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Perception Survey of Experts on the Environment for Promoting Denuclearization and Peace on the Korean Peninsula.

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The Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU) has conducted a perception survey of professionals on the future of the Korean Peninsula. This article discloses parts of the survey results regarding peace development in the Peninsula and denuclearization of North Korea. The survey reveals that a large portion of professionals are expecting the current stalemate on the negotiation around denuclearization will continue. 84% of the respondents responded that if the stalemate on U.S.-North Korea negotiation prolongs, the intensity of the sanction should be increased. In addition, 76% of the respondents believed North Korea's willingness to denuclearize is very small or close to none. The majority of the respondents responded that the proper policy line for South Korea to take in the next 10 years is to "elastically combine the use of maximum pressure and maximum engagement depending on the changes in North Korea's behavior." Professionals pointed to South Korea as the country to benefit the most from establishing a denuclearized Peninsula and setting a condition of peace; they pointed to Japan as the county to suffer the most from the transition.

The stalled relationship between the United States and North Korea is in a quagmire. Recently, the relationship between South and North Korea has tipped in the same direction. The two pillars of peace on the Korean Peninsula—denuclearization of North Korea and inter-Korean cooperation—have both hit a deadlock. This has deepened the concerns of the South Korean government who initially pushed hard for complete denuclearization and the development of a peace regime. In such dire times, KINU has conducted a perception survey of professionals on the future of the Korean Peninsula. The survey was conducted on 200 professionals in the fields of political science, economics, North Korean studies, and international relations in academia, public and private research institutes, and the media, among others. The survey was conducted between April 17, 2020 and May 26, 2020. The scope of the research project covers multiple dimensions of the important current affairs issues of the next decade such as “peace consensus,” “denuclearization and peace process,” “new economy design on the Korean Peninsula,” and “the New Southern Policy and the New Northern Policy.” Among the issues, this article discloses the important questionnaires and results of the survey on the denuclearization of North Korea and the peace process on the Korean Peninsula and proposes policy suggestions for South Korea’s macro policy directions.¹⁾²⁾

Denuclearization, Peace Process, and the Future of Inter-Korean Relations

First, 200 professionals were asked about the next 10 years of

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- 1) This survey has been conducted as a part of KINU’s 2020 General Research Project <Comprehensive Research Project on Peace in the Korean Peninsula and Inter-Korean Cooperation> and was commissioned to Korea University’s Ilmin International Relations Institute. The 200 participants are composed of 50 professionals on each of the four general topics. All 200 participants have responded to 20 common questionnaires. In addition, each group of professionals responded to 20 specified questionnaires. 78.5% of the participants were in their 40s and 50s and 61% of the participants had over 10 years of professional experience on the specialized subject.
 - 2) Full list of questionnaires and results of the perception survey of professionals, along with their comprehensive evaluation, will be disclosed through the <KINU Insight> in July 2020. In the second half of 2020, the <Comprehensive Research Project on Peace in the Korean Peninsula and Inter-Korean Cooperation> will provide in-depth evaluations of the perception survey results and policy suggestions.

denuclearization and the peace process on the Korean Peninsula. 49% predicted the “continued and cyclical repetition of the U.S.–North Korea and inter–Korean stalemate caused by difficulties in negotiations on denuclearization and the continued negotiation phases,” followed by 36% who predicted the “partial denuclearization of North Korea and the concurrent development of the U.S.–North Korea and inter–Korean relations.” 8.5% predicted not much change from the status quo. Regarding the peace process on the Korean Peninsula, 38% responded “no development from the status quo” followed by 35.5% who responded “parallel discussion of denuclearization and the signing of a peace deal as consequences of the developed inter–Korean relations” and by 10% who responded “prior development of inter–Korean relations and peace deal followed by discussions on denuclearization.” Regarding inter–Korean relations in the next 10 years, respondents answered ▲ partial cooperation while maintaining sanctions (44.5%), ▲ similar to status quo (26.5%), and ▲ development of inter–Korean relations due to progress in the denuclearization and peace process” (20.5%). They also responded, “continuation of conflict due to North Korea’s military provocation” (4%) and “escalated tension due to complete break–down of negotiations” (3%). Generally, professionals were pessimistic about possible denuclearization in North Korea within the next 10 years while being optimistic about the possibility of advancing inter–Korean relations amidst the sanctions remained in place.

