

# Korean Peninsula: A Step toward Lasting Peace?

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**The intra-Korea summit on April 27 may well be recorded as historic. The Panmunjeom Declaration signed by Kim Jong-un and Moon Jae-in clearly signifies the Korea's transition to peaceful coexistence, which is welcomed by all except for anti-communist hysterical lunatics nationally and internationally.**

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Thus, for now, the Kim-Trump summit, scheduled sometime in late May or early June, is supposed to finalise the agreement between North and South leaders. As long as Kim Jong-un confirmed his will to denuclearizing and ending the hostilities between North and South Korea, Donald Trump has no other option but to accept the agreement between North and South Korea. And furthermore, Trump's response based on the Kim-Pompeo meetings seems to suggest high hope for an end of antagonism compromise between North Korea and the United States.

## Historic Summit and High Hope

The summit was a huge success for North and South Korean governments in turning the crisis into an opportunity to implement peace and mutual cooperation. The best result was to eliminate the sense of war crisis which dominated the whole Korean nation last year.

According to the latest survey, 82.4 percent of respondents are satisfied with the summit result, and 78.9 percent with the denuclearizing agreement. Accordingly, the approval rate for Moon Jae-in's governance is risen to 79.4 percent.

On the other hand, the support rate for the main opposition party dropped to mere 12 percent, while Hong Joon-pyo has harshly criticised every aspect of the summit and Moon's government. Hong's demagogic slanders are actually his own political suicide, as he is now faced with critiques from the ranks of his own party.

As every minute of the summit was televised, hope for peace is felt real and so the support by the absolute majority is a matter of fact. Thus, fortunately for all, the way of peace and cooperation is wide open. And just after the summit, South Korean army removed the propaganda system along the DMZ, and the North Koreans adjusted their time zone to South Korea's, which has followed the Japan's even after the liberation from Japanese colonialism. These prompt implementation of agreed items further validates the authenticity of the intra-Korea agreement.

## **Kim Jong-un's success**

As a young dictator, Kim Jong-un firstly consolidated his power internally, even killing his uncle-mentor and his own brother. Then, he initiated an external feat against the U.S. through a series of missile launches and nuclear weapon experiments. In face of huge pressure from outside, he stacked up his cards and took an unexpected sharp turn to peaceful negotiation.

Kim Jong-un's turn improved the North Korea's relation with South Korea, and the summit with Xi Jin-ping also recovered the friendly relationship with China, moving him in an extremely favourable position. Especially, his unexpected, unilateral declaring of denuclearing last month decisively paved for a peaceful solution of the war crisis.

Thus, in face of coming NK-US summit, Donald Trump is rather on the defensive, and hostile hawks within his administration are now sidelined. Especially, Trump's unilateralism diminished his legitimacy considerably, for instance, his revocation of Iran-US nuclear deal. Therefore, Trump is now busy with trying to save his own face, and any opposition from within is about technicalities, not the essence.

In a sense, Kim Jong-un's gamble worked perfectly. His verbal war with Trump abruptly turned into a high-profile diplomacy stunt, fooling the others. And now he is just a step ahead of his "new history."

## **Stalin dilemma and the unification lite**

At the moment, especially with high hope for peace, Kim Jong-un is without any doubt a people's hero, whether he is liked or not, very much like Joseph Stalin after the victory in the World War II, without whom the victory over Hitler's Nazim would have been impossible.

Judging from Kim's consolidation of monolithic rule, North Korea seems to follow the path of China's modernisation, whether it is socialist or capitalist. And he will control the process of economic opening and development, recruiting huge support from his former enemies.

However, the problem is what will happen after the lasting peace is secured. Perhaps China nowadays can be a possible mirror of North Korea in the near future.

Interestingly, South Koreans are getting more realistic as peaceful coexistence and mutual cooperation comes close. Discourse of national reunification is replaced by that of unification lite, in which course many are worried that the problems that happened after the German reunification will repeat here.

At this moment, however, no one thinks of the fate of ordinary citizens of North Korea, though it is clear that the South Korean capitalism and North Korean bureaucracy will be beneficiaries, instead of the people who have suffered most from the national division and confrontational antagonism, though the future of Korea will depend on them.

## **In conclusion - for what peace?**

The official end of the war and establishment of last peace in Korean peninsular is an absolute welcome for all the Korean people and their neighbours. When the goal of a series of the summits

are secured, the Korean peninsular will get out of the historically most cruel cold war regime of the national division.

However, both the Korea's entry into "a normal country" is still capitalist of any sort. The ultimate problem of the summit was that in the course of the agreement between leaders, grassroots people have been excluded completely. They have never been consulted in any possible way.

In this crucial point, sadly, the role of the working class, social movements, and the radical left, has been minimal at best. Relegated to mere spectators, they failed to organise any meaningful intervention during the crisis. Neither peace movement nor anti-imperialist struggle was organized to claim the denuclearizing or lasting peace.

However, the looming peace is not stable, as so many obstacles exist and the structural limitation of geopolitics still persists over the Korean peninsular. Thus, struggle for real peace and full democratization is ahead in the dimension of the peninsular and East Asian region. In a different context, the lessons need to be learned from the past failures and a new dynamics for emancipation needs to be imagined and prepared for.

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International Forum in Korea

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