

**Security Environment of Northeast Asia and Prospects for the Six-Party Talks:
A South Korean View**

by

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1. An Overview of the Current Security Environment of Northeast Asia

The current security environment of Northeast Asia (NE Asia) is characterized by several salient attributes: Sino-American military/security competition—a reflection of China’s rise and military modernization vs. the U.S.’s response to it by strengthening its military/security alliance/coalitions including the U.S.-led Missile Defense (MD) and support of Japan’s right of collective self-defense—albeit with an expressed preference for cooperation over conflict; Sino-Japanese conflict based on growing/ratcheting-up nationalism on both sides with the potentially-explosive Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute and Japan’s self-permission of its right of collective self-defense and the U.S.’s support of it; an imbalance/contrast between Chinese/North Korean vs. U.S./South Korean efforts to seek and resume dialogue/negotiations for peace settlement and the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula; the U.S.’s and North Korea’s “open” mutual threat of nuclear attack on each other, having broken the agreement/taboo/spirit of “no use” and “no threat of the use” of nuclear weapons, particularly during the Key Resolve/Foal Eagle in the spring of 2013; continuing deterioration of inter-Korean relations since the Lee Myung-bak government; sharply-worsened South Korea-Japan relations over resurfaced thorny, unresolved issues of textbook/territory, history, Japanese Army’s enforced sex slavery and also over Japan’s proclaimed right of collective self-defense; and gloomy prospects for an early resumption of the Six-Party Talks, which was even challenged by the South Korean President for the effectiveness and utility of the Talks.

All these variables have combined to produce a volatile situation for security in NE Asia at the time of power shift and order forming. The latent factors, suppressed during the Cold-War international order and half surfaced during the transition period, has now expressed themselves in the diverse forms of nationalist and even chauvinist foreign policy and attitudes.

Under the circumstances, any possibility of a nuclear weapons-free zone (NWFZ) in NE Asia will hinge on the following four things at the minimum: whether North Korea agrees to negotiated resolution, decides to denuclearize itself, and faithfully execute the agreement; whether the U.S. promises North Korea not to use and also not to threaten the use of nuclear weapons against North Korea, and faithfully abide by that promise; whether the U.S. can assure North Korea that Japan and South Korea will not develop, test, deploy, and use any nuclear weapons against North Korea; and

whether the U.S. promise to provide Japan and South Korea with a nuclear umbrella/extended deterrence and the U.S. promise not to use and not to threaten the use of nuclear weapons against North Korea can be compatible with each other.

As a matter of fact, the aforementioned minimum four requirements for a NWFZ in NE Asia are interconnected and could be combined to structure the relevant pending issues so that both the “root cause” and “symptoms” of the “Korean Problem” could be resolved, thereby laying the foundation for a NWFZ in Korea and NE Asia. As of now, when this workshop is taking place in early September 2014, however, all of the four variables do not appear to bode well for a NWFZ in this region.

It may be recalled that North Korea offered a NWFZ in Korea with the expression of “denuclearization of the whole Korean Peninsula” in its June 16, 2013 proposal for a high-level dialogue with the U.S.¹ after it experienced the U.S.’s “open” threat of the use of nuclear weapons itself in the 2013 Key Resolve/Foal Eagle. In a statement issued on October 23, 2013, North Korea’s foreign ministry’s spokesman made clear that “The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the invariable aim of the policy of the DPRK government... is the process of making the peninsula a nuclear-free zone on the basis of completely removing the substantial nuclear threats posed to the peninsula from outside on the principle of simultaneous actions.”² But this offer of North Korea’s was completely ignored by the U.S. and South Korea, and North Korea has not put forth anything like this afterwards until now. But there may be a light at the end of the tunnel, depending on what and how the key players will do, creating an opportunity for a negotiated resolution of the North Korean nuclear problem and the establishment of a NWFZ in NE Asia.

2. The U.S. PACOM’s “The Playbook” and North Korea’s counteraction in the 2013 Key Resolve/Foal Eagle: “open” threat of the use of nuclear weapons vs. the threat of Musudan Missile attack on the U.S.

The Key Resolve/Foal Eagle, a joint U.S.-South Korea military exercise, conducted in March/April 2013 was not like ever before. What distinguished it from the previous exercises was the U.S.’s “open” threat of the use of nuclear weapons against North Korea by “openly” bringing in nuclear-capable B-52 strategic bombers, B-2 Spirit stealth bombers, and the attack nuclear submarine USS Cheyenne. It followed the PACOM’s operation plan dubbed “The Playbook.” The Playbook “laid out the sequence and publicity plans for U.S. shows of force during annual war games with South Korea” and “included well-publicized flights...near North Korea by nuclear-capable B-52 and stealth

¹ “DPRK Proposes Official Talks with U.S.,” *Korean Central News Agency (KCNA)*, Pyongyang, June 15, 2013.

