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Session 5C: Denuclearizing North Korea - Agenda for Action

Faced with continued DPRK defiance on nuclear weapons and missile provocations, the international community seems at a loss to know what to do next. Most likely, Security Council condemnations and sanctions will continue to be applied, but with no appreciable impact. The Six-Party Talks have stalled seemingly indefinitely. Is there scope for better and more directed sanctions and other pressures from neighbours? And might it be time to try again with carrots (after the disastrous failure of KEDO)? Might there be room for track-2 diplomacy?

Moderator:

Chung-in Moon (Co-convener, APLN / Editor-in-chief, *Global Asia*)

Presenters:

Nyamosur Tuya (former Foreign Minister of Mongolia)

Pan Zhenqiang (Senior Advisor, China Reform Forum / (retired) Major General)

Peter Hayes (Founder & Director, Nautilus Institute for Security & Sustainability)

Yong-soo Hwang (Senior researcher, NCNCP, ROK)

**All presenters and moderator are APLN members.*

Chung-in Moon (Co-convener, APLN / Editor-in-chief, *Global Asia*):

We have very good panelists today with diverse expertise. I will go around in a circle in asking the questions. First, how should we handle the North Korean issue? Let's start with Dr. Hwang first.

Dr. Yong-soo Hwang (Senior researcher, NCNCP, ROK):

We need a creative carrot to bring in all the stakeholders. While Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) had failed, many lessons were learned. Implementing the fuel leasing and take back service option will be the cornerstone to develop a sweet and practical carrot for the DPRK, if the DPRK demands the installation of commercial nuclear power generation in her territory.

It would be very difficult to solve the DPRK nuclear issues technically. However, it is our duty to solve this dilemma of the DPRK nuclear problems. Assuming that a certain level of a good agreement can be reached among the global parties and the DPRK, it will be critical to carefully select the sweet carrots. As an engineer it will be very attractive to supply the electricity and/or electricity generation systems to the DPRK. The total installed capacity for the electricity generation is just 7 GW, which is equal to the installed capacity of 5 units of the ROK's APWRs. The real fact is that the operation of power installation is very poor so that only less than 30% of the DPRK's electricity installation is at work.

There are a lot of technical as well as political issues in this carrot. The DPRK might not trust the electricity supply from the ROK, China, and Russia. Instead, the DPRK might request the construction of new electricity generation facilities in her territory. Also they might request the construction of the nuclear power plants. It is not an easy task at all, but we should try if the global society decides to go for it. In that case, we can apply the so called the fuel leasing and

take back option. This was already done in the Iranian deal last year. And this is the way to curb the actions of ENR (enrichment and reprocessing) in the DPRK. How to assure the continuous supply of the service is the big matter, but we can still develop the back-up system to satisfy the DPRK with full active participation of the U.S., China, Russia, Japan and others along with the IAEA.

There will still be other key technical issues such as how to set up the electricity distribution grid network nationwide in the DPRK and how to stabilize the electricity supply. But all these technical issues might not be big obstacles to solve the energy supply dilemma in the DPRK if the DPRK and the global society decided to go for the option.

Peter Hayes (Founder & Director, Nautilus Institute for Security & Sustainability):

Kim Jung Un is preparing for change in the DPRK. He outlined his vision for the next few decades based on youth power, or generational shift, in his New Year's speech. His repeated use of the words 'youth power' signals that he is going through internal changes in the DPRK. It would be a turn for the worse if the DPRK strengthens its nuclear power in the context of change.

The only way to tackle the North Korean nuclear armament and reverse this dynamic is to do so in a comprehensive manner that regulates how nuclear weapons affect international affairs in the region as a whole. It will not work to repeat the US-DPRK Agreed Framework in the form of an expanded Iran Deal. It will not work to resume the Six Party Talks with a sole focus on DPRK. DPRK's nuclear armaments can only be dealt with by creating a framework of constraints on the use of nuclear threat in the Northeast Asian region that applies to all states consistently. It also needs to be supported by a strong legal and political basis, starting the active involvement of the leaders of each country at the outset rather than the end of a process aimed at creating such an enduring framework.

