Risk Reduction & Confidence-Building on the Korean Peninsula

Challenges, Opportunities & Implications for Regional Stability

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Risk Reduction & Confidence-Building on the Korean Peninsula:

Challenges, Opportunities & Implications for Regional Stability

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Introduction

With support from the The Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis (IFPA) collaborated with the Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security (IFANS) of the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT) and the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) to organize a trilateral Track 1.5 dialogue in Seoul, South Korea on January 19, 2011 entitled “Risk Reduction and Confidence-Building on the Korean Peninsula: Challenges, Opportunities, and Implications for Regional Stability.” The dialogue brought together approximately fifty prominent policymakers and experts from the United States, China (People's Republic of China or PRC) and the Republic of Korea (ROK or South Korea) for in-depth discussions focusing on the current security situation on and surrounding the Korean Peninsula and prospects for greater cooperation among the three nations represented at the workshop. The event built on earlier workshops that IFPA has organized with DTRA support to examine a variety of regional security challenges in Northeast Asia, including the likely impact of nuclear and ballistic missile proliferation trends, the potential value of multilateral risk reduction and confidence-building measures on the Korean Peninsula, and the prospects for developing over time a Korean Peninsula Peace Regime (KPPR) based in part on the denuclearization of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea). The following is a brief summary of the discussions.¹

¹ Note that this summary does not represent the opinions of all workshop participants or their organizations. It is not a consensus document, nor has it been reviewed by the participants prior to publication. IFPA has drawn its own conclusions from this exercise.

Key Conference Points

• North Korean provocations over the past year have had a significant impact on the strategic environment in Northeast Asia, negatively affecting a range of bilateral ties. For instance, strains have deepened between South and North Korea, South Korea and China, and China and the United States. At the same time, the region is once again polarizing into two main camps (i.e., U.S.-ROK-Japan versus PRC-DPRK).
• The leadership succession process in North Korea appears to be promoting more defiant and aggressive behavior by the regime and adds another unpredictable variable to the already tense regional security environment.
• The nature of deterrence on and surrounding the Korean Peninsula may be shifting, with the North seemingly emboldened to act out with impunity (under the cover of its nuclear weapons posture), and the South declaring a new policy of “proactive deterrence” in response to further provocations.
• In the absence of the Six-Party Talks, the U.S.-ROK-China strategic triangle is an increasingly salient dynamic for managing regional crises in the short term and for shaping a future security structure in Northeast Asia over the long term. Enhanced cooperation and coordination among these three nations can lead to a more effective diplomatic approach to negotiating the denuclearization of North Korea.
• The three countries have diverging priorities, with the United States and South Korea emphasizing denuclearization and China emphasizing peace and
stability on the Peninsula. Harmonizing these priorities is a fundamental requisite for adopting a common approach to the North Korean problem, including achieving a denuclearized Korean Peninsula.

- China’s deepening economic engagement with North Korea is frustrating U.S. and South Korean attempts to isolate and pressure the regime. As this engagement continues, it is becoming increasingly difficult to sanction North Korea without impinging on Chinese commercial and economic interests.
- Washington and Seoul should explore ways to persuade Beijing to join counter-proliferation initiatives and curb North Korean provocations and nuclear development in return for clearer assurances about allied intentions on the Korean Peninsula over the longer run, especially in the context of a reunified peninsula under the leadership of the South.
- The United States, South Korea, and China should improve trilateral security coordination and cooperation through enhanced confidence-building measures (CBMs) and other risk-reduction measures.
- Over time, these CBMs and risk-reduction mechanisms can lead to a new regional security architecture and/or a potential peace regime on the Korean Peninsula that is congruent with the core interests of all three countries.2

2 The notion of a Korean Peninsula Peace Regime (or KPPR) has been in existence since at least the September 2005 Six-Party Joint Statement, although there is no consensus on exactly what the peace regime would look like or how it might be achieved. One potential version of a peace regime could take the form of a confederated Korea with a verifiable denuclearization mechanism and a broad range of confidence-building measures aimed at limiting military tensions on the Peninsula. For more on the conceptual parameters of a KPPR, as well as the role of key players in such an arrangement, see Charles M. Perry and James L. Schoff, “Consensus Building and Peace Regime Building on the Korean Peninsula,” International Journal of Korean Unification Studies, Vol. 19, No. 1. 2010.

3 Pyongyang denies responsibility for the sinking of the Cheonan and refutes the results of a ROK-led multinational investigation that found evidence of North Korean torpedo parts linked to the attack. China, which was not a member of the multinational investigation, has raised doubts about the accuracy of the investigation and has refused to blame North Korea for the attack.

Background

During 2010, tensions on the Korean Peninsula dramatically increased after a series of provocations from the North. In March 2010, the DPRK torpedoed the ROK Navy corvette Cheonan, killing 46 South Korean sailors. Then, in November 2010, the DPRK launched an artillery attack on the civilian-populated Yeonpyeong Island, killing two South Korean marines and two civilians. Both incidents represent among the most violent and deadly actions by the DPRK since the end of the Korean War. Also in late November, North Korea disclosed the existence of new uranium enrichment facilities and a light-water reactor—evidence of substantial advancements in the DPRK’s nuclear development.