² “DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesman Blames U.S. for Posing Nuclear Threat to DPRK,” *KCNA*, Pyongyang, October 23, 2013.

B-2 bombers, as well as advanced F-22 (Raptors) warplanes.”³ The bombers dropped mock nuclear bombs or inert ammunition on a range facility on the Jikdo islands off the western coast of South Korea.

Here, it is worth recalling that the 1994 Agreed Framework and the September 19, 2005 joint statement explicitly and implicitly promised North Korea the U.S.’s and others’ “no use of nuclear weapons” and “no threat of the use of nuclear weapons” against it in exchange for North Korea’s denuclearization of itself. The U.S.’s threat of the use of nuclear weapons against North Korea and North Korea’s determined counteractions with “open” threat of nuclear strike on the U.S. continent, Hawaii, Guam, and other U.S. military bases in Japan and South Korea with its ballistic missile capabilities, dramatically escalated the crisis to a “real and clear danger and threat” of a war in Korea in the spring of 2013, to quote U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel’s words.⁴ In a nutshell, the taboo of “no threat of the use of nuclear weapons” was broken in Korea in the spring of 2013, which overcast an ominous dark cloud over Korea unnecessarily long into the future.

It is also noteworthy that George Little, spokesman of U.S. Department of Defense, made clear that “the focus of our military exercises, and what we’ve been saying publicly, is all about alliance assurance.”⁵ In other words the U.S. was more focused on proving its commitment to the provision of nuclear umbrella, i.e., extended deterrence to South Korea and Japan, than on persuading North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons and preventing it from strengthening its nuclear capabilities.

On the other hand, North Korea countered the U.S.’s open threat of the use of nuclear weapons against itself resolutely by taking several critical measures: the threat of “nuclear strike” on the U.S. continent, Hawaii, Guam, and U.S. bases in South Korea and its vicinity; nullification of the Armistice agreement; invalidation of agreements on nonaggression between the two Koreas; cutoff of all military and government communication lines between North and South Korea and between the North Korean military and U.S. forces in South Korea; putting on the highest alert all the field artillery units including strategic rocket units and long-range artillery units; adoption of the new strategic line of simultaneously pushing forward economic construction and the building of nuclear force (*byongjin noson*) by convening the plenum of the Central Committee of the Korean Workers’ Party; the Supreme People’s Assembly’s passing of a law on consolidating the position of nuclear weapons state for self-defense; threat to fire road-mobile Musudan intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBM) by moving them to the East Coast and hiding them, which made it impossible for the

³ Adam Entous and Julian E. Barnes, “U.S. Dials Back on Korean Show of Force,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 3, 2013; “From the PACOM Playbook to PACOM’s Plan B(MD),” Information Dissemination, Thursday, April 4, 2013, Posted by Galrahn (<http://www.informationdissemination.net/2013/04/from-pacom-playbook-to-pacoms-plan-bmd.html>) (Retrieved on September 5, 2014).

⁴ “Hagel: North Korea presents ‘real and clear danger’ to U.S. and Allies,” *The Washington Post*, April 3, 2013.

⁵ Army Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone C. Marshall Jr., “Little: U.S. Seeks ‘Peace and Stability’ on Korean Peninsula,” *American Forces Press Service*, April 1, 2013 (<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=119664>) (Retrieved on September 5, 2014).

U.S. to determine the time and place of the firing of the missiles; declaration of readjusting and restarting all the nuclear facilities in Yongbyon including the uranium enrichment plant and the 5MWe graphite-moderated reactor; and even the closure of the Kaesong Industrial Park.⁶

Under the circumstances, the problem was any small mistake or accident on either side could trigger and escalate the conflict to a war. By now, U.S. officials began to worry that North Korea was being more provoked than the U.S. had intended. Their concern was that they “were heightening the prospect of misperceptions on the part of the North Koreans,” and that “that could lead to miscalculations.”⁷ Even none other than John Bolton, the well-known neoconservative and former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. during the George W. Bush Administration, expressed his worry that North Korea’s rhetoric and threats were “beyond their normal playbook” and that it was “the kind of environment where a miscalculation can take place on their side or on our side.”⁸

Of all the concerns, the U.S. had to deal with North Korea’s “open” threat of nuclear/missile attack on the U.S. bases in Guam, Japan, and Korea with its Musudan missiles that had U.S. bases in Guam within their shooting range. The dilemma for the U.S. was that it did not have sufficient missile defense capabilities even with all Aegis-capable destroyers of the U.S., Japan, and South Korea combined that were deployed in the West Pacific and in the waters of Japan and Korea, in case of a Musudan strike against the aforementioned U.S. bases.

