

Reflections on 'Korea' Problem and Searching for Solution

Mainstream and Organic Views

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Abstract

Nuclear threat from North Korea seems to be unsolvable problem since Nixon first encountered in 1975 till today challenging the Trump Presidency. The U.S. is right about that China may be able to help finding a solution but the U.S. is going about in a wrong way. To find a solution to the 'Korea Problem', one must understand the history behind Joseon, her relation with China and how she has evolved into two Koreas today challenging the world as the 'Korea Nuclear Problem' as well as facing the reality that nuclear threat can only be rendered ineffective when the three great nuclear powers agree to form a Tri-Party Nuclear Police to deter anyone using nuclear weapon.

I. Reflection and History of Korea and Korea Problem

'Korea' problem is an international hot potato that no one seems to have a solution. Koreans, reflected by their leaders and historical events, are characterized by world leaders who had dealt with the Koreans as emotional people with strong and unyielding will. The incidence of North Korea Leader Kim Jong Un of developing nuclear missiles not only threatens South Korea and Japan but also makes the U.S. and China uneasy. The continuous testing of nuclear weapon and the launching of four ballistic missiles by North Korea in recent months have escalated the 'Korea problem' to a 'hot button' level for the U.S. The U.S. is pressured by South Korea and Japan as well as international community to do something to solve this security challenge. The U.S. is trying to pass on the pressure to China but does the U.S. expect China to have a solution? The North Korea nuclear threat has existed since the Nixon Administration (1975) but no solution has been found up to today's Trump Administration. This author believes that in order to find a solution to the 'Korea problem', we must first understand the history of Korea and trace the causality of evolution of the 'Korea' problem then devise a realistic solution. This article will follow this thought process.

The two Koreas are neighbors of China today but historically the Korean Peninsula had a very close yet complicated relationship with China, a hate relation with Japan and a divided and confused relation with the U.S. First, centuries before Christ, the Korean Peninsula and northeastern part of China were occupied by the northern people divided in many small states until they merged into three kingdoms, Goguryeo 高句麗, Silla 新羅, and Baekje 百濟. In 678AD, with the help of Tang Dynasty (China), Silla united the three kingdoms but then in 698AD it was split into the North (Balhae) and South (Silla) which was later divided into three kingdoms again (892-936AD). The three kingdoms were united by Wang Geon to form the Goryeo Dynasty (918AD). The Balhae was invaded by Khitan (Liao Dynasty, a brief one in Chinese history) causing the Crown Prince of Balhae and his refugees to join the Goryeo

Dynasty, becoming a united dynasty for many centuries thereafter. In 1392, General Yi Seong-gye through a coup established Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910). It was during this dynasty, King Sejong the Great (1418-1450) created the Hangul alphabet enabling recorded Korean history in Hangul. The Joseon Dynasty suffered foreign invasions (1592-1637) and became more isolated and later in many ways like China suffered a tragic fate owing to Western colonialism and Japanese Imperialism.

In 19th century Joseon as a protectorate of Qing Dynasty experienced similar fate as Qing did. They faced the invasion of colonial powers from the West and the aggressive encroachment of the Imperial Japan and victimized by all the unequal treaties forced upon them. After Qing lost in the Sino-Japan War (1894-1895), Qing was forced to sign the infamous Maguan Tiaoyue (1895) to end the war, ceding Taiwan to Japan and acknowledging the independence of Korea Empire by severing its protectorate relation with Qing. Then Japan forced the Korea Empire to sign a protectorate treaty (1905) with her and in 1910 Japan brutally annexed Korea. (160,000 Koreans were killed whereas over 400,000 Chinese were killed in Taiwan by the ruling Japanese) On 4-13-1919, an exile Korea government was established in Shanghai, endorsed by China, then the new Republic of China. However, Japan's ambition in expansion and desire to conquer China had become more vivid eventually leading to an all out invasion war (1937) against China. The young government of the Republic of China was forced to move west to Chongqing and so did the exile Korean government in 1940.

