North Korea's Internal and External Policies and Future Situation on the Korean Peninsula

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1. North Korea's Strategy on the U.S. and South Korea: Comparison pre- and post-2018

□ North Korea's Nuclear Issue and Its Strategy on Approaching the U.S.: 2009~2017

① Withdrawal of the U.S.'s Hostile Policy on North Korea
   ■ U.S.-North Korea talks are possible only when there is a reliable sign or a symbolic gesture of transforming the U.S.'s 'hostile policy toward North Korea'

② Nuclear Negotiations with North Korea Possible after a Preemptive Measure for Building Trust
   ■ A nuclear freeze or denuclearization is impossible without ‘trust’
   ■ The distinction between the trust-building phase and the negotiation phase regarding North Korea's nuclear program has emerged since 2010

③ Nuclear Weapons are Not an Object for Dialogue·Negotiations
   ■ North Korea claimed that 'denuclearization' could speed up if a peace agreement would be reached by 2010
   ■ From 2013, North Korea approached a peace agreement and denuclearization separately (Nuclear weapons are not up for political negotiations1)
   ■ From 2013, nuclear missile advancement started to speed up (a 4-year plan for modernization of defense technology)

④ South Korea is Not a Subject for Nuclear Talks or Negotiations
   ■ Nuclear weapons are a historical by-product of the U.S.'s 'hostile policy on North Korea' and should be dealt with between the U.S. and North Korea
   ■ North Korea claimed that South Korea is neither a party to North Korea's nuclear issue nor a rational mediator or interventionist

□ North Korea's Perception of the U.S.'s Hostile Policy: 2009~2017

■ Obstacles for U.S.-North Korea Talks: Main Contents of the Hostile Policy on North Korea
   (1) U.S. nuclear policy that designates North Korea as an object for a preemptive nuclear strike
   (2) It is at the forefront of sanctions and pressure
   (3) A threat in the form of strategic assets deployed to the Korean Peninsula
   (4) Aggressive ROK-U.S. joint military exercise
   (5) Oral defamation including an insult of the region and its leader

1 Memorandum of the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (March 31, 2017)
■ Core Demands of North Korea

1. A halt in ROK-U.S. joint military exercises and the deployment of strategic assets to the Korean Peninsula
2. A halt in sanctions and pressure
3. A change in policy on North Korea's nuclear program
4. A recognition of North Korea's strategic position (de-facto recognition of North Korea as a nuclear state and recognition of North Korea as a nuclear negotiation partner)
5. Reaching a peace agreement and normalizing relations
6. Nuclear disarmament

□ Estimation of North Korea's Nuclear Roadmap Claimed by North Korea up until 2017

- Halt in the U.S.-ROK joint military exercises
- Withdrawal of the U.S.'s hostile policy on NK
  - Non-aggression toward NK (No intent for preemptive attack)
  - Lifting of sanctions imposed on NK
  - Halting nuclear defiance
- Recognition of nuclear state

□ The Meaning of North Korea's Version of Nuclear Disarmament up until 2017 and the Difference between Nuclear Disarmament and Denuclearization

- A nuclear facility was shut down, and ICBM development was halted and restricted while leaving intact a 'reversible nuclear capacity'
- Not only North Korea's nuclear disarmament but also the U.S.'s extended deterrence on the Korean Peninsula is equally an object for disarmament (symmetric nuclear disarmament concept)
- An action-for-action principle that reduces U.S.-North Korea mutual nuclear threats to build trust
- It is possible that North Korea may demand institutional tools, such as the U.S.-North Korea or multilateral 'nuclear disarmament agreement,' and 'missile restriction agreement'
- It is possible that North Korea's own nuclear disarmament may call for mutual monitoring-verification system

□ Changes in Approach to North Korea's Nuclear Issue after 2018
 zenith\x2f\x2fthe-\x2fend\x2f-of\x2fthe\x2fwar\x2fdeclaration\x2ffirst\x2fand\x2fpeace\x2fagreement\x2flater

- Trust-building by primarily reaching a peace agreement was emphasized in the past
- North Korea now demands that trust be affirmed through a political 'end-of-the-war declaration,' judging that the idea of a peace agreement would not fare well both for the U.S. and South Korea

2 Linkage between Peace Agreement and Denuclearization

- In the past, North Korea clung to the position that the conclusion of a peace agreement is a separate matter from denuclearization
- North Korea agreed to a simultaneous progression of the establishment of a peace regime and denuclearization through inter-Korean and U.S.-North Korea agreements

