

NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR CRISIS AND THE SIX-PARTY TALKS: ISSUES AND PROSPECT

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This article will analyze the structure of conflicts concerning the North Korean nuclear crisis. First, the process of the North Korean nuclear crisis will be reviewed. The legacy of the Geneva Agreement, the emergence of second nuclear crisis, the interaction patterns of North Korea and the United States, and the pursuit of multilateral talks will be examined. After examining the contrasting views in the Six-Party Talks, prospects will be made concerning the evolution of the nuclear issue. Finally, policy proposals for the resolution of the issue will be suggested.

Introduction

After the DPRK withdrew from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in March 1993, the North Korea nuclear problem became a key issue that influenced the Korean peninsula and international affairs until the Geneva Agreement (Agreed Framework) was reached. The North

Korean nuclear issue reemerged on the international stage after some 10 years with Pyongyang's admission of a highly enriched uranium program in October 2002. After the United States suspended the supply of heavy fuel oil in response to the confession, North Korea reactivated its nuclear reactors and expelled International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors. After it withdrew from the NPT and admitted possession of nuclear weapons, North Korea became uncertain and unpredictable on nuclear issues.

In order to evaluate the North Korean nuclear issue, the complicated characteristics of the problem should be considered. The North Korea nuclear problem exhibits the following characteristics in terms of the nature of the problem, relevant issues, and players. First, the North Korean nuclear issue is significant as a model case of international dispute in the post-cold war. Through an attempt to develop nuclear weapons, North Korea is challenging international concerns about the proliferation of WMD. North Korea is a model case of a country with a complicated geopolitical background that is attempting to develop WMD. Especially after the U.S. military campaign in Iraq, the world's attention is now focused on how U.S. policy towards North Korea will take shape.

Second, the North Korean nuclear issue is also relevant to the dynamics of the Korean peninsula and the surrounding Northeast Asian countries. The North Korean nuclear issue is closely related to diverse issues such as inter-Korean relations, the effects of containment and inducement policies, the future of the U.S.-Republic of Korea (ROK) alliance, and the dynamics of relations in Northeast Asia. The formula that emerges in the process of solving the issue could operate as a fundamental framework for reordering relations on the Korean peninsula and in Northeast Asia.

Third, the North Korea nuclear problem is a multi-dimensional and complex issue. The North Korean nuclear issue is not only a matter of military security, but also a matter of politics, economics, and technolo-

gy. Moreover, as step-by-step roadmaps are being examined, a number of aspects concerning the issues are becoming interconnected. Therefore, these correlations and the possibilities of resolving related issues are becoming the objectives of discussion.

Fourth, various players are related to the North Korean nuclear issue. The primary parties concerned are the United States and North Korea. In addition, other related countries like South Korea, Japan, Russia, China, and international organizations like the United Nations (UN) and the IAEA are playing a minor role. It is interesting to note that the role of each player is not determined by a scripted plot, but is changeable, according to developments of the situation and the intentions of the players. As the drama unfolds, each player will take various measures to form its own image and ensure its role.

Fifth, it is possible for negotiations on the nuclear issue to proceed simultaneously through various parallel negotiation channels. Currently, the six-party talks are a main channel, but various bilateral and tripartite forms are working along with the six-party talks. These various negotiating channels sometimes complement each other, but at other times may become mutually contradictory and hindering.

Sixth, some aspects of the settlement of the nuclear issue will cause a qualitative change in the dynamics of the Northeast Asian region. In the case of the nuclear issue being resolved, inter-Korean relations, U.S.-DPRK relations, and DPRK-Japan relations would go through structural changes in various forms. In addition, the effects of the nuclear issue would cause changes in the U.S.-ROK alliance and change the relationships among the three parties: South Korea, North Korea, and the United States.¹

This article will analyze the structure of the conflict concerning the North Korean nuclear crisis. First, the process of North Korean nuclear

1 Jong Chul Park, *The United States and the Two Koreas: The Trilateral Relationship of Conflict and Cooperation* (Seoul: Oreum 2002), pp. 83-87.

crisis will be reviewed. The legacy of the Geneva Agreement, the emergence of second nuclear crisis, the interaction patterns of North Korea and the United States, and the pursuit of multilateral talks will be examined. After examining the contrasting views in the six-party talks, prospects will be made concerning the evolution of the nuclear issue. Finally, policy proposals for the resolution of the issue will be suggested.

The Unfolding of the North Korean Nuclear Crisis

Legacy of the Geneva Agreement

The U.S.-DPRK Geneva Agreement in 1994 not only became a milestone for resolving the North Korean nuclear issue peacefully, but also functioned as a framework influencing U.S.-DPRK relations, inter-Korean relations, and regional order in Northeast Asia. The assumptions and plans for implementation included in the Geneva Agreement are still operating as a legacy influencing North Korean issues and order in Northeast Asia. To bring about a solution to the reemerging North Korea nuclear development issue, it is necessary to examine the legacies of the Geneva Agreement.

The Geneva Agreement was a testing ground of the engagement policies of the Bill Clinton administration in the post-cold war era. The Clinton administration declared an enlargement and engagement policy as strategic guidelines for the Asia-Pacific region in the post-Cold War environment.² According to this new strategic planning, North Korea, at one time an enemy of the United States, became an enlargement policy objective to be brought into the sphere of U.S. influence.

