Recommendations for Stronger US-ROK Alliance to Respond to North Korea’s Growing Nuclear Threat

A Report of the Consensus-Building for the Future of the Korean Peninsula

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Good Minds for the Korean Peninsula
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Recommendation 1: Maintain the goal of North Korea’s complete denuclearization but continue sanctions on North Korea.


Recommendation 3: Strengthen missile defense by integrating ROK-US intelligence assets.

Recommendation 4: South Korea should adhere to the non-nuclear policy to the extent possible, but leave its nuclear options open.
A member of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the ROK has adhered to a non-nuclear policy as a national tenet. The ROK’s non-nuclear policy has been guided by its desire to partake in the greater international cause of building “a nuclear-free world,” and promoting “peaceful uses of nuclear energy.” South Korea’s non-nuclear policy has enabled the country to procure cheap and stable supplies of atomic energy, thereby contributing greatly to national economic development and placing South Korea among the leaders in the field of peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Thanks to its consistent non-nuclear policy, the ROK is now one of the small number of countries capable of building the most efficient and safest cutting-edge nuclear power plants.

From a long-term perspective, the ROK values its non-nuclear policy for peace and reunification of the Korean Peninsula. Presently, however, it serves the purpose of preventing North Korea’s nuclear weapons development. Notably, in 1992, the two Koreas issued the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. In doing so, South Korea went so far as to prohibit reprocessing and enrichment facilities, thereby limiting the advancements of its own nuclear energy industry to induce North Korea’s denuclearization. Furthermore, the geopolitical environment around the Korean Peninsula, which is surrounded by some of the world’s greatest powers, including China, Japan, and Russia, calls for a prudent approach to the nuclear issue. No neighboring country wants a reunified Korea with nuclear weapons. In that vein, North Korea’s nuclear armament poses the danger of triggering an military conflict on and around the Korean Peninsula.

South Korea’s decades-old non-nuclear policy now stands at a crossroads. Some of the key premises underlying the ROK non-nuclear commitment are falling apart. With regard to peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the Moon Jae-in government’s nuclear phase-out policy has undermined the ecosystem of the country’s nuclear energy industry, causing immediate difficulties in energy supply and demand, and creating serious problems in responding to climate change. Not only that, the Moon government is foolishly cutting off its own future options.

On a more serious note, South Korea’s effective deterrents for protecting its people have
been significantly undercut: North Korea has managed to become a de facto nuclear state as denuclearization negotiations remain in a stalemate, and credibility of the ROK-US Alliance and US nuclear umbrella has been undermined. North Korea has already operationally deployed nuclear forces capable of launching attacks against South Korea. It also appears to have the ability to launch a nuclear attack against Japan and US military bases in the western Pacific, crucial rear bases for South Korea’s national defense. Furthermore, North Korea has developed strategic nuclear weapons targeting the continental United States, raising concerns about the decoupling of US-ROK security interests.

Our study group, Good Minds for the Korean Peninsula (공감한반도), offers the following analyses and recommendations, based on open- and closed-door discussions that reviewed the strategic environment surrounding the North Korean nuclear issue.

I. Change in Perception of North Korea’s Nuclear Threat

Over the past three decades, South Korea and the international community have accommodated Pyongyang’s assertions in their attempts to induce Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear programs. This approach was based on the assessment that North Korea, faced with a regime crisis, was pursuing nuclear development as an act of being on the defensive, primarily to ward off external threats and ensure regime survival; and the ROK and the international community have operated under the assumption that the North would voluntarily give up its nuclear weapons if they took measures to remove these external threats and provide security assurances to the North. In short, the grand working hypothesis has been that North Korea, being small, poor, and isolated, has pursued nuclear weapons development for regime survival; therefore, if the international community guaranteed regime security, and the United States ended its hostile relations with North Korea and normalized bilateral ties, North Korea would give up its nuclear development.

Pyongyang over the past 35 years has signed at least six agreements with the international community, including South Korea, pledging complete denuclearization: the accession to the

North Korea for its part has already achieved the withdrawal of US tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea and the suspension of ROK-US combined military exercises. The United States has also signaled a willingness to establish a US-North Korea liaison office and has provided a non-aggression pledge, energy assistance, and economic aid. Moreover, North Korea has been offered normalized diplomatic ties with the United States and Japan, and a peace agreement in exchange for the abandonment of its nuclear weapons program. North Korea has received hefty rewards without once holding up its end of the bargain.

