

Changes in the situation of the Korean Peninsula and Russian policy towards Northeast Asia

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Compared to 2017 fall, in 2018 the situation on the Korean Peninsula has changed dramatically. However despite of the security conditions drastic improvement in last year in a whole, the situation especially in regards with Washington-Pyongyang relations remains to be uncertain and fragile. Therefore it's worth to remind the acute crisis took place in the 2017 year second half in order to learn a necessary lessons. The dramatic change took place and what we have now is possible to define that Summit Diplomacy was the Korean Peninsula's face in 2018 year.

During the triumphant visit to Pyongyang by the ROK President Moon Jae-in from September 18 to 20, 2018, what struck Korea watchers was the fact that the theme of inter-Korean solidarity sounded even louder than before. It's reasonable to add the DPRK Ambassador in Moscow Kim Heung Jun remark done on January 11, 2019 in course of discussion with leading Russian Korean studies related scholars. He emphasized that DPRK leadership consider the whole set of the concluded in 2018 year Panmunjom Declaration, Pyongyang Declaration and the Military Agreement signed by the ranking military officials of the two Koreas on 19.09.2018 in course of the third inter-Korean summit in Pyongyang as de-facto the "Non-Aggression Treaty".

The results of the Pyongyang summit could not but worry Washington. It brought home forcibly to the White House that it was being sidelined in the increasingly turbulent and dynamic process of inter-Korean reconciliation and the settlement of the Korean problem. The positive noises and rhetoric coming out of the US President who continued to woo Kim Jong Un calling him "a great man and leader of his country" was at odds with US actions which followed the program of hardline conservatives. They did not budge in insisting that the US sanctions and maximum pressure against DPRK should remain in place until Complete Verifiable Irreversible Denuclearization (CVID) in spite of any of the phased arms reductions made by the DPRK.

However, Pyongyang made it quite clear that it would denuclearize, to quote the DPRK ambassador to Moscow, "only step by step and simultaneously with reciprocal actions on the part of Washington, building up mutual trust." Most recently this approach was backed by Seoul and not only by Seoul.

The preparatory job for the second US-DPRK summit is going on now. To our mind the main obstacle between the USA and DPRK approaches is the following. White House working team headed by National Security Advisor John Bolton argue that Donald Trump should escape from signing any kind of documents imposed some commitments on the USA. Contrary Pyongyang is striving for signing the road map containing fixed obligation of each side related to every stage of the process.

The Kim Jong Un New Year Speech demonstrated the conciliatory tone and demands toward the USA reduction. So it also gives the ground for constrained optimism in regards with the anticipating second summit between the USA and DPRK modest positive results. Another important factor supporting such hope is Donald Trump has deeply involved himself into the dialogue with Kim Jong Un. So it would uneasy for him to give up the process.