Thus, the PACOM began to dispatch more Aegis-capable destroyers and its radar ship (SBX-1) to the West Pacific near Japan and Korea from Hawaii. And the U.S. even decided to install Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) at Guam and deploy Global Hawks to U.S. Air Force Base in Misawa, Japan. The problem, though, was that it would take weeks and even months to have such strengthened capabilities for MD against Musudan missile attacks, while North Korea might fire Musudan at any moment even before the radar ship arrived from Hawaii. Under those circumstances, the only option left for the U.S. was to lower tension in Korea by stopping the Playbook (Plan A), shifting to Plan B in early April,⁹ and offering dialogue with North Korea. That was exactly what happened: the U.S. decided to postpone the April 7 scheduled test-firing of the Minuteman III, a new type of ICBM, not to provoke North Korea, and the U.S. and South Korean Presidents in coordination simultaneously announced on April 11, 2013 their intention to begin dialogue with North Korea.

⁶ Haksoon Paik, *U.S.-DPRK Relations during the Second Term of Obama Administration, 2013-2014: The Threat of the Use of Nuclear Weapons and the Breakdown of the Relationship* (in Korean) (Seongnam, Korea: The Sejong Institute, 2014), pp. 33-40.

⁷ Adam Entous and Julian E. Barnes, “U.S. Dials Back on Korean Show of Force,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 3, 2013.

⁸ Washington Free Beacon Staff, “Bolton: North Korean Rhetoric ‘Beyond Their Normal Playbook,’” *The Washington Free Beacon*, April 4, 2013 (<http://freebeacon.com/national-security/bolton-north-korean-rhetoric-beyond-their-normal-playbook/>) (Retrieved on September 5, 2014).

⁹ Barbara Starr, “U.S. scripts North Korea ‘playbook,’” *CNN*, April 4, 2013 (<http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2013/04/04/u-s-scripts-north-korea-playbook/>) (Retrieved on September 6, 2014).

3. Traumas and Legacies of the March/April Nuclear Confrontation for North Korea and the U.S.

The March/April 2013 crisis in Korea eventually subsided, but it was never the same compared with before and after. The U.S.'s "open" threat of the use of nuclear weapons, North Korea's counteractions including the threat of the nuclear/Musudan strike on the U.S. bases, and U.S. stepping back from "the Playbook"—all these left huge traumas for both the U.S. and North Korea.

How were both sides affected? In the first place, North Korea appears to have profoundly shocked by the U.S. action of "open" threat of the use of nuclear weapons, and now the problem North Korea faced was how to deal with the nuclear attack from the U.S. with incomparably advanced nuclear weapons and most sophisticated delivery systems, while North Korea itself possessed only a small arsenal of relatively primitive nuclear bombs and limited delivery capabilities. According to Ri Yong-ho, North Korea's vice foreign minister, whom Don Gregg met in February 2014 in Pyongyang, "the memory of the B-29 air raids are in the [North Koreans'] DNA," and the nuclear-capable B-52s flying over North Korea's air space was "seen as a really terrible, terrible threat."¹⁰ So the question was whether to continue nuclear confrontation with the U.S.

Another lesson North Korea appears to have learned was that its missiles proved to be highly-effective instruments of threat to the U.S., i.e., highly-useful politico-military instruments in dealing with the U.S. threats, while North Korea's rhetoric of nuclear attack on the U.S. had clear limitations in reality. Since the Musudan had already proved to be highly-effective policy/military tool vis-à-vis the U.S., Japan, and South Korea, now North Korea even did not have to fire or test-fire long- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles to send a message to the U.S. and the outside world. Simply, the firing or test-firing of short-range missiles was enough, in a sense, to do the job and North Korea purported to kill two birds with one stone: to send a message to the U.S. and the outside, and to improve its short-range ballistic missile technology by firing and test-firing them. In the 2014 Key Resolve/Foal Eagle, North Korea fired as many as almost 90 short-range missiles within a one month period, which was unprecedented but appeared to be designed for the aforementioned effects.