Unfortunately, South Korea and the international community have overlooked the offensive side of North Korea’s nuclear development. Haunted by its failure to win the Korean War, North Korea has consistently developed nuclear weapons for nearly 70 years. A close assessment of North Korea’s behavior shows that, contrary to our generally accepted hypothesis, a very aggressive, consistent strategic goal lurks behind the country’s nuclear development. First and foremost, North Korea’s goal is to become a nuclear weapon state. It means to command the political and military situation on the Korean Peninsula, using its nuclear weapons as leverage. North Korea’s intent is to remove the US nuclear umbrella over South Korea, break up the ROK-US alliance, and ultimately work toward the withdrawal of US Forces Korea (USFK) to create an environment conducive to a North Korea-led reunification of the Korean Peninsula.

Kim Il-sung had consistently argued that North Korea had “neither the intent and ability, nor the need to make nuclear weapons.” By approximately 1968, however, Kim is known to have given secret instructions to “actively develop and produce our own nuclear weapons and long-range missiles with which we can attack the continental United States.”

North Korea in November 2017 launched the Hwasong-15, an intercontinental ballistic
missile (ICBM) capable of hitting the continental United States. After achieving this aim, Kim shifted to peace overtures, successfully paving the way for direct negotiations with Washington that included US-North Korea summit talks. A misrepresentation of North Korea’s intent toward denuclearization, combined with the three rounds of historic US-DPRK summit talks in Singapore, Hanoi, and Panmunjom over the past three years, have given the impression as though there has been great progress in the peace and denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The fact of the matter, however, is that, as of now, not a single North Korean nuclear weapon has been dismantled, and there has been no reporting on or freezing of North Korean nuclear manufacturing facilities. More fundamentally, there is not even a consensus on the definition of “denuclearization.”

North Korea has continued to strengthen its nuclear capabilities since the commencement of its nuclear negotiations with the United States. The North has hitherto carried out six nuclear tests, including hydrogen bomb (boosted fission weapon) tests. According to experts, Pyongyang possesses 50 to 70 nuclear warheads and has already deployed over 1,000 short- to medium-range ballistic missiles capable of striking not only all of South Korea but also Japan and US military bases in the Asia-Pacific. The North is also believed to have a mass production system capable of making more than 10 nuclear warheads per year. Notably, North Korea resumed ballistic missile tests in the wake of the Hanoi summit. North Korea’s nuclear capabilities have become more advanced and cutting-edge by conducting more than 20 ballistic missile tests since the Hanoi summit that included a new type of submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM). It conducted new missile engine tests at the Tongchang-ri missile test site, which it had supposedly dismantled. Chairman Kim Jong-un also warned of a “shocking actual action,” saying North Korea would unveil a “new strategic weapon.” Precedent indicates that North Korea is highly likely to carry out a missile provocation within six months after the new Biden Administration takes office. Instead of displaying its old SCUD-based missiles during the large military parade in October 2020, North Korea showcased strategic weapons including a new super-large ICBM and a new SLBM, as well as new short- to medium-range ballistic missiles modeled after the US ATACMS and Russia’s Iskander missile system. In his report to the 8th Party Congress in January 2021, Kim Jong-un made North Korea out to be a responsible nuclear state. At the same time, however, he made it clear that the country would
continue to strengthen its nuclear arsenals, formalizing the development and production of tactical nuclear weapons and the development of a 15,000km-range ICBM, multiple independently targetable reentry vehicle (MIRV) technology, and a strategic nuclear-powered submarine.

Under these circumstances, skepticism has prevailed over the prospects of North Korea’s denuclearization through negotiations. **Without a US nuclear umbrella to support South Korea, North Korea’s nuclear arms build-up would significantly tip the inter-Korean military balance in Pyongyang’s favor.**

II. Concerns Over the Enfeebled Alliance and Nuclear Umbrella

North Korea’s ability to operationally deploy nuclear capabilities and launch a nuclear attack on the continental United States is giving rise to the decoupling of ROK-US security interests. The continental United States’ own vulnerability to North Korean nuclear weapons and missiles raises serious doubts about whether the United States would be able to retaliate against Pyongyang should Seoul come under a North Korean nuclear attack.

