



[Global NK Zoom & Connect Interview] Episode 25

**Interview with David Maxwell on  
Deterring a Nuclear-Armed North Korea  
and Strategy for Establishing a Denuclearized and Peacefully Unified Korea**

East Asia Institute (EAI)

David Maxwell, a Senior Fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, emphasizes that integrated deterrence requires the seamless integration of multiple elements of national power, including diplomacy, economy, information, as well as the military, to deter threats to the United States and its allies. Regarding prospects for the denuclearization of North Korea, he views that complete denuclearization is not a feasible goal as long as the hereditary Kim regime remains in power. Mr. Maxwell argues that there will be no denuclearization until there is unification, and suggests having a human rights upfront approach in pursuing this goal.

**I. Integrated Deterrence at Center of U.S. National Defense Strategy**

- Washington relies on the concept of integrated deterrence as a centerpiece of its defense strategy. Mr. Maxwell emphasizes that “integrated deterrence must be more than just the military. It must be a whole of government integrating all the elements of the national instruments of power, to include diplomacy, economy, information as well as military.”
- He points out that the “key elements of the national security are alliances that the United States can’t do it alone. We are dependent on our alliances and the mutual support with our alliances really provides strength not only to the United States but to that alliance structure. [...] We should use all elements of national power to deter threats to the United States and to our friends, partners, and allies.”

**II. A Roadmap to Permanent Peace on the Korean Peninsula**

- North Korea’s new law on nuclear forces and Kim’s official refusal to relinquish his nuclear arsenal have made pursuing diplomacy for denuclearization more difficult. Mr. Maxwell is skeptical of North Korea’s willingness to disarm, saying that “as long as Kim Jong-un and the Kim family regime remain in power, there will be no denuclearization. It is clear that nuclear weapons are critical to the survival of the regime as well as to its political warfare and blackmail diplomacy strategy.”



- Mr. Maxwell stresses that “there will be no denuclearization until there is unification” and suggests a unified Korea as the solution to the security problems on the peninsula.
- In responding to North Korea’s intensifying provocations, he claims that “the foundation (of the alliance) must remain deterrence, defense... and should implement a superior political warfare strategy using all instruments of power to achieve our objectives.”
- Mr. Maxwell states that North Korean policy should include bilateral and multilateral approaches to human rights issues and provide information directly to the North Korean people as “they must understand the universal human rights that all human beings are entitled to, and which they don’t have.”
- Even though providing increased access to outside information for the people of North Korea may not lead to desired results in a short time, he clarifies that “if people inside North Korea know there can be a better life, how unification could occur, they will put pressure on the regime and even cause some kind of change and new leadership emerges inside the North that would seek peaceful unification.”
- Although the talks have been long-stalled, and tensions on the peninsula are at the highest point in years, he is optimistic for the future of the Korean peninsula, saying that “I think all Koreans will come together to solve the Korean question, the unnatural division of the peninsula.” And he stresses the significance of a unified Korea that “whatever happens on the Korean peninsula, the ultimate outcome will be unification and that will be a great thing for Korea, for the region, and the world.”■

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### IV. Biography

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- **David Maxwell** is a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. He is a 30-year veteran of the United States Army, retiring in 2011 as a Special Forces Colonel with his final assignment serving on the military faculty teaching national security strategy at the National War College. He has served in various command and staff assignments in the Infantry in Germany and Korea as well as in Special Forces at Ft. Lewis, Washington; Seoul, Korea; Okinawa, Japan; and the Philippines, with total service in Asia of more than 20 years. Following his retirement from the Army, he served as Associate Director of the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University from 2011 through 2017.
  
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