Contexts behind Denuclearization and the Peace Process

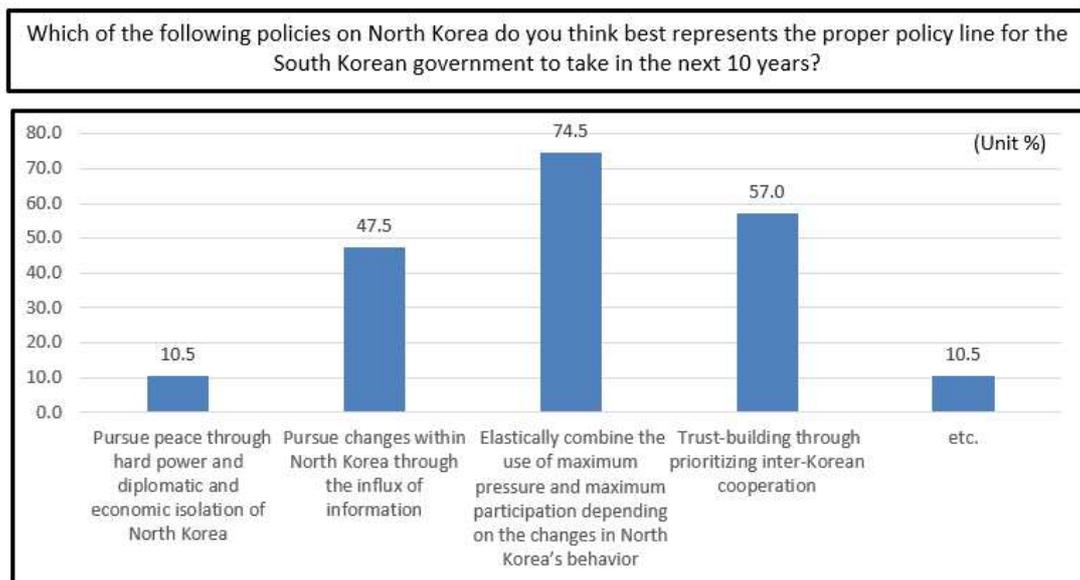
50 professionals have also responded to 20 issue–specific questionnaires on denuclearization and the peace process. Regarding the domestic factor that most hinders the development of denuclearization and the peace process on the Korean Peninsula, 34% responded “the government’s policies on North Korea and its implementation methods, 30% responded a “lack of consistency in policies on North Korea,” and 36% responded “conflicts among South Koreans on policies.” On the Kim Jong–un regime’s willingness to denuclearize, respondents provided an average of 2.3 on a scale of 0 (not willing) to 10 (very willing). Specifically, “not willing (0)” received the highest response of 26% followed by “1” (20%), “2” (16%), and “3” (12%). Not

a single expert answered 8, 9, or 10. Moreover, 76% of the respondents questioned the sincerity of North Korea’s willingness to denuclearize, while 16% held at least a slightly positive view toward North Korea’s willingness.

Policy Direction for Denuclearization and the Peace Settlement

This survey also asked the respondents of their opinions on South Korea’s counter-strategies. First, all 200 participants were asked about the “proper direction for South Korea’s policies on North Korea in the next decade.” Results show that “elastically combine the use of maximum pressure and maximum engagement depending on the changes in North Korea’s behavior” received the most response followed by “trust-building through prioritizing inter-Korean cooperation.”

