Tipping Point for the Six-Party Talks?

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Introduction

Can the Six-Party Talks be saved? Should they be saved? Or, has Pyongyang already made the strategic decision to keep its nuclear weapons arsenal at all costs and under all conceivable circumstances? Is North Korea's recent declaration that it would "never" return to the Six-Party Talks – underscored by a "satellite launch" and a second nuclear test – a firm and unyielding one or just another ploy aimed at keeping its five interlocutors off balance in hopes of improving its bargaining position? Security specialists from all five countries provide their personal opinions and answers to these and other questions in this volume, "Tipping Point for the Six-Party Talks?"

The Six-Party Talks has long been viewed as the last best hope for Korean Peninsula denuclearization. On Sept. 19, 2005, six parties – China, Japan, North Korea, Russia, South Korea, and the United States – issued a Joint Statement that committed them to a set of common principles and objectives: a) denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, b) normalization of bilateral diplomatic relations among themselves, c) recognition of the importance of economic development, including provision of economic assistance for North Korea, and d) establishment of a permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula. This statement has been heralded as a breakthrough in efforts to halt North Korea's nuclear weapons program and to create a stable and enduring peace on the Korean Peninsula.

That statement was the most promising outcome of the Six-Party Talks, a negotiation forum created in the aftermath of U.S. allegations that North Korea was pursuing a covert uranium enrichment program, a charge the Bush administration considered a violation of the Agreed Framework, a U.S.-North Korean bilateral agreement reached during the Clinton administration. In fact, those negotiations were the outgrowth of trilateral – China-North Korea-U.S. – discussions that began in April 2003. The first six-party meeting was held in Beijing in August 2003, and six rounds have been held to date.

The process has been inconsistent. There have been highs – the highest was the September 2005 Joint Statement – and lows, most notably Pyongyang's recent decision to abandon the negotiations and its April 29 announcement that it no longer was committed to denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula. In between, the six-party negotiations have stuttered along, punctuated by missile tests, nuclear tests, United Nations Security Council resolutions, financial sanctions, periodic breakdowns, and back-channel talks.

With Pyongyang repudiating the Sept. 15 Joint Declaration and seemingly committed to possession of a nuclear arsenal, it is time to re-examine the six-party framework and decide whether it should be maintained. This question has been asked throughout its tumultuous existence, but the answer has invariably been in the affirmative. Previously, however, proponents could point to the Sept. 15 statement as reason to continue. That no longer provides a compelling rationale for the talks to go on. Moreover, skeptics failed to provide a realistic alternative to the six-party format. In the

absence of any other avenues, the Six-Party Talks were accepted as the least worst option.

The papers collected in this volume explore whether that continues to be true and, if so, whether that is reason enough to continue the six-party format. The views outlined here reflect the thinking of scholars from five of the six parties (only a North Korean perspective is lacking). These papers were presented at three conferences in China and South Korea in May 2009, after Pyongyang's April 5 "satellite launch" and subsequent decision to repudiate the Joint Statement and before North Korea's second nuclear test on May 25, 2009.

Ralph Cossa, president of the Pacific Forum CSIS, believes the time has come to adopt a policy of containment toward North Korea. His assessment, presented at a workshop on "The North Korean Nuclear Crisis and the ROK-U.S. Alliance," cohosted by the Ilmin International Relations Institute of Korea University and the Korea Defense Forum on May 15, 2009, provides the background of and context for the Six-Party Talks. He believes North Korea has made the long-sought strategic decision regarding its nuclear weapons – unfortunately, that decision is that it won't give them up. Pyongyang's April 29 declaration means "there is no interest in Pyongyang for dialogue on the nuclear or missile issue with anyone (at least not until it gets some new tests of its thus far marginal capability)." There are ongoing debates about Pyongyang's logic and motivations, but Cossa considers definitive answers to this question secondary. The important thing is to not let North Korea set the agenda or get other countries to respond on its terms and timetable. As he concludes, "Perhaps the best thing to do now with Pyongyang is to do nothing."

That doesn't mean "do nothing." Instead, he outlines a rigorous diplomatic agenda, the key to which is coordinating Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul and ensuring that Pyongyang can't drive a wedge between them. Underlying his approach is "a clearly expressed policy of containment aimed at keeping what's in North Korea in North Korea and that keeps anything else that would help the regime develop its nuclear or missile capabilities out." The other parties to the talks should also get on board. That is, concludes Cossa, the only way to convince North Korea that its best interests lie in resuming negotiations.

Andrei Lankov's assessment, also outlined at the Seoul workshop, is even darker. Lankov, an associate professor at Kookmin University in Seoul, argues the outside world "has almost no leverage to influence North Korean international behavior and persuade it to surrender its nuclear weapons." He dismisses the idea that carrots or sticks will work since aid cannot compensate for the potential losses (in the North Korean mind) incurred by denuclearization and sanctions will either be sabotaged (through noncompliance) or hurt innocent people without bringing about regime change.

Lankov concludes "the only theoretically possible compromise might include the admission of North Korea's nuclear status" in exchange for partial dismantling of North Korean nuclear research facilities and implementation of some nonproliferation

measures. This is unlikely to be acceptable to the U.S. It looks like nuclear blackmail, sets a bad precedent, and the deal may not even be honored. But Lankov urges Washington "to abandon any illusions about North Korea's willingness to completely surrender nuclear weapons." He is blunt: "complete, verifiable and irreversible" denuclearization is "an unattainable dream" as long as the Kim family remains in power.

Soeya Yoshihide, professor of political science at Keio University, hews to the status quo: despite the stalemate, he concludes the Six-Party Talks have to continue to maintain their momentum. For him, like many others, a nuclear North Korea is not acceptable, but no party can afford to risk another war on the Korean Peninsula. His analysis, also presented in Seoul, focuses on Japanese decision making, Tokyo's view of developments in North Korea, and how Japanese foreign policy should deal with them.

Soeya argues Tokyo should readjust its diplomatic horizons. As the foremost proponent of Japan's embrace of a "middle-power strategy," he rejects the notion that Japan is a great power. In his formulation, South Korea is Japan's natural diplomatic partner. Indeed, "enhanced cooperation between Japan and South Korea will significantly contribute to the management of the North Korean problem in a much more productive way than is the case today." This should be part of "a long overdue and urgently called for" effort to link their alliances with the U.S. Soeya urges Tokyo and Seoul to use their respective alliances with the U.S. as foundations for closer cooperation.

Scott Snyder, a senior associate at the Pacific Forum CSIS and the Asia Foundation, is also inclined to stick to the Six-Party Talks. Snyder's analysis, presented at a Pacific Forum CSIS-Fudan University conference in Shanghai, rests on several pillars: the six-party format is the only venue at which Pyongyang has committed to denuclearization; it provides a means to pressure all participating countries to stick to the agreed objectives (it prevents defections); it provides an umbrella for bilateral talks; and it allows the U.S. to signal its commitment to North Korean denuclearization.

For Snyder, continuation of the Six-Party Talks "sends an important signal to North Korea regarding the regional commitment to North Korea's denuclearization." That does not preclude parallel bilateral efforts at outreach, however. He urges China to send a high-level envoy to Pyongyang to prod it back to the table. Washington too should engage North Korea, not to begin bilateral talks, but to get it to return to multilateral negotiations. High-level contact could give North Korea a face-saving way to resume talks. That remains the goal. No process should take the region backward or unravel the existing consensus in favor of denuclearization. That precludes settling for "a lesser alternative."

Liu Ming, a senior fellow at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, probed North Korean thinking in his paper, also presented at the Shanghai conference. He concluded that the factors tipping Pyongyang's calculus are domestic. That inclination is reinforced by the North Korea policy review underway in the U.S. Liu said it makes perfect sense for Pyongyang to up the ante while waiting for that process to conclude,

testing missiles, building up its arsenal, and consolidating domestic political support. It may yet return to the Six-Party Talks – if it receives sufficient incentives from the U.S.

Liu harbors no illusions. Like our other analysts, he concludes that Beijing knows "multilateral talks have entered into a dead-end. … there are now no carrots alluring enough to persuade Kim Jong-Il to change his mind" and give up his nuclear weapons. Still, China remains committed to the talks, seeing it as a diplomatic safety valve, even though both the U.S. and North Korea seem eager to dispense with the forum. While China would likely join sanctions if North Korea conducted another nuclear test, it remains uncomfortable with applying pressure, especially against a nonhostile country, and one that has the potential to create swarms of refugees in China. Thus, he sees the continuation of talks as way of preparing for the inevitable transition in Pyongyang: the next generation of leadership might be more willing to strike a deal. In the interim, China, the U.S., and South Korea should begin planning for contingencies in the post-Kim transition.

For Bon Hak Koo, professor at Hallym University, Pyongyang's goal is a nuclear status like that of Pakistan and India: a nuclear weapon-possessing country outside the ambit of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty with normal relations with the U.S. In his analysis, presented at a Pacific Forum CSIS-Shanghai Institutes of International Affairs conference, he concludes "nuclear weapons are more precious than any other thing for Kim Jong-il." Not only does Kim want security guarantees, massive economic assistance, and diplomatic normalization with the U.S., but he also likely seeks termination of the U.S. alliance with South Korea.

Koo's lens includes Pyongyang's focus on South Korea. From his perspective, North Korea is attempting to foment South-South conflict, with the goal of getting President Lee Myung-bak to abandon his hard line against the North and return to the softer Sunshine policies of his predecessors. Koo argues the North will return to the negotiating table, but only when it feels it has increased its leverage. That must be countered by coordinated policies from the rest of the world. For him, there must be only one signal to Pyongyang: it cannot keep its nuclear weapons.

Like Koo, Yoo Ho-yeol, a professor of North Korea studies at Korea University, focuses on the South Korean dimensions of North Korean behavior. In his paper, also presented at the Seoul workshop, he agreed with Koo that Pyongyang aims to roll back Lee Myung-bak's policies toward the North while hoping to marginalize Seoul in international talks. He does not object to a U.S.-North Korea dialogue but wants it to occur within the six-party framework. That will facilitate the close consultations with the other four parties that are a precondition for bilateral talks. As a baseline, however, there should be "an absolute principle to not yield to the North's threats and recklessness."

Yoo argues the Lee government's policy toward North Korea, "Vision 3000 – Denuclearization and Openness," should serve as a framework for the other four governments. It offers a structure for engaging North Korea and its pressing domestic needs. First, however, he wants the Seoul government to do a better job of selling Vision

3000 to the Korean people: only when there is a domestic consensus in South Korea can the Seoul government engage the North as an equal. He also suggests that the Lee government reorganize government institutions that engage the North to ensure policy coordination across the South Korean government. Like other papers in this volume, he urges calm on all the other six-party participants. They should not give into Northern threats or provocations, which only gives Pyongyang the upper hand in negotiations.

Surveying the papers, several points of consensus emerge among our contributors. The first is that North Korea appears determined to keep its nuclear weapons. For a variety of reasons, many of them domestic, the Pyongyang leadership is not ready – and may never be ready – to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula. As a corollary of that argument, there appears to be nothing that can entice North Korea to follow through on the Sept. 19, 2005 Joint Statement. Conversely, there is agreement that the other five countries have limited leverage to compel North Korea to honor that bargain.

Second, the contributors agree that whatever leverage the other five nations have, it is only effective if they maintain a united front. Pyongyang seeks to divide and conquer the five parties, and has had considerable success with that strategy.

Finally, there seems to be an emerging consensus that pressure on North Korea should be increased, even if its effectiveness is limited. Pyongyang cannot be permitted to believe that it can violate international commitments with impunity. There must be consequences for misbehavior. The possibility of the resumption of talks must be kept on the table, but the goal of denuclearization must remain. Other nations must not imply in word, deed, or policy that they accept a nuclear-armed North Korea. The Six-Party Talks can become a five-party discussion with an empty seat at the table. That preserves the negotiating forum that involves all concerned parties and the diplomatic framework that has already accepted the goal of denuclearization. Its utility has not diminished, although its purpose may have shifted.

U.S. Policy toward North Korea: Where to Go Next?

By Ralph A. Cossa*

U.S. President Barrack Obama, in his inauguration address, said he would extend a hand to those who were "willing to unclench [their] fist." His administration quickly expressed its support for the Six-Party Talks and extolled the value of direct dialogue with Pyongyang within the context of this multilateral framework. He promised "aggressive, sustained and direct bilateral and multilateral diplomacy" to achieve a nuclear weapons-free Korean Peninsula.

In contrast to what he described as the Bush administration's "unsteady approach" toward Pyongyang, which at times alienated not only the North but the other members of the six-party process as well, President Obama promised a clear, consistent, and cooperative approach, in close consultation with America's friends and allies, to bring about the "mutually desired" goal of Korean Peninsula denuclearization. I say "mutually desired" since, at the time of his inauguration, even Pyongyang was asserting that this was the North's ultimate objective.

So much for extending a hand!

All this quickly changed, however. Even as President Obama was preparing his inauguration address, Pyongyang was preparing its first challenge to the new U.S. leader, in the form of a "satellite launch" that created a crisis where none would have otherwise existed and that essentially compelled the Obama administration to take a hardline position in response to what was seen in Washington (and Seoul and Tokyo) as a clear provocation.

The North's bellicose behavior was disappointing and potentially counterproductive – why would any country think it in its interest to be the first to test the resolve of a new U.S. administration, especially one in the process of reviewing its policy toward your nation? But it is hardly surprising, given Pyongyang's history of confrontational politics and the tepid response to past provocative actions.

It should be noted here that, under normal circumstances, North Korea would have as much right to launch satellites (or even test missiles) as South Korea, the U.S., or anyone else. But these are not normal circumstances. Pyongyang's 2006 missile launches and nuclear test prompted two stern United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions (UNSCR 1695 and 1718, respectively). These "demanded" a halt in all ballistic missile activity; the second even authorized Chapter VII enforcement mechanisms in the case of noncompliance, but with the caveat that only "measures not involving the use of armed

* This updates a paper originally presented at the ILMIN International Relations Institute, Korea University and Korea Defense Forum's International Workshop on "The North Korean Nuclear Crisis and the ROK-U.S. Alliance," Seoul, Korea, May 15, 2009.

force are to be employed to give effect to its decisions" and even then only after additional UNSC consultation.

