

Summary of Presentations and Discussion at
the 2nd PSNA (Panel on Peace and Security of Northeast Asia)
June 24(Sat)-25(Sun), Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

The 2nd meeting of PSNA (Panel on Peace and Security of Northeast Asia) took place in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, from June 24 (Sat) to 25th (Sun). The meeting was co-hosted by RECNA and Blue Banner with special cooperation from Asia Pacific Leadership Network for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (APLN).

The meeting was held under the Chatham House rule, and thus the following is the summary of presentations and discussions of the meeting. The secretariat of PSNA (RECNA) is responsible for its contents.

June 24 (Saturday)

Session 1 U.S. Nuclear Policy and Its Implications to the Security of Northeast Asia

Presentations: There were two presentations on this subject, one from a US perspective and the other from a Russian perspective. First it was noted that Trump Administration now put high priority on North Korean Issue, and that the US Administration was reviewing all possible options *except* military option which was considered not acceptable. It was suggested that, while it is not clear that new proposal by China and Russia- “freeze (of missile/nuclear tests) to freeze (of joint military exercise)” - may work, it may be a good basis for initial dialogue. The Russian view was different. It was believed that US still reserves a nuclear option toward DPRK. Besides, it was noted that the introduction of THAAD system has raised some concern. According to this perspective, the US, ROK and Japan are still demanding denuclearization and regime change of DPRK, but Russia believes it is totally unrealistic. Russia believes it is better for US to take an “arms control” approach rather than total denuclearization of DPRK.

Discussion:

Although the session was on US policy, the discussion was focused on the DPRK issue. Participants seemed to agree that military options should be excluded and a diplomatic solution should be pursued. But there were differences in opinion about the short-term goal of such diplomatic solutions. Some participants argued that “arms control” is the best we can

ask for, and we may have to give up demanding “denuclearization of DPRK” for the time being. “Freezing” the nuclear program of DPRK would be a more realistic condition for starting the dialogue. But some also argued that we need to have a long-term vision of “denuclearization” and a “peace treaty” should be the ultimate goal. Some argued that the US can accept such a long-term goal but cannot accept DPRK as a nuclear weapon state. There seemed to be a consensus that it may take some time for the Trump Administration to formulate its nuclear policy. For the meantime, there was a proposal that establishing a hotline between Pyongyang and Washington in order to manage the crisis and to improve transparency.

Session 2: Prohibition Treaty Negotiation and NPT Review Process

Presentations: There were two presentations. Both agreed that this (agreement on negotiation of legally binding treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons) was a historic achievement, and the contribution of civil society should be noted. The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, as well as the review process of NPT, have been stagnating for a long time and making no progress in nuclear disarmament. Therefore, there was a strong desire among non-nuclear weapon states for a new framework for nuclear disarmament as the NPT was not enough to respond to new emerging threat of nuclear weapons. As a result, around 2/3 of NPT state parties were supporting the negotiation. It was suggested that the Treaty need to include steps for nuclear weapon states to eliminate nuclear weapons and threats to use must also be banned. Both agreed that it would not damage the NPT regime and the Treaty would provide new norms for the international society.

Discussion: All participants seemed to agree that the Prohibition Treaty would not damage global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime but rather complement them. Especially making nuclear weapons illegal is the realization of Article 6 of NPT. But there were many questions and opinions about the proposed draft of the treaty (editor’s note: The Workshop was held right after the first draft Treaty was published). Comments and concerns included: 1) the relationship with other treaties such as the NPT and CTBT, is not clear; 2) Verification of nuclear disarmament should be included, and role of IAEA needs to be clarified; 3) the IAEA Additional Protocol should be included; and 4) the definition of some key words (ex. “development” “assist”) is not clear. Some argued that the draft Treaty did not offer anything attractive to nuclear weapon states. But the majority of the participants agreed that the Treaty can provide a good legal framework for future nuclear disarmament. One suggested that the Treaty is like a worldwide NWFZ but the biggest difference is that a

NWFZ does not inherently make nuclear weapons illegal while the proposed Treaty would. Its “norm building” impacts could be significant. But it was recognized also that it was difficult, if not impossible, for not only for nuclear weapon states but also for states which have nuclear weapons stationed in their territories to join the Treaty. Some hoped that substantive negotiations for nuclear disarmament would take place in the NPT regime once the Prohibition Treaty was adopted.

June 25 (Sun)

Session 3: Issues for a Future NEA-NWFZ Treaty

Presentations: There were four presentations. One presentation focused on the NEA-NWFZ Treaty itself. There are several important and unique conditions which NEA-NWFZ must take into account. First, the DPRK is already developing nuclear weapons (or has developed). Therefore, verification of nuclear disarmament of the DPRK must be an important component of the Treaty. Second, the ROK once pursued its own nuclear weapon program (and it may do so again). Third, Japan is accumulating large amount of plutonium equivalent to more than 5000 nuclear bombs. Therefore, it was noted that the Treaty must have the Additional Protocol as a condition to join the Treaty. In addition, learning from the experiences of Latin America, it would be important to establish a regional institution, like ABACC, in Northeast Asia to improve transparency and confidence in civilian nuclear energy programs. Fourth, given the missile technology development in the region, the Treaty should restrict missile technology development for military uses. Fifth, nuclear weapon states must respect the nuclear free status and provide “negative security assurance (NSA)”, and prohibition to attack civilian nuclear facilities also must be included. Further, non-nuclear weapon states should not allow any state to use their territories for launching nuclear weapons. Last, but not the least, NEA-NWFZ Treaty must include the peace treaty of the Korea War and prohibition of all kinds of weapons of mass destruction.

