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How to Promote Peace on the Korean Peninsula after PyeongChang Winter Olympics

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The world is witnessing a period of detente unfolding on the Korean Peninsula in the midst of cold wave, a peninsula that not that long ago had repeatedly been threatened by an imminent prospect of war, caused by North Korea's nuclear and missile development. There have been various inter-Korean exchanges since this January: high-level inter-Korean talks were held in a long time; and the Olympics participants and working-level officials of the two Koreas have been going back and forth from the South to the North beyond a barred wire of the thirty-eighth parallel. However, no one knows when this warm breeze stops blowing and a cold snap suddenly hits the peninsula given the unpredictable nature of winter weather.

The detente comes as a precious opportunity to the mostly-frozen peninsula. South Korea should fully seize this dialogue opportunity, created by the PyeongChang Winter Olympics, in laying a foundation for building peace on the Korean Peninsula. It should also formulate a strategy on how to encourage the international community to join an effort in bringing about peace on the peninsula, especially the U.S. among others, who evidently stands by and watches this conciliatory mood emerged by the Winter Games.

The Moon Jae-in government should come up with a flexible approach to denuclearization and a peace regime to lay a cornerstone for peace on the Korean Peninsula. The government should also put in place a multi-layered strategy that enables both establishing an international peace network and keeping the momentum of inter-Korean dialogue alive.

Flexible Approach to Denuclearization and Peace Regime and the Use of Double-freezing as Building Block for Peace

The key to opening a dialogue for denuclearization and a peace regime lies in approaching the issue in a flexible manner. Washington still holds onto its position of denuclearization first and transition to a peace regime later. Pyongyang, on the other hand, sticks to its position of transition to a peace regime first and denuclearization later. However, North Korea has changed its position to transition to a peace regime first and nuclear disarmament later after it declared to have completed its nuclear force.

In the meantime, China is trying to find a middle ground between the U.S. and North Korea by presenting two proposals: double-freezing of U.S.-ROK joint military exercise and North Korea's nuclear and missile provocation; and the parallel advancement of denuclearization and the peace agreement on the Korean Peninsula.

A flexible approach to denuclearization and transition to a peace regime could help find a breakthrough under this current situation. A realistic alternative is to simultaneously create the right condition for the creation of peace regime and denuclearization, instead of sticking with a mechanical, unilinear, and gradual approach in terms of setting priority for denuclearization and a peace regime. In other words, this approach aims to set the condition for peace first, even before denuclearization, thereby creating the right external environment for realizing an ultimate goal of denuclearization. For example, in 2007, the two Koreas sought out a way for transition to a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula through "Declaration of the End of the Korean War." Adopting "Declaration of Peace on the Korean

Peninsula” at the four-party talks or six-party talks could create the environment for promoting peace on the peninsula and secure a momentum for a denuclearization negotiation.

In addition, Seoul should find a way to turn this temporary period of double-freezing into a phase of continuous dialogue after the Winter Games. Since North Korea’s launch of the Hwasong 15 last November, this double-freezing has been enforced but will only remain effective until late March when the PyeongChang Olympics is over. Therefore, the government should make an effort to utilize this peace mood that rarely arrives on the peninsula, created by a temporary double-freezing, in facilitating the transitional process to a dialogue phase. Especially, there should be a close consultation between South Korea and the U.S. on the possibility of delaying and downsizing U.S.-ROK joint military drills after April.

Expanding Momentum of Inter-Korean Dialogue

There are four issues that need to be addressed in formulating a new frame of inter-Korean relations after the Olympics. First is making inter-Korean dialogue a regular event. Second is expanding areas beyond the sports sector that can be covered in inter-Korean dialogue. Third is forging inter-Korean dialogue in a systematic manner. The inter-Korean relations should be institutionalized by systemizing high-level inter-Korean dialogue and working-level meetings and by making those meetings mutually-reinforcing. Fourth is inducing inter-Korean dialogue to act as a driving force for U.S.-North Korean dialogue.

In particular, inter-Korean military talks hold a significant meaning to ease tensions on the Korean Peninsula. A communication channel at the border village of Panmunjom and inter-Korean military communication lines at the West Sea Area have been restored thanks to the North’s participation in the Winter Olympics. The previous inter-Korean agreement, aimed to alleviate military tensions on the peninsula, should primarily be reinstated, among which provisions include the banning of accidental clashes and of mutual exchange of the slander and defamation between

the South and the North.

At the same time, high-level inter-Korean dialogue should be held before and after the Olympics as a follow-up measure. Especially during the Olympics high-level North Korean delegation and South Korean representatives should sit down for a meeting to discuss issues, such as holding a reunion event for families separated by the Korean War, military talks, etc. A meeting between North Korean high-level delegation and South Korean President Moon Jae-in will open a new chapter in advancing inter-Korean relations. After the Winter Games, there should be a high-level inter-Korean dialogue both in Seoul and Pyongyang addressing a wide range of topics, including inter-Korean relations and nuclear issues.

Establishing International Network for Peace

The right condition should be created first for resolving North Korea's nuclear issues so that the inter-Korean relations can flourish beyond the realm of humanitarian support and exchange and cooperation of sports and cultural sector. And an international network for peace is required for building peace on the Korean Peninsula. Above all, there should be a beam of light in improving U.S.-North Korean relations so that inter-Korean relations, too, can gain a momentum. The U.S. and North Korea should hold a dialogue and find a middle ground in a negotiation where the two sides can agree upon.

And a strategic consultative body among South Korea, the U.S., and China should be formed since there needs to be a trilateral channel, through which those three countries can discuss the need to maintain the momentum of double-freezing and U.S.-North Korea dialogue after April. In addition, another trilateral channel among South Korea, the U.S., and Japan should cover various issues in detail, such as maintaining sanctions against North Korea, freeze for freeze, and the peace process for the future.

In addition, it is important to seek a bilateral and multilateral diplomacy



utilizing this opportunity accorded by the Olympics where 26 heads of state gather together, including the U.S., Japan, China, and Russia, and try to gain the international support for promoting peace on the Korean Peninsula. ©KINU 2018

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