

**2023 World Conference against A and H Bombs  
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**Lee JunKyu**

**Senior Researcher, Institute for Reunification and Peace Policy,  
Hanshin University  
Republic of Korea**

**For Breaking Through the Structure of Nuclear Confrontation and Opening up a  
Perspective for a Nuclear weapon-free Peaceful Korean Peninsula**

Recent developments, such as the development of low-yield nuclear weapons, tactical and other “usable nuclear weapons” and the threat of use of nuclear weapons by the aggressor Russia, and the discharge into ocean of radioactive contaminated water planned by the Japanese government, clearly demonstrate that the mere presence of these weapons or nuclear energy poses the “existential threats” to humanity and our planet, even though they are justified with rhetoric such as deterrence, security or “peaceful use”. On the other hand, this year marking the 70th year of the armistice in the Korean War, the situation on the Korean Peninsula has entered a new phase: Confrontation between the most aggressive nuclear posture and nuclear forces is growing to the level the history has never seen. The good examples are the entry into Pusan Port of a US strategic nuclear-capable submarine on July 18 and the missile test by North Korea in response to that. The situation now looks more dangerous than the crisis in 1994 or 2017.

What have we learned from the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, from the Korean War that would have escalated into a nuclear war and from the nuclear accidents in Chernobyl and Fukushima?

Regarding the ongoing cataclysm of the world today, there is a view that the unipolar order with the U.S. at its center is transforming into a multipolar order, taking into consideration the strategic competition between the US and China, the COVID pandemic and the war between Russia and Ukraine. It tends to be a simple picture of China and Russia vs the US hegemony and NATO.

However, in the words of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, the current situation of the world embraces the danger of the “Third Nuclear Age” with possible use of nuclear weapons. This must not be overlooked. In addition, one’s own country first policy, rightwing populism, and the confrontation of “partnership between authoritarian or

dictatorial regimes against Western liberal democracies”, described as a sign of new cold war, are further increasing political tensions at international level. In East Asia, the cold war confrontation between two opposing camps “China-Russia-North Korea vs. US-Japan-South Korea” is emerging. We may be standing at the entrance of a dystopia we see in movies or TV dramas.

North Korea is trying to upgrade its nuclear capabilities both in quality and quantity while Yoon Suk Yeol is upholding the principle of “responding by nuclear against nuclear”. Such confrontation could be regarded as a reemergence of “mutual assured destruction or MAD”. Since the beginning of this year, bellicose verbal exchanges took place between North and South Korean leaders as if they are competing, such as “exponential increase of nuclear stockpiles”, “counter-attack with nuclear weapons”, “the end of Kim Jon-un regime”, “we will not hesitate to fight a war” or “overwhelming war preparations”... The problem is that these statements would be more and more real in the context of current North-South relations.

After the breakup of Hanoi summit meeting with the US in February 2019 and the practical consultation with the US in October of the same year, North Korea declared “front breakthrough”, “self-reliance” and “prolonged war with the US” and presented its policy of increasing nuclear arsenals and enhancing national defense capability. At the Korean Workers’ Party Congress in 2021, it made public planned concrete measures for increasing nuclear arsenals including upgrading ICBMs and other ballistic missiles, development and deployment of multiple-warhead missiles, SLBMs and other tactical nuclear weapons.

In addition, North Korea has warned that it could use nuclear weapons not only as deterrent but also preemptively in which case South Korea could be a target. On September 8 last year, North Korea made into law an aggressive nuclear doctrine by adopting a “New Nuclear Act”. It is under this new law that North Korean defense minister threatened the use of nuclear weapons last month when the US Strategic nuclear submarine entered Pusan Port, saying that it “corresponded to the condition for nuclear weapon use”.

On the task to achieve a nuclear weapon-free and peaceful Korean Peninsula, the U.S. Biden administration has not taken any actions. What he has done is said to be a mere repetition of “strategic patience” of Obama administration. On the other hand, South Korean Yoon administration first resumed the large-scale U.S.-ROK joint military exercise. It included the public training of “operation Decapitation” targeted at North Korean leadership and the mobilization of U.S. Army strategic assets.

