

**National Committee on American Foreign Policy and
DPRK Institute for Disarmament and Peace Roundtable
on Northeast Asia Security**

September 28-30, 2003

Summary Report

with

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(For Limited Distribution Only)

Introduction

The National Committee on American Foreign Policy hosted a multilateral Track One and a Half conference about the nuclear standoff on the Korean Peninsula on September 29-30, 2003, in New York City. North Korea (DPRK) sent a four-man delegation from the Institute for Disarmament and Peace led by H. E. Amb. Li Gun. Also present were government officials, former officials, and academics from the United States, China, Japan, and South Korea (ROK).

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, former Secretary of State, was a speaker. Donald W. Keyser, Principal Dep. Asst. Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, attended the meeting. The keynote speakers were: H. E. Amb. Jin Guihua from China, H. E. Amb. Yukio Satoh from Japan, H. E. Amb. Han Sung-joo from South Korea, Amb. Charles Kartman from the United States, and H. E. Minister Li from North Korea. (A full list of participants is appended.)

The conference was funded by the Carnegie Corporation, the U.S.-Japan Foundation, and the Ford Foundation.

There was a frank exchange of views on the current nuclear stalemate and there were a number of suggestions made for reducing tensions. Most of the participants agreed that the most promising vehicle for reaching a solution to the problem is the six-party talks recently begun in Beijing which includes: the United States, China, Japan, Russia, North Korea, and South Korea.

But there was also general agreement that nonofficial dialogue among informed participants could usefully supplement the official dialogue.

Summary and Conclusions

The current nuclear standoff allows for both optimism and pessimism. The optimism stems from the fact that there seems to be some agreement among the various parties involved as to how to resolve the issue. First, all the parties agree that a resolution should be reached by peaceful means

and through dialogue. Second, all the parties agree that the Korean Peninsula should be nuclear-free. Minister Li Gun said both orally at the meeting, and in his paper, that the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is our final goal.

Third, there is a general agreement that any ultimate solution will have to be a comprehensive one, in the sense that it would encompass not only nuclear weapons, but also economic cooperation, security assurances, and eventual diplomatic recognition. Fourth, there is a general understanding that the six-party format should continue, with some believing that this should lead to a new security framework for Northeast Asia. Although Minister Li Gun was ambiguous in his statements at the conference about whether the DPRK would continue to take part in this format, he did say at one point that we understand the [six-party] process will continue.

Finally, since the first round of multilateral talks was held in Beijing in late August 2003, until the time of our meeting, all the parties, including North Korea, have refrained from taking provocative actions that might prove detrimental to continuing the dialogue. It is notable that at our New York meeting, Minister Li did not threaten to resume testing and he used the phrase nuclear deterrence instead of nuclear deterrence.

Other noteworthy elements in Minister Li's remarks in New York were: he seemed to back away from the earlier DPRK insistence on a Non-Aggression Pact with the United States; he said that all the necessary elements for reassuring the DPRK were contained in the Joint Statement issued when Secretary of State Madeline Albright visited Pyongyang in October 2000; he reiterated the package deal proposal advanced by the North Koreans at the Beijing talks (for a summary of the package deal, see the appendices); and he stressed North Korea's desire to reform its economy and to integrate itself into the global economy. In response to a question, he said that he understands that no economy can be successful in the modern world without integrating it into the world economy.

Although there are some areas of agreement among the parties, key disagreements and obstacles are also apparent. First, there is a stalemate between the United States and the DPRK. The Bush Administration insists that North Korea first take practical steps to demonstrate its intent to abandon its nuclear program and North Korea insists that the United States should first take steps to prove that it is abandoning its hostile policy toward North Korea. Second, there continues to be much debate and deliberation as to how the North Korean desire to have security assurances from the United States should be addressed. Third, there is the complex issue of North Korea's nuclear enrichment program. There is a disagreement regarding whether the DPRK actually possesses a HEU (highly-enriched uranium) program, and as to whether it has ever admitted to having such a program. At the six-party meeting and, again, in New York, the DPRK denied both possessing such a program and having ever admitted to such possession.

