

# A Psychological Approach to North Korea's Nuclear Deterrence

## Nuclear Discourse of the Kim Jong Un Regime

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### 1. Nuclear Weapons in International Politics

(1) From their inception, nuclear weapons have had a subversive effect on international politics. By developing nuclear weapons in the early years of the Cold War, the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) have effectively created a nuclear oligopoly. Nuclear weapons state thus became synonymous with great power.

(2) Nuclear oligopoly also brought forward the concept of nuclear deterrence, aimed at preventing future nuclear wars that lead only to mutual destruction. A nuclear weapon can be both 'attraction' and 'revulsion' at the same time.<sup>1</sup> The relationship among the nuclear weapons states, as well as between them and the non-nuclear weapons states, is not only determined by nuclear capability but nuclear psychology. The same nuclear weapon can be attraction when it is in a friend's possession, but revulsion if it is held by a foe.

(3) <Table I> shows how nuclear weapons influence international politics

<Table I>

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<sup>1</sup> D. Barash and C. Webel, *Peace and Conflict Studies* (London: Sage, 2002).

Identity	Int'l relations	Relationship among nuclear weapons states	Relationship between nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states
Friend		Nuclear cooperation	Nuclear umbrella
Foe		Nuclear conflict and nuclear deterrence	Nuclear threat and nuclear development (nuclear proliferation)

(4) Nuclear threat is a psychological state that a non-nuclear weapons state can slip into, when the state's relationship with a nuclear weapons state is hostile. When faced with nuclear threat, some will respond with a nuclear program that can be successfully developed by not only strong resolve but execution capability. However it is also possible that a development plan be frustrated by international pressure, even with strong resolve and high capability. If a nation without nuclear weapons is to continue defending itself by military means, it must either strengthen its defense posture or find a friend that has nuclear weapons, largely driven by a balance of power perspective. In the latter case, the friend will offer a nuclear umbrella to the non-nuclear weapons armed state in the form of a military alliance. A case in point is Sweden, which sought to develop a nuclear program on its own during the period 1945-1968.<sup>2</sup> By discarding its program and cooperating with the U.S., Sweden successfully countered the Soviet threat and maintained its non-alignment policy. Likewise, accommodating nuclear umbrella can be a replacement for being a nuclear weapons state.

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<sup>2</sup> T. Jonter, "Swedish Plans to Acquire Nuclear Weapons, 1945-1968," *Science and Global Security*, 18 (2010).

(5) Non-nuclear weapons states can exercise yet another option, which is to move away from the balance of power perspective as indicated in <Table I> to create a 'nuclear-free zone.' A state may participate in a regional agreement or declare itself to be a 'one-state Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (NWFZ),' as Mongolia did in 1992. A NWFZ is established through a treaty that bans production, testing, deployment and storage of nuclear weapons. Moreover, before a NWFZ is established, non-nuclear weapons states may need negative security assurance from nuclear weapons states. However it is questionable whether the NWFZ is can stand in parallel with a military alliance under which nuclear umbrella is provided to non-nuclear weapons states

## 2. Why Go Nuclear?

(1) In the early stages of state-making, nuclear discourse of North Korea (DPRK) was centered on 'anti-nuclear' sentiments. The World Peace Conference, in which the DPRK delegation participated, was convened in the late 1940s under the theme of prohibition of nuclear weapons. However, the Soviet nuclear test changed the landscape of nuclear discourse for DPRK. It accepted a binary opposition of good weapons of the Soviet Union (USSR) versus bad weapons of the United States. It was a sudden turnaround for DPRK, which regarded the Korean War and the subsequent Cold War to be a consequence of imperialist policy based on supremacy of power. North Korea quickly aligned itself to the new socialist policy based on supremacy of the Soviet power, and formed its nuclear discourse on issues such as nuclear test ban and prohibition of pre-emptive strike.

(2) After U.S. deployed its first set of tactical nuclear weapons on south of the Korean peninsula in 1957, DPRK began to construct a new discourse on nuclear threat. North Korea had the resolve, but was lacking capability to initiate a nuclear program on its own. Formation of the DPRK-USSR military

alliance in 1961 meant that North Korea would be under a *de facto* nuclear umbrella of the Soviet Union, and Pyongyang simultaneously presented a peace zone concept to its counterparty. The peace zone, according to DPRK, was defined as a “zone free of nuclear and rocket weapons,” to be created through anti-imperialistic solidarity of the people in the region. However, as the bilateral relations turned sour, DPRK turned to “the line of simultaneously carrying on the building up of the economy and defenses (simultaneous line)” in December 1962. It was a decision to replace the soviet nuclear umbrella with strengthened military posture.

