north; airlifting operation exercises for rapidly air-transporting personnel, weapon, supplies; river-crossing operation exercises to surmount water barriers during attack; anti-guerrilla exercises in the occupied region; etc.

The "Team Spirit" joint military exercise was a test for nuclear war, which mobilized the full range of strategic and tactical nuclear weapons. It is a well-known fact that the "Lance" missile, mounted with a nuclear head, had been brought into south Korea under the pretext of this exercise and was kept there even after the exercise. In 1979, a nuclear war operation center had been established and from then on there have been regular bi-monthly exercises of strategic bombers, "B-52," dropping nuclear bombs onto the Taebaeksan bomber range in south Korea. The number of U.S. nuclear weapons brought into south Korea increased rapidly and reached 1,000 by the mid 1980s and made south Korea the largest nuclear weapons depot in the Far East.

The name of the "Team Spirit" joint military exercise changed to the "United Wartime Reinforcement Exercise" in 1994. It merged with the "Eagle" joint military exercise focusing on open-air mobile operations and special operations. In 2008 it was renamed "Key Resolve/Foal Eagle" joint military exercise. The U.S. has also carried out "Ulji Focus Lense" joint military exercises every year since 1975. It was renamed "Ulji Freedom Guardian" in 2008 and changed from being a U.S.-led exercise to having the south Korean army in the lead and the U.S. army backing them.

In an attempt to avoid the pressure from the international society to withdraw the "United Nations Command," the U.S. created "the ROK-US Command" in 1978, thus labeling the U.S. army stationed in south Korea "joint military." Withdrawal of the "United Nations Command" meant the end of the U.S. army pretending to belong to the United Nations. The U.S. needed a new reason to stay in south Korea and the "ROK-U.S. Command" was made up. The response to other sincere efforts by the DPRK to ensure peace on the Korean Peninsula, through the UN resolution, international support and other legal means, was the world's largest scale nuclear war exercise.

There had been some agreements between the DPRK and the U.S. as regards to improving bilateral relations and ensuring peace and security on the Korean Peninsula in the 1990s and the 2000s. However, these agreements were short lived before they became pieces of waste paper.

At the government-level talks held in New York in June 1993 the DPRK and the U.S. agreed on principle of assurances against the threat and use of force, including nuclear weapons .

The DPRK and the U.S. concluded the Agreed Framework in October 1994. According to this agreement:

Both sides will cooperate to replace the DPRK's graphite-moderated reactor and related facilities with light-water reactor (LWR) power plants. 1) In accordance with the October 20, 1994 letter of assurance from the US President, the US will undertake to make arrangements for the provision to the DPRK of a LWR project with a total generating capacity of approximately 2000 MW(e) by a target date of 2003.

In October 2000 the U.S-DPRK Joint Communiqué was announced:

As a crucial first step, the two sides stated that neither government would have hostile intent toward the other and confirmed the commitment of both governments to make every effort in the future to build a new relationship free from past enmity.

However, the U.S. went against all the DPRK-U.S. agreements. It pretended to exert efforts to respect the DPRK's sovereignty and to improve mutual relations at the dialogue tables but upon leaving the table, established all kinds of operation plans dealing with so-called "contingency" and "emergency" cases and carried out the "United Wartime Reinforcement Exercise" and the "Eagle" joint military exercises since 1994.

In his State of the Union Address on January 30, 2002, President George W. Bush charged the DPRK of being part of "an axis of evil" and in March 2002 announced the Nuclear Posture Review in which the DPRK was included in the U.S. list of "preemptive nuclear strike objects." The U.S. special envoy, James Kelly who visited the DPRK October 3–5, 2002, came up with the baseless story that the DPRK was violating the US-DPRK Agreed Framework by pursuing a uranium enrichment program aimed at producing nuclear weapons. He threatened that unless that program was put to

an end, the DPRK-U.S. talks, the DPRK-Japan and the inter-Korean relations would be faced with a grave situation. On November 14, 2002, the U.S. announced its decision to stop provisions of crude oil from December.

The U.S.'s abrogation of the US-DPRK Agreed Framework forced the DPRK to withdraw from the NPT. The hostile U.S. policy threatened the DPRK's sovereignty and its supreme interests and gave it no other choice but to produce its own nuclear deterrent so as to defend its national dignity and the right to existence.

