

An Interview with Jae-Jung Suh*

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About the interviewee

Jae-Jung Suh is currently Professor in the Department of Politics and International Studies at International Christian University, Japan. He received his BA in Physics from the University of Chicago, and his MA in Political Science and his PhD in International Relations from the University of Pennsylvania. He served as a professor at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies from 2007 to 2013. He also served as a member of the Advisory Board of the People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD), Republic of Korea, and of the Unification and Foreign Affairs Division of the Presidential Commission on Policy Planning, Republic of Korea.

The Dilemma of Security Threatening Security

Kim In the early 2000s, you predicted that the U.S. military redeployment plan under America's new security strategy would destabilize the security situation on the Korean peninsula in the long run and fuel an arms race. I would like to know why you were able to make such a prediction.

Suh Your question is related to the issue of the division and reunification of the Korean peninsula as seen from abroad, so let me first tell you why I became interested in security issues while I was in the United States. I immigrated to the U.S. with my family in 1981 and studied physics at the University of Chicago. At that time, one of the many defense policies that President Ronald Reagan was pursuing was what he called "Star Wars," or the idea of building a missile defense system around the United States. The main reason for this was the intensification of the U.S.-Soviet Cold War in the 1980s. As the Cold War intensified, the global strategy of the Reagan administration was that if there was a war between the two countries, the European front would be extended to Northeast Asia. So, for example, if the Soviet Union fought a war in Europe, the United States would fight a war in Northeast Asia. The strategy was to disperse and destroy the military power

of the Soviet Union.

That was the U.S. global strategy at that time. When I was in Korea, I thought that the division of Korea was only the matter between North and South Korea, but when I observed it from the United States, I began to see that the division of the Korean peninsula was just one element that could be used at any time because of the tension between the United States and the Soviet Union, like a piece on a chessboard. If a war were to break out in Europe, it could lead to another war on the Korean peninsula regardless of the local situation. I realized that the global strategy of the United States and international relations, such as the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, could determine Korea's fate.

In the meantime, I was thinking about whether I should continue to study physics because, as I mentioned earlier, advanced science was being mobilized for the missile defense system, and many scientists were involved. This became a huge controversy among scientists, and questions such as "Is such a missile defense system scientifically possible?" and "Even if it is achieved, will it really help peace?" were raised by many people. When I saw this, I began to think that instead of studying physics thoughtlessly, I would rather work for peace in the world, whether it be physics or something else, which may contribute to eventually bringing peace to the Korean peninsula. That's why I became interested in international politics, especially foreign and security policy, in graduate school. Since then, I believe my research methods have increasingly focused on examining the Korean peninsula from an external perspective. Specifically, I began to explore questions like 'What impact do U.S. global strategy and U.S. military security policies have on the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia?'

Kim

You talked about how the change in the U.S. strategy during the Cold War brought the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia to the brink of war, but I would like to bring the story to more recent times. I think the most significant change in the U.S. security and military strategies after the Cold War was the September 11 attacks in 2001, after which the Bush administration declared a "war on terrorism" and referred

to not only Iraq but also North Korea, which had nothing to do with the attack, as an “axis of evil.” How would you characterize the changes in the U.S. security strategies since the 2000s and their impact on the Korean peninsula?

Suh

It can be argued that since the early 2000s, the U.S. strategy has taken an offensive and more dangerous turn. After the September 11 attacks, the Bush administration adopted the so-called “first strike” strategy, which states that even if an enemy does not attack the United States first, it can strike first at the first sign of danger. With the adoption of the first strike strategy, weapons systems were prepared and military deployments were carried out accordingly. But these changes were not limited to the United States. The Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia also experienced changes in weapons systems and deployments. The U.S. military in South Korea had been recognized as an “integrated” force. It was an army equipped with tanks and artillery as its primary weapons, and it was deployed against North Korea. But in the 2000s and beyond, that kind of deployment began to be seen as inhibiting flexibility and mobility. The threat of terrorism came to the fore at that time, and it was argued that the Army needed to be lighter and more rapidly deployable because the static force could not respond well to it. The concept of “rapid deployment forces” was coined, and weapon systems began to shift from heavy weapons to lighter systems that could hit the enemy more precisely. With the change in the U.S. strategy, its military also began to change, and the U.S. forces in Northeast Asia, including South Korea and Japan, began to change so that they could be quickly moved and deployed to other parts of the world, and even if they were in other parts of the world, they could be quickly deployed to the Korean peninsula.