This hardly proved to be a deterrent, especially when, in the weeks leading up to the missile launch, Beijing and Moscow refused to join the others in branding the planned activity a violation of the UNSC resolutions. Both did, after the fact, agree to a UNSC Presidential Statement proclaiming the launch to have been "in contravention" of UNSCR 1718. Had they been willing to take such a stance prior to the launch, they may have helped to avert it, but Beijing in particular kept talking instead about how it wanted to avoid "alienating" the North (even as Pyongyang seems to be going out of its way to alienate everyone else).

The UNSC Presidential Statement was a disappointment to those who were hoping for something stronger; the Japanese press asserted that Japan "had the ladder pulled out from under it by U.S.-China collaboration," expressing anger at Washington's failure to hold firm on its initial demand for a binding UNSC Resolution (a stance that would have likely resulted in no UNSC action at all and an even bigger propaganda victory for Pyongyang).

But the Statement is not without some potential teeth. It calls on all members to comply fully with their obligations under UNSCR 1718 and agrees to "adjust the measures imposed by paragraph 8" (which outlined what could not be sold to the North and what firms should be sanctioned), thus providing an opportunity to tighten international restrictions against Pyongyang; the initial sanctions efforts under UNSCR 1718, aimed at keeping sufficient technology and hardware out of Pyongyang's hands to prevent another launch, obviously failed. It remains to be seen, of course, how serious member states (and especially bordering China and Russia) will be in ensuring that the flow of military technology and "luxury goods" truly ceases in the future, but at least the mechanism is in place and has been reaffirmed, even if it has not been significantly strengthened as a result of the April 4 missile launch.

The reasons why Pyongyang chose to go down this path remain open to wide speculation. Many cite domestic political considerations as a primary motivating factor and these arguments have some credibility, given the uncertainty surrounding succession politics in the North in the wake of "Dear Leader" Kim Jong-il's widely reported stroke – the extent of the stroke and the extent of Kim's recovery are still subject to debate but few question that a stroke did in fact occur. Perhaps Kim wanted (or needed) to demonstrate his continued virility and defiance of the international community and underscore the feeling of crisis that warrants the continued sacrifice of his people in the face of the external threat that only he can guard them against.

But at a minimum, Pyongyang must have realized that its actions would have international implications and that the timing of the missile launch activity, in such close proximity to Obama's inauguration and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's first trip to the region, suggest that this was no mere coincidence. The probability that this could force a hardening of the current more flexible U.S. position toward direct negotiations

with Pyongyang surely would not escaped Kim Jong-il's mind. Perhaps he believed that such confrontational behavior would (as all too often in the past) increase rather than decrease the prospects for eventual dialogue on his terms.

Pyongyang's "strategic decision"

Many North Korean specialists argue that the North initiated this confrontational approach toward the incoming U.S. administration to kill the Six-Party Talks in favor of long-desired bilateral U.S.-North Korea negotiations, while employing the time-honored (and at least partially successful) tactic of driving wedges between and among the other five collaborators while distracting them from the denuclearization goal. But direct dialogue was already being offered and could have been accomplished just by being cooperative and the talks themselves had long since become more a validation mechanism for U.S.-DPRK bilateral agreements than the primary vehicle for negotiations. The counter-argument that I find more persuasive is that the North's action confirms that there is no interest in Pyongyang for dialogue on the nuclear or missile issue with anyone (at least not until it gets some new tests of its thus far marginal capability).

Ever since the original September 2005 Six-Party Talks Joint Statement on Korean Peninsula denuclearization, Washington has been looking for some clear signal from Pyongyang that it had truly made a "strategic decision" about giving up its nuclear weapons. The answer today seems to be "yes," it has clearly made a decision, and that decision is "no." It will not give up its nuclear arsenal. This is not to say that the decision cannot be reversed or that Pyongyang cannot still be persuaded to take another course, but those who are in denial on this issue are just not paying attention. As a spokesman for the DPRK Foreign Ministry declared in an April 29 official statement, "The desire for denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula has gone forever with the six-way talks and the situation is inching to the brink of war by the hostile forces." Threats and even actual declarations of war by Pyongyang are all too commonplace and are usually not taken too seriously (although they should not be casually ignored and can provide a diplomatic tool in dealing with Pyongyang, since they clearly demonstrate which party has the true "hostile attitude"). The key point for the purposes of this discussion – that Pyongyang now sees itself, and expects others to treat it, as a nuclear weapons state – has been proclaimed and repeated too many times in the past several months to be ignored.

The April 29, 2009 statement went on to demand a UNSC apology and withdrawal of "all its unreasonable and discriminative 'resolutions' and decisions adopted against the DPRK," threatening that a failure to do so will compel Pyongyang "to take additional self-defensive measures" which would specifically include "nuclear tests and test-firings of intercontinental ballistic missiles." It further declared that it would "make a decision to build a light-water reactor power plant and start the technological development for ensuring self-production of nuclear fuel as its first process without delay"; the latter threat being interpreted as the initiation of the long-suspected (and presumed to be ongoing) uranium enrichment program.

In response, Washington and its allies, beginning with the ROK, need to reconsider the current "dialogue at all costs" approach and ask if a full-fledged containment policy doesn't make more sense, at least until Pyongyang sends some signal that it is serious about living up to its past promises. Simply calling for the Six-Party Talks to reconvene is not a strategy. While the talks might provide additional confirmation of Pyongyang's strategic decision not to denuclearize, this is not likely to get us closer to the overall objective, which should be the *complete, verifiable, irreversible elimination* of North Korea's nuclear weapons capabilities. I choose my terms deliberately here. We used to seek CVID, with the "D" evolving from an all-encompassing "denuclearization" to a more modest "dismantlement" goal. But if recent history has proven nothing else, it has underscored the temporary nature of dismantlement – Pyongyang is apparently in the process of rapidly reversing previous dismantlement efforts and is expected to demonstrate the inaccuracy of prior claims that one year or more would be required to restart critical Yongbyon elements, in particular its reprocessing facility. It should be noted that UNSCR 1718 "*Decides* that the DPRK shall abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner," so there is a clear legal basis for insisting on elimination (i.e., complete denuclearization) rather than mere dismantlement.

Prior Six-Party Talks agreements/history

Before expanding further upon future strategies, it is worth reminding ourselves of the terms of the three major prior agreements under the Six-Party Talks and how they came about and were or were not honored, since the other five members still consider these agreements to be valid and seem to base their current strategy on a return to the Six-Party Talks, despite Pyongyang's declaration that prior agreements no longer apply.

2005 Joint Statement. The key phrases related to the denuclearization process in the "Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of Six-Party Talks, Beijing, Sept. 19, 2005" are:

- The six parties unanimously reaffirmed that the goal of the six-party talks is the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner.

- The DPRK committed to abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and returning at an early date to the treaty on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons (NPT) and to IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) safeguards.

- The DPRK stated that it has the right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The other parties expressed their respect and agreed to discuss *at an appropriate time* [emphasis added] the subject of the provision of light-water reactor to the DPRK.

- The six parties agreed to take coordinated steps to implement the aforementioned consensus in a phased manner in line with the principle of "commitment for commitment, action for action."

The U.S. and ROK also agreed to keep the southern half of the Peninsula nuclear weapons free and it was agreed that "the directly related parties will negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula at an appropriate separate forum." What was not agreed upon was the "appropriate time" for discussion of light water reactors (LWRs). Washington made it clear that this could only come after complete denuclearization while Pyongyang continues to insist that LWRs must be provided in advance of or simultaneously with the final act of denuclearization.

For a variety of reasons, including a dispute over frozen North Korean funds in a Macau bank, the process then remained stalled from September 2005 until February 2007, when the first "breakthrough" took place in the form of the "Joint Statement from the Third Session of the Fifth Round of the Six-Party Talks, Beijing, Feb. 13, 2007," where the six parties "reaffirmed their common goal and will to achieve early denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner and reiterated that they would earnestly fulfill their commitments in the [September 2005] Joint Statement."

Feb. 13, 2007 Agreement. The main denuclearization actions scheduled for the initial phase (first 60 days) were:

- The DPRK will shut down and seal for the purpose of eventual abandonment the Yongbyon nuclear facility, including the reprocessing facility and invite back IAEA personnel to conduct all necessary monitoring and verifications as agreed between IAEA and the DPRK.

- The DPRK will discuss with other parties a list of all its nuclear programs as described in the Joint Statement, including plutonium extracted from used fuel rods, that would be abandoned pursuant to the Joint Statement.

In return, the U.S. would "begin the process of removing the designation of the DPRK as a state-sponsor of terrorism and advance the process of terminating the application of the Trading with the Enemy Act with respect to the DPRK." The DPRK would also receive an "initial shipment of emergency energy assistance equivalent to 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil (HFO)" as the first installment on a total assistance package representing the equivalent of 1 million tons of HFO.

A number of working groups were also prescribed in the Feb. 13 Joint Agreement. These included a working group on "Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" to be chaired by the PRC, as well as working groups dealing with Normalization of DPRK-U.S. Relations (U.S.), Normalization of DPRK-Japan Relations (Japan), Economy and Energy Cooperation (ROK), and a Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism (Russia).

No time frame was established for implementation of the second phase, which was to include "provision by the DPRK of a complete declaration of all nuclear programs and disablement of all existing nuclear facilities, including graphite-moderated reactors

and reprocessing plant," although the lead U.S. negotiator, Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, hoped that this could be accomplished by the end of 2007.

Of interest, when North Koreans speak about the Feb. 13 agreement, they claim that it included the release of their frozen funds in Macao's Banco Delta Asia – the result of earlier U.S. Treasury action aimed at halting suspected money laundering activities regarding North Korean alleged counterfeiting operations, drug smuggling, and other illicit activities. Actually, there was no reference to frozen bank accounts in the February agreement. Nonetheless, implementation of the agreement was delayed due to a delay in the release of these funds – apparently promised at a side meeting between Hill and his North Korean counterpart Kim Kye-Gwan in Berlin in January 2007 – and the 60-day phase ended up taking about four months to complete. This apparent secret handshake or side agreement also created anxiety among other six-party members, who began to openly wonder what else may have been promised by Washington during continuing side meetings with Pyongyang.

True to form, the next Six-Party Talks plenary session, in July 2007, failed to achieve much forward movement and it took another bilateral Hill-Kim session, in Geneva in early September, to set the stage for the year's second "breakthrough" agreement, the "Second-Phase Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement, Beijing, 3 October 2007."

Oct. 3, 2007 Agreement. In this agreement, participants "confirmed the implementation of the initial actions provided for in the February 13 agreement . . . and reached agreement on second-phase actions for the implementation of the Joint Statement of 19 September 2005, the goal of which is the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner."

Specifically, the DPRK "agreed to disable all existing nuclear facilities subject to abandonment under the September 2005 Joint Statement and the February 13 agreement" with disablement of the three main facilities at Yongbyon – the 5 megawatt Experimental Reactor, the Reprocessing Plant, and the Nuclear Fuel Rod Fabrication Facility – to be completed by Dec. 31, 2007. Pyongyang also "agreed to provide a complete and correct declaration of all its nuclear programs in accordance with the February 13 agreement by 31 December 2007" and "reaffirmed its commitment not to transfer nuclear materials, technology, or know-how." In return, Pyongyang would receive the already promised "economic, energy, and humanitarian assistance up to the equivalent of one million tons of HFO [heavy fuel oil]."

Note that the above agreements specify that the million tons equivalent of aid is in compensation for the disablement of *all* nuclear-related facilities and material, including those yet to be identified but which were expected to be included in the declaration. This would include the facility where North Korea's bomb or bombs are actually produced (specialists say this did not take place at Yongbyon) plus the nuclear test site, etc. One could argue that it should also include "disablement" of Pyongyang's plutonium assets,

presumably including any plutonium residing in actual weapons, although it is clear Pyongyang did not share this view.

Despite Washington's earlier assertions that "all means all," Pyongyang began claiming (without apparent contradiction from Washington or the others) that the energy aid was related only to the disabling of the nuclear site in Yongbyon. Pyongyang also made it clear that Washington must "fulfill its commitments" regarding the North's removal from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list and the lifting of TWEA restrictions prior to, or at best simultaneous with the release of the declaration.

As regards this latter point, the North further claimed that the declaration it apparently provided privately to Secretary Hill in November 2007 was sufficient to initiate the promised U.S. actions; Secretary Hill stated unequivocally that it did not pass the "complete and correct" credibility test. This lead to yet another series of bilateral U.S.-DPRK bilateral meetings, which culminated in Pyongyang finally turning over its much-anticipated declaration of "all its nuclear activities" to Six-Party Talks host China in late June 2007, simultaneous with an announcement from the White House that it was removing North Korea from TWEA restrictions and beginning the 45-day process to delist Pyongyang from the State Sponsors of Terrorism listing.

Verification remains the key

Volumes have been written commenting on the inadequacy of the North's June 26 declaration, mostly by pundits (like myself) who have not seen its contents, which have apparently been kept from the public at Beijing's request (although one suspects an agreement between Assistant Secretary Hill and Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye-gwan may also be in play here). By all accounts, the declaration deals only with the North's plutonium-based nuclear weapons program. (The White House acknowledged that the North's 60-page declaration did not answer Washington's concerns about proliferation and uranium enrichment; these were apparently addressed in two separate short declarations presumably handed directly to Washington.)

The DPRK declaration reportedly provides a detailed accounting of Pyongyang's plutonium holdings – which leaks and rumors have reported at somewhere between 25.5 to 38.5 to 40+ kilograms (with 6-7 kg required for a nuclear weapon) – and the amount used in the North's October 2006 nuclear test (reportedly 2 kg, about half of what had been previously estimated).

In her June 26 commentary in the *Wall Street Journal*, timed to coincide with (and set the stage for) President Bush's announcement, Secretary Rice wrote: "We will not accept [Pyongyang's] statement on faith. We will insist on verification." A State Department "Fact Sheet" issued the same day described what "a comprehensive verification regime" would include, and further asserted that "any discrepancies in its declaration must be addressed by North Korea until the declaration is deemed to be complete and correct." Pyongyang quickly made it clear it did not share this view.

It took another trip to Pyongyang by Assistant Secretary Hill to "resolve" the verification dispute. Finally, with a "U.S.-North Korea Joint Document on Verification" reportedly in hand (which was not released and was later revealed to be only an oral agreement to be reviewed at the next Six-Party Talks meeting), the Bush administration announced on Oct. 11, 2007 that it had "rescinded the designation of the DPRK as a State Sponsor of Terrorism, effective immediately." It also laid out a list of the verification measures that Pyongyang had reportedly agreed upon in return.

