

The Impact after the second year of pandemic in the Korean Peninsula and East Asia

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Phenomena Occurring in the Second Year of the Pandemic

- Escape from uncertainty
 - Generalization of co-existence with COVID-19
 - Swift vaccine development and FDA approval, alleviation of anxiety about COVID-19
 - Emergence of a North-South divide
 - Disparity between each country's ability to secure vaccines and differences in vaccine provision priorities
 - Differences in the ability to break out from (global) economic stagnation (due to the pandemic)
 - Situation of leveraging the pandemic for domestic politics, etc.

- Weakening of a U.S.-led global order and its recovery
 - The Trump Administration vs the Biden Administration
 - "Return to normalcy"
 - Strengthening of cooperation for global network restructuring
 - Structural changes in the U.S.-China conflict

The Pandemic and the Korean Peninsula (1): North Korea Leveraging the Pandemic

- The course to strengthen the “frontal breakthrough strategy with the might of self-reliance,” a new path adopted on December 31, 2019, was reconfirmed at the 8th Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea in January 2021.
 - Five-year national economic development plan for economic self-reliance (2021-2025)
 - Explore economic development with a focus on the metal and chemical engineering industries
 - Revival of the self-reliance route of the 1970s
 - Five-year plan for national defense technology development and weapons system development (2021-2025): sophistication of nuclear force and missile capabilities
 - Resumption of operations of the Yongbyon nuclear complex
 - Long-range cruise missile test launch
 - Mobile ballistic missile launch, etc.

The Pandemic and the Korean Peninsula (2): North Korea Leveraging the Pandemic

- Prolongation of border closure
 - Continuation of the severance of ties between North Korea and China
 - Continuation of border closure between China and North Korea due to concerns about the spread of COVID-19: failure to resume the exchange of goods in August
 - Since the launch of the Biden Administration, China has been emphasizing cooperation with the United States on the North Korean nuclear problem—cause of North Korea’s displeasure
 - Leveraging the voluntary closing of borders due to the pandemic for the prolongation of the self-reliance route: explained to the citizens as an inevitable situation of forced border-closing due to external causes
 - Strengthening punishment based on the Emergency Law on Prevention of Epidemics
 - Controlling foreign currency to take control of the market: reappearance of foreign exchange certificates
 - Focusing on blocking the influence of South Korea: severe punishment for listening to the music of BTS
- Advertised North Korean citizens’ rising dissatisfaction due to escalating hard living through the inevitability by COVID-19, strategy for U.S. and South Korean hostile policies against North Korea (Kim Jong Un’s reimplementing of “Arduous March”), etc. and strengthened control over citizens
- By reviving a “brinkmanship tactic” towards the international community, North Korea intends to raise the priority ranking of the United States’ measures against North Korea.

The Pandemic and the Korean Peninsula (3): the Moon Administration's Continued "Efforts to Draw Out North Korea"

- North Korea leveraging the Moon Jae In Administration's "peace first" policy
 - In spite of receiving criticism for being a "spokesperson for North Korea," the Moon Administration is continuing a peace first policy.
 - Movement by North Korea to connect and close an inter-Korean communication line (telephone line)
 - President Moon Jae In's speech to the United Nations: re-proposed a declaration to ending the War on the Korean Peninsula
 - North Korea expressed doubts about the Moon Administration's influence on the United States and is showing signs to take diplomatic advantage towards South Korea.
 - Statement by Kim Yo Jong: significance of downgrading policies against South Korea
- Official inter-Korean communication exchanges have halted completely
 - After the collapse of the Hanoi summit, distrust towards the Moon Administration heightened
 - Exchange of personal letters between the North and South leaders and intermittent communication through non-official channels function
 - Continued non-response by North Korea regarding support to North Korea: demands for the withdrawal of U.S. forces in South Korea and advance cancelation of the deployment of strategic weapons

The Pandemic and East Asia (1): Full-fledged China Blockade Policy of the United States

