

## **Long-Stalled Six-Party Talks on North Korea's Nuclear Program: Positions of Countries Involved**

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On February 12, 2013, North Korea conducted its third nuclear test. Yet the Six-Party Talks (SPT) have been stalled for over four years, since the last meeting held in December 2008. Given Pyongyang's intense brinkmanship under Kim Jong Un since 2012, the positions of each SPT party toward North Korea and the SPT itself deserve some analysis. Interestingly, between 2012 and 2013 leadership changes or re-election occurred in all the countries involved in the SPT. Having reviewed this positions of Washington, Beijing, Tokyo, Moscow, and Seoul, respectively, the paper assesses that besides North Korea's persistent nuclear ambition, "relative gain" concerns of countries involved have been obstacles in implementing previous agreements made within the SPT. As alternatives, it recommends placing stringent international economic sanctions on North Korea in a concerted manner and/or launching a new type of SPT that focuses on verified denuclearization rather than anything else and draws more cooperation than before from Beijing and Moscow.

**Keywords:** Six-Party Talks, Kim Jong Un, North Korea, nuclear problem, multilateral security cooperation

### **Introduction**

On November 5, 2012, in his annual report to the UN General Assembly, IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano indicated three countries—North Korea, Iran, and Syria—as countries having verification problems. With regard to North Korea, "uranium enrichment activities" and "construction of a light water reactor" were said to be the two main causes of concern.<sup>1</sup>

The year 2013 is the 10th anniversary of the commencement of the Six-Party Talks (SPT) on North Korea's nuclear program. The SPT, launched in August 2003, were the first-ever multilateral approach to the North Korean nuclear problem. The six nations include the two Koreas (Republic of Korea and Democratic People's Republic of Korea) and the four surrounding powers of the Korean peninsula, namely, the United States, China, Japan, and Russia. As such, the SPT were even expected to

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become a harbinger sooner or later for multilateral security cooperation in Northeast Asia, something unprecedented in the sub-region. From Pyongyang's perspective, the United States, Japan, and South Korea are yet to normalize their relations with North Korea, whereas both Beijing and Moscow have had friendly nations with Pyongyang for more than six decades. Today, Beijing is considered the most influential partner to Pyongyang, both politically and economically.

As of early 2013, it is obvious that the SPT have failed in accomplishing its aim to solve Pyongyang's nuclear problem. It must be a shame for the SPT that during the past 10 years since they were launched, North Korea still managed to carry out three nuclear tests, in 2006, 2009, and 2013. In April 2012, Pyongyang, under its new leader Kim Jong Un, declared itself a "nuclear armed state" in its revised constitution. If it were true, nonproliferation-related issues surrounding North Korea are already in a perilous position, unlike the case of Iran. Worse still, the SPT framework itself has been stalled since the last meeting held in December 2008. For the past 10 years, the five parties of the SPT—South Korea, China, Japan, Russia, and the United States—all shared the primary goal of SPT, i.e., denuclearizing North Korea. But when it comes to the ways and means, positions of each country differed regarding Pyongyang, which has obviously been one of the major reasons for the SPT's failure besides North Korea's persistence in developing nuclear weapons. In other words, these nations have held "relative gain" concerns, while pursuing denuclearization of North Korea, the "absolute gain" for all.<sup>2</sup>

Are there any prospects for the SPT to be resuscitated in 2013 to accomplish its aim of denuclearizing North Korea? Should or will the SPT revive? If not, are there any alternatives to the SPT? What would be the positions of the SPT parties, as 2013 begins? Interestingly between 2012 and 2013, leadership changes or re-election occurred in all the parties of the SPT. Given Pyongyang's intense brinkmanship under Kim Jong Un, the positions of each SPT party toward North Korea and the stalled SPT deserve some analysis.

### **SPT, First-ever Multilateral Approach (2003) Stalled since December 2008**

The SPT is the third instrument in its kind, following the consecutive failures of the two previous attempts to solve the North Korean nuclear problem: *The North-South Joint Declarations on Denuclearization* (December 31, 1991) proclaimed by the Prime Ministers of the two Koreas, and *the U.S.-North Korea Agreed Framework* (October 21, 1994).<sup>3</sup> Pyongyang's lack of cooperation in verification has constantly been one of the core obstacles to implementing these agreements. The SPT are now facing a similar fate to those two failures.

The SPT, the first-ever multilateral approach to Northeast Asian security, were launched in 2003 by China in cooperation with the United States, together with South Korea, Japan, and Russia, following the failure of *the U.S.-North Korea Agreed Framework*. China, North Korea's sole major ally, persuaded Pyongyang to participate in the SPT. Discussions have taken place within the SPT framework about replacing the failed *U.S.-North Korea Agreed Framework*, notably reaching a preliminary accord on September 19, 2005, *the Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks*, issued by China. In the document, issues of the SPT have expanded from "denuclearization and economic reward for it" to multi-dimensional ones including