Keynote Speeches

North Korea

Minister Li Gun said that the Bush Administration seeks to strangle and isolate North Korea and to coerce it into disarmament. The Bush Administration, he said, also slandered DPRK leaders and called for regime change. It is continuing military exercises and a military buildup that threatens North Korea.

The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is North Korea's final goal but the U.S. policy of coercion creates great obstacles. If the United States has an interest in denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula, it should abandon its hostile policy.

United States

An American speaker said there is a widespread view in the Bush Administration that North Korea cannot be trusted to fulfill its agreements, because it began an enriched uranium program even before the Bush Administration came into office and this HEU program violates the Agreed Framework of 1994. Still, he continued, the Bush Administration is prepared to seek an agreement with North Korea on a phased basis. The six-party format, he said, is important because the nuclear issue is a regional one. He said also that some way would have to be found within the multilateral framework to have bilateral discussions.

China

A Chinese speaker said there was no breakthrough in the six-party talks, but there were positive results and a common understanding. This common understanding included: continuing the six-party process; resolving the issue peacefully through talks; denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula; and addressing North Korea's security concerns.

But, continued the Chinese speaker, major differences exist. The United States says that North Korea must unconditionally give up its nuclear program before there can be a discussion of North Korean concerns and North Korea says that the United States must abandon its hostility before any positive steps can be taken by the DPRK. Second, North Korea says that unless the United States agrees to a Non-Aggression Pact, North Korea will continue its nuclear program, but the United States rejects such a pact and insists on the unconditional end of North Korea's nuclear program. Third, North Korea put forward a package deal for denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula which the United States flatly rejected.

The Chinese speaker concluded that the United States and North Korean positions were

diametrically opposed. In addition, there is much mutual distrust. But he counseled patience. It took eighteen months to get the Agreed Framework of 1994, he said.

He offered two ideas to help resolve the nuclear stalemate. First, the United States and North Korea have convergent interests in the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Both the United States and North Korea also have a convergence of interests in a secure North Korea. Thus, there could be a denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in exchange for security guarantees for North Korea.

On the tactical side, the Chinese speaker pointed out that the U.S. position at the six- party talks is that the United States has no intention of threatening or invading North Korea or to change its regime if North Korea gives up its nuclear program. And North Korea said that it would consider giving up its nuclear program if the United States were to end its policy of hostility. So there is a possible meeting point between the two sides.

The Chinese speaker concluded by saying that China's consistent policy has been that the Korean Peninsula must be free of nuclear weapons. He said, too, that the reasonable security concerns of North Korea should be addressed at the next round of talks. In the meantime, everyone should be restrained and refrain from escalation.

Japan

A Japanese speaker said there is a broadly-shared view among the stakeholders about the need for a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula and he noted that Minister Li Gun had said that this is North Korea's final goal. He observed that Japan continues to adhere to its policy of not possessing or producing nuclear weapons and of not allowing their entry into Japan.

With regard to North Korea's security concerns, the Japanese speaker said that no country harbors hostile intent toward the DPRK or seeks to change its regime. He said that North Korea's concerns would, hopefully, be addressed at the six- party talks and he observed that the dialogue today should help to relieve those fears.

Japan, he said, also wants North Korea to stop testing and exporting missiles and to put biological and chemical weapons programs under international control.

Japan also looks forward to normalizing relations with North Korea on the basis of Prime Minister Koizumi's Pyongyang Declaration.

As to the so-called abduction issue, there is deep resentment in Japan over this matter and it is essential to have a fair resolution before normalization of relations can take place between Japan and North Korea.

The Japanese speaker went on to say that North Korea's testing of missiles and the abduction issue has changed Japanese attitudes and increased support for missile defense and for the alliance with the United States. Still, the Japanese government is ready to resolve the nuclear issue with North Korea. Such a normalization of relations is essential if Japan is to give aid to North Korea in accordance with the Pyongyang Declaration.

The Japanese speaker concluded by noting the absence of any regional framework for security cooperation in Northeast Asia.

