

Mounting Risks Confronting Moon's Nuclear "Shuttle" Diplomacy

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At least for now, President Moon Jae In's 'shuttle' diplomacy between Pyongyang and Washington has appeared making headway at the speed of a lightning. The trip to Pyongyang by President Moon's five-man team of special envoys headed by his national security advisor Chung Eui Yong has already reaped an inter-Korean summit between Moon and Kim Jong Un by the end of April, followed by a U.S.-North Korea summit between Trump and Kim Jong Un by May, hardly believable as they may be. However, the snap pace of the developments probably is about to be over, as dark clouds are seen gathering making things of tomorrow unpredictable.

There are already signs of the dark clouds. White House press secretary Sarah Sanders' press briefing of Friday March 9 is precisely one of them. Sanders told the White House press that a Trump-Kim Jong Un summit was as yet "anything but a done deal." She said that "President Trump will not meet with Kim as long as Kim stays short of taking concrete and verifiable steps in the direction toward denuclearization." The White House press secretary's remark as such on Friday had to sound somewhat out of touch with realities when contrasted against a statement made a day earlier by Chung Eui Young, President Moon's national security advisor, before the White House press that, at a meeting he had with Trump a short while ago, President Trump "directed" him to speak to the White House press that he had decided to "meet with Kim by May" without any reference to "preconditions."

The reason why Sanders brought up President Trump's "preconditions" was unmistakably illustrated by herself in the course of the press briefing of Friday. She said

that she was raising the issue of "preconditions" because "they (North Korea) made some major promises." Sanders claimed that North Korea had "pledged to refrain from any further nuclear and missile tests," adding that, consequently, President Trump would "not go to the meeting with Kim until after North Korea will have matched their rhetorics with actions."

I think I can conjecture two reasons, among others, as to why the White House decided to revisit "preconditions," ex post facto, for President Trump's summit with Kim Jong Un: For one, there could have been counsels from his experienced North Korea specialists, both within and without his cabinet, for cautions in dealing with North Korea. And, for another, questions could have been raised surrounding the wordings that Chung Eui Yong used in his briefing to the White House press following his meeting with President Trump on Thursday March 8.

At his briefing to the White House press, Chung quoted Kim Jong Un as having told him and his colleagues in Pyongyang on March 5 that he was "committed to denuclearization," "pledged to refrain from any further nuclear and missile tests," "expressed his understanding that the routine joint military exercises between the Republic of Korea and the United States must continue" and "expressed in addition his eagerness to meet President Trump as soon as possible."

Chung's presentation to the White House press contained fatal misrepresentations, however. As a matter of fact, it was Chung himself who had disclosed upon his return to Seoul from Pyongyang on March 6 that, when Kim Jong Un made the "promises" that Chung cited not only in his briefing to the White House press on March 8 but most probably at his earlier meeting with President Trump as well, Kim actually had his own "preconditions' attached to "each," and practically "all," of his "promises." Chung's encounter with the White House press on March 9 was evidently tantamount to a criminal act of falsifying and distorting the contents of Kim's remarks in the context of

"preconditions" to his "promises" with regard to North Korea's nuclear activities.

Chung's performance as such was precisely comparable to what had happened during the seven year-long Japanese invasion of Korea in the 16th Century masterminded by Hideyoshi Toyotomi (豊臣秀吉). when a Ming Empire con-man by the name of Shen Weijing (沈惟敬) unsuccessfully attempted to mediate a ceasefire between Ming China and Japan by, with the aid of a Japanese commander, Yukinaga Konishi (小西行長), falsifying the contents of the confidential letters exchanged between Ming Emperor Shenzong (神宗) and Japan's ruler Toyotomi. The ceasefire negotiation collapsed subsequently when Shen's con-man diplomacy was uncovered, resulting in Shen's execution by the Ming court.

In addition, it is obvious that, while, in his meetings with Moon's envoys from Seoul, Kim Jong Un of North Korea put to its best use North Korea's long-known tactic of choosing terminologies of self-contradictory meanings as a means to confuse adversaries, Chung and his Southern colleagues apparently chose, willfully or not, to allow themselves to fall prey to the North Korean tactic, desperate as they were to achieve accomplishment, and, as a result, has left the room to let North Korea to remain in the driver's seat in its attempt to cut a deal with the United States.

