A Regional Framework for a Comprehensive Security Settlement in the Korean Peninsula

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Korean News

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DPRK Proposes Official Talks with U.S.

Pyongyang, June 16 (KCNA) -- The spokesman for the National Defence Commission (NDC) of the DPRK issued the following crucial statement on Sunday:

The present U.S. administration is now asserting that the development of the situation depends on the DPRK, urging the DPRK to show the will for denuclearization first and stop "provocation" and "threats" in order to defuse tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

The U.S. is misleading the public opinion and deceiving the world, trying to give impression that the DPRK is to blame for the tensions that have so far mounted on the peninsula.

The present south Korean authorities that have been accustomed to sycophancy and submission and the forces following the U.S. are dancing to its tune.

In this regard the NDC of the DPRK clarifies the following crucial stand upon authorization:

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by James Goodby

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A previous version of this essay was presented at the New Approach to Security in Northeast Asia: Breaking the Gridlock workshop sponsored by the Nautilus Institute and held in October 2012 in Washington, DC.

I. Introduction

James Goodby writes that if the Administration's "pivot to Asia" is meant to signal a new era of American activism in the Asia-Pacific region, the president should describe to his partners in Asia how he sees the elements of a comprehensive security settlement coming together. A beginning can be made by defining the categories of security issues that need to be addressed, and by which states. The three main categories are:

(1) issues left over from the 1950-53 Korean War and the elements of a North-South peace regime (most of which have solutions that have been formally agreed upon in past statements issued by the North and South Korean Governments and many have been at least implicitly endorsed this year by Kim Jong-un)

(2) issues related to North Korea's nuclear weapons program (and President Obama's call for "a world without nuclear weapons" could be a device for placing a ***de facto*** nuclear weapons-free zone on the agenda to address this), and

(3) issues related to regional inter-state relations in Northeast Asia (one approach to solving these would be to organize something like an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for Northeast Asia).

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II. Policy Forum by James Goodby

A Regional Framework for a Comprehensive Security Settlement in the Korean Peninsula

The main elements of a comprehensive security settlement in the Korean Peninsula have been evident for many years but circumstances always have conspired to prevent a settlement from being achieved. And so the conflict has remained frozen, occasionally generating serious tensions, as was the case this year.

On June 16, the National Defense Commission of North Korea, chaired by Kim Jong-un, issued a statement that, once again, poses the question of whether the time has come for the nations that have the most to say about war and peace in Korea can muster the political will to reach a

settlement. It is an understatement to observe that the odds are against it. As the White House initial response underscored, Pyongyang's actions have not matched its rhetoric, fortunately so, much of the time.

But if the Administration's "pivot to Asia" is meant to signal a new era of American activism in the Asia-Pacific region, the president should describe to his partners in Asia how he sees the elements of a comprehensive security settlement. It may not be negotiable, but passivity, so-called "strategic patience," has run its course. It is time for leadership and a strategic vision.

A beginning can be made by defining the categories of security issues that need to be addressed, and by which states. The three main categories are: (1) issues left over from the 1950-53 Korean War and the elements of a North-South peace regime, (2) issues related to North Korea's nuclear weapons program, and (3) issues related to regional inter-state relations in Northeast Asia.

The left-over issues from the Korean War and the elements of a North-South peace regime involve primarily North and South Korea and the United States, with China a likely fourth party. Other nations in Northeast Asia and those nations elsewhere in the world that were involved in the Korea War probably should have supporting roles.

Examples of specific issues to be addressed in this category are:

- Terminating the state of war,
- Terminating armistice arrangements,
- Establishing the border between the DPRK and the ROK, including maritime boundaries,
- Renouncing the manufacture, possession, stationing, and control of weapons of mass destruction,
- Affirming the right to adhere to alliances and to accept the stationing of friendly forces on the territories of the DPRK or ROK, if requested by either of the Korean states,
- Renouncing the threat or use of force in relations among the signatories,
- Affirming the goal of unifying North and South Korea,
- Affirming the free movement of people, information, and ideas between the DPRK and ROK,
- Promoting economic relations between the DPRK and the ROK,
- Establishing a consultative organization that would include the DPRK and the ROK, and probably the United States and China.[1]

Most of these issues have been formally agreed in the past in statements issued by the North and South Korean Governments and many have been at least implicitly endorsed this year by Kim Jong-un. Ideally, a legal document of some kind should replace the armistice arrangements. It could resemble the treaty that surrendered quadripartite rights in Berlin and Germany as a whole in 1990, i.e., a "Treaty on the Final Settlement of the Korean War." If that could not be managed, an "Interim Agreement," politically but not legally binding, might be considered. A treaty negotiated later on could include this set of agreements as a Protocol. A peace regime would also include cooperative DPRK-ROK agreements similar to those in the Basic Agreement of 1992, including, very importantly those relating to human rights.

