

UPF Peace Talk 4 -- Speakers Comment on Kim Jong-un and North Korea

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May 8, 2020

UPF Peace Talk 4, Prospects and Challenges for Peace on the Korean Peninsula in Light of Recent Developments



Kim Jong-Un

Dr. Thomas G. Walsh: We have a strong audience of over two hundred participants. I'd like them to have the opportunity to ask some questions. First, would Ambassador DeTrani or Ambassador Chung like to make any brief comment about any remarks your fellow panelists have made?

Ambassador DeTrani: If I may, just one comment: It relates a little to Ambassador Chung. I thought your comments were good. Look, I think we have to be realistic. North Korea has nuclear weapons for survival purposes. For them to give up those weapons would be difficult. We have seen that over the last twenty- six years, and we had some progress. Let's be realistic. The sense we have is that he's [Kim Jong-un's] not going to use them; he's not suicidal. Our Joint Forces with the Republic of Korea, with the Joint Command in Seoul, is powerful. We have joint exercises, so I think Kim Jong-un is a rational actor. We just have to be patient, and we have to work so that he gets his security assurances and the other deliverables that he needs if we expect him to give up all his weapons.

Ambassador Chung: I want to make one comment to Dr. Mansourov. I have no intention to provide disinformation about Kim Jong-un. It is a fact that he has a health problem. There is obvious evidence. Because of the health problem, he is thinking of a possible successor, who will be his sister. His position has been upgraded and that is preparation. It is obvious. That is clear evidence that Kim Jong-un has a health problem. Another point: North Korea's attitude since 2018 has changed. Now, since they possess nuclear weapons, they have a clear intention to unify Korea in the North Korean style, the North Korean mode. That is obvious. If they have any genuine intention to solve the nuclear issue or to negotiate the nuclear issue, they should revise their constitution. Their constitution says North Korea is a nuclear state. They should at least express a statement [regarding the nuclear issue] and revise their constitution. We don't have that clear evidence.

Dr. Mansourov: Kim Jong-un is thirty-six years old. He weighs a bit more than an average person. I am overweight. I drink. I don't smoke; he does. If we keep talking about his health, his history despite his age -- I, too, have a history. For the rest of our lives is that what we are going to be stuck with? This is the fifth or sixth time we been thrown into this crisis mode, because someone (who I'm not going to name here) planted a story in the newspaper and then orchestrated this whole campaign.

Instead of focusing on a major success story in South Korea the country was able to hold unprecedented elections during an unprecedented crisis -- the pandemic. They showed an example to the rest of the world when other countries are talking about canceling elections, postponing elections.... Not only was the country able to manage the crisis, produce all the P.P.E. [Personal protective equipment] all the test kits, share them around the world, share their expertise with so many nations, even the United States, while negotiating on so many fronts -- the defense talks with the United States, difficult talks with Japan and with China.... Instead of giving credit to them, this whole agenda is being hijacked.