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Facing the Inconvenient Truth:

**Re-examining Policy for Peace and Denuclearization
of the Korean Peninsula**

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Society of Security and Diplomatic Policy Studies

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1. Two "Inconvenient Truths"

An "inconvenient truth" has been revealed from the crisis on the Korean Peninsula in this spring --- we have no effective measures available to solve the North Korean nuclear missile development problem in the short term. If military enforcement measures are taken, that would bring about disastrous consequences jeopardizing the security of Japan. The nuclear armament of North Korea has become an established fact, whereas we have no choice but to condone it tacitly as de facto or to pursue efforts to realize the denuclearization of the Peninsula in a long term perspective of about ten to twenty years. If we choose the latter option, the long term option, we must start from scratching once again to make North Korea realize that they are overestimating the value of their nuclear missile holdings. In other words, Chairman Kim Jong-un must definitely recognize another "inconvenient truth" that even if North Korea succeeded in nuclear armament and long-range missile development, such efforts would only amount to the acquisition of extremely rudimentary nuclear deterrence, but will not fundamentally change relations with South Korea and other countries, nor guarantee the survival of the current North Korean regime. Otherwise, any negotiation with North Korea would be

difficult. The international community would not be able to impose restrictions upon the North such as nuclear and missile test freeze, and international inspection --- still less to make North Korea abandon nuclear missiles they have so far developed.

2. Elimination of Appeasement Policy

Therefore, in the short term, any appeasement policy toward North Korea should be eliminated. It would not only encourage the North's overestimation of their nuclear missile program but might also in the worst case induce them to conduct military provocation to confirm the deterrent effect of their missiles. In that sense, the policies already implemented or in development after the 2nd nuclear crisis are all pertinent ones:

- 1) the secondary boycott by the US government against third country financial institutions failing to fulfill the UN resolutions;
- 2) the demonstration of US deterrent capabilities (nuclear umbrella), including deployment of strategic bombers and stealth fighter aircraft over the Osan Air Force Base;
- 3) the promotion of THAAD deployment for US military bases in the South Korea and in the Pacific region;
- 4) the strengthening of the security partnership between Japan, the US and South Korea, including the conclusion of Japan-Korea GSOMIA (General Security of Military Information Agreement); and
- 5) on top of these, economic sanctions against the North based on UN resolutions must be implemented 100%. In particular, cooperation by China will be the focus of attention.

3. Reintroduction of Tactical Nuclear Weapons

If North Korea, regardless of these measures, intends to continue nuclear tests and missile launches, it is desirable to redeploy tactical nuclear weapons at the US military bases in South Korea as a counter measure. From a military point of view, South Korea is already protected by US extended deterrence; but from a psychological and political point of view, redeployment of tactical nuclear weapons will increase reliability of stable mutual deterrence. Moreover, it will provide an underpinning for an equal-footing dialogue between North and South Korea. If the North is resolute to continue nuclear tests despite the reintroduction of tactical nuclear weapons, we need to consider other measures to prevent them. The new "nuclear posture review" undertaken by the Trump administration should be taken into consideration the strategic environment of Northeast Asia including the progress of North Korea's nuclear and missile development, while Japan and South Korea should be guaranteed protection by US extended deterrence.

4. New "Containment" Policy

The policy goal of Japan, the United States and South Korea is not to use full-scale military force against the nuclear-armed divided state, or to expedite the collapse of North Korea by other means. If in an unpredictable contingency North Korea's counterattacks were directed inside the country, the situation would develop into a Romanian-style civil war and invite China's military intervention; in the worst scenario a military clash may occur

between the North and the South, and an intervention by the US Forces stationed in South Korea. If North Korea strikes outward, US military bases in South Korea, Japan and the Pacific will be targeted, and even the possibility of the North's ultimate use of nuclear missiles cannot be denied. One very serious concern is that it has now become almost impossible to eradicate all nuclear weapons and missile facilities scattered throughout North Korea by "surgical operations." Instead, we should learn from the "containment" policy George Kennan propounded early in the Cold War era, in order to frustrate North Korea's strong will to hold nuclear weapons over a long span of time. It is most appropriate for Japan, the United States and South Korea to maintain robust defense capabilities and to collaborate to carry out what Kennan termed, the "long-term, persevering, but firm, vigilant containment," which will provide the most proper basis for the three countries' North Korea policy. It is high time for Japan to reexamine its missile defense system and seek a legal solution regarding attack operations on enemy bases. North Korea is a small, poor country but it is not stupid. If they realize the limits of their nuclear deterrent capabilities, they will sincerely explore the possibility of negotiations relatively earlier than expected. Such a move from North Korea may constitute the first step toward a long-time peaceful coexistence of the two Koreas and the peace and security of surrounding countries.

