

# **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 negotiations<sup>1</sup>)
- 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

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<sup>1</sup> Memorandum of the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (March 31, 2017)

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

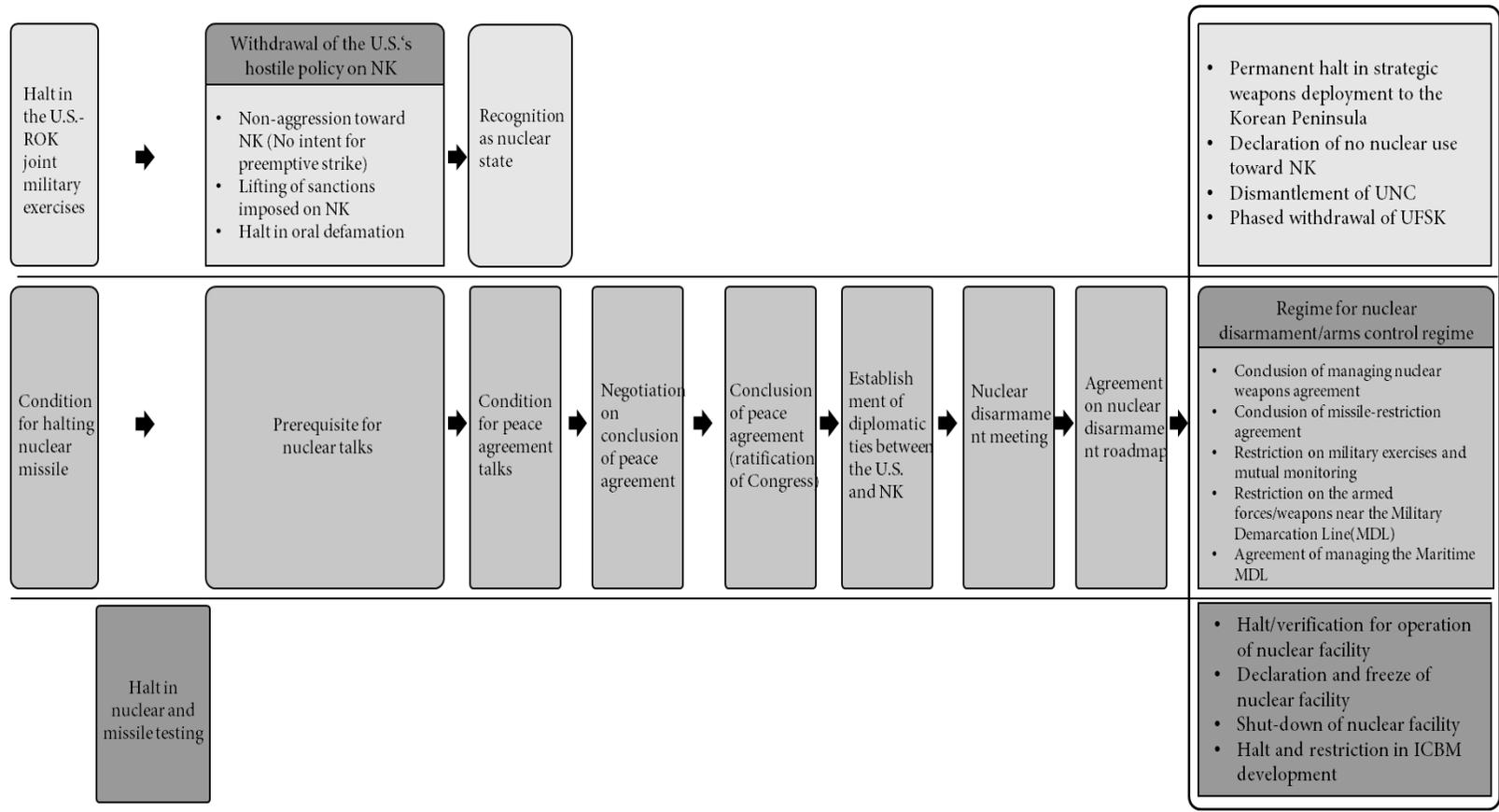
■ **Obstacles for U.S.-North Korea Talks: Main Contents of the Hostile Policy on North Korea**