Throughout the Chinese history, the north east of China including Manchuria and Joseon Peninsula had been protectorate of China for sometime as well as threatening neighbors for other times with excursions of invasion into China. The 'northern people' (They are part of minorities of Chinese population today) included then the Joseon people thus the 'northern people' has a complex historical background in Chinese history. In good times, they were China's protectorate and in bad times they were the invaders. From the opposite perspective, some 'Northern People', such as Joseonians even advocate today that their ancestors have ruled China (Some Koreans would claim Manchuria even further into the Middle Kingdom of China were part of Korea). This historical background had great influence on China's Korea policy and laid basis for probable explanation of Korea's flip-flop China relation and off-and-on dependence on China.

When WW II ended with Japan surrendered to the Allies (the U.S., the Great Britain, France, Russia and China), and by the Potsdam Declaration, Japan had to give up and return all conquered territories to China. Thus Manchuria and Taiwan were returned to China and Korea was to become independent from Japan. Unfortunately, the post war order could not be restored smoothly due to the emergence of communism (for example, Russia was in northern Manchuria receiving the Japanese surrender instead of China). Post WW II, China broke out a civil war with People's Republic of China controlling the Mainland China in the end and the Republic of China controlling the Taiwan Province of China. Similarly, post WW II, Korea was split to North and South Korea supported by the Soviet Union and the United States respectively. Both China and Korea's situations were the direct consequence of the anti-communism policy the U.S. adopted and the expansionary policy of the communist Soviet Union. The Korean War (6-25-1950) was one of the major confrontations between the U.S. (supporting South Korea) against the Soviet Union (supporting North Korea). China (especially her generals) then was not willing to fight the superior US forces but Mao had no choice since he was fully aware of the Stalin strategy. Russia

would be more than happy to send Russian troops to Korean Peninsula to fight the Americans passing through Chinese northern territories and demanding China to offer local support and supplies to the Russian move to protect North Korea. In 1950, China was still under the devastation of WW II, Mao decided to engage China in the Korean War directly rather than being a puppet behind the Russian troops. He had to commit his own son to boost morale to fight the US modern forces on behalf of the Koreans. (Mao's son was killed during the Korean War) The Chinese fought a bitter battle against a well equipped American army. By sheer man power and will power, they stopped the US advances eventually settled back to the original 38 degree truce line. Thus the world maintained a draw of the Korean conflict between the two sides. China and the U.S. both suffered severe casualty in their respective military history. The U.S. and China fought an unnecessary war for the Koreans. China claimed victory for North Korea and the U.S. for the South Korea but the two Koreas were never appreciative. The 'Korea Problem' thus persisted from the cease fire in 1953 till today. The war was at truce but never ended.

II. Searching for the Solution of the 'Korea Problem'

The motives of the U.S. in Korean War is foremost to stop communist from taking over the Korean Peninsula and to a lesser degree to build a nation chain to surround and curtail the communist states. China was a communist state but with her long history rich in ideologies and in political governance, China never accepted communism as the gospel as proven out later by her departure from the Soviet Communist bloc and by her embracing of capitalism and cultivating a system of her own. The motives of China in Korean War was a reactionary one to the US-Soviet confrontation and mostly driven by the objectives of self preservation and desire to build herself into a true independence state. It is an easily understandable foreign policy judging on China's treacherous revolution history to become a modern independent nation. However, today's situation has changed. The Soviet Union had collapsed. China has risen not only economically but has become more mature and self-confident on the world stage. The U.S., though still a superpower with the strongest military might in the world, must recognize the past decades of globalization which has molded the world into intricate interdependence. The 'Korea Problem' evolved under the prolonged confrontation with North Korea developing nuclear power since 1960's for nuclear energy purpose then expanded for military applications in late 70's. China had refused North Korea to share her nuclear technology in 1964 when she succeeded in her first nuclear bomb test. North Korea always had intention to develop nuclear weapon and the U.S. had always tried to get North Korea to sign a nonproliferation treaty to stop nuclear weapon development. (A brief summary: North Korea did sign a NPT in 1992 but the inspection process would break down. Then threaten to withdraw (1993), negotiation (1994-2002), withdraw from NPT (1-10-2003), begin of six party negotiation (4-2003), re-signed agreement (2005) and breakdown again and continued negotiation (2006-2011), death of Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un taking control (12-2011) and now the recent increased testing and launching (2012-present))