(3) In August 1963, Partial Test Ban Treaty was signed by the governments of the U.S., Great Britain and the Soviet Union. DPRK immediately perceived this initiative to be the three nations’ attempt to prevent nuclear possession by other socialist states. When China (PRC) blasted its first nuclear bomb in October 1964, strong words of support came from DPRK, indicating a hopeful expectation for a new umbrella to be provided by China. In a statement released immediately following the nuclear test, PRC argued that the test was carried out to disable nuclear monopoly of the superpowers and ultimately to make nuclear weapons disappear. The same argument was repeated in North Korea’s statement that was released right after its 1<sup>st</sup> nuclear test in October 2006.

(4) At the sixth Congress of the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK) in 1980, DPRK argued that peace and security would not be maintained by balance of power, and called for nuclear free zone and peace zone to be established not only on the Korean peninsula but the world as a whole. North Korea urged the world to ban testing, production, storage and usage of nuclear weapons, and to realize their complete dismantlement. Pyongyang continues to propose for a nuclear free zone to this date. Moreover, North Korea’s nuclear free zone was conceptualized to be “a zone free of foreign military bases and facilities in which aircrafts and vessels are banned from passing territorial air and sea or

using airport and seaport.”<sup>3</sup> The definition indicates that denuclearization would not be possible unless South Korea-U.S. alliance became defunct.

(5) In September 1991, the U.S. announced withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea (ROK). Three months after in December of the same year, the DPRK leader Kim Il Sung met U.S. Congressional Representative Stephen J. Solarz, and said that North Korea was neither capable nor willing to develop nuclear weapons. This is a statement often quoted as the denuclearization “instruction of Kim Il Sung.” When the second nuclear crisis began in October 2002, DPRK’s position was somewhat reluctant on nuclear development discourse. It was at the foreign spokesperson statement of October 25, 2002, that North Korea first came up with deterrence, with nuclear development message implicitly embedded in it. The spokesperson argued that non-aggression treaty can be a reasonable and realistic solution to break nuclear impasse between DPRK and the U. S, and that negotiation and deterrence can be alternated for the sake of autonomy and survival of the regime. The focus, however, was on negotiations.

(6) North Korea began to mention deterrence from April 2003, as seen on the foreign ministry spokesperson’s statement on April 6, 2003.

“The Iraqi war shows that to allow disarming through inspection does not help avert a war but rather sparks it. Neither international public opinion nor the UN Charter could prevent the U.S. from mounting an attack on Iraq. This suggests that even the signing of a non-aggression treaty with the U.S. would not help avert a war. Only the physical deterrent force, tremendous military

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<sup>3</sup> *A Dictionary of International Law* (Pyongyang: Publisher for Social Science, 2002).

deterrent force powerful enough to decisively beat back an attack supported by any ultra-modern weapons, can avert a war and protect the security of the country and the nation. This is a lesson drawn from the Iraqi war. .... (the DPRK) will have no other option but to beef up the deterrent force for war by mobilizing all the potentials.”

This statement shows a major shift in DPRK’s position, which believed that the U.S.-DPRK non-aggression treaty as a solution, even after the second nuclear crisis. The change in position came from the U.S. aggression against Iraq. This statement, more than anything, is interpreted to be a discourse to justify nuclear development endeavors of North Korea. They regard military deterrence capability, including nuclear power, to contribute more to their security than international cooperation or anti-war peace movement of the civil society. The *Rodong Sinmun* editorial dated June 14, 2003, which commemorates the 2000 inter-Korean summit, also said that “our deterrence capability is a victorious deterrence and legitimate exercise of defense power to protect the homeland territory including South Korea and the 70 million compatriots.”