3 Seeking a Development Strategy by Making Nuclear Weaponry an Object for Negotiations

- A strong position was shown that nuclear weapons were not an object for talks or negotiations
- North Korea demanded that a corresponding measure, such as the end-of-the-war declaration and the easing of sanctions, be followed by a promise for complete denuclearization

4 A Demand for South Korea to be an Active Mediator for Denuclearization

- In the past, a principal was adhered to that it will not discuss or negotiate nuclear issues with South Korea
- Through an agreement reached at the Inter-Korean summit in 2018, North Korea recognized South Korea's standing as a mediator, party, and guarantor

North Korea's Strategy in Negotiations with the U.S. after 2018

- Developments of U.S.-North Korea Negotiations from 2018 to 2020

North Korea's Strategy in Negotiations with the U.S. after 2018

- Four Inflection Points in U.S.-North Korea Denuclearization Negotiations
  [Inflection Point 1] June 12, 2018 ~ October 2, 2018
    - U.S.-North Korea Summit in Singapore
    - Third Visit of U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to North Korea (July 6, 2018)
    - A speech delivered by North Korea’s Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho at the UN General
Assembly (“We will not be swayed by the end-of-the war declaration”)

[Inflection Point 2] December 20, 2018 ~ February 28, 2019
· First mentioning of a ‘new path’ (December 20, 2018)
· A visit by special envoy, Vice Chairman of the Central Committee of the WPK, Kim Yong-chol, to the U.S. (January 17, 2019)
· Working-level negotiation in Stockholm, Sweden (January 22, 2019)
· A breakdown of the U.S.-North Korea summit in Hanoi

[Inflection Point 3] April 12, 2019 ~ October 23, 2019
· Kim Jong Un's policy speech at the Supreme People's Assembly (New calculation, the end-of-the year deadline, a new path)
· A meeting among leaders of South Korea, North Korea, and the U.S. in Panmunjom (June 30, 2019)
· A breakdown of U.S.-North Korea working-level negotiations in Stockholm (October 5, 2019)
· Kim Jong Un riding on the back of a white horse at the Paektu Mountain (October 16, 2019)
· Kim Jong Un ordered a demolition of the Mount Geumgang tourism zone (October 23, 2019)

[Inflection Point 4] December 28, 2019 ~ Current
· The 5th Plenary Meeting of the 7th Central Committee of WPK (A frontal breakthrough, continuation of strategic weapons development)
· Delay in implementing the demolition of the Mount Geumgang tourism zone
· Blowing-up the Inter-Korean Joint Liaison Office after taking issue with propaganda leaflets flown to North Korea
· Operation of the maximum quarantine system for COVID-19
· No denuclearization negotiation without a withdrawal of the U.S.’s hostile policy on North Korea (Kim Yo-jong 7.11 discourse)

◼ Change of framework for negotiations with the U.S. via four inflections points: the end-of-the war declaration → lifting of sanctions against North Korea → withdrawal of the hostile policy on North Korea
A change in its tactical attitude toward South Korea in line with a change of the negotiation framework with the U.S.

- Demand for the end-of-the-war declaration: active utilization of a South-North-U.S. trilateral channel and inter-Korean relations as a tool to build U.S.-North Korea trust
- The period for demand of lifting of sanctions: focus on U.S.-NK direct talks, persuasion of the U.S., and demand for implementation of an inter-Korean agreement to shake up the framework of sanctions
- After the demand for withdrawal of the hostile policy toward NK: Indirect pressure on the U.S. by launching an offensive against South Korea, such as the demolition of the Mount Geumgang tourism zone, blowing-up of the Inter-Korean Joint Liaison Office, and criticism of U.S.-ROK joint military exercises and South Korea's weapons' acquisition

Changes in North Korea's Demands for Negotiations with the U.S.

