

Dark Clouds of Military Tension Over the Korean Peninsula, North Korea Waited, Disappointed and Now Angry

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In 2012, a young man educated in the West took over the power in Pyongyang; he has decided to transform North Korea into an ordinary country where people can live decent life.

His name is Kim Jong-un. He has given everything to achieve his objectives. He met three times Moon Jae-in, president of South Korea and three times Donald Trump, president of the U.S.

He made a several-thousand-km train trip in February 2019 to Hanoi filled with the hope for peace; he was betrayed by Trump.

Yet, he has not given up the hope; he still trusted Moon Jae-in; he waited, he was disappointed.

Then, a group of North Korean refugees in South Korea has not stopped sending balloons of anti-Kim Jong-un propaganda leaflets insulting the dignity of the supreme leader.

Now he is angry. His sister, Kim Yo-jong has been making violent statements against Moon Jae-in and South Korea; she even promised to blow up the Joint Liaison Office Building in the city of Gaesung, the symbol of the North-South peace dialogue.

The Building was blown up at 14:49 on June 16.

And, the danger of military confrontation on the Korean peninsula is not impossible.

North Korea might send back some army units including long-distance artillery units to Gaesung city and Geumgan-san area thus threatening South Korea, in particular, the Seoul metropolitan area where 50% of South Koreans live.

This paper begins with the episode of propaganda leaflets followed by the analysis of the hidden reasons for violent reaction of North Korea through Kim Yo-jong. Then, it discusses the North-South economic cooperation which is the only way to overcome the present security crisis.

Propaganda Leaflets Incidence

In the period, from April 9 to May 31, 2020, a radical right-wing group of North Korean

refugees sent by air and sea more than 10,000 propaganda leaflets with a bag of rice, one-dollar bill and a lot of dirty insulting words against Kim Jong-un and North Korea.

There are about 30,000 North Korean refugees most of whom are now South Korean citizens.

Some of them earn money by reporting to intelligence agencies in the U.S. and South Korea under conservative government fabricated stories of abuse of power and violation of human rights in the North.

A few radical group work for some American NGOs which fund the operation of sending the leaflets; this operation violates some existing South Korean laws and, in particular, the Panmunjom Declaration of April 2018 and the Joint Pyongyang Declaration of September, 2018.



Kim Yo-jong (image on the right; source is Reuters), vice-director of the United Front Department of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) who is now considered to be second in command in Pyongyang lashed out in public blaming South Korea for allowing the launching of leaflets of anti-Pyongyang propaganda.

However, her statements cover much more than her anger about the propaganda leaflets; they reflect cumulated frustration of North Korea about the inactions of Seoul and Washington.

Her accusation was unusual in several aspects.

First, the tone was very aggressive treating South Korea as enemy; she would cut all the direct communication channels including the military lines. In addition, she has asked the military to take appropriate actions against South Korea.

Second, her statements are reported for several days in Ro-Dong Sinmun, official paper of the Workers' Party. This means that the whole population of North Korea is informed about the issues.

Third, there have been street demonstrations by citizens for days. Even the chef of the most famous restaurant in Pyongyang has made a harsh statement against South Korea.

This means that the whole population of North Korea is allowed to join the South Korea bashing campaign.

Some of Kim Yo-jong's declarations show how the North Koreans feel about South Korea and the U.S.

“Getting stronger every day are unanimous voices of all our people demanding for surely settling account with the riff-raff who dare the absolute prestige of our Supreme leader representing our country and its great dignity and flied rubbish to inviolable territory of our side with those who connived at such hooliganism, whatever many happen” (see [this](#))

What seem to have hurt the feeling of Kim Yo-jong is those expressions found in the leaflets which are hurting the dignity and prestige of Kim Jong-un, whose absolute authority is essential to rule the country. Moreover, these leaflets messages are also hurting the prestige of Kim’s family.

In the past, there were many anti-North Korea propaganda leaflets, but they have seldom attacked directly the leader and his family.

Kim Yo-jong is blaming Moon Jae-in for more serious reasons.

“If the South Korean authorities have now the capacity and courage to carry out at once the things they have failed to do for the last two years, why are the North-South relations still in stalemate like now?” (see [this](#))

What she is saying here is that South Korea should have implemented what was promised in the Joint Pyongyang Declaration, in particular, North-South economic cooperation.

This statement shows how deeply North Korea has been relying on the courage of Moon Jae-in to materialize his promise despite the objection of Washington.

There was also a statement of North Korean Foreign Minister, Ri Son-gon.