(7) DPRK used “a foreign ministry statement” to declare nuclear weapons possession on February 10, 2005. The statement announced that North Korea “had already taken the resolute action of pulling out of the NPT and have manufactured nukes for self-defense to cope with the Bush administration’s evermore undisguised policy to isolate and stifle the DPRK.” However, the January 2003 “statement of DPRK Government” said that pulling out of the NPT doesn’t mean that they “have no intention to produce nuclear weapons” and that their “nuclear activities at this stage will be confined only to peaceful purpose such as the production of electricity.” The government statement also argues that “the DPRK may prove through a separate verification between the DPRK and the U.S. that it does not make any nuclear weapon.” If one is to take their words at face value, North Korea’s policymakers

came to believe that, since January 2003, there had been a radical change to the political 'situation' that they were face with, a change big enough for them to believe that they needed nuclear weapons. Pyongyang attributed their policy change to the U.S. invasion against Iraq of March 2003 and the U.S. nuclear threat waged against them.

(8) DPRK's motivation for nuclear development may not come from changes in the political situation, but from its unique 'disposition.' In 2005, North Korea and the U.S. released the September 19 joint statement to exchange the Korean peninsula denuclearization with the Korean peninsula peace regime, In December of the same year, North Korea blamed the U.S. for a breakdown in the Agreed Framework between the U.S. and DPRK, saying that "it was a right decision to maintain and not disable nuclear facilities," and that "it was a matter of time for the Agreed Framework to break down and light-water nuclear reactor construction to come to a complete stop." North Korea also applauded itself for its foresight and for timely responses it took as a self-defense measure

(9) Policymakers in North Korea often attribute their nuclear development to the surrounding political situation. For example, DPRK once said that "it is none other than the U.S. that pushed the republic that yearns denuclearization, to the path of nuclear weapons possession." On the other hand, the U.S. and the neighboring states have tended to cite the unique disposition of the policymakers as the main cause of nuclear development in North Korea. Generally speaking, one tends to regard political situation as the cause of positive action by adversary.<sup>4</sup> When the action is negative, disposition is usually cited as the underlying cause. In other words, after the politics of identity determine a state to be an enemy, friend or at least a friend candidate, DPRK's motivation for nuclear possession will be

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<sup>4</sup> J. Mercer, *Reputation & International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

determined to come from either disposition or political situation. If disposition is the case, then denuclearization would not be possible unless there were a fundamental transition in the current DPRK regime. However if the motivation came from political situation, then resumption of denuclearization process would be possible. It is because the former is regarded as a variable, and the latter a constant

(10) DPRK insists that their nuclear possession is a “deterrent for self-defense under any circumstances.” While realization of nuclear deterrence can begin with a declaration that one has deterrence capability, it will not be created by declaratory statement alone. For the deterrence capability to earn ‘credit,’ those who exercise it need to secure physical ‘capability.’ Necessary conditions for nuclear deterrence include the ability to prevent and retaliate against any attack from the adversary party. To this end, test of nuclear bombs and delivery devices and reductions of the warhead both in size and weight must be completed. Second, the deterrence capability was powerless unless recognition came from the counterparty. Therefore, by recognizing nuclear deterrence capability, conflicting states may begin to cooperate with each other. DPRK is engaging in a ‘recognition struggle,’ in a way that sends an expensive signal of nuclear threat to induce cooperation. Third, one should be able to display a resolve that nuclear weapons could be used. Those who strive for nuclear deterrence tend to display their deterrence capability with a firm stance at low-level conflicts. Put another way, if one is to acquire nuclear deterrence capability, one needs to build a strong, and consistent ‘reputation’ in the counterparts.

### 3. A Stronger Discourse for Nuclear Deterrence



(1) Despite internal complications incurred by power succession, North Korea struck an agreement on February 29, 2012 with the U.S., to bring back the principles as laid out in the September 19 Joint Statement of 2005. The February 29 Agreement called for implementation of the September 19 Joint Statement, the U.S. provision of nutrition aid to DPRK exclusion of private use goods in the U.S. sanctions list, bilateral discussion for light-water nuclear reactors following resumption of the six-party talks, Pyongyang's temporary stoppage of nuclear test, missile blasting and uranium enrichment activities, and IAEA surveillance against the DPRK nuclear program. The two sides also disclosed their intentions to continue with dialogue, as they share the understanding that "improving bilateral relations to realize denuclearization bring "benefit" to both countries. The two sides placed denuclearization on the agenda again, against the backdrop of the six-party talks that broke down in December 2008. Around this time, Kim Il Sung's instruction for denuclearization was an agenda item that North Korea can agree to, although it must be said that denuclearization is linked to establishment of a peace regime on the Korean peninsula.