2 U.S. Department of Defense, Office of International Security Affairs, *United States Security Strategy for the East Asia Pacific Region* (Washington, D.C.: US GPO, February 1995).

To carry out this enlargement strategy, a policy of persuasion and reward was suggested instead of a policy of containment and punishment. These policy approaches were an important means in the process of nuclear negotiations with North Korea and realization of the Geneva Agreement.

Against the backdrop of the Geneva Agreement, gradual rapprochement between Washington and Pyongyang was possible. In addition, resumption of normalization talks between Tokyo and Pyongyang was carried out. Moreover, the inter-Korean summit in June 2000 was held because the North Korean nuclear issue was handled by the Geneva Agreement.

However, after the inauguration of the Bush administration, the Agreed Framework was subjected to an overall reexamination. The Bush administration worried that the investigation into North Korea's past nuclear activities had been postponed due to the delay in the construction of the light water reactors, and because the Geneva Agreement focused on freezing North Korea's nuclear weapons program, the issue of its past nuclear activity was postponed until construction of the reactors could be completed.

The United States believed that the freezing of Pyongyang's nuclear program under the Geneva Agreement was not sufficiently thorough, and that stricter inspections of the DPRK's nuclear facilities should be carried out through revision of the agreement. Transparency concerning North Korea's past nuclear activity is also related to the light water reactor project schedule. According to the Geneva Agreement, North Korea was supposed to allow temporary and general inspections in compliance with the safeguards agreement as the key components for the light water reactors were delivered to North Korea. However, since it takes three to four years to carry out nuclear inspections, inspections of North Korean nuclear facilities should have started at least by the year 2002.

In addition, the Geneva Agreement has no guaranteed mechanism

for its implementation. The agreement is designed as a framework that relates North Korea's freezing of its nuclear program with gradual compensation from the United States. Therefore, when the implementation of the agreement is delayed by a breach in obligation by either party or from an unforeseen crisis, it becomes difficult to implement the entire framework. Moreover, there are no regulations concerning a breach of the agreement and no set of provisions to guarantee its implementation. In addition, since the Geneva Agreement is a two-party accord between the United States and North Korea, there is no third party or international organization to supervise its implementation.

The Bush administration believes that the Geneva Agreement taught North Korea the wrong lesson by rewarding its brinkmanship tactics. The Bush administration argues that providing rewards to North Korea that disobeyed international norms actually tempts Pyongyang to seek further benefits through intimidation and threats.

The Advent of North Korea's HEU Program

The basic direction of the Bush administration's North Korea policy was announced on June 6, 2001. Bush would hold U.S.-DPRK talks to improve the implementation of the Geneva Agreement, to resolve the issue of Pyongyang's missile development and missile technology exports, and to reduce its conventional forces threat. President Bush announced that he would take a comprehensive approach to these issues in relation to inter-Korean relations, establishment of peace on the Korean peninsula, improvement of U.S.-DPRK relations, and security on the Korean peninsula. In addition, he expressed interest in removing sanctions and seeking improvement of U.S.-DPRK relations in response to positive steps taken by Pyongyang.³ U.S.-DPRK talks

3 Statement by President George W. Bush, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, June 6, 2001, USKOREA@PD.STATE.GOV.

were resumed in New York on June 13, 2001, but ended after one round without any definite outcome.

In September 2002, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi visited Pyongyang for a summit with Kim Jong Il, and the DPRK-Japan Pyongyang Joint Declaration announced a new attempt at reconciliation. As North Korea displayed gestures of reconciliation toward the international community through the summit talks with Japan, U.S. Assistant Secretary James Kelly visited North Korea on October 3, 2002 as a special envoy of the president of the United States. After his visit, Kelly stated at a press conference that he expressed to North Korea officials the U.S. concerns over the DPRK's nuclear and missile development programs, the development and exports of WMD, the threats from its conventional military force, and its violation of human rights. He mentioned that he had suggested to the counterparts that U.S.-DPRK relations could be improved if Pyongyang made a comprehensive effort to address these concerns.⁴

However, on October 17, 2002, with the U.S. State Department's announcement that North Korea acknowledged its HEU program in response to the evidence of that plan presented by Kelly, the North Korean nuclear issue entered a new phase.⁵ Although there had been much debate about the intention of North Korea's admission of a nuclear program,⁶ the discussions came to an end after North Korea's official acknowledgment of its plan. A spokesman for North Korea's

4 Daily Press Briefing of State Department by Richard Boucher on October 7, 2002, On Assistant Secretary Kelly's visit to Pyongyang, <http://www.state.gov>.