On the other hand, the U.S. became ever more determined to complete the U.S.-led MD system vis-à-vis North Korea, China, and Russia after it suffered the stigma of giving up its operation plan "the Playbook" due to North Korea's threat to strike the U.S. military bases with its Musudan missiles. In the worst scenario, the Musudan could carry a potentially-miniaturized nuclear warhead on it. For all these concerns, the U.S. policy has now become more focused on persuading South Korea to officially join the U.S.-led MD in order to complete U.S. defense shield against potential enemies including China. Japan joined the U.S.-led MD long before.

¹⁰ Garson Yiu, "North Korea Sent Kenneth Bae to Labor Camp to Protest B-52 Flights," *ABC NEWS*, February 14, 2014.

The U.S. pressure on South Korea to join its MD system was amply demonstrated in the first Park-Obama summit in May 2013 in Washington, D.C. “Interoperability” was the key word for alliance defense posture: both Presidents decided to strengthen “our comprehensive, interoperable, and combined defense capabilities, to include shared efforts to counter the missile threat posed by North Korea and integrated intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems.”¹¹ At the Seoul summit held in April 2014, the U.S. succeeded in making South Korea join the U.S.-led MD in exchange for the reconsideration, i.e., the postponement of the 2015 timeline for transferring wartime operational control of the South Korean Army to South Korea. It was done when South Koreans’ attention was almost completely diverted to the Sewol ferry disaster. The U.S.-South Korea joint communiqué titled “The United States-Republic of Korea Alliance: A Global Partnership” reads: “Both the United States and Republic of Korea continue to develop interoperability and readiness through the use of annual joint and combined exercises such as Ulchi Freedom Guardian, Key Resolve, and Foal Eagle,” and “the Republic of Korea is also developing its own interoperable ballistic missile defense systems and enhancing the interoperability of the Alliance’s command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence (C4I) systems.”¹²

In the joint press conference President Park of South Korea said: “We also agreed to beef up our capacities to effectively deal with DPRK’s nuclear and missile threats. As a part of that effort, Korea’s air and missile defense, KAMD, will be developed into an independent system and will collaborate to enhance KAMD’s interoperability [with the U.S.-led MD] while securing its efficient operation.” And President Obama said: “In our discussions today, we agreed to continue to modernize our alliance, including enhancing the interoperability of our missile defense systems.”¹³ And U.S. Deputy Defense Secretary Robert Work demanded “an extreme interoperability” from Korea when said at the Osan Air Base in South Korea on August 21, 2014: “What we hope is to have an extremely interoperable system between the United States’ theater missile defense and the KAMD.”¹⁴ And the U.S. is reportedly planning to deploy THAAD in South Korea.

4. Imbalance of North Korea/China vs. the U.S./South Korea in pursuit of dialogue/negotiations for “peace”/“peace environment”

After the horrible experience of March/April 2013, North Korea and China had to find a way out of the crisis and also a solution to the confrontation with the U.S. and South Korea in order to stabilize Korean and Northeast Asian politics devoid of nuclear confrontation and threat of war. In this context,

¹¹ “Joint Declaration in Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the Alliance between the Republic of Korea and the United States of America,” The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, May 7, 2013.

¹² “The United States-Republic of Korea Alliance: A Global Partnership,” The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, April 25, 2014.

¹³ “Press Conference with President Obama and President Park of the Republic of Korea,” Blue House, Seoul, Republic of Korea, April 25, 2014.

¹⁴ Oh Seok-min, “US calls for ‘extreme interoperability’ with S. Korea in air defense system,” *Yonhap News Agency*, August 21, 2014.

North Korea offered the U.S. a high-level dialogue to discuss for a solution to sanctions, armistice, denuclearization, etc. It is noteworthy that “the denuclearization of the whole Korean Peninsula” was emphasized and added to the existing two of North Korea-demanded *quid pro quo* for denuclearizing itself, i.e., U.S. abandonment of hostile policy toward the North and the transformation of the armistice into a peace regime.

As explained already, North Korea’s demand for denuclearizing the whole Korean Peninsula was practically a demand for a NWFZ in the Korea Peninsula, in which U.S. nuclear weapons cannot be brought in by land, air, and sea in the spirit of no use of nuclear weapons and no threat of the use of nuclear weapons against North Korea. Later on October 23, 2014, as quoted already, the spokesperson of North Korea’s foreign ministry issued a statement: “The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the invariable aim of the policy of the DPRK government... is the process of making the peninsula a nuclear-free zone on the basis of completely removing the substantial nuclear threats posed to the peninsula from outside on the principle of simultaneous actions.”¹⁵ But the U.S. ignored an opportunity for a NWFZ in Korea.