To be serious, they are trying to consolidate the extended deterrence by the U.S.-ROK

“nuclear alliance”. When the doubts were raised about the possibility of realizing redeployment of tactical nuclear weapons or possession of nuclear weapons, President Yoon Suk Yeol and the conservative ruling party insisted on the institutionalization of the U.S. extended deterrence and the forward deployment of the U.S. Army strategic assets to the Korean Peninsula. As a result, the South Korean and U.S. leaders, at the summit meeting in April this year, agreed on the Washington Declaration that included the establishment of the U.S.-ROK “Nuclear Consultation Group (NCG)” as well as the “visibility” and “regularity” of forward deployment of the U.S. nuclear forces.

In addition, the Yoon administration seems to aim at establishing a tripartite military alliance among South Korea, Japan and the U.S. It is deeply involved in the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy and the Pacific Atlantic Alliance to contain China and support the life of U.S. hegemony. While upholding diplomacy based on the same value, the Yoon government has embarked on building up the tripartite military alliance and partnership with Global NATO.

The current South Korean policy for North Korea and the strategy for foreign relations and security, which practically abandon denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, are likely to worsen the situation and affect nuclear confrontation in East Asia. The current government not only denies the policies of the previous government but has labelled people claiming the end of Korean War “anti-state forces”, The Yoon government is dealing with domestic and international politics based on the cold-war thinking of binary confrontation.

Over the East China Sea, Taiwan Straights and South China Sea that are flash points in this region, the U.S. and Japan are aligned to confront China militarily. Japan is aimed at exercise of the right to collective defense and obtaining the enemy attack capabilities by revising the peace Constitution and strengthening Japan-U.S. alliance. China regards this entire area as the defense line for its territory and vital interests. In this context, instead of sending out a message of non-nuclear peace from the Korean Peninsula, South Korea has taken on the role of spearheading the incitement of a nuclear confrontation and arms race.

Based on the understanding of the current situation set out above, I would like to propose the following tasks:

First, we have to develop solidarity with Ukrainian people who are continuing to fight against aggression by Russia. Nuclear superpower Russia has invaded Ukraine that abandoned nuclear weapons and annexed its territory to Russia. If the war of aggression, in which threats of nuclear war are repeated, is allowed, it would have

negative impact on the world beyond our imagination.

We must also strengthen solidarity with social movement pursuing the realization of the universal values such as a nuclear weapon-free world, peace, human rights, justice, environment and gender equality, in the countries like Hong Kong, Myanmar, Iran and their people, who make the world understand what the universal values are. It is the first task we have to tackle when we face challenges against international laws, international norms, international bodies such as the UN and various multilateral frameworks.

Secondly, under the unstable international security environment, people tend to support the security relying on nuclear weapons and massive arms race. In spite of the logic of nuclear against nuclear having the risk of annihilating humanity by nuclear war, it widely spreads an illusion of nuclearism that regards “nuclear weapons as weapons of peace to punish big evil or protect security”. South Korea and Japan are not exceptions. It is not easy to advocate no to nuclear weapons and yes for disarmament. However, it is because of such dangerous situation that we have to propose a citizens’ vision for non-nuclear weapons, peace, disarmament and coexistence. Because the victims of arms race, armed conflict and war are not those in power or politicians but the socially vulnerable and ordinary citizens.

Third, we must expand and strengthen solidarity against nuclear weapons and for peace across national boundaries beyond the Korean Peninsula and East Asia. The people of the Korean Peninsula who underwent the Korean War cannot simply head towards a nuclear confrontation tunnel which leads to the annihilation of humanity. We must continue to promote the process of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and establish a peace regime there.

And solidarity against nuclear weapons and for peace must be based on the principles of the movement against A and H Bombs: Prevention of nuclear war, abolition of nuclear weapons and solidarity with hibakusha. If we face challenges to these principles by any group or state, we have to stand up and fight against them. Above all, I want to stress that developing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons to be a solid international norm will be a strong driving force in the struggle against nuclear possessing and relying states.

I want to conclude my remarks by quoting a part of the report of a Korean scholar of international politics Mr. Lee Samson presented at the “International Conference for International People’s Tribunal on the Atomic Bombing” held in South Korea on 6 June, 2023.

“In our effort to face this dangerous reality where a discourse that relies on nuclear weapons and proposes their preemptive strike as one of the normal security strategies is prevailing, sharing the humanitarian impact of atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is indispensable and may be one of our important starting points”.