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## The EU and the Six-Party Talks

by Moosung Lee

### ABSTRACT

The EU's foreign and security policy is seen as normative in nature as it seeks to deal with regional conflicts through dialogue and integration rather than military force. Asia is no exception to this. Since the early 1990s, the EU has realized that the region's stability and growth are vital for EU's own interests. As the North Korean nuclear issue, amongst others, began to constitute a source of regional insecurity, the EU sought to address it within the context of regional cooperation and trust building. This paper examines the role the EU has played on the Korean Peninsula so far, including discussion as to whether – and to what extent – there could be a distinctive contribution by the EU to the Six-Party Talks (SPT), the main multilateral security forum established in the early 2000s to deal with the de-nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

*European Union | South Korea | North Korea | East Asia | Nuclear weapons  
| Non-proliferation | Arms control*

**keywords**

## The EU and the Six-Party Talks

by Moosung Lee\*

### Introduction

With the advent of post-Westphalian world-order discourses after the end of the Cold War, which would argue that states alone no longer dominated global security issues, the European Union (EU) has emerged as a novel kind of actor that provides a normative form of security policy.<sup>1</sup> The EU's foreign policy is seen as normative in nature as it opts to deal with regional conflicts through dialogue and integration rather than by relying on the deployment of armed forces.<sup>2</sup> The Union has attempted to pursue this approach not only through its foreign-policy trajectory but also in its own integration processes.<sup>3</sup> In this context, Asia has been no exception – especially since the early 1990s, when the EU has realized that the region's stability and growth is vital to its own interests<sup>4</sup> and particularly since the North Korean nuclear issue, amongst others, began to constitute a source of regional insecurity. Under these circumstances, the EU seeks to address the North Korean nuclear issue within the context of regional cooperation, and has therefore made its own contribution – albeit marginal and indirect.<sup>5</sup> One of the prime examples of this contribution was the Union's engagement in the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) as an executive member, in the hope that this

<sup>1</sup> Ian Manners, "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?", in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 40. No. 2 (June 2002), p. 235-258, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-5965.00353>.

<sup>2</sup> Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor*, 2nd ed., London and New York, Routledge, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Diez, Stephan Stetter and Mathias Albert, "The European Union and Border Conflicts: The Transformative Power of Integration", in *International Organization*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (July 2006), p. 563-593.

<sup>4</sup> Moosung Lee and Thomas Diez, "Introduction: The EU, East Asian Conflicts, and the Norm of Integration", in *Asia Europe Journal*, Vol. 14. No. 4 (December 2016), p. 353-366.

<sup>5</sup> Moosung Lee, "The EU, Regional Cooperation, and the North Korean Nuclear Crisis", in *Asia Europe Journal*, Vol. 14. No. 4 (December 2016), p. 401-415.

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would incentivize North Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, DPRK) to relinquish its nuclear aspirations in return for a degree of economic assistance.

Yet the EU's endeavour, to its own and other parties' disappointment, has fallen short of expectations. As the KEDO programme faltered, the Six-Party Talks emerged as an alternative. Aiming solely at addressing the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula, the talks once again rallied all the key stakeholders – i.e. the US, China, Russia, the two Koreas and Japan – within a newly established platform aimed at security cooperation and conflict resolution. There appeared to be good grounds for the EU's participation but, given its past experience of failure (with respect to KEDO), it did not participate directly – nor is likely to do so for the foreseeable future. Even so, it remains undeniable that the EU's anticipated contribution – whether that comes in the form of direct engagement or not – cannot be easily disregarded. Hence, this paper aims to examine the possible roles of the EU, with particular attention to its contribution to the future development of the Six-Party Talks (SPT).

### 1. Evolution of the Six-Party Talks

The North Korean regime is concerned about its security. The development of nuclear weapons is a strategic move to ensure its own survival. However, during the Clinton Administration, the accompanying brinkmanship policy was, to some extent, mitigated. This was because the framework for dialogue represented by the KEDO facilitated a "forum" in which the conflictive behaviour of the parties concerned could be regulated. However, there was a sudden changeover in US foreign policy with the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, which traumatized the US and intensified its national-security concerns. Abandoning its previous policy of constructive engagement, it adopted a hardline policy, began putting pressure on North Korea and even called for the toppling of the Kim Jong-il regime in order to guarantee the peace and the security of the world. But this hardline stance, triggered by a security speech that portrayed the DPRK as a member of a perceived "Axis of Evil", merely served to intensify North Korea's misgivings about its security, and only led to the foreign-policy route of reactivating its nuclear programmes.<sup>6</sup> Purposely selecting routinized nuclear brinkmanship – even though this was certain to make it once again an outcast in the international community – North Korea declared it would withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), denouncing the US as a contributor to the recent debacle.<sup>7</sup> Despite the resulting

<sup>6</sup> It can also be argued as a move to ensure its own ontological security. For a general argument of ontological security, see Jennifer Mitzen, "Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma", in *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2006), p. 341-370, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1354066106067346>. For specific implications relating with the North Korean nuclear issue, also see Moosung Lee, "The EU, Regional Cooperation, and the North Korean Nuclear Crisis", cit.