- (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

■ **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**



**□ 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**

### ① **The 'End-of-the War Declaration' First and Peace Agreement Later**

- 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



■ 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

## Declaration of the end of war

## Lifting of sanctions on North Korea

## Security guarantee (withdrawal of hostile policy)

2018.6. 12~10.2

Utilization of South-North-U.S. trilateral channel persuasion on the U.S.,  
Implementation of Inter-Korean agreement

- Prompt end-of-the war declaration intended for building international trust
- Willingness for peace, Agreement on active arms control with South Korea

- Focus on confirming U.S. willingness/trust
- Primarily earning the benefits from the end-of-the war declaration/halt in U.S.-ROK joint military exercise
- Delivering the willingness for peace to the international community
- Creating the environment for flexible sanctions

Inter-Korean relations, a tools for building U.S.-North Korea trust  
Active agreement, displaying the atmosphere for reconciliation

2018.10. 2~Hanoi (2019.2.28)

Main U.S.-North Korea channel, direct talks between the U.S. and North Korea  
South Kora's auxiliary channel + South Korea's persuasion toward the U.S.

- U.S.-ROK working group, criticism on U.S.'s principal of adjusting the speed
- Demand for independently implementing inter-Korean agreements
- Persuasion of the U.S. on dismantlement of Yongbyon nuclear complex through inter-Korean summit
- Move focused on making sanctions flexible

- Direct focus on partial lifting of sanctions
- Claim for unjustness of international sanctions on North Korea
- Emphasis on inter-Korean agreements, shaking-up of the sanctions framework

inter-Korean relations, persuasion of the U.S. and shaking-up of the sanctions framework  
Presenting a Yongbyon card, emphasis on independent implementation of agreement

Hanoi ~ current

Setting the bar higher for U.S.-North Korea negotiation  
Exclusion of South Korea-> Hawkish stance/shaking-up of South Korea

- Criticism on U.S.-ROK joint military exercise and acquisition of weapons
- Demand for demolition of the Mount Geumgang tourism zone
- Criticism of the U.S.-ROK alliance, and submissive posture
- Blowing-up of the Inter-Korean Joint Liaison Office
- 'Postponement' of actions plan against the enemy

- Demand for security guarantee in earnest with the card of pressing for the sanctions lifting
- Demand for withdrawal of hostile policy on North Korea includes all the military issues between the U.S.-NK, SK-U.S., and SK-NK.
- Calling attention to the need for implementation of inter-Korean agreement through radical measure

Inter-Korean relations, a tool for pressuring the U.S. and shaking-up of sanctions  
Non-implementation of inter-Korean agreement-> Non-implementation of U.S.-North Korea agreement

- 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 exercise(6.12 agreement)
- Halt in additional measures for unilateral sanction, withdrawal of designation as state sponsors of terrorism
- Non-intervention in human rights issues, halt in hostile verbal attack

