

Replacing Armistice Agreement with Peace Agreement is the best way for ensuring peace on the Korean Peninsula and the rest of the northeast Asian region by Jong Nam Hyok

Jong Nam Hyok is a researcher at the Institute for American Studies under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DPRK. This article provides a DPRK perspective. While readers may find fault with many of its arguments and points of view (as do we), it is published to provide our readership with insights into how the DPRK sees the current situation.

The United States is directly responsible for terminating armistice and ensuring lasting peace in Korea

The primary reason that the United States is directly and mainly responsible for replacing the Armistice Agreement with a peace agreement is because it is a direct signatory to the Armistice Agreement as the leading force of the united forces involved in the Korean War against the DPRK.

The armed forces from 15 satellite countries and south Korea mobilized for the Korean War engaged in combat operations under the direct command of the US commander-in-chief of the armed forces in the Far East veiled as the commander-in-chief of the “UN Forces” in the whole period of the war. However, the US commander-in-chief of the armed forces in the Far East never answered to the UN, but to the US president, Pentagon, and the headquarters of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

It is noteworthy that when the counterattack by the Korean People’s Army turned tables in the wake of the war it provoked by instigating the south Korean puppet army, the United States raised the veil as the wire puller and took over and exercised operational command over the south Korean land, naval, and air forces from the Syngman Rhee regime over the whole period of the war. The US military personnel mobilized for the Korean War were numbered at about 1,408,000 which far exceeded the number of military personnel from 15 satellite countries and south Korea, which respectively stood at about 79,000 and over 570,000.

The US generals acted as representatives in the talks for the Korean ceasefire and the Armistice Agreement was signed by US Army Gen. Clark, US commander-in-chief of the armed forces in the Far East and US Army Lt. Gen. Harrison, not representatives of the UN or any other country.

The United States has been abusing the name of the “UN Forces” of its own accord without any agreement among or consent of the United Nations and there is no doubt that the so-called “UN Forces” are none other than the US Forces. Hence, the UN has also acknowledged on several occasions that the “UN Forces” in south Korea have nothing to do with the UN, but are only a military instrument which the United States has arbitrarily forged.

That the US is the very one that has been posing the gravest threat to the survival and development of the DPRK since the end of the war further substantiates the fact that the US is directly responsible for concluding a peace agreement with the DPRK. The United States has for decades pursued a hostile policy – the harshest ever in its history – toward the DPRK and sought to politically obliterate, economically isolate, and militarily stifle the latter. As early as the 1950s, the United States ignited the Korean War with the aim of destroying the DPRK by the use of force.

In the post-war days after its defeat in the war, the United States has made a string of agreements with south Korea including the “US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty” so as to permanently station its land, naval, and aerial forces in any part of the south Korean territory, and it holds the wartime operational control over the south Korean puppet army till date. The United States has systematically brought a large stockpile of nuclear arsenal into south Korea since the late 1950s, turning south Korea into a huge depot of nukes.

In the late 1960s, the United States kicked off US-south Korea joint military exercises featuring surprise landing and capture and airlifting operations targeting the DPRK. Since then the US has continued to update and elaborate a series of north-targeted nuclear operational plans with the objective of toppling the DPRK’s leadership and occupying the northern part of the Peninsula at a stroke. Under those plans, the means for preemptive nuclear strike such as aircraft carrier fleets and strategic bombers have frequently been dispatched to the Korean Peninsula.

The US has also employed political and economic means along with military instruments in their persistent pursuance of its strategy to undermine our State. The US seeks to tarnish the image of our Republic by raising the alleged “Human Rights issue” while imposing toughest economic sanctions on the latter for its differing ideology and ideals and for its alleged development and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The Declaration for developing inter-Korean relations and ensuring peace and prosperity adopted at the inter-Korean summit meeting in 2007 states that the north and the south shared the understanding about the need to put an end to the existing armistice mechanism and build a lasting peace mechanism and agreed to cooperate with each other in the efforts to push forward the issue of arranging the meeting of the heads of state of three or four parties directly concerned on the Korean Peninsula and declaring an end to the war.