“Pyongyang’s diplomatic normalization with the United States and Japan,” “peace regime on the Peninsula,” and “Northeast Asia’s peace and security.”<sup>4</sup> On the basis of this September 19 Joint Statement (2005), the six parties further agreed on *the Initial Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement* (February 13, 2007 Agreement), which was followed by some initial actions by participating states. The subsequent September 27–30 meeting resulted in the October 3, 2007 agreement on *the Second-Phase Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement*. While the deadline for Pyongyang (December 31, 2007) to provide a complete and correct declaration was missed, Pyongyang belatedly delivered its declaration to China on June 26, 2008. North Korea also imploded the cooling tower at the Yongbyon facility the next day in the presence of the international media and U.S. government officials. Following the progress on disablement and provision of a declaration, George W. Bush, who was then president, announced the lifting of the application of the Trading with the Enemy Act (TWEA) with respect to Pyongyang, and the Secretary of State rescinded North Korea’s designation as a state sponsor of terrorism in October 2008.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, the reality is that from inception the negotiation process within the SPT was not smooth at all. There have been numerous momentums of frustrating confrontations, agonies, delays, and controversies with regard to “verifiable and irreversible disarmament,” “peaceful use of energy,” “financial restrictions,” “state sponsor of terrorism,” “commitment for commitment and action for action,” and so on. Eventually, due to verification steps which met with Pyongyang’s resistance, the SPT has been stalled for more than four years now. In April 2009, North Korea unilaterally announced its withdrawal from the SPT and expelled the IAEA inspectors. Since then there have been no verification measures (safeguard implementations) in North Korea. Pyongyang now proudly announces that its nuclear capability has actually increased in the past four years. So, the question is whether there are other alternatives to the SPT—or should the SPT resume?

## **Pyongyang 2013**

### *Nuclear Armed State*

North Korea is the only country to have announced its withdrawal from the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), after suspicions were raised over its secret nuclear weapons program. For many analysts North Korea’s nuclear capability is “spilled milk,” unlike the case of Iran, signifying the failure of the two decades of efforts by the United States, South Korea, China, Russia, Japan, the NPT, the IAEA, and the international community as a whole. While the SPT were still alive in 2006 North Korea for the first time detonated nuclear device, which was followed by international condemnation resulting in UNSCR 1718. In May 2009, Pyongyang again detonated a nuclear device, which soon led to the passing of UNSCR 1874, an expansion of the provisions of UNSCR 1718, requiring member states to inspect and seize North Korea’s cargo suspected of being in violation of sanctions. Notwithstanding sanctions, however, Pyongyang declared in November 2009 that it had completed reprocessing 8,000 spent nuclear fuel rods in August. A U.S. research organization estimated recently that Pyongyang has separated enough plutonium for roughly 10 nuclear warheads.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, on November 12, 2010, North Korea unveiled its new uranium enrichment facility consisting of some 2,000 recently constructed centrifuges to a group of American scientists, including Dr. Siegfried S. Hecker of CISAC, Stanford University.<sup>7</sup> It was claimed that the centrifuges were producing low-enriched uranium (LEU) for a light-water reactor that North Korea was constructing. In April 2012, North Korea under the new leadership of Kim Jong Un revised its constitution and claimed that it was now a “nuclear armed state” at last. And in response to the new UNSCR 2087 adopted on January 22, 2013 with regard to its long-range rocket tests on December 12, 2012, Pyongyang conducted its third nuclear test on February 12, which was followed by strong condemnations from the international community.

### ***Putting a Satellite into an Orbit***

Among the estimated 31 countries in the world that are believed to possess ballistic missiles, nine are known or suspected to be in possession of nuclear weapons too. These are the P5 (the United States, China, Russia, UK and France), and non-NPT states (India, Israel, Pakistan), and North Korea.<sup>8</sup> The North Korean military currently deploys short-range Scud and medium-range ballistic missiles like Musudan and Nodong and is allegedly working toward developing intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). The two long-range rocket tests (Taepo Dong-1 & Taepo Dong-2) using ballistic missile technology under Kim Jong Il failed respectively in 2006 and 2009. In the aftermath of Kim Jong Il’s death, despite pressure not to do so by the international community on the basis of the UN Security Council’s two previous resolutions, Pyongyang under its new leader launched missiles twice in one year 2012, in April and December. North Korea is now claiming that at last its launch of a long-range rocket on December 12, 2012 was successful in putting a satellite into orbit.

In so doing, North Korea under Kim Jong Un has to pay a price. Firstly, the launch needed high budget, requiring sacrifice on the part of population. According to South Korean officials in the Ministry of Unification, the two launches in 2012 cost a total of \$1.3 billion. That would have bought 4.6 million tons of corn for the nation, enough to feed the people in the North for four to five years.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, a “Leap Day Deal” with Washington made in February 2012 as a first step toward preparing for the resumption of the SPT broke down. Soon after the launch in April, Washington suspended its food aid promised in the deal.<sup>10</sup>

Thirdly, UNSCR 2087 was adopted on January 22, 2013 in response to Pyongyang’s launch on December 12, 2012. The resolution added to the sanctions list six North Korean entities, including its space agency and the man heading it. In the resolution, the Security Council condemns the use of ballistic missile technology in launches by North Korea and expresses its determination to take significant action in the event that Pyongyang proceeds with further launches.<sup>11</sup> Despite the fact that the resolution called for resumption of the SPT, North Korea reacted immediately by threatening to boost its military power, including nuclear deterrence.