<sup>7</sup> Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig, "North Korea's Nuclear Politics", in *Current History*, Vol. 103, No. 674 (September 2004), p. 273-279, <http://brook.gs/2c1dYiP>.

deadlock over the North's reactivated nuclear programme, efforts to deal with the matter in a peacefully way were not abandoned. The proposal of the Six-Party Talks came about. In the beginning, there was doubt whether the US would accept this proposal due to its longstanding suspicion of North Korea and its reluctance to commit itself to pursuing a diplomatic solution to the region's security crisis. However, when the first round of the SPT finally took place in August 2003, such worries were dissipated.

Without the direct participation of the EU, the first round of the SPT began, and the participants were encouraged to adopt six points of "consensus".<sup>8</sup> Although the first round concluded with nothing but an agreement for further rounds of talks "down the road", it had significance in its own right: it re-launched the institutionalized framework of dialogue dealing exclusively with the nuclear issue. Riding the momentum gained by the first round, the second and third rounds were held in February and June 2004. They both allowed the participating parties to discuss the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the peaceful coexistence of the participating states and the use of mutually coordinated measures to resolve crises. As a result, during the second phase of the fourth round, the six parties finally consented to a joint statement on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The Joint Statement of 19 September 2005, despite some criticism that it was "bereft of any significance",<sup>9</sup> was a breakthrough – at least, at the time – because it opened a window of opportunity that encouraged North Korea to reconsider its strategy of nuclear-development programmes in return for energy assistance and security guarantees from the other five parties.<sup>10</sup>

After the first session of the fifth round, however, the negotiating climate deteriorated. Because of alleged complicity on the part of the DPRK in money laundering and other illicit activities associated with clandestine nuclear-development programmes, the US imposed sanctions on North Korean trading entities as well as on Banco Delta Asia of Macau. Pyongyang regarded the freeze as the result solely of US hostility, and used it as a justification for its redoubling of efforts on regime security.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the brief period of rapprochement created by the release of the Joint Statement of 19 September 2005 soon collapsed. Pyongyang, as usual, ascribed all this to US financial sanctions, claiming this as a breach of the denuclearization pact signed in September 2005, and undertook a long-range rocket test and its first underground nuclear explosion in 2006,<sup>12</sup> all of which left

<sup>8</sup> Ren Xiao, "Korean Security Dilemma: Chinese Policies", in Hazel Smith (ed.), *Reconstituting Korean Security. A Policy Primer*, Tokyo, United Nations University Press, 2007, p. 213-229, <https://collections.unu.edu/view/UNU:2484>.

<sup>9</sup> Victor D. Cha, "What Do They Really Want? Obama's North Korea Conundrum", in *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (October 2009), p. 120.

<sup>10</sup> Mikael Weissmann, *The East Asian Peace. Conflict Prevention and Informal Peacebuilding*, London and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 121.

<sup>11</sup> Jonathan D. Pollack, "No Exit. North Korea, Nuclear Weapons and International Security", in *Adelphi series*, No. 418-419 (2011), p. 145-146.

<sup>12</sup> Siegfried S. Hecker, "Lessons Learned from the North Korean Nuclear Crises", in *Daedalus*, Vol.

the SPT at a standstill.

With China's efforts to restart the talks, the sixth round resumed in February 2007 after an 18-month pause. At this meeting, the participants sought to overcome existing difficulties, and agreed to adopt an "action plan" for the implementation of the 19 September 2005 Joint Statement. Behind the scenes, China played a crucial role. It pressed North Korea to rejoin the multilateral framework after the nuclear crisis came to a head; the process gained momentum in the second half of 2007, leading to an agreement on Pyongyang disabling its ageing reactor and other plants at Yongbyon and removing thousands of fuel rods under the guidance of US experts. Yet, no sooner had this breakthrough been made than negotiations fell apart. Following a final round of talks in 2008, North Korea declared the deal void after refusing to allow inspections to verify compliance. The prospect of talks further deteriorated in 2009, when the UN Security Council condemned North Korea's failed satellite launch in a Presidential Statement. Instead of bowing to international pressure, Pyongyang firmly resisted by pulling out of the talks and resuming its nuclear-enrichment programme. Some sporadic attempts to resume the talks followed this latest breakdown, but these efforts have not come into fruition.