The issue of concluding a peace treaty has also been reflected in the Joint Statement issued at the Six-Party Talks on September 19, 2005.² The U.S. went against the spirit of mutual respect and equality of the Joint Statement and made an issue of the DPRK's peaceful satellite launch at the UN Security Council and imposed additional sanctions on the DPRK. Consequently, the issue of the conclusion of a peace treaty could not proceed and the Six-Party Talks came to a standstill. A lack of confidence between the DPRK and the U.S. led the latter to make a fuss over the DPRK's peaceful satellite launch and infringe on its sovereignty. This led the DPRK to carry out a nuclear test as a defensive response, which led to sanctions. Sanctions again resulted in frustration of the Six-Party Talks. The evil circle of mistrust went on.

The setbacks and failures of the Six-Party Talks proved that without confidence between the concerned parties, nothing can come out of the talks.

The fundamental issue in creating confidence between the DPRK and the U.S. is to put an end to the war status, the main root of DPRK-U.S. enmity, and conclude a peace treaty. On the occasion of the 60th anniversary after the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, the DPRK proposed that the signatories to the Armistice Agreement should hold talks to replace it with a peace treaty. The peaceful peoples of the world responded enthusiastically to the DPRK's proposal as a just and reasonable one contributing to security and peace in the region and to the settlement of the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula. Nevertheless, the U.S. answered by taking up the nuclear issue and keeps insisting on "abidance to the Armistice Agreement" by preserving the technical war status on the Korean Peninsula.

² Article 4 of the September 19 Joint Statement: "The six parties committed to joint efforts for lasting peace and stability in Northeast Asia. The directly related parties will negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula at an appropriate separate forum."

Last year's Cheon'an and Yeonpyong Islet cases, which almost caused a war, are vivid and typical examples revealing that the real intention of the U.S. is that it does not want to conclude a peace treaty.

The U.S. in collaboration with south Korean forces carried out a joint naval military exercise July 25–28, 2010, mobilizing both air and naval forces. This exercise involved forces ten times larger than earlier joint military exercises. The extra large aircraft carrier, George Washington, which has an operational capacity of 625 miles and 150-times-a-day set offs of fighter bombers, was engaged in war exercise with various kinds of fighter aircrafts and AWACS on board. The U.S. navy fighter FA-18F Super Hornet EF and AWACS E-2C Hawk Eye 2000 and many other aircraft took off from the aircraft carrier.

The U.S. introduced the ultramodern fighter F-22 Raptor for the first time in this naval military exercise. This fighter had not been used in either the Iraqi or the Afghanistan war. The fighter has an operational radius of 1200 km and can be deployed all over the Pacific region. In a simulation air battle, the U.S. demonstrated "absolute predominance" over the fighter bomber F-16, the current mainstay of U.S. air defense.

Neither the efforts to replace the Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty, the international support for peacefully settlement of the Korean issue nor promises for working for peace made by not only the DPRK but also the U.S. bore fruit. The U.S. responded to the DPRK's proposal for a peace treaty by intensifying its military provocation.

The Korean Peninsula is constantly tormented by the evil circle of tension and confrontation even 60 years after the ceasefire.

Intensification of Tensions on the Korean Peninsula and the U.S. Strategy in the Asia Pacific

The U.S.'s real intention of persistent evasion of the peace treaty is to realize its Asia Pacific strategy through maintenance of escalating tension. Its strategy is to suppress the emergence of a new power that might pose a challenge to its domination in the Asia Pacific region.

The northeast Asian region with the Korean Peninsula in the center is comprised of China, the world's second largest economic power and also with the world's largest population, which is capable of challenging the U.S. and Japan, the possessor of economic and technical power next to the U.S., which dreams of establishing a "new order in the great East Asia," as well as Russia, one of the world's largest nuclear possessors, which opposed the U.S. during the Cold War.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was a U.S. presidential security advisor in the late 1970s, claims that the U.S. needs a strategic and economic presence that matches its increasing interests in the Asia Pacific region.

The U.S. is trying to preserve its enormous combat forces in Northeast Asia in order to realize its Asia Pacific strategy. Korea is located in the most appropriate position to realize this kind of plan, since the Korean Peninsula is at the strategic point to intercept the extension of power in the Asia Pacific region of both China and Russia. Korea is also a gateway to check Japan's expansion onto the continent.