South Korea

A South Korean speaker noted that there is cause both for optimism and pessimism about the nuclear issue. On the positive side, there is agreement on the need for a peaceful resolution of the issue; there is a consensus to keep the Korean Peninsula denuclearized; there is an agreement that any solution must be comprehensive. He observed that the other parties will respond to any positive initiatives by North Korea. He said also that the multilateral format, as represented by the six-party talks, is here to stay. And he observed that all parties have refrained from provocative actions since the beginning of these talks.

There are, however, key disagreements on several issues. First, there is the security guarantee North Korea is seeking. North Korea, he said, needs to clarify the kinds of assurances it seeks. And he asked whether the United States can provide security assurances to North Korea in ways other than a Non-Aggression Pact. Second, he continued, there is the problem of North Korea's enriched uranium program. There is disagreement over whether North Korea has or ever admitted to having such a program. And North Korea needs to make an effort to show that it has no facilities for producing enriched uranium.

Third, there is the question of how to proceed—whether by simultaneous, sequential or parallel steps. This is not unsolvable.

Finally, with regard to the alleged hostile policy of the United States, the South Korean speaker said that the U.S. policy is linked to the nuclear issue. North Korea needs to have a more forthcoming approach in order to resolve this issue. And, he warned, if the issue is not resolved,

it will trigger an arms race in Northeast Asia and it will lead to an extremely dangerous and uncontrollable situation.

North Korea (Again)

Minister Li Gun said there were two points that emerged from the six-party talks. First, there is the issue of commitment. There needs to be a clear commitment from both the United States and North Korea. The main concern of the United States is the nuclear issue. The main concern of North Korea is security. Both sides need to make a commitment. The United States has to commit itself to abandoning its hostile policy. And North Korea has to commit itself to abandoning its nuclear program.

As to the next round of the six-party talks, North Korea has low expectations. AWe understand,@ he said, that Ait will continue.@ But before agreeing to participate, North Korea needs some reassurance that Awe will talk equally@ and it will not be a case of one side making Aunilateral demands.@

In subsequent discussion, Minister Li said that North Korea was Anot complaining@ about the six-party talks but he said that North Korea was Adisappointed.@

Discussion Highlights

An American participant summed up his impressions of what the parties were trying to accomplish. He noted there seems to be agreement on several issues. First, there is some North Korean commitment to the abandonment of its nuclear program. Second, there is agreement on the need for a denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Third, there is agreement on the need for North Korea to participate in the international system and in the world economy and to have normal diplomatic relations with other powers.

The U.S. participant noted that he heard much about the mutual distrust between North Korea and the United States. The distrust could be removed only by moving forward toward the ultimate goal of denuclearization.

The participant characterized the current situation as follows. North Korea is actively increasing its nuclear capacity and has announced that it is reprocessing. This is in violation of the Nonproliferation Treaty and of the Agreed Framework. There is, moreover, a deadline because reprocessing will at some point reach an intolerable level.

The participant said he could understand why North Korea does not want to abandon its nuclear program without some idea of what it can get if it does. But the reprocessing should stop or the United States will feel under pressure to bring matters to a head. Moreover, it is inconceivable that any U.S. administration will normalize relations with a nuclear North Korea. As to the stages of the denuclearization process, this could be a matter for discussion.

Regarding the matter of distrust, North Korea says that it sees U.S. policy as an attempt to disarm North Korea. But there is another interpretation of North Korean motives other than that it feels threatened and needs to be reassured. That is that North Korea seeks to isolate South Korea and then to demand the total withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Korea. And if the United States were to fail to comply, North Korea could accuse it of being in violation of the Nonaggression Treaty it seeks. So, continued the participant, he was opposed to a Nonaggression Treaty on two counts. First, the United States should not be singled out as a special threat to another country. He had no difficulty with a general pledge of nonaggression that other countries could join. Second, the United States should not negotiate about Korea without South Korea.

The matter of mutual distrust, continued the participant, will not easily be removed. But each side should not seek to undermine the other.

Concerning the issue of regime change, the participant said that he is not an admirer of the North Korean system but regime change should not be a U.S. objective. There are, however, two aspects to this issue. First, the United States can not affect what happens inside North Korea. Second, the United States can, however, agree not to use military pressure to help bring about regime change in North Korea.