Given the fact that it is a party to the Korean War and to the issue of reunification, one cannot say that south Korea is totally irrelevant to establishing lasting peace mechanism by way of replacing the Armistice Agreement with a peace agreement. Nonetheless, under the circumstances where the US stations its huge armed forces in the south targeting the

DPRK and takes hold of wartime control over the south Korean armed forces, it is meaningless to give precedence to north-south talks on signing a peace agreement.

China is also a participant in the Korean War and a signatory to the Armistice Agreement. But, its involvement in signing a peace agreement is something to be considered only after the US actually agrees to replace the Armistice Agreement with a peace agreement. Moreover, China has officially announced its position, through the speech of the then-foreign minister at the UN General Assembly in 1975, that it is the practical way for the direct parties to the Korean Armistice Agreement to negotiate and sign a peace agreement in replacement of the Armistice Agreement under the changed circumstances where the Chinese People's Volunteers' Corps withdrew from Korea a long time ago and a majority of components of the "UN Command" dispersed.

It stands to reason that, to put an end to the unstable state of ceasefire and secure lasting peace by way of replacing the Armistice Agreement with a peace agreement, the US should be the first to come out to sign a peace agreement.

Significance of replacing the Armistice Agreement with a peace agreement

Once the state of ceasefire between the DPRK and the US is terminated and a peace agreement is reached, a precarious ceasefire regime can be replaced with a lasting peace regime and it would, in turn, lead to fundamental removal of risks of war on the Korean Peninsula. An armistice agreement technically means a temporary suspension of combat operations by warring parties, and even if the armistice agreement is duly observed, it does not imply that the state of war has actually terminated and durable peace has settled in.

Furthermore, given that the Korean Armistice Agreement and the subsequent ceasefire regime has completely lost its binding force and is no longer in effect due to the US during the past 60 years, signing a peace agreement becomes all the more urgent.

The US intentionally refused to implement Article IV of the Armistice Agreement which stipulates that a higher level political conference shall be convened to seek to secure lasting peace in Korea, and systematically shipped ultra-modern war equipment including nuclear weapons into the whole territory of south Korea. Worse still, in the 1990s, the US appointed a general of the south Korean puppet army, which is neither an actual signatory nor a nominal party to the Armistice Agreement, as the senior representative to the Military Armistice Commission, thus completely breaching core provisions of the Armistice Agreement.

In particular, the US has been hell-bent on aggressive military provocations against the DPRK for decades under the pretext of "defense-oriented exercises," in flagrant violation of the basic spirit of the Armistice Agreement: a complete cessation of all hostilities by all armed forces under their control. The venue of such military movements, the size of the forces mobilized, and the contents of constantly renewed, north-targeted operational plans vividly indicate that those exercises are dangerous hostile acts aimed at occupying the

northern part of our Republic by mounting a large-scale surprise attack at any time.

It is a universally acknowledged international practice and the requirement of any international law that if an agreement between any countries becomes essentially nullified due to one party, such an agreement would no longer be valid and subsequently, there would be no reason for the other party to stay bound by that agreement.

At present, the central boundary line of the ground military demarcation line drawn by the Armistice Agreement is barely retained. However, the August incident of last year teaches a lesson that any accidental incident can lead to a full-scale nuclear war in this region where huge forces of warring parties are standing in acute confrontation.

The uncontrollable and dangerous situation, in which the DPRK and the US remaining technically at war consider themselves no longer legally bound in terms of use of force against each other, can be alleviated only when the Armistice Agreement that exists only in name is replaced with a peace agreement.

The danger of a war can be completely averted only when the US withdraws its troops stationed in south Korea, quits reinforcing its armaments, and suspends hostile military acts such as joint military drills as a result of the conclusion of a peace agreement.

If the hostile relations between the DPRK and the US are improved and the US hostile policy toward the DPRK is verifiably terminated through the process of a peace agreement, a radical change would be brought about in normalizing relations between countries in northeast Asia.

In general, termination of acts of war and normalization of relations through elimination of hostile relations between warring parties constitute two major elements of a peace agreement. At present, the US hostile policy against our Republic is extremely vicious, which is unprecedented in intensity. The resultant hostile relations between the DPRK and the US seriously obstruct the development of inter-Korean relations and DPRK-Japan relations as well as DPRK-US relations.