The right approach for this issue is one of comprehensive security. There are necessary if not sufficient elements for such a comprehensive security settlement. First, an end to the Korean War, the Armistice, the Military Armistice Commission, and the creation of a post-war "treaty" — a peace treaty or agreement which can take many forms. Second, achieve a non-hostility statement that is multilateral in nature and is agreed to by all states in the region. Third, achieve a regional treaty of peace and amity that is tailored to Northeast Asian circumstances, and establish a Security Council to deal with unresolved security issues in the region. Fourth, end sanctions calibrated to the degree of North Korean denuclearization. Fifth, provide specific energy and economic assistance to the North that stabilizes its economy and generates joint returns, especially the connection of networks that transit the North from the South and Japan en route to China, Russia, and beyond. Finally, establish a regional nuclear weapons-free zone that regulates the use of nuclear threat by Nuclear Weapons States against Non-Nuclear Weapons States; and provides the DPRK with the opportunity to come into compliance over time after joining the treaty alongside Republic of Korea and Japan.

To realize such a vision, the two most crucial players are the United States and China. Without their active concert, such a vision cannot be realized and will be constantly overruled by other bilateral issues that divide the two great powers. Such issues may be more pressing in the short term, and constantly render impossible the implementation of a joint strategy that would actually present DPRK with a reshaped external security environment, in turn

changing its security calculus and making it possible for Kim Jong Un to realistically explore denuclearization pathways. It is therefore up to Republic of Korea and other players, such as civil society, to actively promote a comprehensive security settlement led by the United States and China as the only meaningful alternative to increased reliance on nuclear and conventional force threats, which presents the increasing probability of South Korean, Japanese and Taiwanese nuclear proliferation on the one hand, and an increasing risk of war, including nuclear war, on the other, as the awful logic of mutual probable destruction unfolds in Korea as North Korea expands its nuclear capacities

Pan Zhenqiang (Senior Advisor, China Reform Forum / retired Major General):

As each country has a different threat perception, it is too difficult to find a solution that all countries could agree upon. Meanwhile, the DPRK is updating its capabilities. As such, we need a method that combines our common goal. For China, two things are important. First, as denuclearization for the DPRK is an issue concerning all surrounding countries, there is an obligation to make an environment that enables the DPRK to feel comfortable abandoning its nuclear capabilities. Second, a dual approach should be tried. Sanctions are necessary, but they should serve as a window to open up a new opportunity for peace. It should not be a tool to crash the regime. Negotiations based on mutual respect and trust will give solutions.

We do not need new creative ideas for this issue. The joint statement of September 19, 2005 included six principles to guide the solution of the nuclear issue on the Peninsula, based on mutual respect, mutual compromise, and each party undertaking its own obligations for the peaceful solution of the issue. Under the guidance of these essential principles, a roadmap was also agreed on, pointing to a gradual way leading to the denuclearization of the peninsula. Had all these principles been successfully implemented, we perhaps would not need today to have the topic on our discussion agenda. All that needs to be done is to go back to the Six Party Talks, reactivate the dialogue and negotiation, and renew the work as envisaged through the Joint statement of September 19, 2005 for an effective solution of the North Korea nuclear issue. To that end, state leaders should demonstrate greater political courage, and perhaps a bit of diplomatic skills to take the leadership

Nyamosur Tuya (former Foreign Minister of Mongolia):

There were two failures regarding DPRK's nuclear issue. First was the failure for DPRK to abandon nuclear weapons. The second involved failure for mutual compromise that could have been acceptable. Sanctions have not worked and they may continue to do so in the future. What the international and regional community could do more – beyond Security Council meetings and rounds of sanctions and in order to avoid forceful responses that could trigger dangerous action-reaction dynamics - is work on an agenda for action that includes efforts to address the issue through political means - that is, through diplomacy. She outlined this as firstly, revival of the Six- Party Talks and, secondly, engagement of North Korea on a range of non-nuclear issues, including by third parties, i.e. non-SPT parties. The Iran deal took much time and effort to solve. Likewise, we need more time and effort to solve the issue of DPRK. In that context, Mongolia has been trying to provide setting for dialogue for DPRK through channels such as the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue.

