

[SE4-GB-1] The Six Party Talks as Viable Mechanism for Denuclearization

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Full Summary

This panel focused on the Six Party Talks as a viable mechanism for denuclearization of North Korea. The panel seemed split with Bruce Klingner from The Heritage Foundation and Sue Mi Terry from the Council on Foreign Relations suggesting that while the Six Party Talks are not perfect and there needs to be a lot of work done to change North Korea's calculations on having nuclear weapons, the Six Party Talks are a framework for approaching denuclearization issues. Alternatively, General Burwell B. Bell, former Commander of UN Command, Combined Forces Korea, and US Forces Korea along with Dr. Larry Wortzel of the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission insisted that the Six Party Talks were not helpful for denuclearization and other alternatives should be used. All panelists were skeptical a nuclear deal would be reached at the present time but gave ideas on how to pressure North Korea into giving up its nuclear weapons.

For Bruce Klingner and Sue Mi Terry, talking to North Korea should be part of the policy approach to denuclearization. Sue Mi Terry argued the Six Party Talks are the least bad option in a land of lousy options. She believed the Obama administration must at least tactically demonstrate that dialogue is possible with North Korea. Bruce Klingner expressed that talking to North Korea is just one tool of national power, but it must be combined with all the instruments of national power, including tougher sanctions, better military cooperation with allies, and a missile defense system with South Korea and Japan. For both Bruce Klingner and Sue Mi Terry, it seemed that talking to North Korea was permissible within the Six Party Talks framework, as long as it is combined with other forms of pressure and deterrence against North Korea provocations.

Last year, the attacks on the *Cheonan* and Yeonpyeong Island brought into question some of the deterrence and military capabilities of the South Korean armed forces. The revelation at Yongbyon of a low enrichment uranium facility also challenged the deterrence ability of the U.S., South Korea, and other members of the international community to prevent North Korea from enhancing its nuclear program. Sue Mi Terry advocated for more consultation

between the United States and South Korea on extended deterrence issues.

During the question and answer period, questions on the need for tactical nuclear weapons to be stationed in South Korea were raised as part of this discussion on deterrence. General Bell noted South Korean President Lee Myung-bak pushed for having the nuclear umbrella pledge by the United States in his joint statement with President Obama. General Bell argued bringing a tactical nuclear weapon onto South Korean soil wasn't necessary. He said it does not take tactical nuclear weapons on South Korean shores for the U.S. to respond with nuclear weapons. Dr. Wortzel also argued that from a policy standpoint, one does not need tactical nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula, but it is necessary for the U.S. to have nuclear weapons and use them if needed.

Part of a deterrence package beyond nuclear weapons discussed by the panel was a missile defense system. Bruce Klingner, General Bell, and Dr. Wortzel all asserted a need for a better missile defense system for South Korea. General Bell stated there was an extraordinary vulnerability with the lack of an effective integrated missile defense system for South Korea. He maintained that a missile defense system would help protect South Korea because North Korea doesn't have thousands of missiles ready for launch. It takes the North Koreans time to fuel their rockets, and they only have a certain number of locations where they can launch missiles. General Bell also believed South Korea and Japan could afford a proper missile defense system.

Another aspect of deterrence is trilateral cooperation between the U.S., the ROK, and Japan. Both Sue Mi Terry and Larry Wortzel recommended the U.S. strengthen its trilateral coordination with its allies in order to enhance deterrence capabilities. General Bell argued much closer coordination and a consensus on approaching North Korea is necessary between the U.S., South Korea, and Japan. Moreover, trilateral understanding prevents North Korea from exposing differences among the respective countries and exploiting them in negotiations.

For General Bell and Dr. Wortzel, the Six Party Talks are no longer helpful for denuclearization. General Bell believed a divided peninsula is in the interests of the countries in the immediate region and North Korea would not give up its weapons that it has worked hard to procure. Dr. Wortzel noted Chinese military literature and thought suggests that nuclear weapons for small countries help limit superpower hegemony; thus, China would not pressure North Korea to give up its weapons. Dr. Wortzel proposed moving forward with a peace treaty on the Korean peninsula and changing the location of denuclearization talks to Geneva or New York.

During the question and answer session, a question was raised asking if moving the Six Party

Talks would actually take the pressure off of North Korea and put it back on the United States. Bruce Klingner contended many people in South Korea and in the policy community in the United States now realize North Korea is the problem, not the policies enacted by the administrations in South Korea and the U.S. If the people now see North Korea as the problem, does switching locations of the talks let North Korea off the hook? Does it put more pressure on the U.S., because if it took the advice of Dr. Wortzel, the U.S. would be the country recommending the change? The panel did not necessarily address this question.

The discussion of moving the location of the talks continued after the panel finished. Another expert who attended the panel suggested one advantage for having the talks in Beijing was China had to pay the bills for hosting the talks, and possibly for bringing over the North Korean delegation; furthermore, there was some hope that being hosts would pressure China to push for some accomplishments at the meetings. The expert suggested it might be a tough sell for the U.S. Department of State to ask for more money to have negotiations with the North Koreans in Geneva or New York. Cost would be an interesting factor for considering a change in venue for the Six Party Talks.

With the panel examining if the Six Party Talks are a viable mechanism for denuclearization, it was not mentioned that North Korea left the Six Party Talks after being condemned for a missile test. While not discussed in the session, it raises a question if the Six Party Talks are too broad in scope to handle the issue of denuclearization. North Korea has recently suggested this line of reasoning when discussing the *Cheonan* and Yeonpyeong Island attacks. North Korea has claimed these incidents do not deal with nuclear issues, so they should not be part of the Six Party Talks. When active, the Six Party Talks focus on denuclearization but have working groups to discuss human rights, a peace treaty, and other issues. Does the Six Party Talks need to be solely based on denuclearization? Or is North Korea just really good at deflecting criticism by separating issues and incidents important to the other countries involved? If the Six Party Talks resume, Sue Mi Terry argued the low enrichment uranium facility unveiled at Yongbyon last November must be discussed.

This panel provided an interesting debate on true desires for denuclearization of the parties involved and whether or not the Six Party Talks framework could help accomplish those goals. While disagreeing on the viability of Six Party Talks, all panelists seemed to agree on closer coordination among allies and greater use of instruments of national power to pressure North Korea into giving up its nuclear weapons.

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