Only when the belligerent and hostile relations between the DPRK and the US are put to an end with the conclusion of the peace agreement can the relations between the countries in the Northeast Asian region be normalized and lasting peace regime be established on the Korean Peninsula.

In the past, a number of countries were engaged in a war with the United States, and in the long run, they brought the war to a complete halt and secured permanent peace by way of concluding or proclaiming a peace treaty or similar documents. Like the Korean War, the Vietnamese War was a clash between the US strategy toward Asia and the interests of the Vietnamese people and, at the same time, a confrontation between two conflicting ideals. Vietnam was of geopolitical significance as much as Korea for the United States in terms of realizing its strategy for domination over Asia. However, unlike the Korean War, the Vietnamese War came to an end with the signing of the peace agreement. As seen above, there

is no reason why the United States can't agree to reaching a peace agreement.

Despite the fact that signing of a peace agreement between the DPRK and the US is becoming a matter of great urgency, the latter persistently rejects the proposal by demanding nuclear abandonment on the DPRK's part as a precondition. Although the signing of a peace agreement is an issue to be addressed without any delay or precondition in light of its priority and urgency, the United States refuses to sign a peace agreement by asking for the DPRK's nuclear abandonment as a precondition, claiming it as a package solution to all other relevant issues.

As long as belligerent and hostile relations between the DPRK and the US continue to exist, talk of "respect for sovereignty," "equality," and denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula sounds hollow, devoid of any practical significance.

The DPRK's option for building up its nuclear force under such difficult circumstances is not intended to seek any political and economic benefits from the US and other countries or for intimidating anyone. The DPRK was compelled to opt for building up its nuclear force to deter serious threats to our State and people posed by the United States which possesses the world's most destructive nuclear force in quantity and quality and is in a state of war against the former. Therefore, the argument that the DPRK's scrapping of nuclear weapons would pave the way for concluding a peace agreement is a sophism where the cause and the outcome are completely reversed.

That out of the two parties in belligerent and hostile relations, one party demands that the other disarm while continuing to inflict serious military threats on the latter is an expression of inequality in itself and proves that the former intends to prolong the belligerent relationship, not to bring peace.

We have witnessed a string of precedents where the United States has coaxed those countries with differing ideology and ideals, the countries that stand in the way of realizing its strategy for world domination, into disarming themselves with fraudulent promises to lift sanctions and normalize the relations before toppling them.

It is utter nonsense for the United States to demand DPRK denuclearization while constantly imposing nuclear threats upon the DPRK by military provocations such as large-scale joint military drills involving nuclear strike means.

"A policy based on the approach of laying stress on denuclearization alone on the conception that North Korea is equal to nuclear threats is doomed to fail. It is because the only way for North Korea to scrap its nuclear weapons is to convince the former into trusting in the US, and therefore, such a policy of merely sticking to the nuclear issue and pursuing stand-off is infeasible," once noted Henry Kissinger, former US Secretary of State. *[Editor's note: We are unable to verify this quote.]*

Sitting US government officials voice their interest, on every possible occasion, in détente and ensuring peace on the Korean Peninsula, and if they are as sincere as they sound,

they should take a strategic option for giving priority to replacing the Armistice Agreement with a peace agreement before addressing the rest of the issues.

Today, thanks to the DPRK's deterrence, the balance of power is maintained and nominal peace is preserved by the skin of its teeth on the Korean Peninsula.

The conclusion of a peace agreement is not the only way for achieving peace. If the US persists on its strategy of stifling our Republic by use of force while constantly rejecting the conclusion of a peace agreement, the DPRK will have to make the inevitable choice to deter the war by means of force and protect peace.

Institute For American Studies (IFAS)

The IFAS, which is a research and advisory agency affiliated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), was established on Jan 29, 2014.

The IFAS, DPRK undertakes research on the nature and background of and ways designed to remove the US threats leveled against the DPRK and conducts in-depth study into the nuclear issue and the DPRK-US relationship.

The IFAS conducts research on the DPRK-US relationship and the state of the US in an effort to assist the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in performing policy on the United States.

The IFAS undertakes wide-ranging exchanges vis-à-vis policy research institutes and researchers of the US, Europe, and other foreign countries.

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