According to a State Department Fact Sheet, Pyongyang agreed that experts from all six parties would have access to all declared North Korean facilities and, "based on mutual consent," to undeclared sites. Agreement was reportedly reached on the use of scientific procedures, including sampling and forensic activities, and on access to additional documentation. U.S. spokesman asserted that the samples would be allowed to be taken out of the DPRK for further testing and added that all measures contained in the Verification Protocol would apply not only to the North's plutonium-based program but to any uranium enrichment and proliferation activities as well. According to a State Department spokesman, "every element of verification that we sought is included in this package."

From the start, North Korea refused to validate Hill's claims about the nature and extent of the verification agreement. A U.S. version of the joint agreement was reportedly prepared in writing and delivered to the DPRK mission in New York. While it was not publicly refuted (and, depending on various unconfirmed reports, may have even been privately acknowledged to be accurate), all agreed that whatever agreement had been reached bilaterally was not really "official" until all six parties signed off on it.

When the six parties finally convened in Beijing in December 2008 (following yet another bilateral U.S.-DPRK session, this time in Singapore), Pyongyang further pulled the rug out from under Secretary Hill – and fired its first warning shot at the incoming Obama administration – by proclaiming publicly and emphatically that it had never agreed upon the most contentious (and essential) aspect of the verification protocol, the taking of samples, which Pyongyang described as "an infringement upon sovereignty as it is little short of seeking a house search." The understatement of the day came from Hill, who lamented that "the North Koreans don't want to put in writing what they are willing to put into words." This should come as a surprise to no one but serves as a useful reminder to the Obama negotiating team, which is being led by Ambassador Steven Bosworth, a seasoned former diplomat with years of experience in dealing with North Korea.

Obama views on verification

When the Bush administration announced it was removing Pyongyang from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list, this decision was roundly criticized by Sen. John McCain, then running for the presidency from President Bush's own Republican Party. Democratic Candidate Obama, however, was more supportive, calling it "a modest step forward in dismantling [North Korea's] nuclear weapons program" and "an appropriate

response," but with the following caveat: "as long as there is clear understanding that if North Korea fails to follow through there will be immediate consequences." In words that proved all too prophetic, Obama warned "If North Korea refuses to permit robust verification, we should lead all members of the Six-Party Talks in suspending energy assistance, re-imposing sanctions that have recently been waived, and considering new restrictions."

The Obama administration's decision to seek UN sanctions in the face of the missile test, and in light of Pyongyang's earlier dismissal of the "U.S.-North Korea Joint Document on Verification" should not have come as a surprise to Pyongyang. As President Obama stated in Prague when addressing the North Korean situation in the context of his speech on global disarmament, "Rules must be binding. Violations must be punished. Words must mean something."

Where to go next?

President Obama's principled reaction to the North's provocations drew the predictable and promised DPRK response. Pyongyang seized upon the UN Presidential Statement to walk away from the already moribund (although technically still alive) Korean Peninsula denuclearization talks, declaring that it "will never participate in the talks any longer nor will it be bound to any agreement of the Six-Party Talks." It has also threatened to restore its currently "disabled" nuclear facilities at Yongbyon "to their original state . . . putting their operation on a normal track and fully reprocess the spent fuels churned out from the pilot atomic plant as part of it."

While this clearly represents a major step backward, it is not cause for immediate alarm. Estimates are that it will take six months to a year or more to get Yongbyon back into full operation, after which it could at best produce about one bomb's worth of plutonium annually (to add to the 6-8 bombs worth North Korea is believed to already possess). This may have some psychological value to the North but has very little, if any, military significance. As a result, a smart, well-coordinated response is much more important than a quick one.

Thus far, the Obama administration has (wisely) not taken the bait. It continues to insist on the six-party format for working the problem; the UNSC Presidential Statement calls for its "early resumption" and for "full implementation" of previously negotiated commitments including "the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner."

Perhaps the best thing to do now with Pyongyang is to do nothing. President Obama should consider taking a page out of the Dear Leader's playbook. He should announce that the U.S. will be unable to engage in direct dialogue until Pyongyang ends its "hostile policy" toward its neighbors and that the only way to demonstrate its willingness to do this is to return to the Six-Party Talks. Until then, Washington will have no option other than to make sure that whatever is produced in North Korea stays in

North Korea and that means tightening sanctions (and their enforcement) under UNSCR 1718.

Even better than an Obama statement to this effect would be a joint statement emanating from Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo that commits all three nations to this course of action. Seoul could underscore its seriousness by stating unequivocally that it will become a full participant in the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), a "coalition of the willing" formed during the Bush administration to help ensure that weapons of mass destruction did not fall into the hands of non-state actors or others who would do us harm. (Seoul announced it would consider taking this step if the North launched its missile but has thus far refrained from confirming its participation – Japan is a charter member of the PSI).

While Pyongyang's objective may have been to drive deeper wedges between the various six-party participants, its actions have actually created an opportunity for deeper cooperation between Washington and both its Northeast Asian allies and, more importantly, between Seoul and Tokyo, if both leaders demonstrate the political courage to move smartly in this direction. The Lee Myung-Bak administration is much more comfortable than its predecessor in playing hardball with the North, which puts it in greater sync with Tokyo. Meanwhile Tokyo and Seoul's worst fear – that the Obama administration would be too forthcoming toward the North and cut a bilateral deal with Pyongyang that would put both at a disadvantage – has surely faded; Pyongyang's behavior makes this almost impossible, even if Obama was inclined to move in this direction (which he does not appear to be).

The primary focus of the Obama administration now should be to repair any residual damage from the UNSC debate and ensure that the U.S. and its South Korean and Japanese allies are completely in sync as to the best approach to take toward Pyongyang. This should include a pledge of no direct *negotiations* between Washington and Pyongyang outside the context of the Six-Party Talks. This does not rule out an eventual "special envoy" visit or use of the "New York channel" or other venues to deliver a firm joint message; it does rule out the type of bilateral negotiations that resulted in former U.S. six-party negotiator Christopher Hill announcing a verification agreement, only to have the North claim in joint session that no such agreement was ever reached.

Next step: a declared policy of containment

What's needed at this point is a clearly expressed policy of containment aimed at keeping what's in North Korea in North Korea and that keeps anything else that would help the regime develop its nuclear or missile capabilities out. This does not mean that Washington (or anyone else) is prepared to recognize North Korea as a nuclear weapon state. The goal still remains the complete, verifiable, irreversible elimination of Pyongyang's nuclear weapons capabilities. It does recognize that this will be a multi-stage process and the counter-proliferation is a major step in this process. So is tightening

the noose around Pyongyang to increase the political, military, and economic costs associated with going down the nuclear path.

As part of this North Korea containment policy, Seoul should examine the continued wisdom of pumping money into the North through the Kaesong industrial complex. The North seems to take great delight in periodically restricting access to Kaesong or employing harassment techniques against South Koreans working there but it has more to gain (or lose) from Kaesong than does Seoul, despite the considerable investment made there. Given the South's economic slowdown, wouldn't those jobs be put to better use in the South? A "temporary" shutdown of Kaesong by Seoul, until such time as the North resumed good faith negotiations, would send a powerful message. Recently, Pyongyang announced that it was changing the rules of the game at Kaesong, raising rents, salaries, and the like and then invited the South to leave if they did not like the new unilateral demands. Seoul should accept the invitation.

Most effective of all would be a decision by China and Russia to get on board the containment train. Beijing could send a powerful signal to Pyongyang (and the rest of the world) about its commitment to nonproliferation by joining the PSI – Russia joined in 2004 but has not been an active participant in PSI exercises in recent years. Beijing, as Six-Party Talks host, should also schedule a plenary session, invite Pyongyang to attend, but make it clear that the meeting will take place regardless. The time has long since passed for the other five to continue giving Pyongyang a veto over its activities.

Restraining from such actions out of fear of alienating or isolating Pyongyang seems misplaced. It's Pyongyang that is doing the alienating. Had Kim Jong-il been interested in dialogue – had he wanted to reach out to President Obama's outstretched hand rather than give the international community the finger (if you will pardon the somewhat irreverent pun) – he would not have decided to conduct his missile launch in the first place. Nor would he have undermined the six-party process last fall by declaring that the North had never agreed to any type of verification regime.

Pyongyang had apparently made up its mind to end the six-way dialogue from the start; the missile launch and anticipated reaction was the vehicle for doing this and the UNSC declaration the excuse. Kim Jong-il apparently felt there was (and perhaps still is) an operational need to test his long-range missile capability – after all, the April 2009 launch, while more successful than previous efforts, was still a partial failure. The same holds true for testing his nuclear weapon, since the first test is generally believed to have fizzled. Therefore, we should not have been surprised when Pyongyang threatened additional missile or nuclear weapons tests. In fact, we should silently hope for them, since each event will further solidify international support behind tightening the sanctions noose and each kilogram of plutonium used up in an additional test is one less we will have to ultimately account for.

Pyongyang will return to the negotiating table when it perceives it in its best interest to do so. There are two ways to bringing this about. The tried and true way is to dangle more carrots. This might get the Dear Leader back to the table temporarily, but

only until he has once again eaten his fill. He will then surely walk away. As one senior statesman quipped, “Clinton bought Yongbyon once and Bush bought it twice, why shouldn’t the ‘Dear Leader’ think he can sell it a few more times to Obama?”

An alternative approach, which requires close cooperation among Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo at a minimum, with Beijing, Moscow, and others preferably on board, is to increase the costs involved in his staying away through stricter enforcement and an incremental strengthening of UNSCR 1718. Perhaps it’s time we tried ignoring the North’s threats and demands, and started tightening restrictions to the point that the Dear Leader will either have to cooperate or will tumble from his own weight.

How Much Leverage does the World have when Dealing with North Korea?

By Andrei Lankov

The recent missile test (or was it rocket launch?) and nuclear threats once again put North Korea in the limelight – as was, no doubt, intended by Pyongyang's strategists. The launch produced an expected wave of chest-beating, vague (and meaningless) diplomatic threats and rhetoric, but nothing of substance. Even the United Nations Security Council failed to approve a resolution which would strengthen sanctions.

The nuclear issue seems to be the heart of the controversy; long-range missile launches are essentially a sideshow. It will take many years before North Korean missiles pose any credible threats to the country's neighbors (with the obvious exception of South Korea). Right now, North Korean missiles are unreliable, unwieldy, have very low accuracy, and take days to prepare for launch. On top of that, the North Koreans have not developed a nuclear device that is small and light enough to be mounted as a warhead.

Nuclear weapons seem to be an altogether different issue. Even without workable delivery systems, North Korean generals can find a way to smuggle a crude nuclear device to, say, a Japanese or U.S. port. The stockpile of weapons-grade plutonium is a potential threat, too. Finally, nuclear proliferation clearly constitutes a greater danger than the proliferation of missile technologies.

However, the latest wave of the never-ending "North Korean crisis" also makes us wonder: what can the U.S. and, more broadly speaking, the world really do about North Korean nuclear and missile capabilities? The honest answer is not much, or even nothing.

The rationale of the North Korean nuclear program

North Korean leaders are sometimes presented in media as madmen, driven by some irrational (or ideology-motivated) desire to look dangerous and create trouble. This is not the case. Their penchant for seemingly irrational and erratic behavior is illusionary: North Korean leaders know exactly what they are doing. They are not madmen or ideological zealots, but remarkably efficient and cold-minded, perhaps the most perfect Machiavellians of the modern world. Alas, this time their calculations seem to indicate that denuclearization will be a mistake.

To start with, the decision to go nuclear was not made overnight. The North Korean nuclear arms program was conceived in the late 1950s, began in earnest in the mid-1960s, and acquired military dimensions around 1980. In other words, the program has a long history. It is a result of decades of sacrifice and hard work.

From its inception, the program has served three distinct political goals. Each goal is important for Pyongyang, although their relative importance has changed over time.

First, North Korea needs nuclear weapons as a powerful strategic deterrent. They are sincerely afraid of a foreign attack, and after Iraq and Afghanistan, such a fear can hardly be dismissed as paranoid and unfounded. The Pyongyang rulers believe – and with good reason – that no nuclear-armed country will be invaded by any great power.

Second, the Pyongyang leaders need the nuclear weapons as a blackmail tool (an aid-maximization tool, if one prefers). Despite the bombastic propaganda, North Korean diplomats are painfully aware that their country is not a major international player. In terms of population size and economic significance, the closest analogue to their country is, of all places, Mozambique. Therefore, the major reason why the international community pays so much attention to North Korea is its nuclear and, to a lesser extent, its missile program. In other words, the existence of nukes means that every time North Korea has trouble getting aid, it starts making threatening noises. The North Korean strategists are afraid that without nuclear weapons, the world would become far less willing to satisfy their demands - and they are probably correct. Even if the surrender of nuclear weapons was likely to be rewarded with a large compensation payment, this lump sum money would not last forever. Meanwhile, the existence of nuclear weapons creates the opportunity for systematic and regular extortion.

Third, the nuclear program has domestic importance. The nuclear test, held in a remote mountain area in October 2006, has actually been the only visible "success" of Kim Jong-il's rule. Pyongyang's propaganda now insists that the suffering and destitution of the past 15 years were a necessary sacrifice, voluntarily made by selfless North Koreans to safeguard their country and nation against enemies (above all, the "blood-thirsty Yankees" who dream about wiping out the entire Korean race). Surrender of its nuclear weapons would render this suffering and death meaningless.

These three goals are important to the regime, and it would agree to abandon these goals only under serious pressure or if seduced by sufficiently attractive incentives. Alas, no such incentive is in sight, and no pressure is likely to work either.

Why sticks are not big enough

Talk about the "red line" which should be drawn in dealing with North Korea implies that in some cases the U.S. and the "international community" will exercise enough pressure on the country that it will have no choice but to surrender its nuclear program.

To start with, no military action against North Korea is thinkable. Air raids against nuclear installations (akin to the Israeli air raid on Iraq's nuclear-research center in 1981) will not be of much use. It is too late. Plutonium and nuclear devices are safely hidden in underground facilities. Destruction of research facilities in Yongbyon or elsewhere is not going to have a serious impact – after all, these facilities have fulfilled

their mission. North Korea does not need many nuclear devices. It has produced enough to serve its political goals.

A large-scale invasion by ground forces is definitely a non-starter. If Americans and their allies chose to invade, they would likely win, but the price of such victory would be very high.

An invasion would also encounter grave political problems, as South Koreans are unlikely to join such an undertaking. Actually, it is a rational choice: the South Korean public would prefer to live with the (very small) possibility of a North Korean nuclear strike rather than start a war in the vicinity of their major population centers. Unless faced with a clear and immediate danger, no South Korean government would (and should) be enthusiastic about joining such a hypothetical U.S. invasion. But without South Korean support, land operations become very difficult.