(2) On March 16, 2012, North Korean Committee for Space Technology announced that "the DPRK is to launch a working satellite, Kwangmyongsong-3, manufactured by itself with indigenous technology to mark the 100th anniversary of President Kim Il Sung." The announcement immediately threw the February 29 Agreement down the drain. It was a crisis situation. The U.S. warned that the rocket launch by DPRK would destroy the bilateral agreement, making a strong case against testing of a *de facto* nuclear weapons carrier.

(3) This confrontation needs further explanation. Negotiators from both the U.S. and DRPK admitted to having discussed the issue of rocket launch at the bilateral talks. North Korea insisted that they were clear about their intention to launch satellite rocket during the course of discussion, but the U.S.

claimed that North Korea unofficially spoke of halting its launch plan. On March 27, 2012, the DPRK foreign ministry released the following statement, in order to clarify the relationship between its satellite launch and the Feb. 29 agreement.

“At the U.S.-DPRK high-level talks, the DPRK consistently maintained that a moratorium on long-range missile launch does not include satellite launch for the peaceful purposes. As a result, the U.S.-DPRK agreement dated February 29 specified a moratorium on long-range missile launch, not “launch of long-range missile including satellite launch” or “launch with the use of ballistic missile technology.”

As of now, there is no telling fact from fiction. However, this debate could have created a watershed moment for DPRK’s nuclear discourse, as afterwards North Korea seemed to be distancing itself more and more from denuclearization agenda.<sup>5</sup>

(4) Pyongyang described launch of its multipurpose satellite as fulfillment of “Kim Jong Il’s instruction” as well as “an essential requirement for economic development.” On March 31, 2012, North Korea’s foreign ministry spokesperson released a statement at the news of the U.S. calling off food aid plans for its people. The statement began to develop a discourse based on argument that the U.S. was using North Korea’s rocket launch as “an excuse to set up a U.S. missile defense system” in this

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<sup>5</sup> For more details, see Koo Kab Woo, “North Korea’s Foreign Policy and Peace in Northeast Asia (in Japanese),” *The Journal of Peace and Community Studies*, 4 (2014), published by Rikkyo Institute for Peace and Community Studies.

region and it also argued that U.S. was taking a path toward “creation of a new cold war, which disturbs peace and stability not only on the Korean peninsula but also in the Northeast Asian region.

(5) The fourth WPK Party Conference of April 11, 2012 elected Kim Jong Un as the First Secretary, the Chairman of the Central Military Commission, and a standing member of the Politburo. A few days after on April 13, North Korea launched Kwangmyongsong-3 satellite, which failed to enter its preset orbit. North Korea openly acknowledged its failure. Furthermore, at the 5<sup>th</sup> Session of the 12<sup>th</sup> Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA), Kim Jong Un was elected as the First Chairman of the National Defense Commission. On April 13, DPRK’s Socialist Constitution was amended and renamed “Kim Il Sung-Kim Jong Il Constitution.” The preamble was changed to include Kim Jong Il’s achievement, which was transformation of DPRK into a “nuclear weapons state.” Although unofficial dialogue continued between the two countries, DPRK commented on July 20 that “making the prospect of denuclearizing the peninsula all the more gloomy,” and that “the situation compels the DPRK to totally reexamine the nuclear issue.”

(6) On August 31, 2012, the DPRK foreign ministry released a memorandum under the title “The U.S. hostile policy towards DPRK the main obstacle in resolving the nuclear issue.” Here North Korea admitted to “the similarity in technology, as a matter of fact, between satellite rocket launchers and nuclear warhead missiles.” In other words, Pyongyang was admitting that satellite launch test can also be construed as a missile test to carry nuclear warhead to the U.S. territory, but also pointed to tolerance exercised by the U.S. in similar tests conducted by other countries. Moreover, North Korea also emphasized that the principle of words for words, action for action, as agreed at the September 19 Joint Statement of the Six-party Talks, will not function unless the U.S. departs from its “confrontational attitude toward DPRK.” Two paths were proposed to the U.S. here. The first was to

“unroll its hostile policy towards the DPRK,” and the other path was for “the U.S. to maintain its current hostile policy, in counter of which North Korea will continue expanding and strengthening its nuclear arsenal.” If the latter path were to be chosen, DPRK would “inevitably” have to “prolong” possession of the “treasured sword.” Nuclear possession, as explained at the memorandum, was not a tactical choice but a strategy for DPRK. To sum up in a short sentence, the memorandum was inevitably calling for “prolonged” possession of nuclear arsenal by the North.

