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# Analysis on the Military Parade Commemorating the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Armistice

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The overall size of the military parade celebrating the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the armistice<sup>1)</sup> was 60 to 70% of that of the April 25 military parade last year, the biggest ceremony ever, in terms of the number of participants and weapons. There was no official speech made by Kim Jong-un. However, it is worth noting that North Korea unveiled threatening new weapons, including Saetbyeol-4, a strategic unmanned reconnaissance vehicle, and Saetbyeol-9, a multi-purpose attack drone. The North also rolled out key strategic and tactical nuclear weapons, including Haeil, its first-ever nuclear-armed unmanned underwater vehicle, Hwasung-17 and Hwasung-18, new hypersonic missiles, and KN-23, KN-24, and KN-25, which are tactical nuclear weapons. With the appearance of these weapons, North Korea's offensiveness has elevated as it signals the possibility of using armed response against the US and the ROK.

The military parade focused on the following: (1) boasting its military and diplomatic solidarity and cooperation among North Korea, China, and Russia; (2) showcasing the achievement in key strategic and tactical weapons through the "Weaponry Exhibition-2023"; and (3) sending a clear warning message of the possibility of using armed attack against the US-ROK alliance. It is safe to say that the military parade served as a venue to discuss potential cooperation with Russia and China as well as boasting the solidarity among North Korea, China, and Russia.

One of the thorny issues related to the military parade is that delegations from Russia and China staged an attitude virtually accepting North Korea's warheaded tactical and strategic missiles as they celebrated the anniversary together. This can be interpreted as an attempt to nullify UN resolutions regarding sanctions on North Korea, a movement that may have diplomatic ripple effects and raise concerns about facilitating international cooperation for the denuclearization of the North.

More importantly, we have to stay vigilant about whether or not Russia and China will further provide support to the North, including military reconnaissance satellites, ICBMs, and SLBMs. If this takes place, the odds of elevating its existential nuclear threats could be much higher. Worse, there could also be cooperation on weapons operations and combined military exercises, directly and indirectly, between North Korea and Russia and between North Korea, China, and Russia. Another possibility is that North Korea will make yet another aggressive provocation following and in the name of countering a massive US-ROK combined military exercise, which will likely be conducted in August or September.

### A Total of 13 Military Parades Since the Start of the Kim Jong-un Regime

The Korean Central News Agency broadcast a recorded military parade starting at 3:00 pm on July 28, 2023, showing the commemoration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the armistice. It seems that the actual event lasted more than two hours from 8:00 pm on July 27 and the duration of the filmed version was two hours and 15 minutes. Beginning the October 2020 military parade commemorating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Workers' Party, there have been six such events taking place at night, becoming a common practice in North Korea.

Since the start of the Kim regime, a total of 13 military parades have been conducted, all of which were attended by him. Meanwhile, he delivered his remarks in six out of 13 parades, which means the rate of making a speech is 46%. Defense Minister of North Korea, Kang Sun-nam, was on the podium for his speech celebrating the 70<sup>th</sup> armistice anniversary on behalf of Kim Jong-un. Cho Ryong-Hae, the then Director of the General Political Bureau of North Korean People's Army, also gave a congratulatory speech for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the armistice in July 2013 on behalf of him. These cases prove that no remarks from Kim Jong-un are not unusual.

[Table 1] Statistics on yearly military parades since the start of the Kim regime

Anniversary	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	total
Kim Il-sung's birthday (Apr 15)	○ 100th (P/S)					○ 105th (P)							2
Military Foundation Day (Feb 8)							○ 70th (P/S)					○ 75th (P)	2
Revolutionary Armed Force (Apr 25)		Ceremony									○ 90th (P/S)		1
Armistice Day (Jul 27)		○ 60th (P) Delegation from China										○ 70th (P/S) Delegations from China and Russia	2
The Day of the Foundation of the Republic (Sep 9)		○ 65th (P)					○ 70th (P) Delegation from China			○ 73th (P)			3
Party Foundation Day (Oct 10)				○ 70th (P/S) Delegation From China					○ 75th (P/S)				2
Conference of the Workers' Party										○ (Jan 14) (P)			1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>13</b>

1) In North Korea, the armistice day is called "Victory Day" or "Day of Victory in the Great Fatherland Liberation War."

fn. 1)  Day time /  Night time

2) "P" refers to participation by the Kim

3) "S" refers to speech by the Kim

4) "Delegation from China" refers to the presidium of the congratulatory delegation

Until now, foreign congratulatory delegations have stood alongside the presidium for military parades three times, all of which were attended by high-level delegations from China since the Kim regime. During that period, such case didn't happen with Russia. It is the first time delegations from China and Russia, led by high-level officials, have participated in North Korea's military parade. In the previous three cases, Kim Jong-un made a speech only once during the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the communist party in 2015. The fact that the North Korean leader didn't deliver his speech indicates sending a strong message against the US with delegations from China and Russia may pressure both countries.