These actions have occurred against the backdrop of the DPRK’s leadership succession process in which the reins of power are slowly being passed from Kim Jong-il to his young son and heir-apparent, Kim Jong-un. At a conference of the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK) in September 2010, for example, Kim Jong-un was made a four-star general and given several senior party posts, requisite steps toward building his legitimacy as the country’s next leader. The delicate, and largely opaque, succession process like-
ly played some part in the North’s recent provocations and adds an additional unpredictable variable to ongoing tensions on and surrounding the Peninsula. The sinking of the Cheonan and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island appears to confirm, as well, the leverage of the North Korean military (the Korean People’s Army or KPA) over the leadership transition.

Taken together, developments on the Korean Peninsula over the past year have had a significant impact on the regional security environment, including heightened tensions across a series of bilateral state-to-state relations. In addition to the increasing acrimony between North and South Korea, the past year has also seen U.S.-China, China-ROK, and Sino-Japan relations suffer (although the latter rift between Beijing and Tokyo is mainly a result of a bilateral spat over the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyutai Islands). The breakdown of the Six-Party Talks, after North Korea’s abrupt withdrawal from them in April 2009, has also left the region without a multilateral mechanism for managing the ongoing crisis. This has bought time for North Korea to continue developing its uranium enrichment and light-water reactor programs outside the scrutiny of international nuclear inspectors.

There have also been divergent responses to North Korea from Seoul and Washington on one hand and Beijing on the other. The United States and South Korea have maintained diplomatic pressure on Pyongyang in response to its recent provocations, calling for tough new UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and sanctions against the regime. Beijing, however, has shifted from sanctioning North Korea for its nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009 to accommodating and even enabling the regime’s development and proliferation of nuclear technology.

China has also shielded North Korea from UNSC resolutions condemning the regime for its role in the Cheonan and

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**North Korea’s Major Naval Bases and Artillery Deployments in the Yellow Sea**

- **Northern Limit Line (NLL)**
- **76mm, 130mm artillery**
- **Silkworm, Samlet missiles**
- **North Korean artillery barrage Nov. 23, 2010**
- **Yeonpyeong Island**
- **Yellow Sea (West Sea)**

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Yeonpyeong incidents, further straining Beijing’s ties with Seoul and Washington. In response, the United States and South Korea have conducted numerous joint military exercises, including naval exercises in the West Sea (or Yellow Sea), that have agitated China’s strategic anxieties. Meanwhile, the political climate in South Korea has changed in ways that are leading to a more aggressive ROK deterrence posture and greater public support for retaliation against the North in the near term.

Conference Overview: Divergent Priorities, Divergent Policies

Workshop participants pointed out that the primary cause of the divergence in the U.S.-ROK-China triangular dynamic is a widening gap in priorities among the three powers in relation to the North Korean problem. Seoul and Washington emphasize the importance of denuclearizing the Peninsula, while Beijing has shifted from prioritizing denuclearization to showing a greater concern for preserving peace and maintaining stability within the North Korean regime. In this regard, China hopes to preserve a buffer from perceived allied encroachment on or near its border and to ensure the continued development of its northeastern provinces. China’s emphasis on peace and stability reinforces the status quo on the Korean Peninsula even as the North takes further steps to enhance its nuclear capabilities. As the stakes have grown higher, the main players have moved in opposite directions, making the North Korea problem seem all the more intractable.

Participants from the United States and South Korea criticized the shift in China’s approach toward the North. In the words of one U.S. participant, “China has gone from being part of the solution for North Korean denuclearization to being part of the problem,” by shielding North Korea from the consequences of its actions and enabling the regime to develop its nuclear program. He added that China’s efforts to protect North Korea from UN sanctions have undermined the credibility of the UNSC and its enforcement of the 1953 Armistice Agreement.

Another U.S. participant pointed out that Chinese trade and investment in North Korea have expanded exponentially and are undercutting international efforts to sanction the regime for its belligerent behavior. Moreover, as Chinese trading firms increasingly invest in North Korea, it is becoming more difficult to sanction the North without affecting Chinese economic interests—yet another disincentive for Beijing to rein in North Korea’s belligerent behavior.

Chinese participants acknowledged the severity of North Korea’s provocations and said that these acts, along with the regime’s nuclear development, do represent a serious dilemma for Chinese security interests as well. Indeed, such

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actions on the DPRK’s part, it was admitted, serve to undermine Chinese security interests by, among other things, driving Japan, the United States, and South Korea closer together, increasing interest among all three countries in missile defenses that may degrade China’s ballistic missile capabilities, and raising the overall prospect of the very instability within the region that China hopes to prevent. As one Chinese participant pointed out, “We are all in the same boat,” referring to China, the ROK, and the United States. While that may be true, another participant countered that “we may all be in the same boat, but we are rowing in different directions.”

