

South Korea and China

- Panel:** Plenary Session IV (Orchid Room)
Date/Time: Wednesday, December 12, 2012 / 16:45-18:00
Speakers: Sohn Jie-Ae, Korea International Broadcasting Foundation (Moderator)
Bark Taeho, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Vasily V. Mikheev, Institute for World Economy and International Relations
Douglas H. Paal, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Pan Zhenqiang, China Reform Forum
Rapporteur: Tingting Li, University of Chicago

Panel Short Summary

In response to the recent North Korea missile launch, Ms. Sohn Jie-Ae, CEO of the Korean International Broadcasting Foundation, asked the speakers to comment on the event before proceeding to the assigned topic. Dr. Vasily V. Mikheev, Vice President of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations at the Russian Academy of Sciences, considered the launch an inevitable failure due to technological backwardness and noted that US assessments tend to overestimate North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities. Dr. Douglas H. Paal, Vice President for Studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, noted that the missile launch is an early test for the new Chinese leadership and that China's response will be a symbolic moment to indicate whether the new leadership is willing to take a tougher response to provocative behaviors. Maj. Gen. Pan Zhenqiang, Senior Advisor to China Reform Forum, advised against overreacting to the launch and emphasized the importance of treating the event with a sense of urgency to restart negotiations.

Returning to the topic of South Korea and China, Dr. Bark Taeho, Minister of Trade at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Republic of Korea, asserted that a high quality FTA between South Korea and China could set up a model for future regional economic cooperation. He noted that FTA negotiations in the Asia-Pacific region are advancing from the bilateral to the multilateral level because the growing economies have increasing demands for promoting regional trade, and argued that a bilateral FTA between South Korea and China

*** The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies.**

*** The views expressed herein are panel overviews of the Asan China Forum. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the author or the institutions they are affiliated with.**

could contribute to such multilateral negotiations.

Dr. Mikheev argued that China and South Korea should separate the North Korea issue from FTA negotiations and not let the former influence the construction of an East Asian free trade area. He asserted that the two countries will be capable of further promoting economic development because their shared strategic interest outweighs their differences in approaches. As for the North Korea issue, he argued that the key to a solution is not nuclear, per se, but the regime, and suggested that China and South Korea should cooperate to promote total engagement with North Korea in order to bring changes to the regime.

Dr. Paal argued that the relationship between South Korea and China will continue to advance in a positive direction, especially in terms of economic integration, in response to worries about an alleged return to cold war symptoms. He noted that the long-term relationship between the two countries depends on the development of inter-peninsula relations and emphasized that South Korea should maintain close cooperation with the United States for better chances in improving relations with North Korea. Meanwhile, he argued that South Korea and China need to develop crisis management tools to solve potential problems and that Washington's participation is necessary in the development of such tools to see what each party can and cannot tolerate.

Maj. Gen. Pan asserted that China and South Korea need to build new frameworks in economic relations, security, and public opinion in order to maintain the momentum of bilateral cooperation. Putting special emphasis on security, he argued that the two countries should develop ways to better manage the influence that a third country, especially North Korea and the United States, could exert on their bilateral relationship. In his opinion, it is essential for China-ROK cooperation that both countries maintain good relations with North Korea and that potential tensions arising from US security policy in the Asia-Pacific region be well managed.

*** The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies.**

*** The views expressed herein are panel overviews of the Asan China Forum. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the author or the institutions they are affiliated with.**