Inter-Korean Normalization

The NAPSNet Policy Forum provides expert analysis of contemporary peace and security issues in Northeast Asia. As always, we invite your responses to this report and hope you will take the opportunity to participate in discussion of the analysis.



Recommended Citation

Haksoon Paik, "Inter-Korean Normalization", NAPSNet Policy Forum, February 05, 2013, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-policy-forum/inter-korean-normalization/

---

by Haksoon Paik

February 5th, 2013

This report was originally presented at the New Approach to Security in Northeast Asia: Breaking the Gridlock workshop held on October 9th and 10th, 2012 in Washington, DC. All of the papers and presentations given at the workshop are available here, along with the full agenda, participant list and a workshop photo gallery.

Click here to download a pdf of this report.

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

CONTENTS

I. Introduction
II. Report by Haksoon Paik
III. Nautilus invites your responses

I. Introduction

In this concise report Haksoon Paik lists the current state of key issues preventing inter-Korean normalization, including the lack of national reconciliation, the continued threat of war and the persistent North Korean nuclear weapons program. He also provides a brief overview of the South Korean position on a Northeast Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone.

Haksoon Paik is currently the director of Inter-Korean Relations Studies Program and the director of the Center for North Korean Studies at the Sejong Institute in Korea.

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Nautilus Institute. Readers should note that Nautilus seeks a diversity of views and opinions on significant topics in order to identify common ground.

II. Report by Haksoon Paik

Inter-Korean Normalization
by Haksoon Paik

KEY ISSUES

National reconciliation

1. Deepened distrust between the two Koreas to an unprecedented extent during the Lee Myung-bak government due basically to the incongruence between the Lee government's official policy of "mutual benefits and common prosperity" with North Korea and its hidden agenda of seeking the collapse of the North
2. The absence of government-to-government dialogue, social and cultural exchanges, and humanitarian assistance to the North

Removal of military conflict/threat of war

1. Since the March 2010 *Cheonan* Incident and the November 2010 *Yeonpyeongdo* Shelling Incident, the West Sea (Yellow Sea) of Korea has become a detonating cap/an explosive warehouse, which can trigger a large-scale military conflict in Korea; since the aforementioned two incidents, the South Korean military forces deployed in the islands in the West Sea are under the order of "retaliation first, reporting later."
2. Koreans are living with a specter of a war hovering above them.
3. OPLAN 5029, designed to collapse North Korea, has contributed to the threat of war on the Korean Peninsula.
4. North Korea responded negatively to South Korea's recent extension of missile range up to 800 kilometers.

Termination of the state of war and creation of a peace regime

1. South Koreans are in a consensus by now that there should not be another military conflict, which may escalate to a war and destroy democracy and economic prosperity they have achieved.
2. The Cheonan and Yeonpyeongdo incidents drove home the need to end the state of a war and transform the Korean armistice into a permanent peace system in Korea.
3. The September 19th Joint Statement reads: "The directly related parties will negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula at an appropriate separate forum."
4. The "root cause" of the disease called "the Korean problem" is the existence of the armistice, which nurtures and strengthens distrust and enmity, while the nuclear and missile issues and military conflict in Korea are the "symptoms" of the disease.
5. The establishment of a peace regime and the resolution of the nuclear issue should move forward step by step in parallel based on the principle of simultaneous action.

Resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue

1. The failure to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue could basically be attributed to the result of the interplay of policies of both North Korea and the U.S. toward each other.
2. South Korea's support for the U.S. policy that has unrealistically preferred pressure and sanction to dialogue and negotiation has fatally reduced its own independent space/capacity for exercising flexibility and increasing leverage for nuclear resolution.
3. Most recently, North Korea made clear that the U.S. should drop its hostile intention and policy against North Korea, if it were to have North Korean nuclear resolution; in addition, North Korea has consistently demanded the establishment of a peace regime.

PENDING ISSUES

1. Resolution of the *Cheonan* and *Yeonpyeongdo* incidents/termination of sanctions called the "May 24th measure."
2. Resumption of Mt. Kumgang tourism/expansion of Kaesong Industrial Park
3. Food and fertilizer assistance, and the reunion of the separated families
4. How to respond to North Korea's new leader's policy of introducing economic reform and opening for the "improvement of the people's living standards," his pragmatism based on more openness and transparency, and his effort to keep up with "the trend of the world."

2012 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

1. Saenuri Party candidate Park Keun-hye's policy: trust politik and trust process with the North, but no mention of "peace regime"
2. Democratic United Party candidate Moon Jae-in's policy: Korean economic confederation, peace regime, and nuclear resolution
3. Independent candidate Ahn Chul-soo's policy: national reconciliation, peace regime, and nuclear resolution

NUCLEAR WEAPONS FREE ZONE (NWFZ): SOUTH KOREA'S POSITION

1. The South Korean government has signed and announced "Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" with the North in February 1992.
2. The South Korean government took measures to implement the joint declaration, but a series of North Korean nuclear crisis of 1993-94, 2002, 2006, and 2009 stopped its implementation; Since then, it has not taken any concrete measures for creating a NWEZ either on the Korean Peninsula or in NE Asia.
3. Currently, the South Korean government is focused more on the "denuclearization of North Korea" itself than on creating a NWFZ on the Korean Peninsula or in NE Asia: the denuclearization of North Korea should come first; if there is a substantial progress in the negotiation to denuclearize the North, then it can resume negotiations for a peace regime and a NWFZ.

III. Nautilus invites your responses

The Nautilus Peace and Security Network invites your responses to this report. Please leave a comment below or send your response to: napsnet@nautilus.org. Comments will only be posted if they include the author's name and affiliation.

View this online at: https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-policy-forum/inter-korean-normalization/

Nautilus Institute

608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email: nautilus@nautilus.org