The current patterns show that North Korea holds a military parade no more than twice a year. Even in 2018, when more than two five-year anniversaries fell, the number of military parades was limited to two. It seems North Korea has factored in time and financial burden required for military parade preparation. However, 2023 can be an exceptional year with three military parades because two parades were held already during the 75<sup>th</sup> Military Foundation Day and the 70<sup>th</sup> Armistice Day while the Day of the Foundation of the Republic will fall in the second half of this year, a special day on which North Korea usually staged a military parade.

### **Displaying Solidarity with Beijing and Moscow and Focusing on Diplomatic Tactics Using the Military Parade and Potential Sales of Weapons**

North Korea focuses on a diplomatic message that shows the solidarity with Russia and China while not losing sight of the practical aspect of military cooperation. The military parades rolled out for the past three years were mainly about building an internal bond and boasting weapons. They were domestic festivals joined by Ri Sol-ju and Kim Ju-ae. This July 27 parade was filled with a two-day reception of Kim Jong-un by the foreign delegations, the conveyance of letters signed by Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, visiting the Weaponry Exhibition 2023, watching congratulatory performances, a meeting between defense ministers, a banquet, and the military

parade, all of which were a combined report publicly broadcast in the North. The authoritarian regime concentrated on military and diplomatic message such as the solidarity with Russia and China, the achievement of weaponry development, and a warning message toward the US. Capitalizing on resistance against the US, the symbolic code of North Korea's "Victory Day," and delegations from Russia and China, the North Korean leader aims to highlight the two blocks of the New Cold War and "imperialism vs. anti-imperialism" through the military parade. North Korea's focus on diplomacy is well documented in news photos. The total number of photos taken for news reports was 202 during the July 27-28 event, and 64% of those pictures (129) featured delegates from Russia and China.

It is interesting that the North used the parade as an arena to showcase new weapons, which could later facilitate the sales of such weapons. It was unusual for North Korea to publicly release a foreign delegation's visit to the Weaponry Exhibition 2023. This time, Kim Jong-un and Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu made a visit to the exhibition. North Korea said it exchanged opinions with Russia on "the current international trends in developing armed weapons and on mutual interests while introducing its weapons and combat technical equipment." All of this shows the North is looking to not only sell weapons to Russia, who is facing a lack of weapons and other relevant supplies for the Russo-Ukraine war, but open up new markets to sell its weapons in other countries.

### **The Closest-Ever Relations between Russia and North Korea and the Prudent Attitude by China**

The highlights of the parade were (1) the participation of delegates from Russia and China and their presence in the tactical or strategic missile parade, including ICBM; and (2) the showcase of "a joint line" between North Korea and Russia for strategic and tactical coordination and cooperation. At first glance, it seems that the three countries stand in solidarity supported by the same level of partnership for one another. But, deep down, the relationship between North Korea and Russia is different from that of North Korea and China. Whereas reports on delegates from Russia are filled

with phrases such as “consensus,” “strategic/tactical coordination and cooperation,” “joint line,” “strategic solidarity,” “strategic friendship,” and “trench,” no such expressions indicating how close North Korea and China are can rarely be found in reports on delegates from China. North Korean media selected cliched phrases often used to describe the traditional friendship between the two countries. While there were only about 30 photos related to the delegation from China during the July 27–28 event, the number of Russia delegation photos almost tripled. (84 photos) It is more reasonable to think that Russia and China show a different type of support for North Korea; rather than it unilaterally decided to build a closer relationship with Russia.

The level of delegation from China clearly shows its prudence. Even though the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the armistice is not only a year that comes in a 5-year cycle but a war anniversary that celebrates the participation of the Chinese military, the leader of the delegation from China was a mid-level official. Since the start of the Kim regime, the three previous delegations were headed by high-level officials or Xi Jinping’s close politicians such as Li Yuanchao, the Vice President of the People's Republic of China, Liu Yunshan, a member of the Politburo Standing Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, and Li Zhanshu, the chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. (The visits took place on July 7, 2013, October 10, 2015, and September 9, 2018, respectively.) However, Li Hongzhong is a member of the Politburo composed of 24–25 people, and his level is far lower than the previous figures. Instead of staging a close partnership between North Korea and China, the authoritarian state made a typical visit and intentionally chose a mid-level official. Due to his rank, other than delivering the letter signed by Xi, Li Hongzhong’s official activities was limited.