Nevertheless, against the U.S./South Korea’s cold shoulder and non-action did North Korea launch a “dialogue/peace offensive” with a clear idea that it needed a “peaceful environment” for economic development and the improvement of the people’s standards of living in North Korea. North Korea never stopped conducting its dialogue/peace drive until the U.S. and South Korea agreed on the “tailored deterrence strategy” on October 2, 2013, in which, North Korea thought, an element of nuclear preemptive strike against North Korea was included. It has to be pointed out that North Korea’s genuine intent of promoting peace by resuming bilateral/multilateral talks with the U.S. and South Korea was evidenced by North Korea’s abstention from criticizing the U.S. during the 2014 Ulchi-Freedom Guardian (UFG) against North Korea, despite the B-52 strategic bombers’ practice bombing runs in South Korea targeting the North.

It should be noted that North Korea’s policy toward the U.S. has been closely coordinated with and strongly supported by China, and that China itself made serious efforts to persuade the U.S. to come to the negotiating table and resume the Six-Party Talks. For instance, when Choe Ryong-hae, Kim Jong Un’s special envoy, visited Beijing and met Chinese President Xi Jinping on May 24, 2013, Xi strongly emphasized that denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and peace and stability in this region were common aspiration for all the peoples in this region and that China had a clear idea for it. Choe agreed “by accommodating China’s suggestion” to properly resolve pending issues through various forms of dialogue and negotiation including the Six-Party Talks and requested China’s good offices for the resumption of U.S.-North Korea bilateral dialogue. Xi played his part when he met Obama in the Sino-American summit held in California in early June 2013. And on September 9,

¹⁵ “DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesman Blames U.S. for Posing Nuclear Threat to DPRK,” *KCNA*, October 23, 2013.

2013, in the Sino-American summit held in St. Petersburg, Russia on the occasion of the G-20 Summit Talks, Xi suggested Obama an early resumption of the Six-Party Talks, but Obama's response was lukewarm.

5. Deterioration of U.S.-North Korean Relations: the 4th Nuclear Test Warned

The relationship between North Korea and the U.S. has deteriorated dramatically after the tailored deterrence strategy, which North Korea understood as a preemptive nuclear attack strategy, was adopted on October 2, 2013 at the 45th U.S.-ROK Security Consultative Meeting in Seoul. And U.S. State Secretary John Kerry used the term "rogue state" against North Korea in late October 2013, and Chuck Hagel used the term "rogue nation" in early February 2014. The use of the term "rogue state/nation" in line with George W. Bush's "axis of evil" reflected the practical failure of U.S.'s North Korea policy. And the U.S. and South Korea conducted the 2014 Key Resolve/Foal Eagle in late February to mid-April 2014. This year, B-52 strategic bombers reportedly did the mock nuclear bombing on Jikdo islands before, not during, the joint military exercise. And "Ssangyoung Drill," the largest-ever landing exercise in Korea since 1993, was conducted with its main objective reportedly "to occupy Pyongyang."

As a countermeasure, North Korea fired in training its short-range missiles and also medium-range Rodong missiles, and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) "condemned" it. North Korea argued that the rocket-launching drills were "self-defensive" and "to cope with the grave situation created by the U.S. hostile policy toward the DPRK which has been pursued for the past several decades and the evermore intensified exercises for a nuclear war." North Korea also criticized that the UNSC, "shutting its eyes to the U.S. madcap nuclear war exercises, 'denounced' the KPA's self-defensive rocket launching..." North Korea finally warned that "it would not rule out a new form of nuclear test for bolstering up its nuclear deterrence."¹⁶

The relationship between North Korea and the U.S. continued to worsen to a breakpoint by the time of the U.S.-South Korea summit in Seoul on April 25, 2014. In addition to the decision to strengthen U.S.-Korea allied defense capabilities and U.S.-Korea-Japan cooperation in sharing military information, as well as to increase punishment to North Korea against another nuclear test, Obama consented to Park's request for the delay of transfer of wartime operational control of South Korean forces and Park, presumably in exchange, consented to Obama's demand for South Korea's joining U.S.-led MD. All this incited North Korea's anger against the leaders of the U.S. and South

¹⁶ "DPRK FM Blasts UN for Taking Issue with DPRK over Its Justifiable Rocket Launching Drills," *KCNA*, March 30, 2014.

Korea, and it lashed out with more than its usual vehement rhetoric at both Presidents, even resorting to racist insults on President Obama by even likening him to an ape.