The problem is that these changes have created new security insecurities on the Korean peninsula and in Northeast Asia. To understand why U.S. strategic shifts have created such security insecurities on the Korean peninsula and in Northeast Asia, we need to look at the different responses of South Korea and North Korea to the U.S. strategic shifts. While the U.S. transformed the nature and use of its military in

response to the post-9/11 terrorist threat, South Korea was so accustomed to American thinking and strategy that it took the U.S. strategic shift for granted. The U.S. military, U.S. Forces Korea, the military exercises, the weapons systems—all of these things have become so natural that we don't question them.

We don't think about how it looks to other people, especially North Korea. From their point of view, it's not only very unfamiliar, but also very dangerous. It is a significant burden for North Korea to see the U.S. and South Korean troops stationed on the Korean peninsula. Moreover, given the sudden and rapid military deployments, U.S. troops and weapons move in and out unpredictably and long-distance attacks are also a possibility. From North Korea's point of view, this situation could be a major concern for them. From the U.S. point of view, it's all about counterterrorism. However, I believe that a change in U.S. strategy and military and weapons systems for reasons unrelated to North Korea may seem not only unexpected but also extremely dangerous to North Korea.

Kim

What you're saying reminds me of why North Korea continues to focus on missile development despite international pressure. In general, whenever North Korea conducts a missile test, we try to criticize it by demonizing it, but we don't seem to try to understand it rationally from the North's point of view, which is what is needed to resolve the unrest on the Korean peninsula.

Suh

We need to look at the U.S. security and military strategy from the North's point of view, and then we can understand why the North wants to build nuclear weapons and is tempted to develop long-range, medium-range, and short-range missiles. Of course, I'm not advocating that we tolerate and accept them, but I am saying that we have to ask the question of how the North sees the South and the United States and look at it from a geopolitical perspective. And if we try to do that, a reasonable assumption that we can make is that the changes in U.S. military strategy since the early 2000s must have posed a tremendous threat to North Korea, and in response to that

threat, they have focused on developing nuclear weapons and missiles.

In international politics, all of this is known as a security dilemma. One side takes steps to increase its military power for its own security, but the other side sees this as a threat to its own security, so it takes military action to increase its own security, which in turn creates a dilemma in which it must increase its own military power because the other side has increased its military power. This, in turn, creates a dilemma in which it must increase its own military power because the other side is using military power to maintain its own security. This vicious circle creates a cycle of military tensions and security dilemmas.

Let me talk a little more about the U.S. strategy. During the Park Geun-hye government and the second term of the Obama government, following the Lee Myung-bak government, military strategies such as the Kill Chain and the Operational Plan 5015 were established. If the previous strategy was all-out war with long-range projection in case of war, the military strategy of the Park Geun-hye and Obama governments changed to pre-emptive strikes at the first sign of danger. In international law, there is a difference between “preemptive strike” and “preventive war,” so the ROK (Republic of Korea) Ministry of National Defense and the United States use the term “preemptive strike.” Strictly speaking, a preemptive strike means launching a defensive attack when it is clear that a real attack is coming. This is permitted under international law. On the other hand, attacking first when there are no obvious signs of military aggression is called preemptive or preventive war, which is prohibited by international law because it is an act of invasion and aggression.

However, the line between preemptive and preventive strikes is very blurry. It's always a problem in international politics because there's a gray area between what is and is not a clear “sign” that an enemy is going to attack. Even in the case of the Iraq war, we now recognize that it was a preemptive strike, but at the time the rationale was that Iraq was developing weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, and it would be a clear threat to international peace and order, so it was a preemptive attack,

not a preemptive strike.