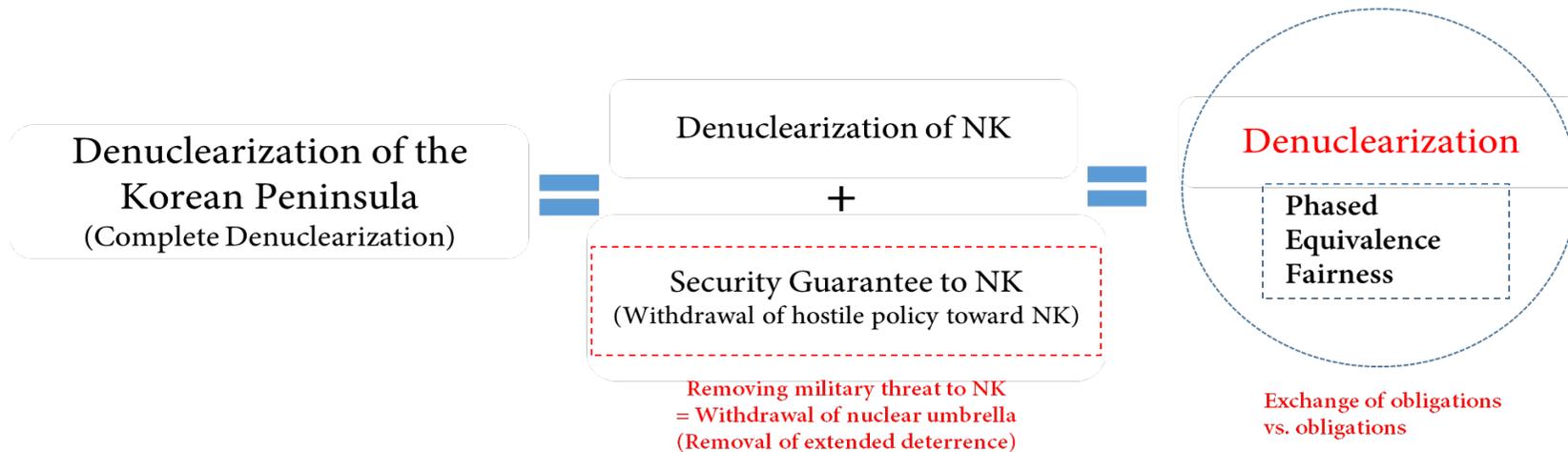
[Basic frame] Denuclearization vs. comprehensive security guarantee[full-scale withdrawal of hostile policy toward NK]

↑  
Phases/synchronous implementation in  
parallel with mutually irreversible measure

- 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 exercise
- 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," "grand change in attitude"