6. North Korea's Policy for NWFZ in Korea/NE Asia

We may wonder if there is a glimmer of light at the end of the dark tunnel we have entered. It is noteworthy that none other than Kim Il Sung advocated and supported a “nuclear-free, peace zone” in the Korean Peninsula as well as in NE Asia since 1980. Before 1980, he supported nuclear-free, peace zones around the world.

A review of *Kim Il Sung: Works* shows that he offered a nuclear-free, peace zone over the Korean Peninsula on as many as thirty-six occasions (forty-four times if a nuclear-free, peace zone over NE Asia is included) during the fifteen-year period from his Opening Speech at the Sixth Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea on October 10, 1980 to his talk with the chairman of the Central Committee of the Belgian Labor Party on June 30, 1994, a week before his death.¹⁷ The “federal-state” unification formula he offered at the Sixth Party Congress that North Korea still holds made clear that the federal state “should make the Korean peninsula a permanent peace zone and nuclear-free zone” and that “our Party will strive to turn the Korean peninsula into a nuclear-free, peace zone and will actively support the struggle of the world's people to create such zones in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and Europe”¹⁸ Kim Il Sung also offered the NE Asian nuclear-free peace zone from March 1981, as demonstrated in the “Joint Declaration on the Establishment of a Nuclear-free Peace Zone in Northeast Asia” with the Japan Socialist Party. It was on June 23, 1986 that the North Korean government officially announced a proposal for a nuclear-free, peace zone over the Korean Peninsula. In early September 1986, Kim Il Sung convened in Pyongyang an international conference for a nuclear-free, peace zone over the Korean Peninsula. On July 13, 1987, North Korean foreign ministry issued another statement on a nuclear-free peace zone over the Korean Peninsula. In mid-October 1988, North Korea convened another international conference on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

On January 20, 1992, North Korea signed the “Joint Declaration of South and North Korea on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” which was the first-ever official agreement with other party, South Korea, on denuclearizing the whole Korean Peninsula, a stepping stone toward a NEFZ in NE Asia. And Kim Il Sung repeatedly confirmed his will and the North Korean policy faithfully abided by the Joint Declaration up until his death.

¹⁷ *Kim Il Sung: Works, Vol. 35-44* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1989-1999).

¹⁸ “Opening Speech at the Sixth Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea” (October 10, 1980), *Kim Il-Sung: Works, Vol. 35* (Pyongyang, Korea: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1989), pp. 338, 343-344, 350-351.

It is noteworthy that, despite the intermittent mention of the need to establish and carry out a nuclear-free zone in the whole Korean Peninsula and the “simultaneous-action principle” as a way to achieve it, North Korea practically dropped its support for a NWFZ in Korea or in NE Asia during the period of nuclear confrontation with the U.S. from July 1994, when Kim Il Sung died, until recently, when North Korea re-advocated a NWFZ in Korea in the June 16, 2013 proposal for a high-level talks with the U.S. It is to recall that North Korea succeeded a few times in making agreements with the U.S. and others such as the Agreed Framework, September 19 Joint Statement and the two agreements to implement it, U.S.-DPRK Joint Communiqué, and the “leap day” deal. During the period of nuclear confrontation with the U.S., however, North Korea tended to demand talks for “nuclear arms reduction,” rather than “denuclearization.” But after the appalling experience of U.S. nuclear threat against North Korea in the spring of 2013, it appears that North Korea has not abandoned the idea of creating a NWFZ in Korea, as demonstrated in the June 16 proposal and the October 23 statement.

7. Inter-Korean Relations at the Nadir

Currently, inter-Korean relations are seemingly at a nadir with no government-to-government dialogues in progress. Basically, North Korea’s nuclear and missile threats made the Park Geun-hye government more hawkish to the North, and South Korea’s head-to-head confrontation with the North based on its close alliance cooperation with the U.S. also made North Korea more hawkish toward the South. A series of war of nerves has contributed to deepening distrust.

On the South Korean side, the “May 24 Measure” the Lee Myung-bak government took as sanctions on North Korea after the *Cheonan* Incident in 2010 still holds, even preventing humanitarian cooperation between the two Koreas. The South Korean government has monopolized any meaningful contacts and dialogue with the North. Differing ideas/discourses or policy options/alternatives were suppressed and criticized by the government and pro-government conservative news media as harmful to the spirit of the “unity of national consensus” in the pursuit of national unification. But this attitude is something that does not appreciate the free competition of ideas and policies, which democratic polities try to promote.