Thus, the U.S. needs to intensify tension on the Korean Peninsula in order to have an excuse to occupy the whole peninsula by means of force or at least to perpetuate the stationing of its military in south Korea. The U.S. does not wish to establish a peaceful regime since that would end whatever justification it has to stay in south Korea. The U.S. has a strategic interest in sustaining the 1953 Armistice Agreement. The U.S. entered south Korea in September 1945 pretending to be a "liberator" and provoked the Korean War on June 25, 1950 in order to achieve its objective of colonizing the whole of Korea and ensure that Korea could function as a springboard for the Asia Pacific strategy of the U.S. However, the U.S. could not achieve this aim by means of war. From then on it has systematically expanded its military forces

and carried out war exercises that violated the Armistice Agreement. The U.S.-intensified tension on the Korean Peninsula met a defensive response from the DPRK. It is an old trick of the U.S. to justify its deployment of military forces on the Korean Peninsula by misleading public opinion by claims that the DPRK poses the threat on the Korean Peninsula.

It is neither a nuclear issue nor ideological contradiction between the U.S. and the DPRK that actually makes the U.S. strengthen its sanctions and blockade the DPRK. Apart from the DPRK, Cuba and Vietnam are also socialist states but the U.S. is not intent so much on military occupation of Cuba and even tends to have deep relations with Vietnam. India, Israel and Pakistan are not members of the nuclear club but possess nuclear weapons and still the U.S. does not show much interest in these countries' nuclear issues. It is using the nuclear issue as an excuse to suffocate the DPRK and occupy the whole of the Korean Peninsula.

The U.S. is the instigator of the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula and the world's greatest possessor of nuclear weapons. It claims that it desires a settlement of the DPRK's nuclear issue but it has never had a will to solve it. In order to realize its ambition to occupy the whole of the Korean Peninsula, the U.S. spreads rumors of the "collapse of north Korea" and raises the issue of an "emergency" in the Korean Peninsula. The U.S. has established aggressive war plans, periodically intensifying the situation and has spread over the world hatred and repugnance towards the DPRK by bringing up "human rights issue."

Currently the target of the U.S.'s Asia Pacific strategy is to check China's military "rise" through intensifying military tension on the Korean Peninsula. China has rapidly risen to become a world power in the areas of politics, economy with a military ranking with that of the U.S. and has become a prodigious threat to the U.S.

Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger wrote in his book *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?* (2001):

A hostile Asian bloc combining the most populous nations of the world and vast resources with some of the most industrious peoples would be incompatible with the American national interest. For this reason, America must retain a presence in Asia, and its geopolitical objective must remain to prevent Asia's coalescence into an unfriendly

bloc (which is most likely to happen under the tutelage of one of its major powers).

He also wrote:

China has the longest uninterrupted history of any country in the world and is controlled by the last major government to call itself Communist. It is the state with the greatest potential to become a rival of the United States at some point in the new — though, in my view, not in the first quarter.

Last year, China's GDP reached over US\$5.7 trillion making it the world's second largest economy, surpassing Japan. In a recent estimate by the IMF, it is predicted that China will become the world's largest economy in five years, surpassing the U.S. The IMF estimated that China's GNP will reach US\$19 trillion in 2016 from the current US\$11.2 trillion with the purchasing power parity as the measuring standard, while the U.S. GDP will increase to US\$18.8 trillion from the current US\$15.2 trillion. It means that the IMF for the first time officially acknowledged the decline of the U.S. supremacy and the advent of China. Its status is increasing and its voice in international fora and among the emerging economies is strengthened. Many countries consider that key international issues cannot be resolved without the participation of China.

China's influence is increasing in Northeast Asia as well. The tri-nation summit of China, Japan, and south Korea that was initiated in 1997 within the framework of the ASEAN+3 has been reshaped into an official China-Japan-south Korea summit in 2008. Active moves are being witnessed within the framework of the summit with a view to pushing ahead the integration of the regional economy, including the conclusion of a free trade agreement (FTA).

