

April 24, 2017

Nuclear Issue of North Korea

By **Jun. M. YAMAZAKI**

The scandal of MORITOMO Gakuen is swaying the whole Japanese media. The truth remains hidden out of sight and Prime Minister Abe's irritated faces appear on television. However, now is not the time for Japan to get engrossed in such a trivial matter. On March 6th, North Korea launched four ballistic missiles towards the Sea of Japan and three of them fell into a point approximately 200 km north-northwest of the Noto Peninsula in Ishikawa Prefecture, which is within Japan's exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Veering off slightly, the missiles could have reached the US Iwakuni Air Base. Pyongyang clarified that the missile targeted the US military bases in Japan. As a response to this, Chief Cabinet Secretary SUGA Yoshihide emphasized at a news conference on March 9th that the North Korean missiles have become a real threat to the security of Japan.

According to an expert, what is significant in the event is the fact that four missiles were launched simultaneously. That implies North Korea may now be capable of saturation attacks that should overwhelm Japan's defense capabilities. Simply put, North Korea's missile offensive capabilities have reached beyond Japan's response capabilities with its own missile defense system. To make matters worse, according to a report from the US Fox News, North Korea will launch another nuclear test in a few days. At a joint press conference with the Foreign Minister of South Korea Yun Byung-se held on March 17th, the U.S. Secretary Tillerson stated that, despite the US' provision of \$1.3 billion (approximately 150 billion yen) for food and energy assistance to North Korea since 1995, denuclearization could not have been realized and the attempts to establish a dialogue with North Korea for the past 20 years have completely failed. He noted that the policy of strategic patience implemented by the former administration is no longer in effect and implied changes in strategies with "all options on the table."

The risks associated with military attacks against North Korea are immeasurable. The preemptive attacks by the U.S. would trigger North Korea's immediate reprisal raid against Japan and Korea, as well as terrorist attacks by the North Korean agents hiding in Japan. That can also result in a large number of refugees. The overturn of Hussein Administration of Iraq by the U.S. has prompted establishment of the IS, and the failure to subvert the Assad regime invited the death of many citizens and more than four million refugees. Most of the military operations by the U.S. have ended with miserable results. Then, what should we do for our next move? My idea is to acknowledge nuclear possession by North Korea and invite the country to be incorporated into the international community. With some reflection, we could know that North Korea has not bothered the international community so much. The country has surely misbehaved as seen in the abduction issues with Japan and South Korea, terrorism, smuggling of weapons and drugs overseas, and the counterfeit of the US dollars. However, they do not show any sign of ambition to expand its territory except in the case of unifying North and South Korea, or to overthrow governments of other countries. What North Korea demands from the United States is nothing more than guarantee of the survival of the country under the current regime and its national security.

In fact, possession of nuclear weapon is not in breach of the international law. As North Korea has withdrawn from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 2003, the possession of nuclear weapon does not mean that the country is in violation of the treaty. In fact, India and Pakistan, both non-signatory countries of the NPT, declare the possession of nuclear capacities and Israel is believed to possess them as well. Of course, I do not want North Korea to have nuclear weapon. However, since North Korea has already obtained nuclear arms in reality, the international community should accept this fact and demand North Korea to adopt the principle of responsibility. Although the United States has failed in its trial to “denuclearize North Korea”, which lasted for the past 20 years, we should find a way to “settle with North Korea” by acknowledging its nuclear possession.

(This is the English translation of an article written by Jun. M. YAMAZAKI, Risk Management Consultant, which originally appeared on the e-Forum “Giron-Hyakushutsu (Hundred Views in Full Perspective)” of GFJ on March 29, 2017.)