

NUCLEAR FORUM

Panel: US-China: North Korean Nuclear Dance Card (Regency Room)

Date/Time: Tuesday, February 19, 2013 / 15:30-16:45

Talking Points for: Kim Sung-han, Vice Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Republic of Korea

The US-China relationship has repeatedly changed over time, but 'cooperation and competition' will continue to characterize the essence of their bilateral relations.

China's Korea policy can be summarized as: 1) maintaining the stability of the Korean peninsula and 2) achieving denuclearization. However, due to North Korea's continued defiance against its international obligations through nuclear tests and provocations, China is increasingly fatigued with North Korea and there are increasing signs that China is beginning to recognize North Korea no longer as a diplomatic asset but rather as a liability.

On the other hand, the US's main concern over the Korean Peninsula is the dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear capability and preventing WMD proliferation. Ultimately, the US intends to induce the reclusive state to open up and reform its political and economic system.

While it is undeniable that we have seen some disagreement between the US and China with regards to the North Korean nuclear problem, we are beginning to see indications that China is gradually keeping pace with the international community when it comes to condemning North Korea's nuclear tests and long-range missiles launches.

As such, the interests of the US and China do not necessarily contradict each other.

Against this backdrop, it is imperative that South Korea maneuvers wisely and delicately at the time of change in US-China relationship. One thing for sure is that South Korea is not required to and should not try to choose one country over the other. Since diplomacy is not a zero-sum game, South Korea should maintain firm deterrence against North Korea based on a strong strategic ROK-US alliance, while at the same time further deepen its mutual strategic cooperative partnership with China. It should seek to overcome the different views and misunderstandings with China through high-level official dialogues and people-to-people exchanges, and try to expand the area of common understanding.

My government continues to hold fast to its policy that North Korea's nuclear program can never be tolerated. To my understanding, the new Park Geun-hye administration will respond resolutely against further provocations, while, in accordance with its '*Korean Peninsula Trustpolitik*', leaving the door open for dialogue and cooperation including humanitarian assistance to North Korea.

It would be hard for North Korea to come up with the "benefit" of the *Trustpolitik* unless North Korea gets out of its belief that WMDS and ballistic missiles are the survival kit of the

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regime. South Korea, in this light, should try to share the vision of “unified Korea” with the US and China, while taking a driver’s seat for the policy formulation and implementation to deal with the North Korean question.

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