



Rising Tension in Northeast Asia and How to Ensure Regional Security by An Sang Nam

[Editor's note: the following article provides a North Korean perspective on the Six-Party Talks and the broader Korean Peninsula nuclear issue. For a U.S. perspective, see PacNet 23B.]

Today, the situation in Northeast Asia surrounding the Korean Peninsula is more enflamed than ever before. This causes great concern not only among all the Korean people but also among people in the region. This urgent situation presses for steps to prevent a new war and ensure the peace and security in the region by concerted efforts of regional countries.

Factors for rising tension in Northeast Asia

The U.S. hostile policy against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and its arms buildup constitutes a major factor threatening security in this region. The Six-Party Talks have yet to be resumed and the resolution of the nuclear issue has been delayed. To all intents and purposes, this is the fault of the U.S.

As mentioned several times, the DPRK put a just demand to the U.S. to change its hostile policy aimed at seeking "regime change" and shift its policy in favor of peaceful co-existence between the DPRK and the U.S. If the U.S. does this, the nuclear issue can be resolved.

But the second Bush administration, like that of the first term, stipulated as its policy not to co-exist with the DPRK but to "overturn" the system chosen by the Korean people themselves.

The Bush administration says that it is not hostile toward the DPRK and it doesn't intend to invade it. But, it acts differently from what it says. It sets as its "overriding objective" "regime change" in the DPRK and remains persistent in employing double-faced tactics of stick and carrot for this purpose.

This is well proved by the fact that Bush labeled the DPRK, defining it as part of the "axis of evil" and an "outpost of tyranny." Worse still, it slandered the supreme leadership of the DPRK.

It is well-established that Bush, as he soon took office, reneged on all dialogues and negotiations with the DPRK that the previous administration had held, and defined the DPRK as part of an "axis of evil" in his State of the Union Address of late January 2002 and named it as a target of its "preemptive nuclear strike" in March that same year.

This time, Bush, rather than retracting his labeling of his dialogue partner the DPRK as part of an "axis of evil," overstepped the mark, listing the state-chosen DPRK

government as an "outpost of tyranny," defining it as the object to be removed. He thus made the DPRK fail to find any credible reason to participate in the six-way talks.

The U.S. puts its dialogue partner in dishonor though it says it wants to hold negotiations. All told, this is not what we call a sincere approach to resolving the nuclear issue.

The U.S. is also massively deploying huge ultra-modern war hardware in south Korea under the pretext of "repositioning its forces." The repositioning of U.S. troops in south Korea is part of a new war preparation based on the theory of "preemptive strike." *[Editor's note: while North Koreans traditionally refer to their own country as the DPRK, they usually refer to the Republic of Korea as south Korea rather than South Korea or the ROK.]*

The U.S. announced in May 2003 an "arms buildup plan" with an envisaged investment of \$11 billion for south Korea. In mid 2004, it began deploying en masse its latest war hardware with the increased fund of \$13 billion under the signboard of "relocation of combat forces."

The "arms buildup plan" is justified to fill the "security vacuum" to be caused by the "reduced U.S. troops" in south Korea. This plan already went more than halfway.

The U.S. earmarked a lion's share of its budget for the research of smaller nuclear weapons aimed to destroy underground bunkers of the DPRK and simulates dropping nuclear bombs by deploying in south Korea U.S. Air Force planes stationed in Japan, Guam, and other places, in addition to the U.S. forces in south Korea. This fact is no longer considered secret. The U.S. brings into south Korea the latest war hardware, the destructive power of which was tested in the aggressive war in Iraq.

The U.S., as it reinforces its armed forces in south Korea, commits itself to continued joint military exercises on a large-scale basis against the DPRK. Last March, the U.S. and belligerent forces in south Korea staged in the whole area of south Korea joint military exercises codenamed "Foil Eagle." Such military exercises are, to all intents and purposes, a nuclear war rehearsal with its eye on the north, and include massive participation of elite forces in south Korea, the U.S. mainland, and overseas and other nuclear strike forces such as aircraft carriers.

Through such exercises, the U.S. pursues efforts to upgrade maneuverability beyond the Korean Peninsula at a moment's notice, not making its operational field confined to the DPRK, but is designed in the light of the changed mission of U.S. forces in south Korea to become a "mobile force in the wider region."

