

WELCOME TO BREAKING THE GRIDLOCK WORKSHOP

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October 9, 2012

Before we start, I have one apology to convey to you from Yang Xiyu, one of China's distinguished diplomats and Korea experts. Yang intended to join us along with Fan Jishe, but was forced to cancel when advised that travel was unwise due to his post-cancer treatment. I will convey your best wishes for his speedy and full recovery.

We began to plan this workshop three years ago in 2010. Since then:

- North Korea emerged as an aggressive, nuclear-armed state
- North Korea covertly and overtly attacked South Korea with conventional forces
- South Korean influential voices have called for nuclear armament or redeployment
- The Fukushima catastrophe shifted the nuclear paradigm
- The US has begun to rebalance its military forces in the region

The trends signaled by these events led us to convene the *East Asia Nuclear Security Workshop* in Tokyo in November 2011, in conjunction with the *Asia Pacific Leadership Network* of former PMs and FMs, led by Gareth Evans. We sent you the summary report of that workshop which examined the logic of a NWFZ in NEA.

At that meeting, we asked Mort Halperin to define the necessary enabling conditions for a NEA-NWFZ.

Although it may have raised more questions than it answered, Mort's Tokyo paper has already seized the imagination of analysts and policy-makers in the region, especially in Seoul, and has been circulated widely in the region.

I think the reason is that policy makers know a dead end when they see one. They intuit that attempting to shape North Korean behaviors has not worked. Rather, we need to reshape the environment, just like President George Bush Sr. did with his Presidential Initiative in 1991 that unilaterally withdrew nuclear weapons.

Everyone in this room has spent a large fraction of their lives in trying to turn around the deteriorating DPRK situation.

Nonetheless, if we are honest with ourselves, we must admit we have failed.

North Koreans remain starving. North Koreans remain oppressed. North Koreans now have nuclear weapons.

The situation might have been worse if we had not all, in our own ways, from wherever we stood, tried as hard as we did.

But the best we can say is we helped avoid a war, and possibly a nuclear war—no small achievements, I admit.

But doing so entailed deferring the ultimate settlement of the conflict into the future, thereby increasing the stakes.

Now the future is upon us. We need an answer that works, now. We know it isn't what we have done before. The standard answers have been tried and found wanting.

The question before us is whether Mort's concept will work. Would it reshape the strategic environment in a way that's conducive to the

creation of cooperative security; and would it suffice to reverse North Korea's nuclear breakout?

The coincidence of six leadership transitions in this region may never happen again. It is a time when leaders might align on a new approach. This window will shut by mid-2013.

Given this timeline, we decided to test interest, first in Seoul in June, and then in various quarters in Washington on both sides of the aisle. We confirmed that interest was strong and minds were open.

We therefore convened this meeting to assess anew the revised concept, on neutral territory—thank you Robert Hathaway for co-hosting us at the Wilson Center—and luckily, we had the funds--thank you Norwegian MOFA and Ploughshares Fund.

We thank you for accepting our invitation, and for producing your 2 pagers—much harder than 20 pages—in a short time.

This meeting will succeed if any of the following occur:

- We discover security benefits arising from the concept that we missed
- We identify deep and irremediable flaws that doom the concept
- We find sufficient potential gain to advance the concept with further investigation.

Thus, there is no presumed outcome at this event; just hard work.

Finally, there is a reason there are no North Koreans here. We won't talk to the North Koreans about this concept until we have done our homework, of which this workshop is part.

Nothing is worse than raising a possible strategy with North Korean counterparts, and if after consulting with home, they say yes, we then say sorry, we weren't really serious.

The last time I ate here at Nora's Restaurant was in 1997, with a delegation of North Koreans who had just come from a famine. I don't know what they made of the sumptuous meal that Nora's presented them that night. The visit did lead to outcomes and cooperation on energy issues that no-one believed were possible at the time.

So we know that good things with North Koreans can start at Nora's.

Let's make the best of tonight and tomorrow and start session 1 with a toast to peace, security, and sustainability in Asia-Pacific, and to our success in working together.

To success!

Clink!