



**4th Pugwash Workshop on
Stability, Security and Cooperation in
Northeast Asia**

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Report

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The 4th Pugwash Workshop on East Asian Security, co-sponsored by the Chinese People's Association for Peace and Disarmament (CPAPD) and the Institute of Applied Physics and Computational Mathematics (IAPCM), was held in Beijing from the 12th to 15th of January 2006. This workshop was locally organized by the Program for Science and National Security Studies (PSNSS) in close cooperation with three sponsoring institutions. Special thanks to Gen. Pan Zhenqiang, Prof. Li Hua and Mr. Niu Qiang for their efficient collaboration in organizing the workshop within little time.

This workshop was not only timely but very important. The region is in crisis over the dialogue process in the search for a solution to the North Korean nuclear issue. This is putting the six-party talks in jeopardy. Due to the financial sanctions against the DPR Korea(North Korea) by the US since last October, the tension between the US and North Korea is increasing and has reached a new height in the region. Participants from major countries in the region, namely the US, China, Japan, Russia, and the two Koreas (plus Pakistan and two from Europe), attended the three day meeting and engaged in intensive and serious discussions at a comfortable and beautiful surrounding in Beijing. This meeting had an unusually large participation of Chinese experts on Korea and security matters. Three people from North Korea actively participated and presented papers.

The first session dealt with the current security situation on the Korean peninsula and started out with a brief assessment of the developments over the North Korean nuclear issue. One South Korean expert pointed out a repeated pattern of crisis over the North Korean issue and tried to explain why. He believes the cause of this problem is a lack of trust and a deeply rooted, mutual hostility between the US and North Korea since the Korean War. He urged the conflicting parties to have more patience and to be wiser in resolving the problem.

One of the North Korean participants stressed that the prolonged hostile policy of the US is the real problem, and prescribed policy change to solve the problem. He demanded the financial sanctions be lifted to remove the obstacles to the six-party talks. He also mentioned that having nuclear capability is simply a matter of survival for North Korea. He also called for an end to the double standard in the non-proliferation issue, saying that some countries such as Israel, Pakistan and India are accepted and respected by the US as nuclear powers. He also questioned that Japan is allowed to stockpile plutonium, which can be used for nuclear weapons. He pointed out that the US might have attacked Iraq because Saddam Hussein had failed to acquire nuclear capability.



Regarding North Korean capability, one of the leading nuclear experts from the US gave a report about his two recent trips to North Korea, which included a visit to the nuclear facilities in Yongbyon. Being the only Westerner who has seen the plutonium metal first-hand, he shared his view on the North Korean nuclear capability. According to his assessment, North Korea might already possess about 45 kg of plutonium and has acquired necessary technologies to produce nuclear weapons. But, he does not believe actual weapons have been created. He is more concerned about plutonium being in the wrong hands.

Another US expert assessed the September 19, 2005 Joint Statement of the Six Party Talks, and called for an early resumption of the talks. According to him, the statement is neither a breakthrough nor much ado about nothing. He stressed that the US needs to do more to improve the atmosphere for dialogue, but North Korea should come to the negotiation table without any preconditions. The Joint Statement being a vital first-step, he called on the US and North Korea to work hard, with more flexibility and creative thinking, to make a breakthrough. He thinks that China, as the host and facilitator for the talks, can persuade North Korea it is in its national interest to return to the talks without preconditions.



In the second session on the nuclear non-proliferation issue in Northeast Asia, Japanese nuclear policy was in the focus of interest. Two Chinese experts drew attention to Japan's nuclear capabilities. One North Korean participant also called attention to Japan's growing nationalism and militarization. He argued that no one could guarantee that Japan would not attack the US as it did with Pearl Harbor. Some Chinese and North Koreans viewed the Japanese stockpile of plutonium as a serious security threat, not only to the region, but to the whole. He called for the closure of the Rokkasho Maru reprocessing plant, which is scheduled to go into operation this year. Japan's current stockpile of plutonium is enough to produce 4000 nuclear warheads, and the new plant might produce 5 to 12 tons of plutonium per year.

One of the Japanese participants stressed that transparency is the best solution to the problem and explained the Japanese nuclear policy in historical and technical perspectives. He mentioned that due to the lack of nuclear waste storage facilities in Japan, it is cheaper to reprocess the spent fuel rods and to stockpile plutonium. Japan has no intention to go nuclear or misuse the plutonium for military purposes. It is purely for energy self-sufficiency and according to the nuclear policies decided in the 1950s and 1970s. Japan is now paying a high price for this policy, but it is difficult to reverse due to the domestic constraints. Nevertheless, Japan is in full compliance with IAEA safeguards and there is no danger of misuse. Heated debates followed his presentation, mostly by the Chinese and North Korean participants. The issue is likely to be seen as a security challenge in the region as the Rokkasho Maru plant starts operation this year.



