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## Bringing About Peace on the Korean Peninsula Two Years After the September Pyongyang Joint Declaration

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Two years have already passed since the signing of the September Pyongyang Joint Declaration. Spring on the Korean Peninsula in 2018 was warmer than usual. The Pyongyang Joint Declaration in September was made possible by the Panmunjom Declaration on April 27 and the surprise tri-lateral summit in May. We were able to have a nice Chuseok that year because peace looked possible between the two Koreas. Two years later, however, I have to wonder what all of that effort brought for inter-Korean relations. The seeds of those successes were not again planted this past spring, so there is not much to harvest this year. If the seeds the two Koreas planted two years ago had grown into a tree, we would now be busy reaping the rewards. The Koreas, however, failed to properly take care of those seeds. As I watched the Inter-Korea Liaison Office turn into dust before the fall harvest, which has also been setback by recent typhoons, I have been concerned whether we will ever see anything like the September Pyongyang Joint Declaration again.

### **Bringing Military Issues to the Fore to Bring about Peace**

Every South Korean administration has hoped for and tried to bring about inter-Korean summits. Ever since the Kim Dae-jung administration brought about the first inter-Korean summit on June 15, 2000, there have only been five summits and four summit agreements signed between the two Koreas. The June 15 (2000) and October 4 (2007) declarations were inflection points that signaled the overcoming of contradictions of Korea's division, along with the hope for a new beginning and advancement for the inter-Korean relationship. The April 27 Panmunjom Declaration (2018) and the September Pyongyang Joint Declaration (2018), meanwhile, signaled a new start of peace on the Korean Peninsula. During the September Pyongyang summit -- soon after President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un signed the joint declaration -- the two leaders attended the signing of military accords by South Korean defense minister Song Yong-moo and Ministry of People's Armed Forces head No Gwang Chul. The September 19 (2018) Military Accords were both the first article of the joint declaration and a separate agreement. That was the first time such military accords had been signed in the history of inter-Korean relations. The military accords signaled a paradigm shift from past efforts to denuclearize and bring peace to the Korean Peninsula because the accords placed a priority on resolving military issues.

The efforts of the two Koreas to resolve military issues represent a firm basis to improve inter-Korean relations and are the key to bringing about a peace system on and denuclearization of the peninsula. These efforts are also the link between developing inter-Korean relations and establishing a peace system on the peninsula. While economic issues are important, military issues between the two Koreas have long forced inter-Korean relations, denuclearization, and US-DPRK relations to advance hand-in-hand under the umbrella of the Korean Armistice Agreement. A focus on resolving military issues, however, could provide the glue to ensure that the two Koreas advance toward denuclearization, establish a peace system, and bring about improvements in the US-DPRK relationship. There is no question that adhering to the Armistice Agreement by reigning in military expenditures, preventing military clashes, and reducing military tensions is important to bringing about denuclearization and establishing a peace system. The military accords contrast with agreements made in the past and have a unique significance

because they are still being adhered to by both sides; they are, in fact, the only one of two summit agreements made in 2018 that are still being observed by the two Koreas. The idea that one must prepare for war to achieve peace is wrong. Peace cannot be bought with money, either. Achieving peace requires discussion on military issues and the implementation of military-related agreements.

### **How to Turn an Enemy into a Friend**

Charles Kupchan emphasizes in his book “How Enemies Become Friends” that the first step to reconcile with an opposing side to achieve lasting peace is “unilateral accommodation.” In other words, one has to engage in “strategic accommodation.” Peace can only be achieved through dialogue and mutual accommodation, not through isolation.

Everyone, at one time or another, can have hostile thoughts about an opposing side. The two sides may have had a major fight in the past, hurt each other, or even engaged in serious competition. Whatever the reason, you cannot live your life in peace if you are in an uncomfortable relationship with those nearby. If you are in a stronger position, you have the choice to accommodate; forcing the opposing side into a corner when they have rational concerns about their well-being will never create a stable relationship. South Korea has announced that its GDP is more than 50 times larger and its trade volume is 400 times larger than North Korea’s. Should we not, then, accommodate first? North Korea is, after all, one half of our divided peninsula, right?

### **There’s No Such Thing as Bravery without Fear**

While diplomatic circles claim that there is no such thing as a “failed summit,” the situation that clouded the Korean Peninsula following the “no deal” summit in Hanoi between the US and North Korea is an exception to the rule. No one should assume that a meeting between the two Korean leaders will lead to an agreement and the signing of a declaration. Despite the significant number of inter-Korean meetings and inter-Korean agreements over the past 70 years, there is a clear imperative to protect each and every promise made between leaders of the two Koreas. There is also a need for both sides to view things from the perspective of the other to understand how each side has implemented the three articles and 13 clauses of the Panmunjom Declaration and the six articles and 14 clauses of the Pyongyang Joint Declaration.

The 10 months between the signing of the April 27 Panmunjom Declaration and the September Pyongyang summit were part of a significant effort to implement the promises made between the two Koreas. Trust and courage drove the two Koreas to begin implementing the agreements; these efforts, in turn, accelerated the development of the two country’s relationship and began the process of bringing real peace to the peninsula. These efforts, however, did not lead to long-lasting peace, and the process is now at a standstill; in fact, it may even be backpedaling. What we must do to achieve CVIP (Complete, Verifiable, Irreversible Peace) is not to look hesitantly this way and that while planting new seeds in the ground. We must place a priority on caring for the seeds that were already planted two years ago so that they can survive the cold winter and bloom into flowers next year.

There’s a Korean saying that goes: “You’re brave if you’re stupid.” Being stupid, however, does not bring out real bravery. Only people who know fear can be brave in a difficult situation. I wonder how the leaders of the two Koreas felt when they signed the joint declaration and military accords in Pyongyang in September 2018. They certainly were afraid that the documents they signed could create difficulties for the US-South Korean relationship and increase South-South conflict. Now, however, the current inter-Korean crisis calls for us to blame ourselves, not the practical limitations imposed by the relationship or the South-South conflict. We can bring about long-lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula only if we take unilateral and preemptive steps to implement the inter-Korean accords.

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