Behind this attitude is its intention to balance the increasingly fierce competition between the US and China. In recent months, minister-level officials from the US have visited China, calling for cooperation on North Korean issues, a movement by the US that China feels uncomfortable with. That is why China has staged a typical visit not to disregard North Korea while not openly displaying the close relations between the two.

## **The Limited Military Cooperation between North Korea and Russia and Concerns over the Possibility Russia Provides Military Technology Support to North Korea**

On the other hand, Russia, in a state of war, acknowledges it needs North Korea to show diplomatic support, deepen military cooperation, and form a joint line against the US. We have to keep an eye on whether there will be tangible military cooperation between North Korea and Russia, and whether Russia will provide military technology support to the North. It has reached a technical impasse related to ICBM, military reconnaissance satellite, SLBM, and nuclear submarine, but this problem can be easily solved if Russia decides to provide technical support. Such scenario could give rise to a highly elevated level of threat to the US and the Republic of Korea.

With that said, only when North Korea provides a reward that corresponds to Russia's support, can the above-mentioned hypothesis be realized. Russia's decision to provide support hinges on whether North Korea can provide some strategic items on par with nuclear technology transfer because it is Russia who has to bear the condemnation from the international community which always rallies behind nuclear non-proliferation.

However, North Korea's support will cover diplomatic support, provision of war materials and supplies, and postwar recovery. It seems that the strategic benefits deriving from North Korea are not significant for Russia. Therefore, it is safe to say the partnership between North Korea and Russia would be the display of their diplomatic joint line and limited military cooperation rather than the transfer of advanced nuclear technology.

## **The Number of Photos Showing Weapons Is Reduced in Half and Focusing on Strategic and Tactical Nuclear Weapons Through a Selection and Concentration Strategy**

The July 28 edition of North Korea's Rodong Sinmun published 82 photos of the military parade and 20 of which featured weapons. In April 2022, when the Korean People's Revolutionary Army performed the military parade, the newspaper published

152 photos featuring the event and 60 photos featuring weapons, setting a new record in North Korea’s press history. Given it usually runs approximately 100 photos of military parade and 40–60 photos of weapons since 2020, the number of photos featuring the July 27 parade was reduced in half. Here comes a selection and concentration strategy by North Korea. Instead of showing conventional artillery weapons, it rolled out warheaded tactical and strategic weapons, including KN-25, a short-range ballistic missile, KN-23 modified version and KN-24, which are a new type of tactical guided weapons, strategic cruise missiles, Haeil, a nuclear-armed unmanned underwater vehicle, and Hwasung-17 and Hwasung-18, which are new hypersonic missiles. In addition, a strategic unmanned reconnaissance vehicle and a multi-purpose unmanned attack vehicle resembling the US reconnaissance aircraft Global Hawk and Reaper respectively were rolled out.

[Table 2] The number of photos published by Rodong Sinmun in the Kim Jong-un era

Anniversary	2023 7.27	2023 2.8	2022 4.25	2021 9.9	2021 1.14	2020 10.10	2018 9.9	2018 2.8	2017 4.15	2015 10.10	2013 9.9	2013 7.27	2012 4.15
Number of photos	82	150	152	73	100	127	94	100	78	38	12	18	42
Number of photos of weapons	20	37	60	0	42	62	14	41	25	8	2	4	11

Rather than mobilizing and showcasing numerous existing weapons, North Korea took a selection and concentration strategy boasting tactical and strategic nuclear weapons, such as new solid-fuel Hwasung-17 and Hwasung-18 ICBMs, to deliver a strong message against the US.

### The Size of the Military Parade Featured by 112 Weapons of 16 Types in 66 Columns with 13,000 Participants

The military parade was characterized by 66 units with 56 infantry and mechanized units along with 10 missile-related units. Since one infantry unit consists of 300 soldiers, the estimated number of participants is around 13,000–14,000. For the April

25 parade last year, the number of units was 72 consisting of 50 infantry and 22 mechanized units, which means 20,000 participants. (estimated) The size of the military parade this time was only 60–70% of that of the April 25 event, which was the biggest in North Korea’s parade history.