North Korea’s testing of more than 20 various ballistic missiles after May 2019 did not faze Washington because those missiles were clearly targeted at South Korea and Japan and were not ICBMs capable of hitting the continental United States. In fact, citing cost issues, President Trump virtually suspended the deployment of strategic assets to the Korean Peninsula. These assets, such as strategic bombers, make up the core of the deterrent against North Korea and constitute a key component of the US nuclear umbrella. To make matters worse, during a news conference immediately following the US-North Korea summit in Singapore in June 2018, President Trump unilaterally suspended ROK-US joint military drills and even hinted at the withdrawal of USFK. Since then, all but joint tabletop exercises have been suspended between the ROK and US militaries. ROK-US joint military exercises, along with the deployment of US strategic assets, function as a key mechanism for confirming that the US extended deterrence is being provided and giving reassurances to the ally, South Korea..
North Korea’s definition of “denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula” does not mean dismantling of North Korea’s nuclear programs: it has consistently referred to the entire Korean Peninsula, including U.S. nuclear umbrella, as the target of denuclearization. The behest of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il calls for a “nuclear-free world.” This means that the entire world must be denuclearized in order for North Korea to dismantle its own nuclear programs. More importantly, this means Pyongyang will consider nuclear dismantlement only when US security commitments to South Korea are removed. In sum, North Korea’s vision of the “complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula” will be fulfilled on the Korean Peninsula only when USFK, which command nuclear control, leaves the ROK.

Linking denuclearization to the removal of US commitments to ROK defense has been North Korea’s consistent tactic for the past three decades, which means North Korea’s strategic goal is to disintegrate the ROK-US Alliance. What is surprising is that the actual agenda of nuclear negotiations has evolved over the past 30 years to include the removal of the US nuclear umbrella for the ROK, the suspension of ROK-US joint military exercises, the disbandment of the UN Command, and the withdrawal of USFK, which were not our policy considerations in the past. It would be no exaggeration to say that North Korea’s nuclear capabilities, advanced enough to break up the military link of the ROK-US Alliance, have bolstered the logic of “turning the Korean Peninsula into a nuclear-free zone.”

A nightmarish scenario for South Korea consists of a US-North Korea peace declaration followed by the pullout of USFK in exchange for North Korea’s “unverified” abandonment of ICBM and nuclear proliferation, not denuclearization. North Korea has emerged as a de facto nuclear state. Under these circumstances, South Korea’s national security will be on the threshold of hell if it should no longer be able to trust the US nuclear umbrella and if US troops should pull out, the result of which will be the erosion of the ROK-US alliance.

III. Recommendations for a Stronger Alliance and Response to the North Korean Nuclear Issue
The inauguration of the Biden Administration, which values alliances, is very fortunate for South Korea, because South Korea desperately needs a stronger ROK-US alliance. Unlike the Trump Administration, which was more interested in political events, the Biden Administration is expected to aim for substantial denuclearization talks with North Korea. One thing that worries South Korea is the possibility of US tacit recognition of North Korea as a nuclear state like India and Pakistan, while keeping North Korea’s denuclearization as a long-term goal. Some experts advising the Democratic Party are of the position that the Iran nuclear deal should be applied to North Korea. Their rationale is that it is mission impossible to achieve North Korea’s denuclearization, and thus crisis management through a freeze and a phased approach is more realistic than complete denuclearization. They view nuclear arms control as a necessity for attaining the goal of denuclearization. Nuclear arms control is what Pyongyang has wanted for a long time, and while at a glance it may seem like a rational approach, it is contradictory in that it in effect recognizes North Korea as a nuclear state. If we are to approach the North Korean nuclear issue from an arms control viewpoint, we risk becoming mired in North Korea’s strategy of winning recognition as a nuclear state by exchanging partial denuclearization, or nuclear arms control, for the lifting of key economic sanctions.

