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NORTH KOREA: Break Down in Denuclearization Talks Weaken Regional Stability

Summary: Pyongyang's dissatisfaction with the current state of nuclear negotiations with Washington strongly indicates its renewed resolve to continue both missile and new experimental weapon tests, defying existing UN sanctions. The breakdown in negotiations and North Korea's current disregard for sanctions will likely promote uncertainty for the future of the Korean Peninsula and surrounding nations.

Pyongyang Makes Threatening Noises: On 12 November, Pyongyang warned of consequences if South Korea and the US conducted joint military training and has made several other threats recently regarding the upcoming theoretical deadline for completing denuclearization negotiations with Washington. In early October, the negotiations in Stockholm had broken down, although reports indicate talks may resume in the next few weeks. North Korea set a year-end deadline to reach mutual terms for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and North Korean officials stated that Washington would be making a mistake by ignoring the deadline.

Pyongyang will likely hold true to its threat by continuing missile tests unless a breakthrough occurs in talks. On 31 October, North Korea test fired two KN-25 short range ballistic missiles from the South Pyongan province towards the Sea of Japan, indicating Pyongyang's dissatisfaction with denuclearization negotiations. The missiles traveled 350-400 km and reached approximately 100 km in altitude before landing outside Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone. On 1 November, Pyongyang conducted a third test of a new multiple rocket launcher. While this new multiple rocket launcher can destroy multiple land-based targets, North Korea also uses the platform to launch the two KN-25 short range ballistic missiles. North Korea's military also began to equip its regular soldiers with the Type 88 assault rifle with a new 150 round helical ammunition magazine, increasing their firepower capability. North Korean special purpose forces likely used the Type 88 before deployment to its entire military.

Increased Rhetoric and Growing Tensions: Pyongyang's recent increase in harsh rhetoric missile testing and upgrading of military personal indicate growing tensions and instability in an already divided, fragile region making it more difficult to establish unified pressure against Pyongyang. Cooperation declined significantly between Japan and South Korea, two key nations in North Korean denuclearization negotiations, specifically over World War Two reparations and disagreements over trade. North Korea's rhetoric, although not new, comes when the likelihood of cooperation dissolving altogether is increasing due to regional conflict, and these two forces acting together likely do not indicate meaningful progress on denuclearization.

Outlook and Implications: Pyongyang will almost certainly continue to test its expanding arsenal of weapons. North Korea will likely also continue to leverage these future tests to gain the upper hand in future nuclear negotiations with Washington and serve as a way to keep its citizens wary of a possible attack from the US. Pyongyang's continued threats to resume and continue missile tests likely demonstrate its will to disregard international sanctions.

North Korea's renewed efforts to add nuclear capability likely indicates a regression of North Korean strategy to events pre-negotiation and will likely continue to destabilize the Pacific region. North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un maintains power through claiming Western nations pose an existential threat to North Korea, a sentiment likely undermined by meaningful negotiations. By rejecting diplomacy and regressing to a pre-negotiation strategy, including anti-Western rhetoric and increased missile testing, Pyongyang can maintain a strong-hold on the nation. Additionally, this will likely increase tensions between South Korea and Japan. Though North Korean nuclearization threatens both nations directly, South Korea has a cultural connection with North Korea that Japan lacks, This, combined with already strained relations, will likely increase regional tensions as the threat from North Korea grows.

Since negotiations began, North Korea's standing and ability to conduct missile testing has increased, increasing Pyongyang's regional capabilities, and improving Kim's domestic image. The promise of negotiations likely allowed North Korea to appear as cooperative to the global community, and to further pin failures to denuclearize on the West. Since pausing negotiations North Korea continues to violate sanctions and test new weapons without punishment, indicating their abilities have not decreased.

[August Kather]

CHINA: Xi Jinping Endorses Hong Kong Leader to Help Mitigate Protests

Summary: Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam in hopes to lessen pro-democracy movements. Xi's meeting aimed to show the Hong Kongese that they are still a region under Chinese control and therefore not a democracy.