□ **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

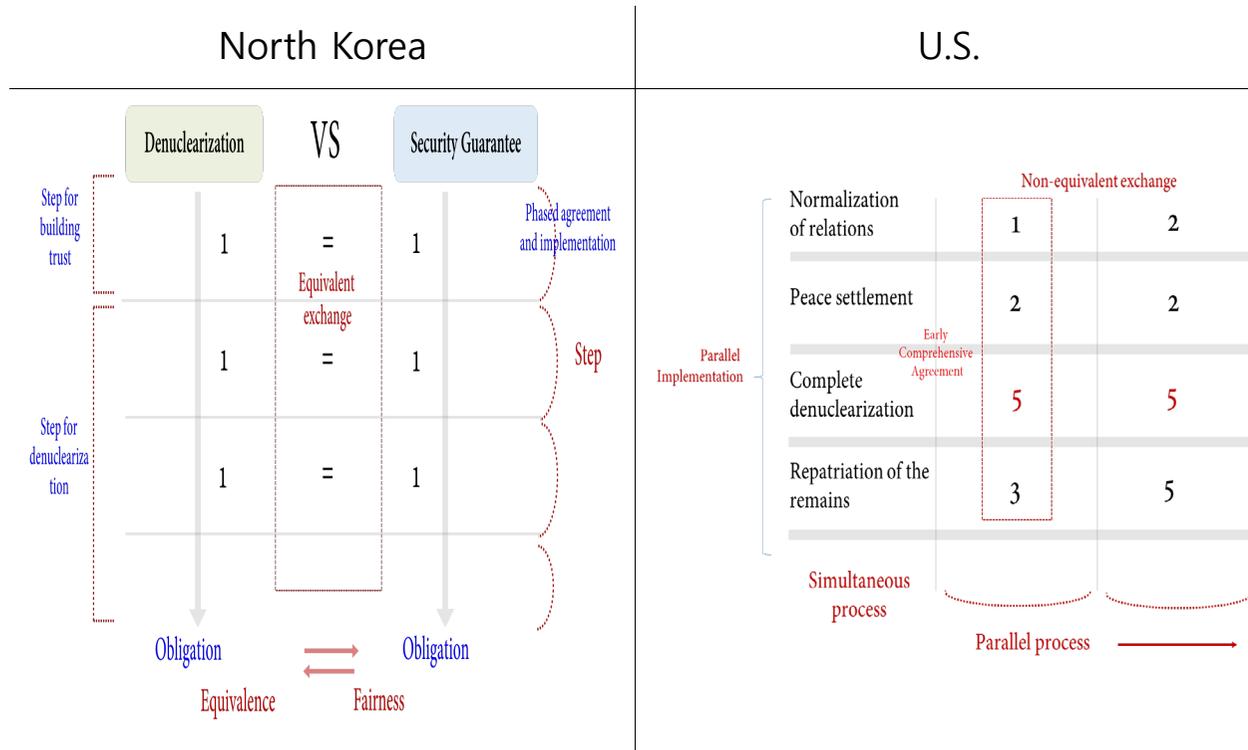


■ Regression to the existing logic of ‘nuclear disarmament’ that includes a removal of the U.S. extended deterrence (nuclear umbrella) and exchange of denuclearization with a security guarantee

■ Category of denuclearization

- ① North Korea's denuclearization: Elimination of nuclear weapons program in North Korean region
- ② Denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula: ‘Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula’ in 1992 and elimination of the entire nuclear weapons program on the Korean Peninsula
- 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



- 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

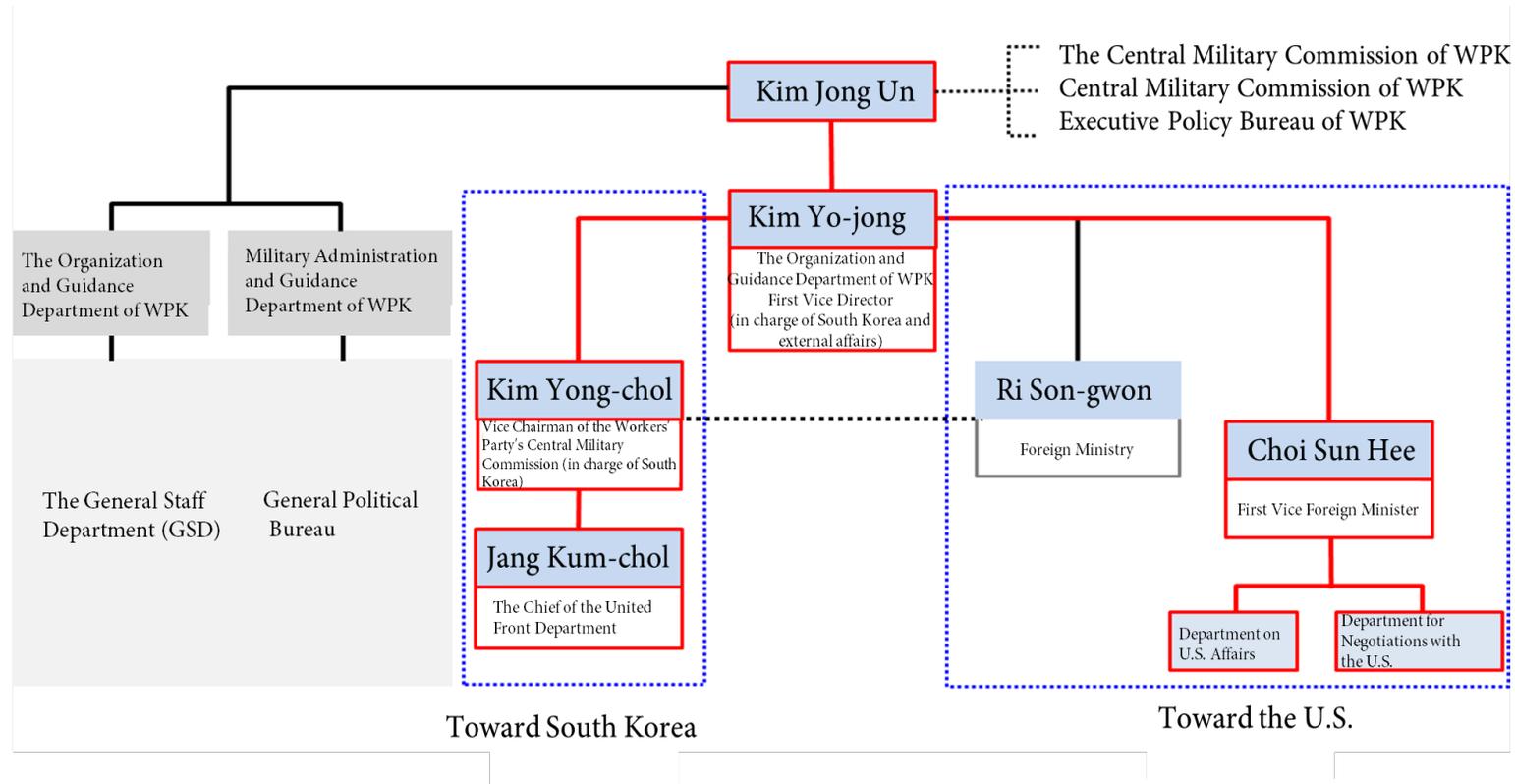
	<b>Structure of Exchange</b>	<b>Implementation Type</b>	<b>Trust-building ME</b>
<b>North Korea</b>	Phased denuclearization vs. phased security guarantee	Synchronous·phased·equivalent → fair exchange	Halt in U.S.-ROK joint military exercises Prompt end-of-the war declaration Lifting of sanctions on NK
<b>U.S.</b>	Comprehensive denuclearization vs. Economic prosperity, bright future	Synchronous·parallel·non-equivalent → Denuclearization first, rewards later	Agreement·implementation of comprehensive denuclearization