Professor Chung-in Moon

Will sanctions be effective in changing the behavior of DPRK? General Pan, please give us your thoughts.

Pan Zhenqiang

There is a dilemma regarding implementation of sanctions. Sanctions should be meaningful if they are to be implemented. It should damage DPRK and make it feel that continuing to pursue nuclear weapons will hurt its rule over the population. On the other hand, sanctions should not hurt the people. China does not want regime collapse. Sanctions should be proportionate to the problems that are faced. It should not lead to destabilization of the Korean Peninsula.

Professor Chung-in Moon

The South Korean government believes that sanctions are working, and now the American government is concurring with that opinion.

Dr. Yong-soo Hwang

Sanctions worked for the Iranian case. However, there are many technical and political problems for the North Korean case. It emphasizes the importance of peace talks among all concerned parties. There should be a creative package that will stabilize the region.

Professor Chung-in Moon

The South Korean government thinks that there should be more damage forced to the North Korean regime. It believes that the North Korean government will come back for a more acceptable deal then.

Director Peter Hayes

That will not work because DPRK has already been through famine and worse situations. Also, states do not want regime collapse because the cost is too high. In fact, current sanctions on DPRK are not exceedingly strong. Sanctions regarding financial markets would be a campaign of “strategic strangulation” (as David Maxwell characterizes the UN and other sanctions against DPRK) and will not weaken Kim Jong Un’s rule, nor stop the North’s nuclear and missile programs from becoming a real as against hypothetical, still largely symbolic threat. Increasing sanctions will not stop the regime, nor affect its rate of nuclear armament. Sanctions will, and already have, slowed the pace of marketization and imposed substantial humanitarian costs on ordinary North Koreans.

Professor Chung-in Moon

When we talk about the possibility of regime collapse in North Korea, we should first define what kind of regime collapse we are discussing about. There are many interpretations of regime collapse – change of government, policy, leader, system, or the collapse of DPRK as sovereign state. But the last one is not doable. As such, we should freeze, roll back, and then have negotiations to solve problems. While this incremental approach is not wanted by the U.S., DPRK will not throw away its nuclear weapons overnight.

Pan Zhenqiang

I am skeptic towards the sudden enthusiasm of the South Korean government regarding sanctions. ROK should not want regime collapse as well as it is counter-productive. Sanctions should only be used to express the firm attitude that the parties will not back off. This issue should not be approached from a worst case scenario. ROK should not follow the position of the U.S. ROK is playing into DPRK’s hands when it is much stronger than DPRK. China is burdened with the current leadership role. ROK should pursue leadership and its own independent policy. The sunshine policy’s intention was laudable. Former minister Nyamosor

suggested that a regime collapse would not be welcomed by China. China will not be cooperative.

Director Peter Hayes

Regime collapse would in this case point to the absence of the Kim family. It may be possible to achieve that by stopping all supply of oil, including Kerosene. However, there will be chaos and military action. In the end, neighboring countries will have another family to contend with. A military alliance is not effective. There is not enough intelligence on North Korea.

Professor Chung-in Moon

Please share your perspectives on the feasibility of solution by dialogue.