The rise of China that involves strengthening of economic ties with the traditional allies of the United States as well as its influence is a matter of great concern to the United States. It wants to stop the influence of China spreading to the traditional allies of the U.S. The core of the U.S. strategy of containing the rise of China is to prevail over the Chinese economic superiority with military superiority. During the Cold War, the U.S. tried to justify its military presence in northeast Asia under the pretext of deterring the

“southward invasion of the Soviet Union” and protecting its allies. However, since China has now formed alliances and partnerships with the U.S.’s regional allies, it is difficult for the U.S. to claim that there is a “threat from China,” with China portrayed as being an equal of the former Soviet Union.

Outright confrontation with China is not an option either because China and the U.S. depend on each other for their economic development. Furthermore, any military clash between these two major nuclear powers of the world might lead to a fatal war.

When China’s president Hu Jintao visited the United States last January, he concluded economic deals amounting to US\$45 billion. It is estimated that the deals will create some 235,000 new jobs in the U.S. China is now the biggest creditor of the U.S. and possesses U.S. government bonds worth approximately US\$1.16 trillion. This is yet another reason for the United States to try to avoid an outright confrontation with China because the economic recovery of the U.S. cannot be reached without cooperation with China. Therefore, the U.S. needs to have a third country as an enemy to justify the establishment of the missile defense system, the formation of the U.S.-Japan-south Korea triangular military alliance and the forward deployment of aircraft carriers. As a result of this the U.S. refuses to respond to the DPRK’s proposal of concluding a peace treaty and does not want the DPRK-U.S. relations to improve, nor is it in a hurry to resolve the nuclear issue speedily. The U.S. is exacerbating tensions on the Korean Peninsula on a regular basis to create hostile relations with the DPRK as an excuse for its military strategy targeting China.

It is obvious that the Korean Peninsula has distinct advantages over other regions from the perspective of the U.S. containment strategy against China. There are also a number of other areas that can serve to justify the U.S. strategy of containing China, such as the South China Sea, Taiwan and Diaoyudao. However, the strategic value of those areas cannot match the Korean Peninsula where the United States maintains a direct military presence.

South Korea is of a great strategic significance because it is close to Beijing and Shanghai which are strategic areas of China, enabling the U.S. to deliver strikes and threaten the depth of China’s mainland; its position is far more favorable than Japan’s. At the same time, naval bases in south Korea can be used in naval blockade operations that might cut off the East China

Sea from the rest of the world. Unlike using Taiwan for a strike which would directly hurt China's interest, the Korean Peninsula is a battlefield that can be used by the U.S. to encircle and contain China, while instigating south Korea and Japan to a confrontation with China.

The fact that the U.S. hurts China by deploying massive troops on and around the Korean Peninsula last year under the pretext of the incident of sunken south Korea warship Cheon'an and the shelling on Yeonpyong Islet soon after it declared its "return to Asia," clearly showed that mounting tensions on the Korean Peninsula benefit the U.S. in implementing its strategy towards China.

The U.S. deployed its aircraft carrier in the West Sea of Korea last December, soon after the shelling on Yeonpyong Islet despite strong opposition from China. The Chinese newspaper *Global Times* published an article in June last year in which it is argued that:

The widely anticipated and repeatedly postponed joint exercise between the US and South Korean navies in the Yellow Sea is still in the air. Yet the signs are that the other shoe will eventually drop in a week or two despite China's strong opposition. [...] Whatever harm the US military maneuver may inflict upon the mind of the Chinese, the United States will have to pay for it, sooner or later.

