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3rd Webinar on Prospects for Peace on the Korean Peninsula

Written by Maria Nazarova, president, UPF-Russia Chapter: Russia



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Introduction:

In November 2020, UPF held a series of webinars to mark the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War and gathered scholars from Russia, the USA and Europe to discuss the obstacles and possibilities for the reunification of Korea. The situation on the Korean Peninsula affects the whole Asia-Pacific region and countries all over the world.

At the same time, 2020 has been a year of dramatic shocks for all of humanity, as evidenced not only by the COVID-19 pandemic. Panelists were discussing if 2020 has brought the prospect of peace on the Korean Peninsula closer or further away.

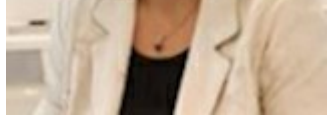


The moderator was **Maria Nazarova**, UPF - Russia President,

The panelists of the webinar gave a 7-minute presentation followed by a question and answer session.

The speakers were:

Harry J. Kazianis, Senior Director, Center for the National Interest, USA



Vladimir Petrovskiy, chief researcher, Russia-China Center, Institute of Far Eastern Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences

Maria Nazarova, UPF – Russia President

Michael Jenkins, President, UPF International, USA

Main report:



Harry J. Kazianis, Senior Director, Center for the National Interest, USA

Mr. Harry Kazianis spoke first. He pointed out that the US approach North Korea as if we were back in 1990. Joe Biden, who probably will be the next president, would be well advised to see North Korea for what it is now, i.e. a state armed with nuclear weapons which, most likely, can hit the US homeland with its intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM).

Mr. Kazianis gave some suggestions for Joe Biden:

He should reassure North Korea that he intends to carry on with President Trump's legacy, possibly via a statement even before his inauguration, and that he won't ignore the progress made. This might prevent the DPRK from having missile tests, which it will be tempted to do. Most importantly, that statement must reaffirm that all agreements signed or agreed to informally by Trump will be honored, to gain the confidence of North Korea. He should not fall back on

strategic patience, which was the policy of the Obama administration.

America should understand North Korea's dire domestic situation—three typhoon landings, food insecurity, international economic sanctions—all amplified through COVID-19. It should understand that a pressure strategy will be matched by a countereffect from North Korea.

America should conduct a policy that supports denuclearization, even though the latter is unlikely to happen in the short or even long term. Priority should be given to trust building. There should be a peace declaration ending the Korean war. How otherwise can North Korea be asked to give up its ICBMs? Lastly, there need to be talks about arms control on both sides, to lower the temperature militarily on the Korean Peninsula.



Vladimir Petrovskiy, chief researcher, Russia-China Center, Institute of Far Eastern Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences

The second speaker was **Dr. Vladimir Petrovsky**. He too said that the USA still approaches North Korea as if we were in the 1990s. All countries involved should consider why there is this gap in time. He remembers, the process of cross-recognition, in 1990, following which China and the US diplomatically recognized South Korea, while the US and Japan were to give diplomatic recognition to North Korea, but this did not happen. Russia, USA, China, Japan, all have the same goal of denuclearization, but the question is how to achieve that. If you want to obtain something, you need to give something. This is the main point for the policy with North Korea to be successful. Therefore, China, the US and the other members of the UN Security Council need to find a mechanism to release the economic sanctions on North Korea and at the same time support denuclearization.

Dr. Petrovsky also said that what President Trump has achieved during his term of office should not be abandoned.

Question and Answer Session

Answering the question from the North-Korean radio in Russia on what the policy of USA would be if Joe Biden wins, **Mr. Kazianis** said that, from his point of view, it would depend a lot on what North Korea will do first. He strongly advises North Korea not to conduct any provocations whatsoever. It would also be good for North Korea to show their readiness to continue the dialogue with the USA. At the same time, it is hard to know what Biden will do.