### ***Vulnerability in Governing***

North Korea is the sole communist dictatorship based on hereditary succession. It has been ruled by the Kim family since the division of the Korean peninsula in 1948: Kim Il Sung (1948–1994), his only son, Kim Jong Il (1994–2011), and Kim

Jong Il's third son Kim Jong Un (2011–present). Kim Jong Un continued his father's brinkmanship diplomacy and military maneuvers as seen above and the nation begins a cult for him, celebrating the success in long-range rocket launch and nuclear test. Nevertheless, Kim Jong Un and the regime are vulnerable in some important aspects. Firstly, because his legitimacy to rule depends on the nation's loyalty to his grandfather and father, even if he is reform-minded, which appears not to be the case, it is difficult for Kim Jong Un to distance himself from the tradition and reform the system. Secondly, unlike the case of his late father, who was at the age of 53 when becoming the supreme leader, Kim Jong Un was only 27. Also Kim Jong Un received only two years of leadership training from his father, while Kim Jong Il had 16 years of training. Unlike his father who was the sole son of Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Un has two elder brothers, each of whom also had been his father's favorite at one point or another in the past. Thirdly, North Korea's economy and living condition have deteriorated severely. Malfunctioning of state distribution could produce social disorder, which, in the leadership's perspective, must be prevented by either harsh political control or allowing corruption and co-opting, both of which cannot be a durable option for the system. In particular without financing the military at the level of his father's days, Kim Jong Un will find it difficult to rule the military.<sup>12</sup>

Given the domestic vulnerabilities and the sanctions imposed by the United States, Japan, South Korea, and other member states of the UN in response to its nuclear and missile tests, after some years of muddling through, a longer-term likelihood of slow or sudden collapse could be expected unless outsiders like China try to prevent it. Pyongyang might suggest or accept to resume the SPT. But most likely it will be with an intention to get rewards and concessions—both economic and political—from other SPT parties, rather than denuclearization. What would be the position of the major powers in the SPT toward North Korea and the long-stalled SPT?

### **Washington's Position Regarding the SPT in 2013**

The second-term inauguration of Barak Obama as the 44th President of the United States took place on January 20, 2013. What will be the U.S. stance toward the SPT?

Since the 1990s, “verifiable denuclearization” has been the catchword of Washington's successive administrations. The Obama administration in particular has presented nuclear arms control agenda as its priority. Hence, by launching long-range rockets and detonating a nuclear device in 2009, North Korea lost an opportunity for dialogue with the first-term Obama administration. Further, North Korea's two military provocations against South Korea held in March and November 2010 reinforced the ROK-U.S. alliance as well as relations between Presidents Obama and Lee Myung-bak. During the first-term Obama administration, the U.S. economic assistance and normalization talks with North Korea, promised by parties in the SPT in the 2005 Joint Statement, were unable to proceed. UNSCRs 1718 and 1874 were followed through. North Korea, which was removed from the official list of “state sponsors of terrorism” by the Bush administration in October 2008, now is listed as a country not fully cooperating with the United States in reducing terrorism. Also, since April 2009 when Pyongyang demanded the departure of personnel monitoring U.S. food distribution, U.S. humanitarian assistance has been provided only through NGOs. Washington-Pyongyang governmental contacts were infrequent.<sup>13</sup>

However, shortly after Kim Jong Un assumed the leadership, succeeding his father, the Obama administration reached an agreement with North Korea in Beijing on February 29, 2012 as a step toward resuming the SPT. In accordance with this agreement, North Korea would halt its missile testing and uranium enrichment, and agree to the resumption of international monitoring of its nuclear sites, in return for Washington providing 240,000 tons of food aid to North Korea.<sup>14</sup> But to Washington's embarrassment Pyongyang failed to meet this commitment by firing long-range rockets in April 2012. Mitt Romney, then U.S. Republican presidential candidate, criticized Washington's attempt as appeasing North Korea with a food-aid deal. "The impotence of the Obama administration has emboldened the North Korean regime and undermined the security of the United States and our allies." Jon Kyl, the Republican whip in the U.S. Senate, called on the White House to abandon its "naïve negotiations" with North Korea.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, John Bolton, a neo-con and former ambassador to the UN under President Bush criticizes strategic patience under the Obama administration, arguing that the United States should have persuaded Beijing to oppose Pyongyang's nuclear weapons.<sup>16</sup>

Notwithstanding opinions from domestic political critics, however, the administration of President Obama has taken a tougher stand with North Korea than the Bush administration in that it no longer provided economic assistance. *Strategic patience* has been the Obama administration's policy toward North Korea, waiting for verifiable changes in Pyongyang. The United States has called on North Korea to take *concrete, irreversible denuclearization steps* toward fulfillment of the 2005 Joint Statement of the SPT, comply with international law including the UNSCRs 1718 and 1874, cease provocative behaviors, and take steps to improve relations with its neighbors.<sup>17</sup>

Glyn Davies, U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy stressed denuclearization as America's goal:<sup>18</sup>

"Even were North Korea to go down the path of economic reform, and they haven't yet. That is no substitute for denuclearization. It's important that North Korea understands this issue of fulfilling the promises they've made for years, on denuclearization."

From Washington's perspective, the SPT are still a useful multilateral mechanism to deal with the North Korean nuclear issue, given the failed 1994 Geneva Framework, which was bilateral. Within the SPT, the responsibility is shared by other parties in the framework in that it includes China and Russia, both of which share burdens with the United States in talks on nuclear issues not only on North Korea but also on Iran. It also brings in South Korea and Japan, its two allies whose security is in the U.S. strategic interest. Nevertheless, by now the SPT turned out to be failed as a way to realize *verifiable denuclearization*. The lesson for President Obama's second-administration to learn from its first administration is that both inaction and action with regard to Pyongyang were ineffective and criticized by opposition politicians. Hence, it seems that in the next four years, the United States will continue to adopt strategic patience not allowing concession, while cautiously opening a door for direct talks and resuming the SPT, if North Korea is ready for change with regard to verified denuclearization. On the basis of this principle, Washington will closely consult with Seoul and Beijing.

