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Now we will move to Professor Toloraya. You recently asked yourself and the audience a question: Who needs to make peace with whom in this situation? I was already talking about the new peace regime as the conclusion of this process, or reconfiguration of the previous arrangement. Along those lines, Russia does not seem to have been in the forefront of this, but Russia is a permanent member of the Security Council, and Professor Yuichi was referring to Japan perhaps feeling a little marginalised in this process. Is Russia marginalised in this process, and if not, what are Russia's red lines in this, if any?

Georgy TOLORAYA

I have been watching Korea for more than 45 years, and it has always been like a pendulum, swinging from extreme tension to some kind of détente, but these days, the amplitude of this pendulum is stunning. I knew the former leader Kim Jong-il comparatively well, and he compared his negotiations with the US to a chess game. I believe that the current leader, his son Kim Jong-un, prefers poker, nuclear poker, and the stakes are much higher these days.

However, now we have the most peaceful and promising period in the Korean situation for many years and if this situation persists, I would give the Nobel Peace Prize to President Trump, President Moon and Kim Jong-un. I do not know if it can be divided into three, but now we have the most peaceful period, and that satisfies almost everyone apart from conservatives who want to push North Korea down by sanctions and pressure.

Is the agreement reached in Singapore between North and South Korea feasible? It provides for the complete and verified irreversible denuclearisation of Korean peninsula in exchange for security guarantees. The problem is that none of these goals are attainable in the first place, and certainly not in the short run. What are the security guarantees on the part of the US? Dr. Paal would probably not agree, but I do not think that the US system gives any possibility for future governments to keep the guarantees the previous government has given, and we see a lot of that kind of US behaviour, the latest being the INF treaty, where guarantees and obligations were withdrawn or reconsidered. This is just the nature of the US political system. How in this case could you expect North Korea to give up its only guarantee for survival, the nuclear card, just for 'promises'?

However, there is an answer: that is that the process is more important than the result in this case. As long as negotiations are going on, as long as North Korea reduces its nuclear programme phase by phase, gives up developing of new WMDs and declines proliferation, this is the movement in right direction. At some point North Korea would only be left with a small existing nuclear arsenal just to be on the safe side. That would be a better situation than the one we had last year, with the constant nuclear tests, missile tests and the danger of war.

There are subtle nuances on the US side as well -now instead of very inflexible CVID- "complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearisation" - they use the words 'final, fully verifiable denuclearisation.' However, you can argue about what 'final denuclearisation' means. Does it include peaceful nuclear programmes or not? There is a lot of room for negotiation.

There is one more thing about North Korea, about them cheating and breaking their obligations. One rule I have acquired over years of dealing with North Koreans is that you should understand they will fulfil the obligations they have taken on themselves, not those you think they have taken, and usually there is a misunderstanding that they must do this or that – if they have not agreed to doing it, they will not. Therefore, you should be very objective and not disrupt negotiations. The longer they go on the better it is for both regional cooperation and the international order.



You can always argue, of course, that North Korea maintaining its nuclear potential for a prolonged period would deal a blow to the non-proliferation regime. This is true, but it will not be a fatal blow, and in the current situation of the crumbling world order, looking at harsh exchanges between the US and Russia about nuclear containment, it is hard to predict how the situation in the non-proliferation sphere will develop.

Maybe it would be better to have North Korea totally give up their nuclear weapons and have the Korean Peninsula fully free of all nuclear danger. That would be better, but as Mick Jagger said, you can't always get what you want. What we can get now is a peace process, and this peace process should be crowned with the political guarantees of the big powers which historically were involved in the Korean situation. I mean the Russian idea about the roadmap starting with a freeze, then negotiations, then multilateral guarantees, and here in this place we have the countries which should be a part of it. That is China, US, Japan, Russia and Mongolia, because Mongolia is also a part of Northeast Asia.

Therefore, if we reach this stage, it would be promising and would ease tension, perhaps for a prolonged period of time.