(7) North Korea came back with satellite tests right before South Korea’s presidential election, on December 12, 2012. This time the satellite successfully entered at the orbit. Discussions for punitive international sanctions ensued, and the DPRK foreign ministry released a memorandum which could be the foundation of Kim Jong Un’s foreign policy on January 14, 2013. Dissolution of the “United Nations Command (UNC)” was put on the agenda. Without mentioning denuclearization, or creation of a nuclear free zone, Pyongyang was linking UNC dissolution with a peace treaty. The main argument in this memorandum was that the U.S., under its pivot to Asia policy was trying to transform the “UN Command” into a “multinational force command” which served as a matrix of the Asian version of NATO.

(8) The UNSC adopted Resolution No. 2087 to impose sanctions against the DPRK launch of satellites on January 22, 2013. The DPRK argued that it drew “a final conclusion that denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is impossible unless the denuclearization of the world is realized, and released a statement declaring that “the September 19 joint statement adopted at the six-party talks on the principle of respect for sovereignty and equality has now become defunct and the prospect for denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula has become gloomier.” It was against this resolution that Pyongyang responded with the 3<sup>rd</sup> nuclear test of February 12, 2013. Through the Korean Central

News Agency (KCNA), North Korea claimed that they now had nuclear weapons that were “sufficiently small, light, and diverse.” The North Korean foreign ministry argued that its goal was “to focus efforts on economic construction and the improvement of the standard of people’s living by dint of nuclear deterrence for self-defense” to justify its nuclear possession from economic perspective.

(9) On April 1, 2013, DPRK Supreme People’s Assembly passed the “Law on Consolidating Position of Nuclear Weapons State,” as a follow-up to the constitutional amendment which includes nuclear power status in the preamble. The new law could be interpreted as a commitment for possession of nuclear deterrence without proliferation, until denuclearization was realized at a global scale

(10) Although resolve for nuclear deterrence was being solidified through legal and systematic framework to “perpetuate” nuclear weapons presence, North Korea seemed to question the economic efficacy of the resolve. In the WPK Central Committee “report” of March 2013, Kim Jong Un said that “the most important and pressing challenge to the WPK is to accelerate economic power state construction and improving quality of people’s lives, and that the republic rejects the threatening blackmail that there will be no economic development unless it gives up nuclear weapons, and also deceiving appeasement that help will be provided when it opts for another path.” Although the ‘political situation’ of the first half of 2013 was one of the conditions for North Korea’s choice of the “simultaneous line,” it can also be said that North Korea’s disposition for self-reliance, based on its peculiar security discourse, led it to the path for simultaneous line. On the domestic front, Pyongyang seeks to overcome the economic crisis through technical innovation and the introduction of independent management system. Kim Jong Un feels that “active efforts should be made externally, to create a favorable environment for realization of the simultaneous line of economic development and nuclear capability build-up.” However, such efforts still remain at ought-to-be ideas, such as

“diversification of external trade,” and exploration of underground resource to ease cash shortage problems.

(11) Revisionist states with only a small number of nuclear weapons, such as North Korea, tend to believe that the enemy’s resolve is not strong enough. They also believe that if deterrence capability functions properly, then a large stockpile of nuclear weapons or arms race will not be necessary, and that crisis and confrontation can be reduced to the minimum level. Moreover, states with small stockpiles could easily come to a self-assessment that through low cost highly efficient nuclear weapons, they can reallocate some of their resources for economic development and thus maximize their economic ‘benefits.’ However, looking at only a few nuclear weapons, the other party may become tempted to forcefully remove them. Furthermore, a small stockpile may potentially bring vulnerability to those who own it, who may feel tempted to either blast them or give them up entirely. This is a nuclear deterrence paradox for states with small number of nuclear weapons.

#### 4. Prospects for Resumption of Denuclearization Process

(1) Northeast Asia now stands at a crossroad that leads to a path for balance of power, and another path for post-balance of power. How and whether the Korean peninsula denuclearization process will be resumed would determine the future path for Northeast Asia.

