



DPRK Briefing Book: Policy Area: Multilateral Talks

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The Reduction of Tension in Korea

US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Vol. 1 June 1972.

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The so-far unproductive multilateral talks on North Korea's nuclear program are not new. For many years, the great powers in the region have separately and collectively engaged the two Koreas in efforts to resolve the Korean conflict. American analysis of how best to achieve tension reduction in the peninsula also goes back many decades. Yet the nuclear standoff between the United States and North Korea has increased the risk of war and nuclear war on the Korean peninsula since October 2003 and in spite of the talks, we are no closer today to resolving the critical insecurities driving the standoff than a year ago. It is useful, therefore, to revisit earlier reflections on how best to reduce tensions in Korea.

The US Government's Institute for Defense Studies produced a technical report in 1972 that details ways to reduce the threat of conflict on the peninsula through constructive confidence building between the powers in the region. The cornerstone of their proposal rested upon promoting dialogue, the same missing element between the United States and the DRK that impedes the current six-party talks. The authors argued dialogue with the DPRK can be achieved without offering concessions that might prove politically dangerous or sacrifice bargaining chips needed in actual negotiations.

The IDA report states:

"Because the great powers all have an interest in avoiding a direct confrontation with one another (or a sharp deterioration of their bilateral relations) as a consequence of a conflict in Korea ... if these opportunities are not exploited, they may diminish." [page 9]

"...the plan calls for coordinating existing contacts with an effort to engage the other major powers - Japan, China, and the Soviet Union - in the tension-reducing process, initially in a series a bilateral consultations. Arms-control dialogues and tension-reducing negotiations would proceed at several different levels at roughly the same time, and responsiveness by the other side in any of these forums would be followed up vigorously. The resulting interlocking arms-control dialogues could generate stimuli that would encourage agreements between the two Koreas; they might lead to a direct agreement, formal or tacit, among the players themselves." [page 17]

"North Korea should be asked to make significant military and political arms-control concessions for an NFZ agreement. It is quite possible that Peking would urge Pyongyang to enter into an appropriate agreement, which would represent a political as well as arms-control gain for both China and North Korea (for China, because Peking probably views at least some of the nuclear weapons stored in Korea as potentially usable against Chinese as well as Korean targets." [page 23]

"The negotiating plan that we present may not lead to major arms-control measures in Korea in the very near future, but at least we expect that it would contribute to the confidence-building process, that it would tend to stabilize relations between the Koreas, and that the proposed arms-control dialogue would add substance to the developing détente between North and South Korea, the united States and China, the United States and the Soviet Union, and between the Communist countries and Japan. The risks in the suggested plan are not great, since unilateral substantive concessions are not involved; on the other hand, failure to take additional tension-reducing initiatives in Korea could lead to a deterioration of North-South relations that would involve far greater dangers." [page 26]

Read the full report [here](#).

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