[Table 3] Types and scale of weapons identified at the parade under Kim Jong-un

Date	2023 7.27	2023 2.8	2022 4.25	2021 9.9	2021 1.14	2020 10.10	2018 9.9	2018 2.8	2017 4.15	2015 10. 10	2013 9.9	2013 7.27	2012 4.15
Weapons Identified	112 weapons with 16 types	100 weapons with 13 types	170 weapons with 26 types	0	172 weapons with 20 types	225 weapons with 23 types	125 weapons with 12 types	136 weapons with 17 types	169 weapons with 22 types	291 weapons with 31 types	20 weapons with 2 types	285 weapons with 38 types	560 weapons with 37 types
Entire Column	66	60	72	Worker–Peasant Red Guards	50	61	54	36	85				
Number of participants	13,000	15,000	20,000		15,000								

### New Attack Weapons and Units Alongside Strategic and Tactical Missiles

Although there wasn’t a new nuclear weapon released by North Korea as it did during the February 8 parade marking the anniversary of founding its military, it was not hesitant to showcase weapons in life-size for the first time that were made public through experiments and military exercises in the first half of this year. Saetbyeol-4, a strategic unmanned reconnaissance vehicle, and Saetbyeol-9, a multi-purpose attack drone, received the most attention among the new weapons, which have not been made public. The strategic unmanned reconnaissance aircraft, dubbed by North Korea, resembles the US’s Global Hawk, a high-altitude unmanned aerial reconnaissance system. North Korea’s multi-purpose attack drone also seems to model after the US’s MQ-9 Reaper. North Korea published on July 26 five photos showing these vehicles out of 20 news photos of the Weaponry Exhibition 2023. They circled over the Kim Il-sung Square in a show of force. The Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) broadcast an intro video of the Weaponry Exhibition 2023 featuring Saetbyeol-9, an unmanned attack vehicle, test-flying and firing missiles at nighttime on July 27. During the military



parade, North Korea boasted a dedicated unit called “multi-purpose unmanned vehicle unit.” The scene of test-flying these vehicles points to a higher possibility that North Korea can use them for actual purposes after improving their capabilities in the near future. It is suspected that North Korea released its unmanned reconnaissance aircraft and unmanned attack drone on purpose to respond to the overwhelming superiority of reconnaissance assets, the development of unmanned attack vehicles, and the operation of drone units by the US and the ROK. If the North secures the stability of its weapons, it could make provocations such as a filtration operation with spy activities and flying in a show of force.