One also cannot rule out that in the case of a U.S. invasion that China and, perhaps even Russia, would cautiously support the North Korean armed forces with arms, ammunition, and intelligence. Neither country is going to back a North Korean attack against the South, but in a hypothetical case of an invasion by the U.S., the North Koreans would be seen as victims of aggression (with some justification, one should admit). It is likely that China would undertake some measures to make the situation even more difficult for its U.S. rivals.

However, the major obstacle for an invasion is the North Korean army. It is badly trained and equipped, but it has been subjected to decades of brain-washing, has developed massive underground fortifications, and invested much in guerrilla training. North Korea's mountainous terrain also favors defenders. On the final count, the U.S. technical superiority would probably be decisive, but the political, financial, and human costs of a victory would be prohibitively high.

In this situation, sanctions appear to be the only realistic option. But their usefulness is doubtful. First, sanctions are difficult to impose, since China and, to a somewhat lesser degree, Russia, would be unwilling to partake in a truly rigorous (read: efficient) sanctions regime.

However, in the improbable case of Chinese and Russian reluctance being overcome, the sanctions would still not likely influence Pyongyang's policy. Normally, sanctions work in an indirect way. Sanctions do not exercise direct influence on the lifestyle of the elite – those people still ride in their Mercedes and drink Hennessy cognac. It is the common population whose life becomes more difficult and challenging if the country is subject to international sanctions. The strategy of economic sanctions is based on the assumption that a dissatisfied population would pressure the regime for a policy and/or regime change. This might take the shape of a popular revolution, but in the case of a more democratic and tolerant regime, it could be achieved via elections.

This mechanism is not likely to work in North Korea. The North Korean regime does not allow its people any say in matters of governance. North Koreans do not vote. (Actually, they vote with predictable 100 percent approval of a single government candidate). They do not rebel either. They are terrified and isolated, have none of the rudimentary self-organization required to start a resistance and to a large extent are unaware about any alternative to their mode of life (rumors about prosperous life outside North Korean borders are spreading, but only a minority of North Koreans understand how backward and poor their society really is in comparison with its neighbors). Therefore, if sanctions are made successful, the only result would be the suffering and death of common people.

Why carrots are not tasty enough

Optimists who believe North Korea can be persuaded to abandon nuclear weapons usually cite three major incentives that could be put on the table: monetary payments and other aid (say, building light-water reactors); security guarantees and a normalization of relations with the U.S.

The aid and monetary payments are most welcome in Pyongyang. Indeed, generous aid is the pre-condition of a regime's survival. However, a lump sum payment is not necessarily a solution. Once money is spent (and it would be spent quite soon), the Pyongyang regime would have great difficulty in obtaining a sufficient amount of additional aid without an opportunity to use its nuclear potential as a way to press international donors.

At the same time, the North Korean leadership believes that it cannot initiate Chinese style-reforms, as the existence of dirty-rich and very attractive South Korea means such reform might become destabilizing and lead to collapse, East German-style. This means that it has to adhere to the Stalinist model of a centrally planned economy (of an exceptionally rigid variety).

The promises of a security guarantee are also not attractive enough. There are two reasons why the security guarantees might be irrelevant. First, North Koreans deeply distrust the U.S. (and, broadly speaking, all foreigners), so they do not believe in the value of foreigners' promises, especially in a democratic system where leaders and policies are bound to change every few years. Second, they know that their major security threat is internal, not external. They are afraid of a U.S. invasion, but they are even more afraid of a domestic crisis that might lead to their overthrow by their own population.

Needless to say, the U.S. cannot provide a guarantee against such an outcome, while the existence of nuclear weapons at least increases the North's ability to fend off unwanted intervention in a domestic crisis as well as its ability to extract aid that might help prevent such a crisis.

Additionally, promises of "cooperation" are not particularly alluring to a regime that for many decades has done its best to remain as isolated as possible. The North

Korean leaders suspect that all exchanges with the outside world are corrosive and ultimately destructive to their system, and they might be correct in this assumption.

Contours of possible compromise

Does this mean that compromise is completely impossible? It seems that it is not the case, even though the road to such a compromise may be long and winding. There is another problem: the only compromise solution that seems to be at least theoretically acceptable for the North Korean regime would be probably seen as unacceptable by the U.S. side.

First, to achieve at least something, the U.S. should abandon any illusions about North Korea's willingness to completely surrender nuclear weapons. As shown above, "complete, verifiable and irreversible" denuclearization is an unattainable dream – at least as long as the Kim family regime stays in control in Pyongyang. As explained above, North Korea needs to keep at least part of its modest nuclear arsenal. The North Koreans might compromise on certain things (if they were paid well enough), but this is a non-negotiable bottom line.

If this is the case, what are the possible options for compromise? North Korea is likely to agree to dismantle its nuclear research facilities. After all, it does not need old rusty reactors anymore. Yongbyon, the North Korean nuclear research center, cannot produce more than Los Alamos in the U.S. or Arzamas-16 in Russia, and it does not make much political sense to further increase the North Korean nuclear arsenal.

They already have enough nuclear devices to achieve the desired political effect. If North Koreans use Yongbyon facilities to increase their nuclear armory from their current six to 15 devices to, say, 60 or 100 devices, their ability to deter and/or blackmail would not increase fivefold or tenfold. In fact, it would not increase much at all. So, the research and production facilities have outlived their usefulness and thus can be dismantled if the fee is sufficiently high.

Perhaps, North Koreans would agree to accept measures that would make proliferation less likely, thus addressing another major U.S. concern. It is open to question which types of measures would become acceptable, but perhaps surprise inspections of ships and even airport facilities would be allowed (once again: North Korean diplomats would require a high price for such a major concession, which actually infringes their sovereignty).

Partial surrender of nukes might be negotiable. Perhaps, North Korea could be bribed into giving up a part of its plutonium and/or a few nuclear devices.

However, this denuclearization, contrary to U.S. insistence, is not going to be either "complete" or "verifiable." North Korean leaders will need at least to maintain a high level of ambiguity about their nuclear capabilities – or, ideally, they would like to

have an explicit or implicit admission that they would be allowed to keep some stockpile of plutonium and a couple of nuclear devices.

It remains doubtful whether such an outcome would be acceptable to the U.S., which will be expected to pay hefty fees for downsizing the threat while still living with a nuclear North Korea. Perhaps, such a compromise is not even advisable, if judged from the U.S. viewpoint – after all, it creates a dangerous precedent. It will mean that North Korea would be rewarded for nuclear blackmail. In all probability, the total price they would extract from the U.S. for the above-described compromise would exceed their spending on the nuclear program.

This is a very imperfect and partial solution, to be sure. It might be even seen as an unacceptable solution. Unfortunately, no other compromise is in sight. So if the above-mentioned solution were rejected, we are likely to see years of negotiations, broken promises, false dawns, and still without any tangible result at the end - at least until the demise of the Kim family regime, which is perhaps an event of a rather distant future.

Linking the ROK-U.S. Alliance and the Japan-U.S. Alliance

By Yoshihide Soeya

The North Korean problem is in stalemate. The dilemma for the parties concerned is that they will have to continue to strike a deal and look for a slim margin of cooperation, if only to keep the momentum of the Six-Party Talks, while remaining aware of the North Korea's ultimate choice to not let go of nuclear means altogether. Given that no party can afford to risk a war on the Korean Peninsula while there is a consensus that a nuclear North Korea is not acceptable, a cyclical pattern between slim hope and much despair is likely to continue.

An uncultivated and untested domain in this stalemate situation is closer and more substantial cooperation between Japan and South Korea. The extent to which Japan and South Korea can or cannot build genuine cooperation today and in the short term will have a decisive impact on the process and the outcome of the eventual unification of the Korean Peninsula, let alone the process of transformation of the North Korean regime and the subsequent period of instability.

In building such cooperation between Tokyo and Seoul, the alliances with the United States are the natural foundations upon which both governments should come closer. The U.S.-Japan alliance has steadily evolved into public goods since the end of the Cold War. This is not and should not be regarded as a development directed against China, but a crisis on the Korean Peninsula was a critical trigger for the reaffirmation of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

In fact, changes in Japanese security policies after the Cold War have largely been internationalist in nature, encouraging Japan's greater involvement in international security and the consolidation of the U.S.-Japan alliance, while the rise of political conservatism has constantly complicated the decision-making process and external relations and perceptions. As such, Japan's security policy resembles that of a middle power rather than a traditional great power, and the geopolitical reality in Northeast Asia should be regarded as Japan and Korea being encircled by the three strategically independent great powers, i.e., the United States, China and Russia.

Just like for South Korea, the North Korean problem for Japan has four dimensions: domestic politics and national security, bilateral relations, alliance management with the United States, and multilateral diplomacy at the Six-Party Talks as well as at the United Nations. Each aspect has its own distinct elements of importance, and in the end any successful diplomacy toward North Korea should establish some balance among the four.

In this short paper, I will first demonstrate that the changing domestic environments and political discourses in Japan after the end of the Cold War have not affected the substance of Japanese security policy as much as the conservative tone of political assertions might imply. Second, on the basis of this understanding, I argue that

the potential for Japan-Korea cooperation as genuinely equal partners does exist, and that it takes new thinking, as well as innovative political leadership, to turn this potential into reality. This naturally implies that enhanced cooperation between Japan and South Korea will significantly contribute to the management of the North Korean problem in a much more productive way than is the case today.

This perspective of a truly equal partnership between Japan and South Korea is grounded in deep reality, i.e., in the domain of traditional and nontraditional security in general, and in terms of the alliance relationships with the United States in particular. The fundamental reminder of this reality is the fact that security policies of both Japan and South Korea, including those toward North Korea, are never complete without the alliance with the United States. In a nutshell, unlike the United States, China, and Russia, Japan is not a strategically independent actor, and a realistic perspective on Northeast Asian geopolitics is that Japan and Korea are surrounded by the "three great powers" of the United States, China, and Russia, rather than Korea being encircled by "four great powers," a list that includes Japan. This deep geopolitical reality would constantly provide structural pressure for Japan and South Korea to come closer through their alliance relationships with the United States.

These perspectives and arguments are premised on a couple of key propositions. First, Japanese security policies in the postwar years have in effect, if only unconsciously, been that of a middle power rather than a traditional great power[1]. Second, changes in Japanese security policies after the Cold War demonstrate the consolidation of the basis of a middle power diplomacy, rather than a move back to a traditional great power.

To substantiate these propositions, a quick overview of the changing nature of Japanese politics and security policies after the Cold War is in order. This will be followed by examinations of the evolution of the U.S.-Japan alliance after the end of the Cold War, its implications for China, and the twists and turns of the North Korean problem.

Accounting for "self-assertiveness"

Recent changes in Japan's security policies, which many observers tend to interpret as indicating a more assertive Japan in the style of a traditional great power, can be categorized into two types. The first is a set of attempts to remedy exceedingly minimalist policies (often labeled as one-country-pacifism) of postwar Japan. In essence, the concept of "Japan as a normal country" was raised in this context, presupposing somewhat extreme "abnormalities" in postwar Japanese defense and security policies. When Ichiro Ozawa raised the concept in the early 1990s, the "abnormalities" had to do with inadequate Japanese adjustment to the end of the Cold War, in general, and its inability to respond to the Gulf War in 1991, in particular.

[1] Yoshihide Soeya, *Nihon-no Middle Power Gaiko [Japan's Middle Power Diplomacy]* (Tokyo: Chikuma-shobo, 2005). The Korean translation is available from the Oruem Publishers (2006).

On the basis of this recognition, Japan's awakening to the new security realities after the Cold War has opened up ways toward greater participation in international peacekeeping operations, and later the strengthening of the U.S.-Japan alliance. These changes, often seen as signs of Japan becoming a "normal country," have in effect tied Japan's hands in the web of multilateral security cooperation as well as the alliance relationship with the United States, and thus have actually consolidated the foundations of Japan's de facto middle power strategy.

The second set of changes has been manifest, particularly after the demise of the 1955 regime caused by the collapse of the Socialist forces in Japanese domestic politics, in the vocal protests by Japanese traditional nationalists against the postwar state of Japanese defense and security policies and their premises. These political actors are in essence voicing their frustration over the dominant and majority consensus of postwar Japan, without any sense of an alternative grand strategy for the future. In essence, these statements against the Japanese postwar consensus are sources of complexity in Japanese domestic politics as well as its external relations, but are by no means any indication of Japan's international security role today and in the future. In other words, a lineal projection of Japan's future out of the rise of political conservatism is not plausible both analytically and in reality.

The same applies to the debate about Article Nine of the Japanese postwar Constitution, meaning that the rising voice in support of revision, particularly the revision of Article 9, is not tantamount to the revival of Japanese interest in traditional security or power politics. An opinion poll conducted by the *Yomiuri Shimbun*[2], for instance, reveals that while 56 percent of respondents favor constitutional revision, 70 percent of those who are for revision do so because they believe the present constitution does not clearly justify the existence of the Self-Defense Forces. Moreover, 47 percent support revision because they feel that the current constitution cannot adequately deal with new issues such as contribution to multilateral security cooperation. This is in line with the results of many other opinion polls, indicating that constitutional revision is far from being an issue of nationalism or "assertive diplomacy" for the majority of the Japanese public.

That said, there must also be recognition of the fact that the misunderstandings and distortions about the changing nature of Japanese security policies in recent years may have been fueled by the rise of political conservatism in Japanese society and politics. I do not have space to fully explicate this, but in all likelihood, the rise of political conservatism will eventually fail to dictate the future direction of changes in Japanese diplomacy let alone its security policies, although its influence on the daily management of Japanese diplomacy will remain real and important, complicating the domestic process of decision making, and external perceptions and politics.[3]

[2] *Daily Yomiuri*, April 4, 2006.

[3] I am working on a paper on this subject, for a multinational project organized by the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington, D.C. This should become available through the web page of the CRF sometime toward the end of 2009.

If this is the case, the greater the impact of Japanese political conservatism, the longer the period of time in which Japanese diplomacy will complicate regional politics, but not to the extent of a Japan-China geopolitical clash becoming a reality as many, particularly those in Korea, may worry. In short, Japanese diplomacy held hostage to political conservatism would mean that Japan will largely remain irrelevant, but perhaps harmless, in regional politics and cooperation, rather than becoming a source of instability or triggering the revival of great power rivalries or anything of that sort.