Kim

In the case of Iraq, it wasn't just a military attack, but the government itself was changed in the name of establishing a democratic government. The concept of preemptive strike seems to be not only limited to the military dimension, but also related to actively changing the political structure of a country. Perhaps this precedent will make North Korea even more concerned about the changes in U.S. security strategy.

Suh

That's right. If preemptive strikes were the means to an end, then the fact that the end of these military operations has shifted to regime change may be more threatening to North Korea, because the official U.S. goal is not just to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, but to overthrow the existing regime and replace it with a new one. From a humanities perspective, this is a denial of North Korea's identity, and it's not just about refusing to acknowledge its existence. It's about defining the North as something to be eliminated.

The ROK–US Alliance and the (Re)production of Confrontational Discourses

Kim

You've talked about the impact of the U.S. strategic shift on the security situation on the Korean peninsula, which on the other hand seems to be deeply connected to the issue of South Korea's autonomy over its North Korea policy. Based on what you're saying, I think one of the key factors here is the strong ROK–US alliance. The East-West Cold War system collapsed a long time ago, and South Korea has become so far ahead of North Korea in many ways that systemic competition has become irrelevant. Nevertheless, I can't help but feel that the ROK–US alliance is getting stronger rather than weaker, especially considering the issue of THAAD deployment in the past. From an objective point of view, there is no reason for the ROK–US alliance to be strengthened. What is your opinion on this?

Actually, that question was the topic of my Ph.D. dissertation. In the 1990s, the Soviet Union fell apart, and the Cold War system collapsed. Hasn't China also changed to the point where you can't tell if it's a socialist or capitalist country because it has adopted capitalist elements? Politically, the U.S.–China relationship has normalized, and economically, it has become a very close interdependent relationship, and if you compare the defense spending of the two countries, isn't South Korea's defense budget equal to North Korea's entire national budget? The arms race between North and South Korea has reached a point where even if North Korea spent its entire national budget on defense, it would not be able to keep up with South Korea's defense spending. My question was why South Korea still values the ROK–US alliance and is obsessed with U.S. Forces Korea when the gap between the two Koreas has grown to such an extent.

I think the question is still valid. In April 2014, a year after the Park Geun-hye government took office, one of the most important agreements that came out of the ROK–US summit was on wartime jurisdiction. It was supposed to be handed back in 2015, but the two sides agreed to postpone the transfer. Of course, the Lee Myung-bak government had also postponed the handover, but this agreement seems to be an indefinite postponement in that it was a postponement not based on the “timing” of the handover, but rather based on the creation of subjective “conditions” such as the security environment in Korea. This is almost unheard of for a sovereign nation, so the question remains: why is South Korea still doing this?

I found the answer in two things. The first is military and economic interdependence. Because the South Korean military has been dependent on the U.S. military since its inception, everything we have now, including weapons systems, military organization and strategy, is organized with the U.S. military in mind. Therefore, we have a military structure and military system that is so deformed that it would be difficult to function independently without the U.S. military. The weapons system is a prime example of this because South Korea imports a huge number of weapons, and most of them are American made. Even THAAD, which is

an issue these days, is a missile defense system made in the United States, and about 90% of our weapons imports, from tanks to fighter jets to missiles to warships, are made in the U.S. That's how dependent we are on the United States. The second part of the answer can be explained in terms of the "identity effect." Once you go beyond military issues and political interests, North Korea is thoroughly seen as "the Other," or that South Korea is essentially united with the United States. I believe that North Korea and the United States have acted as two major axes in the formation of South Korea's identity. On the one hand, North Korea has been thoroughly ostracized as inferior to us, economically poor, socially troubled, politically oppressive, and militarily dangerous, and at the same time, South Korea has constructed its identity by saying that it is different from North Korea. Therefore, it is inevitable that the thorough exclusion and suppression of "communists" will work from within, and as much as we ostracize North Korea, we will also ostracize the impurities within.

If the exclusion of the North is an important aspect of South Korean identity, I think the United States is an equally important aspect. The difference is that while the North is an object of exclusion, the United States is an object of integration, so a discourse system has been formed in South Korea in which American democracy is a good thing, the American economic system is great, American society is something we should emulate, and the American military and security system is something that protects peace.