## **Beijing's Position Regarding the SPT in 2013**

It is generally agreed by the international community that China is the most influential actor on the survival of the North Korean regime. During the Korean War, China sent several hundred thousand People's Army "volunteers" to the Korean peninsula to fight the multinational UN forces that included the U.S. and South Korean militaries. Both Beijing and Pyongyang express themselves communist brothers and still maintain the "Sino-North Korean Mutual Aid and Cooperation Friendship Treaty" (July 11, 1961), unlike in the relations between Pyongyang and Moscow which discontinued a similar treaty in the 1990s.

In the economic dimension, in 2011 Beijing accounted for 70.1 percent (\$5.6 billion) of the North's entire trade volume of \$8.0 billion. Trade volume between them jumped by 62.4 percent from the previous year.<sup>19</sup> During the period when Pyongyang's relations with South Korea, the United States, and Japan deteriorated as a result of Pyongyang's non-compliance with its commitment and international norm and the SPT have been stalled, Beijing utilized this as an opportunity for deepening its relations with Pyongyang. The fact that Pyongyang is subject to international sanctions after its nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009 have not affected Beijing-Pyongyang economic transactions, particularly compared with South Korea whose economic transactions with North Korea were even further constrained by the newly imposed May 24 Regulations in the aftermath of the sinking of the *Cheonan* corvette in March 2010. In August 2012, North's powerful economic policymaker Jang Song Taek visited China to secure support for cross-border infrastructure and trade, including two special economic zones, later in autumn resulting in preliminary investment agreements reportedly worth nearly \$1.3 billion.<sup>20</sup>

With a fear of the North's collapse, China has provided fuel and aid to Pyongyang for years. Beijing's leadership has been reluctant to impose sanctions on Pyongyang in the name of "peace and security on the Peninsula." Within the framework of the SPT, Beijing has played a major role in persuading Pyongyang with incentives like economic aid from the other parties to the SPT and diplomatic normalization with the United States and Japan, while most of time being in support of North Korea's claim that Pyongyang's nuclear program might be for the peaceful use of nuclear energy, which is guaranteed by the NPT's Article IV.

However, as 2013 begins, Beijing sees itself in a dilemma with regard to North Korea policy. First, to advocate Pyongyang, which obviously crossed a red line, will damage its image as a peacefully rising power.<sup>21</sup> Second, North Korea's nuclear and missile program could become a security threat or boomerang on China. Japan has cooperated with the United States on missile defense for decades, which, in Beijing's view, could lead to regional instability in East Asia.<sup>22</sup> On January 11, 2013, new Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's ruling Liberal Democratic Party said Japan will increase military spending for the first time in 11 years in the next fiscal year starting from April. This move is obviously in response to a harsh confrontation with China over disputed islands in 2012. But Pyongyang's launch of a rocket over Japan's southern islands in December 2012 has also had a major impact. Likewise, North Korea's provocations led President Lee Myung-bak to strengthen the ROK-U.S. alliance. Given President Park's belief in *trustpolitik*, the same would naturally occur with the new administration of President Park Geun-hye, if North Korea opts for losing further trust by violating its commitments and international obligations.<sup>23</sup> Third, both

Washington and Seoul are vitally important for China to sustain its economic growth. In 2011, Chinese trade with the ROK reached \$245 billion, 38 times higher than in 1992 when diplomatic relations were established between democratic South Korea and communist China.<sup>24</sup> Fourth, as some in Beijing argue, North Korea is sometimes beyond Beijing's control, often crossing a red line. *North Korea fatigue* has begun to appear at the mass level, even criticizing the North Korea policy of their government.

From the perspective of Beijing, the SPT are a useful tool for realizing dual purposes, denuclearizing North Korea and at the same time preventing the collapse of the North Korean regime, which seems more important to them. That is why Beijing let Pyongyang sit at the table of the SPT from the outset, and that is why Beijing as a host state of the SPT has played a major role in preventing the breakdown of the SPT, persuading North Korea to come back to the table and requesting other parties to provide incentives again and again. Whereas Beijing considers its role was positive, bringing about peace and stability on the Korean peninsula, public opinion in other parties to the SPT, particularly the United States, South Korea, and Japan, is pessimistic about the SPT and even doubts Chinese motives with regard to the primary goal of the SPT.<sup>25</sup> Some expect that Beijing's decision to back UN Security Council Resolution 2087 in January 2013 would send a strong message to Pyongyang's new leadership. But still many consider that probably due to Beijing's effort, this resolution was rather too cautious.<sup>26</sup>

Taken together, the year 2013 will be a year to see if the new Chinese leadership under Xi Jinping will depart from the previous line of North Korea policy, and whether Beijing truly wants to resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis more than anything else. If so, Beijing needs stronger policy coordination with the United States and South Korea even more than before. The starting point is that Beijing has to acknowledge the ineffectiveness of the SPT.

### **Tokyo's Position Regarding the SPT in 2013**

Like between Washington and Pyongyang, relations between Tokyo and Pyongyang are yet to be normalized. From 1910 through 1945, Japan colonized the Korean peninsula, after which the Peninsula was temporarily occupied by the Soviet Union and the United States. This was the background of the division of Korea into two separate states in 1948. During the Cold War-era, both South Korea and Japan belonged to the free world and normalized their relations in 1965. Japan subsequently recognized South Korea as the only legitimate government on the Korean peninsula. The normalization issue between Japan and North Korea was prescribed in the SPT's 2005 Joint Statement but talks have been stalled, as with the SPT.

