

## US-China: North Korean Nuclear Dance Card

- Session:** Regency Room  
**Date/Time:** February 19, 2013 / 15:30-16:45
- Moderator:** Simon Long, The Economist
- Speakers:** Kim Sung-han, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
Gary Samore, Harvard University  
Shi Yinhong, Renmin University of China
- Rapporteur:** Paolo Venneri, Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology

### *Session Sketch*

The session began with Simon Long explaining the creative title of the session. He explained that the relationship surrounding North Korea occurred with a regularity and complexity that mirrored a dance: rising aggression, UN response with sanctions, mitigation of those sanctions through Chinese efforts, and a return to the previous the status quo. Mr. Long proceeded to set the tone of the session by presenting the governing question: How will United States (US) and Chinese cooperation relating to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) happen, and how will the Republic of Korea (ROK) behave?

The first issue that was addressed by all the speakers was what factors influenced the nuclear dance. Dr. Kim Sung-han, vice minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea, summarized it by explaining the objectives of the opposing positions. China has two purposes in its current dealing with the DPRK: maintain stability in the region, and the denuclearization of the DPRK. The US, on the other hand, has the primary goal of the denuclearization of the DPRK first, placing it above the state's own stability. The other two speakers, Dr. Gary Samore, executive director of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and Dr. Shi Yinhang, professor of international relations at Renmin University, added on to this by connecting US and Chinese behavior to broader geopolitical issues. The issues related

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largely to the competing influences in East Asia of the two countries.

A second major discussion point was the nature of the relationship between China and the DPRK. Most of the speakers expressed the belief that China continues to have strong ties with the DPRK, and as such, should play an important role in its denuclearization. Dr. Shi responded to this succinctly when he explained that, despite popular opinion, China was facing increasing difficulty in influencing DPRK actions, and that this deterioration was continuing to worsen. He continued to argue that it was because of this risk that China refrained from taking part in the more drastic proposals made by the US and its allies. It was also brought up that recently, as shown by Chinese responses to recent nuclear and rocket tests in the DPRK, that perhaps there is a growing opinion in China that the DPRK is becoming a strategic liability. It was pointed out that this is view, while still being held by the minority, is slowly gaining influence in both the government and general population.

A final recurring issue was the role the ROK would play in the dance. Such options included reintroducing US nuclear weapons into the ROK, initiating stronger trilateral sanctions against the DPRK, and expanding the dialogue surrounding it to include issues beyond nuclear weapons. It was generally agreed that reintroducing extended deterrence into South Korea was largely an ineffective tactic, and one that had been entertained because of worries regarding possible US defense budget cuts. The initiation of stronger trilateral sanctions by the ROK, China, and the US drew more attention because of Chinese worries relating to the destabilizing effects on the region. Dr. Samore and Dr. Kim both expressed the opinion that this path was readily available, and that the destabilizing consequences were manageable. The final possibility of expanding the dialogue to issues beyond nuclear weapons was strongly proposed by Dr. Kim. He argued that the issue should also include a dialogue relating to the reunification of the Korean peninsula.

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