Here are some of the cases in point:

Chung cited Kim's reference to the word "denuclearization" as the basis of his assertion that Kim was "committed to denuclearization." However, Chung was ignoring the simple fact that a "denuclearization" in the North Korean vocabulary was a terminology that had a totally different meaning from the same terminology in the vocabularies of the Republic of Korea, the U.S. and the rest of the western international community. The "denuclearization" that western world refers to is a terminology that, on the basis of the assumption that the Republic of Korea is still a "non-nuclear" state, calls for a "CVID (complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement) of all of North Korea's

nuclear material (inclusive of nuclear weapons whose verification still remains the task of the future) as well as nuclear arms development programs," categorically denying the North Korean claim that it be accepted as the ninth "nuclear state" of the world.

To the contrary, a "denuclearization" that North Korea refers to is actually a reference to a "nuclear free zone (NFZ)" that comprises the Korean Peninsula as a whole and its neighborhood that covers an area that has yet to be defined. North Korea argues that, "since North Korea's nuclear arms program was necessitated as a means of self-defense against the threat posed by the U.S. military presence in the area complete with nuclear weapons deployment, any debate on the North Korean nuclear program should be preceded by a debate on the U.S. nuclear armaments that threatens North Korea's national security." Or, so goes an alternate North Korean argument on the issue: That, accepting North Korea as yet another "nuclear state" (ninth after the U.S., Russia, China, U.K., France, India, Pakistan and Israel), the U.S. "should allow North Korea's nuclear and missile issues to be coped with within the framework of international nuclear arms control negotiations."

Given this confusion in semantics, it is bound to be far-fetched to argue that, simply because Kim Jong Un referred to the terminology "denuclearization," he should be accepted as having committed himself to a "denuclearization" that satisfies the western definition of the wording. Under the circumstances, unless the confusion that surrounds the definition of the terminology is somehow resolved in advance, it is certain that the summit that materializes between the U.S. and North Korea will provide the ring of a renewed round of confrontation that has characterized the stalemate of 25 years of the Beijing Six-party Process, with President Trump talking about the issue of "denuclearization" on the basis of his own definition of the word as against Kim Jong Il countering him with his own argument that features the all-too unrealistic idea of an "NFZ."

The outcome of such a confrontation between the two countries at the level of the summit is all too likely to be catastrophic. President Trump, for his part, will have to find himself likened to a barking dog against a chicken on top of a fence, while allowing the entire North Korean nuclear issue to remain in the state of a limbo for a long period of time with North Korea enjoying the respite to finish its nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

Chung's quotation of Kim Jong Un's alleged remark that North Korea would "refrain from resuming its strategic provocations such as additional nuclear tests and ballistic missile firing," coupled with Kim's additional pledge that North Korea would "not employ not only nuclear but also conventional arms as well against the South," also sounded bizarre as, if accepted by both the Republic of Korea and the United States, they should leave the two allies allowing two consequences to take hold: First, the two allies were giving a de facto recognition of North Korea as yet another "nuclear state." And, second, the two allies were blessing North Korea to remain in the driver's seat in the international negotiation over Korean affairs, certainly including the nuclear and missile issues, while practically leaving not only the nine past United Nations Security Council sanction resolutions on North Korea but also the entire spectrum of the hitherto international efforts to mobilize a maximum pressure upon North Korea.

It is noteworthy that, while having been the perpetrator of thousands of military and subversive operations against the South during the course of the past 70 years since the country's division, with the Korean War of 1950~1953 topping the list, there has never been a single occasion when North Korea admitted a single case of its wrongdoings. It is a recollection of these past endless series of provocations perpetrated by North Korea that, as they heard Chung relay to them Kim's alleged pledge that North Korea would "refrain from using not only nuclear but also conventional arms" against them, people of the South are reminded by the preposterous historical episode of September 30, 1938, about Neville Chamberlain, British Prime Minister then, telling a

crowd of Londoners that he had brought from Munich, Germany, a "peace of our time" endorsed by Adolf Hitler.