Japan has been rather passive about the SPT framework in that it not only fails to denuclearize Pyongyang, but also lacks talks on Pyongyang's missile issue, which, in Tokyo's view, is directly threatening its national security. Besides, for Japan, North Korea's abduction of Japanese citizens during 1977–1983 remains a hurdle to normalizing relations with North Korea.<sup>27</sup> Japan cut almost all trade and ties with Pyongyang.

In August 2012, government officials from Japan and North Korea met for the first direct talks in four years since 2008. It was a working-level meeting between mid-ranking diplomats held in Beijing. Japan interpreted the meeting as a signal that the North's new leader, Kim Jong Un, wants to improve the country's economy by

reaching out to Japan, while trying to reduce Pyongyang's dependence on China. Nevertheless, given North Korea's habit of renegeing on agreements, observers were not optimistic. As a matter of fact, North Korea's long-range rocket launch on December 12, 2012, the second in a year, angered the Japanese. In the general election on December 16, 2012, opposition Liberal Democratic Party won an absolute majority, resulting in the assumption on December 30, 2012 of premiership by Shinzo Abe, who served as Prime Minister in 2006-2007, and has been tough on North Korea. If North Korea does not show any changes in its behavior, attempts by Tokyo to appease Pyongyang will not be much in evidence. As long as North Korea does not change its behavior, the SPT would not be an appropriate tool for Tokyo to solve North Korea's nuclear issues any more—not to mention Japan-specific North Korea issues, like normalization, missile, or kidnapping.

### **Moscow's Position Regarding the SPT in 2013**

Russia had hoped to participate in resolving the first North Korean nuclear crisis in the early 1990s, but this was not realized. The crisis ended with the 1994 U.S.-North Korea Framework. A decade after, in 2003, Moscow under the leadership of Vladimir Putin at last became a member of the newly established SPT. Besides the denuclearizing of North Korea, Moscow's goal within the SPT involves equal partnerships with the United States, China, and Japan on the issue;<sup>28</sup> and pursuing economic interests like greater integration into dynamic East Asia, and ensuring of transit routes for energy and railroad throughout the Korean peninsula.

As a matter of fact, since 2000 when Putin assumed the presidency, Moscow has proactively presented toward both Seoul and Pyongyang grand and ambitious trilateral economic projects like linking a Korean peninsula railroad to the Trans-Siberian Railroad (TSR) and energy pipelines as part of an incentive for North Korea to become a peace-loving state.

Realistically speaking, at least for the time being, among the four major powers, Russia has the weakest links to the Korean peninsula and East Asia in every sense—political, economic, and cultural. Therefore, from Moscow's perspective the SPT are one of the most important multilateral frameworks useful for its diplomacy in the East. Hence, saving the SPT was imperative. In 2006, it was Russia among the SPT parties that voluntarily carried out a last minute technical procedure in lifting money-laundering sanctions, an action by U.S. law enforcement to freeze North Korea's funds held at Macao's Banco Delta Asia. In so doing, the SPT, which had been boycotted by Pyongyang citing the United States as "hostile" during late 2005 and most of 2006, resumed in December 2006. Then, since February 2007, Moscow has been the chair within the framework of the SPT of the working group for Northeast Asia Peace and Stability Mechanism.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, Moscow in 2013 has to face limitations and a dilemma with regard to previous North Korea policy as well as the SPT. First, Russia's leverage on North Korea—both political and economic—is far less than China's, the sole communist state within the SPT. Hence, to unite unconditionally with Beijing might not be in Russia's interest. Second, within Russia, there are opinion leaders and think tanks that increasingly view North Korea negatively, as a dictatorship with nuclear arms and starving people, a socialist state with its unique *Juche* ideology and dynastic

succession, etc. For instance, a report written by IMEMO (Institute of World Economy and International Relations), one of Russia's foremost national think tanks, takes the collapse of the North Korean regime as a given, and concludes that Korean reunification led by South Korea coincides with Russia's national interests—a view contrasting with Moscow's authoritative view emphasizing its equidistance toward the two Koreas.<sup>30</sup> Third, a crucial lesson for Moscow to learn from the 10-year experience of the SPT is that as long as Pyongyang is suspicious of potential nuclear weapons and their delivery systems by the United States, South Korea, Japan, and the international community, Russia's economic interests cannot be realized at all. South Korea and other parties would not participate in possibly risky—security as well as economic—projects.

Taken together, in 2013, Moscow under the leadership of Vladimir Putin will continue to see the SPT as an important asset for high-profile diplomacy in the East. Yet, given the limitations and dilemmas illustrated above, Moscow also is likely to reconsider its previous policy toward North Korea and the SPT.

### **Seoul's Position Regarding the SPT in 2013**

North and South Korea are still technically at war because their 1950–53 war ended in an armistice, not a peace treaty. Since the truce, North Korea's provocations and terrorist acts against South Korea have continued to occur. Even during the time of South Korea's "Sunshine Policy," there were provocations in the West Sea in 1999 and 2000, with soldiers killed.