The third and fourth session was devoted to relations of the big powers and their influence on East Asian security. Two Chinese experts assessed the North Korean nuclear issue and its impact on the US policy. They pointed out that the Bush administration has refused for three years to deal directly with North Korea. One Chinese scholar proposed to help North Korea to overcome its economic difficulties and to narrow the gap between North and South Korea. A few North Korean and Chinese participants blamed the US for using the North Korean issue as an excuse to encourage Japan to strengthen its military and to build up the Missile Defense system against China. Growing military cooperation between the US and Japan is seen by some as a serious threat to peace and stability in the region.

One of the US participants expressed critical opinion on the Bush administration for provoking North Korea to speed up its nuclear program and to build up nuclear capabilities. As long as the US hostility exists, North Korea is likely to continue to expand its nuclear program. He emphasized that to end enmity and normalize political and economic relations North Korea has repeatedly offered to trade its nuclear capability for assurances that the US will not attack the state, interfere in its internal affairs, or impede its economic development by maintaining sanctions or discouraging aid and investment from others. He called for serious change in Washington's hostile policy against North Korea and an end to military exercises in the South. He sees a need for a peace keeping system on the Korean peninsula and for an early resumption of the six-party talks.

Another prominent participant focused the attention on strategic interests of the US and Russia in the Northeast Asian region. He stressed that the US acts according to its international strategic interest and the new Russia has not yet developed a full fledged strategic policy in the region. He read a letter by President Clinton to the North Korean leader, Chairman Kim Jong Il, two days prior to the Geneva Framework Agreement in 1994 in which Clinton personally assured the North Korean leader that two light water reactors would be delivered. The letter went a long way to explain the continuing North Korean demand for the light water reactors. The recent financial restrictions in Macau targeting North Korea are seen as part of the US financial encirclement by

Pyongyang. They are, therefore, likely to remain a fundamental roadblock to resumption of the six-party talks. The six-party talks are only on denuclearization, which is the interest of the US. Pyongyang is more interested in talking about security from regime change; as such change can come not only by military intervention but also by human rights agitation and financial sanctions.



The final session focused on confidence building and the search for lasting security cooperation in the region. One prominent US participant called on the US to take the first step to break the deadlock, as it is much more powerful and stronger than North Korea. The US can afford to take the risk and solve the problem, and the sooner the better. The US should provide security guarantees and economic compensation in return for the North Korean dismantlement of its nuclear program. The plutonium stockpile in North Korea should be neutralized, so terrorists can not get hold of it. He made an interesting suggestion to resolve the problem: all parties (including the US and South Korea) should help North Korea to modernize and upgrade its complete energy system into a more reliable and sustainable one. In return, North Korea should offer its 20-30 kg plutonium.

One influential South Korean scholar urged the US, as the center of the world, to be more humble and to show respect to small countries. He suggested that the US use more preventive diplomacy in multilateral forums, such as the six-party talks, rather than military preemption and a unilateral approach which has its own limits. He strongly warned against exaggerating the situation and talking too much about the worst case scenario on the Korean peninsula. Instead, he called for more positive thinking and collective wisdom to ensure stability, security and cooperation in Northeast Asia.

Secretary General of Pugwash Conferences, Prof. Paolo Cotta-Ramusino, in the end stressed that countries should not believe that mere possession of nuclear weapons is a reliable deterrence against nuclear attack or a guarantee of security. In contrast, the US would attack any country militarily to prevent it from developing nuclear weapons. In the case of North Korea, he stressed

that only full implementation of the September 19th Joint Statement is the a security guarantee; the US will have no longer have an excuse to attack and the international community may feel more sympathetic to North Korea.

All in all, the workshop was a fruitful and unique opportunity to discuss sensitive regional issues from different perspectives and to better understand each others' interests. It was clear that a lack of trust still exists among countries in the region and needs to be overcome by mutual respect and better information. All participants agreed that at present the six-party process is the best mechanism. It should move forward to negotiate a solution and to create a nuclear-free Korean peninsula. To this end, the Pugwash workshops are not only useful but a much appreciated forum for regional confidence-building and cooperation in peace building in this conflict ridden region. The fifth workshop is planned for this July at the beautiful Kumgang Mountain and Panmunjom, North Korea. The main topic will be security on the Korean peninsula: how to transform the truce agreement into a peace mechanism.

Participants

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