The Kim Jong Un Leadership and North Korea’s Strategy for Peace*

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<Abstract>

This article examines Kim Jong Un’s leadership and his strategy for peace in the Korean Peninsula and offers some suggestions for peace regime on the Korean peninsula. The regime stability issue of North Korea influences international relations surrounding North Korea, and the North Korean nuclear issue will involve how North Korea will obtain a satisfactory quid pro quo for denuclearing itself from the U.S. and other states.

There exist several variables at the level of structure that helped power succession happen without any serious irregularities in North Korea: the suryong system itself that practically controls all aspects of the North Korean society; non-existence of rivals to Kim Jong Un; the desire of power elites to benefit from Kim family’s power succession; “Korean-style socialism” based on “people-centered socialism”; “military-first” politics; and an unfavorable external environment derived from hostile policies of the U.S., South Korea, Japan, and EU countries toward North Korea.

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Under the circumstances which are the power succession and hostile diplomacy, Kim Jong Un seems inevitably to be independence (*juche*)-seeking, military-first and defensive against external security threats as were his predecessors. He is more flexible in the domestic realm with his *suryong* status, so can handle demands of North Korean more sensitive and responsive. On the contrary, Kim Jong Un is more rigid in dealing with international community. However, this does not mean that these policies are based on supreme leader’s personality. North Korea’s strategy and policy for peace during the Kim Jong Un era is from a structural perspective than from a perspective of personality or individual-specific characteristics. The questions on possibilities of the denuclearization of North Korea and the establishment of a peace regime in Korea depend on how the U.S. and South Korea can respond to North Korea’s strategy for peace in Korea. To this regard, I suggest U.S. and South Korea should consider opting for “win-win” response to North Korea’s demands.

**Key words:** Kim Jong Un, *suryong* system, peace regime on the Korean peninsula, win-win