[Table 4] The sequence of the display of weapons in recent military parades

2023.7.27.	2023.2.8.	2022.4.25.	2021.1.15.	2020.10.10.
<b>112 weapons with 16 types</b> <b>Nuclear type: 8</b>	<b>100 weapons with 13 types</b> <b>Nuclear type: 5</b>	<b>170 weapons with 26 types</b> <b>Nuclear type: 12</b>	<b>172 weapons with 20 types</b> <b>Nuclear type: 6</b>	<b>225 weapons with 23 types</b> <b>Nuclear type: 10</b>
[Units of Weapons of the Past] 1. The T-34 Tank Unit (6)  [Mechanized Unit] 2. Amphibian Tank (6)  [Missile Unit] 3. Super large Multiple Rocket Launcher (8) 4. Strategic Cruise Missile (6) 5. KN-23 Unit (6) 6. KN-24 Unit (6)  [Underwater Weapons] 7. Haeil Underwater Strategic Unit (4)  [Anti-aircraft Rocket Force] 8. The Pon'gae-7 Anti-aircraft Missile (4)  [Unmanned Vehicle] 9. Unmanned Vehicle Unit (4)  [Strategic Force Mechanized Unit] 9. Hypersonic Missile Unit (4) 10. Hwasung-18 (4)	[Units of Weapons of the Past] 1. The 1st Infantry Regiment (6) 2. The 603rd Motor Cycle Regiment (18) 3. Towed Artillery Unit (6) 4. The T-34 Tank Unit (6) [Major Tank] 5. M2020, North Korean-version Abrams Tank (6) [New Self-propelled Artillery Unit] 6. 155mm Self-Propelled Howitzer (SPH) (6) 7. 12-tube 300mm Multiple Rocket Launcher (6)  [Super Large Multiple Rocket Launcher] 8. 6 KN-25 Super Large Multiple Rocket Launchers (4 launch tubes)  [Anti-Aircraft Rocket Force] 9. The Pon'gae-7 (M-2020 SR-SAM) (Estimated, 6) 10. KN-24 (6) 11. KN-23 (Wheeled, a total of 6)	[Mechanized Unit/Tactical Rocket Unit] 1. 88-tube Spike Anti-Tank Missile mounted Armored Vehicle (9) 2. M2010 APC (Armed Personnel Carrier) Wheeled Armored Vehicle (9)  [Tactical Guided Missiles] 3. ATGM (Anti-Tank Guided Missile) mounted Truck (9) (Estimated to have North Koreanmade Spike mounted)  [Major Tank] 4. M2020, North Korean-version Abrams Tank (8)  [New Self-propelled Artillery Unit] 5. 155mm Self-Propelled Howitzer (SPH) (a total of 8) 6. 22-tube 240mm Multiple Rocket Launcher (9) 7. 12-tube 300mm Multiple Rocket Launcher (9)	[Mechanized Unit] 1. 8-tube Spike Anti-Tank Missile-mounted Armored Vehicle (9) 2. M2010, APC Wheeled Armored Vehicle (a total of 9)  [Mobile Artillery] 3. M2020, Wheeled Armored Vehicle (9)  [Major Tank] 4. M2020, North Korean-version Abrams Tank (9)  [New Self-propelled Artillery] 5. 155mm Self-Propelled Howitzer (SPH) (9) 6. 200mm 12-tube Multiple Rocket Launchers (9)  [Multiple Assault Weapon-Super large Multiple Rocket Launcher] 7. KN-25 Super Large Multiple Rocket Launcher (4 launch tubes, 9 units) 8. KN-25 Super Large Multipl	[Tactical Rocket] 1. 8-tube Spike Anti-Tank Missile-mounted Armored Vehicle (9) 2. M2010, APC Wheeled Armored Vehicle (9)  [Mechanized Infantry Division] 3. M2020 Wheeled Armored Vehicle (9)  [Tank Unit] 4. M2020, North Korean-version Abrams Tank (9)  [New Self-propelled Artillery Unit] 5. 155mm Self-Propelled Howitzer (SPH) (9) 6. 240mm 22-tube Multiple Rocket Launchers (9) 7. 300mm 12-tube Multiple Rocket Launchers (9)  [Super large Multiple Rocket Launcher] 8. KN-25 Super large Multiple Rocket Launcher (4 launch tubes, 9 units)

<p>11. Hwasong-17 (5)</p>	<p>12. The Hwasong-17 (7) 13. Solid-fuel ICBM (4)</p>	<p>[Super large Multiple Rocket Launcher]</p> <p>8. 4-tube KN-25 (Super Large Multiple Rocket Launcher) (9)</p> <p>[Missile]</p> <p>9. 5-tube Strategic Cruise Missile (9)</p> <p>10. The KN-23, modified SLBM (4)</p> <p>[Underwater strategic ballistic missile]</p> <p>11. SLBM (Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile) (larger than the Pukguksong-5) (4)</p> <p>[Anti-aircraft Rocket Force]</p> <p>12. New low-altitude anti-aircraft system that includes anti-aircraft radar (6)</p> <p>13. Surface-to-ship missile (KN-19), The Kumsong-3, a modified armed weapon (4)</p> <p>14. The Pon gae-7 (4)</p> <p>[Strategic Force Mechanized Unit]</p> <p>15. North Korean version of KTSSM (6)</p> <p>16. KN-23 (North Korean version of Iskander) (8)</p> <p>17. KN-24 (North Korean version of ATACMS) (6)</p> <p>18. KN-23 Larger Variant (heavyweight warheads) (6)</p> <p>19. Hypersonic Missiles in Two Variants (6)</p> <p>20. The Hwasong-8 (topped with a hypersonic gliding vehicle: HGV) (6)</p> <p>[Jang Chang Ha's Red Flag Company]</p> <p>21. The Hwasong-15 (4)</p> <p>[Kim Jungsik]</p> <p>22. The Hwasong-17 (4)</p>	<p>e Rocket Launcher (6 launch tubes, 9 units)</p> <p>[Underwater Strategic Ballistic Missile]</p> <p>9. The Pukguksong-5 (4)</p> <p>[Anti-aircraft Rocket Force]</p> <p>10. New low-altitude anti-aircraft system that includes anti-aircraft radar</p> <p>11. The Pon gae-6 (4)</p> <p>12. The Pon gae-7 (6)</p> <p>[New major Equipment]</p> <p>13. KN-23 (Wheeled, 6 units)</p> <p>14. KN-24 (9)</p> <p>15. KN-23, modified SLBM</p>	<p>9. KN-25 Super large Multiple Rocket Launcher (6 launch tubes, 9 units)</p> <p>[Rocket Unit]</p> <p>10. Strategic Cruise Missile (5 launch tube) (9)</p> <p>11. Surface-to-ship missile (KN-19), The Kumsong-3 (9)</p> <p>[Underwater Strategic Ballistic Missiles]</p> <p>12. The Pukguksong-4 (4)</p> <p>[Anti-aircraft Rocket Force]</p> <p>13. New low-altitude anti-aircraft system that includes anti-aircraft radar</p> <p>14. The Pon gae-6 (4)</p> <p>15. The Ground-launched Pukguksong-2 (6)</p> <p>16. The Pon gae-7 (6)</p> <p>17. KN-23 (wheeled, 6 units)</p> <p>18. KN-23 (orbit, 6 units)</p> <p>19. KN-24 (9)</p> <p>[Hwasong Artillery]</p> <p>20. The Hwasong-12 (6)</p> <p>[Intercontinental Ballistic Rocket Unit]</p> <p>21. The Hwasong-15 (4)</p> <p>22. The Hwasong-17 (4)</p>
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North Korea mentioned a nuclear underwater attack weapon unit for the first time, showing off a dedicated force responsible for the operation of such system. It already