I think this identity effect has intensified and expanded over the past 50 years as the ROK-US alliance has continued. Even the joint military exercises between the two countries are closely related to this issue of identity. For example, when we hold the Ulchi Focus Lens Exercise, we say that it is to prepare for the "threat" from the North, but it is itself a process of reproducing the discourse that reaffirms the North's identity. Similarly, the ROK-US military exercises held under the guise of annual "defense" drills are part of the process of reproducing the discourse of U.S. identity. The ROK-US alliance is also explained in the context of this identity effect. The most important annual event in the

ROK-US alliance is the annual security meeting held in late October or early November, and at the end of this meeting there is always a communiqué, and the most important part of the communiqué is the ostracism of the North; that is, that the alliance is threatened by the North. It's a process of collectively reaffirming and reproducing the North's identity, and it's also a process of reinforcing the idea that the alliance must be protected for South Korea's security. So I think the alliance and the military exercises are inextricably linked to the (re)production of identity. For so many years, South Korea's identity has been shaped by the perception of North Korea as a dangerous "Other," and the United States as a natural ally, and this perception has been taken for granted. Reflect on the recent incident involving the slashing of the U.S. Ambassador to South Korea, Mark Lippert. During that time, some South Korean citizens fasted and expressed guilt for not being able to protect him. I think South Korea is almost the only country in the world that does this kind of thing. It's hard to talk about the ROK-US alliance or relationship without talking about the identity effect.

Kim

If we say that the interdependence and identity effect between ROK and the U.S. have been the factors that have sustained, deepened, and expanded the ROK-US alliance so far, I think this won't have a positive effect on inter-Korean communication to overcome the division because it will ostracize the North as a threat. However, we cannot ignore the U.S. when it comes to the reunification of the Korean peninsula. In any case, the direct parties to the reunification of the Korean peninsula are the North and the South, and I think that depending on what the North and the South do, they can improve relations by convincing neighboring countries to join in the efforts. The Kim Dae-jung government made such efforts. So, regardless of whether the ROK-US alliance should be dissolved or not, isn't the autonomy of the North and the South important for reducing tensions on the Korean peninsula and allowing inter-Korean communications?

Suh

I think that's the heart of the matter. Indeed, the ROK-US alliance and the U.S. military strategy exert power that

perpetuates division structurally. It consistently poses the question of how we can act as a subject within the structure of division on the Korean peninsula, the global structure resembling the Cold War or neo-Cold War, particularly in Northeast Asia, and within the framework of U.S. policies. The structure does not completely determine the behavior of the subject because the structure has some coercive power, but there is still room for the subject to act.

In this sense, I think the experiences of the Kim Dae-jung government and Roh Moo-hyun governments provide important lessons. First of all, the breakthrough was made by the political leaders, but the two inter-Korean summits created an opportunity to overcome the ostracism of North Korea. Indeed, the summits opened up possibilities. But I think the important phenomenon during the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun governments was dialogue and exchange, because if the ostracization of the Other was strong before, certain cracks began to appear in the ostracization of the Other as the space for dialogue and exchange was opened. People began to say things like: “I thought they were strange horned demons, but when I went there, I found them just look like us,” or “I went there and found people living there,” which is something Hwang Sok-young wrote in his novel. In that sense, it showed the possibility of going beyond the Other. I think the most effective and important way to go beyond the ostracism of the North was through direct contact, dialogue, communication, and exchange.

Political conservatives refer to that period as the “lost decade,” and in retrospect, it really has turned into the “lost decade.” I think the most important thing about that period is that it showed the possibility of overcoming the exclusion of the Other through contact and exchange, communication and dialogue, and I think the role of civil society is probably the most important part of it. In the previous “lost decade” the state created some gaps in the wall of division so that civil society could communicate, and in the “lost decade” the state closed the passageway so that the possibility of such communication and exchange was completely closed. It is important that the state does not close the door to communication and exchange. After all, it is through direct

contact, communication, and exchange that we can overcome the ostracism of the Other.

