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## **Day 2 Session III: Dealing with a Nuclear North Korea**

Moderator: Shin Chang-Hoon, The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

Speakers: Lee Chung Min, Yonsei University  
Michael O'Hanlon, The Brookings Institution  
Bennett Ramberg, Foreign Policy Consultant and Writer  
Yamaguchi Noboru, National Defense Academy of Japan

Lee Chung Min, a professor of international relations at Yonsei University and a Korean Ambassador for Korean affairs discussed how the last two decades have witnessed the emergence of a true nuclear proliferation network. Lee named North Korea as part of network five.

Lee also set out to dispel three of the “great myths” of the North Korean nuclear problem. The first myth Lee mentioned is that North Korea had no intentions to develop nuclear weapons and if they did then they would relinquish development for the right price. This idea has already been proven false by North Korea’s nuclear tests and unwillingness to limit their nuclear development. The second myth is that if North Korea has nuclear weapons then the only reason is to protect itself from persecution from the United States. However this is no excuse for North Korea’s refusal to abide by the terms of agreements banning or reducing nuclear weapons. The third myth is that all options to put an end to nuclear development in North Korea are still on the table. Mr. Lee explains that this statement is not true because certain options, such as force, would only incite North Korea and bring the threat of war.

Lee expressed serious doubts that any reforms concerning nuclear weapons will come about due to Kim Jong-un’s rise to power. In fact, Lee opined that the present North Korean leader’s power will only decrease as the years pass. He added that the United States will be hard pressed to resolve the problem of nuclear power in North Korea if their attention is diverted to other nuclear critical countries such as Iran or Afghanistan. Countries such as these may also prove to be critical teachers to North Korea. Lee also emphasized the need for China’s involvement in this issue. A nuclear neighbor could prove disastrous to China. Lee suggested addressing nuclear weapons from a holistic perspective and posits that the United States and Japan need to create a concrete plan or roadmap to accomplish this task.

Lee argued that North Korea’s ability to undertake reforms has nothing to do with other countries but only with whether Kim Jong-un really wants to reform. However, if the world gives North Korea de facto recognition then it would trigger negative effects for many other countries, especially Japan and South Korea. Lee also pointed out that the president of China will have to realize that a nuclear North Korea will hurt China’s own interests. He added that China has already made some indications towards this realization by stating publicly that it is prioritizing denuclearization.

Michael O'Hanlon, the director of research at the Brookings Institution, offered a more hopeful approach to disarming North Korea. O'Hanlon suggested that grand bargaining is the most effective solution. While he admitted that it is unlikely that Kim Jong-un will sign a grand bargain tomorrow, he insisted that the negotiations will work and the sooner they are started the better. O'Hanlon also promoted the use of sanctions, trade, and humanitarian aid to encourage an end to nuclear expansion.

While the idea of "buying the same horse twice" was raised, O'Hanlon optimistically stated that this has not occurred. He argued that with each transgression on the part of North Korea, the United States has modified its tactics and taken away sanctions. He also commended the continued humanitarian aid given to the people of North Korea, for even though the government may try to use aid for their own purposes, the people that might be helped should not be punished.

O'Hanlon proposed that countries should use trade to bring about a change in North Korea's nuclear proliferation. He believes that the use of Chinese trade to influence North Korean leaders would be especially effective. O'Hanlon added that it is necessary to take an optimistic, forgiving approach to this issue. He argued that while firmly adding sanctions to our relations with North Korea, we should make them temporary so as to give North Korea the opportunity to improve. He added that we need to hope that Kim Jong-un will become at least somewhat reformist in order to maintain his power and position.

O'Hanlon also explained the differences between North Korean and Pakistani nuclear development, stating that North Korea's extreme oppression towards its own people and belligerence towards South Korea has resulted in little tolerance of its nuclear weapons. He admitted that the Pakistani regime has many flaws but points out that Pakistan is not as hostile to its own people, which results in a meaningful distinction between the two countries. O'Hanlon also argued that Pakistan's status within the world should encourage North Korea to scale back on nuclear power and military and better treat its people. It should give North Korea hope that it can improve its relations with other countries.

If North Korea mounts warheads on missiles that can reach South Korea and Japan, O'Hanlon hopes to convince North Koreans that there is nothing to gain from bombing its neighbors. He believes that laying out a strategy of reform for North Korea without expectations or a timeline of when things must occur will be the most beneficial. He also suggests trying to induce Kim Jong-un to stop making more nuclear weapons even if he doesn't give up his current ones. O'Hanlon sees even a reduction in nuclear weapons as a victory with North Korea.

Bennett Ramberg, a foreign policy consultant, writer and expert on nuclear weapons proliferation, terrorism, and international affairs, disagreed with O'Hanlon and expressed disbelief that North Korea will give up its nuclear weapons. He believes that no negotiations, incentives, or punishments will induce North Korea to end proliferation. He pointed out that there are only two cases in which countries gave up nuclear weapons: South Africa and some eastern European countries that were part of the Soviet Union. Ramberg added that the only reason these countries relinquished nuclear weapons was because they felt safer without the weapons than they did with them. However, this is not the case with North Korea. Ramberg argued that North Korea uses nuclear weapons as a security blanket and a way to support the

regime. He also explained that when he uses the term “arms control” he refers to anything that reduces the probability of war.

Ramberg next laid out three different options for dealing with nuclear North Korea. The first option is to recognize the state of North Korea and to offer unconditional diplomatic relations. He admitted that this option could result in several harmful possibilities including legitimizing a nuclear state next to South Korea, allowing the North Korean government a sense of victory, and undermining the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. However, he also pointed out that this option could reflect reality, provide diplomatic recognition, reduce the isolation of North Korea, and encourage communication during a crisis. The second option Ramberg presented is to leave North Korea alone to “stew in its own dysfunction” and instead let China be responsible for propping up the government. This option is a response to the repeated failures of all efforts with treaties and sanctions. It is also at the opposite end of the spectrum from a military strike against North Korea which is impossible because it will only incite a nuclear war. Ramberg argued that this option allows us to eliminate illusion and deal with reality. He wants to completely cut off North Korea and close all diplomatic relations until it allows national inspectors back into the country to ascertain that all nuclear weapons are gone. The third option Ramberg posited is to return weapons to South Korea to use as an insurance policy against North Korea. This last option will curb South Korea’s desire for its own development of nuclear weapons to protect itself. However, it will also increase tensions with North Korea, raise objections from China, and undermine President Obama’s nonproliferation policy. Ramberg argued that while the first option seems tempting, it will only result in North Korea using diplomatic relations as leverage. Ultimately, he believes that the second option is the most effective.

Yamaguchi Noboru, a professor at the National Defense Academy of Japan, emphasized that the denuclearization of North Korea should always remain an ultimate goal. Noboru pointed out that their nuclear weapons pose many dangers including the physical destruction of North Korea’s neighbors. He also added that nuclear weapons are especially dangerous in the hands of people with such an extremist philosophy. He pointed out that North Korea is already isolated because of their behavior and sanctions and he worries that isolating the country like Ramberg suggests may only further provoke them into using these weapons. Noboru also acknowledged the Japanese abductees and the growing middle class within North Korea, but stated that these issues are not the whole picture and cannot solely determine Japan’s policy with North Korea.

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