The six-party negotiation, he continued, is meaningful because each of the six parties has a fundamental interest in regional peace. In fact, Japan, China, South Korea, and Russia are more threatened by North Korean nuclear weapons than is the United States. So the threat is to the international system and not just to the United States.

The participant is opposed to the tendency to turn the multilateral forum into a bilateral U.S.-North Korean negotiation. There needs to be a common position on the part of all five parties and, hopefully, North Korea. He is opposed to a purely bilateral negotiation because the outcome should guarantee the security of Northeast Asia.

Finally, said the participant, the nuclear issue can be addressed in two phases. There needs to be an end to reprocessing in the first phase while negotiations are going on. This will give us time to discuss the second phase.

Minister Li had three responses to the U.S. participant. First, North Korea seeks security guarantees only from the United States and not from the other parties because the United States is the only party which creates a threat to North Korea. Second, the U.S. participant observed that the multilateral forum should not be turned into a bilateral negotiation between North Korea and the United States. But in the six-party talks, Minister Li said, North Korea had intensive discussions with China, Russia, Japan and South Korea, but only twenty minutes with the United States. Third, Minister Li denied that it was North Korea's intent to undermine U.S. relations with South Korea or any of the other parties.

The U.S. participant responded by reiterating his view that the multilateral talks should not be used as an excuse to say that the issue confronting us is strictly a U.S.-North Korea problem. But, if there is progress toward some kind of agreed framework for resolving the issue, a real bilateral dialogue between the United States and North Korea will inevitably develop.

Conclusion

There was general agreement among the participants that the meeting convened by the National Committee on American Foreign Policy was, in the words of one U.S. participant, Aextremely useful.@ There was also agreement that U.S., South Korean, Chinese and Japanese views converge on the need for an overall security system for Northeast Asia. Finally, there was agreement that the critical question of where we are going could usefully be addressed in Track Two or One and a Half meetings such as this.

Appendix A

A North Korean Proposal

The following is the keynote speech given by Kim Yong Il, North Korea >s vice minister of foreign affairs, at the six-party talks in Beijing Aug. 27. It is the most detailed account to date of what the North Koreans proposed, and appeared in an article published by KCNA, the state-run news agency:

For a package solution, the U.S. should conclude a non-aggression treaty with the D.P.R.K., establish diplomatic relations with it, and guarantee the economic cooperation between the D.P.R.K. and Japan and between the north and the south of Korea. And it should also compensate for the loss of electricity caused by the delayed provision of light-water reactors [LWRs] and complete their construction.

For this, the D.P.R.K. should not make nuclear weapons and allow the nuclear inspection, finally dismantle its nuclear facility, put on ice the missile test fire, and stop its export.

According to the order of simultaneous actions, the U.S. should resume the supply of heavy-fuel oil and sharply increase the humanitarian food aid while the DPRK should declare its will to scrap its nuclear program.

According to this order, we will allow the refreeze of our nuclear facility and nuclear substance and monitoring and inspection of them from the time the U.S. has concluded a nonaggression treaty with the DPRK and compensated for the loss

of electricity.

We will settle the missile issue when diplomatic relations are opened between the DPRK and the U.S. and between the DPRK and Japan. And we will dismantle our nuclear facility from the time the LWRs are completed.

First, the DPRK and the U.S. should make clear their will to clear up bilateral concerns. The DPRK will clarify its will to dismantle its nuclear

program if the U.S. makes clear its will to give up its hostile policy toward the DPRK.

Second, all the countries participating in the six-way talks should agree on the principle to implement the measures for solving the nuclear issue between the DPRK and the U.S. through simultaneous actions.

If our reasonable proposal is turned aside at the talks, we will judge that the U.S. does not intend to give up its attempt to stifle the DPRK by force at an appropriate time while persistently insisting the DPRK scrap its nuclear program first to waste time.

In this case, the DPRK cannot dismantle its nuclear deterrent force but will have no option but to increase it. Whether the nuclear issue will be settled or not depends on the U.S. attitude.

