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## **Evaluating the South Korean Special Envoy's 2nd Pyongyang Visit: Reviving Dialogue, Delaying Resolution**

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On September 5, 2018, the details of the South Korean high-level delegation's second visit to North Korea were released. At a press briefing the next day on September 6, the South Korean president's special envoy and National Security Director Chung Eui-yong announced several outcomes and agreements from the inter-Korean consultations: (1) the third inter-Korean summit between President Moon Jae-in and Chairman Kim Jong Un would be held from September 18 to 20 in Pyongyang, (2) Chairman Kim Jong Un reiterated his firm commitment to the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, (3) the two sides agreed to continue talks to reduce military tensions and take measures to build mutual trust, and (4) they agreed to open a joint liaison office before the third summit. In his answers to press questions following the briefing, Special Envoy Chung reconfirmed the dismantlement of the North Korean missile engine testing facility at Dongchang-ri and noted that Chairman Kim had dismissed claims by some that a declaration to end the Korean War would lead to the withdrawal of American troops in South Korea.

The delegation's second visit to North Korea contributed to the improvement of inter-Korean and US-North Korea relations and has been the spark that has kept the momentum alive for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The United States had hoped for a positive outcome based on the telephone conversation between President Trump and President Moon prior to the delegation's departure. While not revealing the details during the press briefing, the delegation also received a North Korean message to deliver to the United States, most likely detailing more advanced denuclearization measures. It was an achievement that mention of a "declaration the end the war at an early date", which the North had insisted upon up to that point, was not emphasized as a key feature of the talks. Another positive outcome was that they did not include reference to economic cooperation as was originally anticipated.

Due to these factors, the third inter-Korean summit is expected to be an important occasion for frank and honest debate on the development of peace and denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula as well as inter-Korean relations.

However, based on the limited information that has been made available thus far, there still remains much work to be done to achieve denuclearization. This is the task that lies ahead of the third inter-Korean summit in Pyongyang.

First, there is still no detailed roadmap for the denuclearization of North Korea. The concept of a "complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" needs to be fleshed out. Since the first Moon-Kim inter-Korean summit on April 27 and the US-North Korea summit on June 12, the term has still remained stuck at the level of "repeat verification." Regrettably, Chairman Kim's commitment to abandoning his nuclear weapons capability was not explicitly stated in either the press reports of the North's Korean Central News Agency nor the South's delegation's press briefing and was full of conditions. Considering these points, North Korea has left space to interpret the "complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" as both the "abandonment or dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear capability" as well as "US-North Korean nuclear disarmament talks premised on North Korea's nuclear status."

In addition, North Korea's Korean Central News Agency stipulated that the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula should occur in the context of no more armed conflict, military threats, nuclear weapons, and nuclear threats, which suggests that the issue of the South Korea-US alliance could be raised in any future denuclearization process. At the same time, North Korea emphasized that the United States had not taken reciprocal steps even though it had preemptively carried out denuclearization measures. This is also indicative of its willingness to negotiate using salami slicing tactics, in which North Korea's nuclear capability is negotiated and rewarded piecemeal, without accepting the denuclearization road map based on "report-verify-dismantle" even as it urges the United States to agree to declare an end to the war. Therefore, we have to find our own alternatives so that North Korea can accept the denuclearization road map leading to "report-verify-dismantle".

Second, it is now important to go beyond rhetorical flourishes and secure promises on specific measures. Chairman Kim has already indirectly expressed his commitment to denuclearization on several occasions, including the two visits by the South's high-level delegation and at the US-North Korea summit. This should now be shaped to detailed plan in an official written document, or even an externally disclosed policy or action. No one denies that North Korea is maintaining its nuclear and missile testing moratorium. Indeed, there has been no North Korean nuclear or missile test in the past 10 months, mainly because North Korea publicly dismantled its Punggye-ri nuclear test site. However, there still remains suspicions about the partial freeze. For example, the dismantlement of the Dongchang-ri engine testing facility (even if it is viewed as a freeze measure and not part of the moratorium) has only been 'estimated' through satellite photographs or observers' accounts, but it has still not been publicly announced. Setting aside the removal of nuclear materials or actual nuclear weapons, as was discussed and expected to be implemented during the first half of the year, it is necessary to at least obtain a declaration listing the North's nuclear capabilities, which would nevertheless constitute a substantial retreat from initial goals.