On that particular note, Chinese participants criticized the U.S.-led alliance system in Asia as “moving backward” in the direction of a Cold War security structure that Beijing and Pyongyang perceive as threatening and counterproductive. According to one Chinese participant, Beijing’s attempts to transcend the Cold War security paradigm have been repeatedly set back by allied responses to events on the Korean Peninsula, which have stressed joint military cooperation and strategic solidarity. Moves to strengthen U.S.-ROK-Japan defense ties in the wake of the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong incidents, it was argued, only deepen the sense of insecurity in North Korea and raise Chinese
concerns about strategic encroachment by the allies. This also feeds into the perception in Beijing that the United States and its allies are creating a regional security structure that is balancing against China rather than seeking ways to incorporate China’s legitimate security interests into a broader regional architecture.

Deterrence on the Korean Peninsula

For their part, participants from South Korea and the United States argued that a robust allied response to North Korea’s recent provocations was called for and was necessary to deter further aggressive acts by the regime. South Korean attendees argued that President Lee’s “proactive deterrence” policy is necessary to ensure that further provocations from the North will not be tolerated indefinitely. They added that the policy is meant to send three messages to the North: 1) that South Korea will retaliate proportionately to another attack; 2) that although the South does not want war it will not avoid one if it is inevitable; and 3) that South Korea will continue to strengthen the alliance with the United States beyond the 2015 deadline for transferring wartime operational control (OPCON) from the U.S. to ROK command.

Still, not all participants agreed with Seoul’s new “proactive deterrence” policy. An American participant argued that the new policy is dangerous for several reasons. Among them, he said, is that President Lee may be held politically hostage to future provocations from the North by being forced to retaliate or else risk losing his credibility. This situation also binds U.S. policymakers to any actions that President Lee would take in response to another attack, without taking a more coordinated, alliance-oriented approach to the next provocation. The potential for an escalation of hostilities is all the higher in the context of the DPRK’s succession process, which makes Pyongyang less willing to back down in a contest of wills with Seoul. The North, meanwhile, is likely to continue attacks as part of its own deterrence strategy, which is to demonstrate that it is not afraid of conflict with outside powers.

Chinese participants said that Beijing’s behind-the-scenes diplomatic efforts have successfully kept North Korea from making any further provocations since the Yeonpyeong incident—somewhat contradicting their claims throughout the day that China has less leverage over North Korea than is commonly assumed. An American participant conceded that the reduction of tensions on the Peninsula over the winter may have been a result of behind-the-scenes measures by China, as well as U.S.-ROK demonstrations of deterrence, but he wondered whether the current state of relative calm is sustainable over time.

6 In response to the Cheonan incident, ROK President Lee Myung-bak announced on May 24, 2010 that “From now on, the Republic of Korea will not tolerate any provocative act by the North and will maintain the principle of proactive deterrence. If our territorial waters, airspace or territory are violated, we will immediately exercise our right of self-defense.” The statement is online at http://english.president.go.kr/pre_activity/speeches/speeches_view.php?uno=3217&board_no=E03&search_key=&search_value=&search_cate_code=&cur_page_no=4.
Prospects for the Six-Party Talks

Divergent priorities have also changed how the three countries now perceive the main goals of the Six-Party Talks, which have not resumed since North Korea withdrew from the talks in April 2009. As Beijing has shifted away from an emphasis on denuclearization, it has repeatedly called for a resumption of the Six-Party process in order to manage tensions arising from the North’s recent provocations. China therefore appears to see the talks as a crisis management mechanism as opposed to a mechanism that focuses first and foremost on denuclearization issues. On the other hand, Washington and Seoul continue to see the talks as a mechanism for negotiating the denuclearization of North Korea, and they have balked at Beijing’s calls to resume the talks in the wake of the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong incidents without credible indications that Pyongyang is prepared to get serious about its prior commitments to denuclearize. The breakdown of the six-party process for the past two years has also cast doubt on whether the talks can really pave the way toward a viable regional security mechanism.

Participants took different positions on the usefulness of the Six-Party Talks at this stage of the crisis. Chinese participants argued that the Six-Party Talks could still be effective, but they urged the United States to be more flexible and to consider normalizing ties with North Korea in exchange for steps toward denuclearization. In this sense, members of the Chinese delegation, in contrast to their more pessimistic American counterparts, stressed the possibility that the right package of inducements could compel the North to give up its nuclear program. Another suggestion offered by a Chinese participant was to broaden the scope of the Six-Party Talks, essentially focusing on “softer”, but still important, security issues, such as multilateral cooperation on humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and similar matters, before tackling “harder” issues such as denuclearization.

South Korean participants reiterated their government’s position that some form of apology from the North, however pro forma, is a requisite condition for resuming the Six-Party Talks. Nonetheless, one expert from the ROK did agree that the Six-Party Talks should be resumed in order to find a solution to the North Korean nuclear problem. He suggested two different approaches to induce North Korea and China to change their positions: 1) a “hard line” approach that would use enhanced allied security cooperation and deterrence capabilities to force China to more seriously consider denuclearization as a policy priority; and 2) a “soft line” approach that would provide the North with assurances about its leadership succession process in exchange for concessions on nuclear weapons. This latter approach, in other words, would use the succession process as a bargaining chip, although this same expert conceded that he was not sure about how that might be implemented as an actual policy.