Development: On 4 November, Lam met with Xi in Shanghai to discuss the protests in Hong Kong. Lam faces strong opposition as the people call for more democracy, but greatly opposes the idea of democracy for Hong Kong. Lam briefed the president on the continuation of the protests and agreed with Xi when he reaffirmed that Hong Kong needs to stay under Beijing's control. After their meeting, Xi praised Lam by saying that she has led Hong Kong diligently. Xi approves of Lam's efforts to move Hong Kong toward a more stable relationship with Beijing.

Analysis: Xi's endorsement of Lam will spur suppression of the protests despite the strong support for democracy. Lam's relationship with Xi will probably tarnish her credibility and protestors will likely see it as another Chinese effort to control Hong Kong. Lam may feel emboldened by Xi's endorsement to take more active steps to suppress protestors and block pro-democratic legislation. Continued rejection of Lam's leadership could lead to increased protests and violence.

[Alexis Macias]

HUNGARY: Huawei to Help Install 5G Technology Opening Potential Backdoors

Summary: Budapest hired Huawei Technology to install 5G technology country-wide despite the possibility of the implementation of malicious software, potentially encouraging other nations to utilize the company as well.

Development: On 5 November, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto announced Huawei's involvement in the country's release of 5G technology. This announcement comes despite the European Union's recommendation against working with the Chinese-based company. Huawei Technology may contain back doors which could allow China to spy on other countries besides the one using Huawei. The EU did not mention Huawei specifically and instead released a general warning. Hungary stated that after a joint investigation with Magyar Telekom there did not appear to be any security threats.

Analysis: The Hungarian government's defiance of the EU's recommendation shows a commitment to opposing the EU. Additionally, this may lead to other countries using Huawei rather than another, more reputable and trusted source. Despite Hungary not solely using Huawei, the possibility of the presence of any malicious data may pose a threat to the West. If Huawei does have back doors in its system, China will most likely exploit them to its benefit. Access to Hungary's network traffic, and possibly other countries, could lead to exposure of company and state secrets.

[Luke Overfelt]

ISRAEL: Attack by Iran Remains Unlikely Despite Increased Israeli Preparation

Summary: Although Tel Aviv has prepared for the possibility, Iran will likely not conduct an offensive attack out of fear of reprisals from surrounding nations.

Development: From 27 October to 3 November, senior ministers of the Israeli government met twice to discuss the threat Iran poses. The ministers discussed the plan for an Iranian drone attack plan that was thwarted by an Israeli air strike back in August. Discussions focusing on the Iranian drone attacks on the Saudi oil tankers and the possibility of a similar attack happening to Israel also occurred. On 23 October, Israel Defense Forces announced their new defense plan, Momentum, which increases Israel's capabilities to prepare for a possible attack from Tehran. This comes after the bombing raids Israel conducted on Iranian targets in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq.

Analysis: Israel's preparation likely indicates it expects increased conflict in the future, most likely from Iran. Although Israel remains on the cautious side for a possible attack from Tehran, it seems unlikely that an attack will occur. Nearly all Middle Eastern countries would respond negatively if Tehran were to act, likely sparking a larger conflict Iran may view as unwise. The magnitude of such a possibility will likely keep Iran from increasing tensions in the short-term future.

[Danielle Jamieson]

ISRAEL: Political Deadlock Triggers Temporary Appointment of Defense Minister

Summary: The temporary appointment of new Defense Minister (DM) Naftali Bennett by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu likely will not affect Israeli foreign relations.

Development: On 8 November, Netanyahu announced Bennett's temporary appointment to the DM position pending the approval of the Interim cabinet. Netanyahu's Likud party and Bennett's New Right will vote as a unified alliance while keeping their parties' separate entities. Many view the alliance as a ploy to keep Bennett from joining the White and Blue party and keep Netanyahu in power. Netanyahu's election rival Benny Gantz must form a new government before 18 November.

Analysis: The appointment of Bennett to the DM position likely will not impact the foreign or domestic relations of Israel due to its temporary nature. The appointment probably angers Israeli voters who view this as a power move benefiting Netanyahu instead of promoting political unity as presented by the government. Political tensions will likely increase as leader dissatisfaction continues to grow.

[Abigail Clark]

This is a global intelligence briefing prepared by the students of the Global Security and Intelligence Studies program at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona. The views expressed in this briefing are those of the students, not the university.

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