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## **A Misunderstanding on North Korean issue**

By SUZUKI Keisuke

Allegedly, North Korea has announced that it is planning to launch a satellite in April. As previous similar cases show, the planned satellite launch is likely to be the disguise of a ballistic missile test. Even if it is a rocket launch, it is technically interchangeable with a ballistic missile test. It is obvious that the planned satellite launch will pose a serious threat to Japan's national security. I have long been concerned that in our country the issues of nuclear tests and missile launches by the North are less seriously considered to be "its own problems" than the abduction issue. Of course, the abduction issue is the highest-priority problem that should be politically tackled. However, the issues of nuclear tests and missile launches are as important as the abduction issue from the perspective of protecting the security of the Japanese land and people.

Fundamentally, if North Korea has nuclear weapons and succeeds in transforming them into small-sized ones, the highest probability is that the country will load a warhead on the Rodong, which is highly reliable and has also reached a significant technical level. Its range suggests that it is quite likely to target Japan. In addition, the Taepodong, which is speculated to be linked to the planned satellite launch, can be considered to target the United States. It is very likely that the North's effort to increase the accuracy level of the missile is intended to weaken the U.S. will to take military actions in East Asia.

Undoubtedly, all of these moves have the largest security impact on Japan, not on North Korea's ally China, South Korea, the United States or Russia. Unless Japan embarks on its full endeavor to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula and to address the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), it may cause a major problem in the future of our country. Japan has no significant bargaining chips in terms of military and critical economic means in its negotiation with North Korea. Therefore, our country cannot get significant results though bilateral negotiations with the North. This is the case with all of the abduction, nuclear and missiles issues. The only way for Japan to

reduce North Korean risks is to make sure that China be obliged to put pressure on the North while closely collaborating with the United States.

In particular, regarding our relationship with the United States, although it is our major ally, we should face up to the sheer reality that, geopolitically, Japan has an even greater sense of crisis and is also facing an even more serious or vital security threat from North Korea. If our country does not approach the problem and urge the United States to collaborate with a properly grave sense of crisis, even the major ally will not react with great earnestness. The Japan-U.S. alliance is not such a bilateral framework in which Japan automatically receives services in a passive mode. I should say that the current Japanese administration does not have an adequate recognition of this. If Japan mishandles the situation immediately after the North Korea's change of its leader, it can inflict greater damage on national interests than in usual situations. Japan needs to turn around the situation as soon as possible.

**(This is the English translation of an article written by Mr. SUZUKI Keisuke, former Member of the House of Representatives, which originally appeared on the BBS "Hyakka-Somei" of CEAC on March 29, 2012.)**