reported on the experiments of Haeil-1 and Haeil-2 on March 21, March 24, and April 8, but it has not unveiled them in life-size until the military parade for the 70<sup>th</sup> armistice anniversary. Landing assault battailion, known as the 41st Landing Assault Battalion Unit, was introduced for the first time during the event- a unit designed to penetrate the Yellow Sea Defense Line of the ROK and successfully land on South Korean soil in case of emergency. (The foundation date of the battalion is marked on its unit flag as May 7, 2017.) This can be interpreted as a response to the landing drills conducted by the US and the Republic of Korea. These weapons and units, including unmanned vehicles show that North Korea is shifting away from the missile capability of “deterrence” or “retaliation” to the ability to offensively strike strategic points such as coasts and ports, where using missiles alone may not be ideal. The 8th Congress of the Workers’ Party heralded the development of weapons, including unmanned vehicles and underwater tactical and strategic weapons, all of which are being developed at a faster clip than expected since 2021.

[Table 5] Development direction & key tasks of strategic weapons set out during the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress

■ Development direction of strategic weapons presented during the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress

- 1) Developing lightweight and compact tactical nuclear weapons
- 2) Producing ‘super large’ warheads
- 3) Securing the ability to strike various strategic assets within the range of 15,000 km.  
→ North Korea set out its goal of advancing its “ability to make a preemptive or retaliatory strike on the US mainland, United States Pacific Fleet, United States Seventh Fleet, and United States Forces Korea

■ Five key tasks for the development of strategic weapons presented during the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress (presumed)

- 1) (In the near future) Hypersonic missiles
- 2) Solid-fuel ICBMs that can be launched from land or submarines
- 3) (In the near future) Military reconnaissance satellites
- 4) Presenting unmanned reconnaissance aircraft

## **With the Solidarity between North Korea, China, and Russia Up in the Air, the Kim Regime Reaffirmed Its Offensive Armed Response**

The latest military parade has focused on staging the solidarity between North Korea, China, and Russia in responding to the upgraded US–ROK alliance, increased extended deterrence by the US, and deepened trilateral cooperation on security between the ROK, the US, and Japan. Reactions by the North, including a series of conversations and weapon firing, may say a lot about the weight of pressure it feels on the back of more comprehensive and robust cooperative partnerships on security matters between the ROK and the US as well as among the ROK, the US, and Japan. As Defense Minister of North Korea, Kang Sun-nam, delivered a speech on behalf of Kim Jong-un during the latest parade, joined by delegations from Russia and China, his firm message to the US and the ROK – taking about the possibility of using offensive armed response – reflects North Korea’s high expectations on forming and strengthening a joint response line with China and Russia.

There are four key takeaways from the address by Defense Minister: (1) strengthening US–ROK–Japan cooperation on security as well as with NATO; (2) the operation of the Nuclear Consultative Group; (3) the deployment of a nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine on the Korean Peninsula; and (4) the warning on North Korea by the US–ROK alliance, which says “the end of its regime” in the event of nuclear attack. His remarks intend to reiterate the situation Russia and China are facing in terms of strategic pressure against the US. It is, however, unclear whether the two countries will come up to the high expectations that North Korea has. ©KINU 2023

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