

**EIAS Roundtable**  
**“Discussion with the Chinese Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Affairs”**

*EIAS Brussels, 22 April 2022*

**Report**

On 22 April 2022, the European Institute for Asian Studies (EIAS) hosted a roundtable discussion with H.E. Mr Liu Xiaoming, the Chinese Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Affairs. The event discussed issues surrounding security on the Korean peninsula, with a particular focus on China’s view and outlook. The opening remarks were addressed by EIAS CEO Mr Axel Goethals, welcoming Mr Liu and his delegation, before going on to discuss matters surrounding China and the DPRK.

H.E. Mr Liu Xiaoming first made remarks about how, with the recent opening up of international travel, he has been able to visit other Ambassadors and compare notes, having traveled to Washington, D.C. and New York, Russia, France, Switzerland and Germany. He also had plans to travel to the UK and South Korea. From there, he went on to discuss issues surrounding security matters, China’s position on the DPRK and their actions on the Korean peninsula.

He underlined that China’s vision on the peninsula’s security can be summarized under the “*four Rs*” – *reducing* tensions and maintaining peace, *resuming* dialogue with foreign actors, *recognizing* political steps undertaken by the DPRK, continuing to encourage its efforts towards denuclearization, as well as promoting *regional* cooperation and engagement to deepen the ties with its neighbors.

He articulated how China sees sanctions as being ineffective given that they have failed to change the state of affairs, underlining how China is instead advocating for a diplomatic solution and a political settlement. He detailed how the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) must be united on this issue, and that while he was in New York, he met with Permanent Representatives from both the DPRK and ROK. He also emphasized how avenues for dialogue must be opened up, which would lead to a thaw in tensions on the peninsula in the long run.

Moreover, he underlined that China is keen on easing tensions through promoting diplomatic dialogue, but also highlighted how China would like to see further engagement from the US. He accentuated how US’ hostility is a key reason for the current deadlock in the relations, and that the US should engage with the DPRK rather than confront them. This in particular given the DPRK’s shutting down of some of their testing facilities in 2018.

Following Mr Liu's remarks exposing the Chinese view on the DPRK and the Korean Peninsula, he took the time to answer questions raised by the attendees. In response to a first question on China's fundamental role in the security of the peninsula, Mr Liu highlighted that China's main priority is to strengthen regional peace and stability, in particular through denuclearisation efforts. He underlined the respective role of the DPRK, the ROK, China, Russia, Japan, and the US in discussions, calling all parties for restraint. He also articulated that despite their views on the effectiveness of sanctions, China has been compliant in implementing sanctions agreed to by the UNSC on the DPRK, while wishing to see a partial lifting of sanctions to help improve the humanitarian situation.

The discussion touched upon the fact that the EU had not really been taken into consideration regarding such security matters, questioning how the EU could be involved in these efforts in the future. The EU is a significant actor of global peace and stability, and has experience in denuclearisation negotiations. However, Mr Liu underscored that the EU is not a part of the Six Party Talks, and thus cannot play a key role on behalf of the DPRK and the US. Moreover, he highlighted how the DPRK was more interested in negotiating directly with Washington.

Matters surrounding dialogue in the economic and financial fields were also raised, in particular regarding the DPRK's integration into regional security and trade organizations, focusing on the example of bankers, traders and businessmen who are, by definition, not interested in stronger tensions in North East Asia. What would be the actions to be implemented in order to bring the DPRK towards further cooperation, either through reforms, restructuring the spending of expenditures – highly directed towards the military branch – or developing some form of regional attachment for the isolated country? Mr Liu agreed on the idea that relying on the EU playing an independent role could reduce tensions on the peninsula. Although the EU is not part of the Six-Party Talks, its members could definitely bring their expertise regarding negotiations on denuclearization to the table, and hence be viewed as key actors for peace and stability in the region.

Overall, H.E. Mr Liu Xiaoming provided a fruitful insight into China's position in regional ongoing affairs. It was a great occasion for both sides to share and deepen their understanding and viewpoints regarding the current situation on the Korean peninsula.

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