An American expert agreed that the Six-Party Talks were still an attractive mechanism for achieving the denuclearization of the Peninsula, but that the bilateral networks necessary to support the six-party framework have eroded. He added that the talks could only resume once there was a more stable inter-Korean relationship, a more active U.S.-DPRK
Regional Security Cooperation and a Potential Korean Peninsula Peace Regime

In lieu of the Six-Party Talks, another American expert, picking up on an earlier Chinese proposal for expanding the six-party process, called for the creation of a five-party Northeast Asian security dialogue that would promote cooperation on disaster relief, humanitarian assistance, cross-border health issues, and other common challenges confronting the region. The advantage of this approach, the expert argued, is that the dialogue would not be held hostage to North Korean participation (or lack thereof) and could be used initially to tackle less contentious issues before, over time, taking on larger and more intractable strategic issues, such as denuclearization, missile reduction, and contingency planning for an unstable transition in the DPRK.

Participants considered other options for enhancing regional cooperation through confidence-building measures (CBMs) and other risk-reduction measures. One suggestion was for the United States and China to collaborate more closely on controlling North Korean proliferation networks, including proliferation networks that the North has developed within China. Another idea, suggested by U.S. participants, was to include China in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). This would bring China into the fold of international counter-proliferation efforts toward North Korea. Moreover, given the voluntary nature of the PSI, Beijing could still determine on its own, he went on to argue, the type and level of support it was prepared to contribute to the initiative, and under what conditions such support would be provided.

Chinese participants, mirroring their government’s position, did not appear receptive to the idea of joining the PSI. However, one Chinese expert suggested that the United States and South Korea could invite China as an observer in joint naval exercises in less strategically sensitive areas (i.e., outside the Yellow Sea) as a mutual trust-building measure. This would, according to the expert, give China the opportunity to prove to the international community that it is a “responsible stakeholder” in the region.

Regarding a potential Korean Peninsula peace regime, a U.S. participant argued that a peace regime should not necessarily be linked to a peace treaty with North Korea. According to the participant, a peace treaty is a “non-starter” absent a major breakthrough with Pyongyang on denuclearization issues, but that should not hamper, he went on to emphasize, additional efforts to conceptualize what a peace regime might look like in the future and how a broad range of CBMs and tension reduction measures in the midterm might lead to a potential peace regime over the longer run.
Conclusion: Toward Harmonizing Trilateral Approaches to North Korea

Getting all three countries to “row in the same direction” again will depend on harmonizing their priorities over the near- to long-term. One U.S. participant pointed out that there may be more of a convergence of priorities than meets the eye, as denuclearization and stability are not mutually exclusive and are, in fact, inextricably linked. As U.S. and ROK participants contended, “we can't have peace and stability without denuclearization.” Indeed, based on the workshop discussions, it would appear that trilateral collaboration has the best chance of success if it is focused first on harmonizing U.S., Chinese, and ROK priorities and strategies on three broad, but interconnected, issue areas, namely: 1) near-term stability and crisis management; 2) denuclearization and nuclear security; and 3) the shape of long-term peace on the Peninsula.

Recent events on the Korean Peninsula could have had the potential to drive Seoul, Beijing, and Washington closer together, but it is clear that large gaps still remain on this front. In many cases, these gaps stem from a lack of Chinese confidence in the region’s ability to manage potential instability in North Korea and from China’s anxiety over the ultimate shape of a long-term peace regime. In this sense, while the U.S. participant mentioned above chose to focus on the nexus of the first two issues (stability and denuclearization), China tends to see the challenge more broadly, with the ultimate peace structure and supporting security system of paramount importance. Beijing worries in particular that a future security structure for the Peninsula, especially one that included a democratic, reunified Korea, may prove to be insufficiently sensitive to Chinese strategic interests. Therefore, if serious progress is to be made toward harmonization, trilateral cooperation must deal with all three issue areas simultaneously.

Looking ahead, so-called “front-end dialogue” about the entry point for renewed six-party negotiations is, of course, necessary, but it may not allow for sustainable progress, because the barriers to coordinated action have as much to do with the three countries’ discordant visions for the future as they do regarding the present. For this reason alone, trilateral dialogue over the next few years could be far more productive if it was focused on a number of near- to mid-term crisis management issues in a way that illustrates to China how all three countries can work together to cope with potential instabilities (including a cross-border disaster or humanitarian crisis), while at the same time exploring the longer-term requirements of a Korean peace regime and regional security system that accounts for China’s needs. This could potentially include the following points:

- U.S. assurances to Beijing that potential post-unification allied force structures would not be aimed at “containing” China or checking its strategic interests. This could include promises not to forward-deploy U.S. bases near the border with China and a discussion of potential reductions of U.S. forces from the Korean Peninsula under certain security conditions.
• Reassurances that Chinese economic and commercial interests would be maintained in post-unified Korea and that China would continue to have a major stake in the future economic development of the Peninsula.
• More concrete proposals for a Korean Peninsula Peace Regime (KPPR) or post-unification regional security structure that would take into account China’s strategic interests and would give Beijing a key role in deciding the direction of this new security arrangement.