For 10 years under President Kim Dae-jung (1998–2002) and President Roh Moo-hyun (2003–2007), South Korea's North Korea policy was called the "Sunshine Policy," or more broadly an "engagement" policy, leading to the two inter-Korean summits, respectively in 2000 and 2007. Nevertheless, the way they negotiated with the nuclear-ambitious North was soon criticized by the majority of the population in the South, as being too naïve and making the South too vulnerable to the North's threats and unpredictable behaviors. The North-South economic cooperation under the "Sunshine Policy" was also a target of criticism in that unlike the China-Taiwan or former West Germany-East Germany economic cooperation, it was of help to the leadership in Pyongyang, notably, the Kim family, to extend the rule of the regime threatening the security of the South and the region.<sup>31</sup> Reflecting the views of the majority of the population, North Korea's nuclear agenda stood at the forefront of the subsequent Lee Myung-bak administration as the condition for grand-scale aid to be provided to Pyongyang, as indicated in a slogan "Denuclearization, Openness, 3000." It implied that Seoul would assist Pyongyang to achieve \$3,000 GDP per capita, once Pyongyang denuclearized and opened up.

However, North Korea refused to accept this offer from the Lee administration. Instead, in 2008 a North Korean soldier shot dead a female tourist at Mt. Kumgang on the pretext of protecting the North's security zone. In 2010, North Korea became far more confrontational, as illustrated by the submarine attack on a South Korean navy vessel *Cheonan* with 104 sailors aboard, among which 46 were killed. The *Cheonan* was conducting a normal naval patrolling mission in the vicinity of Baengnyeong Island on March 26, 2010.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, on November 23, 2010, North Korea shelled South Korea's Yeonpyeong Island, killing four South Koreans, two soldiers

and two civilians. These two incidents, for which the North has not yet apologized, caused tensions between North and South Korea and stood in the way of resuming the SPT.

Park Geun-hye of the ruling Saenuri party inaugurated as five-year term President of the Republic of Korea on February 25, 2013. The Park administration's North Korea policy will reflect the lessons learned from the previous policies toward North Korea of her predecessors. In light of Pyongyang's intense brinkmanship under Kim Jong Un as well as public messages implicated in the election results last year, North Korea policies of her administration could not and would not be the same as those followed under Presidents Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun. The resumption of the SPT for the sake of the SPT could not and would not be an appropriate option for the peace and stability of the Korean peninsula and beyond. Her administration needs to coordinate well with Obama's second administration in Washington, the allied power, and at the same time with Beijing under its new leader Xi Jinping, among others.

## **Ten Years Have Passed**

Two questions arise 10 years after the launch of the SPT. Firstly, is North Korea's verifiable, irreversible denuclearization a possible goal or not? In other words, will North Korea sincerely realize the goal someday? Secondly, is the SPT as it is a capable forum for discussions on resolving the North Korean nuclear problem?

Unfortunately, honest observers' answers to both questions are "no." North Korea, as it has been, might not denuclearize itself to the extent that would satisfy the United States and the international community. North Korea has openly proved this by its own deeds over the past two decades. The SPT as it has been functioning also would not solve the North Korean nuclear problem, not to mention further goals like contributing to building a peace regime on the Peninsula and implementing a Northeast Asian peace and security mechanism that the SPT envisioned in its September 19, 2005 Joint Statement.

Why is this so? Firstly, because the five partners within the SPT are heterogeneously related to North Korea, and accordingly priorities differ within the broader domain of the SPT. In Pyongyang's perspective, the United States is hostile, whereas China and Russia are not. Japan wants to include missile and kidnap issues to the domain of the SPT. South Korean administrations change their North Korea policy from one more similar to Beijing during the late Roh Moo-hyun's leadership to one more similar to Washington's under President Lee Myung-bak.

Secondly, the issues on the table of the SPT have been increasingly too comprehensive and complicated. The priority of the United States has always been verifiable denuclearization, whereas China and Russia are inclined to focus on giving to the leadership in Pyongyang security guarantees and economic aid, promoting normalization of Pyongyang's relations with the United States and Japan, and building a peace regime on the Peninsula and a Northeast Asia peace mechanism to the domain of the SPT. But given the current strategic competition between the United States and China, and China and Japan, together with territorial disputes among them involving China, Japan, Russia, and South Korea, the expansion of SPT's domain beyond denuclearization is not desirable, only delaying a resolution of the North Korean nuclear

crisis.<sup>33</sup> In addition to North Korea's persisting ambition for nuclear deterrence, it easily could lead the crisis to become a chronic one.

Thirdly, principles based on "commitment for commitment" and "action for action" have always been a matter of controversy when applied to rewards in response to unverified or unsatisfied denuclearization in every stage. In the absence of trust between the two countries, there will be no smooth "give-and-take."

Fourthly, the ineffectiveness of UN Security Council resolutions has disappointed many who expected responsible actions by the member states of the UN, particularly the five permanent members of Security Council.<sup>34</sup> Among the parties of the SPT, three of them—the United States, China, and Russia—are also permanent members of the UN Security Council. Yet, even these three have not united in enforcing sanctions on Pyongyang. China and to some extent Russia have appeased Pyongyang to come back to the table of the SPT whenever it boycotted negotiations. Are China and Russia accepting the UNSCRs to comply with them wholeheartedly? Do they still consider or want to believe that Pyongyang's high-budget nuclear and missile programs are either for peaceful purposes or nothing more than a bluff? In other words, are they really disregarding Pyongyang's self-proclaimed WMD threats to the United States and the Republic of Korea, considering them either peaceful or simply a bluff? Or, conversely, do they really find that North's military capacity, including nuclear weapons and ballistic missile technology, is already so seriously threatening that neighbors should not provoke the leadership in Pyongyang? Ironically, these two opposite explanations have been the reactions from Beijing and Moscow to some extent.