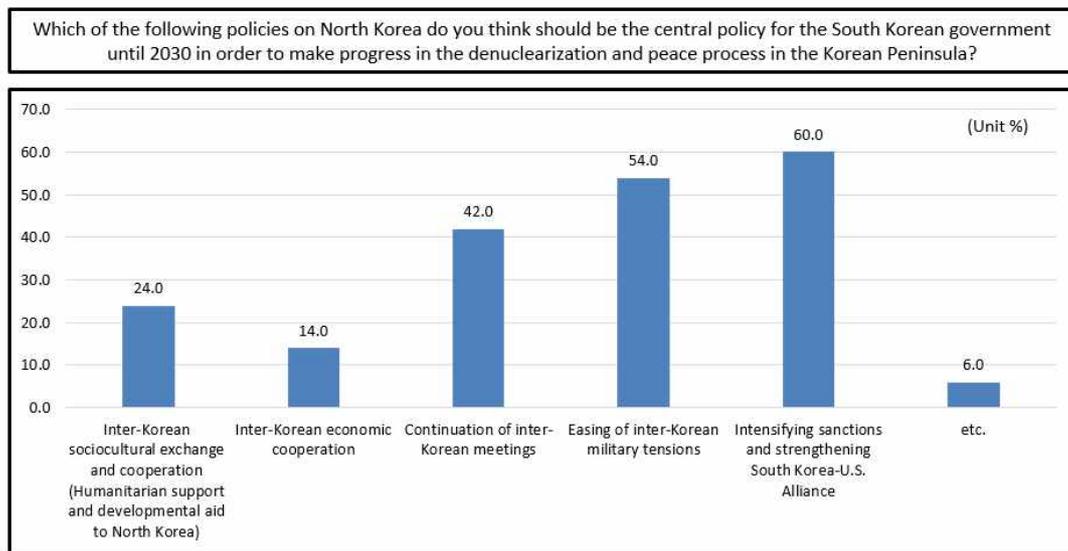
<Figure 1>



In tandem with the above questionnaire, 50 professionals on denuclearization and the peace processes were asked the similar question below. As a result, the highest response rate came from “intensifying sanctions and strengthening South Korea–U.S. alliance,” but many also responded, “easing of inter-Korean military tensions.” Multiple responses were allowed for those two questionnaires, and more than half

of the respondents demanded that South Korea pursue both a ROK-U.S. alliance-centered pressuring policies and inter-Korean cooperation policies in parallel.

<Figure 2>



On the status and role of the United Nations Command (UNC), which will become one of the most important issues once denuclearization and the peace process on the Korean Peninsula progress, 60% responded, “status and role of the UNC will be changed and reduced.” The response was followed by “maintain the status quo” (16%), “status and role of the UNC will be changed and expanded” (12%), and “will be replaced by a different institution” (8%). The answer, “UNC will withdraw from the Korean Peninsula,” only received 4%. Inspection and verification will also be important issues when denuclearization and the peace processes further advance. On the most proper measure for nuclear inspections and verification of denuclearization, 42% chose “inspection and verification by the IAEA and the UN Security Council member states.” This was followed by “inspection and verification by the IAEA and the United States” (38%), “inspection and verification by the IAEA alone” (10%), and “inspection and verification by forming an independent specialized body composed of relevant institutions” (8%). On the question of to what extent the U.S.-North Korea relations will normalize by 2030 if negotiations on denuclearization were to have shown

positive developments, respondents provided the following answers: ▲ “maintain the status quo” (42%), ▲ “establish mutual liaison offices” (30%), ▲ “U.S. will ease and lift important sanctions against North Korea” (20%), and ▲ “mutually open embassies” (8%).

On the question about South Korea’s stance on sanctions against North Korea assuming the stalemate between the U.S. and North Korea sustains, respondents answered from a spectrum of 0 (lift) to 10 (intensify). The average of all responses was 6.3—both “5” (maintain the status quo) and “8” received the most responses (20% each). 84% of all responses were 5 or above. On South Korea’s diplomatic and security response against a potentially failed denuclearization negotiation between the U.S. and North Korea, 44% chose “blockading North Korea diplomatically through intensifying international sanction,” and 24% chose “NATO-style nuclear sharing between South Korea and the U.S.” “The re-dispatch of the U.S. tactical nuclear weapons to the Korean Peninsula” and “recognizing North Korea as a nuclear state and negotiating disarmament” each received 12%. On how much development will occur over the next 10 years regarding the easing of military tensions and creating trust between the two Koreas, 60% responded, “changes according to steps taken on denuclearization.” This answer was followed by “little change and mostly maintaining the status quo” (28%), implementation of inter-Korean military Confidence Building Measures (CBMs)” (6%), and “implementation of inter-Korean operational arms control” (6%).