Kim

You have just talked about the role of civil society. I wanted to follow up on that. I'm wondering if you mean "civil society" in the narrow sense of organizations like NGOs or in the broader sense to include ordinary citizens. The reason I ask is that while I recognize the important role that the private sector plays in bridging the gap between North and South Korea, there are many people in our society who have internalized the logic of hostile division and reproduce it on a daily basis. In other words, as long as the hostility of the division is spontaneously (re)produced within civil society, I don't think we can expect civil society to play a positive role if we don't address this issue.

Suh

First of all, I talked about "civil society" in a broad sense. Normally we talk about the state, civil society, and the market as three separate things, but I'm talking about civil society in a broad sense to include people and groups of people who are outside the realm of state and market. However, we cannot deny that it is mainly organized NGOs that play a role in political issues and critical moments, because it is typical of a civil society that most people are immersed in their daily lives. So, when we talk about politics and the dynamism and changeability of civil society, I think the role of organized NGOs is important, but ultimately civil society in a broader sense also constitutes the state and influences the direction and character of the state.

As you said, civil society (in the broadest sense) does not present a single, unified picture. It is composed of various actors, and even if they live in the same space, their lives and ideas are different. I think that the reproduction of division is also happening in civil society. When I was talking about the ostracization of North Korea, I mentioned that it is repeatedly done through the reproduction of discourse in South Korea, and the "Othering" of people who are called Reds, pro-North Koreans, and *chongbuk* (literally, "those blindly following North Korea") is also being reproduced in our society due to the habitus of division. In that respect, the North-South

divide is overlapping into our society, creating a South–South divide, but on the other hand, there is also a trend to overcome the North–South divide. In civil society, there are simultaneous attempts to overcome the Othering of the North and the internal division, so there are conflicts between the two positions. So, I believe that overcoming the internal reproduction of division is as important as dialogue and communication between the North and the South.

The Escalation of the Arms Race and Crisis on the Korean Peninsula

Kim

Let's go back to the “security dilemma,” which I understand means that the more a country strengthens its military power to defend itself against threats from other countries, the more it falls into the vicious circle of arms race, which paradoxically creates an unstable situation where peace is threatened. Therefore, the controversial issue of THAAD deployment can be understood in the light of the concept of “security dilemma” in that it is the result of a series of processes, such as the U.S. strategic shift and North Korea's missile development. I know that you have already discussed the issue of THAAD deployment on the Korean peninsula in this context, but I would like to hear your opinion on THAAD deployment in particular.

Suh

China strongly opposes the deployment of THAAD in South Korea, arguing that it would allow China to monitor South Korea and thus jeopardize its own security. “Deploying THAAD would deepen the conflict between the U.S. and China, and South Korea could lose out as a result. And if China retaliates, South Korea could suffer a great deal of economic damage.” So, it seems that the THAAD deployment is framed as a conflict between the U.S. and China, and the debate is framed in terms of whether to side with the U.S. or with China. In this framework, the proponents of THAAD are considered on the side of the U.S. and the opponents are considered on the side of China. That's how the debate is framed.

Of course, the parties involved may present a different perspective on this issue, but the framing of the discussion revolves around a security conflict China and the U.S. It would take a long time to get into the technical details, so I'll just say that it is the United States that wants to deploy THAAD in South Korea, and I think the main reason is the North Korean nuclear and missile threat. There are a few reasons for this, and one of them is that the issue of THAAD really started to be raised in 2014. In June of 2014, the commander of U.S. Allied Forces Korea, Curtis Michael Scaparrotti, said publicly for the first time that THAAD should be deployed in South Korea. In the American way of thinking, the commander of the ROK-US Joint Forces Command is a military man, and military men are not allowed to make statements that can government policies. Since there has already been a case where MacArthur attempted but failed to do so, there is a clear division of roles in civil-military relations, with the civilian president and the Republican Party making policy decisions and the military only executing them. However, Scaparrotti did make a statement that could influence policy by saying that THAAD should be deployed in South Korea. I think that the policy decision was made at the April 2014 summit between the U.S. and South Korea, which was an agreement on interoperability of missile defense systems, including THAAD. Since there was a political agreement, Scaparrotti made that public statement and the work to deploy THAAD in South Korea was done in a coordinated way.

