



Policy Forum 11-14: A Time for the Future of Peace: the 11th Anniversary of the 6.15 Inter-Korean Summit



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A Time for the Future of Peace: the 11th Anniversary of the 6.15 Inter-Korean Summit

By Lim Dong-won and Paik Nak-chung

June 14, 2011

Nautilus invites your contributions to this forum, including any responses to this report.

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I. Introduction

Lim Dong-won, former Minister, Ministry of Unification and Co-representative of Korea Peace Forum, and Paik Nak-chung, Professor Emeritus, Seoul National University and Co-representative of Korea Peace Forum, write, "We need to continuously develop effective strategies to realize a peace system on the Korean peninsula and implement them to the best of our abilities. That is, we need concrete systematic plans and visions to resolve the nuclear threat of North Korea and to dismantle the cold war atmosphere. Reflecting the transitioning order of Northeast Asia, we need the methodology and wisdom to convert the ceasefire agreement into a permanent peace regime. We must propose a path towards "tangible peace," providing security for our people to allow our nation to dream for the future."

This article was the opening speech for the 11th anniversary commemoration (June 11th in Seoul) of the inter-Korean summit meeting on June 15th, 2000.

Korea Peace Forum is online at: <http://www.koreapeace.co.kr/>

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II. Article by Lim Dong-won and Paik Nak-chung

- A Time for the Future of Peace: the 11th Anniversary of the 6.15 Inter-Korean Summit

By Lim Dong-won and Paik Nak-chung

As we welcome the 11th Anniversary of the 6.15 inter-Korean summit, we increasingly realize how important the spirit and agreements of 6.15 are in times of regressing inter-Korean relations. The various North and South Korean interactions that extended from the 6.15 agreement have come to a standstill, resulting in heightened tension and anxiety. Only disappointments remain in place of cooperation and exchange. Slander and defamation prevail, and instead of exchanging dialogue, we now exchange bullets. The Cold War, which we aimed to curtail through the 6.15 agreement, has now returned and threatens our peace and stability.

Lee Myung-bak government should be afraid of historical judgment

It is true that North Korea's provocation exacerbated the relationship between the North and the South. However, we should not forget that the relationship began to deteriorate when the Lee government denied both the 6.15 and 10.4 agreements in early 2008. The Lee government has not demonstrated a sense of duty in managing the complicated relations on the Korean peninsula, or any will to repair the degenerated current situation, or the capacity to create peace. We have lost too much from the Lee government's confrontational policies.

First, we have lost our peace. The President of the Republic of Korea has an obligation to administer peace on the Korean peninsula. However, peace disappeared after the Lee government took power. Last year, our citizens experienced the fear of war. Today, residents who live on the borders of the country still live in instability. Korea plunged to 50th in a 2011 index of peace research by an international agency. It is even lower than Tunisia where a civil revolution occurred. A nation's basic duty is to protect the lives and properties of its people. The Lee government has shown negligence regarding this basic duty.

Second, we lost the opportunity to develop the northern economy. China replaced the South as a favored economic partner of North Korea. Our hope to advance into China and Russia through connected roads and railway with North Korea may now crumble into dust. We can only watch China's economic plan materialize, and the Russian Far East's development advance.

Third, smaller businesses are in a state of abject hopelessness. A year has passed since the implementation of the 5.24 measure blocking all exchanges with the DPRK. A businessman who imported sand from North Korea and supplied it to metropolitan construction sites went bankrupt; a medium-sized enterprise that has been processing brought-in materials from North Korea for more than 10 years has now closed. The Lee government insists on applying restrictive measures against the North, yet in reality, our smaller enterprises are the victims of such measures.

Fourth, separated families have lost their hope. Separated families, victims of tragic ethnic partition, are desperately waiting to fulfill their dying wish. Since most members of the separated families have either passed away or are older, unless we resolve our current situation promptly, our attempts in the future will only be futile. Once our separated families are lost due to our government's untimely decisions, they will be remembered as tragedies in our history. What has the Lee government done for our separated families?

Although we have wasted our time, we can still change our policy towards North Korea. Rather than promoting a backdoor summit, if we change our policies, we can confidently and openly hold summits with North Korea. The Lee government should consider how they will be depicted in history. Our current government has regressed inter-Korean relations to a state prior to the 7.4 Joint Statement of the North and the South in 1972. In the transitioning period of the Northeast Asian order, our government has paralyzed Korean diplomacy. Furthermore, the Lee government largely impaired the base of North and South's economic community, bequeathing large reunification costs to our future generations.

We must learn to fear history. If we would like to mitigate, even in the slightest degree, a harsh evaluation in history, we must hasten to alter our policy towards North Korea. Incompetent government officials should be replaced with capable ones, and the voices of citizens who desire to establish peace must be listened to. We are still waiting for the Lee government to accept its mistakes and return to the spirit of 6.15: that is, an introspective, reflective stance and vision for peace and co-prosperity, desire and an active attitude for reunification, and the dismantling of the Cold War regime. We must abandon anachronistic ideologies and become awake to the reality of division. The government of the Republic of Korea should resolve the pending issues with North Korea. Communication with our people is mandatory in order to create a future of peace together instead of regressing back to the Cold War.

Tasks of peace for the liberal and reformist forces

This year's 6.15 anniversary should be a new turning point. Now, we must retrieve the future of the Korean peninsula that the Lee government has misplaced. It is time to prepare for the spirit of 6.15 and 10.4 to bloom. There is nothing more important than peace for the people's welfare in the divided nation. Groups for progressive reform must arrange strategies to develop inter-Korean relations, peace on the Korean peninsula, and cooperation of Northeast Asia.

Above all, we must expand the peace movement. We must build a Korea inhospitable to cold warriors who are ready to sacrifice people's lives. Through the local elections on June 2, 2010, we saw an inspiring scene of citizens judging the immoral government, absorbed in exploiting the tension with the North. We must help our citizens to possess an even more mature consciousness for democracy and peace.

The content and system of the engagement policy must continue to be developed. Change through engagement was our consistent philosophy during the terms of two previous presidents. During the three and a half years of the Lee government the relationship between the Koreas has deteriorated, and many holes need to be filled. Future policies must concretely reflect these changes.

We need to continuously develop effective strategies to realize a peace regime on the Korean peninsula and implement them to the best of our abilities. That is, we need concrete systematic plans and visions to resolve the nuclear threat of North Korea and to dismantle the cold war atmosphere. Reflecting the transitioning order of Northeast Asia, we need the methodology and wisdom to convert the ceasefire agreement into a permanent peace regime. We must propose a path towards "tangible peace," providing security for our people to allow our nation to dream for the future.

It is time for spring to blossom on the Korean peninsula. As the two previous presidents and our nation have been hoping for, it is time for us to prudently overcome the division and confrontation to prepare for our future of peace.

The anniversary of the 6.15 summit will be a turning point from despair to hope, and from crisis to peace. Regardless of how much the Lee government contradicts us, in the long run, our future is bright. Together with everyone who hopes for peace, we shall certainly prevail in our efforts for peace.

III. Nautilus invites your responses

The Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network invites your responses to this essay. Please send responses to: bscott@nautilus.org. Responses will be considered for redistribution to the network only if they include the author's name, affiliation, and explicit consent.

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