5 Daily Press Briefing of State Department by Richard Boucher on October 17, 2002, <http://www.state.gov>.

6 Regarding North Korea's nuclear intentions, there were opinions that it was just bluffing and that it was not an actual admission. Wook-shik Cheong, "The Truth about North Korea's Admission to a Nuclear Development Program," *Forum on North Korea's Admission to a Nuclear Weapon's Program and Media Reporting*, jointly sponsored by The Korea Federation of Media Worker's Unions and Citizen's Coalition for Democratic Media, October 23, 2002.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated: "We clearly mentioned that in order to protect our national sovereignty and right to survival from the nuclear threat posed by the United States, and we have come to possess not only nuclear weapons, but also more powerful weapons than that," which made it clear that Pyongyang had a plan to develop nuclear weapons.⁷

With North Korea's admission of having a HEU program, the character of North Korea's nuclear issue fundamentally changed. The Geneva Agreement was intended to prevent North Korea from developing plutonium-based nuclear weapons and from extracting plutonium in the future, while deferring the issue of its past nuclear development. However, because of the HEU program, the North Korean nuclear problem is not only a matter of preventing the DPRK's acquisition of plutonium, but also curbing its HEU program.⁸

During the negotiations in Geneva, North Korea's intention in developing nuclear weapons remained a mystery. With its HEU program, North Korea's intentions have come under question again; according to the DPRK's reasons for developing nuclear weapons, the context of negotiations changes. Generally, national security, domestic political reasons, and national prestige are reasons for developing nuclear weapons.⁹ North Korea pursues nuclear weapons for security, domestic political solidarity, and international status, as well. In addition, North Korea hopes to use their nuclear program as leverage in order to receive economic favors and to have negotiations with the United States.

Some analysts explain North Korea's development of a nuclear weapons program as a way to deal with security threats. According to

7 *Korean Central News Agency*, October 25, 2002.

8 Ju Seok Suh, "Prospects for U.S.-DPRK Relations after the North Korea Nuclear Sensation" *National Strategy*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (December 2002), pp.30-33.

9 Scott D. Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?: Three Models in Search of a Bomb," *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Winter 1996/1997).

this view, military might is all the DPRK can rely upon, as it is inferior in all other aspects of national power. With North Korea's economic difficulties, its conventional military forces have become weaker. As a result, the leadership in Pyongyang cannot help but rely on the development of WMD. According to this view, the only reason North Korea accepted negotiations with the United States was to ease international pressure and to gain more time to develop its nuclear program.¹⁰

If we assume that North Korea is developing nuclear weapons as a last resort to maintain its regime, then the possibility that North Korea will scrap its weapons program through negotiations is unlikely. If this is the case, the countermeasures are likely to be centered on a hard-line policy of deterrence and sanctions. Hardliners in Washington assume that even though North Korea agreed to the Geneva Agreement, it has been developing a secret nuclear program. Even if North Korea accepts the benefits of negotiations, it will not easily give up a nuclear program that it believes is its last means for ensuring security.¹¹

Second, there is the view that North Korea is developing nuclear weapons to enhance its international status and for the purpose of domestic propaganda. According to this perspective, unless a plan to enhance its international status is suggested, North Korea will not easily abandon its nuclear weapons program.

Third, other analysts believe that North Korea is developing nuclear weapons as a tool for negotiations in order to procure material benefits. From North Korea's perspective, it can acquire more political and economic gain through nuclear negotiations than through actual nuclear development. If negotiations fail, North Korea still retains the potential to develop nuclear weapons. In particular, as North Korea observed

10 James A. Bayer, "The North Korean Nuclear Crisis and The Agreed Framework: How Not to Negotiate with North Korea," *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Fall-Winter 1995), p. 192.

11 Chuck Downs, *Over the Line: North Korea's Negotiating Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: The AEI Press, 1999), pp. 247-252.

economic incentives being offered by the United States to the Ukraine and Kazakhstan for their abandonment of nuclear weapons, it has also expected economic compensation from Washington.¹²

The opinion that North Korea was motivated by a need to have bargaining chips for negotiations gained prominence through the Geneva Agreement. Negotiations on the nuclear issue offered an appropriate level of compensation for Pyongyang.¹³ However, when it was discovered that North Korea is developing HEU program, the opinion that nuclear development is for the purpose of negotiations alone began to receive criticism. Even after North Korea agreed with the Geneva Agreement, it did not entirely give up its nuclear program. People who emphasize the negotiation factor explain the HEU program as a reaction to the Bush administration's conservative policy towards North Korea. However, hardliners have pointed out that North Korea had been pursuing a HEU program since 1998 during the Clinton administration—a period when the U.S.-DPRK relations were improving. The theory of negotiations as a motivational factor, therefore, lacks validity.

On this point, it is not easy to determine clearly whether the intention of North Korea in developing nuclear weapons was national defense, improvement of international status, domestic propaganda, or for use in negotiations. North Korea could have considered all these factors. It would have considered as many factors as possible and would want to possess various options to deal with them. North Korea's intentions and policy priorities could change according to the unfolding of the situation and circumstances. North Korea's motiva-

12 For more on U.S. incentives offered to the Ukraine and Russia for their abandonment of nuclear weapons see John C. Baker, *Non-Proliferation Incentives for Russia and Ukraine*, Adelphi Paper 309 (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1997).

13 Leon V. Sigal, *Disarming Strangers: Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 10-14.

tion to develop nuclear weapons, rather than being set in stone, could also again change according to contextual changes in the future.

