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زبانهای اروپائی

FEBRUARY 16, 2018

by MIKE WHITNEY
18.02.2018

The Obnoxious Pence Shows Why Korea Must End US Occupation

Mike Pence's boorish and disgraceful behavior at the Pyeongchang Olympics illustrates why the United States can play no constructive role in the easing of tensions on the Korean Peninsula. In just 48 hours, the overbearing Vice President managed to insult or embarrass everyone he encountered including South Korean President Moon Jae-in and his honored guest from the north, Kim Yo-jong. Pence flaunted his contempt for the Korean people by humiliating their leaders, shrugging off their hospitality, and scoffing at their joint efforts for peace. He acted like an arrogant proconsul who only deigns to visit his subjects in order to treat them with condescension and scorn. His behavior proved to the world that he is a blustery, egotistical bonehead who doesn't have the slightest regard for the feelings of others.

Before he'd even set foot on Korean soil, Pence had already started stirring up trouble by announcing "the toughest and most aggressive round of economic sanctions on North Korea ever". The announcement, that was made a day earlier in Tokyo, was clearly designed to exacerbate already strained relations and put a damper on any negotiations currently underway between North and South. The belligerent VP wanted to make sure that any attempts at rapprochement between Pyongyang and Soule would be swiftly thwarted by the Washington overlords. Far from an isolated incident, Pence's preemptive announcement follows a familiar pattern of heavy-handed intervention into Korea's domestic affairs that stretches back more than 6 decades with the aim of derailing any promising move towards national reconciliation or détente. The western media has done

an impressive job in concealing Washington's malignant role in Korea's politics. By focusing on imaginary threats from the North, they have obfuscated the real source of the divisions, the distrust, and the hostility. Washington.

Pence childishly showcased his meeting with a defector from the North in order to humiliate the delegation from the DPRK before even meeting with them. He then reiterated the administration's commitment to conduct massive joint-military drills with the South following the Winter Games in order to apply "maximum pressure" on the North. The needlessly provocative military exercises— which are a source of endless aggravation in Pyongyang— include "decapitation" drills that simulate the capturing and killing of the North's supreme leader, Kim Jong-un. Is it any wonder why Pyongyang thinks it needs nuclear weapons to defend itself?

Virtually all of Pence's activities and statements were designed to incite animosity, generate suspicion, or prevent any progress towards a lasting peace. The sole purpose of the VP's trip was to preserve the status quo, that is, to make sure the country remains permanently split into warring camps that justify Washington's military occupation, thus, protecting US commercial interests while maintaining control of a strategically-located territory that is a critical part of Washington's plan to dominate Asia. Pence is merely following the century's old maxim for preserving imperial power: Divide and conquer. The US doesn't want a peaceful, prosperous, unified Korea, it wants a fragmented, garrison state where cheap labor is abundant and the politicians dance to Washington's tune. That was the objective when Washington installed its lackeys in the Capitol in 1953 and that's the goal today.

Pence's visit was highlighted by one mortifying gaffe after another making it the worst diplomatic disaster since Prince Philip asked his Aborigine hosts during a trip to Australia if they "still threw spears at each other." Fortunately, in Philip's case, he was clever enough to grasp his mistake and quickly make amends. Not so the fatuous Pence who in a short two-day stretch snubbed his hosts and their guests by ducking out of an extravagant state dinner he was expected to attend, by refusing to shake hands with Kim Jong-un's younger sister, and by stubbornly remaining seated while the united North-South Korean team entered the Olympic stadium to the rapturous applause of the crowd. If Pence hoped to project the image of a man who felt he was superior to all others, he certainly succeeded. It is doubtful, however, that he won the love and admiration of the Korean people who are now, undoubtedly, rethinking their relationship with the pompous and trouble-making United States.

Pence's blundering visit helps to confirm that the United States cannot play a constructive role in resolving the thorny issues between North and South. Pyongyang and Soule will have to convene a regional summit on denuclearization headed by China and Russia while demanding the immediate cessation of all joint-military exercises in the South. The North should agree to take verifiable steps to decommission its nuclear arsenal and allow international weapons inspectors free reign to conduct their work, in exchange for the gradual lifting of economic sanctions, the progressive strengthening of economic ties with the South, and the incremental, but total withdrawal of all US troops and military personnel pending proof from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that the North is in "full compliance" with the restrictions it has willingly accepted in order to normalize relations with the South and terminate Washington's 65 year military stranglehold of the peninsula