Another problem with South Korea’s May 24 Measure is that the South has not pursued any engagement with the North in conduction with the economic sanctions it applied to the North. In principle, if we apply an economic sanction to make the target country give in, we have to combine it with a political engagement with the country, so that we could give it an opportunity to step back and make concessions and compromises. By not taking meaningful engagement with the North when it applied sanctions to the North, the Lee and Park governments of the South have ignored and lost the valuable opportunities to make the North save face and compromise with the South.

From January 2014, the Park government's policy line changed from "trust process" to "preparation of unification." The rationale for the preparation of unification was twofold: the "instability" of Kim Jong Un's power in the North and the net benefit of unification based on the thesis of "unification as bonanza," an expression President Park herself used in a press conference in early January 2014. The Blue House is known to have regarded the execution of Jang Song Thaek as a sign of the instability of the Kim Jong Un regime, and President Park and her government turned to the emphasis of the net benefit, particularly the net economic benefit of unification, reversing their thitherto position that stressed the "prohibitive" cost of unification. Conservative news media, pro-government opinion leaders, and government-affiliated think tanks were fully mobilized to justify the rationale for such change in policy line. The Blue House organized the "Presidential Committee for Unification Preparation" with the President as the chair of the committee, which mobilized various sectors of the South Korean society including senior officials of the government, academia, education workers, the press, the NGOs, etc. The committee basically appears to be an effort on the part of the President and her government to encourage pro-unification policy ideas and make people rally around the government's unification policy, thereby enlarging and strengthening the pro-government constituency in the South.

The most serious problem with the unification-preparation policy is that it has failed to get North Korea's cooperation and support. The Park government has demanded the denuclearization of North Korea as a precondition for improvement of inter-Korean relations, and President Park, during her visit to Germany in March 2014, publicly announced the German unification model, an absorptionist model, to be the model for Korean unification. As a result, the Park government's policy of unification preparation has become a policy for domestic consumption regardless of the genuine goal of the policy in the absence of North Korea's cooperation whatsoever.

North Korea's criticism of the Park government's North Korea policy includes: President Park's persistent demand for North Korea's denuclearization as a precondition for improvement of inter-Korean relations; her pro-American policy and attitude; South Korea's joining in the U.S.-led MD; her "tailored deterrence strategy" with the U.S. against North Korea's nuclear and missile threats; her continuation of the "May 24 Measure"; her repeated request for China to put pressure on North Korea for denuclearization; lack of South Korea's good-will support for North Korea's participation in the 2014 Incheon Asian Games, etc.

8. The Future of the Six-Party Talks

Finally, what are the prospects for the Six-Party Talks? The Six-Party Talks have been stalled for about five years. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's address delivered at the Commemorative

Seminar “Retrospect & Outlook: A Decade of the Six-Party Talks” held in Beijing on September 18, 2013 makes many important points.¹⁹

First, there is no refuting Wang Yi’s observation that “Looking back on its tortuous course over the last decade, we find that whenever all parties were actively committed to dialogue and consultation, situation on the Korean Peninsula would be basically stable; and whenever the Six-Party Talks was deadlocked, situation on the Korean Peninsula would become tense or even risk getting out of control. All of us need to take concrete actions to cherish and uphold the strategic value of the Six-Party Talks.”

Second, Wang Yi correctly understood the root causes of the Korean Problem when he said “[t]he root causes for the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula can be traced to the legacy of the Cold War and the serious distrust between relevant parties” and also rightly appraised the September 19 joint statement when he explained “[t]he September 19 Joint Statement reflected in a balanced manner the concerns of all parties, and identified such important goals as the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, normalization of relations between relevant countries, promotion of cooperation on energy, trade and investment, and joint commitment to lasting peace and stability in Northeast Asia.”

Then, what is to be done for the resumption of the Six-Party Talks? Currently, the U.S. position is that it can come to the negotiating table for the resumption of the Six-Party Talks if and only if North Korea first demonstrates its trustworthiness by showing in action its decision to denuclearize itself. On the other hand, North Korea demands that the Six-Party Talks be resumed without any preconditions. There has been no convergence between the two positions until now.

Then, what should be done to make the Six-Party Talks an effective problem-solving mechanism/venue for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula? Basically, the North Korean nuclear problem is a problem that can be resolved only when North Korea “voluntarily” gives up its nuclear weapons and weapons programs. Then the question is how to make North Korea do so. In principle, there is no other way but to meet the demands of North Korea. North Korea has demanded three things as a *quid pro quo* for denuclearizing itself: U.S. abandonment of hostile policy toward the North, the transformation of the armistice into a peace regime, and the denuclearization of the whole Korean Peninsula. As pointed out already, North Korea’s demand and agreement that the whole Korean Peninsula should be denuclearized is conducive to the establishment of a NWFZ in Korea and eventually in NE Asia.

