

New Solutions for the DPRK Nuclear Crisis

Summary
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The following is a summary of a report (which can be found [here](#)) published on February 26, 2016 by EAI in Korean entitled “New Solutions for the DPRK Nuclear Crisis.”

The report was a product of a roundtable discussion on “North Korea Policy after the Fourth Nuclear Test” hosted by Dr. Young-Sun Ha (EAI) and Dr. Chaesung Chun (EAI & Seoul National University). The following experts attended the roundtable and contributed to this report: Dr. Byung-Yeon Kim (Seoul National University), Mr. Sung-lac Wi (Seoul National University), and Dr. Hee Ok Lee (Sungkyunkwan University).

I. Introduction

On January 6, 2016, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) carried out its fourth nuclear test. The DPRK has continued to develop its nuclear and missile technology in the face of sanctions and criticism from the international community. Furthermore, the possibility of the DPRK developing a hydrogen bomb and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) has taken the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula to a whole new level.

In light of DPRK’s increasingly threatening behavior, an investigation into why past sanction regimes have been ineffective is necessary to devise new policies. In that process, however, one must also keep in mind that the situation is much more complex now – any simple approach toward sanctions or engagement will not suffice if we

are to prevent another turn in the vicious cycle of DPRK’s nuclear and missile provocations.

This task is not an easy one, but we believe such new policies should at least be comprised of the following: making sanctions stronger and more efficient, a new security approach toward the DPRK without considering the nuclear option, developing a new diplomatic strategy for denuclearizing the DPRK along with a long-term engagement plan for peace on the Korean Peninsula, and devising a catalyst which can lead to the DPRK’s self-denuclearization as well as normalization through economic development.

II. Making Sanctions Stronger and More Efficient

Cooperation among the countries surrounding the Korean Peninsula is a requisite condition for the sanctions against the DPRK to be efficient. To do so, China’s role has been and will continue to be important.

Here, the Republic of Korea (ROK) must do all it can to keep issues related to the Korean Peninsula, including the denuclearization of the DPRK, from becoming linked to the strategic competition between China and the U.S. A key here is to clearly show China that ROK-U.S.-Japan security cooperation is not a threat. The ROK also needs to make it clear that it seeks

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peaceful coexistence with a non-nuclear DPRK and that it wants to pursue gradual and peaceful unification.

Accordingly, preventing a spark from igniting in U.S.-China relations over the Korean Peninsula is critical. In order to do this, it is necessary to continue improving relations and building trust with China. A China that shares aligned interests with the ROK pertaining to the denuclearization of the DPRK and actively participates in the sanctions against the DPRK is going to be the key to effectively implementing the new UN Security Council resolution.

III. Constructing a New Security Approach toward the DPRK

The ROK government should calmly respond to the DPRK’s development of nuclear weapons by considering longer term alternatives. Independently developing nuclear weapons is ineffective and unrealistic, and redeploying American tactical nuclear weapons to the Korean Peninsula is not feasible.

Rather, the ROK must quickly build up its deterrence and defense systems, and work to strengthen its missile defense systems and extended deterrence in cooperation with the U.S. Without running the risk of causing further instability in the region, the ROK government should ramp up its non-nuclear efforts to discourage the DPRK from developing nuclear weapons, eventually leading the Kim Jong Un regime to seek a new alternative.

At the same time, the ROK must actively strengthen its cooperation with the U.S. regarding extended deterrence. In order to

respond quickly and effectively to the DPRK’s rapidly increasing nuclear threat, defense spending must guarantee such efforts are completed faster than previously scheduled.

IV. Developing a New Diplomatic Strategy toward the DPRK

The DPRK has continued to repeat its demand for concluding a peace treaty with the U.S. since the early years of the nuclear crisis, and as the cycle of the nuclear crisis continues to roll on, there have been calls for such a peace treaty. On February 17th, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi suggested pursuing a parallel track approach of simultaneously realizing denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula and negotiating a peace treaty. In order to deal with the instability on the Korean Peninsula that has been caused by the nuclear crisis, a shift to a new diplomatic strategy is needed.