Escalated Conflict

After North Korea admitted to its nuclear program, tension increased as Washington and Pyongyang faced off for an offensive and defensive battle. While focusing on Iraq, the United States chose to use delaying tactics in order for the nuclear issue to not hinder its engagement with Baghdad, and it continued to restrain North Korea through the multilateral framework of the international community. Instead of responding immediately to North Korea's confrontational actions, the United States tried to bring the issue to international attention by pointing out that Pyongyang was in violation of global standards. With the belief that it would be difficult for the United States to carry out coercive measures toward North Korea until the end of the war in Iraq, the DPRK tested the United States by its brinkmanship strategies, insisting that the demands of both sides be met in an overall package deal.

The United States pointed out that North Korea's nuclear program was in violation of the NPT, IAEA Safeguards Agreement, Joint Declaration on Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and the Geneva Agreement. It demanded that Pyongyang abandon its program. The United States demanded that North Korea's nuclear program be dismantled in an immediate, visible, and verifiable way.

On the other hand, Washington repeatedly emphasized its resolve to settle the issue peacefully, but it insisted it would not allow the DPRK to possess nuclear weapons. President Bush stated on November 15, 2002 that the United States has no intention of attacking North Korea and will seek to resolve the nuclear issue peacefully.¹⁴ The prin-

14 News Conference of President George W. Bush, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases>, November 15, 2002.

ciple of a peaceful resolution to the nuclear issue was reconfirmed several times through U.S. senior officials such as Secretary of State Colin Powell. The U.S position of peaceful resolution to the nuclear issue was somewhat related to the growing crisis with Iraq and the deployment of troops to the Gulf. In addition, the United States reflected Seoul's appeals for a peaceful solution and was attempting to acquire justification for its hard-line policy in the event of the worst-case scenario.

While declaring a policy of peaceful resolution, the United States undertook gradual coercive measures against North Korea. At the KEDO executive board meeting on November 15, 2002, the board decided that supplies of heavy fuel oil would be suspended in December. In addition, the board announced that if North Korea's attitude did not change, the KEDO project would be reexamined.

Through cooperation with the international community, the United States utilized global pressure in demanding that North Korea scrap its nuclear program. During the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting, South Korea, the United States, and Japan announced a Joint Statement on October 27, 2002 urging North Korea to drop its nuclear program. The APEC Chairman's Declaration on October 28, 2002 upheld denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and insisted on the abandonment of North Korea's nuclear weapons program. The IAEA chose on November 29, 2002 to draft a resolution urging North Korea to drop its weapons program and implement safeguards. It then passed a resolution on February 12, 2003, referring the issue to the UN Security Council. Through these steps, the North Korean nuclear issue was referred to the UN as it was in 1993. Consequently, a UN Security Council board meeting was held on April 10, 2003. Since China opposed the nuclear issue being discussed at the Security Council, neither the UN resolution nor the Security Council chairman's statement could be adopted.¹⁵

15 A spokesman for China's foreign ministry expressed the position that China did not

Meanwhile, Pyongyang sought U.S. attention by gradually increasing threats and adopting a policy urging negotiations while Washington continued to pursue its policy of hostile neglect. After North Korea declared it was restarting its nuclear program on December 12, 2002, it removed IAEA surveillance equipment on December 21, 2002, and expelled IAEA inspectors on December 27, 2002. North Korea declared its withdrawal from the NPT on January 10, 2003. When North Korea withdrew from the NPT in March 1993, the nuclear crisis surged and U.S.-DPRK talks resumed afterwards. However, despite this most recent withdrawal from the NPT, the United States has not accepted negotiations. Then, North Korea raised the danger level by transferring spent fuel rods on January 31, 2003 and restarting its 5MWe reactor on February 26, 2003. Moreover, during the Beijing three-party talks in April 2003, North Korea proposed a step-by-step resolution, yet ventured across redlines established by the United States by stating it possesses nuclear weapons and started reprocessing spent fuel.

Multilateral Framework

A Search for Multilateral Approach: The Three-Party Talks

In the early stages of the reemerging North Korean nuclear issue, the United States held fast to a hard-line stance: “Abandon nuclear weapons first, talk afterwards.” There would be no talks with North Korea unless it completely abandons its nuclear program. However, the U.S position changed to “talks possible, negotiations impossible” after the ROK-U.S.-Japan TCOG meeting in early January 2002. The

want the issue referred to the UN Security Council, and instead of discussing the nuclear issue in the council, China could take the role of a mediator with the hope of starting talks between the United States and North Korea, *Joongang Daily Newspaper*, March 25, 2003.

U.S. policy is that it is possible to have talks with North Korea, but not possible to have negotiations on terms that involve compromise. However, the United States softened its stance and started to express consideration of compensation to North Korea after it abandons its nuclear program. President Bush proposed a “bold initiative” on January 14, 2003, stating that if North Korea gives up its nuclear weapons program, food and energy can be provided.¹⁶ Richard Armitage, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, mentioned that a non-aggression pact would not be possible because of congressional opposition, but it is possible to express non-aggression intentions in the form of an official declaration or exchange of letters.¹⁷

In January 2003, various efforts were made to seek U.S.-DPRK talks. Governor Bill Richardson and Han Song Ryol, North Korea's deputy permanent representative at the UN, held an unofficial meeting in Santa Fe, New Mexico that discussed the possibility for talks. Technical problems concerning the nuclear issue were discussed at a meeting between U.S nuclear experts and representatives from the DPRK's Department of Atomic Energy in Berlin, Germany. The role of China as a mediator in the U.S.- DPRK talks manifested by visits to North Korea of high-ranking Chinese officials in early March and a visit to China by North Korea's Vice Chairman of the National Defense Commission, Cho Myong Rok, in mid-March.¹⁸

While the possibilities for U.S.-DPRK talks were explored, the end to the war in Iraq promoted a situation for the pursuit of dialogue. With the early victory in Iraq, the United States gained the confidence and time to focus its attention on the North Korea issue. After carefully observing the unfolding progress of the war in Iraq, North Korea felt the urgent need to have talks as it realized it might be the next target. Under these circumstances, North Korea expressed its intentions to

16 *Joonang Daily Newspaper*, January 16, 2003.