If the allies can begin to reassure China in this way, it might be possible to enlist more effective Chinese cooperation on counter-proliferation priorities and the containment (and the eventual roll-back) of North Korea’s nuclear programs. Viewed from this angle, solving the North Korea nuclear problem has more to do at present with “getting China right,” than with trying to engage and/or seek negotiated terms with Pyongyang. And while strengthening the US-ROK alliance and the US-ROK-Japan strategic triangle is an important way to bolster deterrence in the short run, it will not provide a full or lasting solution to the long-term problems posed by North Korea. China should be part of that solution, and there is a long way to go to develop a policy framework that all three countries can support, and that will lead to a denuclearized Korean Peninsula and a more stable regional security environment.

China, it seems clear, is looking for a new course in the region that is not beholden to the old order, one that reflects its rising status and accommodates its interests. The allies, it would appear, are not completely averse to this concept, but they are somewhat skeptical of China’s motives or its willingness to be satisfied with an end state that includes a free and democratic Korean Peninsula allied with the United States. They are uncertain, moreover, whether China will really act as a responsible stakeholder in the region pursuing plus-sum policies, or that Beijing really appreciates that they also have a set of “core interests” (equal in importance to the ones China claims for itself) that must be accommodated.

Charting a new course for China with regard to the Korea problem and Northeast Asian security, therefore, is a conversation that all three countries must have together, and it is central both to the prospect of effective Six-Party Talks in the future and to the framing of a regional security architecture that could manage and contain a nuclear-capable North Korea while also promoting its denuclearization. Further rounds of US-China-ROK trilateral dialogues, similar to the one convened by IFPA, IFANS, and USIP (with support from the Carnegie Corporation) in January 2011 is an ideal mechanism to achieve forward progress on both fronts. It can be structured in a way that looks at the three issue areas outlined above in an integrated fashion, while seeking to connect near-term, cooperative initiatives with the development of a longer-term vision for the Peninsula that all three countries can support, and that can eventually be supported as well by other important regional players, including Russia and Japan.
Jan. 10, 2010: North Korea’s Foreign Ministry proposes discussions on a peace treaty, either within the Six-Party Talks framework or at an independent meeting of signatories of the 1953 Armistice (i.e. China, the US and DPRK – but not the ROK). Washington and Seoul call for Pyongyang to first return to the 6PT.

Jan. 27, 2010: US President Barack Obama in the State of the Union Address calls on DPRK and Iran to abandon their nuclear ambitions, warning of stronger sanctions if they continue to pursue atomic weapons.

Jan. 27, 2010: The KPA fires about 30 artillery rounds near, but on its side of, the Northern Limit Line (NLL). The ROK Navy ripostes with about 100 warning shots. Pyongyang says this is an annual drill, which will continue. It does, firing a total of about 350 rounds through Jan. 29.

Feb. 8, 2010: In an interview with CNN, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton says the Obama administration will continue engaging the DPRK to convince it to return to the Six-Party Talks.

March 11, 2010: Gen. Sharp says that US troops who would be tasked with eliminating the DPRK’s weapons of mass destruction in the event of armed conflict are participating in the current Key Resolve-Foal Eagle US-ROK military exercise (from March 8 to March 18).

March 26, 2010: The 1,200 ton ROK Navy corvette Cheonan sinks off Baengnyeong – South Korea’s northwestern island, close to the Northern coast and near the NLL, which the DPRK disputes.

April 11, 2010: Secretary of Defense Robert Gates announces that the US will leave “all options ... on the table” vis-à-vis North Korea, including the use of nuclear weapons.

May 3, 2010: Sources in Seoul report that Kim Jong Il has begun a nominally secret visit to China: his first since 2006. He returns home on May 7, apparently a day earlier than planned and possibly in high dudgeon.

May 20, 2010: South Korea’s Joint Investigation Group (JIG) publishes its findings that the Cheonan was sunk by a DPRK torpedo. The US, Japan, and other Western allies offer support and condemn North Korea.

May 27, 2010: South Korea launches an anti-submarine drill off its west coast.

June 4, 2010: The ROK formally refers the Cheonan sinking to the UN Security Council (UNSC). North Korea urges the UNSC to demand a new probe into this, and threatens “the toughest retaliation” should the world body discuss punishing the DPRK.
June 16, 2010: President Obama announces that the US will extend its current sanctions regime on North Korea by one more year, arguing that the “existence and the risk of proliferation of weaponsusable fissile material on the Korean Peninsula continued to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat” to the US.

