



Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik  
German Institute for International and Security Affairs



Konrad  
Adenauer  
Stiftung

## 10<sup>th</sup> Berlin Conference on Asian Security (BCAS)

### *Nuclear Stability in Asia Strengthening Order in Times of Crises*

Berlin, June 19-21, 2016

A conference jointly organized by Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), Berlin  
and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), Berlin

Discussion Paper  
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### *Session III: North Korea's nuclear program*

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# Denuclearization of Korea: Keep Working

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## Abstract

The emphasis on economic gains, which the DPRK will get in case it abandons its nuclear ambitions, failed to bring any tangible results. While paying due attention to economic aspects of the settlement, it is necessary to keep in mind that the nuclear problem was caused, first of all, by the drastic deterioration of North Korea's security environment. For the North Korean regime, security is the top priority. Until the current situation in this field changes, the world community will have to coexist with a nuclear-armed North Korea. The process of economic integration and globalization in Northeast Asia can be utilized for modifying North Korea's behavior. This policy, which aims at a real involvement of the DPRK in globalization and the cooperation processes in NEA, can convince North Korea's leaders that the international community has taken on a road leading to the DPRK's peaceful integration into the existing international political and economic order instead of forcing a regime change scenario on the country.

*North Korea, nuclear problem, non-proliferation, security, engagement*

## 1. Denuclearizing North Korea: Wrong Assumptions

The history has proved that economic inducements are not sufficient to make North Korea to give up her nuclear ambitions. North Korea's security concerns are a key issue to be addressed in order to find a solution to the nuclear problem. The habitual emphasis on economic benefits which will get the DPRK in case it gives up its nuclear ambitions made by many experts and the majority of the media was wishful thinking. Moreover, such an approach leads us away from the essence of the problem.

While paying attention to the economic aspects of the settlement, it is necessary to remember that the nuclear problem on the Korean peninsula was caused, first of all, by a security crisis in the region. Economic factors matter, too, but security considerations were certainly at the forefront for the DPRK's leaders. The nuclear problem emerged in the beginning of the 1990s and as North Korea's reaction to

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drastic deterioration of her security situation caused by two major international developments.

The first one was the unilateral use of force by the U.S.A. and other NATO member states with the purpose of regime change in a number of sovereign countries in Europe and Asia. The second factor was the USSR's dissolution and abrogation of the bilateral military-political alliance treaty of 1961 between Moscow and Pyongyang by a new Russian leadership.

World history provides us with some examples when states were pushed for such a choice because of real or imaginary threat. In the 1970s, South Korea, frightened by the prospect that sudden rapprochement between the U.S.A. and China would deprive her of the American nuclear shield, made an attempt to acquire nuclear weapons. These ambitions were curbed only after Washington re-confirmed its security guarantees to Seoul

In his testimony at the Senate in 2004, James Kelly mentioned that normalization of relations with North Korea will be possible after she complies with the US demands concerning not only the nuclear issue, but also those concerning the reduction of conventional armaments, the liquidation of stockpiles of chemical and bacteriological weapons, human rights, export of narcotics and fake dollars.

In view of such a position, the negotiations on the nuclear issue are losing any meaning from the DPRK's point of view because even full compliance with the U.S. demands on the non-proliferation agenda would not allow Pyongyang to achieve its main objective of an enhanced security as a result of normalization of relations with the United States, for which North Korea had agreed to participate in these negotiations –.

One can wonder what would have happened with the Soviet-American Strategic Arms Limitation Talks in the 1970-1980s if, for example, a human rights issue was also included in the agenda?

North Korea's missile launches and nuclear tests are nothing more than a clear signal of Pyongyang's frustration with Washington's stubborn refusal to work seriously towards achieving a mutually acceptable compromise on security issues and its incessant resorting to pressure, sanctions and demonizing the DPRK's leadership.

At the moment, taking into consideration the domestic political situations in the U.S.A., the ROK and Japan, it is plausible to suggest that the denuclearization of North Korea in the short and even medium term is unlikely. A more realistic agenda could be to obtain two obligations from the DPRK: to abstain from testing and to abstain from proliferating nuclear weapons and relevant technologies as well as missiles and their workmanship. The future of the Six-Party process depends mainly on its ability to adjust the talks' mandate to the changed realities.

One can expect that North Korea will continue her course that has been started in 2006, trying to solve the nuclear problem according to “the Indian model”, i.e. calling the United States and other participants of the Six-Party talks to abandon double standards on nuclear and missile proliferation. The position, by the way, was mainly provoked by the United States, which concluded the so-called nuclear deal with India in 2006 in violation of both the U.S. and international laws governing the non-proliferation regime.

Pyongyang's behavior after the fourth nuclear test on January 6, 2016 and the second successful satellite launch one month later demonstrates that in the foreseeable future, all of us have to deal with the de-facto nuclear North Korea. Domestically the nuclear status was legitimized by amendments to the country's constitution in 2013 and finally reconfirmed by the DPRK top leader Kim Jong Un in his report to the rare WPK congress held on May 6-9, 2016 in Pyongyang.<sup>i</sup>

At the same time, the North Korean leader has sent an encouraging signal to the world by promising that the DPRK is going to be “a responsible nuclear state” and that she will not proliferate her WMD. In fact, the statement can be interpreted as Pyongyang's promise to abide with non-proliferation regimes while formally remaining outside of the NPT. Regretfully, the realities of the modern world are unlikely to encourage the North Korean leaders to give up their nuclear and missile “deterrent”.

