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# Background and Implications of North Korea's Participation in 19<sup>th</sup> Non-Aligned Movement Summit and 3<sup>rd</sup> South Summit: Political Use of Global South

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North Korea dispatched a government delegation headed by Vice Foreign Minister Kim Son-kyong to participate in the 19<sup>th</sup> Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) held in Kampala, the capital of Uganda, on January 19 and 20, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> South Summit of the Group of 77 and China held at the same venue on January 21 and 22. This article analyzes the background and implications of North Korea's participation in the two summit meetings.

### Utilization of the NAM as a Venue for Anti-US Coalitions and Promotion of Legitimacy of Nuclear Possession

First, North Korea's participation in the NAM Summit and the South Summit is attributable to the symbolic value and political utility these international events hold. The 'Non-Aligned Movement' is an international forum of countries that are not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc, such as countries in Africa and Southeast Asia. Founded in 1961 based on 'Bandung Principles,' the Non-Aligned Movement still maintains unity, solidarity, and collective coordination among the member nations.<sup>1)</sup> Since becoming an official member at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Non-Aligned Foreign Ministers' Conference held in Lima, Peru in August 25, 1975, North Korea has

consistently participated in Non-Aligned Movement summits. The Non-Alignment Movement serves as a crucial international platform for North Korea that helps expand its diplomacy centered on China and Russia to embrace multilateral diplomacy with the ‘Third World’ countries.

Second, North Korea’s non-aligned diplomacy aligns with Kim Jong-un’s foreign policies which are based on principles of anti-Americanism and self-reliance. In his speech at the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the 14<sup>th</sup> Supreme People’s Assembly, Kim Jong-un reiterated that ‘anti-imperialism and self-reliance’ is the immutable ‘primary state policy,’ and asserted the prioritization of developing relations with socialist countries, strengthening of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and advocating ‘joint action and struggle for anti-imperialism’ at a global level.<sup>2)</sup> Following such policy directions, Vice Foreign Minister Kim Son-Kyong clearly affirmed North Korea’s ‘continued commitment’ to the non-aligned movement even in the Kim Jong-un era, and that it will spare no efforts in strengthening the role of the non-aligned movement to shape a new international order.<sup>3)</sup>

Third, by emphasizing the uncertainties of global security, North Korea actively advocates for the legitimacy of measures strengthening its capabilities for self-defense and war response. Through the 19<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, North Korea claimed that measures to strengthen its defense capabilities were a legitimate exercise of sovereignty, citing unstable global security, the

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1) The Ten Principles of Bandung stated by the NAM are as follows: ① Respect for fundamental human rights and for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, ② Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations, ③ Recognition of the equality of all races and of the equality of all nations large and small, ④ Abstention from intervention or interference in the internal affairs of another country, ⑤ Respect for the right of each nation to defend itself singly or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations, ⑥ Abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defence to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers and abstention by any country from exerting pressures on other countries, ⑦ Refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country, ⑧ Settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means, ⑨ Promotion of mutual interests and co-operation, ⑩ Respect for justice and international obligations.

2) *Rodong Sinmun*, January 16, 2024.

3) *Korean Central News Agency*, January 22, 2024.

sovereignty of the state, stable control and monitoring of political developments as reasons. Furthermore, it warned that provocations and threats from the United States and its allies are unprecedentedly high, turning the prospect of war from an “abstract concept” into a “practical reality.”<sup>4)</sup>

Fourth, the orientation of the activities of the Non-Aligned Movement today aligns with North Korea’s socio-economic development agenda. In particular, the ‘Kampala Declaration’ agreed upon at the 19<sup>th</sup> Non-Aligned Movement Summit extensively covered peace and security, development and human rights, and international cooperation. While mentioning the need to end economic subjugation by the West, North Korea advocated for enhanced regional and continental cooperation among the member countries for agenda including food, energy crisis, health emergencies, and climate change. It pointed out that the widening development gap and imbalance between the developed and developing countries undermine the implementation of SDGs, and highlighted the importance of South-South cooperation among the Group of 77 developing countries.<sup>5)</sup>

### **Will the Global South Set a New Stage for North Korea?**

The political implications of North Korea’s participation in the Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China (G-77/China) can be summarized into three points. First, there is a probability of North Korea further expanding the South-South cooperation through members of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Global South. While socialist countries in the Non-Aligned Movement are a minority, the majority of the members, who are developing countries, are potential partners who may jointly pursue common interests. Second, the Global South could serve as a platform for North Korea to emphasize the unintended consequences of sanctions against it. During the summit meetings of the Non-Aligned Movement and the G-77, there were demands for the lifting and abolishing of the

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4) *Rodong Sinmun*, January 22, 2024.

5) *Rodong Sinmun*, January 24, 2024.

use of sanctions against developing countries as a means of exerting political and economic pressure. Third, it is necessary to pay attention to bilateral diplomacy between North Korea and the member countries of the Non-Aligned Movement and the G-77. North Korea could utilize the Global South in order to share their thoughts and stance, and to secure legitimacy for their actions including their aggressive actions.

Considering the strict international sanctions against North Korea, it remains uncertain whether partner members of the Global South would be able to satisfy North Korea's economic needs. Unlike other international organizations such as the United Nations or the African Union, the Non-Aligned Movement does not have any binding treaty, charter, or a secretariat. However, based on North Korea's continued emphasis on South-South cooperation centering on developing countries in Asia, South America, and Africa, North Korea's utilization of the Global South in the future warrants attention. ©KINU 2024

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