June 26, 2010: Presidents Lee and Obama decide to delay Seoul’s scheduled takeover of wartime operational control of its troops (OPCON) to Dec. 1, 2015.

July 8, 2010: China’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang says that China “resolutely opposes” joint naval exercises that South Korea and the US plan to conduct in the Yellow Sea.

July 9, 2010: The UNSC adopts a Presidential Statement on the Cheonan, which avoids directly condemning North Korea.

July 25-28, 2010: The US and South Korea conduct a large-scale naval exercise codenamed Invincible Spirit in the Sea of Japan, that includes the aircraft carrier USS George Washington and 20 other ships and submarines, 100 aircraft, and 8,000 personnel from the US and ROK armed services.

Aug. 5, 2010: Following joint US-ROK exercises in the East Sea, South Korea holds its own five-day naval maneuvers in the West (Yellow) Sea.

August 9, 2010: DPRK fires some 130 rounds of artillery into the Yellow Sea near its border with the South.

Aug. 16-26, 2010: South Korea and the US conduct the annual Ulchi Freedom Guardian (UFG) exercise, a computer-based simulation involving about 56,000 ROK and 30,000 US troops.

Aug. 26, 2010: Kim Jong-il makes a sudden trip to China, his second in four months. He visits several cities in the northeast, meeting President Hu Jintao in Changchun.

Aug. 30, 2010: President Obama signs an executive order mandating new financial sanctions on North Korea.

Sept. 1, 2010: China starts a four-day artillery exercise in waters off Qingdao.

Sept. 12, 2010: US Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth and US Special Envoy for the Six-Party Talks Sung Kim arrive in Seoul to meet with Shin Kak-soo, the acting foreign minister, and Wi Sung-lac, the ROK’s chief nuclear envoy.

Sept. 16, 2010: Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell testifies before the Senate Armed Services Committee, making it clear that the State Department won’t get ahead of Seoul in engaging North Korea.

Sept. 27, 2010: South Korea and the US launch joint anti-submarine military exercises in the Yellow Sea.

Sept. 28, 2010: Kim Jong-un is named Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission of the WPK.
Oct. 1, 2010: The Koreas hold their first direct military talks (colonel level) in two years. The South insists on an apology, while the North still demands to send its own inspectors to examine the Cheonon wreckage.

Oct. 8, 2010: US Secretary of Defense Secretary Robert Gates and ROK Defense Minister Kim Tae-young say that both allies are fully ready for “all situations that could occur.”

Oct. 10, 2010: In his second major public appearance, Kim Jong Un joins his father (and a senior Chinese delegation) on the saluting stand for a large-scale military parade marking the WPK’s 65th anniversary.


Oct. 13-14, 2010: South Korea hosts a PSI maritime exercise off the coast of Pusan.

Oct. 25, 2010: The Pentagon announces it will postpone planned joint naval drills in the Yellow Sea with the ROK, but adds that China had nothing to do with the decision.

Oct. 28, 2010: In a speech given in Honolulu, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton refers to the US-Korea alliance as a “lynchpin” of peace and security in the region.

Oct. 29, 2010: North Korea fires two rounds toward South Korea and South Korean troops return fire.

Nov. 9, 2010: US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Adm. Mike Mullen reiterates the US pledge to send an aircraft carrier into the Yellow Sea for joint drills with the ROK in the near future.

Nov. 11, 2010: Presidents Obama and Lee meet on the sidelines of the G20 meeting in Seoul to discuss the KORUS FTA, North Korea, and resumption of the Six-Party Talks.

Nov. 20, 2010: The New York Times reports that earlier this month Siegfried Hecker, the former head of Los Alamos National Laboratory, was shown a hitherto unsuspected ultra-modern uranium enrichment (UE) facility containing some 2,000 centrifuges at Yongbyon. On Nov. 22 Hecker publishes a full report of his visit.

Nov. 22, 2010: US special representative for North Korea policy Stephen Bosworth, dispatched to Asia in the wake of Hecker’s UE revelations, says that this news is disappointing and provocative, but “not a crisis.”

Nov. 22, 2010: The ROK begins its annual large-scale Hoguk military exercise.

Nov. 22, 2010: Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un visit the DPRK’s southwest coast, to inspect fish farms.

Nov. 23, 2010: The KPA fires some 170 artillery shells at the ROK’s Yeonpyeong Island, close to the DPRK west coast. ROK forces fire about 80 rounds back. The KPA
claims Seoul started this, by firing shells into its territorial waters. President Lee calls the North’s act “an invasion of South Korean territory.”

Nov. 24, 2010: The State Department urges China to influence North Korea to reduce tensions.

Nov. 25, 2010: Secretary Clinton reassures the ROK of the US commitment to the alliance.

Nov. 26, 2010: Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi expresses Beijing’s concern over the upcoming US-ROK joint exercises in the Yellow Sea.

Nov. 27, 2010: Chinese State Counselor Dai Bingguo makes a sudden visit to Seoul to meet President Lee.

Nov. 28, 2010: China proposes emergency consultations with members of the Six-Party Talks.