## What Next?

In 2013, given the uncertainty and dangers with regard to North Korea's nuclear weapons program, the SPT parties would not object to the resumption of the SPT. This has been same logic underlying the repeated revival of the SPT in the past. As a matter of fact, UNSCR 2087, newly adopted in January 2013, while condemning the North's rocket launch last year reaffirms its support for the SPT and urges its resumption.

Today, however, it is the right time for the SPT parties to reconfirm *verifiable denuclearization* as the "absolute gain" for all. The consideration of "relative gain," i.e., strategic interests of one's own, should not stand in the way of achieving this "absolute gain." The SPT, as it has been for the past 10 years, could not be a legitimate and effective forum to deal with North Korea's nuclear problem. The September 19, 2005 Joint Statement reached by the SPT and issued by China is an idealistic statement, but lacks practicality when North Korea persists as it is and SPT parties, the major powers surrounding the Korean peninsula, put priority on their own relative gain concern.

For the last 10 years of the SPT, the Republic of Korea has become more vulnerable to North Korea's threat and unpredictable behavior. Now, Seoul is left with no other choice but to declare an official death to the 10-year-old SPT and the rest of the SPT parties, i.e., Washington, Beijing, Tokyo and Moscow, should follow the suit. *International economic sanctions* in a concerted manner, which include among others efforts by Beijing and Moscow, could be the best way to a peaceful solution to North Korea's nuclear crisis, avoiding military sanction. This might lead to form-

ing a new SPT or SPT-2, which should be new in form and content, so as not to license North Korea to threaten the security of specific states and international norms. Within the SPT-2 China and Russia must coordinate more closely with South Korea, the United States, and Japan in a responsible manner to guarantee *verifiable denuclearization*. Iran and other countries are watching closely how the world's leading responsible countries are dealing with the North Korean nuclear crisis.

The EU and its many individual member states might provide their insights from their experiences with European integration or German reunification on the North Korean issue, as they normalized relations with Pyongyang more than a decade ago in 2001.<sup>35</sup> Yet, careful vigilance is constantly needed as North Korea, unlike the former East Germany (GDR), possesses ambitions for an independent nuclear and long-range missile programs and artillery shell to strike South Korean territory, killing innocent people, while its own people are suffering from hunger and malnutrition.

## Notes

1. "Statement to the Sixty-Seventh Regular Session of UN General Assembly," International Atomic Energy Agency, <http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/statements/2012n018.html> (accessed November 26, 2012).
2. For the concepts of "relative gain" and "absolute gain," see Joseph Grieco, Robert Powell, and Duncan Snidal, "The Relative-Gains Problem for International Cooperation," *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 3 (September 1993): 727–43.
3. Under the Agreed Framework, the United States, South Korea, and Japan on March 15, 1995 founded KEDO (Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization), whose principal activity was to construct a light water reactor nuclear power plant in North Korea to replace North Korea's Magnox type reactors. Since then other members joined: 1995 (Australia, Canada, and New Zealand); 1996 (Argentina, Chile, and Indonesia); 1997 (EU, Poland); 1999 (Czech Republic); and 2000 (Uzbekistan). Nevertheless, in autumn of 2002, Pyongyang acknowledged its secret uranium enrichment program to a U.S. official. With this, the implementation of the Agreed Framework was suspended and then officially dead. Eventually, the executive board of KEDO decided on May 31, 2006 to terminate the LWR project, on the basis of the failure of North Korea to perform the steps required in the Supply Agreement. <http://www.kedo.org> (accessed February 6, 2013).
4. See the text of the Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks, <http://www.state.gov/p/eap/regional/c15455.htm> (accessed November 20, 2012).
5. Larry A. Nicksch, *North Korea: Terrorism List Removal* (Congressional Research Service, January 6, 2010).
6. "Nuclear Weapons: Who has what at a Glance," Arms Control Association, <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Nuclearweaponswhohaswhat> (accessed November 5, 2012).
7. Siegfried S. Hecker, "Extraordinary Visits: Lessons learned from Engaging with North Korea," *Nonproliferation Review* 18, no. 2 (July 2011): 445–55.
8. These nine and Iran have flight-tested missiles with range exceeding 1,000 km. See, [www.armscontrol.org/factsheet](http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheet) (accessed November 20, 2012).  
<short>: less than 1,000km; <medium>: 1,000-3,000km; <intermediate>: 3,000-5,500km; <inter-continental>: more than 5,500km.
9. "North Korea's rocket launches cost \$1.3 billion," *CNN*, December 12, 2012, <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/12/12/business/north-korea-rocket-cost> (accessed January 10, 2013).
10. The agreement hoped for the North's moratorium on uranium enrichment and missile testing and a return of IAEA inspectors to Yongbyon with substantial U.S. food aid, leading to a resumption of the SPT.