This nuclear threat has impact on not only the two Korea Peninsula states but also Japan, China, Russia and the U.S (by her military alliances with South Korea and Japan). This 'Korea Problem' has challenged the U.S. from the Nixon-Kissinger era (1970-1975) through Obama to Trump Presidency. What is the solution? None! The problem has escalated as North Korea gained more in nuclear and missile technology. According to the US National Security Archive released in 2010, Nixon had pondered on launching a pre-emptive nuclear strike on North Korea, but the

consequence would be neither predictable nor acceptable judging on the possible behavior of the Korean leaders. Up to today, North Korea had conducted its first hydrogen bomb on January 6, 2016 and its fifth underground nuclear test with an estimated yield of 10kt on July 6, 2016 and the above mentioned ballistic missile launch on March 6, 2017. The 'Korea Problem' thus has become a more dangerous thorny issue. However thorny, we must find a solution, mustn't we?!

Kim Jong Un, out of his frustration in managing his country's economic problems (more likely a survival issue), took nuclear power development as the adrenaline shot. But nuclear missiles are not rice and bread nor fuel and commodities needed by the North Koreans. Nuclear missiles may be a threat but launching one requires a clear minded resolve to pick a target. First, which and where is the target? Second, would a pre-emptive strike succeed? If the U.S. couldnot easily arrive at such a resolve, it would be more difficult for North Korea to arrive at a clear effective resolve for sure. Should North Korea first attack Soule (capital of South Korea) or Japan or a US military base or China and Russia's military bases? It would be an impossible resolution to make if the U.S., China, Russia, Japan and South Korea were all truly united in dealing with the 'Korea Problem'. This is the very reason, China believes in a six party negotiation as the only solution to resolve the 'Korea Problem'. If the U.S. could work with China and Russia on this 'Korea Problem, the problem would disappear. Let me explain why.

From the legacy US foreign policy, the U.S. is treating Russia and China, two nuclear powers, as threats to the U.S. and the world. Based on this policy, the U.S. is essentially facing two 'nuclear threats' with magnitude larger than the 'Korea Problem'. If the U.S. could not solve the Korea problem how would The U.S. solve the Russia or China problem? The current strategy of placing THAAD in South Korea over the objections of China and Russia would not change the two bigger nuclear threats at all. THAAD may be effective in deterring North Korean missiles but it will not be able to deter Russia or China both of which have a large land mass and huge ocean territory to launch nuclear missiles. So the fundamental strategic thinking about nuclear threat must change. The only workable strategy seems to be pursuing an across the board de-nuclear plan among the three biggest nuclear powers. If the United States, Russia and China would agree with this principle, then any small 'nuclear threat or problem' could be solved, since the small threat had no way to succeed in any pre-emptive strike against the U.S., Russia and China. If the three great nations would sign a nuclear war prevention agreement (NWPA), that is, if any nation was found to develop nuclear weapon with intent to launch such weapon against any other nation, anyone of the three nuclear powers could take a retaliate nuclear strike to annihilate the nuclear attacker's nuclear facility. This NWPA basically establishes a tri-party nuclear police (TPNP) which will be the solution to the 'Korea Problem', 'Iran Problem' or any other nuclear ambition.

Following the above concept, we may find a lasting solution for the 'Korea Problem' by taking the following steps:

The U.S. immediately initiates a discussion to develop a NWPA establishing the tri-part nuclear police mechanism. With such an agreement reached, the U.S. can withdraw all military forces including any nuclear weapon from South Korea and demanding the North Korean to stop and destroy its nuclear power development. What can North Korea do? Attack South Korea to invite a total destruction from the Tri-Party police? To defy the tri-party nuclear police and to invite a

severe sanction punishment? This Tri-Party Nuclear Police will render the ‘North Korea’ nuclear threat ineffective. This tri-party nuclear police will also eliminate Japan's excuse of building an ambitious nuclear power. This TPNP can take away any incentive for any nation to start a military nuclear power program. If the three great nations cannot reach a NWPA and TPNP mechanism, the consequence is clear – nuclear threats cannot be stopped, ‘Korea Problem’ or any other nuclear threat will lead to a nuclear war destroying the entire Earth including the three great nations.

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