Nov. 28-Dec. 1, 2010: The US and ROK hold large-scale joint naval drills off the west coast of the peninsula, including the 97,000-ton aircraft carrier USS George Washington.

Nov. 29, 2010: In a televised address, ROK President Lee pledges strong retaliation to any future provocations. He says Seoul has given up hope that dialogue will make Pyongyang abandon brinkmanship and nuclear weapons. He rejects China’s proposal for convening an emergency meeting of the Six-Party Talks.

Dec. 6, 2010: According to the White House, President Obama asks President Hu Jintao “to send a clear message to North Korea that its provocations are unacceptable.”

Nov. 24, 2010: The State Department urges China to influence North Korea to reduce tensions.

Nov. 25, 2010: Secretary Clinton reassures the ROK of the US commitment to the alliance.

Nov. 26, 2010: Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi expresses Beijing’s concern over the upcoming US-ROK joint exercises in the Yellow Sea.

Nov. 27, 2010: Chinese State Counselor Dai Bingguo makes a sudden visit to Seoul to meet President Lee.

Nov. 28, 2010: China proposes emergency consultations with members of the Six-Party Talks.

Nov. 28-Dec. 1, 2010: The US and ROK hold large-scale joint naval drills off the west coast of the peninsula, including the 97,000-ton aircraft carrier USS George Washington.

Nov. 29, 2010: In a televised address, ROK President Lee pledges strong retaliation to any future provocations. He says Seoul has given up hope that dialogue will make Pyongyang abandon brinkmanship and nuclear weapons. He rejects China’s proposal for convening an emergency meeting of the Six-Party Talks.

Dec. 6, 2010: According to the White House, President Obama asks President Hu Jintao “to send a clear message to North Korea that its provocations are unacceptable.”


Dec. 13, 2010: The US and the ROK form the Extended Deterrence Policy Committee, a joint committee to make decisions about the alliance’s nuclear and extended deterrence policies.

Dec. 14, 2010: Beijing says Pyongyang has agreed to an emergency meeting of chief envoys to the Six-Party Talks. Seoul and its allies are less than keen, to put it mildly.

Dec. 15, 2010: Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg leads a delegation to Beijing to discuss Northeast Asian security and developments on the Korean Peninsula.

Dec. 16, 2010: North Korea’s Foreign Ministry states that the DPRK “supports all proposals for dialogue including the Six-Party Talks...to prevent a war and realize denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula.”

Dec. 16, 2010: Chosun Ilbo reports that Kim Jong Il said during a meeting with State Counselor Dai Bingguo that he was willing to consider allowing IAEA inspections into the DPRK.

Dec. 18, 2010: China expresses its opposition to South Korea’s upcoming drills.

Dec. 20, 2010: An emergency session of the UN Security Council (UNSC) fails to agree on a statement on defusing tensions on the Korean Peninsula. China reportedly threatens to veto any phrase condemning the DPRK for its Nov. 23 artillery attack on Yeonpyeong.

Dec. 20, 2010: South Korea conducts a 90-minute live-fire drill on Yeonpyeong, firing about 1,500 rounds. North does not respond.


Dec. 23, 2010: South Korea stages massive firing drills involving missiles, artillery, and fighter jets near the border with North Korea.

Dec. 30, 2010: ROK 2010 Defense White Paper labels the DPRK an “enemy.” While harsher than the phrase “direct military threat” in the last White Paper, this is not as strong as “main enemy” which was used from 1995-2004, which some now wished to restore.

Jan. 3, 2011: In his New Year’s address, ROK President Lee Myung-bak says: “I remind the North that the path toward peace is yet open. The door for dialogue is still open.” He adds that “nuclear weapons and military adventurism must be discarded.”

Jan. 26, 2011: North Korea’s Foreign Ministry releases a statement reiterating the commitment to the denuclearization of the “entire Korean Peninsula” and also warns Seoul against setting “unilateral preconditions” for the cross-border talks.

Feb. 9, 2011: Preliminary military talks between South and North Korea break down as the North refuses to apologize and admit its responsibility for deadly provocations last year.

Feb. 25, 2011: ROK Prime Minister Kim Hwang-sik says absorption-based reunification is not an option despite protracted military tensions between South and North Koreas.

Feb. 28, 2011: U.S. and South Korea began to conduct the annual Key Resolve-Foal Eagle military exercise.

April 14, 2011: A pentagon official told a Senate Armed Services Committee that the U.S. and South Korea signed an agreement for cooperation in developing a future BMD program against North Korea.

April 18, 2011: U.S. Department of State urges North Korea to improve ties with South Korea before moving to another round of the Six-Party Talks.