5. Necessity of Dialogue with North Korea

North Korea's brinkmanship that evolved from February through April this year after the start of the Trump

administration obviously aimed at a "deal" between Chairman Kim Jong-un and President Trump, by utilizing the possibility of the sixth nuclear test and ICBM test as a military and diplomatic means. The North's obvious brinkmanship carefully avoided military conflict, while urging the US to recognize the importance and inevitability of negotiations with North Korea through the creation of a crisis. Moreover, since military conflict was avoided this time, North Korea has reserved the possibility of resorting to another military provocation. Needless to say, if US-North Korea talks or tripartite talks between the US, China and North Korea were realized, it would be unlikely for North Korea to give up the development of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles in the foreseeable future. Yet, without any dialogue or negotiation with North Korea, it would be impossible to freeze the development of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles and to build an international inspection system. On the other hand, Japan, the US, and South Korea should uphold the joint statement of the fourth round of the six-party talks in September 2005, which agreed on the resumption of the six-party talks presided by China and the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. We should remember that this joint statement includes agreement on normalization of the US-North Korea and the Japan-North Korea relations.

6. Peaceful Unification Policy

The North Korean leader will not accept complete denuclearization until he can end his state's international isolation and become convinced of his personal safety. He is demanding the realization of federation-type unification with

"one nation, one state, two systems, two governments." Although this proposal also includes the establishment of "one federal government," he evades such enunciation. Such an attitude can be perceived as diplomatic "deceit." However, as long as, South and North Korea remain a divided nation, and intense regime struggles, international isolation, and severe economic sanctions continue, the survival of the North Korean regime will never be guaranteed. Paradoxically, only when a long-lasting peaceful coexistence of two regimes is achieved on the Peninsula, a peaceful unification of the two Koreas and the denuclearization of the North will become a reality. Looking back humbly on the past, one of the causes that brought about today's situation is that surrounding nations were unable to realize detente on the Korean Peninsula after the end of the Cold War: the cross-recognition of the two Koreas by the four surrounding powers --- the United States, the Soviet Union, China, and Japan.

Today, in the process of forming its diplomacy toward North Korea, Japan needs cooperation not only from the six-party talks member states, but from the international community including Southeast Asian countries. Japan, in cooperation with these countries, must formulate a foreign policy based on pressure and dialogue to help realize the return of North Korea to the international community and a peaceful unification of two Koreas.

7. Strategic Interests Shared by Japan and South Korea

As Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's policy speech defines, South Korea is, for Japan, "the most important neighbor sharing strategic interests." If the US resorts to limited military force

against North Korea single-handedly or suddenly agrees to a US-North Korean summit talk, it will impact both Japan and South Korea. In the former case, the risk of a war invoked by the use of military force would plunge the people of South Korea into a frenzy and the US-ROK alliance would face the danger of collapse. Likewise, despite a possible prior consultation, the Japan-US alliance would nonetheless undergo a serious crisis. In the latter case, a shock comparable to President Nixon's visit to China in the 1970's will impact Japan and South Korea. In this sense, Japan and South Korea certainly share strategic interests; consequently both countries must jointly prepare in peace time for a possible warfare. A prerequisite to this end is to separate security issues from history and territorial issues.

The most recent North Korean crisis will be a good opportunity to discuss a "two-track" policy with a new upcoming administration of South Korea. Japan should promote information sharing with South Korea based on the GSOMIA concluded last year, and also expedite the conclusion of Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) with the country. Based on these agreements, Japan should advance a broader, concrete defense cooperation with South Korea. In addition, Japan and South Korea should closely exchange views on dialogue with North Korea and maintain diplomatic cooperation. Assuming the resumption of North-South Korean dialogue and exchange programs, Japan should reconfirm the Japan-North Korea Pyongyang Declaration, and make the utmost effort to overcome "the unfortunate past between Japan and North Korea" and to solve pending problems including the abduction issue. With

such possibilities in view, Japan should prepare her own North Korea diplomacy.

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