With recollections as such in mind, we cannot but ask Chung, and Moon Jae In as well, how they dare relay to the people of the South Kim Jong Un's all-too shameless lies that North Korea would "have no reason to possess nuclear weapons should North Korea have had the military threats against it removed and the security of its political system guaranteed," allegedly calling them as "messages of peace." We feel obliged to ask Chung if he can cite a single instance when, during the past 70 years since the country's division, the Republic of Korea, and the United States as well, has ever swayed from remaining militarily defensive in dealing with North Korea. We cannot but accuse Chung and his colleagues in Moon Jae In's team of special envoys as North Korea's "fellow travellers" for their failure to dispute Kim Jong Un's fake "messages of peace" on the spot and for their failure to protect South Korea's young post-war generations from being exposed to contamination by the falsified North Korean propaganda that the Republic of Korea was more responsible for the state of military confrontation on the peninsula.

Even more nonsensical is Kim Jong Un's demand that the United States "guarantee the security of the North Korean regime." In theoretical terms, it can be a point of argument to provide North Korea with some kind of a "guarantee of non-aggression," which, in fact, is something North Korea already has in its own hands in the form of the inter-Korean "Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-aggression, Exchange and Cooperation," a basic document aimed at governing the inter-Korean relations pending unification, which was adopted, ratified and put into force by the two Koreas, respectively, as of February 19, 1992.

Included among the 25 articles that make up the historic document are agreements of;

- "recognition and respect of each other's systems, respectively" (Art. 1); - "non-interference in each other's internal affairs, respectively" (Art. 2); - "refraining from acts of destruction and subversion against each other" (Art. 4);

- "continued observation of 1953 Armistice Agreement pending the arrival of the state of a permanent peace" (Art. 5);

- "refraining from use of military means and military aggression against each other" (Art. 9);

- "peaceful resolution of all issues through dialogue and negotiation" (Art. 10)

- "continued observation of the military demarkation lines drawn under the Armistice Agreement of June 27, 1953, and zones that have thus far been controlled respectively as lines and zones that divide the two sides" (Art. 11)

It is a matter of record that the historic document has turned into a scrap of paper beginning right from the day after the day when it had gone into force on February 19, 1992, as North Korea unilaterally discarded it without even offering any explanation. With North Korea having unilaterally disowned the basic inter-Korean agreement, it should be questionable if it makes sense for North Korea to talk about a new additional "guarantee of non-aggression."

Furthermore, Kim Jong Un's demand that the Republic of Korea and the United States "guarantee" the "security" of his controversial "Military First" regime that features three generations of an anachronistic hereditary succession of power is a ridiculous nonsense running out of proportion as it is entirely a matter of North Korea's own "internal affairs." It is beyond question that the question of "guaranteeing" the security of North Korea's regime is wholly up to North Koreans themselves, if not Kim Jong Il himself as their tyrannical demigod dictator, leaving no room for other countries, including the Republic of Korea and the U.S., to play any role. It was consequently tantamount to acting merely as Kim Jong Un's *zombies* for Chung and his fellow South Korean envoys to act as mail-men delivering Kim's nonsensical "messages" to Seoul and Washington

It is also notable that unmistakably implied in Kim Jong Un's references to "external threats to the security of the North Korean regime" and "military threats to North Korea" was a hidden North Korean demand that, again as a "precondition" to a dialogue with the North, the U.S. "cease her policies hostile to Pyongyang." To be specific, the North Korean demand includes requests that the U.S. ① withdraw her troops from South Korea, ② put an end to U.S.-ROK joint military drills, ③ dismantle the U.S.-ROK combined forces command, ④ abrogate the ROK-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954 and ⑤ conclude a "peace treaty" with North Korea to replace the Armistice Agreement of 1953. Among other things, North Korea insists that the Republic of Korea be either kept out in the cold or forced to accept the role as a back-bencher in negotiation on the "peace treaty" between Washington and Pyongyang.

It is obvious that Kim Jong Un is opting for the moment to an approach flexible enough to refrain from uncovering these goals all at a time. As one of the inheritors of a "revolutionary romanticism" uniquely of North Korea's own brand, a legacy of the Stalinist school of Communism transplanted into the North by the former Soviet Union in late 1940s, it looks rather apparent that Kim Jong Un is now trying, braving North Korea's growing economic hardships caused by the ever-tightening noose of international economic sanctions, to use "fake charm offensives" of his own kind to confuse the public opinions of both the Republic of Korea and the United States with the multiple aims of ① driving a wedge between Seoul and Washington and thus weaken the foundation of the ROK-U.S. security ties and ② promoting pro-North Korean and pro-left forces inside South Korea to cause South Korea's tilt further away from its traditional commitment to anti-communism and the ROK-U.S. security ties.