17 *Joongang Daily Newspaper*, January 20, 2003.

18 *Chosun Daily Newspaper*, April 17, 2003

accept multilateral talks through a foreign ministry spokesman interview on April 12, 2003.¹⁹

Mediating between North Korea's insistence on U.S.-DPRK bilateral talks and the U.S. demand for multilateral talks now became possible. Regarding the formation of multilateral talks, while various plans were discussed such as the six-party talks (South Korea, North Korea, the U.S., Japan, China, Russia), ten-party talks (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, South Korea, North Korea, Japan, European Union, Australia), the three-party format with North Korea, the United States, and China was chosen as an initial formula for negotiations. When North Korea refused the suggestion of multilateral talks by the United States, China proposed the three-party talks as an alternative plan and obtained agreement from the United States and North Korea.

As the first step to resolving the issue in the three-party talks in Beijing from April 23-25, 2003, problems arose in relation to the nature of the talks, the present situation of North Korea's nuclear program, and the agenda. Washington defined the three-party talks as preliminary before substantial multilateral talks and insisted that South Korea and Japan participate in subsequent talks. However, Pyongyang maintained that China offered only a venue, and the meeting would technically be bilateral talks between the United States and North Korea. Instead of opposing discussions on the nuclear issue at the UN Security Council, China recommended the three-party talks as an extension of its policy to resolve the problem through U.S.-DPRK talks. It seemed that China was satisfied with its role as a mediator rather than as a party taking an active stance.

On the other hand, questions regarding the current situation of North Korea's nuclear program were raised before the three-party talks were held. Just before the talks, a DPRK spokesman of the For-

19 *Korean Central News Agency*, 2003. 4.12.

eign Affairs Ministry stated: "We are successfully reprocessing more than 8,000 spent fuel rods at the final phase." This statement raised questions about the capacity of North Korea's nuclear reprocessing activities. The English translation of the statement, which indicated that North Korea had completed the reprocessing, cast doubt on whether the talks would even be held. However, North Korea pointed out that there was an error in the English translation and stated that reprocessing had not been completed. Thus, the three-party talks were held as planned.²⁰

However, during the talks, the conflict intensified when the DPRK representative insinuated that North Korea already had nuclear weapons and had completed reprocessing. In light of this surprise, the incident involving North Korea's incorrect English translation before the talks may have been an intentional mistake meant to test the intentions of the United States. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld mentioned on various occasions that there is the possibility North Korea has enough plutonium to make one or two nuclear bombs or may already have one or two bombs in its possession.²¹ Therefore, North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons was not a new fact. With North Korea's shift from a position of No Confirmation-No Denial (NCND) to that of admission of possession of nuclear weapons, it became necessary to consider a concrete countermeasure policy.

North Korea suggested a step-by-step settlement plan at the talks. It required the resumption of heavy fuel oil provisions, the continuation of construction on the light water reactor project, the conclusion of a non-aggression pact, the normalization of relations, and its removal from the U.S. list of terrorism- sponsoring states. In return, it would freeze its nuclear activity and completely abandon its nuclear weapons

20 *Joongang Daily Newspaper*, April 19, 2003; April 21, 2003.

21 U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld commented at a press conference on October 17th 2002 that North Korea already has one or two nuclear bombs in its possession, *Yonhap News*, October 18, 2002.

program.²² For the sake of the negotiations, North Korea proposed a step-by-step resolution plan on the one hand and, on the other, it admitted to having nuclear weapons and reprocessing in order to increase its leverage in the negotiations.

Issues and Contrasting Views in the Six-Party Talks

Following the tripartite meeting concerning North Korea's nuclear program, it was agreed that six-party talks would be held. North Korea expressed its willingness to accommodate the North-U.S. dialogue within the framework of the multi-party talks via Chinese President Hu Jin-tao, who was attending the G-8 meeting held in Evian, France on June 1, 2003. Thus, China again played a role of mediator between the North and the U.S. Chinese Senior Vice-Foreign Minister Dai Bing-guo paid a visit to Pyongyang on July 14, 2003 and urged Kim Jong-il to participate in the multi-party talks; he also concurred with the views of U.S. State Secretary Colin Powell on a visit to Washington. As a result, the first round of the six-party talks was held from August 27 to 29, 2003 with the two Koreas, the U.S., China, Russia and Japan.

