

What Is to Be Done to Induce the DPRK to Dialogue?

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The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has already tested its short, medium, and long-range ballistic missiles, eighteen times in 2022. As the DPRK has completed preparations for its 7th nuclear test and is only tinkering with the timing, it is very unsettling that the dark clouds of a nuclear war are hanging over the Korean Peninsula. Furthermore South Korea's domestic political instability has deepened since the inauguration of President Yoon Suk-yeol due to internal political strife and growing economic difficulties in South Korea.

The DPRK had not crossed the tacit red line by halting intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test launches for nearly four years from April 21, 2018, right after the PyeongChang Winter Olympics, to March of this year. However, since the United States sticks to its 'benign neglect policy' and did not respond to the new 'counting method' that the DPRK had demanded, Pyongyang finally decided not to abide by the red-line.

On May 21, 11 days after the inauguration of ROK President Yoon Suk-yeol, the historic Yoon-Biden summit was held in Seoul at high speed. At the ROK- U.S. summit in Seoul, the ROK -US alliance was upgraded to a 'global comprehensive strategic alliance'. The normalization of the ROK-U.S. joint exercises, including the deployment of strategic weapons on the Korean Peninsula, and other issues were on the agenda. President Yoon has also publicly used the term 'the denuclearization of North Korea' instead of 'the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula'. Paradoxically, there are serious concerns about whether the hardline policy of the ROK and the U.S. toward the DPRK is pushing Pyongyang into a complete nuclear power state.

In this column, the author would like to discuss a creative formula for inducing the DPRK into a forum for dialogue through which a genuine dialogue between the two Koreas and the U.S. will be held first and then the three parties will engage in practical diplomatic negotiations with a view to preventing Pyongyang from becoming a complete nuclear power. .

Since the ROK-U.S. summit in Seoul, the situation around the Korean Peninsula has become critical and it is becoming increasingly difficult to find a solution to the Korean Peninsula problem due to the snowball effect. At present, the ROK and the United States are unable to provide a solution to the Korean Peninsula problem. Washington has consistently repeated 'dialogue without pre-conditions' since the inauguration of the Biden administration. In response, Pyongyang has likewise repeated a demand for a 'new calculation method',

While the chicken game continues, the DPRK has no choice but to strengthen its nuclear force to become a complete nuclear power state. In the absence of dialogue with North Korea, the Yoon government has only strengthened its military security without considering a peace strategy. The present strategic situation around the Korean Peninsula is highly uncertain and dangerous as the crisis on the Peninsula escalates in the wake of ROK-U.S. joint military exercises.

Therefore, the author would like to emphasize that sincere dialogues between Washington and Pyongyang need to begin for peaceful diplomatic negotiations between the two Koreas and the United States. If a hostile tit-for-tat confrontation strategy between the three continues, the likelihood of an 'accidental' nuclear war on the Korean Peninsula will increase, which is the cause

of grave concern and undesirable. The top leaders of the two Koreas and the United States must recognize this fact.

What then needs to be done? Are there any 'incentives' to create an atmosphere of productive dialogues between Washington and Pyongyang? The author strongly believes that if Seoul, Pyongyang, and Washington are sincerely willing to engage in constructive dialogues, a path to dialogue and negotiations can be found. Therefore, the author would like to make a few suggestions.

First, it appears that Washington and Pyongyang have little interests in constructive nuclear negotiations. Thus, it is essential for Washington, Pyongyang, and Seoul to demonstrate their sincere will to engage in dialogues and serious nuclear negotiations. If the three states have the will to compromise and make mutual concessions based on mutual understanding, they will find a way to dialogue.

Second, Washington needs to change its 'benign neglect policy' first, and make an effort to truly consider and compromise on the core conditions proposed by Pyongyang. So, if Washington is willing to accept some of the conditions, and the U. S. proposes a 'new calculation method', the U.S.-DPRK dialogue may be initiated soon. And in the process of constructive bilateral dialogues, Washington should adopt the 'simultaneous action principle'.

If Washington considers abandoning some of its hostile policies toward Pyongyang, temporarily suspending ROK-US military exercises, easing some sanctions against the DPRK, etc., it should be willing to adopt a friendly tit-for-tat strategy. It could be an enticement for dialogue between Washington and Pyongyang. If Washington is unwilling to take these measures, there will be no dialogue between them.

After a dialogue between the U.S. and the DPRK, an atmosphere for dialogue between the two Koreas will be created, and a sustainable peace process on the Korean Peninsula will be restored. At this point, there are no dialogues between the three countries, and any other proposals to the DPRK will be fruitless, so a constructive atmosphere for dialogue must be created first.

Third, the Yoon government needs to abandon the 'denuclearization of the DPRK' and adopt 'complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula', and change its policy demanding the first denuclearization measures, and tentatively suspend ROK-U.S. joint military exercises including the deployment of cutting-edge strategic weapons on the Korean Peninsula. In addition, since Seoul emphasizes only the military-security strategy 'by power', its peace strategy on the Korean Peninsula is absent. Therefore, it is necessary for Washington to refrain from a hostile tit-for-tat confrontation strategy and shift to a constructive dialogue strategy to resolve the Korean Peninsula issues.

Fourth, the Yoon government needs to consider pursuing a military-security strategy and a peace strategy simultaneously. A sustainable peace process on the Korean Peninsula can be realized only when the two wheels of military- security and peace strategy work together to resolve the Korean Peninsula problem. If top leaders of the three countries make wise decisions and act pragmatically in search of a formula for resolving the Korean Peninsula problem, complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and sustainable institutionalization of peace on the Korean Peninsula will be achievable. The leaders of the three countries must work together for realizing a sustainable peace on the Korean Peninsula. /The end/

Dr. Kwak's short profile

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