(2) Since 2010, the U.S. has been pursuing rebalancing policy, which aims at strengthening bilateral alliance with South Korea and Japan, respectively, and at forging a triangular military alliance between the three countries. Given the closely-woven economic network between China and the U.S., China containment seems unlikely, but the intention is to bring China under siege. In particular, North

Korea's nuclear program brings justification to the U.S. in building a Terminal High Altitude Air Defense System (THAAD). At a point in time when North and South Korea are unable to resume functionalist cooperation, the ROK government plans to import Kill Chain and KAMD as deterrence against the DPRK nuclear weapons. Although the U.S. is actively reaching out to Japan for strengthening of its bilateral alliance, even acknowledging collective self-defense right of Japan, the Korea-Japan relationship is deteriorating to the extent that the tripartite military alliance is not fully realized between the U.S., Korea and Japan

(3) PRC is urging for a new model of major power relations to the U.S., by recognizing vital interest of each other to create a respectful, cooperating international order. This proposal is similar to the five principles for peaceful coexistence, as agreed upon by China and India in 1954. At the Northeast Asian level, China wants counter the strengthened U.S.-Japan alliance by consolidating anti-Japan posture as part of its 'anti-imperialistic' balanced line. PRC wants to induce ROK's participation. China's strategy also brings unwanted consequences, which is improvement of DPRK-Japan relations even as nuclear weapons status of DPRK remains unchanged. Changes in DPRK-Japan relations came in the midst of restructuring in the Northeast Asian order, as the political and economic interest get aligned between the two countries. It should also be noted that China is not displaying the presence of a major power, as seen in its inability to persuade other participants to the six-party talks to resume discussion.

(4) Through denuclearization process, North Korea should evoke memories of anti-nuclear posture and nuclear free zone proposal. A meaningful breakthrough in denuclearization process that has positive correlations for improving U.S.-DPRK relations can only be found in resumption of the U.S.-DPRK dialogue. However, DPRK is holding on to its 'nuclear peace theory,' which would mean that

“military aggression is not waged at nuclear weapons states.” The U.S., on the other hand, is exercising strategic patience against DPRK. If countries in Northeast Asia pursue balance of power policy, internally and externally, then ‘security dilemma’ will be intensified in Northeast Asia. Now we need changes in both domestic and international politics to overcome the instability in the Northeast Asian order. The following are some suggestions for change in Northeast Asia order.

(4-1) North Korea could acquire recognition as a nuclear weapons state. However, if recognition of DPRK’s nuclear deterrence by neighboring states might not only weaken the foundation of the NPT regime but also trigger nuclear race in Northeast Asia. China and the U.S. came to an official agreement for non-recognition of DPRK’s nuclear weapons state status and pursuit for denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. However, the American position is to call for a dialogue with denuclearization as a precondition, while the Chinese position is to call for a dialogue to enable denuclearization. Also, North Korea’s simultaneous line, which the U.S. has no intention to accept, has not been mentioned at all by China. The three principles in China’s North Korean policy, denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, promotion of peace and stability, and solving issues through dialogue and negotiations, remain unchanged.

(4-2) China could extend nuclear umbrella to North Korea. A held view by the ‘fundamentalist’ elites in China is that neither denuclearization nor unification would be possible unless the American forces were withdrawn from Korea. Such stance calls for an exchange between denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and breakdown of the ROK-U.S. alliance. However, Pyongyang may strongly reject Beijing’s nuclear umbrella in fear of subordination to China. Therefore, nuclear umbrella may be a solution that North Korea cannot consent to. Another solution could be nuclear umbrella being



provided by the U.S. to DPRK. China is not likely to accept this solution, however, as it will turn North Korea into a pro-American state.

(4-3) Going back to the September 19 Joint Statement once again, negotiations can be resumed to deal with the idea of exchanging the Korean peninsula denuclearization and the Korean peninsula 'peace system' that includes functional cooperation under a peace regime. For resumption of the six-party talks, the U.S. needs to withdraw strategic patience posture, and the two Koreas need to improve relations. In other words, resumption of talks will only be possible when the U.S. and ROK can implement a policy of benign engagement toward the North. At a point of time and in a space where rebalancing policy of the U.S. collides with a new model of major power relations of China, the six-party talks need to evolve into a venue for the Northeast Asian countries to overcome balance of power and have shared memory of peace for the future. The resumption of six-party talks could be a choice for the participants to reduce transaction cost for Northeast Asia security cooperation, more so than initiating Ulaanbaatar process or even Jakarta process.