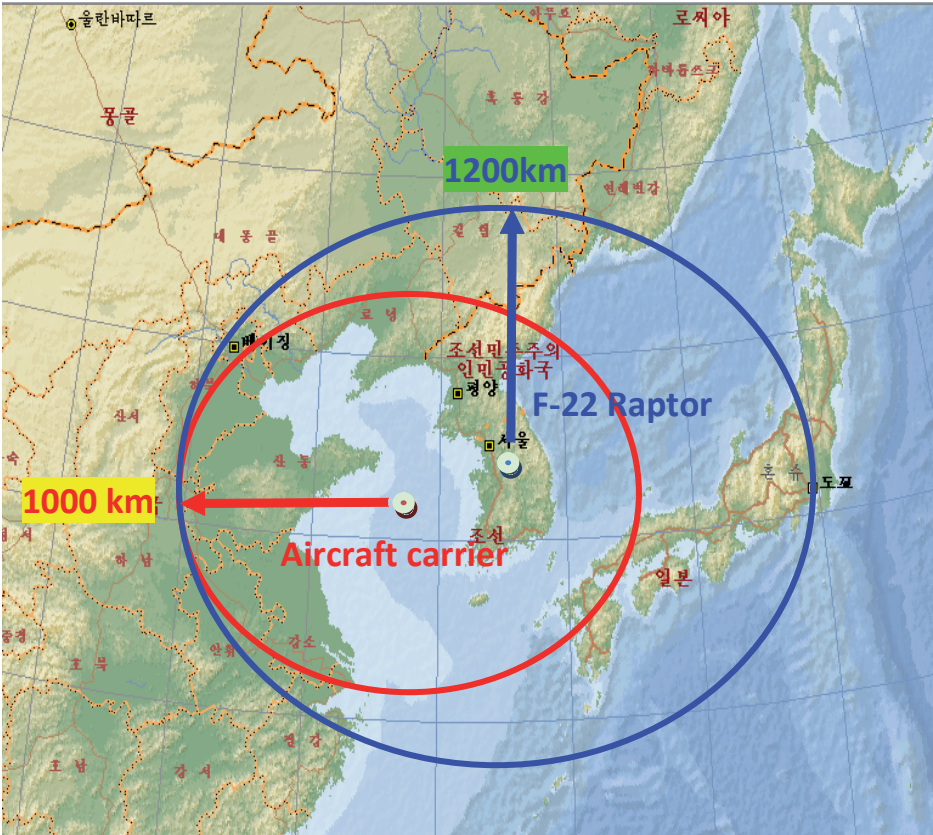
A Chinese expert commented:

Imagine how the United States would feel if China showed the same ignorance of American interests and security as the U.S. is doing toward China? Imagine how Washington would feel if Beijing took part in military exercises with America's neighbors or competitors in nearby areas or sensitive regions? Don't do unto others what you would not have them do unto you. The United States should think twice about this maneuver. Once a U.S. aircraft carrier sails into the Yellow Sea, the greatest damage to Sino-U.S. relations will be in the area of popular support, which is the basis of international relations.

The F-22 Raptor which is the most advanced U.S. fighter and which had been deployed in south Korea under the pretext of the incident of sunken south Korean warship "Cheon'an," has an operating radius of 1,200 km, making China's mainland its battlefield.

All these facts clearly corroborates that one of the reasons the U.S. continues to exacerbate the tensions on the Korean Peninsula is to encircle and contain China. Since the distance from Seoul to Beijing is about 950 km and 1170 km from Seoul to Tokyo, Beijing and Tokyo fall into the operational radius of the F-22 Raptor (Map 1).

Map 1. The Operational Radius of the F-22 Raptor and the U.S. aircraft carrier "George Washington"



The U.S. is trying to revise and supplement its Asia Pacific strategy in keeping with the change of situation on and around the Korean Peninsula. The DPRK's nuclear deterrents made it difficult for the U.S. to provoke an all-out war as in the past. Furthermore, the international community is

calling for an end to the ceasefire and establishment of a peaceful regime on the Korean Peninsula. The U.S. is therefore faced with a dilemma. Hence, the U.S. is seeking “a spare card” to justify a permanent military presence in south Korea. What they came up with as an answer is to “modernize” the U.S.-south Korea alliance so that it suits the demands of the twenty-first century.

At the U.S.-south Korea summit held in Washington in June 2009, agreement was reached to develop the U.S.-south Korean alliance as the “model of strategic alliance of the twenty-first century.” Pursuant to the agreement, the first round of the U.S.-south Korea Defense and Foreign Chief’s Talks reached an agreement to continue to develop the alliance as a “bilateral, regional, and global alliance.” This means that the U.S.-south Korean alliance will not be confined to the defense of south Korean territory but is expanded to contribute to “regional and global peace and security.”

The fact that the U.S. and south Korea are willing to strengthen their alliance as a “regional and global strategic alliance” means that the alliance is no longer bilateral in nature. It is in the transition to a comprehensive alliance that can be used to encircle and contain China.