“The question is whether there will be a need to keep holding hands shaken in Singapore as we see that there is nothing of factual improvement to be made in the DPRK-U.S. relations simply by maintaining personal relations between our supreme leadership and the U.S. president. Never again will we provide the U.S. chief executive with another package to be used for achievement without receiving any return.” (see [this](#))

In this statement, we can see how much North Korea has been disappointed with the inactions of Washington despite sincere actions taken by Pyongyang. But at the same time, we see that Pyongyang is still ready to talk to Washington.

Real Reasons behind the violent Reaction of Kim Yo-jong

The incidence of leaflet launching is one reason. But, the more important reason behind the Kim Yo-jong’s lashing out is something deeper; the real reason is the cumulated frustration caused by the failure of the peace dialogue.



The last Kim-Trump meeting along with Moon took place on June 30, 2019 at DMZ. But no significant results come out of the meeting.

Seeing the lack of Washington's willingness to continue the peace dialogue, Kim Jong-un made it clear at the three day meeting of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), at the end of 2019, that North Korea should go its own way of securing peace and economic development without relying on the external help.

Kim Jong-un said this.

"We might even find ourselves in a situation where we have no choice but find our way for defending the sovereignty of the country and the supreme interests of the state and for achieving peace and stability of the Korean peninsula." (see [this](#))

In fact, since 2019, the main activities of Kim Jong-un have been the promotion of the production of goods and services with domestic inputs so that the North Korean economy be more self sufficient.

Actually, North Korea has been doing it best to be more autonomous; Kim Jong-un was relying on the development of the Wonsan-Kalma Tourist Development Zone in which Kim Jong-un was pouring most of the available resources. Kim Jong-un spent a lot of time there to speed up the project.

But, the success of Kim Jong-un's "My Way" depended much on the North-South economic cooperation as stipulated in the 9.19 Pyongyang Declaration signed by Kim Jong-un and Moon Jae-in on 19th of September, 2018

The 9.19 Pyongyang Declaration is the synthesis of three preceding declarations: the 6.15 Declaration (June 15, 2000), signed by Kim Dae-jung and Kim Jong-il, the 10.4 Declaration (October 4, 2007) signed by Rho Moo-hyun and Kim Jong-il and the 4.27 Panmunjom Declaration (April 27, 2018) signed by Kim Jong-un and Moon Jae-il.

The Pyongyang Declaration includes six sections.

- Cessation of hostile military activities in DMZ and constant high level-communication.
- Sustained economic cooperation, especially the re-opening of the Gaesung Industrial Complex (GIC), and the Geumgang Tourist Resort development (GTR). The agreement also includes the cooperation for epidemics and public health.

- Humanitarian cooperation including, in particular, the reunion of the separated families. It is interesting to notice that the agreement includes also internet facilities allowing video family reunion.
- Reconciliation and cooperation for the reunification of Koreas including cultural and sports exchanges
- Denuclearization of the peninsula including the dismantlement of the Dongchang-ri missile engine test sites and launch platform under the observation of foreign experts in addition to the permanent dismantlement of nuclear facilities in Yongbyon in exchange of corresponding U.S. actions.
- Seoul visit of Kim Jong-un

What Kim Jong-un was desperately hoping to get from Washington was the guarantee of the American non-aggression and the relief of sanctions.

But, since the betrayal of Trump in Hanoi, North Korea knows that it can no longer trust Washington.

However, Kim Jong-un thought that he could trust Moon Jae-in. After all, without such trust, the three Moon-Kim summits and the three Kim-Trump summits would not have taken place.

Besides, Kim Jong-un went to Singapore on June 12, 2018, because Moon Jae-in would have told him that it was worthwhile to meet Trump.

So, since the Hanoi deception, Kim Jong-un has been expecting that Moon would open the Gaesung Industrial Complex (GIC) and the Geumgang Tourist Resorts (GTR) along with the connection of railways.

In particular, the GIC and GTR are not subject to UN sanctions; they were closed by the conservative government of Lee Myong-bak and Park Geun-hye

Unfortunately, Moon has failed.

The question is then why Moon has failed to materialize these projects. To find the answer, we have to begin with identifying unseen forces which prevented Moon from doing so.

When Moon took over the government in 2017, he gave himself two missions. One was the establishment of peace on the Korean peninsula and the reunification of the country. The other was the purification of the 70-year old corruption culture created by the pro-Japan conservatives.

To do this, the progressive government had to keep power as long as possible, possibly 20 years. However, the conservative forces in South Korea are still active and they can take over the power, if the progressives take prematurely pro-North policies.

Before the election of April 15, 2020, the DP had no majority in the National Assembly and all efforts to promote North-South economic cooperation were blocked by the conservatives including the conservative civil servants.

Furthermore, the conservatives in South Korea have been supported by both Shinzo Abe of Japan and the deep-state force in Washington.