□ **Trump administration's negotiation strategy and announcement of a 'flexible approach'**

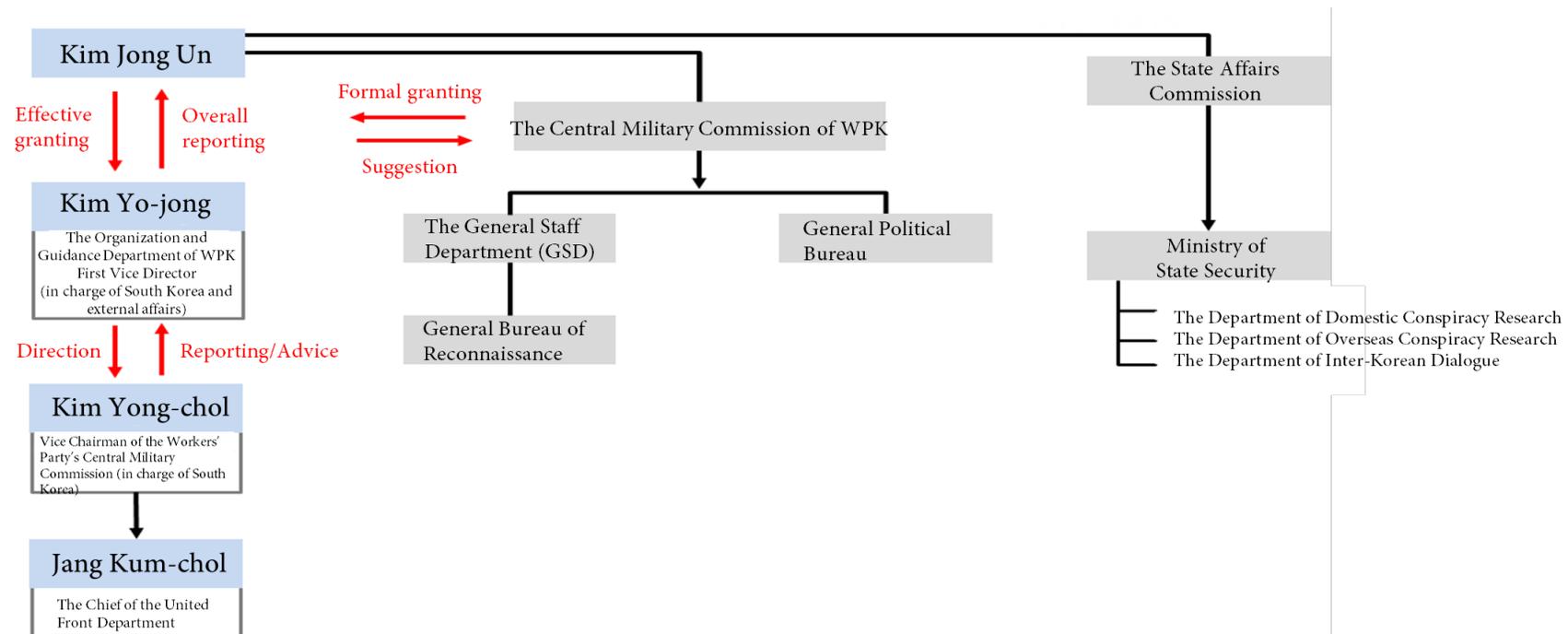
- An emphasis of the U.S. on a 'flexible approach' for negotiations with North Korea since June
- A consensus was made between the U.S. and ROK on the temporary and reversible easing of sanctions if North Korea agreed to and showed a willingness for the implementation of denuclearization (Snapback provision, 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