The China-U.S. confrontation in the South China Sea is another indication that shows that the strategy of the U.S. to encircle and contain China is being implemented vigorously. A Chinese expert warned:

The two regions around China which deserve attention are Northeast Asia including Diaoyudao and the Korean Peninsula and the South China Sea. It is highly likely that the U.S. will try to fan instability in these two regions with the ultimate purpose of bringing pressure to bear on the Chinese economy.

In May this year, the U.S. reaffirmed its security commitment to countries that are engaged in territorial disputes with China and intervened actively to make them challenge China.

In conclusion, there are three important elements in the U.S. strategy towards the Korean Peninsula. First, the U.S. seeks to defer the conclusion of a peace treaty under the pretext of the nuclear issue and ensure military supremacy in the Asia Pacific region by maintaining the state of ceasefire on the Korean Peninsula. Second, the U.S. seeks to kill two birds with one stone by creating an opportunity to control the entire Korean Peninsula with its

military forces while encircling and containing China. Third, the U.S. will try to strengthen its military alliance with south Korea as a comprehensive strategic alliance so as to keep south Korea as its outpost in the Asia Pacific region regardless of the resolution of the nuclear issue and the establishment of a peace regime.

In other words, it follows that the Korean Peninsula is a scene of power struggle among the major powers of the world and a key link in the efforts of the U.S. to control the Asia Pacific region. Furthermore, the U.S. can at any time control the tensions on the Korean Peninsula in a way that benefits its strategic interests. Therefore, the U.S. does not want the conclusion of a peace treaty on the Korean Peninsula. This conclusion tells us yet another important thing. Even when the Korean Peninsula is denuclearized, the tension and the risk of war on the peninsula will not be diminished as long as the U.S. continues to seek supremacy in the region and as long as a lasting peace regime is not in place.

In short, genuine peace and security on the Korean Peninsula as well as its denuclearization can only be ensured (1) when the U.S. gives up its hostile policy against the DPRK as well as its strategy of supremacy in the Asia Pacific region in a "complete and irreversible manner" and (2) when a lasting peace regime is established on the Korean Peninsula through the conclusion of a peace treaty. To replace the ceasefire agreement with a peace treaty will contribute to the prosperity and development of the region as well as to global peace and stability.

An old Korean saying goes: "Look towards the future, and laugh, rather than cry, over the past." To stride towards common prosperity and development in a friendly way is better than to be preoccupied with an unpleasant past full of conflicts and contradictions.

The DPRK is now at the crucial moment to open the gate to a thriving nation in 2012. This demands full concentration of its energy toward economic construction.

What the DPRK needs is not a climate of war but a stable and peaceful environment which is favorable for foreign investment.

The DPRK and China celebrated a few months ago the ceremony for economic projects in the Rason Economic and Trade Zone (RETZ) that will be jointly developed and operated by both sides.

The DPRK and Russia have agreed that the natural gas pipeline from the Russian Far East will pass the Korean Peninsula. The reconstruction project of Rason-Khasan railway is in its final stage.

The geographic position of the RETZ is favorable for connecting the northeastern provinces of China and the Russian Far East region as well as Mongolia. It promises a vibrant economic and trade development future in Northeast Asia as well as will create a world-class trade and investment hub linking Northeast Asia, Europe and North America.

The RETZ, which is called the "Golden Triangle," will further promote economic development in Northeast Asia and contribute to global economic development.

That is why foreign media concluded that the scope of DPRK's economic and trade policy is not limited to China but covers all countries of Northeast Asia and even Western countries.

The conclusion of a peace treaty between the U.S. and the DPRK will relinquish their enmity and make a contribution to world peace and stability, which will promote the economic development in the region. The U.S. should make a strategic decision to build a peaceful regime on the Korean Peninsula with the far-sighted vision as a great power.

It is the firm stand and strong will of the DPRK to prevent a new war, and make peace on the Korean Peninsula so as to lay the sound foundation for world peace and security.

The DPRK will invariably continue to endeavor by all means to build a lasting peace regime on the Korean peninsula in the long run overcoming all difficulties and challenges as in the past.

About the Author

Hak Rim Ho is a Researcher at the Institute for Disarmament and Peace, Pyongyang. He was a guest researcher at ISDP from October 24 to November 21, 2011.