Under this situation, if Moon goes a little too far in the North-South dialogue, he would not

be able to win the April election; his plan for peace and the fight against the conservatives' corruption could have been compromised

Fortunately, Moon's party, the DP, has won the April 15 election of 2020 and commands almost two-third of the seats in the National Assembly. Now, Moon can move to do what was promised.

North-South Cooperation as Means of Overcoming the Present Security Crisis

The following is the North-South cooperation which has been planned by Moon Jae-in and which is now in doubt because of the current security and corona virus crisis.

What North Korea wants and what South Korea can do are the following.

- Law prohibiting the launching of anti-North Korea propaganda leaflets.
- Reopening of the Gaesung Industrial Complex (GIC)
- Reopening of the Geumgang Tourists Resorts (GTR)
- North-South Railway Connection
- Cooperation for the anti-corona-virus war.

Already, the Democratic Party has prepared a law prohibiting the launching of the anti-North Korea propaganda leaflets. The bill will be passed in a month.

The Gaesung industrial Complex has been the best model of North-South economic cooperation in which the South provides the capital and technology, while the North offers land and highly trained cheap labour.

More than 100 South Korea firms were making huge profit and a large sum of money went to the North Korean treasury. The GIC model will be the basic frame of future North-South economic cooperation.

The Geumgang Tourist Complex has been one of the important sources of income for North Korea. The Hyundai Asan is the key investor. It will be integrated into the new colossal Wonsan-Kalma Tourist Resort Zone which would become one of the major global tourist attractions. For this, Kim Jong-un needs South Korea money and technology.

The North-South railway connections on the west coast and east coast are of strategic importance, for it is beginning of the integration of the Korea peninsula into the China's BRI (one-belt-one -road initiative) and cross-Siberia railways.

In other words, the project has the function of integrating the Korean economy into the Eurasia and EU economy.

One of the reasons for the unusually harsh reaction of North Korea is the corona virus crisis. In fact, North Korea has closed completely in January the cross-border traffic of people and goods, which led to the desperate economic situation. North Korea has no public health system to cope with the crisis. North Korea needs South Korea to fight the corona virus.

The corona virus crisis combined with the non-action on the part of Moon Jae-in and the stupid gesture of some North Korea refugees have led to the violent gesture of Kim Yo-jong.

President Moon Jae-in has reacted to North Korea's unusually hostile behaviour. He made

the following statement on 15th of June, which happened to be the 20th anniversary of the 6.15 Declaration signed, in 2000, by Kim Dae-jung, South Korean president and Kim Jong-il, North Korean supreme leader.

“The April 27 Panmunjom Declaration and the September 19 Joint Declaration in Pyongyang are solemn promise that both the South and the North must faithfully carry out. This is a firm principle that cannot be swayed by any change in circumstances.”

“Our government will make ceaseless efforts to implement the agreements we have made. We will keep up our hard-earned achievements. The North and the South should stop its attempt to cut off communication, raise tension and return to an era of confrontation. We hope that the uncomfortable and difficult problems facing two sides will be solved through communication and cooperation.” (see [this](#))

These statements of President Moon make it clear that he will keep the agreements through communication and cooperation.

He has been trying to implement the agreement, but he has not been able to do so, partly because of the internal political constraints and partly due to Washington’s lack of cooperation.

Now, as we saw above, the internal political constraints are attenuated owing the crushing victory of his Democratic Party at the last April general election. Moon Jae-in will do what was promised.

But, it is not clear how far Washington would cooperate with Moon, given the confusing political and social disturbance in the U.S.

It may be difficult to have Trump’s support, but Moon should be able to convince Trump not to interfere in the North-South economic cooperation as long as such cooperation does not violate the sanctions.

It is time for South Korea to have more saying in North-South relations, which are much more important to Koreans than to Americans.

To sum up, I would like to add one word for Kim Jong-un and Kim Yo-jong.

Most of South Koreans understand North Korea’s frustration. But, let us not forget that owing to the peace dialogue initiated by Moon Jae-in and enforced by Kim Jong-un and Donald Trump, the international status of the Kim Jong-un has been assured and the image of North Korea has greatly been improved.

Moreover, the peace has been established since 2018 in the Korean peninsula.

As for the North-South economic cooperation, one can allow some optimism, given the firm determination of the Moon’s government to implement the Joint Pyongyang Declaration.

Moreover, the domination of the National Assembly by the progressive Democratic Party can facilitate Moon’s policy of inter-Korea cooperation.

Finally, North Korea should not forget that North Koreans and South Koreans are the same

race which had been united for more than 4,000 years but separated for 75 years.

They have different flags, but the blood is the same. The only way to solve the problems is the united efforts of the North and the South with international cooperation.

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