North Korea in effect has already operationally deployed nuclear forces with which it can attack South Korea. It also has the ability to launch a nuclear attack against Japan and most US bases in the western Pacific, including Guam. What should be our response in a situation where North Korea is even developing strategic nuclear weapons capable of threatening the continental United States?

Recommendation 1: Maintain the goal of North Korea’s complete denuclearization but continue sanctions on North Korea.

Pyongyang has succeeded in nuclear armament in terms of hardware, but consequent political and economic sanctions from the international community have left the country isolated and in straits. If it fails to win a certain level of international recognition for its
possession of nuclear weapons, serious challenges could persist for regime security. North Korea needs international recognition or tacit approval so that it can possess nuclear weapons without being sanctioned. The international community’s lifting of sanctions against North Korea will naturally be followed by its tacit recognition of North Korea as a nuclear weapons state.

Besides the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC) that have recognized nuclear state status in the NPT, Israel, India, and Pakistan have succeeded in possessing nuclear arsenals. The key to these three countries becoming nuclear states was their relationship with the United States. They won Washington’s tacit approval by convincing the U.S. that their nuclear weapons did not target the United States, and that they will cooperate with the U.S. on a strategic level. Over the past three decades, North Korea has leveraged nuclear development, targeting the continental United States for direct negotiations with Washington. Throughout, it has operated under the strategic goal of forging a compromise: convince the United States that it will never threaten Washington and that it could cooperate strategically in return for US tacit approval for its nuclear armament. In other words, we assess that North Korea will attempt to win US tacit approval for its nuclear possession in exchange for giving up the development of nuclear weapons capable of hitting the continental United States and for not transferring nuclear weapons or materials to a third party.

We want a peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue through negotiations. We must never give up the goal of North Korea’s complete denuclearization, and we object to the premature lifting of sanctions in the name of provoking an arms control on the part of North Korea. The shared interest of the international community in preventing nuclear proliferation and the international community’s consistent sanctions remain the sole impetus for resolving the North Korean nuclear issue peacefully through negotiations. Admittedly, North Korea returned to the negotiating table because it had completed its nuclear weapons program. More than that, however, it was the strong international sanctions regime that led Pyongyang back to the negotiating table. We need to make it clear to North Korea that sticking to its nuclear arsenals will come at a prolonged strategic price serious enough to hurt the
regime. This is the single most important key to achieving North Korea’s denuclearization.

During the Hanoi summit in February 2019, the North Korean regime strongly urged the United States to lift the five core UNSC economic sanctions. North Korea did not back off from this position in the follow-up working-level talks. The North even rejected Washington’s offer to discuss other important issues besides sanctions relief, such as a liaison office, security guarantees, and even a peace regime. This proves that economic sanctions remain the only powerful tool to pressure North Korea into denuclearization. South Korea must work together with the United States to offset North Korea’s growing nuclear and missile capabilities; at the same time, our two allies must refrain from taking any measures that could undermine the sanctions regime against North Korea until North Korea takes irreversible steps toward denuclearization.

We must not forget that the most important key to achieving progress in denuclearization is to **consistently maintain a framework of international sanctions that continuously imposes strategic costs on the North Korean regime, should the latter persist in nuclear armament.**

**Recommendation 2: Increase credibility of the alliance and the nuclear umbrella.**

North Korea’s nuclear capabilities in effect have been operationally deployed. Given this reality, South Korea’s foremost priority should be to possess a deterrent with which it can protect its people. The starting point would be to strengthen the US nuclear umbrella, making it more reliable. The US nuclear umbrella, grounded in a solid ROK-US alliance, remains the core deterrent against North Korea.

The United States since the end of the Cold War has preferred the term “extended deterrence” to nuclear umbrellas to refer to the defense of allies. Extended deterrence means providing allies with a comprehensive deterrent that ranges from conventional capabilities to missile defense and nuclear capabilities. The term, in effect, was intended to reduce allies’ nuclear dependence on the United States. This is particularly applicable to South Korea. Since US
tactical nuclear weapons were withdrawn from South Korea in 1991, the existence of a US nuclear umbrella over South Korea has remained vague; in short, it is in a “neither confirmed nor denied (NCND)” state.