Nyamosor Tuya

Mongolia has an important role to play in dialogue. Mongolia maintains relations with both South Korea and North Korea. It has a sense of affinity with the Korean people and this is a reciprocal feeling. With South Korea, a valued economic partner, this affinity is complemented by shared values of democracy and respect for human rights and increased people-to-people contacts. A large Mongolian community lives and works in South Korea. With regard to North Korea, despite the differences in respective political and economic systems as well as in our respective world outlooks, Mongolia has opted for pragmatism in relations. This approach has its roots in the long history of our bilateral relations with the DPRK. Mongolia was the second country to recognize the DPRK. These traditional ties withstood the end of communism in Mongolia and North Korea's continued isolation. Mutual visits are a regular feature in our bilateral relations.

Mongolia's engagement of North Korea is based, firstly, on a premise that keeping some channels of communication open is a good diplomacy, especially when it comes to a threat that we see in our close vicinity. Secondly, given the stable relations we maintain with North Korea, hope is entertained that Mongolia's own experience of peaceful and successful transition from a closed society to one that has opened itself up to the outside world and enjoys the benefits of international cooperation can be of some value to North Korea. Thirdly, views are held that engagement of North Korea enables participation of its representatives in Mongolia-sponsored- or initiated Track 1.5 and Track 2 activities that allow for a more representative discussion of regional affairs, ranging from security to opportunities for economic cooperation. The assumption here is that, by keeping interaction alive, such gatherings contribute to building trust and better mutual understanding among parties so as some confidence-building measures could further be considered. And fourthly, as a landlocked country in Northeast Asia endowed with huge mineral wealth, yet to be fully tapped, Mongolia hopes to benefit from an economic cooperation in the region that could help the country improve its access to the seas and build stronger trade ties with the region.

This overview of Mongolia's policy towards North Korea hopefully helps the discussion on whether there should be a combination of "carrots and sticks" with regard to North Korea. In the presence of tough UNSC sanctions ("the sticks" that the DPRK has been consistently violating) the countries in the region could consider, at the Track 2 level, a more active engagement of representatives from North Korea (the "carrots") so as to promote mutual trust and see if any compromises could be agreed upon.

There were hopes that Japan, DPRK, and ROK could come to Mongolia to talk about abandoning nuclear power. Other states would provide nuclear weapon protection. However, this is challenging. There is geopolitical tension as each country faces a different situation.

Professor Chung-in Moon

I am critical of South Korea and the U.S. for refusing to suspend ROK and the U.S. joint military exercise, which may make DPRK listen and is easier to give up than others. There is a need to declare that joint exercise will be suspended next year, and see what DPRK offers in turn. However, such a direction would be challenging given President Park's lack of trust towards DPRK and her strong commitment to the ROK-US alliance. The U.S. also does not trust DPRK. Also, the pre-condition of the South Korean government for dialogue with DPRK is very vague. It only repeats that it wants proof of authentic intention.

Director Peter Hayes

I disagree because cancelling a joint military exercise would not be an effective method as the option has already been tried and failed before. General nuclear management rather than just that of DPRK is needed. This should be addressed at leadership level, not at bureaucratic level. The negotiation method should be flexible: that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. Then it may be possible to have a deal that encompasses the whole range of nuclear threat from DPRK, from nuclear states to non-nuclear states, and nuclear states to other nuclear states. DPRK leadership should be legitimized. Otherwise the regime will respond appropriately. For the pre-condition of the U.S. government for dialogue with DPRK, a statement containing information such as a new uranium facility and its location would fulfill those criteria.

Dr. Yong-soo Hwang

I doubt letting DPRK have nuclear power on the condition of international verification would be possible, since DPRK has been developing its program for many years and they may not have information even among themselves. Verification process needs strict procedures, so it could incite difficulties among the U.S., ROK, and DPRK. There should be new ideas for managing nuclear energy of DPRK. There should be a negotiation between IAEA and DPRK to implement technical solutions for managing processing plants.

Director Peter Hayes

The Non-Proliferation Treaty recognizes nuclear weapon free zone as very valuable mechanism. DPRK should undergo the usual inspection process in addition to a regional inspector. ROK and Japan should have their own inspector rights. The verification process should be more extensive because the international community has to gauge the real intentions of the DPRK.

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