A somewhat wishful line of thinking, to which I tend to be inclined, is that the rise of political conservatism is only a transitional phenomenon, caused by the demise of the Cold War structure as well as the collapse of the so-called 1955 regime in Japanese domestic politics. We still remember that the progressive leftism had dominated Japanese political scenes throughout much of the postwar years, which had advanced a rather unrealistic and idealistic diplomatic agenda. The current rise of traditional conservatism is a rather reactionary phenomenon triggered by the demise of leftist forces, but quite significantly, its assertions and agenda are equally unrealistic and idealistic, although ideologically very different.

While the rise of political conservatism tends to attract the attention of many observers and even policy-makers outside Japan, a much more important and different kind of evolution of Japanese security policies has been taking place since the end of the Cold War, that does support my argument for a genuinely equal partnership between Japan and South Korea. In the post-Cold War era, Japan's postwar pacifism has not died away, but some elements of it have found new ways of articulating their values and beliefs. They are usually proactive, seeking a global role, as most clearly represented by Yoichi Funabashi's thesis of Japan as a global civilian power[4]. Very significantly, the concept was endorsed by the Prime Minister's Commission on Japan's Goals in the 21st Century established by Keizo Obuchi in 1999[5]. My assertion of Japan's middle power strategy is another argument of a similar nature.

In these theorizations of Japan's security profile, participation in international security and alliance management with the United States are the key components of Japanese strategy today and into the future. An interesting and important phenomenon in the Japanese debate is that even traditional nationalists explicitly recognize the importance of these basic premises of Japanese security policy, indicating that they are not necessarily motivated by any radically alternative strategies.

Japanese diplomacy toward the North Korean issue has evolved in this overall context of change toward greater involvement in multilateral diplomacy and the consolidation of the U.S.-Japan alliance. At the same time, the rise of a conservative mood and politics complicates the decision-making process and external relations and

[4] Yoichi Funabashi, "Japan and the New World Order," *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1991/92)
[5] The Prime Minister's Commission on Japan's Goals in the 21st Century, *The Frontier Within: Individual Empowerment and Better Governance in the New Millennium* (January 2000), http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/21century/report/pdfs/index.html

perceptions. Between these two basic premises, the alliance with the United States continues to constitute the base line with which Japan purses its objectives of national security and engagement in regional security.

The U.S.-Japan Alliance

In the process of the reaffirmation of the U.S.-Japan alliance after the Cold War, there emerged important seeds for the U.S.-Japan alliance to evolve into public goods for the Asia-Pacific region and the world. Among others, the "U.S.-Japan Joint Declaration on Security: Alliance for the Twenty-first Century," signed April 17, 1996 by Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto and President Bill Clinton, identified the primary role of the U.S.-Japan alliance as public goods for the larger cause of regional peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. It, declared that "the Japan-U.S. security relationship … remains the cornerstone for achieving common security objectives, and for maintaining a stable and prosperous environment for the Asia-Pacific region as we enter the twenty-first century."[6]

The immediate background triggering the administrative process of this reaffirmation of the U.S.-Japan alliance was not a "China threat," but the Korean crisis in 1994 when the Clinton administration seriously considered surgical strikes against North Korean nuclear facilities.[7] At this juncture, policy-makers in Tokyo and Washington came to the stark realization that they had not prepared for feasible military cooperation in the event of war on the Korean Peninsula.[8]

This realization gave rise to serious concern about the survivability of the alliance in the event Japan would prove to be a bystander. Secretary of Defense William Perry later recalled that it would be the end of the alliance if Japan did nothing in the event U.S. soldiers were shedding blood in Korea.[9] The deep and central motive of the reaffirmation process, therefore, was to save the U.S.-Japan alliance from a possible collapse triggered by possible Japanese inaction in the event of a Korean contingency.

This crisis in the U.S.-Japan alliance led to the revision of the 1978 Guidelines for Defense Cooperation between the United States and Japan, which materialized in 1997. The new Guidelines meticulously delineated what Japan constitutionally and legally can and cannot do in the form of cooperating with the United States in the event of a regional contingency. This, in essence, deeply tied Japanese security policy to that of the United States, rather than encouraging Japanese strategic independence.

This became even more explicit under the Bush administration. The initial blueprint for the U.S.-Japan alliance under the Bush administration was presented by core

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[6] "Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security: Alliance for the 21st Century" (April 17, 1996), http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/security.html

[7] Yoshihide Soeya, "The China Factor in the U.S.-Japan Alliance: The Myth of a China Threat," *Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (August 2002).

[8] Yoichi Funabashi, *Alliance Adrift* (Washington, D.C.: Council on Foreign Relations, 1999)

[9] Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (New York: Basic Books, 1997)

people in the Washington policy community, many of whom later assumed important positions in the Bush foreign policy team. This blueprint is the so-called Armitage report, titled "The United States and Japan: Advancing toward a Mature Partnership[10]." Although reality falls far short of U.S. expectations, the message was explicit in calling for a U.S.-Japan alliance more closely modeled on the U.S.-U.K. relationship.

In the Bush global strategy, the expected role of allies underwent a significant transformation. The Bush strategy basically defined U.S. national interests as the core, with the assumption that promotion of the U.S. national interest would lead to a better world and that the end of the Cold War gave the United States a golden opportunity to transform the world. Allies were expected to support and join this U.S. mission. Prime Minister Koizumi's performance with President Bush was quite effective under this new U.S. definition of the alliance relationship, although it is clear that Koizumi himself was neither inspired nor motivated by the deep strategic logic of the Bush administration.

The U.S. military transformation has been in progress with the same premise regarding the role of the U.S.-Japan alliance in U.S. military strategy. Whereas the broad military logic of the U.S.-Japan alliance is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future, Japanese participation in multilateral security cooperation will be more complicated, particularly under the Obama presidency, which has said it will place an emphasis on the importance of international cooperation on Afghanistan rather than the unilateral handling of Iraq.

According to the prevailing interpretation of the Japanese government, Japan cannot exercise the right of collective self-defense under the alliance setup with the United States, nor can it engage in collective security actions involving the use of force "as means of settling international disputes." Japanese participation in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq has been conditioned by these self-imposed limitations, and this is unlikely to change as Japan ponders ways to cope with Afghan affairs in coming years.

Somewhat fortunately for Japan, however, the Obama administration is looking for a comprehensive design to stabilize Afghanistan, which is generally supported by the international community. In this context, particular emphasis is placed on the importance of the nonmilitary, civil sector as a critical component of the rehabilitation of Afghan society. Against this backdrop, the Japanese government is planning programs such as funding the payrolls of the police force, rehabilitation of demobilized soldiers, and construction of school buildings for the dissemination of education, and so forth.

In retrospect, typically U.S. administration have failed to appreciate the political delicacy of alliance management, which leads to over-expectations regarding Japan's role as a "normal" ally, and eventual disappointment and frustration created by the expectation gap. For many Japanese observers, including the author, this was the initial worry vis-à-vis the Obama foreign policy team, because apparently the Obama team attempted to construct a new global approach from scratch, so to speak, and without

[10] "The United States and Japan: Advancing Toward A Mature Partnership," Institute for National Strategic Studies Special Report (October 2000).

appreciation of and sympathy toward the peculiarities of Japanese security policy, this would have led to excessive expectations regarding the Japanese role and the subsequent usual disappointment. Fortunately, however, this has not been the case, at least so far.

Implications for China

One implication of the above argument is the idea that the reaffirmation of the U.S.-Japan alliance was directed against China, in general, and a Taiwan contingency, in particular, is a myth. The U.S.-Japan Joint Declaration on Security, which called for the revision of the Guidelines, was already complete by the fall of 1995, and Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama and President Clinton were scheduled to announce it at the Osaka APEC summit in October 1995, both before the Taiwan Strait crisis and Taiwan's presidential elections in the spring of 1996. But Clinton did not come to Osaka for domestic political reasons.

In the meantime, the question of Taiwan security began to loom large, particularly after Chinese military pressure and exercises directed against the Taiwanese presidential election in March 1996. By that time, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter's trip to Pyongyang had salvaged the North Korean quagmire, resulting in the Geneva agreement to create the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) to circumvent North Korean nuclear programs. This unfortunate combination of events shifted people's attention away from North Korean toward Taiwan in the debate about the reaffirmation of the U.S.-Japan alliance in general, and the revision of the Guidelines in particular.

No responsible policy-maker either in Tokyo or Washington believed that a serious contingency calling for the invocation of the revised Guidelines over Taiwan was imminent.[11] A tricky part is that the revised Guidelines are theoretically applicable to a Taiwan contingency, and that the Japanese government has never denied this. This is implied by the Japanese contention that "situations in the areas surrounding Japan" is a situational concept and not a geographical one.

Yoichi Funabashi describes the role of China in the reaffirmation process as giving a "subliminal" effect.[12] It should be fair to summarize that policy-makers have tacitly seen in the reaffirmed alliance the implicit function to deal with the rise of China generally and over the long run. This was also the central point in the Nye initiative as stated in the 1995 Nye report. Joseph Nye recalls that he thought the rise of China could be managed more constructively if the United States and Japan act jointly on the basis of the alliance.[13] In this regard, the central function of the reaffirmed U.S.-Japan alliance toward China was dominantly implicit, primarily as a tool to maintain general strategic stability amid the historic rise of China, rather than something directed against a specific scenario such as a Taiwan contingency.

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[11] For a discussion on the non-strategic nature of Japan's policy toward Taiwan, see Yoshihide Soeya, "Taiwan in Japan's Security Considerations," *The China Quarterly*, No. 165 (March 2001).
[12] Funabashi, *Alliance Adrift*
[13] Joseph Nye, Jr., "The Case for Deep Engagement," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 1995).

This logic behind the reaffirmed U.S.-Japan alliance has remained intact since then, even including the explicit reference to China and Taiwan in a U.S.-Japan joint statement issued after the "two-plus-two" meeting of ministers in charge of foreign and defense affairs on Feb. 19, 2005 in Washington D.C. In the statement, there were three relevant points regarding China and Taiwan under the heading of "common strategic objectives in the region." Namely, Japan and the United States (1) welcome Chinese constructive roles in the region and the world, and develop cooperative relations with China; (2) encourage peaceful resolution of problems over the Taiwan Strait through dialogue; and (3) encourage China to increase transparency in the military domain.[14] The substance of the reference to China and Taiwan was not news to anyone, including the Chinese.

The more important reality in recent years has to do with strategic coexistence between the United States and China. Such a strategic relationship between the United States and China could be described as two great powers having "different dreams in the same bed." Both need strategic co-existence with each other to tackle their own agendas, but their long-term strategic visions run parallel to each other. The basic differences will continue to exist over the long run in the domain of long-term military strategies of the Pentagon and the PLA, as well as in terms of so-called universal values including democracy and human rights. Because of these fundamental differences, the Taiwan factor will remain a most difficult issue, if only potentially, between Beijing and Washington. It is not impossible that Tibet will grow into such a point of friction; this depends on developments in Tibet and Chinese reactions.

Thus, the U.S.-China relationship is a typical case of strategic coexistence between great powers, which is in essence competitive but will remain cooperative in the foreseeable future out of necessity. In a way, precisely because their strategic preferences are firm, long-term, and tend to point in parallel, not conflicting, directions, they attempt to avoid confrontation and build cooperation. This state of strategic coexistence is likely to continue in the foreseeable future,[15] and will even be strengthened under the Obama presidency.[16]

The North Korean problem

In the context of the North Korean nuclear issue, a critical point to remember is that the strategic positioning of Japan as a middle power vis-à-vis not only the United States but also China informs the basic diplomatic approach of Japan, which combines the domains of national security, the bilateral context of diplomatic normalization, alliance management with the United States, and participation in the Six-Party Talks. This provides common ground for linking the U.S.-Japan alliance and the U.S.-ROK

[14] http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/usa/hosho/2+2_05_02.html
[15] Thomas J. Christensen, "Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster? The Rise of China and U.S. Policy toward East Asia," *International Security*, 31/1 (Summer 2006).
[16] Michael Green, et.al., "Special Roundtable: Advising the New U.S. President," *Asia Policy* 7 (2009).

alliance, which, regrettably and unfortunately, so far has not been fully utilized by Tokyo or Seoul.

The flip side of the coin is that, just like many other issues, the state of U.S.-China strategic co-existence provides the background for the evolution of the North Korean problem. At the time of its inauguration, the Bush foreign policy team had designated Iraq, North Korea and Iran as three rogue regimes, but it argued that the leadership in Pyongyang was living on "borrowed time" and the United States should not hurry. This was in sharp contrast to the case of Iraq, where it stressed that without removing Saddam Hussein nothing significant would change.[17]

These different assumptions regarding Iraq and North Korea did not change, and were consolidated, after the three rogue regimes were upgraded to the "axis of evil" in President Bush's January 2002 State of the Union Address. In contrast to Iraq, Bush was explicitly pushing for a multilateral framework for the North Korean problem, and this encouraged China to take the lead in the Six-Party Talks under the general background of the U.S.-China strategic co-existence.

Also, it is worth remembering that a perceived deep crisis for regime survival had motivated Kim Jong-il, supreme leader of North Korea, to begin a surprising move to host Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in Pyongyang in September 2002. The determination on the part of Kim Jong-il to seek help from Japan was unmistakable with Kim himself confessing and apologizing for the abduction of Japanese citizens.[18] The fact that the South Korean government welcomed the Japanese move is a surprising but clear indication that Tokyo and Seoul are in a similar strategic position in the Northeast Asian geopolitical landscape.

When the gamble to normalize diplomatic relations with Japan stalled, however, Kim Jong-il once again faced – or did not have any choice but to face – the United States squarely and to employ unusually provocative measures, climbing step by step up the ladder of nuclear escalation. Against these escalation tactics, the Bush administration, pushed by ever-mounting domestic pressure from Congress, considered seriously going to the United Nations for sanctions in early 2003. Perhaps, this move alarmed China, which would account for the timing of the Chinese diplomatic shift from advocating bilateral talks between Washington and Pyongyang to taking the initiative to convince Pyongyang to move to multilateral negotiations.

As is often the case with its diplomacy, China initially moved very cautiously, which materialized in de facto three-party talks in Beijing on April 23, 2003. At the time, China refused to call it a three-party talk due to the felt necessity to deal with Pyongyang with care as well as because of its own previous insistence on bilateral dealings between Pyongyang and Washington, but the Chinese shift was obvious. China then upgraded its efforts to persuade Pyongyang, and hosted the first round of Six-Party Talks in August 2003, followed by the second round of talks in February 2004.