■ Decision-making system on South Korea and the U.S.



- 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

□ **Messages sent to the U.S. after the 8<sup>th</sup> Party Congress**

■ Messages sent at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Plenary Meeting of the 8<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK)

- Messages largely consist of two policy areas: 1) the economy & the people's livelihoods, and 2) foreign policy.
- The existing doctrine of self-reliance (*Charkyok Kaengsaeng*) in the economy and the people's livelihoods will be maintained under the emergency prevention system.
- The foreign policy will focus on maintaining the situation via a refined diplomatic resolution.
- By indicating that its policy on the U.S. has been established, North Korea appears to show its willingness to positively accept the U.S.'s North Korea policy. North Korea seems to pass the ball to the U.S. corner by sending messages hinting a shifted focus on the dialogue. It could be interpreted that North Korea asks the U.S. to give them a rationale for coming to the dialogue.

■ North Korea did not mention a withdrawal of U.S.'s hostile policy toward North Korea. Such a move could be interpreted as an intention to tactically lower the high barriers that the North strongly demanded as a precondition for dialogue in the past and create conditions conducive to opening the DPRK-U.S. negotiations.

- North Korea appears to be conscious of and obsessed with making some progress in a five-year economic plan in domestic areas. Other than a self-reliant (*Charkyok Kaengsaeng*) strategy, however, new contents are lacking in its economic and agricultural resolutions.
  
  - The standing of the Politburo Standing Committee has become prominent at the Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the WPK. The Standing Committee is projected to serve the main role in responsible governing of each area in the future.
  
  - Sending messages to the U.S. and presenting comprehensive, eased conditions for dialogues
    - (The General Secretary of the WPK) ordered to “①safeguard the dignity of the state and sovereign interests for development, and prepare for both dialogue and confrontation to ② firmly guarantee peaceful environments and national safety. He emphasized, in particular, to be seamlessly prepared for confrontation.”
    - Instead of demanding a withdrawal of the U.S. hostile policy toward North Korea, for which North Korea strongly asked as a condition for dialogue, North Korea indirectly laid out comprehensive and eased conditions for dialogue.
- ① ‘Safeguarding the dignity of the state and sovereign interests for development’  
: Recognizing the North Korean regime and its leader, removing restrictions that hinder the development
- ② ‘Guaranteeing peaceful environments and national safety’  
: The U.S.’s military threats, diplomatic hostility, and institutional peace (the end-of-the war declaration/peace agreement) have recently been included in a category of peace and safety in North Korea’s media reporting.
- Those previously fell into a category of withdrawal of the hostile policy on North Korea. North Korea’s demands were now replaced by toned down, water-downed, and comprehensive expressions.