Risk Reduction & Confidence-Building on the Korean Peninsula:

Challenges, Opportunities & Implications for Regional Stability

January 19, 2011
Seoul, Republic of Korea

Organized by:
Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis (IFPA)
Institute for Foreign Affairs and National Security (IFANS),
South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT)
U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP)

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January 19, 2011

9:00-9:15 Welcome and Introduction
Amb. Lee Joon-gyu, IFANS
Dr. Charles Perry, IFPA

Session I: The Post-Cheonan and Post-Yeonpyeong Security Environment
9:15-10:45

This session will address such questions as:

- How has the peninsular and regional security environment changed almost one year after the Cheonan incident? Are there new perceived threats to regional stability and have calculations of deterrence been altered since the incident? To what extent is this reflected in the November 2010 tensions? Is there a need for improved crisis management capabilities?
- What is the impact, if any, of the North Korean succession process on regional security calculations? On the prospects for effective dialogue and threat reduction efforts? What might be done to make the most of the changes?
- How have critical bilateral relations among the key players (i.e., US-PRC, ROK-DPRK, ROK-PRC, Japan-PRC, etc.) changed, and how are these ties likely to evolve over the long-term? What is their likely impact on broader regional relations?
- What lessons can we learn from the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong incidents, and how can we move beyond them in order to avoid similar crises and take advantages of opportunities to reduce tensions? Is the prospect of new North Korean leadership an opportunity or only another complication?

Moderator: Dr. Charles Perry, IFPA
Lead US Discussant: Mr. Ralph Cossa, Pacific Forum CSIS
Lead China Discussant: Dr. Shen Dingli, Fudan University
Lead ROK Discussant: Dr. Shin Beom Chul, KIDA
Session II: Toward a Revamped Crisis Management and Risk Reduction Framework
11:00-12:30
This session will address such questions as:
- What adjustments could be made to bolster near-term risk management and address ongoing concerns about proliferation threats (and their interconnections) on the Peninsula?
- How can existing non- and counter-proliferation mechanisms be applied more effectively to North Korean challenges, thereby promoting and supporting regional stability?
- How can additional Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) support the Armistice and reduce future risks and tensions in the region?
- What can the relevant parties do to support implementation of the inter-Korean Basic Agreement and Joint Declaration?
- What is the proper division of labor between various bilateral measures and multilateral measures to reduce tensions and support stability on and around the Peninsula?
- How can a revamped Armistice build toward long-term stability and set conditions for an eventual peace regime on the Peninsula?

Moderator: Dr. Jacquelyn Davis, IFPA
Lead China Discussant: Dr. Teng Jianqun, CIIS
Lead US Discussant: RADM Michael McDevitt, USN (Ret.), CNA
Lead ROK Discussant: Dr. Cheon Seongwhun, KINU

12:30-14:00 Keynote Luncheon Address
The Honorable Hwang Jin Ha (Ret. Lieutenant General, ROK Army), Member, ROK National Assembly; Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Unification Committee

Session III: Envisioning a New Peninsular and Regional Security Structure
14:00-15:30
This session will address such questions as:
- How can the five parties work together beyond the six-party-talks structure to stabilize the Korean Peninsula and reduce tensions over the long-term? What additional parties (e.g., Australia, the ARF, etc.) and global institutions (i.e., the UN and its affiliated agencies) should be involved in the process?
- What additional risk reduction measures can the five parties and global institutions undertake to address North Korea’s WMD-related programs and the risks they pose?
- What would an ideal regional security structure look like without the baggage of legacy issues (i.e., past conflicts and disputes over history, territory, etc.)? What would be the priorities of that new framework, and how would regional players cooperate to achieve those objectives?
- Can a new regional security structure evolve into a peace regime over time? Is there already a peace regime strategy in place among the key players? If so, what are the goals and objectives?
- How can the key players work together to realize a peace regime, and how can they cooperate to make it effective and sustainable? What can be done to implement elements of a peace regime now?
- How can we work over the short term and long term to bring about positive change in North Korea and with respect to North Korea’s regional role?

Moderator: RADM Eric McVadon, USN (Ret.), IFPA
Lead Korea Discussant: Prof. Kim Young-ho, KNDU
Lead China Discussant: Prof. Zhu Feng, CISS, Peking University
Session IV: Workshop Discussion Wrap-up and Possible Next Steps

15:45-17:00

Based on the previous sessions, what are specific “take away” points that could be followed up by participants from each nation? How can we best coordinate bilateral, trilateral, and broader multilateral efforts to promote the ideas covered in today’s workshop? Do the security dialogues and risk reduction efforts of other regions in transition — such as post-Cold War Europe — hold useful lessons for setting in place a new peace and security regime in Northeast Asia? What specifically should future Track 1.5 dialogues focus on to support key objectives identified during the workshop discussions?

Moderator: Mr. Weston Konishi, IFPA
Lead US Discussant: Mr. Scott Snyder, Asia Foundation
Lead China Discussant: Prof. Zhuang Jianzhong, CNSS, Jiaotong University
Lead Korea Discussant: Prof. Choi Kang, IFANS

18:00-20:00

Closing dinner

Hosted by The Honorable Hyun In-taek, Minister of Unification, Republic of Korea
PARTICIPANTS
(In alphabetical order by country/affiliation)

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School of International Studies, Renmin University

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Korean Peninsula Studies Division, China Institute of Contemporary International Relations

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