Mr. Kazianis, during his visit to South Korea in 2018, was told that, in fact, South Korea is like an isolated

island on the peninsula, without communication with or possibility to go to North Korea. Transportation of goods is possible only by air or by sea, which hampers the economic development of not only South Korea, but also China, Russia, and North Korea. If we are talking about bringing North Korea into the international community, major infrastructural projects are essential. Allowing North Korea to be part of the international community, by allowing its economy to grow thanks to better infrastructure, is more useful than concentrating on the nuclear issue. It is worth trying to propose the infrastructural projects to Pyongyang step by step and to see how they react.

Mr. Kazianis thinks that the South Korean government under Moon Jae-In is very enthusiastic about the unification of North and South. However, Korea in 2020 is very different from Korea 20, 30 years ago. Even though the country is now the 10th economy in the world, it faces quite serious demographic problems that will affect the economic development in the years to come. However difficult the unification may be, it is the most challenging, and indispensable project of the 21st century. The South Koreans are well aware of the opportunities a unification of North and South would bring.

Dr. Petrovsky emphasized the importance of infrastructural connectivity between the two Koreas for both the relationship between Russia and North Korea, and between the two Koreas. Some years ago, Russia proposed to build a trans-Korean gas pipeline, and a trans-Korean railway. The railway would connect the North and South Korean railways to the Russian Trans-Siberian railway. Russia also proposed to build the Asian Super Grid, which is a multilateral energy project. Russia has an excess of hydroelectric energy that could be exported to China, North and South Korea, and Japan. The only obstacle, however, for this is the situation on the Korean Peninsula. As soon as North and South Korea manage to trust each other, these ideas can be implemented.

Dr Petrovsky answered to the question whether for the unification of North and South Korea it is necessary for both sides to be completely independent on external factors. At present, South Korea's foreign policy is entirely dependent on the USA. How external sovereignty can be achieved? He said that the necessary infrastructure and trade could easily be built as soon as there is enough trust between the two Koreas. He reminded us of the so-called confederation that North Korea proposed many years ago, in which both North and South Korea would keep their integrity and sovereignty, and be able to communicate with each other in terms of trade, infrastructure, education etc. This idea is still valid, but difficult to materialize by the two Koreas on their own. Its success largely depends on the support given by the major international players involved, i.e. the US on one side and Russia and China on the other side.



Michael Jenkins,
President, UPF
International, USA

The final remarks were given by **Dr. Michael Jenkins**

We must be patient for a peaceful resolution of the conflict on the Korean Peninsula. Dialogue must be continued and the relationship between Russia and the US is crucial. As both have seats at the UN Security Council, they need to work together with the other participants of the 6 Party Talks to find a peaceful resolution.

UPF, together with the Washington Times, found out from fact-finding tours in South and North Korea, Japan, and other places, that no one is really happy with North Korea being a nuclear power. There are concerns that this situation will provoke Japan to develop its own nuclear weapons.

UPF would like to see Korea denuclearized. Understandably, North Korea should receive something worthwhile in exchange for giving up its nuclear weapons, as it considers its nuclear power as its main line of influence rather than defense. It wants to be taken very seriously by the international community.

The Korean conflict is not merely a cold conflict, it actually could turn hot. We therefore should tread carefully.

Dr. Jenkins quoted Mr. Christopher Hill, the former US ambassador to South Korea, who said that there needs to be an understanding of what a unified Korea would be, and how it would not be a threat to China, Russia or the region. And it wouldn't be simply the expansion of American power in Asia either. There would be a balanced development. UPF promotes its wonderful Peace Talks because it considers dialogue and

engagement as absolute critical. Indeed, UPF is looking forward to more engagement and development. Borders should open up, transportation networks should be built all the way to China and Russia. Years ago, the founders of UPF proposed the building of a bridge and a tunnel across the Bering Strait, as well as a tunnel between Korea and Japan. As they are both from North Korea, their longing for the unification of the two Koreas is very strong. The cooperation of Russia, China and the USA is quintessential here. Dr. Jenkins ended the webinar on a hopeful note, expressing his belief in the merit of dialogue.



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