Several factors were considered in deciding on the six-party talks. The U.S. had insisted on holding five-party talks including South Korea and Japan, while China wished to hold further rounds of the tripartite (North Korea-the U.S.-China) talks, while Russia requested that six-party talks (including itself) be held. It appears that the North's position was considered in deciding on the six-party talks: Recognizing that South Korea, the U.S. and Japan form a united stance with respect to its nuclear program, the North wanted Russia, its long time ally, to participate in multi-party talks. As it were, what the North wanted to see was its sphere of activities expanded as much as possible with the

22 *DongA Ilbo*, April 28, 2003.

support of China and Russia, but against the cooperative stance taken by South Korea, the U.S. and Japan.

The six-party talks are useful for the following reasons: They will provide a chance to settle the crisis caused by the North's nuclear program in a diplomatic manner, in addition to having the North's real aim confirmed, and foster conditions to deter the North from engaging in nuclear brinkmanship. From the U.S.'s point of view, rupture of the six-party talks will provide a reason to take severe measures against the North.

In outward appearance, the six-party talks have South Korea, the U.S. and Japan on the one side, and North Korea, China and Russia on the other. But in reality, the talks are led by the North and the U.S., with South Korea and China playing secondary roles, and Japan and Russia tertiary roles. Aside from the six-party talks, various types of official and unofficial meetings have been held, including those between the North and the U.S., the North and China, and the North and Russia, as well as tripartite meetings between South Korea, the U.S. and Japan, and between North Korea, China and Russia.

The first round of the six-party talks has historical significance in that it was the first international meeting between the two Koreas and the four powers, where each played a role in dividing the two Koreas. In addition, the six-party talks may be looked upon as an attempt to internationalize problems that occur on the Korean peninsula. One positive outcome of the first round of the six-party talks was the consensus formed concerning the need to hold further rounds of the talks. It was also agreed that no action should be taken that may aggravate the present situation, and that a second round of the talks should commence in the near future. However, one drawback was that the schedule for the second round of talks was not fixed immediately; only the host country's summarized statement was announced, as opposed to a joint statement, due to the gap in the participating countries' positions and the North's negative stance.

The second round of the six-party talks was held from February 25 to 28, 2004 after six months of the first round of the meeting. The second meeting achieved some results compared to the first one. The Chairman's statement at the meeting included the followings: A nuclear weapons-free Korean peninsula, peaceful resolution of the problem, taking coordinated steps, forming a working group, and holding the third round meeting.²³

The second round meeting discussed detailed issues, while the first round one was a kind of overture. Although the parties concerned never reached an agreement on critical issues, several issues were highlighted for the next meeting. Overall, the U.S. and Japan shared hard-line position, while China and Russia showed a sympathetic attitude towards North Korea's claims. As South Korea basically agreed to the U.S. view on the ultimate dismantlement of the nuclear program, it attempted to find a compromise by suggesting energy provision to North Korea in return for its freezing of nuclear programs.

Four issues were raised in the second round six-party talks: Scope of nuclear dismantlement, Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) program, compensation for freezing of the nuclear program, and security guarantee for North Korea. Among these, the first two issues are related to the degree of completeness of dismantlement, while the remaining two issues were about economic and security incentives for North Korea.

The first critical issue was the scope of dismantlement of the nuclear program. The U.S. and Japan strongly insisted Complete, Verifiable, and Irreversible Dismantlement (CVID) of all forms of nuclear programs including peaceful use of nuclear power. Even if North Korean accepted the ceasing of development of nuclear weapons, it claimed the right of peaceful use of nuclear power. While China agreed to the CVID in principle, Russia was willing to allow peaceful use of nuclear power by North Korea. South Korea, siding with CVID, implied a

23 Chairman's Statement for The Second Round of Six-Party Talks, February 28, 2004.

review of granting peaceful use of nuclear energy by North Korea after North Korea abandons all forms of nuclear programs.

Secondly, the Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) program was one of the stumbling blocks in the negotiation. The HEU problem is itself the cause that brought about the second North Korean nuclear crisis. Although the U.S. is expected to find evidence of North Korea's HEU program, it is reluctant to make it public due to the apprehension that North Korea might conceal the HEU facilities in such a case.²⁴ North Korea strongly denies the HEU program and insists on evidence prove it. Japan and South Korea support the U.S. position in insisting on abandonment of the HEU. China and Russia took a middle-of-the-road position. China's position is that the HEU problem can be discussed if the evidence is presented. Russia suggested that the HEU problem can be reviewed in the working group meeting, or in the process of freezing the nuclear program.

The third issue is the compensation measures in return for the freezing of North Korea's nuclear program. In particular, North Korea was expected to ask for energy aid in exchange for the freezing. China and South Korea were positive to the North Korea's proposal, as they expressed their willingness to participate in the energy aid program for North Korea. China and South Korea tried to reduce tensions and steer towards finding a way for compromise by raising the energy aid issue. Although the U.S. and Japan had negative reactions to the energy aid idea at first, they finally expressed their understanding of the idea by the persuasion of China and South Korea.

The last issue is the security guarantee to North Korea. North Korea consistently claimed the renunciation of the U.S. antagonistic policy towards North Korea as a condition of the dismantlement of its nuclear program. In particular, Pyongyang enumerated specific

24 James Kelly's Testimony at the Hearing of the U.S. Senate, March 2, 2004, <http://ifins.org/pages/kison-archiv-kn545.thm>.