This raises the question of why the agreement on the missile defense system was reached in "April 2014." To answer that, let's go back in time. In 2013, the U.S. did a number of things to move its missile defense system to Asia. In early 2013, it suspended plans for a missile defense system in Europe, canceled plans for Phase IV of the European missile defense system, deployed THAAD in Guam, and deployed X-Band, the radar for THAAD, in Japan. The Pentagon placed an order with Lockheed Martin, the company that produces THAAD. Thus, in 2013, there was a full-scale move to strengthen the missile defense system in the Asia-Pacific region. On the other hand, more ground-based interceptors were deployed in Alaska.

So why did these measures emerge in 2013? They were linked to the ROK–US summit in 2014, but then why did the U.S. do all these things in 2013? To get the answer to this question, you have to go back to 2012. In December of that year, North Korea put a satellite into orbit, which was nothing to worry about because it's just a satellite, but the U.S. and South Korea saw it as a demonstration of North Korea's ICBM (intercontinental ballistic missile) capability. I suppose they started to think that North Korea could have put a nuclear warhead into orbit, not just a satellite, and that if they had a nuclear warhead, they could hit the U.S. mainland. And the other important thing is that in December 2012 a satellite launched from North Korea's western launch site flew over California, after passing slightly over the west coast of South Korea, and then the Philippines, then Antarctica, and then South America. Seeing that on the news at the time, it was reported that the Super Bowl was being played in a stadium in California, and the satellite passed over that stadium. That basically meant that if the North Koreans had launched a nuclear warhead instead of a satellite along that trajectory, it could reach California. So, I suppose the U.S. Department of Defense, of course, took that as a serious threat, and they deployed a missile defense system starting in 2013, and then in 2014, the ROK–US summit led to the decision to deploy THAAD in South Korea. Ultimately, the THAAD system was a response to the possibility of a North Korean nuclear missile hitting the U.S. and also to ICBMs. Given the possibility that North Korea could attack the U.S. military bases in Sasebo, Japan, or Guam with a missile like the Musudan, which is a medium-range missile, THAAD system is capable of intercepting intermediate-range missiles.

Kim However, if the X-Band radar is deployed in South Korea along with THAAD missiles, it could be used to monitor parts of China, can't we assume it's just to protect U.S. security from the threat of a North Korean missile attack?

Suh Now, you might think that THAAD is to monitor China, but now the U.S. announced that they're going to deploy not only radar but also interceptor missiles in South Korea, and

interceptor missiles can't intercept Chinese ICBM missiles because they're too far away. So, here's the question again: Japan has decided to deploy X-Band radar for THAAD without interceptor missiles. If the THAAD system in South Korea is just to monitor China, the U.S. just need to install radar. Given this, why do they need to install interceptor missiles? To answer this question, you first have to ask whether it's to intercept North Korea's intermediate-range missiles, ICBMs. The THAAD that they're going to deploy in South Korea has radar and interceptor missiles, so part of its mission could be to monitor China, but that mission could be secondary. I think the primary mission of THAAD is to intercept North Korea's intermediate-range missiles and ICBMs, and it has nothing to do with South Korea's defense at all. Intermediate-range missiles can just make it to Gwanghwamun.

Kim

If the U.S. is going to deploy an interceptor together, does that mean that if a missile is launched from the North to attack the U.S. mainland, it will fly toward the Philippines-Antarctic Ocean, not toward Alaska, and that the THAAD deployed in South Korea will track it and intercept it? Even though THAAD is already deployed in Guam, that's not enough?

Suh

If North Korea fires missiles southward on a trajectory similar to the ones that were launched in 2012, they will pass over South Korea. The U.S. is going to intercept them when they pass over South Korea. Of course, Guam already has THAAD deployed, so it is already prepared for medium-range missiles. The reason why the U.S. wants to deploy THAAD in South Korea is that they can have a double layer of defense. The idea is that they can try to intercept the North Korean missiles once in the ascent phase and shoot them down there, and if that fails and the North Korean missiles reach Guam, the U.S. can intercept them again in Guam. It's a layered defense concept.