Moreover, North Korea’s ability to launch a nuclear strike on the continental United States presents the disconcerting possibility of decoupling ROK-US security interests. This, in turn, raises some very serious questions. For example, will the United States defend Seoul, potentially at the expense of New York and Los Angeles? Is US extended deterrence, or nuclear umbrella, still reliable?

South Korea and the United States should seek ways to increase the credibility of the US nuclear umbrella to reinforce the effectiveness of extended deterrence. To that end, Seoul should first significantly reinforce policy coordination with the United States regarding the latter’s extended deterrence and nuclear umbrella. Seoul should re-establish a ROK-US communication channel for close cooperation on extended deterrence, for one by jump-starting the “Extended Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group (EDSCG)” between South Korean and US vice ministers of foreign affairs and defense. Secondly, Seoul should work closely with Washington to chart a principled and effective “ROK-US nuclear doctrine” on a nuclear umbrella and extended deterrence, and give concrete shape to the nuclear umbrella with which to prop up the doctrine.

The way to strengthen the nuclear umbrella is to redeploy US tactical nuclear weapons. South Korea and the United States removed tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea in the early 1990s to promote North Korea’s denuclearization. The redeployment of tactical nuclear weapons, however, will remain difficult for ROK-US relations and for domestic political reasons as well.

In addition to redeploying tactical nuclear weapons, South Korea may need to review the possibility of deploying to the East Sea a US nuclear submarine loaded with nuclear cruise missiles and placing it under the joint custody of allies. A US nuclear asset jointly managed by the ROK and the United States would operate under the doctrine of striking
Pyongyang by default, should Seoul come under a nuclear attack. Though a US nuclear asset, the operating cost of the submarine would be shared among the two nations. By adopting a format similar to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO) political co-management (nuclear sharing), the two nations could enhance the credibility of the nuclear umbrella. This option can maximize the deterrence effect against the North Korean nuclear threat by showcasing a tangible nuclear umbrella. The maritime deployment option, in particular, has the advantage of being able to skirt around domestic political opposition compared to the ground redeployment of tactical nuclear weapons. Giving concrete shape to the US nuclear umbrella may also serve the interests of neighboring countries such as China, as it would obviate the need for South Korea to independently pursue nuclear development. Lastly, this option would serve as a good opportunity to revamp a weakening ROK-US alliance. All in all, the credibility of the US nuclear umbrella is commensurate with the strength of the ROK-US alliance.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen missile defense by integrating ROK-US intelligence assets.

North Korea’s operational deployment of nuclear capabilities has upset the military balance on the Korean Peninsula. Yet, the ROK military continues to focus on conventional forces. The ROK military must secure a real, effective means by which to protect the people against North Korea’s nuclear arms build-up. Japan, whose defense spending is comparable to South Korea’s, has already started building a multi-layered missile defense system to defend its own people. By contrast, South Korea does not have a sufficient deterrent with which to protect the people. South Korea’s expensive KRW 37 trillion (US$ 33.6 billion) three-axis defense system, comprising of Kill Chain, the Korea Air and Missile Defense System (KAMD), and Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation (KMPR), has failed to deploy so much as a functioning strategic satellite or an anti-ballistic missile. We do not even know when this will be possible. Even if it was possible, it is uncertain whether this system will serve as an effective deterrent due to rapid advances in North Korea’s missile capabilities and questions surrounding the efficacy of the preemptive strike doctrine.
Since the Kim Dae-jung government, South Korea has pursued an independent missile defense system, known as the KAMD, for the reason that joining a US-led missile defense would amount to being integrated into the US global strategy and thus provoke China and North Korea. As a result, South Korea is developing its own missile defense, when key US allies, such as NATO countries and Japan, have jointly pursued and deployed missile defenses with the United States. The unfortunate reality is that effective missile defense, whose success hinges on every split second, is impossible without US-provided strategic intelligence. South Korea without a doubt needs the US military’s strategic assets to effectively deter North Korean nuclear and missile threats. This notwithstanding, Seoul continues to chase after an unattainable deterrence strategy, all because Seoul would not take part in a US missile defense system due to concerns of upsetting Beijing and Pyongyang.