## 2. History's Lessons

A major lesson that could be drawn from the recent events on the Korean peninsula is that the priority given to a pressure and sanctions approach in order to achieve a solution of North Korea's nuclear and missile issues has proved to be wrong. It is impossible to deny that the course has failed to achieve the aims his supporters, first of all the U.S.A. and its allies, had declared, i.e. the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

On the contrary, when faced with such an attitude, North Korea has conducted four nuclear tests between 2006 and 2016. After three unsuccessful attempts, she finally succeeded in launching two satellites in a row and has become a de facto nuclear power. A history of imposing sanctions against North Korea makes one recollect the famous saying on futility of attempts to do the same thing and expect a different result.

Meanwhile experience of dealing with the DPRK testifies that, in the majority of cases, excessive pressure and coercion had led to greater suspicion and hostility, while engagement and respect for certain positions shaped by history's legacies

brought about cooperation and compromise. The Agreed Framework of 1994, the US-DPRK Joint Communiqué reached during Vice-Marshal Cho Myong-rok's visit to the U.S.A. in October 2000, and the U.S. Secretary of State M. Albright's visit to Pyongyang the same month have proved that a compromise is possible if both sides have a political will to reach one.

Sure, North Korea is not an easy partner to deal with. We in Russia know it better than anyone else. But, if the military option is excluded, a political solution will not be possible without certain compromises.

In his article on foreign policy published during his election campaign in February 2012, President Vladimir Putin pointed out that

"all this fervor around the nuclear programs of Iran and North Korea makes one wonder how the risks of nuclear weapons proliferation emerge and who is aggravating them. It seems that the more frequent cases of crude and even armed outside interference in the domestic affairs of countries may prompt authoritarian (and other) regimes to possess nuclear weapons. If I have the A-bomb in my pocket, nobody will touch me because it's more trouble than it is worth. And those who don't have the bomb might have to sit and wait for "humanitarian intervention."<sup>ii</sup>

So the solution of the nuclear problem depends mainly on what choice will be made by the U.S.A. - whether Washington limits its demands to North Korea to a non-proliferation agenda or continues to use the talks as a tool to realize a regime change scenario. In the latter case, the DPRK is unlikely to give up its "nuclear deterrent".

### 3. Outlines for a Compromise

We certainly do not need any nuclear weapon on the Korean peninsula. But calls for the DPRK to return to the NPT would look more convincing if they were accompanied by definite multilateral commitments by the nuclear powers with regard to her security and her right to develop peaceful nuclear energy under appropriate IAEA safeguard. In the meantime, North Korea is presented with quite a voluminous set of requirements along with very vague promises that are supposed to flesh out only after she completely disarms. Well, what is happening with countries unable to defend themselves in the modern world, we see almost every day.

The mutual respect for the legitimate concerns of the parties in the field of security and cessation of the economic blockade of North Korea would make two absolutely essential elements of any future compromise. Such an agreement could include the following points:

1. The DPRK's return to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and to IAEA safeguard, including her joining the Additional Protocol must be accompanied by a clear statement of other participants of the Six-Party talks that, in this case, the country will be able to freely enjoy all the rights and benefits stemming from Article IV of the NPT, or, in other words, retain the right for peaceful use of nuclear energy. North Korea also disclaims nuclear tests and joins the CTBT.
2. The DPRK's right to launch satellites in accordance with the Treaty on the Use of Outer Space for peaceful purposes and other international agreements governing the activities of states in this area should be recognized. At the same time, Pyongyang, as a gesture of good will, should give up testing of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) and warheads for them. In general, missile programs of North and South Korea should have the same restrictions. An accession of both countries to the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) is advisable.
3. The above agreements on nuclear and missile issues could be enshrined in a new UN Security Council resolution. The document, among other things, should lift those sanctions, which would become redundant in view of the above mentioned arrangements. Moreover it should set a clear timetable for lifting the remaining restrictions with the acknowledgment and respect by the DPRK to her obligations under the NPT, MTCR and other international treaties to which it belongs, or to which it should join.
4. Given the depth of mistrust between Washington and Pyongyang, the U.S.A. guarantees for security to the DPRK can acquire the necessary degree of credibility if they are also given to China or Russia, or to both of them together. The precedent of such guarantees was created during the Cuban missile crisis and has since then demonstrated its viability.
5. The economic component of the settlement would be the transition from the emergency humanitarian assistance to the so-called development aid, in our case - the modernization of the DPRK's economy. The processes of globalization and economic integration unfolding in Northeast Asia provide us with additional opportunities for such an endeavor. The DPRK's participation in the implementation of multilateral energy, transport and other economic projects in the region would be (along with security guarantees) another proof for her ruling elite that the international community, especially the West, took on the path of gradual integration of the DPRK into the political, economic, financial, trade

institutions of the modern world, instead of trying to bring about regime change in the country. Unless the North Korean elite would be provided with convincing guarantees of her personal safety, adequate social status and a certain level of well-being after unification, the North Korean nomenclature would stay united and remain very reluctant to abandon the nuclear weapons.

Russia is firmly in favor of complete and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through political and diplomatic means. The problems of Korea can only be solved when the legitimate security concerns and economic development interests of all countries located in the region will be taken into consideration. In today's world, it is impossible to be safe, if your neighbors do not feel secure.

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ii Vladimir Putin. Russia in the Changing World. *Moscow News*. 2012.02.27.