Third, it is necessary to outline how proposed inter-Korean economic cooperation activities such as road and rail links, easing political and military tensions, and establishing a peace regime will actually lead to the denuclearization of the peninsula and the improvement of US-North relations. It is still difficult to resolve everything with the third inter-Korean summit given the brevity of the current thaw between North and South Korea. What is important is that North Korea's expectations for inter-Korean economic cooperation and reducing tensions are very high—though these expectations should not lead to the relaxation of Korea-US-international cooperation as in the past or an exclusive focus on "national cooperation"—this expectation should reflect the positive change of the North itself and should be able to come from the inter-Korean agreement. For example, the expression of the principle of pursuing international obligations and development of inter-Korean relations at the same time may be considered. Furthermore, a vision should be laid out to ensure that cooperation and peace on the Korean Peninsula will contribute to the stability of the regional order. This will enable us to win broad support and cooperation from neighboring countries for our North Korea policy and denuclearization efforts.

Given that there may still be a North Korean message for the United States that has not been announced publicly, it is hard to predict whether progress in the US-North Korean relationship or a stronger drive for denuclearization will be positive or negative after the inter-Korean summit. However, if Washington positively evaluates Pyongyang's message delivered by the South Korean delegation, it will be possible to resume a fourth visit to North Korea by Secretary of State Pompeo after the summit meeting between the two Koreas and the South Korea-US meeting at the UN General Assembly. In this case, "declaring an end to the war by the end of the year" as set out in the Panmunjom Declaration will be implemented without trouble. On the other hand, if the United States considers this message to still be insufficient, the challenges to be addressed at the third inter-Korean summit are likely to grow.

Finally, South Korea-US cooperation and cooperation with neighboring countries should be strengthened. Now that the third inter-Korean summit meeting has been confirmed, we need to reorganize North Korea policy and foreign policy with a view to re-establishing a foundation for peace and denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula that goes far beyond the successful conclusion of the summit. First, we should once again reaffirm to North Korea and neighboring countries what our role is in the goal of peace and denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula. Whether this role is as a 'mediator' or as an 'facilitator,' it is necessary to state more explicitly what are Korea's ideas and options regarding the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and to persuade neighboring countries. If there are discrepancies between the two Koreas and between South Korea and the US, we should be able to state what they are and openly and transparently address them rather than avoid them. The fact that the joint liaison office is scheduled to be opened before the third summit could be a cause for conflict between South Korea and the US if it is not coordinated properly. Efforts to secure autonomy are important, but it is also necessary to recognize that it is crucial to stably manage the situation through strengthening South Korea-US cooperation.

The change in Pyongyang's behavior reflects North Korea's desire to act as a normal international actor and is also evident in the gestures of Chairman Kim. If so, the principle should be applied to inter-Korean relations as well, and it is necessary for us to take a firm stand. Some pinned the success of the delegation's trip on whether or not they would meet Chairman Kim, but this is inappropriate. It is common sense and to be expected that a

country's "special envoy", as the representative of that country's leader, meet with the leader of another country. In other words, the meeting with Chairman Kim is not a "favor" by North Korea but the "right" of the envoy. We should reflect on whether or not we are unnecessarily deferential in this relationship.

The diplomacy of neighboring countries for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula should also be diversified. Even if we pursue North Korea policy and foreign policy with good intentions, neighboring countries can always interpret our intentions based on their own interests and take countermeasures. This cannot have a positive impact on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. To overcome this, efforts to enhance trust and diplomatic transparency with neighboring countries should be actively pursued as well as on policies toward North Korea. Domestically, decision-making should be diversified and as much information as possible should be shared. It is now time to pay attention to these problems.