As regards ***issues related to the DPRK's nuclear weapons program***, both North and South Korea are essential parties. The three recognized nuclear weapon states of the Asia-Pacific Region, China, Russia, and the United States, should be involved. Japan's nuclear potential also is a factor

for all of the other states in the region. Obviously, this list resembles the composition of the Six-Party Talks, and the agreements reached at various stages in those talks are still relevant as Kim Jong-un signaled in his 2013 New Year's Day Speech.

President Obama's call for "a world without nuclear weapons" also could be a device for placing a ***de facto*** nuclear weapons-free zone on the agenda.[2] This point was made in the DPRK's June 16 statement. How would this be done? One way would be for each of the six nations of the former Six-Party Talks to pledge that it intends to work together with the others to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons and to take immediate steps, voluntarily, to demonstrate its determination to move toward that goal. Each would declare the immediate steps that it might take, individually, in coordination with others, or would negotiate as part of a multilateral package. These could include:

- Ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and adherence to a moratorium in the meantime.
- Cessation of production of fissile material for use in weapons,
- Japan and the ROK pledge that they would not build or accept the stationing of nuclear weapons on their territories,
- The DPRK would agree to destroy its weapons-related nuclear facilities, as part of a Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons
- China, Russia, and the United States would agree not to deploy short-range nuclear weapons in Northeast Asia,
- Verification appropriate to these undertakings would be implemented among the Six Parties, with the assistance of the IAEA.
- Consultative mechanisms would be devised, similar to these in place in the case of New START.

A structure like the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) could serve as the vehicle for implementing the agreement, which would also require a mechanism for addressing issues of non-compliance.

In nearly every other region of the world there are organizations that provide a forum for consultation and sometimes to make collective decisions regarding their regional inter-state relations. Several regional organizations already are active in East Asia but none deal specifically with security and cooperation in Northeast Asia.[3]

One approach to ***regional inter-state relations in Northeast Asia*** would be to organize something like an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for Northeast Asia. A treaty would not be required. It could be established either by a Summit Meeting or a meeting of Foreign Ministers. It might not need a secretariat at the outset. And it would deal with enhancing cooperation, not just security issues. Its core would be the nations of the Six-Party Talks.

The founding document could contain both a set of principles and proposed implementing steps. The principles would define the scope of the regional framework for security and cooperation in Northeast Asia. Implementing steps, many of which could be negotiated later on, would provide the basis for measuring progress. As this implies, a critical part of the agreement would be periodic review conferences.

The reality is that a security community in Northeast Asia can only be created through a comprehensive assault on all or most the issues that bedevil inter-state relations in that region of the

world, including nuclear issues. Only a comprehensive approach offers the hope of ultimately eliminating North Korea's nuclear weapons program. The image we should have in our minds was expressed this way in an article I wrote in 2008:

Three interrelated elements bear on bringing peace to divided Korea: an agreement to end the armistice arrangements, a larger cluster of agreements that create conditions for enduring peace in Korea, and a regional framework that provides a mechanism for resolving conflicts and promoting peace in a region where divided Korea is not the only bitter residue of the past. Thus, the future security architecture of Northeast Asia will have at its core the Korean Peninsula legally at peace after six decades, that peace supported by a set of cooperative understandings mainly between South and North Korea comprising a "peace regime," all embedded in a multilateral mechanism for promoting peace and security in Northeast Asia.[4]

III. Notes

[1] See Goodby, J.E. "The Emerging Architecture for Security and Cooperation in Northeast Asia," Issues and Insights Pacific Forum, CSIS

[2] See Goodby, J.E. "Achieving a Non-Nuclear Korean Peninsula: Options for Diplomacy in Northeast Asia," Unpublished, presented at SIPRI, Stockholm, on October 21, 2009

[3] See Goodby, J.E. "The Six-Party Talks: Opportunity or Obstacle?" 2005. Posted on the Woodrow Wilson Center website.

[4] See footnote 2.

IV. Nautilus Invites your responses

The Nautilus Peace and Security Network invites your responses to this report. Please leave a comment below or send your response to: napsnet@nautilus.org. Comments will only be posted if they include the author's name and affiliation.

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