U.S.-North Korea summit in Hanoi: **Partial denuclearization (Yongbyon) vs. partial lifting of sanctions (five major sanctions)**

**After Hanoi: [Conditions for negotiation resumption] Withdrawal of hostile policy toward NK vs. resumption of U.S.-NK negotiation**

- Halt in U.S.-ROK joint military exercises (a 2+2 agreement)
- Halt in additional measures for unilateral sanctions, withdrawal of designation as state sponsors of terrorism
- Non-intervention in human rights issues, halt in hostile verbal attacks

**[Basic frame] Demunuclearization vs. comprehensive security guarantee [full-scale withdrawal of hostile policy toward N.K]**

- Demand for change of U.S. nuclear policy on designating NK as a subject for nuclear preemptive strike
- Halt in the deployment of strategic assets to the Korean Peninsula
- Halt in U.S.-ROK joint military exercises
- Halt in sanctions and pressure
- Conclusion of peace agreement, normalization of relations
- Nuclear disarmament after recognizing NK's strategic position
- U.S.'s decisive change of attitude: "hardened stance: withdrawal of U.S. forces to South Korea..."
Strengthening of ‘nuclear disarmament’ via a negotiation framework of ‘denuclearization vs. security guarantee’

- The essence of the concept of ‘complete denuclearization’ in exchange for withdrawal of its hostile policy on North Korea

Regression to the existing logic of ‘nuclear disarmament’ that includes a removal of the U.S. extended deterrence (nuclear umbrella) and exchange of denuclearization with a security guarantee

Category of denuclearization

1. North Korea's denuclearization: Elimination of nuclear weapons program in North Korean region
3. Denuclearization on the Chosun Peninsula: Synchronous progression of North Korea's denuclearization and elimination of the U.S. nuclear deterrence

Major issues in existing U.S.-North Korea negotiations: Difference in approach

| North Korea | U.S. |
■ Ambiguity in details for security guarantee (U.S's withdrawal of its hostile policy), non-realistic aspect of ‘equivalence’ and ‘unjustness’ from the perspective of realist inter-Korean relations

■ Difference in approach between U.S. and North Korea under the Trump administration

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<tr>
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<th>Structure of Exchange</th>
<th>Implementation Type</th>
<th>Trust-building ME</th>
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<tr>
<td>North Korea</td>
<td>Phased denuclearization vs. phased security guarantee</td>
<td>Synchronous-phased-equivalent → fair exchange</td>
<td>Halt in U.S.-ROK joint military exercises  Prompt end-of-the war declaration  Lifting of sanctions on NK</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Comprehensive denuclearization vs. Economic prosperity, bright future</td>
<td>Synchronous-parallel-non-equivalent → Denuclearization first, rewards later</td>
<td>Agreement implementation of comprehensive denuclearization</td>
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□ Trump administration's negotiation strategy and announcement of a 'flexible approach'

■ An emphasis of the U.S. on a 'flexible approach' for negotiations with North Korea since June

■ A consensus was made between the U.S. and ROK on the temporary and reversible easing of sanctions if North Korea agreed to and showed a willingness for the implementation of denuclearization (Snapback provision, a sunset provision on technology)

■ It appears that such a position from the U.S. was explained in detail to North Korea at the working-level negotiations in Stockholm.

■ A ‘flexible approach’ suggests that the economic and political security guarantees, without separating them into a category, could be adjusted in response to North Korea's actions.

□ Trends and patterns in the North Korean strategy toward South Korea
Kim Yo-jong is in charge of South Korean and U.S. affairs as First Vice Director of Central Committee of WPK. Starting in 2018, she has been directly involved in summits with South Korea and the U.S. She effectively deals with all the sensitive issues both at home and abroad.

Streamlining the message via Kim Yo-jong that reflects Chairman Kim Jong Un’s intentions

She assumes the role of First Vice Director of The Organization and Guidance Department of WPK in charge of South Korea and the U.S. It is possible that she is in charge largely of projects concerning South Korea-related party organizations and other organizations under the State Affairs Commission as well as negotiations with the U.S.-related departments under the Foreign Ministry.

2. Prospect for North Korea's Strategy on the U.S. and South Korea in 2021
North Korea's Basis for assessing the Biden administration's policy on North Korea

- Whether there exists a message of 'inheriting' the existing agreement negotiations between the U.S. and North Korea
- The policy priority given to the North Korean issue (if it is put on the back-burner and contact is delayed, the spectrum of swinging between hawkish and dovish tactics is likely to be expanded intended for calling the attention)
- The level of U.S.-ROK joint military exercises
- Attitude of the new U.S. administration on Inter-Korean relations
- Whether the U.S. imposes additional measures of sanctions on North Korea
- Announcement of the position on issues of North Korea's human rights or democracy