<Contrasting Views on Core Issues in the Six-Party Talks>

	Scope of Nuclear Dismantlement	HEU	Incentives for Freezing Nuclear Facilities	Security Guarantee for North Korea
The U.S.	CVID on all forms of nuclear activities	Dismantlement of HEU, having HEU related information	Understanding of the energy provision to North Korea for its freezing	Security guarantee and diplomatic improvement after CVID
North Korea	Dismantlement of nuclear weapons, but maintaining right of peaceful use of nuclear power	Denial of HEU, insisting on its evidence	Asking energy for freezing nuclear facilities	Ceasing of U.S. confrontational policy towards North Korea
Japan	CVID on all forms of nuclear activities	Dismantlement of HEU	Understanding of energy provision to North Korea	Multilateral guarantee after resolution of kidnapping issue and missile development
China	Agreement to CVID	Discussion on HEU after suggestion of its evidence by the U.S.	Contributing to energy provision to North Korea for freezing	Multilateral guarantee and additional guarantee by China and Russia to North Korea
Russia	Agreement to CVID, but permitting peaceful use of nuclear power	Discussion on HEU in the process of freezing	Contributing to energy provision to North Korea	Multilateral guarantee and additional guarantee by China and Russia to North Korea
South Korea	Agreement to CVID, but reviewing North Korea's peaceful use of nuclear power after CVID	Dismantlement of HEU	Contributing to energy provision to North Korea	Three-step security guarantee: Expression of intention of security guarantee, temporary security guarantee, permanent security guarantee

items of renunciation of the U.S. antagonistic policy: Confirmation of non-aggression to North Korea, diplomatic normalization between the U.S. and North Korea, and lifting economic sanctions against North Korea. Washington has stuck to its previous position as it suggested the possibility of a security guarantee to North Korea and diplomatic normalization after CVID. Japan attempted to broaden certain points in the talks by adding more conditions to the security guarantee: Abandonment of missile development, and the problem of kidnapping Japanese. China and Russia shared a view that the two countries can provide an additional security guarantee as well as a multilateral security mechanism within the six-party talks. South Korea proposed the most concrete, three-stage security measures to North Korea: Expression of intention of security guarantee to North Korea, interim security guarantee, and permanent security guarantee.

Prospects

Breakdown or Breakthrough

Regarding the North Korean nuclear issue, we can assume three possibilities: a worsening of the crisis, an early settlement of the issue, or a gradual settlement. The first case implies that talks will break down, leading to a deepening of the crisis. Talks will not go smoothly because the Bush administration emphasizes reciprocity, verification, and monitoring, while at the same time assuming a critical attitude towards providing rewards. Likewise, North Korea is unlikely to yield in the talks because it also wants to hold onto WMD as a last means of survival.

However, there is little possibility that the United States will carry out preemptive strikes against North Korea. As the war in Iraq ended, President Bush excluded the possibility of a military campaign against

North Korea and indicated that he would seek dialogues as a means to solve the problem of Pyongyang's pursuit of WMD. Considering both South Korea's and China's opposition to any form of U.S. preemptive strike on North Korea and the security of U.S. military personnel stationed in the South, it is difficult for the United States to use military force. In addition, the use of armed forces would be accompanied by North Korean counterattack.

The second scenario envisions an early settlement. In accordance with the progress of talks, an overall agreement in all areas might be reached or detailed agreements might be made according to each issue. However, there is very little possibility of such an early settlement because of the many pending issues and the sharp opposition on both sides.

Gradual Settlement

The third scenario presents a settlement gradually brought about after many ups and downs. Although talks are sustained, reaching an agreement will take significant time. In this scenario, partial compromise on North Korea's nuclear issue will be made and an agreement will be reached step-by-step despite the repeated breakdown.

The Bush administration is expected to maintain a dual policy of dialogue and pressure against North Korea until the presidential election in November 2004. The U.S. considers applying pressure on the North by Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and psychological warfare. The U.S. pressure against the North includes extension of the broadcast hours of Radio Free Asia (24 hours a day from 4 hours), passage of the bill for distribution of radios for North Koreans, North Korean Freedom Confederation (NKFC) led by human rights activists and religious organizations in the U.S., and passage of the bill for accommodation of North Korean refugees through the Senate. The ceasing of the work for the light reactor project is also a part of the U.S.

pressure against the North.

If the six-party talks produce no results, Washington is likely to adopt a tailored containment policy towards North Korea in the course of the talks. The tailored containment policy may include various sanctions: Withdrawing humanitarian aid, a UN resolution towards North Korea, selective sea blockades to curb North Korea's export of weapons, attempts to stop pro-North Koreans living in Japan from providing financial support, reduction of trade between North Korea and China, and halting technological and educational support by international organizations.²⁵

Nevertheless, it is expected that the U.S. will place more emphasis on peaceful settlement of the North Korea nuclear problem through the six-party talks. This expectation results from several domestic constraints of the U.S.: The ever-increasing burden of the prolonged stay of its troops in Iraq, the aggravation of their economic situation, and the forthcoming Presidential election.

North Korea, for its part, appears to be adopting a dual policy (i.e. attempting to enhance its position in negotiations with the U.S. by means of brinkmanship), while trying to make its nuclear weapons an established fact if the negotiations break down. On October 3, 2003, the spokesman for the North's Foreign Ministry announced the country's plan to enhance its "nuclear deterrent" through operation of a 5-MW nuclear reactor, construction of an additional graphite reactor, and use of plutonium obtained as a result of the reprocessing of 8,000 spent fuel rods.