And in the case of ICBMs, there's a limit to what the U.S. can intercept. If the U.S. launches an ICBM near the Chinese border, it's already above the intercept altitude of THAAD when it passes over South Korea, so it's not possible to intercept it with THAAD in South Korea. In that case, the

radar for THAAD tracks the missiles in the North and relays that information to Aegis-equipped vessels in the southern sea, and the vessels intercept the missiles with a defense system called SM3. That's why missile defense interoperability is so important. If an intercept doesn't work with THAAD, interoperability comes into play when passing that information to SM2, SM3, and other missile defense systems to intercept the missiles.

The idea is that if you launch an ICBM from an area within 500 kilometers of Seongju where the THAAD base is located,, the North Korean missile will be at an altitude of between 100 and 200 kilometers when it passes over South Korea, so South Korea can try to intercept it. If you launch an ICBM from an area farther away, from an area adjacent to China, then by the time it passes over South Korea, it cannot be intercepted by THAAD, but it can be tracked by radar and intercepted by SM3 above the southern sea.

This is a technically complicated discussion, but the reason I'm talking about this is because it's an aspect of the arms race on the Korean peninsula. As you can see from what I've written, I believe there is an ongoing arms race between North Korea and the ROK-US alliance. Let me give you an example from the past. There was a time when South Korea had a problem with North Korean troops being heavily deployed at the front. South Korea took this as a threat and claimed that the North's move was to launch a surprise attack. But if you take a step back and look at this as a security dilemma between North Korea and the ROK-US alliance, you can interpret it differently. The reason why North Korea kept its military forces on the front lines until the 1970s and 1980s was to prepare for U.S. nuclear strikes. If the U.S. dropped nuclear missiles from big planes, the rear forces of North Korea would be completely incapacitated. However, it would be difficult for the U.S. to attack them with nuclear weapons if the troops were concentrated in the front. If a nuclear weapon were to be detonated near the DMZ, the South Korean and U.S. forces immediately to the south would be affected and Seoul also would be affected. So, one of the reasons for concentrating forces in the front was to minimize the possibility of using nuclear weapons.

This is actually a strategy that was used by the Soviet Union during the Cold War, but it is interpreted differently in terms of a security dilemma. The U.S. has been using nuclear weapons as a military strategy since the 1950s. North Korea has been gathering as much military power as possible in response, and as part of that it has responded with so-called asymmetric strategies, fire-and-forget weapons, and so on. Now it has come to the stage of developing nuclear weapons.

Looking at the current situation, it can be seen that North Korea has developed nuclear weapons, whether they admit it or not, and that they have developed or are close to developing ICBMs that can deliver nuclear weapons to the U.S. In this situation, the U.S. has to take countermeasures, and thus is moving to the stage of introducing a missile defense system aiming at neutralizing North Korea's nuclear missiles. There has been an arms race between North and South Korea, and then we have observed steps like North Korea's forward deployment of military forces, the Bush administration's adoption of preemptive nuclear strikes, and North Korea's development of nuclear weapons. Now we're in an arms race with North Korea by adopting missile defense systems against the North's evolving nuclear threats. So, it's a constant escalation.

While the issue of deploying THAAD on the Korean peninsula is certainly a manifestation of the new Cold War between the U.S. and China, I am more concerned about the seriousness and danger of the arms race here. With North Korea possessing nuclear weapons and the United States trying to neutralize them, the arms race is accelerating and entering a stage where the risks far outweigh the benefits. In this situation, the ROK-US alliance is adopting a very dangerous military strategy that is uncertain whether it is a preemptive attack or a preventive strike, and North Korea is responding by threatening a preemptive nuclear strike. To me, it seems that THAAD is not just about a weapons system, but signals that the arms race is entering a highly dangerous stage, increasing the likelihood of preemptive strikes by both sides.