□ **Indicating to implement proactive external policy and manage the situation on the Korean Peninsula by utilizing the surrounding circumstances**

o (The General Secretary of the WPK) “proclaimed its foreign policy stance and principles of the Party and the government of the Republic on important international and regional issues. He mentioned that we should strive to elevate our strategic standing and proactive role and actively create external conditions favorable to us.” He also stated that “we should swiftly and acutely respond to constantly changing situations and focus on stably managing the situation surrounding the Chosun peninsula.”

o **Emphasizing diplomatic interests with the use of the U.S.-China strategic competition structure and international and regional circumstances**

- Such a mentioning in major policy decisions in venues such as North Korea’s Party Congress was unprecedented and was attempted for the first time (Attention needs to be paid to that).
- North Korea previously confined foreign policy to a limited window of its policy on the U.S. when approaching Korean Peninsular issues. However, this time North Korea publically announced its will to uphold certain stance and principles in addressing regional and international issues.
- Regional and international issues include the U.S.-China strategic competition, the U.S.’s strategy of besieging and pressuring China, tensions between the U.S. and Russia, the U.S.’s restoration of the Atlantic alliance, and tensions with NATO, Russia, and China.
- North Korea set out to link such issues to the management of the situation on the Korean Peninsula by elevating its ‘strategic standing.’ Such a statement could be interpreted as showing its willingness to actively leverage regional and international issues to its strategic and tactical advantage.
- Depending on the level and intensity of the U.S.’s besieging and pressuring China, North Korea seems determined to use the following as strategic and tactical leverage: coupling with and getting cozy with China, North Korea-China-Russia strategic alliance, and the strengthening of diplomacy with Russia.

#### □ Detailed plan to implement Party-centered pragmatist policy in economic areas

o North Korean leadership has shown great interests in successfully pulling off a five-year economic plan.

- (The General Secretary of the WPK) ordered to “firmly secure the foundation for implementing a five-year economic plan.”
- Chairman Kim Jong-un adamantly expressed his willingness to thoroughly examine the current situation, make up for what is lacking, and make progress starting in the first half of the year of the planning. He strongly emphasized that the North will not repeat the failures of the past five-year economic plan.
- His remarks also serve symbolic functions of displaying the Party’s ability to overcome the repeated occurrence of natural disasters of last year and swiftly respond to them, and win the hearts of the people.
- It has become a high likelihood that North Korea would make an examination on the current situation a regular event two times a year (first half/second half of the year) when it conducts a yearly evaluation on economic performance at the end of every year. (A possibility also exists that the Plenary Meeting could become a consultative body to assess the overall economic situation twice a year, the first half and the second half of every year).

#### o Revealing the difficulties in implementing a plan in the economic sector and in the food situation

- (The General Secretary of the WPK) pointed out that “all the obstacles and hurdles facing us have created a series of biases in the process of implementing national plans and policy tasks.”
- “People are suffering from food shortages since grain production target has not been met in the agricultural sector due to last year’s flood damages.”
- (The General Secretary of the WPK) said that “pulling all-out efforts at the level of the Party and the state in agricultural sector is desperately needed so that we can learn lessons from last year’s farming situation and overcome this year’s disadvantageous conditions.”
- Chairman Kim ordered to boost the production in the light and fishing industry, which is directly related to people’s livelihood as a way to improve their livelihoods under the current situation required of emergency prevention.
- Leader’s official statements on deteriorating current status are indicative of his pragmatist approach in governing.

### **o Detailing a pragmatist approach of Party-central governing**

- North Korea acknowledged the failure of meeting the economic target starting at a politburo meeting held after last year's flood damage struck the country. It was different from the past where North Korea did not reveal detailed information on the current status.
- North Korea officially revealed current policy issues as it has stressed a Party-led ruling and governing. Detailed formats have come to the surface: a consultation on how to come up with a resolution should be done by expanding the members in a consultative body.

### **o Recognizing the prolonged difficulties in people's livelihoods under the emergency prevention system**

- (The General Secretary of the WPK) said that "the prolonged emergency prevention phase...is tantamount to the prolonged struggle to maintain the overall economy and guarantee people's food, clothing, and shelter."
- The agenda was set as a 'preparation for the prolonging of emergency prevention.' He ordered to be vigilant to the maximum extent in the national emergency prevention projects and continue to uphold the ethos of conforming to the rules," and "steadfastly stand by the state prevention posture under the current conditions."
- It was an intention to maintain the structure of managing the economy and the people's livelihood while continuing to operate an emergency prevention system into the future.
- It is possible that North Korea would continue to minimize external contacts and exchanges, a preventive measure implemented so far until the global vaccination efforts become prevalent and reach a safe phase.