

“Scenario Planning for the Korean Peninsula”

The year 2012 marked a “year of change,” for many states experienced periods of political transition from elections to regime changes, and North Korea become among the first states to usher in a new political era. However, it is becoming increasingly clear, after a year into the Kim Jong-un regime, that the country is headed back to the original course pursued by the preceding regime. In particular, the nuclear program that has raised international concern remains North Korea’s diplomatic leverage to actualize direct negotiations with the U.S. Furthermore, the program is deemed “Kim Jong-Il’s legacy,” and will continue to buttress North Korea’s foreign policy strategies. Major regional and international players have struggled to muster an effective response, further clouding the future success of resolving the issue of North Korea’s nuclear program; all the while the threat of nuclear missiles is becoming an alarming reality for Japan as well as surrounding states.

While there is much opaqueness surrounding North Korea’s progress in weaponizing a small nuclear warhead, the next three to five years will be the critical stage in development. Amidst such a threat, how best to resolve North Korea’s nuclear issue is an imminent challenge for Japan’s security. North Korea’s position of resolutely defending the previous administration’s approach while legitimizing its current course insinuates that the Kim Jong-un regime is connoting unrest within itself.. Especially in the medium to long term, North Korea’s course of action will have a tremendous impact upon the security and stability of Japan as well as on those of its neighbors.

Both in the shorter time frame (three to five years), and in the medium to long term, devising a collaborative approach by Japan, the United States, and South Korea is of paramount importance. In the context of Japan-South Korea relations, for example, the “1965 Framework” that has regulated the two states’ interactions for 50 years needs much reconsideration its durability in mind. Furthermore, in the medium to long term, the kind of regional order (North East Asia) that will emerge in the future is of great importance. At the heart of such an order lies China – a pertinent actor in issues concerning not only North Korea but also the structuring of the regional order itself – and its future actions will greatly influence Japan’s security.

North Korea’s nuclear threat is becoming an alarmingly real issue and, amidst the increasing uncertainty of the North Korean regime’s future direction, the necessity for

scenario planning that encompasses Japan's security is surfacing poignantly. Furthermore, in examining the issues posed by North Korea, Japan must keep in mind the power dynamics among major international and regional players.

Bearing in mind the issues noted above, this project analyzes the Kim Jong-un administration from various angles, and conducts "scenario planning" that takes into account North Korea's nuclear missile threat in the short term (3-5 years) as well as the state of affairs on the Korean Peninsula in the medium to long term. By doing so, this scenario planning seeks to produce policy recommendations outlining appropriate approaches for Japan to resolve the abduction, nuclear weapon, and missile issues vis-à-vis North Korea.

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