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Executive Summary

Possible Measures to Transform the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) into an International Peace Zone



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*This article is written based on the author's personal opinions
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Executive Summary

DMZ International Peace Zone Initiative

- After the termination of the Hanoi U.S.-DPRK Summit in February 2019 without any settlement, the U.S. and North Korea fiercely repeated their quarrels, and inter-Korean relations stopped its progress. The Korean Peace Process virtually ceased its action despite a surprising meeting among the leaders of three countries, the U.S. and South and North Korea, in late June at Panmunjeom.
- President Moon Jae-in, in this context, proposed an initiative to transform the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) into an international peace zone through his keynote speech at the U.N. General Assembly in September 2019 as an effort to revitalize the peace process on the Korean Peninsula. And he emphasized it again in his New Year's address this year.

Constraint Factors for Utilizing the DMZ

- Past administrations of the South Korean government also proposed similar initiatives, but none had a strong will to realize them as the current Moon administration.
- The establishment of the DMZ International Peace Zone cannot be simply realized with the will of the South Korean government alone. It can only be realized when the North Korean authorities identify with the necessity of it, recognize their own benefits, and cooperate with South Korea's efforts. It is necessary to encourage local residents for their cooperation with appreciation and comprehension. It also requires smooth communication and coordination with the United Nations Command (UNC), which shoulders the responsibility of the

peace of the DMZ.

Cases of Peaceful Use of Border Areas in Foreign Countries

- In addition to a large-scale development project, South Korea can increase its probability of success if it maintains all-encompassing manner and passionate attitude along with following features: the maintenance of communication and trust (Cyprus), the consideration of numerous small- and medium-scale parallel development strategies (Finland-Russia), the simultaneous Track II approach (Ecuador-Peru), the government's leadership with volition and enthusiasm (Thailand) and the active development of special products (Oder-Neisse).
- The case of Ecuador-Peru Peace Park construction, which is similar to that of the Korean Peninsula, indicates that the simultaneous initiatives of economic incentives and of peace and ecological preservation projects lead to higher probability of success.
- However, it should be noted that North Korea recently expressed a negative perception by describing the South Korean government's movement as a "commercial use of the DMZ, which connotes the agony of the nation."

Approach

- In order to carry out this initiative, it is desirable to adopt a neo-functional approach, which claims that it is effective in peace-building and integration process between countries to promote cooperation simultaneously in both political and non-political realms by not only institutionally restraining states but also pursuing cooperation outside political domains.

□ Possible Measures

- As possible measures, the government must first establish a comprehensive, systematic plan for the peaceful use of the DMZ with the Ministry of Unification as the central figure. Then, within such effort, it should advance projects that can be unhurriedly and independently led, such as the “DMZ Road to Opening Unification,” continue to operate and develop ongoing projects, and actively promote humanitarian assistance and health and medical cooperation to prevent and eliminate the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) for the resumption of inter-Korean relations. The government should also propose cooperation to eliminate COVID-19, form and operate a “Joint Health and Medical Cooperation Committee” between two Koreas, and expand the cooperation of eliminating COVID-19 to preventing infectious disease all together, such as the African Swine Fever (ASF), Avian Influenza (AI), Thecodiplosis japonensis disease, and waterborne diseases of the Imjin and the Bukhan River, to create an amicable atmosphere for establishing the DMZ International Peace Zone.
- For initial steps, it is desirable to operate the “DMZ New Economic and Agricultural District” as one example of cooperation projects. Such projects must be prioritized in areas where exchanges and cooperation are inevitable due to the nature of border areas.
- Moreover, South Korea should operate a joint military committee for the continuous guarantee of inter-Korean peace, propose the establishment and joint-operation of an “Inter-Korean Border (Management) Committee,” and establish a Special Joint East Sea Tourist Zone connecting Mount Seorak-Mount Kumgang-Wonsan, which North Korea desires at most. It can also increase the probability of success by simultaneously promoting positive response and cooperation of the international community in collaborations with organizations like the U.N.

- It is highly desirable to establish working-level organizations such as a “Special Committee on the Korean Peninsula DMZ Peace Zone Initiative” under the U.N., and to launch a “DMZ International Zone Planning and Promotion Committee” for effectively designing and hosting international events that can draw world-wide attention. ❖

※ Translator's note: This is a summarized unofficial translation of the original paper which was written in Korean. All references should be made to the original paper.