



Session Sketch

Asan Plenum 2019: “Korea’s Choice”
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Session: CVID or “Peaceful” Co-existence?

Date/Time: April 24, 2019 / 15:15-16:45

Rapporteur:

Ben Forney, Kialo

Moderator:

Choi Kang, The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

Speakers:

Evans J.R. Revere, Albright Stonebridge Group

Thae Yong-ho, Former North Korean Diplomat

Yamaguchi Noboru, International University of Japan

Yao Yunzhu, Academy of Military Sciences, People’s Liberation Army

Session Sketch:

The final Plenary Session, “CVID or Peaceful Co-existence,” looked at the choices faced by South Korea and the international community in their efforts to resolve the threat posed by North Korea’s nuclear weapons program. While the United States has stressed CVID (“complete, verified, and irreversible denuclearization”) as the only legitimate path forward, the Kim Jong-un regime has sought to pursue a gradual and reciprocal style of denuclearization tied with easing economic sanctions.

The panelists discussed the contrasting strategies of engagement and containment of North Korea, the outcome of the Hanoi summit, and North Korea’s strategy for maintaining stability within the Kim regime. Leadership changes in Washington, Seoul and beyond have resulted in inconsistent application of sanctions, allowing the North Korean leadership to maintain their nuclear weapons capability while still providing a moderate level of economic growth. Former North Korean diplomat, Thae Yong-ho, analyzed the fallout of the US-DPRK summit in Hanoi, claiming that the failure to produce a deal exposed Kim’s weakness domestically. As a result, Kim’s post Hanoi summit strategy is to showcase himself as a strong leader in the coming months, before renewing the push for continued dialogue with the US.

Panelists also discussed strategies for finding a denuclearization process that is mutually acceptable by all interested parties and the role of the ROK as a mediator between the US and DPRK. There was back and forth between the panelists on the definition of denuclearization, specifically whether denuclearization should involve removing US military capabilities from South Korea. Mr. Thae emphasized that, for North Korea, denuclearization is defined by end of the US-ROK alliance. The panel ended with a question and answer session and a discussion of the outcome of the Kim-Putin summit.

** The views expressed herein are summaries and may not necessarily reflect the views of the speakers or their affiliated institutions.*