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[17] Condoleezza Rice, "Promoting the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs* (January/February, 2000).

[18] Yoshihide Soeya, "Japanese Diplomacy and the North Korean Problem," *Japan Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring 2003).

It was against this new background that Koizumi decided to pay his second visit to Pyongyang in May 2004. This time, the opportunity was ripe for Koizumi to relate progress in Japan-North Korea diplomatic normalization talks to the development of the Six-Party Talks. China has not only supported the Koizumi initiative but apparently encouraged Kim Jong-il to move forward with Japan. The logic here was that progress in Japan-North Korean bilateral talks should also be a boost for the Six-Party Talks.

Differences between Washington and Pyongyang remained deep, and the third round of Six-Party Talks held in June 2004 did not bear fruit. In the meantime, the impasse simply aggravated, giving rise to a sense of crisis among the participating countries about the utility and the survivability of the six-party framework. The deep dilemma here is that, while a meaningful compromise between North Korea and the United States is unlikely, there is no other realistic alternative for all the parties concerned to the Six-Party Talks. Against this backdrop, it appears that they have become almost an end in itself, and none of the parties wish to terminate the talks.

When the six parties met in Beijing for the fourth round of talks from July 26 to August 7 and from September 13 to 19, 2005, perhaps they could not afford to break up without some form of agreement to maintain the momentum. Major agreed items in the joint statement, the first of the kind in the six party talks, included the following deal[19]:

> The DPRK committed to abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and returning, at an early date, to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to IAEA safeguards.
>
> The DPRK stated that it has the right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The other parties expressed their respect and agreed to discuss, at an appropriate time, the subject of the provision of light water reactor to the DPRK.

The basic disagreement between the United States and North Korea, however, was hard to overcome. Washington upgraded its hardline stance when the deals in the fourth round of talks were being negotiated by freezing North Korean bank accounts in Macao in September 2005. Since then, Pyongyang has refused to come back to the Six-Party Talks, and has made the lifting of financial sanctions a precondition.

By early July 2006, there had been no serious responses from the Bush administration. North Korea escalated its brinkmanship by launching seven missiles including a Taepodong into the Sea of Japan. The reaction of the Japanese government was exceptionally quick, initiating UN Security Council Resolution 1695 denouncing the North Korean action and calling for its return to the Six-Party Talks.[20] It also hastened to prepare and implement its own sanctions against North Korea under the strong leadership of the then-Cabinet secretary Shinzo Abe.

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[19] http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n_korea/6party/joint0509.html
[20] http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/431/64/PDF/N0643164.pdf?OpenElement

North Korean brinkmanship escalated to the nuclear tests in October 2006. Japan, again under the leadership of Shinzo Abe who had succeeded Koizumi as prime minister just a month earlier, acted swiftly and assertively, leading to the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1718 on Oct. 14.[21]

After that, the Bush administration became a bit desperate, anticipating a very likely scenario that the end result of its eight-year diplomacy would be a North Korea armed with nuclear weapons. Toward the end of its second term, therefore, the Bush administration, pressed by time, had to make haste in making compromises, including its decision to remove North Korea from the list of states sponsored terrorism in October 2008. The North Korean response, however, was not to deal with the Bush administration, awaiting the advent of the Obama administration in 2009. Then, North Korea greeted Obama with the launch of a long-range Taepodong 2 over the Japanese archipelago on April 5.

The dilemma for the parties is that they have to continue to strike a deal and look for a slim margin of cooperation, if only to keep the momentum of the Six-Party Talks, despite being aware of North Korea's ultimate choice not to give up all its nuclear weapons. So far, the North Korean nuclear problem has followed a cyclical pattern between slim hope and much despair. Given that no party can afford to risk a war on the Korean Peninsula and there is a consensus that a nuclear North Korea is not acceptable, the cycle is likely to continue under the Obama presidency and despite sustained strategic coexistence between the United States and China.

At least in theory, an uncultivated and untested domain in this stalemate situation is closer and more substantial cooperation between Japan and South Korea. In this connection, perhaps the issue of Japan-North Korea diplomatic normalization is a critical one to be reexamined by Japan and South Korea, rather than leaving it simply as a Japan matter. Also, the extent to which Japan and South Korea can or cannot build genuine cooperation and in the short term will have a decisive impact on the process and the outcome of the eventual unification of the Korean Peninsula, let alone the process of transformation of the North Korean regime and the subsequent period of instability. In advancing their cooperation, both Tokyo and Seoul should consult closely with the Unites States as its allies, as well as with China as a friendly neighbor, but a close partnership between the two countries should come first.

In conclusion: strategic importance of Japan-Korea cooperation

One of the serious obstacles to this potentially constructive partnership between Japan and South Korea as equals is the conservative urge prevalent in Japanese domestic politics for seeking assertive and more "independent" tools of security policy vis-à-vis North Korea. This blinds Japan's conservative politicians to the strategic opportunities that are buried in Japan's alternative strategies through cooperation with South Korea.

[21] http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/resolution1718.pdf

Likewise, the dominant Korean perception that the rise of conservatism will dictate and take over the course of Japanese diplomacy including its security policy is a serious obstacle blinding Korea to the huge potential inherent in cooperation, and instead causing an emotional vicious cycle between the two countries. The same vicious cycle exists between Japan and China, occasionally providing an incentive for South Korea and China to join together to fight a misconceived Japan problem.

As emphasized above, the conventional wisdom that the Korean Peninsula is surrounded by four great powers including Japan does not provide a realistic perspective to understand the security policy of postwar Japan in Northeast Asia, and has been even been an important source of confusion in the evolution of a regional order. This, for instance, is a breeding ground for the myth of Japan-China geopolitical rivalry. South Korean self-definition of its role as a balancer between Japan and China also appears to be a product of this conventional wisdom.

Rather, the geopolitical perspective stressed in the paper is a reminder that an equal partnership between Japan and South Korea is not a political slogan but can be a substantive foundation of the bilateral relationship. In the overall context discussed in the paper, the relationship between Japan and South Korea has the potential to cause a paradigm change in Northeast Asian politics. It is against the backdrop of this geopolitical reality that democracy in Japan and South Korea, and civil society exchanges between the two peoples have impacted the bilateral relationship in a fundamental way.

In dealing with the North Korean problem, the Six-Party Talks are the only viable multilateral framework for cooperation at the moment, which is founded upon strategic compromise between the United States and China. The Six-Party Talks have become possible on the basis of U.S.-China strategic co-existence, but this does not mean that the substance of the dialogue should be led exclusively by these powers. Japan and South Korea can and should consult more between themselves, and conceptualize an alternative approach toward North Korea, within the framework of the six party talks and without contradicting the logic of U.S.-China strategic co-existence.

The same geopolitical perspective is also a profound reminder that serious attempts by Tokyo and Seoul to link their alliances with the United States are long overdue and urgently called for. In my view, a Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) among Japan, South Korea, and the United States should be reconceptualized and reinstitutionalized with the promotion of Japan-South Korea security cooperation as the clearly defined central agenda.

This is particularly urgent, because the time has come to deal with the North Korean nuclear problem with a mid- to long-term perspective, envisioning, if only theoretically, the eventual unification of the Korean Peninsula. In other words, the so-called solution to the nuclear problem could and indeed should be addressed as a critical phase in the process of eventual unification of the Korean Peninsula. There are various

scenarios for such a process, but the implications and possible impacts of measures taken today should be judged and planned with this long-term perspective in mind. Otherwise, it is not entirely unlikely that we will be overcome by events rather than guided by our actions.

For Japan to do this, the alliance with the United States will continue to be the key, because Japan, unlike the U.S., China, and Russia, does not have and is not likely to obtain tools, not to mention the military means, with which to engage in the unification process as an independent security actor. In this context, as emphasized throughout the paper, the importance of Japan-South Korea cooperation cannot be stressed too much, and in all likelihood the same should be true for South Korea. In the short- and medium-term, this applies to the ongoing Six-Party Talks, and if substantial cooperation between Japan and South Korea is accelerated, the horizon of the long-term future will be totally different.

Do the Six-Party Talks Have a Future?

By Scott Snyder

The future of the Six-Party Talks appears to be in grave danger following North Korea's threat "never" to come back to the process. This was triggered by the UN Security Council condemnation of its April 5, 2009 missile test. North Korea's announcement deepens the diplomatic crisis surrounding the future of North Korea's nuclear weapons program. It poses a direct challenge to the Obama administration, which has clearly indicated that it expects the six-party process to resume and that the forum will continue to be an important venue through which to address North Korea's commitments to denuclearization.

This is not the first time that North Korea has threatened to talk away from the six-party process, and the negotiations have faced lengthy interruptions in the past. It is the first time, however, that North Korea has issued a definitive statement that it will not participate in the talks. Following the North's announcement, the other parties have reaffirmed their commitment to the six-party process while not ruling out the possibility that other forms of diplomacy may be needed as a pathway to return to the talks. Given the furor over the talks and questions about the future of the six-party process, it is useful to view the reasons for the establishment of the Six-Party Talks and their value in dealing with major issues involving North Korea.

Establishment of the Six-Party Talks

The Six-Party Talks were established to create a diplomatic channel to encourage a diplomatic solution following revelations in October 2002 that North Korea had been pursuing a covert uranium enrichment program. The pursuit of this secret program was regarded by the Bush administration as a violation of the Clinton-era Agreed Framework, which had been put into place to halt North Korea's plutonium-based nuclear program. The discovery of the violation of the spirit if not the letter of the Agreed Framework led to a spiraling crisis as North Korea kicked out International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors, reprocessed spent fuel rods stored under the Agreed Framework, and resumed production of bomb-grade fissile material by re-starting its 5 megawatt nuclear reactor in December 2002 and January 2003.

Drawing on perceived lessons and failings of the Agreed Framework, the Bush administration sought a venue for multilateral rather than bilateral dialogue with North Korea. Those lessons included: the perception that a bilateral negotiation with a duplicitous North Korea would enhance the likelihood that the North would fail to live up to its agreements; the recognition that the North Korean nuclear issue was in fact a Northeast Asian regional security problem as much as a challenge to the national security of the United States; that other parties had both leverage and a strategic stake in preventing North Korea from attaining nuclear weapons; and that U.S. leverage/pressure by itself would not be sufficient to convince North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons pursuits. Finally, establishment of the six-party process came about as a result of the

evolution of multilateral cooperation in Northeast Asia to deal with North Korea-related matters, building on the multilateral experience of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) and the four-party talks of the late 1990s.

Another prerequisite for the establishment of the Six-Party Talks was China's more proactive response to a renewed nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula. This was a sharp contrast to China's passive response during the first North Korean nuclear crisis of the 1990s. Motivated in part by concerns that the U.S.-DPRK confrontation of early 2003 might lead to a military conflict, Chinese leaders initially brokered a three-way U.S.-PRC-DPRK meeting in April 2003, a meeting that led to the establishment of the six-party process that included South Korea, Japan, and Russia as participants in August of that year. China's roles as a host, broker, mediator, and stakeholder in the six-party process have given Beijing multiple incentives to promote the success of the process as a vehicle for achieving denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula.

The primary achievement of the Six-Party Talks has been the crafting of a Joint Statement on Sept. 19, 2005. This statement commits all parties to a lowest-common denominator set of common principles or objectives: a) denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, b) normalization of bilateral diplomatic relations among members of the talks, c) the importance of economic development, including provision of economic assistance for North Korea, d) the establishment of a permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula. Since this is the first time the parties in question have identified common interests, the Joint Statement might be seen as a minimalist version of the Helsinki Final Act principles agreed to by the Conference on Security Cooperation in Europe during the 1970s.

Value of the Six-Party Talks

The on-again, off-again nature of the six-party process has been a major reason for criticizing the talks as ineffective and for seeking alternative organizing principles, including establishing a five-party process. China has not been willing to sign on to such a process, however. China refuses to participate in five-party talks for fear that such talks would further alienate the North, despite the fact that the long-term establishment of an effective regional security dialogue in Northeast Asia will depend on the development of an agenda for the region that goes beyond North Korea. As a result, the six-party process has in some ways been held hostage to the peculiarities of the North Korean agenda: the talks can't meet unless North Korea agrees and North Korea's participation ensures that the talks will focus on North Korea.

Now that the talks are off again, it is natural to question whether they can really be useful in promoting an effective and lasting diplomatic solution. Still, the Six-Party Talks offer the following unique advantages over the alternative diplomatic paths currently available:

- The Six-Party Talks are the only venue in which the North Koreans have made a public commitment to denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The Sept. 19, 2005 Joint Statement clearly states that the end goal of the six-party process is

"denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula." This means that any implementing agreements developed as part of the six-party process should include naturally include elements designed to implement that objective. Conversely, abandonment of the six-party process might serve North Korea's strategic objective of promoting its acceptance as a nuclear weapon state, and absolve Pyongyang of the denuclearization commitment it made in the Sept. 19 Joint Statement.

- The six-party process may also be a means by which to pressure individual countries that attempt to resist or deny the agreed-upon objectives and regional consensus embodied in the Sept. 19, 2005 Joint Statement. The commitment to the implementation of the Joint Statement has stimulated bilateral and trilateral consultations among members of the talks to implement the shared goals and consensus embodied in the six-party process.

- The six-party process serves as an umbrella for bilateral discussions designed to implement the objectives of the talks. Among the objectives of the Six-Party Talks is the normalization of bilateral relations among all the parties; thus, the six-party process naturally contributes to the achievement of this aim. The process implicitly underscores the principle that improved bilateral diplomatic relations among the main parties are a development beneficial to the promotion of regional peace and stability.

- The United States' commitment to Six-Party Talks has become the primary tangible means by which the U.S. is able to demonstrate its continued commitment to North Korea's denuclearization in light of increasing skepticism that North Korea will abandon its nuclear weapons. Given doubts and concerns across the region that the primary diplomatic objective of the United States may shift from denuclearization to non-proliferation – a tacit acceptance of a nuclear North Korea as part of a new regional status quo – it is particularly important that the U.S. remain committed to implementing the agenda of the Six-Party Talks.

Getting Six-Party Talks back on track: challenges and prospects

Reconstituting the six-party process as a viable means to address regional security in Northeast Asia is a daunting assignment in light of North Korea's announced withdrawal from the talks. But the commitment of the other parties to the six-party process despite North Korea's statement that it would "never" return to the six-party process sends an important signal to North Korea regarding the regional commitment to North Korea's denuclearization. North Korea's early challenge to the Obama administration over the shape of diplomatic engagement is also a test that will shape the future agenda and form of diplomacy. The Obama administration's response to this challenge will influence the future prospects for success.