North Korea will use brinkmanship tactics to increase negotiating leverage, while adopting a more detailed policy means through "salami tactics." In particular, North Korea's brinkmanship tactics such as demanding unilateral concessions from the other party, bluffing and

25 Michael R. Gordon, "North Korea Faces Isolation over Reactors," *The New York Times*, December 29, 2002.

threatening, establishing deadlines of its own choosing, and breaking off talks will erect barriers to finding a solution.²⁶

However, the North knows that its rejection of further rounds of the six-party talks will lead to its own isolation in the international community, and will worsen food and energy shortages. Therefore, the North is showing a reconciliatory attitude in the six-party talks and refraining from escalating the tension.

Despite the contrasting view between North Korea and the United States, both realize the necessity and inevitability of dialogue and are expected to try to find a solution despite the bumps along the road during negotiations. Both sides recognize that it is not easy to find an opportunity for resolution if their demands are not dealt with through dialogue. The United States has expressed its commitment to a peaceful resolution without an appeal to arms, while North Korea suggests that, through dialogue, it is willing to abandon its nuclear development program.

As the six-party talks maintain its momentum, core issues in a tedious series of negotiations are the format of the talks, the sequence of implementation of agreements, and means of remuneration for North Korea.

First of all, the six-party talks should be periodically held, with systemized methods of operation, and in order to systemize talks, it is necessary to form working-level groups in charge of individual agenda: Verification of the North's nuclear program, a security guarantee for the North, and economic support for the North.

The working-level group in charge of verification of the North's nuclear program should work out efficient methods of carrying out inspections of the North's nuclear facilities. In addition to the IAEA's inspections, it is necessary to form a multinational group (consisting of

26 Scott Snyder, *Negotiating on the Edge: North Korean Negotiating Behavior* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999), pp. 68-96.

South Korea, the U.S., Japan and Russia). It is also necessary to insist on inspection of nuclear facilities based on the Joint Statement for Non-Nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula concluded in 1992.

The working-level group for providing a security guarantee for the North should seek both bilateral and multilateral security mechanisms. First of all, it is possible to guarantee the North by adopting a joint statement on the six-party talks. It may be considered to offer such a guarantee in the form of a multi-party treaty (or agreement or convention). It is also possible that the U.S. Congress may adopt a resolution that reaffirms the North's sovereignty.

The working-level group for economic support for the North should find diverse methods of providing economic and energy aid for the North. In the first place, the U.S. should take a series of measures for the North, including the lifting of economic sanctions against the North, removing the North from terrorism support countries, and allowing international financial institutions to grant loans to the North. Japan's provision of economic compensation for its past colonial rule to the North following normalization of diplomatic relations between the two will provide an important impetus for invigoration of the North's economy. Other alternatives include China's provision of aid to the North, including the aid for the formation of the Special Economic Zone in Shineuiju, and the promotion of joint development of the three provinces in its Northeast and nearby areas in North Korea, as well as Russia's development of natural resources in Siberia, and the linkage between the railroads on the Peninsula and the TSR.

Multi-party economic aid for the North may also be promoted, like the formation of an international consortium for energy development in the North or establishment of a Northeast Asia economic development bank for the North's economic development.

Concluding Remarks

The unfolding pattern of the North Korean nuclear issue will definitely have a critical effect on inter-Korean relations, regional order in Northeast Asia, and global security. The following policy provisions are suggested in order to solve the North Korean nuclear issue.

In anticipating various scenarios of the North Korean nuclear issue, concrete policies must be prepared to deal with each possible situation. Various policy measures should be prepared for the best-case scenario, a stalemate, or a worst-case.

Based on the results of negotiation, South Korea is likely to bear its share of economic support for North Korea. It is desirable for South Korea to provide its economic support through the international economic consortium supported by the international community. Economic support from South Korea should have beneficial returns for Seoul, such as South Korea's participation in a Siberia gas development project or other energy developments in the North, and should not be one-sided economic support for the DPRK.

In addition, guidelines need to be prepared for minimizing rising tensions and resuming talks when negotiations break down. Crisis management plans should also be prepared so that North Korea does not unexpectedly increase tensions on the peninsula when talks come to a standstill. When talks break down, South Korea should explore its mediating role through inter-Korean dialogue.

At the same time, a multi-cooperative system should be envisioned for the settlement of the North Korean nuclear issue. Its first step should focus on the trilateral coordination amongst South Korea, the United States, and Japan. A consensus among the three countries should be sought through the harmonization of differences in each party's perception of threat, policy approach, and policy means. For this purpose, the role of the TCOG should be upgraded. At the same time, comprehensive cooperation with China and Russia should be

explored.

In connection with the nuclear issue, concrete plans for cooperative projects between the two Koreas should be established. South Korea should draw a clear “red line” that indicates its disapproval of North Korea’s nuclear pursuits. If North Korea complies, mutual talks between the two Koreas and economic cooperative projects should be maintained; if it crosses the red line, the South must review how to regulate the speed of economic cooperation and strengthen its vigilant posture towards North Korea.