Noteworthy in this regard is the recent move of President Moon's left-leaning South Korean government to, taking advantage of the Pyongchang Winter Olympics that it hosted in February and March this year as an opportunity, offer itself as a pathway for Kim Jong Un to reach toward President Trump of the United States, even in the absence of

North Korea's irrefutable commitment to its own denuclearization. There are mounting concerns in South Korea today that, with a Moon-Kim summitry by the end of April followed by a Trump-Kim summitry by May now looking likely, Moon's conduct of the snap "shuttle diplomacy" is more aimed at serving Moon's own domestic political agenda in the context of a nationally held local elections slated for coming June.

Moon's domestic political agenda notwithstanding, it is noteworthy too that a possibility has popped open for the Trump-Kim, if not the Moon-Kim, summit to fail to materialize as a result of President Trump's own snap move of raising the issue of "preconditions" for the summit. It looks not entirely inconceivable that President Moon's top special envoy Chung Eui Yong will be forced to be driven into a corner where, in 16th Century, Ming Empire con-man diplomat Shen was forced to conspire with his Japanese counterpart, Gen. Konish, to falsify the contents of the confidential letters exchanged between the supreme leaders of the Ming Empire and Japan.

In case President Trump's White House stays firm demanding that, as a "precondition" to the projected summit, Kim Jong Un "take concrete and verifiable steps in the direction toward denuclearization" as Sanders said on March 9, we cannot but feel curious about how Chung will retro-transmit the White House message back to Kim Jong Un. Although the White House's "precondition" that Sanders said was confined for now to asking North Korea to honor Kim's alleged "pledge to refrain from any further nuclear and missile tests," there is no blocking of the possibility that the White House may come up with additional "preconditions" when viewed against the fact that Sanders also said that "President Trump will not meet with Kim as long as Kim stays short of taking concrete and verifiable steps in the direction toward denuclearization."

Should Chung choose, in his desperate attempt to prevent the projected summit from collapsing, to either "edit" or "falsify" the contents of the statements made by Trump and Kim Jong Un, respectively, with respect to the issue of "preconditions," it is not

entirely impossible for him not only to fail in protecting the summit from falling apart but also to allow him to tread the tragic fatal path trodden by Ming Empire's Shen some four hundred years ago. President Moon's controversial "shuttle diplomacy" between Pyongyang and Washington may, should it fail to deliver, lead to far more explosive consequences. It can lead to the erosion of Washington's trust in Seoul as an ally, making it possible for Washington to feel compelled to go its own way alone, skipping consultations with Seoul, in dealing with North Korea.

There is a strong possibility that Washington's ultimate choice under these circumstances will be a massive military "fire and fury" aimed at stripping North Korea not only of its nuclear and ballistic missile capability but also of its collateral capability to mount a retaliatory attack against South Korea, and the U.S. as well. It is perhaps time for the Republic of Korea to be reminded of the harsh reality that, particularly in the aftermath of North Korea's alleged success in the underground nuclear testing on September 30 last year that North Korea claimed was the detonation of a "hydrogen warhead" and the test firing on November 28 last year of what North Korea termed "Hwasung 15 Type" ICBM possibly with a range of 13,300 miles enough to reach anywhere in the Continental U.S., the United States is finding her own national security directly threatened by Kim Jong Un who is allegedly holding his fingers on a button of nuclear warhead-tipped ICBMs to be launched against the Continental U.S. any moment.

Director Mike Pompeo of the CIA was reported to have reported to President Trump in November last year that the U.S. then had no more than "three months' time" to "remove North Korea's ICBM capability to deliver nuclear warheads to the Continental U.S. in advance." The three-month grace period mentioned by Pompeo has already become a thing of the past since February this year. To close, it is a big question of today if the United States, with all her colossal arms capabilities, both nuclear and conventional, will once again allow herself to fall prey to North Korea's time-old gamesmanship in a preposterous nuclear swindle.

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