A firm commitment to Six-Party Talks need not preclude all other forms of diplomacy related to North Korea. Given China's considerable leverage over North Korea; its past ability to establish high-level bilateral contacts directly with Kim Jong-il;

Beijing's interest in the resumption of diplomacy to underscore regional stability; and finally its manifest interest in seeing the resumption of the Six-Party Talks rather than the establishment of an alternative diplomatic process in which China's role might be less central, it would seem natural that a Chinese special envoy might be dispatched to convince the North Koreans to reconsider their opposition to the six-party process. Yet even if that is all true, this may be a difficult moment for Sino-DPRK relations as China signed on to the UNSC Presidential Statement condemning North Korea's missile test despite early signals that it respected North Korea's right to conduct a satellite launch.

Alternatively, the United States could engage in a direct, high-level bilateral contact with North Korea by delivering a clear message to the North from President Obama regarding U.S. expectations. Such a contact would be analogous to the high-level meeting that took place in New York in early 1992 between Undersecretary of State Arnold Kanter and Korean Worker's Party International Department head Kim Yong Sun. That unprecedented high-level contact was designed for the United States to deliver a message to North Korea, not to open a new channel for diplomatic negotiations. Indeed, any U.S.-DPRK bilateral diplomatic contacts with North Korea should not be cast as negotiations themselves, but as talks with the objective of bringing North Korea back to the Six-Party Talks. Moreover, the establishment of any high-level bilateral diplomatic interaction between the United States and North Korea must be the result of prior consultation with allies in Seoul and Tokyo and should be publicly endorsed by America's allies. Under these circumstances, it should be possible for the United States and North Korea to have direct, high-level diplomatic contact to exchange messages and perspectives on the current stalemate. Such a diplomatic exchange might provide North Korea with a face-saving reason to change its mind and return to the six-party process.

At this moment, there are many reasons to think that the Six-Party Talks are dead, and that events have finally outstripped the rationale underlying such a process. But it is also important that the core regional commitments to denuclearization, peace, stability, and economic development of North Korea not be abandoned. Any new process that takes the region backward or unravels such a consensus will not serve the best interests of all parties to the talks. For this reason, the focus of diplomacy should remain the reestablishment of the six-party process rather than settling for a lesser alternative.

Some Thoughts on Recent Korean Peninsula Nuclear Developments

By Liu Ming

Interpreting North Korean intentions

Outsiders speculate that North Korea intended to use its missile (or rocket) launch to get the Obama administration's attention, keep the momentum of the bilateral talks that the Bush administration promoted in the past two years, and win more rewards for Pyongyang as the world dealt with a nuclear-armed North Korea. In this light, this is typical brinksmanship.

But we also could see the issue in a different angle: it was a separate action driven by domestic needs. By enhancing the country's military power, the leadership could claim it has realized the ambitious goal of building a Powerful and Prosperous State by the end of 2012. Pyongyang knows the Obama administration will continue to conduct bilateral talks and will be happy to strike a deal, so it is not in a hurry to press Obama. However, the U.S. needs time to review its North Korea policy before coming back to the Six-Party Talks. Therefore, North Korea wanted to use this interval to boost its missiles capabilities and ensure its nuclear bombs have real combat power. At the same time, it will strengthen its status as a nuclear power.

North Korea's reaction to UN sanctions was within expectations. Its logic was clear: it has the right to develop traditional military might, and the leadership thought it was unfairly treated by the international community in terms of developing missiles and engaging in space exploration projects since it agreed to participate in the Six-Party Talks on denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in 2003. Thus, it declared it would withdraw from the Six-Party Talks and stop disablement activities, and reactivate nuclear facilities to develop weapons-grade plutonium. Pyongyang also ordered inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency to remove their surveillance equipment and leave the country.

These actions lead to the conclusion that North Korea has closed the door to the Six-Party Talks since it has developed U.S.-North Korea bilateral talks as an alternative negotiation platform. However, we can't exclude the possibility that Pyongyang would again try to use the Six-Party Talks symbolically to show its readiness to make concessions to Chinese and U.S. demands to sit down on the nuclear issue. Of course, whether it will continue to promise to implement the denuclearization accords depends on the benefits to be obtained from U.S.-North Korea bilateral talks. North Korea might choose to come back to the negotiations if it can find a way to save face as China mediates or the U.S. expresses some goodwill in bilateral contacts.

The current status of Six-Party Talks

Until March 2009, nuclear disablement work in North Korea was slow but it was making progress. Almost 6,000 spent fuel rods were removed and eight of 11 designated items were finalized. China, the U.S., and Russia fulfilled their commitments to send heavy oil to North Korea; the total amount of oil shipped has reached approximately 75 tons.

Apart from the new obstacle – missile launches and expanded UN sanctions imposed on North Korea in April 2009 – it was sample-taking that blocked the denuclearization process at the end of 2008. This is not just a technical issue. This is proof that North Korea wants to delay the denuclearization process from moving to the third stage, or dismantlement. It also showed that what North Korea accepted or was interested in was just disablement of the decrepit nuclear reactors at Yongbyon. As Pyongyang stated, "North Korea has an exceptional position in terms of implementation of verification" since it is out of the bonds of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. So it will do its best to narrow the definition of verification and try to limit the scope of inspection and information about nuclear materials and the numbers of bombs.

By this logic, it is only if the U.S. accepts North Korea's approach to verification – inspections at Yongbyon, ascertaining documents, and having conversations with technicians – can the Six-Party Talks continue. Pyongyang also might make a concession for limited sample-taking while charging for light-water reactors. But the next stage will not move to the goal of dismantlement.

The North Korean Foreign Ministry statement delivered Jan. 13 should be taken seriously. It meant North Korean would not forgo nuclear weapons even if Washington and Pyongyang normalize relations. Therefore the prospects for resolving the North Korean dismantlement issue are dim, unless the U.S., Japan, and South Korea agree to move the denuclearization process forward at a very slow pace or only through a technical approach. All five parties would oppose progress of the other Working Groups without resolving the denuclearization issue.

Next Steps for North Korea

Pyongyang has three options in the following months:

A. Conduct another nuclear test and expand its nuclear weapon arsenal. As a consequence, the crisis would escalate and while Pyongyang would be in a better position to deal with the U.S. it would face more pressure from the U.S., Korea, Japan, and China. Further UN sanctions would be inevitable. Its only assistance comes from China and this would be cut considerably.

B. Maintain the stalemate with all parties without conducting more nuclear tests, while nuclear facilities are gradually restored. In this case, North Korea could no longer

get heavy oil and assistance from the U.S., Korea, and Japan. Neither China nor Russia would help them a lot. It will feel more isolated and could not realize its goal by 2012.

C. After some time, Pyongyang could resume contact with the U.S. in the UN or other places. If it gets pledges to improve bilateral relations from the U.S. and Beijing steps up its mediation, Pyongyang would take a chance to resume talks. Comparing the three scenarios, it seems the first one is more likely in the short run if we take North Korea's recent bluff seriously. But if diplomatic mediation and collective pressure are used timely and effectively, it is possible to prevent North Korea from conducting another nuclear test.

China, the Six-Party Talks and the Obama administration

Before the latest nuclear and missile crisis, the importance of the North Korea nuclear issue seemed to have been degraded in China-U.S. relations. Three reasons explain this trend.

First, both sides are fully preoccupied with the financial crisis, which is at the top of their agenda. Second, China is fatigued by its shuttle diplomacy and thinks that since Washington and Pyongyang have opened direct negotiations, Beijing's role is marginalized. Third, China and the U.S. know the multilateral talks have entered into a dead-end. Washington has offered almost everything to Pyongyang, yet the DPRK doesn't find this package attractive enough to make the strategic decision to drop its nuclear program. In other words, there are now no carrots alluring enough to persuade Kim Jong-Il to change his mind. NK military leaders want to postpone, if not cancel, the denuclearization process, and it is in their best interests to reserve as many nuclear bombs as possible. This is in stark contrast with the U.S. and other countries, which have been unable to reach consensus on taking stiff action other than sanctions against the DPRK. North Korea's military leaders have clearly perceived the impotence of the five parties.

Beijing wants to maintain the momentum of the Six-Party Talks, and move the talks into the dismantlement stage as soon as possible, which then U.S. chief negotiator Christopher Hill promoted in the previous process. However, China understands that the tactical and strategic obstacles are huge. Therefore, Beijing would like to share the leading role with Washington, expecting the U.S. to promote the talks through discussions on tough issues in bilateral U.S.-North Korea contacts. China's advice to the U.S.: be patient, realistic, and take a gradual or piece-meal approach. Right now, we are looking forward to seeing the results of Washington's North Korea policy review.

Washington will continue to ask China to play a unique role, particularly in this difficult time, and privately persuade North Korean leaders to stop their provocations and faithfully implement all accords approved by the six parties. China will face more pressure from the U.S. to handle the tension that Pyongyang created. Although Beijing would like to play a leading role to overcome the escalating crisis, it faces dilemmas: China still wants to use the framework of the Six-Party Talks, treating it as safety valve to release pressure and keep the ball moving, even though the U.S. and North Korea try

to discard this platform. Chinese diplomacy is mainly represented by the promotion of dialogue between the two main parties, but the U.S. is unwilling to pursue fruitless talks and cheating by the DPRK. China wants to drag North Korea into a trap and push it step by step to the final goal of dismantlement. The U.S. wants a clear-cut result and North Korea is taking a capricious approach

Sino-U.S.-Korea cooperation on the North Korean nuclear issue

I believe that if North Korea conducts another nuclear test, generally speaking China would support a reasonable resolution to impose sanctions against the DPRK. However, it is not clear how far China would go to meet U.S. and Japanese demands on specific sanctions. The difficult issues are not about maintaining stability prior to denuclearization, but reflect other considerations. China's diplomatic tool-box lacks the readiness to take a hard approach to a nonhostile sovereign country. China doesn't want to completely damage PRC-DPRK relations. China doubts the effectiveness of sanctions. And China doesn't want to see swarms of refugees.

As North Korea's military takes a more provocative stance since last summer, we have to make preparations for the power transition in Pyongyang. If the North Korean Defense Commission has played a leading role in the nuclear issue, we will have less chances to strike a deal. Even if we signed agreements with DPRK Foreign Ministry officials in previous talks, the prospects for full implementation are dim.

Given the health of Kim Jong-il, the opportunity to resolve the nuclear issue might reappear when their leadership changes. Therefore, China, Korea, and the U.S. need to partly shift the focal points of their cooperation to future issues: preparing to offer carrots to North Korea's new leaders; designing new rules for the Six-Party Talks; in case of chaos, having coordination to control nuclear facilities and other weapons of mass destruction, and maintaining social order in the post-Kim transitional period. Think tanks need to conduct more track-two meetings from now on.

Six-Party Talks and Regional Security Relations

By Bon-Hak Koo

North Korea recently claimed that it began reprocessing spent fuel rods to extract plutonium and will conduct nuclear and missile tests in protest of the UN Security Council's Presidential Statement that denounced its April 5, 2009 rocket launch.

Then, the North said that it would never return to the Six-Party Talks, which has been stalled since December 2008. North Korea is believed to be seeking bilateral talks with the United States, possibly to find a way out of international isolation that deepened under the former George W. Bush administration.

Responses from both the U.S. and South Korea were very solid. U.S. special representative for North Korea policy Stephen Bosworth warned on April 8 that there will be consequences should Pyongyang go ahead with a second nuclear test, though he did not specify what consequences. He said that the six-party process is at the heart of efforts to deal with the North Korean nuclear issue. He also said that he is prepared to deal with North Korea bilaterally in a way that reinforces the multilateral process.

North Korea, however, responded that there is no use in trying to talk with the United States and that it will bolster its nuclear forces as long as Washington continues its "hostile" policy to North Korea. It said that the U.S. hostile policy toward North Korea remains unchanged even after the coming to power of the Obama administration. It also said that the measures taken by the North recently are not aimed at drawing attention and opening dialogue. In this regard, the North expressed its intention very clearly. That is, it will keep its nuclear capabilities.

So, North Korea intends to extend the deadlock for the time being. It wants Washington to recognize it as a nuclear state and improve relations as the U.S. did with India and Pakistan.

Most experts believe that bilateral talks between the United States and North Korea are the only solution. That was what the North sought from the beginning, and it will most likely continue on this path of brinksmanship until the North is understood or satisfied.

Nevertheless, on April 25, 2009, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said during her visit to Baghdad that the United States refused to be blackmailed by North Korea. She emphasized that Washington continues to remain open to dialogue with the North to help denuclearize it. The Obama administration has reiterated that Washington hopes to engage Pyongyang in dialogue through the framework of the six-nation discussions.

Jack Pritchard, former U.S. special envoy to North Korea, said that the Six-Party Talks were over, and North Koreans were losing a good opportunity to improve relations with the United States. Recent North Korean provocations toward South Korea and the

United States failed to put the North Korean issue at the top of the policy agenda of the Obama administration. The Obama government may need time to prepare for a dialogue with North Korea. But North Korean provocations have made the Obama administration wary of or cautious about North Korea. So, provocations are useless for North Koreans to achieve their objectives.

Then, what is North Korea's intention? Pyongyang may not want to continue the Six-Party Talks. Those negotiations produced a resolution on Sept. 19, 2005, when North Korea agreed to abandon all nuclear programs and nuclear weapons in return for diplomatic and economic rewards. I do not believe North Korea will abandon its nuclear weapons with uncertain political and economic rewards. Pyongyang is not as naïve as that. For Kim Jong-il, Six-Party Talks are of no use, or are obsolete. The announcement of that joint statement was probably the end of the Six-Party Talks. Why? The reason is simple. North Korea has no intention of implementing the agreement. North Korea wants to keep nuclear weapons because nuclear weapons are more precious than any other thing for Kim Jong-il. If this analysis or this scenario is correct, then it will be very difficult to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue.

North Korea may not want to discuss the nuclear issue any more without security guarantees, massive economic assistance, and diplomatic normalization with the U.S. In addition, North Korea probably wants to talk about a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, which means, according to North Korean terms, withdrawal of U.S. military forces from South Korea and dissolution of the ROK-U.S. alliance. If the U.S. agrees to that, then Pyongyang may come back to the table.