To cope with the grave situation created by the U.S. hostile policy toward the DPRK, the DPRK on Feb. 10, 2005

clarified that it was compelled to suspend its participation in the Six-Party Talks for an indefinite period until there was justification for it to attend and there were ample conditions and atmosphere to expect positive results from the talks. The DPRK also took a measure to bolster its nuclear weapons arsenal in order to protect the ideology, system, and democracy chosen by its people as the U.S. disclosed its attempt to topple the political system in the DPRK at any cost.

It is quite natural to respond to nukes in kind.

The U.S. strategy in Northeast Asia is another factor aggravating the regional situation.

China now increases its influence in Asia. South Korea is at loggerheads with the U.S. over the "security issue." What the U.S. is cooking in this situation is a proxy war in which countries in Northeast Asia turn their backs and fight each other. For this, the Bush administration tries to put in place a structure of confrontational containment against the DPRK and China by the U.S., Japan, and south Korea.

Recently, the U.S. fans Japan over the Tokdo islet, sacred territory of Korea, and Tokyo's bid for permanent membership on the UN Security Council. This puts a great spur to Japan in its undisguised bid to seize territories of other countries and distort history.

The U.S. does not like to see the Korean nation moving toward reunification hand in hand and tries by all possible means to put a fifth wheel in the smooth development of inter-Korean relations. This year alone, the U.S. puts pressure on the south Korean authority to "keep pace with the speed of economic cooperation" and "make it clear on the conception of a principle enemy."

All the facts prove that the U.S. does not seek reconciliation and cooperation between the north and the south of Korea and the security in Northeast Asia, but instead seeks confrontation between the north and the south.

How to ensure security in Northeast Asia

First, in order to ease tension in Northeast Asia and ensure regional peace and security, it is essential for the U.S. to renounce its hostile policy toward the DPRK and co-exist with it in peace.

The nuclear issue between the DPRK and the U.S. is a product of the Bush administration's extreme hostile policy. Such being the case, the key to this resolution lies in the U.S. changing its hostile policy into a policy for peaceful co-existence between the DPRK and the U.S. As long as the U.S. does not change its hostile policy against the DPRK, we can neither expect regional peace and stability nor the resolution of the nuclear issue between the DPRK and the U.S.

It is par for the course that the U.S. should apologize and withdraw what it said about the DPRK "ending its tyranny" and gives up its hostile policy aimed at "regime change" in the DPRK. It also should make clear its political will to move toward peaceful co-existence. Through all this, the U.S. should put its money where its mouth is.

The DPRK remains unchanged in its principled stand and maintain its overriding objective: to denuclearize the

Korean Peninsula and resolve the nuclear issue peacefully through dialogue and negotiations.

The DPRK is prepared to participate in the six-way talks at any time if the U.S. provides the DPRK with conditions and justification for the resumption of the Six-Party Talks without disregarding the DPRK. The switchover of the U.S. policy from hostility toward the DPRK to one of peaceful co-existence with the DPRK and a complete solution to the nuclear issue between the DPRK and the U.S. will naturally bring about settlement of the security issue in Northeast Asia.

Second, one way of ensuring regional security is that those countries interested in the security in Northeast Asia and linked to the continent meet to discuss the issue of security.

The master of Northeast Asia is the countries and people in this region. They are deeply interested in this security and have the potential and capacity to be responsible for regional peace and security. That is why it is very important for these countries to meet to discuss the issue of regional security. As the U.S. is across the ocean and Japan is away from the continent, they have no interest in the peace and security of Northeast Asia, nor can they have any responsibility for them.

Third, it is possible to ensure the security of Northeast Asia only when all aggressive forces deployed in this region are completely removed. In order to ensure regional security, U.S. forces along with all its lethal weapons must be withdrawn from this region and U.S. interference in the internal affairs of other countries be terminated.

Fourth, the militarism of Japan must be checked at any cost. Japan's ambition to beautify and justify its dirty history of aggression, to grab the territory of other countries and step up preparations to invade Asia must be frustrated at all costs as it is a very dangerous development from the viewpoint of peace in Asia and the rest of the world.

The DPRK, as a responsible country located in Northeast Asia, will make every possible effort to ensure regional peace and security as it did in the past.

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