

Korean peninsula: The spiral of provocation

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A “state of war” declared, deployment of missiles, threats of pre-emptive attacks, warnings to foreign embassies... The (dictatorial) North Korean regime has raised its provocative gestures to an unusually high level. In the eyes of a number of experts, this is about Kim Jong-un consolidating his authority over the army, militarizing the population still more and improving his hand in negotiations with the USA, notably as concerns the civilian nuclear programme. Certainly, but they forget a bit too easily the very recent US provocation: the participation in late March of B52 bombers and F22 stealth fighters (with nuclear capacities) in military exercises in South Korea simulating an operation against the North. Washington has certainly poured oil on the fire of the Korean crisis.

Washington, Seoul and Tokyo all have an interest in the rise in tension. The US justifies the consolidation of their military bases (South Korea, Okinawa) and the reinforcement of the Seventh Fleet. The Japanese right pushes for increased militarization and prepares public opinion for the idea that the country should equip itself with nuclear weapons. Seoul and Tokyo profit from this “state of emergency” to marginalize (and severely repress in the case of South Korea) the social résistance to austerity policies, the pacifist movements or the democratic opposition post-Fukushima to nuclear energy.

The Chinese regime will regret North Korean “excesses” but cannot accept the perspective of a reunification of the peninsula under the control of Seoul or remain indifferent to the rise in power of the USA in this part of the world. It has engaged on a very significant programme of development of its military fleet both in the South China seas and the oceans: Beijing disputes influence over the Maldives with India, participates in international operations of “securing” of seaways in the Indian Ocean, and has symbolically sent a flotilla to the Mediterranean.

North Korean weaponry is too rudimentary to threaten Japan or the US. Nobody believes that we will see the start of a new war in Korea. But, given the provocations and counter provocations (deployment of B52s or missiles), we cannot rule out still more violent military “incidents” than those we have seen in recent years, which could get out of control. Whatever happens, the Korean crisis is already feeding the militarisation of East Asia as a whole, together with the nuclear proliferation and authoritarianism of a good number of political regimes.

As conceived by the powers (or by the authoritarian states), the policy of “security” leads to a very worrying militarist spiral, whose consequences for the populations are increasingly felt. Security from the viewpoint of the peoples is on the other hand borne by democratic and social movements independent of the established powers; by the fight for universal nuclear disarmament and its corollary, the end of nuclear energy; by anti war mobilizations and opposition to right wing nationalism.

International solidarity is built by the meeting of these progressive movements. With internationalism as their crucible.

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P.S.

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