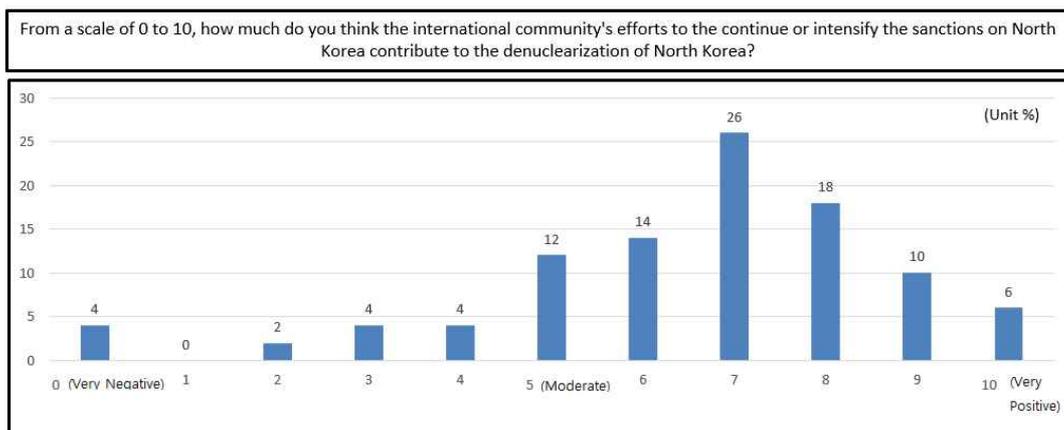
Peace on the Korean Peninsula and the International Community

Pursuing denuclearization and the peace process on the Korean Peninsula requires the cooperation and understanding of the international community. In this light, this study discloses the results of the following four questionnaires. First, respondents were asked to rank the three countries that will have benefitted the most from the creation and maintenance of a denuclearized and peaceful condition on the Korean Peninsula. Countries that appeared the most in the top rank were South Korea (60%), North Korea (36%), and China (4%), and in the second rank were North Korea (36%), South Korea (28%), China (20%), and United States (16%). On the other hand, when

asked about the country that will have suffered the most, 38% chose Japan, followed by China (20%), North Korea and Russia (14%), South Korea (8%), and United States (6%).

When asked about the direction at which the negotiation would unfold between the U.S. and China on the establishment of a denuclearized Korean Peninsula and of a peace regime by 2030, 52% chose “5” (status quo) from a scale of 0 (extreme conflict) to 10 (complete cooperation). In addition, “4” composed 18% and “6” composed 16% of the responses. The average was 4.88. Overall, professionals were pessimistic on the two superpowers cooperating on disrupting the status quo when it comes to issues regarding the Korean Peninsula. Finally, on the effect of maintaining or intensifying international sanction on the denuclearization of North Korea, “7” received the highest response rate (26%), followed by “8” (18%) and “6” (14%), generally with more responses recorded above “5.”

<Figure 3>



South Korea's Strategic Considerations

Considering the results of the survey, the authors suggest the following three mid- to long-term strategic tasks.