Wang Yi’s proposals at the aforementioned Commemorative Seminar in Beijing are worth listening to: “The parties should adopt integrated measures and address the concerns of the parties in a

¹⁹ Wang Yi, Foreign Minister, “Stay Committed to the Six-Party Talks for Lasting Peace,” Address delivered at the Commemorative Seminar “Retrospect & Outlook: A Decade of the Six-Party Talks,” Diaoyutai State Guesthouse, Beijing, China, September 18, 2013 (http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t1078892.shtml) (Retrieved on September 6, 2014).

balanced manner”; “a holistic approach should be adopted to address both the symptoms and root causes”; “we should advance in parallel the goals outlined in the Joint Statement, accommodate the legitimate concerns of all parties, gradually implement the consensus in a phased manner, and strive for solid progress.”

The author of this writing argues that there should be a more tightly-integrated way, which goes beyond Wang Yi’s “parallel” approach, to implement any future agreement on denuclearization. The author argues that the promise/track for North Korea to denuclearize itself, on the one hand, and the promise/track for the Six-Party Talks parties to provide the *quid pro quo* for North Korea’s denuclearization, on the other, must be combined into an integrated single track, not separate both tracks proceeding in parallel. This is important because the past experience shows that there has always been a gap or imbalance between the two promises/tracks due to the differences in priorities/preferences of the players in the game, which led to the failure of the Six-Party Talks. For instance, North Korea has been less enthusiastic about denuclearizing itself than about securing the *quid pro quo* for it, while the U.S. has been more enthusiastic about denuclearizing North Korea than about providing the *quid pro quo* for North Korea’s denuclearization.

In closing, there are some ominous signs for the future of the Six-Party Talks. On September 23, 2013, Ben Rhodes, then Deputy National Security Advisor for President Obama, commented that the international community needs to take different approaches toward North Korea and Iran with regard to their nuclear programs because, unlike Iran, North Korea has already developed nuclear weapons and conducted tests. On the other hand, President Park Geun-hye of South Korea said in her joint press conference with President Obama after their summit in Seoul on April 25, 2014, that “if North Korea is actually going to carry out the fourth nuclear test, that is going to change fundamentally the security landscape and I believe that all our efforts to resolve the nuclear issue through the Six-Party Talks is going to be completely dissolved. It’s going to go in the air.”²⁰ President Park reiterated the point in her interview with *The Wall Street Journal* on May 28, 2014. She said “a new nuclear test by North Korea could have a domino effect by providing its neighbors with a pretext to arm themselves with nuclear weapons.” She also expressed her worry that “stalled negotiations over Pyongyang’s nuclear program involving the U.S. and regional powers would end for good.”²¹

So, is there a light at the end of the tunnel we are in? At this moment, the prospects for the Six-Party Talks are as gloomy as ever, but the author believes that there could be another chance of comprehensive give-and-take to resolve the “Korean Problem” if either North Korea or the U.S./South Korea changes policies in good faith toward the other party. This prediction of the author’s has much

²⁰ “Press Conference with President Obama and President Park of the Republic of Korea,” The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Blue House, Seoul, Republic of Korea, April 25, 2014.

²¹ Gerard Baker and Alastair Gale, “South Korea President Warns on Nuclear Domino Effect,” *The Wall Street Journal*, May 29, 2014.

to do with North Korea's "strategy of survival and development for the 21st century," as he sees it: North Korea's strategy requires, more than anything else, the termination of the Korean War, transformation of the armistice into a peace regime, national reconciliation and cooperation with the South, normalization of relations with the U.S. and Japan, and economic reform and opening in North Korea. It is to note that all these requirements, if met, are absolutely contributive to a NWFZ in Korea and NE Asia.

The requirements above, however, cannot be met unless North Korea decides to denuclearize itself to secure U.S.'s/South Korea's cooperation and unless the U.S./South Korea help North Korea do so. In other words, for North Korea, finding a solution to the nuclear issue is an integral part of its strategy of survival and development. For the U.S. and others, in the same vein, helping North Korea give up its nuclear weapons and weapons programs is also an integral part of their strategy of peace and co-prosperity for all in this region. The question is whether both North Korea and the U.S./South Korea are ready to take a genuine, problem-solving approach to each other for a win-win outcome, making a clear departure from the past.