



## **A Path to Progress for the Six-Party Talks**

by Scott Snyder, Ralph A. Cossa, and Brad Glosserman

The fourth round of Six-Party Talks, scheduled to resume in late August after a three-week recess, have raised hopes that progress may finally be possible in resolving the North Korea nuclear weapons standoff. Increased U.S. flexibility and a greater attempt to listen to the concerns of all the involved parties have contributed to an improved atmosphere for dialogue. In the final analysis, however, the prospects for success in resolving the current crisis remain limited, unless all six parties – or at least the other five, absent the DPRK – have a clear, common understanding of desired outcomes and objectives, a common definition of what constitutes success (or failure) and a common roadmap for getting from where we are today to where we want and need to be.

The record casts doubt on whether the Six-Party Talks is up to the challenge of denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula. Efforts by all parties have fallen short of their rhetorical commitments in the past and Pyongyang has proven itself a master at exploiting the differences that continue to exist among its other interlocutors.

For this reason, the other five participants (less the DPRK) need to reach common understanding on what constitutes failure – on what the “deal breakers” might be. A firm common stance on such issues will reduce Pyongyang’s ability to play at the fissures in their time-honored game of “divide and conquer.” A clearer common definition of failure will help the Talks ultimately succeed since Pyongyang would be hard-pressed to ignore common stances, just as it finds irresistible the temptation to exploit the differences.

In the one instance where the other five have all spoken firmly and publicly on the same issue – in warning of the “severe consequences” that would result if the North were to conduct a nuclear test – Pyongyang appears to have heard and honored the message. The reverse can also be true: thus far only Washington seems to be speaking out firmly against allowing Pyongyang to have any form of “peaceful” nuclear energy program. Without a single voice on this issue, compromise on Pyongyang’s part seems unlikely.

While the road ahead is sure to be bumpy, all remain committed to the diplomatic process; circumstances suggest that no member of the Six-Party Talks process favors military action as a vehicle for resolving the crisis, and there is little evidence that China or Russia is willing at this point to take the North Korean nuclear issue to the UN Security Council or to devise some other forum for addressing this issue. Therefore, the odds are high that some of six-way dialogue will continue after the August 2005 “recess.”

A joint statement, if achieved, will represent only a modest step forward, however. Equally important will be an

agreement to resurrect the six-party working-level effort both to more specifically identify the core problems, concerns, and points of concurrence and contention, and to start charting the course ahead. We suggest that the following issues and areas of research and dialogue be placed high on any working group agenda, and on the agenda of other track one and track two efforts that seek to facilitate the six-party process.

**Clearly Define Objectives and Criteria for Success/Failure and Coordinate Those Objectives With Other Participants in the Six-Party Talks.** Many differences remain over the definitional issues associated with the common rhetorical goal of “the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” If the United States cannot gain support for its definition of comprehensive dismantlement from the other parties, this objective will likely prove unsustainable. The U.S. must hold further discussions with its counterparts outside the context of Six-Party Talks on the objectives of the talks and the specific measures that must be taken to fulfill those objectives.

**Clearly Define Lessons from the “Libyan Model” for the Six-Party Talks.** The U.S. has commended the “Libya model” as a preferred approach to dismantling the DPRK’s nuclear program. However, there is no comprehensive study of the lessons from the Libyan case that would be most applicable to the DPRK. There should be research to determine the aspects of the Libyan experience that are most applicable to North Korea.

**Determine the Functions and Modalities of a Six Party Verification and Monitoring Regime for the DPRK.** There is a need for meetings including participation from members of the six-party process (with or without North Korean participation) to examine comparative strengths and weaknesses of various approaches to verification and monitoring. Technical analysis and comparison of available inspections regimes should be pursued through workshops and research. This effort might also include an assessment of the skills and capabilities of potential participants in any multilateral verification regime, and the development of appropriate training materials for them.

**Undertake a Comprehensive Post-Agreed Framework Assessment (including Lessons Learned from the First North Korean Nuclear Crisis).** There is a need to examine the lessons from the first North Korean nuclear crisis and their implications for future verification efforts with the DPRK. This work should examine how technological advances may facilitate the use of more effective and less intrusive verification measures that might be more easily implemented as part of any final settlement. The goal is to develop a clearer understanding of how the DPRK views verification issues and whether there are technology or other applications that might assist in overcoming potential DPRK obstacles to an agreement.

**Identify Future Needs and Next Steps Toward Nuclear Transparency in Northeast Asia.** Establishment of the Six-Party Talks has revealed a new openness to consider an institutionalized dialogue on regional issues beyond the North Korean nuclear problem. A conference should be convened to discuss nuclear transparency issues and the development of regional institutions in Northeast Asia while also supporting any likely verification vehicle that might develop through the talks. This effort would be designed to build linkages between European officials and energy experts involved or familiar with EURATOM cooperative efforts and East Asian officials and nuclear specialists.

**Prevent Illicit DPRK Procurement or Trade Activities.** As diplomacy proceeds, there will be an ongoing need for measures to constrain DPRK alternatives and to curb its illicit procurement activities. There is a need for research to determine whether there are new monitoring technologies that might support the PSI. As Washington and Beijing agree that the transport of fissile or other illicit materials should be prevented, this also provides the basis for enhanced Sino-U.S. technical cooperation. Pyongyang has stated that it will not export nuclear weapons or fissile material; it should be offered the chance to demonstrate this commitment through an invitation to join the PSI and demonstrate transparency on this issue.

**Beyond the Nuclear Issue: Addressing Security Assurances.** All parties agree that multilateral security assurances will be part of the final settlement. While the focus of discussions has been on providing security assurances to Pyongyang, all six parties have legitimate security concerns that must be addressed. Regional security outlooks prepared by ARF governments could be studied to better identify the security concerns that must be addressed and set the stage for developing the confidence building measures and monitoring/verification mechanisms needed for any final agreement.

**Beyond the Nuclear Issue: Addressing Missile Verification.** We recommend a joint U.S.-Japan study of their concerns about DPRK missile capabilities. It would consider whether joint U.S.-Japan efforts on missile defense can fully respond to Japan's security concerns and the monitoring and verification measures necessary to enhance confidence in any deal with the DPRK to freeze its missile development and deployment activities. This research might also explore Japanese incentives that could induce the DPRK to give up its missile program and how the missile issue should be dealt with in relation to multilateral security assurances that might be offered as part of the Six-Party Talks.

These recommendations are part of "The Six-Party Talks: Developing a Roadmap for Future Progress," a new Pacific Forum CSIS study by Scott Snyder, Ralph A. Cossa, and Brad Glosserman. The analysis reviews the origins of the current crisis and the progress of the Six-Party Talks to date, examines areas of agreement and disagreement among the parties, assesses prospects for the future of the talks, and identifies technical issues, uncertainties, and information needs that the parties will need to address if the Six-Party Talks are to proceed and ultimately succeed. The study, part of the Pacific Forum's Issues & Insights series, is available at <http://www.csis.org/pacfor/issues%5Cv05n08.pdf>.

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