First, in order to actively drive the U.S. and China's mutual cooperation on the issues of the Korean Peninsula, South Korea should establish a so-called 'cooperative leading diplomacy' strategy. According to this survey, many professionals

are expecting the strategic competition between the U.S. and China to prolong. With the two countries not elevating the level of cooperation on the Korea issue, potential for denuclearization and normalization of U.S.–North Korea relations will decrease if North Korea creates greater leverage in negotiation against the U.S. by improving relations with China and increasing its strategic value. Hence, the South Korean government needs to establish a diplomatic strategy that can minimize the effects of the Sino–American conflict and competition and work positively toward the normalization of U.S.–North Korea relations. Above all, South Korea must face the fact that the Korean Peninsula is not the priority issue for the two superpowers and devise strategies to draw two superpowers’ attention toward the issue of peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Second, South Korea should reestablish its diplomatic strategy against the United States in order to influence the U.S.’s policy decisions. As reflected in the survey of professionals, while roads to peace may vary, the destination will certainly entail better relationships between the U.S. and North Korea and between the two Koreas. The United States is, without doubt, the most influential external player in inter–Korean relations. Hence, there must be long term efforts to insert South Korea’s interests into the U.S.’s policies on the Korean Peninsula. Primarily, the U.S.’s foreign policy decision–making process is highly influenced by opinion leaders. For instance, the mediating efforts of professional groups centered around Washington D.C.’s political circle have contributed heavily to normalizing the U.S.’s relations with hostile countries like China, Vietnam, and Cuba. Alongside negotiations between governments, South Korea should promote public diplomacy with the U.S. through relevant think tanks and ‘1.5 Track’ consultative bodies. Such ‘diversification’ of diplomacy against the U.S. should target at creating an atmosphere for the issue of denuclearization of North Korea to become a priority for various domains of U.S. foreign policy such as the White House, administrative departments, Congress, the media, research institutes, and private organizations. The authors anticipate that the diversification effort will vitalize the issue of denuclearization in North Korea as a lasting one instead of one that only gains attention in times of North Korean military provocations.

Third, as many experts have pointed out, the easing of military tension in

the Korean Peninsula and trust-building are closely connected to the progress in the denuclearization process. However, the core of denuclearization in North Korea lies in resolving the hostile relations and improving the relations between the U.S. and North Korea. Hence, one important policy for South Korea in denuclearizing North Korea is to induce the resumption of negotiations on denuclearization and peace and, ultimately, to reach agreements through improving U.S.-North Korea relations. For this, we suggest the establishment and operation of the Permanent Consultative Body among the Two Koreas and the U.S. (Consultative Body). The Consultative Body aims at narrowing the differences of positions and making viable compromises among the members on the scope and method of denuclearization through active and routine meetings. By making the consultative meetings permanent, the three countries will be able to minimize the threat of falling into a stalemate after high-level negotiations fail and to conduct preliminary consultations on sensitive issues, such as nuclear inspections and verifications.

Finally, efforts to secure the room for keeping afloat the peace process should focus on advancing inter-Korean relations. Based on the merits and demerits of the past three-years worth of policies against North Korea and the cold reality regarding the current inter-Korean relations, there needs to be a recheck on the mid- to long-term process of peace on the Korean Peninsula. While inter-Korean relations have recently become rigid, South Korea must maintain its efforts to signal its sincerity for peace. In such dire times, the South Korean government should actively help North Korea understand South Korea's strenuous efforts to increase the sustainability of inter-Korean agreements and cooperation measures. Also, the ROK should point out that no such efforts can come to fruition without understanding and cooperating with North Korea.

If, despite the efforts and anticipations of the ROK, North Korea creates a competitive atmosphere as it did before, South Korea should make clear that North Korea will face irreversibly dire consequences. In the survey, professionals pointed to "elastically combine the use of maximum pressure and maximum engagement depending on the changes in North Korea's behavior" as the most proper policy line against North Korea. At the same time, they also answered "trust-building through

prioritizing inter-Korean cooperation.” The two responses imply that South Korea should never give up on cooperating with North Korea but act firmly based on established rules against North Korea’s aberrations. Of course, it is important to maintain proper strategies against North Korea to make sure that it does not make the wrong choices in the first place. Overall, if North Korea violates the inter-Korean agreement and commits military provocations, South Korea should let North Korea know that the intended effects of their provocations will certainly be denied by the capabilities and responses from South Korea. The success and failure of policies on North Korea are evaluated not in times of peace but of trouble. South Korean government should remember that the most important foundation of the policies on North Korea is strong security that does not allow any military provocations. ©KINU 2020

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