

## **U.S.-Russia Ceasefire Talks Invite a Serious Threat to Korean Peninsula Security**

THE ASAN INSTITUTE  
for POLICY STUDIES  
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President  
2025. 3. 4.

The United States and Russia have begun negotiations to end the Ukraine war. This is a welcome news. However, the way these negotiations are taking place is concerning. Moreover, President Trump called President Zelensky a dictator and said Ukraine should have never started the war. This gives the impression that President Trump is pressuring Ukraine to accept U.S.-Russia negotiations.

Ukraine is the biggest victim of Russia's aggression and is directly affected by the war. Since February 2022, Russia has occupied almost 20% of Ukraine's territory. It killed over 80,000 people, including civilians and soldiers. It is estimated to cost \$480 billion to rebuild the country after the war over the next decade. Sidelining Ukraine and seeking an end to the war through negotiations with Russia is inconsistent with the liberal democratic principles that the United States has pursued.

These peace talks have not only excluded Ukraine but also Europe which has supported Ukraine for three years. But the biggest problem with these peace talks is that they can teach authoritarian revisionist states a dangerous lesson. If the results of the peace talks settled between the United States and Russia are implemented as they are, Russia will be able to end the war, despite having invaded Ukraine, without any real costs. Russia will also take more aggressive policies against Ukraine and neighboring European countries, and be tempted to launch another invasion in the future. Because U.S. security commitments cannot be trusted, there are calls in Germany for nuclear-sharing arrangements with Britain and France. In Poland, there is an unfolding debate about indigenous nuclear armament.

China and North Korea will also closely watch the outcome of the peace talks in Ukraine. They may miscalculate that if they invade Taiwan or South Korea, the United States will want to negotiate rather than respond militarily. When President Trump has been asked, "How would you respond to a Chinese invasion of Taiwan?" he has avoided discussing military action. He has instead stated that he would use economic retaliation, including tariffs, while emphasizing that Taiwan should spend more on defense. With an attitude and policy like this, can he deter China's determination to invade Taiwan?

From North Korea's perspective, which has long sought the communization of the Korean Peninsula, the Trump administration's Ukraine peace talks can be seen as an opportunity by North Korea. North Korea will remember that President Putin and other Russian leaders

threatened to use tactical nuclear weapons throughout the Ukraine war. They will make use of a “nuclear shadow” to make threats in negotiations with the United States after launching a surprise provocation against South Korea. If North Korea threatens the security of the continental United States with nuclear weapons, won't the United States be tempted to use a ceasefire card with North Korea faster than it did in the Ukraine war? The security on the Korean Peninsula will only become more dangerous if President Trump's remark, “It is good to get along with [a country] that has a lot of nuclear weapons,” becomes a reality.

The Ukraine peace talks are reminiscent of the 1973 Paris Peace Accords. At the time, the United States negotiated with North Vietnam and made South Vietnam accept the outcome. South Vietnam agreed to the peace agreement between the United States and North Vietnam because it believed the U.S. assurance that it would return if North Vietnam invaded. Shortly after, North Vietnam invaded South Vietnam again, but the United States did not return. The result was that Vietnam became a communist country.

Turning a blind eye to illegal invasions could open the door to even more wars. Even if South Korea pays a higher cost in order to prevent war and respond to North Korea's nuclear threat, it needs to secure more concrete extended deterrence measures, including more credible U.S. security assurances and redeployment of tactical nuclear weapons. Moreover, by establishing an Asian NATO, we must push back against the threatening ambitions of authoritarian forces.

\* The view expressed herein was published on February 26 in *The Chosun Ilbo* and does not necessarily reflect the views of The Asan Institute for Policy Studies.