- Launch of the Biden Administration: declaration of the “return to normalcy”
 - Recovery of the global network
 - The Trump Administration: “world bashing” instead of “China bashing,” leading to the weakening of the traditional alliance and influence of the United States
 - Attempt to recover a traditional alliance
 - Active involvement in global issues (global warming, refugee problem, etc.)
 - Full-blown China blockade strategy utilizing the global network
 - Strengthening of new security alliances targeting China: Quad, Five Eyes, AUKUS, etc.
 - Advancement of the U.K. to East Asia (aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth’s sail through East Asia)
 - Realignment of a U.S.-centric global value chain (semiconductors, batteries, mobile communications, etc.)
 - The blockade strategy, used in the past against the Soviet Union and the Communist Bloc, being re-employed against China signifies that the conflict between the United States and China is becoming full-blown (Thucydides Trap).

The Pandemic and East Asia (2): China Focusing on Strengthening Domestic Capacity

- Strategic move for the prolongation of the Xi Jinping Administration: response to a full-blown U.S.-China conflict
 - Clampdown within China exploiting the pandemic
 - After the launch of the Biden Administration, China recognized a substantive threat accompanying the recovery of the global network.
 - Adoption of a “dual circulation strategy”: utilizing China’s closed 2 billion-person market (including people of Chinese heritage overseas)
 - (It seems that China is) Focusing on internal solidarity ahead of a full-blown conflict with the United States
 - Exclusion of anti-Communist Party forces (especially targeting corporate giants in China), narrow focus of the authority of the Communist Party (attempt to prolong the Xi Administration)
 - Prevention of the invasion of external forces opposing China’s internal solidarity
 - Decrease of China’s global influence during the pandemic
 - Loss of trust for China’s morality within the international community due to China’s inappropriate handling of the spread of COVID-19
 - Hindrance to the Belt and Road projects due to the pandemic: a new Silk Road initiative that connects Europe and Asia
 - Accumulation of Chinese citizens’ dissatisfaction toward Xi Jinping’s autocratic rule and prolongation of citizens' restrictions on freedom of movement (due to the pandemic)

The Pandemic and East Asia (3): Clash between the United States and China Over the Ability to Control the Global Network

- The United States' core strength vs China's core strength
 - The United States' core strength is its influence over the 80% open global network.
 - Prediction of the strengthening of the United States' degree of contribution to global issues: global warming, global risk response, etc.
 - Define China's actions that go against international order as global risks
 - Focus on drawing China into the open global network: example of utilizing China to contain the Soviet Union during the Cold War (detente of the 1970s) and bring China into the global network.
 - China's core strength is the rallying power of the 20% closed Chinese network
 - Has a population of 1.4 billion and close to ten mega cities with a population of 10 million or more
 - A network of 60 million people of Chinese heritage overseas across the globe, mainly in Southeast Asia
 - Technological superiority and bold investment in specific fields, etc.
- The U.S.-China conflict is a conflict between the United States' stock accumulated over more than 70 years and the flow accompanying China's dramatic development. In the end, it is highly likely that the situation will develop so that China will be incorporated into the U.S.-centric open global network.

Strengthening of Regional Cooperation Harnessing the Process of Overcoming the Pandemic Is Necessary

- The necessity of strengthening Japan-South Korea cooperation in the East Asia region
 - Joint response for regional security (risk management): the necessity to aspire to a joint regional security—efforts to include China and North Korea
 - North Korean nuclear problem
 - China’s military expansion, etc.
 - Strengthening of East Asian cooperation within the global network for global issues
 - Because China and North Korea have high reliance on fossil fuels, they need a lot of time for efforts towards “carbon zero.”
 - South Korea and Japan are in a situation in which they can lead efforts toward “carbon zero.”
 - Necessity to create an East Asian global warming response network including China and North Korea: steer China and North Korea towards the global network through the expansion of non-military cooperation fields such as alternative energy development.
 - Construction of a joint response framework in anticipation of risks emerging from Chinese and North Korean policies
 - It is essential to recognize danger as danger (Jared Diamond)