11. See text of the UN Security Council Resolution 2087. UN Security Council, "Security Council Condemns use of Ballistic Missile Technology in Launch by Democratic of People's Republic of Korea in Resolution 2086 (2013)," <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2013/sc10891.doc.htm> (accessed February 1, 2013).
12. For a need for South Korea and the United States to prepare for contingency, see Richard Weitz, "Regional Powers Grapple with North Korea's New Leader Kim Jong Un," *Korea Journal of Defense Analysis* 24, no. 3 (September 2012): 405–18. Refer also to the International Crisis Group's recent analysis on instability of North Korea. International Crisis Group, "North Korean Succession and the Risks of Instability," *Asia Report* No. 230 (July 25, 2012). On North Korea's economic situation, see Lee Seok, "North Korean Economy 2012 and Prospect for 2013" [in Korean], *KDI Review of the North Korean Economy* 15, no. 1 (January 2013): 3–23
13. Refer to the website of the U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov> (accessed November 5, 2012).
14. Press Statement by Victoria Nuland, Spokesperson, Department of State, February 29, 2012
15. Chris McGreal, "Obama engagement policy 'in tatters' after North Korean rocket defiance," *The Guardian*, April 13, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/apr/13/obama-north-korea-engagement-policy> (accessed November 10, 2012).
16. John Bolton, "Obama's indifference to North Korea=nuclear danger," FoxNews.com, December 13, 2012, <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2012/12/13/obama-indifference-means-nuclear-danger/>.
17. Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Relations with North Korea," <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm> (accessed February 10, 2013).
18. Glyn Davis, "Remarks on North Korea," Tokyo, October 17, 2012, <http://m.state.gov/md199291.htm> (accessed February 14, 2012).
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21. Scott Snyder considers economic interdependence between Beijing and Pyongyang would not transfer to Beijing's political influence, given improved Beijing-Seoul relations as well as anti-Chinese feeling in North Korea. Scott Snyder, *China's Rise and the Two Koreas: Politics, Economics, Security* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009).
22. Masako Toki, "Missile defense in Japan," January 16, 2009, <http://thebulletin.org/web-edition/features/missile-defense-japan> (accessed September 10, 2012). Also, scholars like Daniel M. Kliman argue that in Japan since September 11, 2001 normative restraints have fast been replaced by an interest-based realpolitik defense strategy. Daniel M. Kliman, *Japan's Security Strategy in the Post-9/11 World: Embracing a New Realpolitik* (Washington, D.C.: CSIS & Praeger, 2006).
23. See Park Geun-hye, "A New Kind of Korea: Building Trust Between Seoul and Pyongyang," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 5 (September/October 2011): 13–18.
24. Lee Seung-ah, "Korea and China, a Look Back at 20 Years of Friendship," Korea.net, <http://m.korea.net/english/NewsFocus/Policies/view?articleId=102129> (accessed October 9, 2012).
25. For frustrations accumulated among the South Korean population on the chronic North Korean nuclear crisis, see Cheon Seong-whun, "The Rise and Demise of North Korean Nuclear Agreements and the 2012 Leap Day Deal," *IFANS Review* 20, no. 1 (June 2012): 1–27. Cheon emphasizes that North Korea will not give up its nuclear program and that increasingly many people argue for Seoul to develop its own nuclear weapons to counter the North's threat.
26. See "UN resolution on DPRK," China Daily.com, January 24, 2013, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2013-01/24/content\\_16167822.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2013-01/24/content_16167822.htm) (accessed February 10, 2013)
27. Following the historic summit in 2002 between Kim Jong Il and Koizumi, five surviving

- victims of kidnap and their families were allowed to leave the country and they resettled in Japan in October 2002. Twelve other cases remain unresolved.
28. The Security Council of Russia, *National Security Concept of Russia* (2000). Full English translation from <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/gazeta012400.htm> (accessed September 6, 2012).
  29. There are five working groups within the Six-Party Talks established on the basis of the Agreement in February 2007. Each of them focuses respectively on denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, normalization of North Korea-U.S. relations, normalization of North Korea-Japan relations, economy and energy cooperation, and Northeast Asia peace and security mechanism. See Full Text of Initial Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement of February 13, 2007, [http://armscontrolcenter.org/issues/northkorea/articles/070213\\_initial\\_actions\\_six\\_party\\_talks\\_joint\\_statement/](http://armscontrolcenter.org/issues/northkorea/articles/070213_initial_actions_six_party_talks_joint_statement/) (accessed January 20, 2013).
  30. A. Dynkin, ed., *Strategic Global Outlook 2030* [Stratigicheskiglobalnyprnoz 2030] (IMEMO, 2011).
  31. See Nicholas Eberstadt, *The North Korean Economy: Between Crisis and Catastrophe* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 163, 175, and chapter 8.
  32. An investigation conducted by an international team of experts from South Korea, the United States, Canada, Australia, and Sweden concluded that the *Cheonan* was sunk by a torpedo launched by a North Korean Yono-class miniature submarine.
  33. For the strategic consideration of the United States and China, refer to the following articles. Patrick M. Cronin, "As the World Rebalances in the Asian-Pacific Century, So Must the United States," *Global Asia* 7, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 8–13; Allen Carlson and Ren Xiao, eds., *New Frontiers in China's Foreign Relations* (Lexington Books, 2011); and Andrew F. Nathan and Andrew Scobell, "How China Sees America," *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 5 (September-October 2012): 32–47.
  34. The ineffectiveness of UN sanctions on the North Korean nuclear issue is presented by Doug J. Kim. See his article, "The North Korean Nuclear Issue and the United Nations," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 23, no. 2 (June 2011): 289–302.
  35. Since 1995, the EU has been involved in various assistance programs in North Korea. Since then over 366 million Euros in aid has been provided in the forms of food aid, medical, water, and sanitarian assistance and agricultural support. [http://eeas.europa.eu/korea\\_north/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/korea_north/index_en.htm) (accessed September 5, 2012). Also in 1997, the EU joined KEDO and increased annual contribution from 15 to 20 million Euros, [http://www.kedo.org/au\\_history.asp](http://www.kedo.org/au_history.asp) (accessed August 7, 2012).

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