

Virtual Trilateral Meeting: Crisis Management on the Korean Peninsula

Date: December 16, 2024

Time: 08:00-10:00 (ET); 14:00-16:00 (CET); 16:00-18:00 (Moscow); 21:00-23:00 (Beijing)

Introduction

Since the last HD Trilateral Dialogue in August 2024, regional and global developments have further exacerbated the already fragile situation on the Korean Peninsula. Rising military tensions have been underscored by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea)’s Hwasong-19 ICBM test on October 31, an advanced missile featuring multiple warheads and a solid-fueled engine. In response to North Korea’s ICBM test, the United States of America (U.S.), the Republic of Korea (ROK or South Korea), and Japan conducted a joint aerial exercise, deploying a B-1B bomber, further complicating regional dynamics.

Furthermore, DPRK has sought to deepen its strategic ties with the Russian Federation (Russia) and has reportedly sent weapons and troops to support Russian military actions in Ukraine. This has underscored the perception that actions initiated on the Korean Peninsula have implications going far beyond the immediate vicinity of Northeast Asia.

Despite the complex regional and global situation, the U.S., Russia, and China continue to have a shared strategic interest in stability on the Korean Peninsula. Amid ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, and rising tension in the Taiwan Strait, it is in the interests of all three powers to prevent regional escalation in the Korean Peninsula. With Donald Trump reelected as the US President, renewed diplomatic engagement opportunities with North Korea may arise.

To further understand these developments and prepare for the immediate future, HD is convening this informal, closed-door virtual roundtable with experts from the US, Russia, and China to examine the current security landscape on the Peninsula. Additionally, this virtual meeting will provide an opportunity to review the idea of a multilateral cooperation mechanism discussed during the last HD Trilateral Dialogue. Participants will evaluate whether this framework remains a viable approach in the face of evolving geopolitical factors and the potential revival of U.S.-DPRK bilateral talks. Insights from this discussion will inform preparations for the next HD in-person trilateral meeting, scheduled for early next year, ensuring continued alignment and progress on shared objectives.

Program

8:00-8:10 (ET); 14:00-14:10 (CET); 16:00-16:10 (Moscow); 21:00-21:10 (Beijing)

Welcome remarks

8:10-9:00 (ET); 14:10-15:00 (CET); 16:10-17:00 (Moscow); 21:10-22:00 (Beijing)

Session 1: Current Situation and Future Prospects on the Korean Peninsula (50 minutes)

In this session, experts from the U.S., Russia, and China will offer their perspectives on the Korean Peninsula, analyzing recent developments and exploring potential future trajectories within the region and beyond. Experts will outline their country's position, focusing on the implications of recent Russian-North Korean cooperation and the anticipated impact of new U.S. policies on regional dynamics. These insights will serve as a foundation for discussing the future framework for negotiations on the Korean Peninsula.

Discussion Questions:

- How does the ongoing war in Ukraine and DPRK's enhanced support for Russia in the war influence the three major powers' interaction on the security situation in the region?
- How will the Trump administration's policy towards the Korean Peninsula evolve and what might it mean for security on the Peninsula?
- How feasible are potential Trump-Kim talks, and what conditions would make them more likely?

9:00-9:50 (ET); 15:00-15:50 (CET); 17:00-17:50 (Moscow); 22:00-22:50 (Beijing)

Session 2: Reassessing Multilateral Dialogue Mechanisms (50 minutes)

During the last HD Trilateral dialogue, participants considered a multilateral cooperation mechanism on the Korean Peninsula, initiated by U.S., Russia, and China, designed to address joint crisis prevention, regional stability, and arms control. With some possibility that US-DPRK bilateral talks may resume under the Trump administration, it would be pertinent to reassess the multilateral mechanism in order to ensure its effectiveness for future negotiations. This session will provide an opportunity for experts to examine the future structure and relevance of dialogue frameworks on the Korean Peninsula.

Discussion Questions:

- Is there demand for a multilateral mechanism for stability and cooperation in the region in the evolving geopolitical environment? What themes should such a platform adopt to explore? What could the mechanism achieve in terms of output in the short term and in the long run?
- What would be the elements/steps of a realistic roadmap to activate the multilateral framework?

- Which stakeholders should be involved in the mechanism, either from the beginning or at a certain stage, aside from the three major powers?
- What are the benefits of a bilateral, top-down approach to addressing challenges on the Korean Peninsula? How does it compare to the role of multilateral dialogue? What roles could China and Russia play, if US-DPRK talks resume?

15:50-16:00— 9:50-10:00 (ET); 15:50-16:00 (CET); 17:50-18:00 (Moscow); 22:50-23:00 (Beijing)

Closing and Wrap-Up (10 minutes)

Final reflections on potential next steps.

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