Other presentations dealt with more specific regional issues. For Japan, it was emphasized that the Article 9 of Japan’s constitution must be maintained, and that the establishment of a NEA-NWFZ would play a vital role for that purpose. Concern was expressed about the Abe administration’s recent security policy. Others gave warnings about possible impacts of THAAD deployment in ROK, saying its deployment may trigger a world-wide arms race. All seemed to agree that there should be something more comprehensive than just

denuclearization. In this context, comprehensive approaches including NEA-NWFZ could be a new framework. Still, it was emphasized that DPRK problem is still the biggest obstacle. In order to realize a NEA-NWFZ, one emphasized view was that it is necessary to build minimum political trust among the relevant parties and to coordinate the positions of major states. In essence, it was also emphasized that dependence on nuclear deterrence must be reduced.

Discussion: For a NEA-NWFZ, there was one concrete suggestion. Instead of a “three plus three”, it was suggested that it be based on a “two (ROK and Japan) plus one (DPRK) plus three (US, Russia and China)” arrangement. This approach would be not only a realistic assessment of the situation, but it might also interest DPRK which has declared itself as a nuclear-weapon state. Then there were several comments on how to give incentives to DPRK to join the NEA-NWFZ. In order to do that, it was emphasized that we need to address DPRK’s threat perception, and first to improve DPRK’s own security environment. And if the DPRK’s security environment improves, the DPRK can be less dependent on nuclear weapons. And if DPRK-West relationship completely normalizes, DPRK might be willing to denuclearize. However, it was cautioned that it is very unlikely for DPRK to agree to implement stringent verification measures and thus we may have to try something incrementally. The crucial point, it was argued, is whether we believe DPRK is willing or capable of gradually reforming and really integrating itself into the international community as a normal country. Therefore, we should create an environment that encourages DPRK to make a decision in that right direction. In this context, a “freeze agreement” can start with actions that do not need verification. It was emphasized that we have to take some risks in believing the trustworthy of our counterparts in order to build trust.

There was an interesting discussion on “verification” of nuclear disarmament. It was suggested that since verification of nuclear disarmament is difficult, unilateral disarmament initiatives may produce substantial results, noting the example of 1991 US-Russia unilateral nuclear disarmament without any legally binding treaty and verification. Many agreed that DPRK proposals (for possible dialogue) should be taken more seriously and US should send signals to DPRK and other related countries.

Another interesting proposal was to invite other countries beyond six-party countries to break the impasse. Mongolia is certainly a good candidate as it is not playing favorites with one side or the other, i.e. it is able to talk to all of the sides.

The most substantial discussion on NEA-NWFZ was the relationship between NWFZ and role of “extended nuclear deterrence”. It was argued that negative security assurances may remove the necessity of “extended nuclear deterrence”. But in the case of South Pacific NWFZ, Australia is a member but still maintains its security treaty with the US. But it was stressed that legally binding “negative security assurances” would significantly improve regional security and is not inconsistent with current US-Japan-ROK security alliance. The suggestion was made that missile issue can be relaxed once nuclear weapon issue was resolved.

Finally, it was agreed that the proposed Nuclear Weapon Prohibition Treaty is consistent with NWFZ.

Session 4: Civilian Use of Nuclear Programs in Northeast Asia

Presentations: There were two presentations. One presentation summarized the current status and future prospects of civilian nuclear programs in NE Asia. Then, five major issues were raised: the safety of nuclear reactors; nuclear terrorism; spent fuel management, and possible expansion of reprocessing programs, existing Japanese plutonium stockpile, and latent nuclear weapon capability; and regional cooperation involving DPRK. The second presentation focused on multilateral cooperation on nuclear fuel cycle activities including; low enriched uranium (LEU) fuel bank; multilateral uranium enrichment corporation; regional inspection scheme like ABACC; regional spent fuel management and waste disposal; and international plutonium management. Both analyses suggested that LEU fuel bank could be the best candidate but the risk of proliferation may lie with spent fuel management and plutonium stockpiles.

Discussion: The safety issue of spent fuel pool storage was raised and shifting to dry cask storage was highly recommended. An international repository of nuclear waste (spent fuel) was also discussed but political hurdles were considered still high. Because the international uranium enrichment market is stable and supply is abundant, it was noted that there is no need to build national enrichment capacity. Inflexibility of Japanese nuclear fuel cycle policy was also discussed and it was noted that Japanese government nationalized its reprocessing activities. Mongolia can be an important player as a uranium supplier, but it was noted that it will not accept nuclear waste from foreign countries although Mongolia may be technically a good place to bury the waste.