Early strategic baseline of the Biden administration on North Korea

- North Korea's mid- and long-term strategic goals for the U.S.
  - Corresponding measures in exchange for denuclearization include establishing diplomatic relations between the U.S. and North Korea, lifting of sanctions on North Korea, securing the security guarantee via the conclusion of a peace agreement, thereby creating the conditions for economic development
- North Korea's strategic baseline toward the U.S.
  - It is possible that North Korea may simultaneously continue developing strategic weapons and express its intention for resuming the negotiations
  - It is possible that North Korea may strengthen the logic of its own style of nuclear disarmament that includes a withdrawal of existing 'U.S. hostile policy on North Korea.' It may attempt to gain negotiation leverage by setting the 'bar' for negotiation higher.
  - It is possible that in negotiations, North Korea may induce the Biden administration into a nuclear disarmament approach and use the logic of North Korea's own nuclear disarmament that centers around a comprehensive withdrawal of the U.S.'s hostile policy on North Korea
- Early basic demands
  ① Inheriting the existing agreements, ② Gradual-phased approach, ③ Demand for early measure of trust-building (Halt in U.S.-ROK joint military exercises, lifting of sanctions on NK), ④ Comprehensive demands for the withdrawal of the U.S.'s hostile policy on North Korea, and ⑤ Normalization of relations

message sent to the U.S. after the 8th Party Congress

- 제8기 제3차 당중앙위원회 전원회의 메시지
  - 크게 경제 및 민생, 대외정책 두 분야로 정책 제시
  - 경제·민생에 있어서는 비상방역체계 내에서 기존 자력갱생식 전략 유지
  - 대외정책은 정제된 외교적 결론을 통해 정세 관리에 무게를 두는 접근 제시
대외정책이 수립되었음을 알림으로써 미국의 대북정책에 대한 긍정적 수용 의사를 보인 것으로 보이며, 대화에 무게를 두는 메시지를 통해 미국에게 공을 넘기며 대화에 나설 수 있는 명분 제공을 요청하는 모양새

■ 대북적대시정책 철회 요구를 언급하지 않아 기존 대화의 전제조건으로 완강하게 요구했던 문턱을 전술적으로 완화하여 북미협상에 임할 수 있는 여건을 만들려는 의도

■ 대내분야 관련 경제 5개년계획 성과적 추진을 강박적으로 의식하고 있는 것으로 보이며, 경제 및 농업 관련 대책은 ‘자력갱생전략’ 이외에 새로운 내용은 부재

■ 당중앙위 전원회의 전체 진행에서 당 정치국 상무위원회의 주도적 위상이 나타나고 있어 향후 상무위원회가 분야별 국정 책임운영의 핵심이 될 것으로 보임.

■ 대미메시지 발신과 포괄적이고 완화된 대화조건 제시

- (총비서 동지께서는) “우리 ① 국가의 존엄과 자주적인 발전리익을 수호하고 ② 평화적 환경과 국가 안전을 맡음직하게 담보하자면 대화에도 대결에도 다 준비되어 있어야 하며 특히 대결에는 더욱 빈틈없이 준비되어 있어야 한다고 강조”

- 기존에 대화 조건으로 완강하게 요구했던 대북적대시정책 철회 대신 포괄적이고 완화된 대화 조건 간접적으로 제시
  ① ‘국가의 존엄과 자주적 발전리익 수호’
     : 북한체제와 지도자 인정 및 존중, 발전 가로막는 제약 제거 등
  ② ‘평화적 환경과 국가 안전의 담보’
     : 미국의 군사적 위협, 외교적 적대시, 평화 제도화(종전선언/평화협정) 등이 최근 북한 메체 문맥에서 평화와 안전에 포함
- 사실상 기존에 대북적대시정책 철회로 주장했던 내용들에 해당하지만, 순화하고 완화하고 포괄적인 표현으로 대체

□ 주변 정세를 활용한 능동적 대외정책 및 한반도 정세 관리 시사
총비서 동지께서는 '중요한 국제 및 지역문제들에 대한 당과 공화국 정부의 대외정책적 입장을 원칙들을 표명하시며 우리 국가의 전략적 지위와 능동적 역할을 더욱 높이고 유리한 외적 환경을 주동적으로 마련해 나갈 데 대하여 언급하시면서 시시각각 변화되는 상황에 예민하고 기민하게 반응대응하며 조선반도 정세를 안정적으로 관리해 나가는 데 주력해 나가야 한다고 밝하시였다.'