Recent North Korean provocations can be analyzed or interpreted in three dimensions: domestic political necessity, strategy toward South Korea, and strategy toward the United States. First, at the domestic political level, Kim Jong-il aimed at consolidating his political power by strengthening internal solidarity around him through the long-range missile launch, and by reinforcing ideological control of the North Korean populace after increased inter-Korean exchanges for the last 10 years.

Second, at North Korea's South Korea strategy level, Kim intends to put pressure on Lee Myung-bak's government to return its North Korea policy to "Sunshine," to divide South Korean society with the so-called South-South conflict, and ultimately to collapse the conservative Lee Myung-bak government.

Third, at North Korea's U.S. strategy level, Kim expects to pull Obama government's attention toward North Korea, although it officially refused to do that, so that it can take a more advantageous stance in future negotiations with the United States.

Past North-South experiences show that at the first stage of a crisis, North Korea increases military tension, and then at the second stage, suggests dialogue after the climax of the crisis. At the third stage of the crisis, North Korea accepts economic rewards and enhances South Korean expectations that Pyongyang will change eventually. At the final stage, North Korea stops North-South dialogue, exchange, and cooperation.

The history of North-South relations shows that North Korea will go back to the negotiation table following a “cooling off” period after a crisis. The long-range missile launch seems to be a climax of a crisis. So, Pyongyang will return to the negotiation table sooner or later. That is a positive side of the nuclear issue. But, I am not sure when the North will resume dialogue. Kim Jong-il may believe that he holds leverage in the person of the two U.S. reporters and the South Korean who have been detained for almost two months.

Policy cooperation and consultation among concerned countries are necessary to force North Korea to shift its nuclear policy. Concerned countries must put strong pressure on Pyongyang to open and reform its system. That is the only way for North Korea to abandon nuclear weapons and reach accommodation with the international community.

How to Deal with the North Korean Problem: A South Korean Perspective

By Ho-Yeol Yoo

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Kim Il Sung in 2012, North Korea is boosting its strength and power by saying that it would put on the doorplate of a "Strong and Prosperous State," but North Korea has had only two leaders since the establishment of an independent government in 1948. The health of 68 year old Kim Jong-il seems to be restored from his recent stroke, but we are not sure whether the North Korean state system can be maintained while he is alive, or whether Kim will complete the handover of power to his successor, or whether Kim will make the critical decision to open and reform, and adopt changes in and out of North Korea.

North Korea has had a planned economy for more than 60 years, which is based on the control system guided by the center and has poured excessive resources into the military sector to maintain *Juche* (self-reliance) socialism. Since the adoption of the four defense goals in 1960s, North Korea possesses a powerful conventional military force as well as well-developed weapons of mass destruction, including missiles and chemical weapons. Because of its ill-planned economy and the *Juche* system, North Korea's economy has been experiencing difficulties over the last decades.

Despite short-term relief programs like the new economic measures adopted in July 2002, there is no evidence of improvement in ordinary people's living standard and the national economy as a whole. The food shortage is almost a constant and its currency has continued to decline from 150 NK Won to $1 in 2002 to approximately 3,600 won to $1 today. North Korea's foreign trade volume is also extremely small and is limited only to trade with China and South Korea. Reflecting such difficulties and hardships, Pyongyang urged its people not to have a fantasy about the outside world, but to have pride in their revolutionary leadership. In an effort to mobilize domestic resources, they called on North Koreans to follow the spirit of the Chollima (a legendary horse that flew 1,000 miles a day) Movement, which began in 1956 under the leadership of Kim Il Sung.

It has been almost 10 years since the inter-Korean relationship was improved by the historic inter-Korean summit between South Korea's former President Kim Dae Jung and Kim Jong-il in Pyongyang. Although inter-Korean relations entered a new phase, we could not see any fundamental changes in the North Korean regime and thus the true impact of inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation was limited. The Kumgang Mountain tourism project has been halted since South Korean female tourist Park Wang-ja was shot to death by a North Korean soldier in July 2008 and Kaesung tourism has been cancelled by North Korean authorities as a protest against political leaflets sent by South Korean NGOs last December.

Now, the Kaesung Industrial Complex in North Korea is the only official place for experimental exchanges and cooperation or a communication channel between the

two Korean governments. Even if the official government-to-government dialogue resumed in April 21 at North Korea's request, we are not sure when and how the two sides will resume a second round of dialogue. South Korea's main concern is to resolve the detention of a South Korean employee who was arrested by North Korean authorities and is still in custody on charges of defaming the North Korean system. But North Korea does not seem to have changed its previous positions and sticks to its demand to revise contracts to raise fees for using its land at the complex and receive higher wages for its workers.

North Korea's provocative actions and threats

North Korea's provocative actions and threats against South Korea and the international community have gone beyond the endurable these days. North Korea continues to make hostile accusations toward Lee Myung-bak's government and reaches the culmination of its political and military threats on the Korean Peninsula. Pyongyang's attitudes toward Washington are also gradually changing from waiting with expectation to losing patience. Even if North Korea tries to maintain amicable relationships with China and Russia, it turns its back to the Western world, including Japan, when it comes to human rights and proliferation issues.

In its joint New Year editorial in 2009, North Korea blamed the Lee Myung-bak government for the thorny inter-Korean relationship and attempted to instigate South-South discord by blaming the Lee government for the tensions and conflicts on the Peninsula. Since April 1, 2008, North Korea has officially blamed President Lee by name with hostile words on an average of 52 times a month, and increased the frequency to more than 90 times a month in 2009.

On January 17, a spokesman of the North Korean Army General Staff wearing a military uniform proclaimed on Korean Central TV that inter-Korean relations had entered a total confrontation stage as a result of South Korea's provocative actions. A spokesman for the North's Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland issued a statement threatening to scrap all political and military agreements with South Korea and declared the Northern Limit Line proclaimed by the South would not be valid after January 30. Kim Jong-il, as chairman of the Defense Commission, replaced the minister of defense and the chief of the General Staff of the People's Army with those regarded as hardliners and named one of his loyalists as one of the deputy chairmen of the Commission to strengthen his own power.

Even before its declaration to withdraw from the Six-Party Talks in response to the UN Security Council's presidential statement in April, North Korea threatened to resume its nuclear development program unless its demand to create a nuclear-free zone on the Korean Peninsula would be realized prior to the establishment of a verification system in the second stage of the dismantlement of Pyongyang's nuclear program. It argued that complete dismantlement of the North's nuclear program should occur in parallel with nuclear disarmament talks among nuclear states, including the United States. North Korea also justified its attempts to possess nuclear weapons by referring to the U.S. nuclear umbrella for South Korea.

In spite of the concerns and warnings of the international community, North Korea launched a long-range missile and thus increased the level of tensions on the Korean Peninsula significantly. The launch was in violation of UNSC Resolutions 1695 and 1718; however, North Korea insisted that it was successful in launching a communications satellite named Bright Star 2 that was mounted on the Galaxy 2 rocket. According to Pyongyang, the satellite is in orbit and sending telecommunication signals. North Korea argues that it is a historic and scientific achievement to join peaceful space development programs. According to them, any threats or sanctions against their rocket launch violate international norms and law and they would fight them with every means available to defend their sovereignty.

Their logic also argues that any infringement of their rights and sovereignty justifies their withdrawal from the Six-Party Talks, since the spirit of the September 19 joint statement to resolve North Korea's nuclear problem recognizes the sovereignty of participating states. In response to North Korea's missile launch, South Korean government revealed its plan to join the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) as a full member. North Korea immediately reacted by claiming that such action would be a formal declaration of war on North Korea and it was ready to take decisive measures in response.

North Korea maximized the level of tension on the Korean Peninsula in early March by cutting military communications and blocking access to the Kaesung Industrial Complex in a protest against the ROK-U.S. joint military exercise (*Key Resolve*) in South Korea. They argued the joint military exercise was a preparation to attack North Korea and thus it is quite natural to behave as if a war situation has descended on the whole peninsula by terminating exchanges and cooperation done in a peace-time situation.

The North also tightened its border security by arresting two female U.S. journalists who had covered North Korean refugees near the border between China and North Korea. After a thorough investigation in Pyongyang, the two journalists seem ready to be put on trial for illegal entry and anti-North Korean activities. In addition, North Korean authorities detained a South Korean employee working at the Kaesung Industrial Complex on suspicion of denouncing the North Korean political system and encouraging a female North Korean worker to defect. The South Korean detainee has been in custody for more than 45 days without access to any South Korean officials, which is a violation of the inter-Korean agreements for the operation of the Kaesung Industrial Complex. The arbitrary internment of civilians is contrary to all agreed safety measures and heightened tensions on the Peninsula.

North Korea's recent provocative behavior and hostile threats seemed to stem from disappointments about the new governments in Seoul and Washington. They are rightfully upset by such concrete actions as launching a long-range missile, restricting access to Kaesung, and the internment of civilians. The subjects are also being released by the General Staff of North Korean Army, the High Command of North Korea's Armed Forces, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland.

Responses to the North Korea provocations

In response to the rising provocative actions of North Korea, it is necessary to take effective countermeasures through a careful analysis of North Korea's intent and the type and level of provocation. By focusing on the transformation of North Korea's provocation from a simple threat to an action, we need to prepare for everything in various stages around the Peninsula. Overreacting to North Korean threats would lead to excessive risk and thus would fulfill what North Korea intentions. Calm and coordinated caution is needed.

North Korea's threats against and libel of the Lee Myung-bak government are gradually expanding to South Korean society as a whole and are becoming a threat to the international community in general. Therefore, in preparation for a sudden crisis in this region, the establishment of comprehensive and coordinated efforts and response are required. Despite hitting the Lee Myung-bak government directly, the North failed to achieve its goal and thus it could accelerate its threats. From the initial stage, therefore, close cooperation in the international community, including solid coordination between South Korea and the U.S. is definitely needed.

It is believed that North Korea's reckless provocations will not lead to the collapse of its system as its leadership will make the decision to avoid war; however, effective responses to threats to prevent a crisis should be made. North Korea attempted to create an alternative regime to resolve its nuclear problem, but the UN Security Council chose to condemn and punish North Korea's provocation. UN Security Council Resolution 1718 was reaffirmed to issue regulations highlighting the principle of the nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction and thus South Korea should issue a formal declaration to join the PSI as a full member. China as a leading state in this region as well as an emerging leader of the world should make serious considerations to participate in PSI, to promote world peace and stability and in preparation of turning the initiative into a formal institution.

Instead of adopting a new measure, the Six-Party Talks participants, excluding North Korea, should agree on concentrated and concrete measures to overcome the crisis. It is reported that Washington is interested in resuming a formal bilateral dialogue with North Korea, but only in the framework of the Six-Party Talks. The other participants in the talks are eager to see a constructive dialogue, but close consultations among them are a precondition for bilateral talks. The United States and China, in particular, should make every effort to build a constructive partnership and determine to genuinely resolve the North Korean problem. The international community needs to agree that North Korea's threats and provocation should be dealt with, and it should be an absolute principle to not yield to the North's threats and recklessness. Establishing confidence and trust in the process of dealing with North Korean problems would turn the current phase of the crisis into an opportunity in this region.

The Lee Myung-bak government's North Korea Policy, "The Vision 3000-Denuclearization and Openness" should be differentiated from the policies and strategies of the Sunshine policy in a correct way to deal with North Korea. South-South conflict

and the lack of communication and integration need to be resolved by reestablishing the principle of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and reciprocity between the two Koreas. Complementary actions and efforts to convince a number of nongovernmental organizations regardless of their outlook should proceed in parallel with realizing the will and philosophy of the ruling government.

The Lee government has not had enough time to settle its long-term North Korea policy; instead it has focused resources and efforts to overcome the economic crisis. It is now time for it to pay more attention to the North Korean problem and assume leadership in inter-Korean relations. The Lee government needs to redefine the philosophy and vision of the government of the Republic of Korea as part of the process of firmly establishing the legality and legitimacy of the republic.

The Lee government's election commitment to the Vision 3000 – should be followed up to regain the support it won almost two years ago. It should highlight peace and security, resolution of the North's nuclear issue, and the benefits to ordinary North Koreans of the improvement of the inter-Korean relations as key areas of its North Korea policy.

To build a new inter-Korean relationship, the Lee government should continue to reorganize government institutes that work on these matters. Given the current situation and the capabilities of the government, the ministries of foreign affairs, defense, and unification, the Blue House and the National Intelligence Service should be closely and systematically coordinated to create and implement comprehensive policies. The Obama government seems ready to focus on the North Korean problem by completing the institutional scheme coordinated by Special Representative Stephen Bosworth; however it is not yet clear who in South Korea who would be his counterpart on a regular basis. South Korea and the U.S. should have learned that they need to maintain a close communication channel if U.S.-DPRK bilateral talks resume to avoid confusion and misunderstanding between the two allies. Given the North's desire to drive a wedge between the U.S. and South Korea, it is urgent to have working-level cooperation as well as coordination in the control towers in both Seoul and Washington.

Beyond resolving the current problems on the Korean Peninsula, there are a couple of other issues to be dealt with. In the spirit of peaceful coexistence, it is necessary to consider the peace system on the Korean Peninsula. Even though they have begun to discuss this matter within the framework of the Six-Party Talks, it is expected that North Korea will raise the issue at the U.S.-DPRK dialogue. The South Korean government already said that it would not oppose such a dialogue but it is necessary for us to join the talks when they discuss the peace treaty and the replacement of the current system with a permanent peace regime on the Peninsula. In the process of transformation, there might be turmoil in and around North Korea and thus both South Korea and the U.S. should prepare for such contingencies in a coordinated ways. The Helsinki process in Europe in the 1970s could be applied to this region to maintain security and lead controlled change in North Korea.

North Korean domestic needs such as food shortages and economic development should be dealt with in coordination with neighboring countries. The Lee government's policy, Vision 3000, can create a common approach to those issues. In addition, the problems of North Korean refugees, abductees, South Korean POWs, and overall North Korean human rights issues should be resolved in an orchestrated way by sharing information and experiences between the U.S. and South Korea.

The paradigm on the Korean Peninsula has changed. North Korea's hostile threats and provocation reflect such changes. Weapons of mass destruction should be eliminated from the Korean Peninsula, but we also need to prepare for emergencies in North Korea. Global and regional policies of the U.S. and China seem to be in the process of readjustment. If we go too far too quickly, it will cause unnecessary confusion and bring more problems to the Peninsula. Focusing only on North's provocation and threats or hastening dialogue with North Korea to revive dialogue would drive us all into a North Korea-led game once again.

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