Patriot PAC-3 missiles, recently purchased by the South Korean military, are insufficient for defending the broader Seoul metropolitan area: they are more for point defense, such as airports, bases, and infrastructure, rather than area defense. South Koreans living south of Pyeongtaek will be protected by US missile defense, thanks to the deployment of Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD). The 23 million people residing in the Seoul metropolitan area, however, remain defenseless against North Korea’s nuclear weapons and missiles.

The thrust of US extended deterrence is to reduce the allies’ nuclear reliance on the United States and give priority to offering them missile defense. South Korea, however, is trapped in a peculiar ideological dogma that a nuclear umbrella, which is more offense-oriented, is acceptable, but a missile defense system, which is defensive in nature, is not. At this point, missile defense is the only effective means of countering Pyongyang’s nuclear and missile threats. **It is critical that South Korea urgently build a multi-layered defense system that will most efficiently protect the people by integrating the South Korean and US intelligence assets necessary for missile defense.** In particular, it should work quickly toward bringing in a THAAD battery-level unit to defend highly populated metropolitan areas such as Seoul. Seoul should welcome the US Defense Department’s recent THAAD enhancement plan, which consists of broadening the scope of missile defense through the separation of launchers and batteries; remote control of launchers; and the integrated operation of THAAD and the
Patriot missile system.

The ROK armed forces should build a non-nuclear deterrent with significantly increased missile defense and precision-strike capabilities. An ineffective deterrence strategy that relies on preemptive strikes is of no service. **South Korea should seek a powerful deterrence strategy that combines deterrence through retaliation, as provided by the US nuclear umbrella, with deterrence through defense, whose core is damage control through missile defense and precision strike capabilities. A powerful and effective deterrent is an absolute necessity for resolving the North Korean nuclear issue over the long term and in a peaceful manner.**

**Recommendation 4: South Korea should adhere to the non-nuclear policy to the extent possible, but leave its nuclear options open.**

South Korea needs to stand by its non-nuclear commitment to the extent possible. The collapse of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime is by no means desirable for South Korea; in fact the preservation of this regime is in South Korea’s national interest. **The hope for North Korea’s denuclearization is still pinned on the international community’s common interest in preserving the “global nonproliferation regime.” Recognizing or tolerating North Korea’s nuclear armament will in effect mean the end of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime.**

In order to induce North Korea’s denuclearization, South Korea must adhere to a non-nuclear policy until the moment North Korea’s denuclearization becomes impossible through negotiations. **In short, South Korea must stick to the non-nuclear policy to the extent possible, until the window of opportunity for negotiations closes.** Yet, we also need to be prepared for the worst. If the premises on which South Korea’s non-nuclear line are built turn out to be are no longer valid, nuclear armament will become an inevitable choice for Seoul.

It would not be an exaggeration, of course, to say that South Korea’s nuclear development almost completely hinges on the ROK-US alliance. In an interview with *The New York Times*
in 2016, Donald Trump, as the presidential candidate, implied his willingness to tolerate a nuclear South Korea and Japan: he said he was “‘open-minded’ about Japan and South Korea developing and possessing their own nuclear weapons to protect themselves against North Korea or China.” A remark made under the advice of former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, it was intended to pressure China to play a greater role in curbing North Korea’s nuclear activities. This logic -- that the United States cannot prevent South Korea or Japan from going nuclear if North Korea continues to build its nuclear arsenals -- was re-emphasized by Trump’s former National Security Advisor John Bolton and Stephen Biegun, Deputy Secretary of State and Special Representative for North Korea. Clearly, such comments by US high-level officials were meant to serve as a leverage against China. However, they also reflected Washington’s understanding that South Korea and Japan would inevitably pursue nuclear development one day, if North Korea’s nuclear state status became a fait accompli.

**South Korea will have no choice but to pursue its own nuclear program if North Korea’s denuclearization becomes impossible through negotiations, and if US troops withdraw from South Korea and the ROK-US alliance consequently disintegrates while North Korea’s nuclear armament becomes a fait accompli. To avoid this situation, we must not give up on the goal of North Korea’s complete denuclearization until the very end, and we must do our best to enhance our negotiating leverage and build a deterrent through the ROK-US alliance. /End/ **