미중 전략경쟁 구도와 국제 및 지역 정세를 활용한 외교적 이익 강조
- 북한의 당대회를 비롯한 주요 정책 결정 내용에 이런 내용이 언급된 것은 이례적이고 거의 처음이라고 판단됨(크게 주목할 필요)
  - 기존에 북한은 대체로 한반도 문제 차원에서 대미정책이라는 제한된 시야에서 대외정책을 언급해 왔으나, 이번에는 국제 및 지역문제들을 입장과 원칙을 갖고 활용하겠다는 의지를 공개적으로 표출
  - 국제 및 지역문제는 미중 전략경쟁과 미국의 대중국 포위압박전략, 미러 긴장, 미국의 대서양 동맹 회복, 나토와 러시아 및 중국과의 긴장 구도 등
  - 이런 문제들을 자신의 ‘전략적 지위’를 높이며 한반도 정세 관리와 연관 짐가했다고 하는 것은 국제 및 지역 현안을 활용한 전략적/전술적 이익을 적극화하겠다는 것으로 해석 가능
  - 향후 미국의 대중국 포위압박전략 수준과 강도에 따라 중국 동조화 및 북중 밀착, 북중러 전략적 제휴, 러시아 외교 강화 등을 전략적/전술적 레버리지로 활용하겠다는 것으로 보임.

□ 경제분야 당 중심의 실용주의적 정책 운영 가시화
○ 경제발전 5개년계획 성공적 추진에 대한 지도부의 지대한 관심
  - (총비서 동지께서는) "5개년계획 수행의 확고한 담보 마련" 제시
  - 김정은 위원장은 계획 첫해 상반기부터 꾸준하게 정형을 파악해 문제점 보완하며 성과를 내겠다는 의지가 강하게 표출, 지난 시기 국가경제전략 5개년 계획의 실패를 반복하지 않겠다는 의도 절박하게 표출
  - 지난 해 연속적인 자연재해로 인한 어려움 극복, 당의 신속한 대응 모습을 보여주고 민심 이완을 막기 위한 상정적 측면
  - 매년 연말 1년 단위 경제실적 조사에서 상반기/하반기 두 차례에 걸친 정형파악을 정례화할 가능성이 높아짐.(당 전원회의가 상하반기 두 차례 경제 전반을 점검하는 회의체로 자리매김 가능성)
대형식 경제 분야 계획 추진의 어려움 공개, 식량 상황 어려움 공개화

- (총비서 동지께서) “현재 우리 앞에 가로놓인 여러 가지 애로와 난관으로 인하여 국가계획과 정책적 과업들을 수행하는 과정에 일련의 편향들도 산생되었고 지적”
- “농업부문에서 지난 해 태풍 피해로 용골생산계획을 미달하여 현재 인민들의 식량형편이 급장”
- (총비서 동지께서는) “지난 해 농사에 큰 불리한 조건으로부터 전당적, 전 국가적인 힘을 농사에 충집중하는 것이 절실하다고 말씀”
- 비상방역 상황에서 민생 해결 방안으로 감정은 위원장은 민생과 직접된 경공업과 수산업 생산 증대를 주문
- 어려운 실해에 대한 지도자의 공개적 발언은 그의 실용주의적 국정운영 코드 차원

당 중심 통치의 실용주의적 접근 가시화

- 지난 해 태풍 피해 이후 개최된 당 중앙위 정치국 회의 때부터 경제 실적 달성의 실패 인정, 과거 구체적 실패를 공개하지 않던 것과는 다른 형태
- 당 중심의 국정운영과 통치를 강조할수록 정책 현안문제를 공개화하고 대책 논의를 확대된 인적 구성에 동반 협의하는 형식을 가시화

비상방역체계에 따른 주민 민생 어려움 장기화 인정

- (총비서 동지께서는) “비상방역상황의 장기화는...경제전반을 유지하고 인민들의 식의주를 보장하기 위한 투쟁의 장기화”
- 의제 자체의 비상방역의 장기성 대비로 설정하고 “국가비상방역사업에서의 최대 각성과 규율 준수기능의 장기화”, “현 조건에 맞게 국가적으로 방역태세를 완벽하게 견지”를 주문
- 향후에도 비상방역체계 유지 속에서 경제와 민생을 정기간 구도는 지속하겠다는 의도
- 방역 차원에서 기존에 해왔던 대외적 접촉, 교류의 최소화는 하반기 전세계적 백신 접종이 안정권에 진입할 때까지 유지될 가능성