The ROK government’s new policy design should not only include a demand for sincere DPRK denuclearization, but also a guarantee for the survival of the DPRK regime if it denuclearizes, trust building measures in security affairs, and finally guidelines for arms control. This kind of policy can clearly express to the DPRK that there is no desire to see it collapse but rather the ROK seeks to coexist with a non-nuclear DPRK. In doing so, the ROK will need to gain China’s trust on its policy toward the DPRK, and subsequently utilize the strategic cooperation between the U.S. and China during the process of negotiating a system of peace on the Korean Peninsula. That being said, effort must be made to prepare a framework for negotiating these issues as quickly as possible.

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V. A Catalyst for Self-Denuclearization and Change

The ROK government must prepare a way for the DPRK to seek on its own a path for denuclearization. The DPRK's *byeongjin* policy of simultaneous economic and nuclear development is neither realistic nor desirable. Simply put, economic and nuclear weapons development are not complementary but rather contradictory.

In order to help the DPRK to realize this, the ROK and the international community must make a joint effort to encourage the DPRK to forgo the current *byeongjin* policy by showing how it is incurring significant security costs, and push the DPRK toward a new alternative that can be characterized by a new *byeongjin* policy of pursuing non-nuclear security and economic development.

Secondly, there needs to be active support for reform and opening up of a DPRK that makes strides in denuclearization. At first this will include humanitarian assistance and low levels of economic cooperation, but ultimately there will need to be a focus on the growth of the DPRK's markets and the soft landing of its economic transition.

VI. Policy Recommendations

1. **Following the strengthening of sanctions which are a result of the DPRK's nuclear and missile tests, the ROK government should clearly signal its intentions associated with its policies and make a strong effort to prepare a complete roadmap considering negotiations and engagement.** A new complex solution comprised of making sanctions stronger and more efficient, constructing a new

non-nuclear security approach toward the DPRK, developing a new diplomatic strategy for denuclearizing the DPRK, and devising a catalyst which can lead to the DPRK's self-denuclearization should be prepared.

2. **The ROK government should encourage China to participate in the implementation of the sanctions against the DPRK. Also, the ROK needs to understand China's national interests and accept the need for strategic cooperation with China on issues related to the DPRK in the long run.** The foreign policy goals of the ROK and China's core national interests are not necessarily at odds with each other, and during strategic ROK-China dialogues it should be confirmed that they can actually harmoniously co-evolve together.

3. **The ROK government should understand that developing its own nuclear weapons is costly and unrealistic. Conventional deterrence systems, without considering the nuclear option, should be pursued stronger.** Given the increasing nuclear and missile threat of the DPRK, the ROK should conduct a complete review of its security systems.

4. **Once sanctions against the DPRK take effect, the ROK should make it clear that the DPRK's current approach towards a peace treaty with the U.S. is not realistic. At the same time, it would be important for the ROK to propose a new and convincing plan to all of the countries involved.** This new ROK plan for peace should not only include a demand for sincere DPRK denuclearization, but also a guarantee for the DPRK regime's survival if it denuclearizes, trust building measures in security affairs, and guidelines for arms control.

“the ROK government should put forward a mid and long-term roadmap for co-evolution which will not only lead to the DPRK adopting the new *byeongjin* policy of non-nuclear security and economic development, but also seeks fundamental internal changes in the DPRK so that it becomes a more effective unification partner.”

5. For the survival and prosperity of the DPRK in the twenty-first century, rather than the current *byeongjin* policy which incurs excessive security costs, the ROK and the international community should make a joint effort to propose a new *byeongjin* policy of pursuing non-nuclear security and economic development. The ROK needs to actively support reform and opening up of a DPRK that makes strides in denuclearization, and also prepare an appropriate sanctions regime which can ensure that the DPRK's economic development does not translate into more nuclear weapons and missiles. The ROK should also control the direction and pace of improving relations. During this process, the ROK government should put forward a mid and long-term roadmap for co-evolution which will not only lead to the DPRK adopting the new *byeongjin* policy of non-nuclear security and economic development, but also seeks fundamental internal changes in the DPRK so that it becomes a more effective unification partner. ■

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