

Response to “Can We Reach a Nuclear Deal with North Korea?”

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Response to "Can We Reach a Nuclear Deal with North Korea?"

Policy Forum Online 09-022A: March 19th, 2009

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I. Introduction

The following are comments on the essay, " [Can We Reach a Nuclear Deal with North Korea?](#) " by Peter M. Beck, a Professor at American University in Washington, D.C. and Ewha Womans University in Seoul, which appeared as Policy Forum Online 09-022A: March 19th, 2009.

This response includes comments by Marion Spina, a Washington DC attorney.

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Nautilus Institute. Readers should note that Nautilus seeks a diversity of views and opinions on contentious topics in order to identify common ground.

II. Comments by Marion Spina

I welcome and appreciate Professor Beck's positive search for a solution to this long-standing dilemma. I agree that the current DPRK attitude seems to match its earlier episodes of attention-seeking. Whether the satellite launch is a pre-cursor to development of a long-range nuclear weapons delivery system, or part of its general marketing of missile technology to potential customers, or both, seems unknowable. But rather than allow DPRK to command the pace of dialogue and simply react predictably to their whims, I agree with Professor Beck that the concerned parties would do well to propose "bold initiatives" to the DPRK. I disagree that a "shotgun" would be the consolation prize. Each time the DPRK misses an opportunity to accept a proposal supported by the other five members of the six-party group, the continuation of its miserable status quo is a sufficiently negative consequence that the "shotgun" is unnecessary. They have long punished themselves and their people by making unwise choices. It is obvious that some will object to giving the DPRK anything prior to the DPRK's abandonment of its nuclear materials. I do not see how such a position will ever lead to progress. And, I see no reason why the DPRK will be enticed by general promises of economic aid. So, let's talk about bold initiatives.

Professor Beck's proposal can be expanded to include cooperation from each of the other members of the group. Building on the basic concept that DPRK would receive the previously promised light-water reactors, perhaps roles could be added so that all members are involved and so that the DPRK avoids the appearance that it is submitting to a particular adversary. For example, assuming that some accommodation to Japan could be deemed to satisfy their concerns over the abducted citizens, Japan could directly provide the light water reactors as its colonial reparations. That is, rather than take reparations off the table, Japan pays the reparations in the form of the two light-water reactors. I'm guessing that the total price of the reactors might be about the amount that Japan would otherwise have provided in development aid.

The Republic of Korea could enter into a contract to purchase electricity produced by the new plants and delivered by high-power transmission lines to the ROK electrical grid. The ROK would pay for and control those transmission lines. Meanwhile, Russia, seems to have left open its offer to resume construction of a nuclear power plant in the DPRK. This offer could be accepted and Russia could build an additional nuclear power generating facility in the northern part of the DPRK. China could purchase electricity from the Russian plant by an arrangement similar to that described for the ROK's purchase of the light-water reactors' power.

Profits from the operations should be at least partially ear-marked to build out the domestic grid that DPRK will need in order to actually use any of the electricity itself. A portion of profits could go to the respective Japanese and Russian plant operators until the DPRK takes over the plants.

Security of the Japanese and Russian built plants and access to nuclear fuel would be controlled by the Japanese and Russian suppliers until such time as the DPRK has disclosed of and disposed of its nuclear materials and has re-joined the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty.

The US would have to play a key role in persuading the other parties to agree to the plan and in following through with normalization actions without expecting to get "paid" by the DPRK for doing so. That is, the US should proceed with normalization of relations in advance of DPRK's abandoning

its nuclear materials.

The above steps would take years to execute.

If the "bold initiative" can be made sufficiently attractive to gain acceptance by DPRK, its implementation will create a large and more immediate carrot for the DPRK.

By the time the plants are generating and selling electricity for profit, the cost-benefit analysis by the DPRK will be much easier. So, while it appears that the DPRK is receiving something in advance, in reality, the DPRK receives nothing, because the plants and their profits would be controlled by other parties until the DPRK fulfills whatever commitments it has made with respect to its nuclear programs.

More importantly, once a positive program is in place, the activities and communication required to implement these plans would have a huge impact on the DPRK's methods and abilities for coping with international commerce. While the nuclear power plants appear to be the carrots, they would really be tent-poles, holding up the tent so that other activities could develop, gradually transforming the DPRK. As a process, this seems much more attractive than the process of crisis management.

III. Nautilus invites your responses

The Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network invites your responses to this essay. Please send responses to: napsnet-reply@nautilus.org . Responses will be considered for redistribution to the network only if they include the author's name, affiliation, and explicit consent.

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