

Statement on North Korea's 3rd Nuclear Test

Stop All Measures Threatening Peace on the Korean Peninsula!

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On February 12, North Korea conducted a third nuclear test. Later that day, North Korean state media confirmed that the test had been carried out successfully.

Repeated nuclear tests by North Korea now prove that the U.S. and South Korea-led response to North Korea's nuclear ambitions has failed.

Since the 1980s, North Korea has demanded that withdraw of U.S. troops and weapons from the Korean Peninsula, the mutual reduction of North and South Korean military forces and the establishment of a framework for peace.

North Korea has also sought the normalization of relations with the U.S. The U.S., however, has thoroughly ignored these demands, instead, adopting an antagonistic policy towards North Korea. Following the Bush Administration, which notoriously dubbing the country part of an 'Axis of Evil', the Obama Administration continues to refused negotiations, maintaining the option of a preemptive strike against the country under its policy of 'strategic patience'. Taking advantage of its overwhelmingly superior military force, the U.S. has strengthened sanctions targeting North Korea's economic vulnerability. These measures have merely fanned North Korea's nuclear ambitions, which it sees as the only means to equalize its position vis-à-vis the U.S. The same can be said for the regime set by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Far from controlling nuclear proliferation, the NPT has functioned to guarantee the hegemony of existing nuclear powers, especially the U.S. and has, thus, accelerating North Korea's drive toward nuclear tests and weapons. It is now clear that the U.S.-led international response to North Korea and the NPT regime have utterly failed.

Through its three nuclear tests, North Korea has now demonstrated how close it has come to actual nuclear weapons possession. In the past, the North Korean government insisted that it adhered to the principle of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and that the development of nuclear capability was only a necessary means of self-defense. This attitude has now changed. North Korea has now amended its Constitution to designate itself a 'nuclear-armed state' and has declared that issue of denuclearization is no longer up for negotiation. Even considering the failings of U.S. and South Korean policy, this drive towards nuclear possession is, ultimately, not the right path.

In a resolution censuring North Korea adopted on January 22, 2013, the United Nations Security Council expressed its "determination to take significant action in the event of a further DPRK launch or nuclear test". The North Korean government should recognize its drive towards nuclear armament is bringing about hardline responses from international society and a potential military confrontation, rather than increasing its negotiating power. North Korea's neighbors in Northeast Asia are using North Korea's nuclear threats to justify further militarization and more increased hostility. Far from achieving its goals of a balance of power and security guarantee, North Korea's actions are heightening tensions and threatening peace and security in the region.

For its part, the South Korea government has responded rapidly with hardline measures, as if it was almost waiting for the chance provided by another nuclear test. It recently announced the

acceleration of plans to deploy missiles with the capability to reach every corner of North Korean territory and other military build-up measures.

The South Korean government makes the argument that it can control a further nuclear test or military action through equivalent demonstrations of strength. It is important to recognize, however, that far from being a solution, such threats only become excuses for more aggressive actions on the part of North Korea. North Korea's official state media, for instance, has used UN Security Council sanctions imposed after its rocket launch on December 12th as a justification for the last nuclear test, claiming that the test was a needed response to the U.S.' hostile violation of its legitimate rights to use satellites for peaceful purposes. The South Korean government should recognize that hardline measures have objectively failed to deter North Korea's nuclear ambition and to mitigate ever-growing military tension on the Korean Peninsula.

The South Korean government should immediately stop using the North Korean nuclear test as a pretext for increased military armament and hardline policies. These responses will only raise tension in Northeast Asia and are likely to spur an arms race.

On the day of the nuclear test, Kim Jang-su, nominee for Chief of National Security under the new Park Geun-hye administration, told journalists that, should the test be confirmed, the "process for trust-building between South North Korea will not be the same as before." This was a hint that the incoming administration will likely strengthen its stance towards North Korea. Now that she has been elected, Park Geun-hye has already begun to renege on campaign promises concerning welfare and economic democratization. The president-elect must not use the North Korean nuclear test as an excuse to turn her back on the Korean people's demands for peace on the peninsula.

All advocates of peace in Korea should take a firm stance against all nuclear weapons and, at the same time, work for the reduction of military tensions on the peninsula. Supporting North Korea's nuclear armament would only aggravate confusion and insensitivity to the danger nuclear weapons pose, making it difficult to oppose arguments for South Korea's nuclear armament. Nuclear weapons are not a means to bring about peace, but stimulants of tension and threats to peace and stability.

The responsibility for nuclear disarmament lies first and foremost with the United States and other nuclear powers. And, tensions on the Korean peninsula can only be reduced when the United States and South Korea give up their antagonistic policies towards North Korea.

PSSP will continue to struggle against aggressive policies towards North Korea and all actions that threaten peace and stability in the region.

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