

Will President Trump's "Deal" diplomacy produce a "new history"?

-- Kim Jong Un's transformation also stands out --

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America's 71-year-old President Donald Trump, leader of a superpower who unashamedly embraces the principle of "America First," and 34-year-old Kim Jong Un, dictator of the poorest communist nation, took to the world stage in Singapore on June 12 for the first meeting in history between leaders of the two countries.

The two leaders, whose countries do not have diplomatic ties, exchanged handshakes; but the question remains whether North Korea will abandon its nuclear weapons as per expectations. Japan, which can only watch the current events from the outside looking in, is holding its breath along with the rest of the world.

The joint statement issued by the two leaders immediately following their meeting carried a sense of déjà-vu. While on a visit to Washington on the afternoon of June 1, Kim Yong Chol, the vice-chairman of North Korea's Workers' Party, was accorded unusually cordial treatment by Mr. Trump, who

invited Kim to enter the White House Oval Office. The statements made to reporters after the meetings in Singapore were virtually identical to those made previously in Washington, with the U.S. side conspicuous in its conciliatory stance.

- "The start of the deal"

The key topic was the complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, concerning which the U.S. side adopted a drastic change in its position.

On June 1, President Trump had remarked, "The summit will not end with a single meeting. The meeting on June 12 will be no more than the start of a long process to work out a deal. I informed them that it was fine to implement the denuclearization gradually." He also said to the effect, "As concerns continuation of the current sanctions, I don't want to use the term 'maximum pressure' any more. Because we will get along well, a good relationship is within our sights.

"I look forward to the day when the sanctions can be dropped," Mr. Trump added.

Actually in the joint statement, the words "The rapid implementation of complete, verifiable and

irreversible denuclearization (CVID)," which both the U.S. side and Prime Minister Abe had repeatedly emphasized, did not appear.

Then at the press conference on June 12, Mr. Trump remarked, "We discussed bringing a conclusion to the Korean War that has continued for 70 years." The possibility was also raised of a partial withdrawal of U.S. forces in South Korea.

In terms of the concrete measures for the "systematic guarantees" to take place following denuclearization which North Korea so desires --- in other words, "staged quid pro quos" --- an accord to formally end the Korean War was recognized. Moreover, the intention to suspend joint U.S.-South Korean military exercises was put on the table citing the reason of their "massive costs." As this construed the implicit acceptance of a longstanding request by the North Korean side, it was even taken so far as to raise the possibility of partial withdrawal of partial withdrawal of U.S. military forces from South Korea.

Investigating the matter thoroughly, it is easy to understand that Trump's moves were made to bolster the awareness of his own supporters ahead of America's upcoming mid-term elections, as an adjunct to his domestic political programs. They form the basis of his "America First" policy that he brandished at the G7 meeting in Canada, just prior

to the conference with Kim in Singapore.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is the one who's assumed the active role in Trump diplomacy. Pompeo has enjoyed Trump's trust since his tenure as former director of the CIA, during which, in late April, he made his first secret visit to Pyongyang. After his nomination to become Secretary of State, he traveled to Pyongyang again to secure the release of three US citizens incarcerated in North Korea, and it was highly likely that during the extended secret meetings with First Secretary Kim he hammered out the "deal."

Pompeo also met Vice-chairman Kim Yong Chol for two days in New York before he flew to Washington DC to deliver the Kim's letter to President Trump. Pompeo's role closely resembles that of Henry Kissinger's, the driving force behind the reconciliation between the U.S. and China during the Nixon Era, 47 years ago.

If the details of the joint statement are concretely realized in the future, then the initial criticisms that "Kim pulled the wool over Trump's eyes" will instead be viewed, as per Trump's own words, as "results that were achieved with unprecedented speed." One might go so far as to wonder if he will be regarded as a second Kissinger.

- The urgent need for historic reconciliation with both South and North Korea

We must also take notice of the realism advanced by Kim Jong Un, who has leaped wholeheartedly into Trump's "deal." In his New Year's Day message, followed by his address to the General Meeting of the Worker's Party just prior to the summit with South Korea, he once again proclaimed the success of becoming a "nuclear missile-armed country" and clearly equivocated his intention to pursue the future line concentrated on economic development.

Concurrent to the establishment of friendly relations with South Korean president Moon Jae In following the North's participation at the Pyeongchang Olympics, relations with China, which had been strained following that country's having adopted United Nations sanctions, rapidly improved in the wake of Kim's sudden visit to Beijing for his first summit meeting with Xi Jinping, followed one month later by a second meeting in Dalian. Before making the "deal" with Trump over denuclearization, he also succeeded in involving China to act as its "guarantor"; China's providing an aircraft for his round trip flight to Singapore stands as eloquent testimony of this.

Kim, on the occasion of his signing the joint statement, asserted that "Today we decided to make a break with the past." The world will come to see this as a major change." But is Kim Jong Un's "change" the real thing? For the time

being we will have to watch every move he makes.

Above all, for Japan to pursue a future line of diplomacy closely tied to Mr. Trump would be worrisome. The rationales of "respect for human rights" and "national self-determination" and the "shaking hands" with a "dictator" the likes of Kim Jong Un --- as was the case 47 years ago with Mao Zedong --- and for this reason Japan will once again need to reflect upon the shrewd traditions of America's diplomacy which is adept at adopting realism for different purposes.

President Trump abided by Prime Minister Abe's requests, advising First Secretary Kim to resolve the issue of Japanese abductees to North Korea, upon which Abe's diplomacy rushed off to organize a summit between Japan and North Korea.

But presently with the "relationship of trust" between Trump and Kim in the forefront, Japan's diplomatic circumstances can be described as being similar to that of around the time of the "Nixon Shock." In view of the reality that Japan has yet to achieve reconciliation with either South or North Korea underscores the urgent need for efforts to deal with this matter.

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