

Insgesamt erwies sich die wissenschaftliche Tagung der DGA im Jahr 2003 als ebenso ambitioniert wie erfolgreich. Das gelungene Zusammenführen von Wissenschaft, Politik, Wirtschaft und Zivilgesellschaft schuf einen Ort intensiven Austauschs, der nicht zu Unrecht das, wenn auch strapazierte, Wort des "Think Tanks" provozierte. Die Tatsache, dass in diesem Jahr zudem gleich mehrere attraktive wie angenehme Gastgeber, Sponsoren und Tagungsorte gefunden werden konnten, hatte einen wesentlichen Anteil am Erfolg der rundum gelungenen Tagung.

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## **The Present Crisis on the Korean Peninsula**

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Since the US labelled North Korea as part of the "axis of evil", the International Relations scientific community has returned to focussing on its foreign policy. Its strategy of escalation is widely perceived as a source of instability and confronts decision makers around the globe with the problem of how to deal with the Pyongyang regime. The DPRK's violation of numerous international agreements it has formally entered, and its disputes with the US over its proliferation of missile technology made it evident that North Korea's foreign policy has taken steps which are perceived by many as unacceptable to the international community and indicates that "someone" must finally do "something". Unfortunately, however, reliable information about what is really going on within the Pyongyang regime is as rare as useful suggestions are as to what should be done in order to resolve the crisis.

In order to discuss these questions, a workshop, organised by the Department of International Relations of Trier University, was held at the European Academy of Law, Trier, on 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2003. With the benefit of first hand information provided by four participants from KINU (Korea Institute of National Unification), together with experts from European and German think tanks, the Korean Embassy in Berlin, the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Political Scientists from Trier University, the conference sought to shed light on the complex situation on the Korean Peninsula within the framework of three sessions: the first attempted to explain tendencies in the domestic Korean situation and inter-Korean relations, the second widened the focus to include outside actors such as the US by discussing the DPRK's nuclear weapons development, while the topic of the third session was the European role and its influence on the Korean Peninsula.

The opening presentation held by Dr Park from KINU commenced by stating that South Korea, whether under Kim Dae Jung's or Roh Mu Hyun's presidency, has found itself in a quandary: they had to meet US expectations and demands, sometimes against better knowledge, given their more complex understanding of the situation. Specifically, both presidents were put under pressure by Washington over their political strategies vis-a-vis Pyongyang. By connecting nuclear issues with the enormous economic and social gap between North and South as well as with questions of humanitarian aid and refugee integration, South Korea, while largely sharing the US' threat perception, differs in its assessment of policy options towards the North. In the end, however, the new President Roh Mu Hyun disappointed most of

his younger – and mostly anti-American – voters by bridging differences in US and South Korean policy in the context of the Iraq Crisis and the International War on Terrorism. This meant the end of Kim Dae Jung's Sunshine Policy towards the North and a policy shift from a nationalist and, some would argue, naïve to a more pragmatic position. In spite of the symbolic re-opening of different railway lines, economic relations between the two countries are still very limited, even taking KEDO transfers into account. South Korean investment in the North is still rare because of political insecurities and uncertain profitability, in spite of Pyongyang's declared intentions to reform and open its economy. Thus, economic relations between the Koreas are seen by the South less in economic terms than in political terms, i.e. in balancing the Bush administration's focus on military security and nonproliferation of WMD.

But the main problem in inter-Korean relations according to the Korean participants, is the unreliability of Pyongyang in all negotiations. Moreover, while one can find in this a pattern of North Korean negotiating tactics, from the South Korean perspective it is hard to ascertain a clear "grand strategy" which would allow its negotiating partners to anticipate North Korea's bargaining position in follow-up talks.

With respect to a possible collapse of the DPRK regime, Korean participants pointed out that South Korea tries to learn from German experience in integrating the growing number of North Korean refugees, which is seen as a moral obligation in South Korean society. Of course, it is difficult to compare the German and South Korean situations. The relatively small number of about 2,000 Northern refugees is not comparable with the integration of millions of East German (let alone Turkish or Russian) immigrants in the Federal Republic of Germany, who at least are normally not jobless - unlike their North Korean colleagues, whose prospects for a prosperous life - in spite of six months re-education and significant financial support to the tune of \$70.000 from the Seoul administration - are not very high. Moreover, the Seoul government often instrumentalises North Korean refugees for propaganda purposes.

Korean and European participants agreed that even in light of the German experience with unification in 1990, any specific preparation of policy options for the day X when the DPRK's regime would finally collapse was, to say the least, fraught with uncertainty. History can not be anticipated, and preparations in advance will therefore ultimately be futile.

Tensions between the DPRK, the US, and other actors such as the IAEA, the UN SC, Japan and China were the focus of the session on North Korea's plutonium and nuclear developments. The introduction held by Seongwhun Cheon (KINU) identified two major consequences of the DPRK's relationships with outside actors: first, the international communities' awareness of North Korea's non-compliance with the IAEA regulations has been enhanced. Second, Pyongyang is now widely seen as the "bad guy" in its conflicts with the US. But, as Prof Maull pointed out, North Korea and the US have moved into a situation of potential stalemate where neither side could trust the other to settle negotiations in good faith, because neither side really intended to live up to expectations from the other. Pyongyang could not trust the US to ensure regime survival, while Washington could not trust Pyongyang to really dismantle its WMD programmes.

European participants suggested that the DPRK's strategy is to use military threats against South Korea as a bargaining chip and as a preliminary negotiating play for bilateral talks with the US. As Dr Harnisch argued, Pyongyang learned its lessons well from the Pakistani-Indian conflict, where Pakistan was able to gain international support by acquiring nuclear weapons (and participating in the International War on Terrorism). Thus, North Korea has learned that it can create situations in which the US and the international community have to live with Pyongyang's nuclear weapons.

The key question today may well be how to deal with that kind of situation. This led the discussion to the question whether there was a "red-line" for Pyongyang from the viewpoint of the main international actors. Most European participants interpreted the verifiable proliferation of North Korean weapons of mass destruction or missile technology to nongovernmental actors or other rogue states as a point of no return for the US. Some KINU members saw a North Korean test of a nuclear bomb to prove their capabilities as the red-line for South Korea, because of the deep psychological impact of such an action would have on the South Korean population. For China and Japan, the testing of a long-range missile by Pyongyang could provoke Beijing into toughening its approach to the DPRK.

The domination of military and nuclear issues in dealing with North Korea also has implications for the European Union's involvement on the Korean Peninsula, which was the topic of the third session. As Dr Axel Berkofsky from the European Institute of Asian Studies explained, the EU does not have an appropriate institutional framework for the negotiation of nuclear issues and has little interest in endangering its relations with the US by opposing Washington's line on North Korea. Hence, the EU's important technical assistance in the DPRK has been put on hold, although humanitarian assistance and food aid continues.

Opinions differed concerning the EU's involvement in KEDO and the new doctrine of the EU's security policy presented by Javier Solana on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2003. Those issues led to a debate about the EU's overall role on the Korean Peninsula and its general interest in Korean politics. Diplomatic relations with North Korea started in 2001, but the EU's political dialogue with Pyongyang broke down after negotiations on human rights questions. Nevertheless, South Korea seems to be interested in involving the EU as a mediator between North and South, which was, however, seen as unrealistic by most of the European participants. Yet, on an optimistic reading, the failure of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in coping with the 2003 Iraq crisis could still lead European decision makers to the conclusion that a common position towards North Korea and its nuclear weapons offered a good chance for a CFSP breakthrough.

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