## 2. The EU's contributions to the talks

The EU's interest in the DPRK's nuclear issue dates back to the early 1990s, when its *Towards a New Asia Strategy* was published.<sup>13</sup> Since then, it has continually identified the North's aspiration to develop nuclear weapons as a serious threat to "regional stability".<sup>14</sup> Although the EU decided not to participate in the Six-Party Talks directly, its commitment to coping with the North Korean nuclear issue within the institutionalized framework of regional cooperation remains unabated. There are three explanations for this.

First is the EU's normative tendency to support multilateral frameworks for dialogue as a way of addressing regional conflicts.<sup>15</sup> Embedding the North Korean nuclear issue within this context can be seen as more appropriate than bilateral talks, in which power politics would be more likely to prevail. Bilateral talks, if held hostage to power politics, are likely to lead actors to threaten one another with military, economic or political aggression; this is also more likely to occur if they are overly preoccupied with their own national interests.

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139, No. 1 (Winter 2010), p. 50, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Hecker.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> European Commission, *Towards a New Asia Strategy* (COM/94/314), 13 July 1994, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:51994DC0314>.

<sup>14</sup> European Council, *A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy*, 12 December 2003, p. 4, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Diez, Mathias Albert and Stephan Stetter (eds.), *The European Union and Border Conflicts. The Power of Integration and Association*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008.

However, multilateral dialogue posits a different scenario. Intended to serve as an unbiased forum and thus being acceptable to all parties, even for discussing such controversial issues as nuclear weapons and missiles,<sup>16</sup> multilateral talks could function (at least, in principle) to diffuse tensions between archrivals – in this case, between the United States and the DPRK.<sup>17</sup> It is hard at the moment to envisage any European “effect” within SPT, because the EU is not part of the talks. But examples from the EU’s neighbourhood policy show that multilateral talks have also been successfully used as foreign-policy instruments for conflict resolution. The EU’s preference for civilian means of engagement does not simply imply its agreement with this normative approach, but seems to be a reflection of its self-identity as a normative power.<sup>18</sup> So, the normative EU’s choice to support the SPT offers a contrasting viewpoint to the “realist” perspective that focuses overwhelmingly on effectiveness.

Second, while the existing frameworks fell short of expectations due to frictions among the parties engaged, and while nuclear crises have often overshadowed prospect for the talks, the EU nonetheless stresses that North Korea should re-engage constructively with the international community – and, in particular, with the members of the Six-Party Talks.<sup>19</sup> It is noteworthy that this approach has also been pursued through alternative paths, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). Specifically, the ARF serves as a forum in which members’ incompatible positions can be attenuated and confidence among the parties concerned reinforced.

Since the mid-1990s, a nuclear-weapons-free zone on the Korean Peninsula has been regarded as an essential component for regional peace and stability. Against this backdrop, ARF has elected the North Korean nuclear issue as one of its main topics, particularly since 1996, and has continued to stress that the SPT should function as an important mechanism to deal with this issue.<sup>20</sup> The EU, as a member of the forum, echoed this view, supporting the reinforced role of the SPT in order to face recurring nuclear crises on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>21</sup> The analogous stance that

<sup>16</sup> Hazel Smith, “Reconstituting Korean Security Dilemmas”, in Hazel Smith (ed.), *Reconstituting Korean Security. A Policy Primer*, Tokyo, United Nations University Press, 2007, p. 17-18, <https://collections.unu.edu/view/UNU:2484>.

<sup>17</sup> Maria Castillo Fernandez, “Korean Security Dilemmas: European Union Policies”, in Hazel Smith (ed.), *Reconstituting Korean Security. A Policy Primer*, Tokyo, United Nations University Press, 2007, p. 222-223, <https://collections.unu.edu/view/UNU:2484>.

<sup>18</sup> Jennifer Mitzen, “Anchoring Europe’s Civilizing Identity: Habits, Capabilities and Ontological Security”, in *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2006), p. 270-285.

<sup>19</sup> Council of the European Union, *Council conclusions on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea*, 3222nd Foreign Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 18 February 2013, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/135534.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/135534.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), *ASEAN Regional Forum Statement on Non-Proliferation*, Jakarta, 2 July 2004, <http://aseanregionalforum.asean.org/library/arf-chairmans-statements-and-reports.html?id=179>.

<sup>21</sup> Katja Weber, “The ASEAN Regional Forum and the EU’s Role in Promoting Security in the

the EU has maintained within ASEM should also be understood in a similar context. Agreeing to the principal position of ASEM that North Korea's nuclear programme is also regarded as one of the Meeting's key agenda items,<sup>22</sup> the EU has likewise endorsed the SPT as a main forum for discussion. This is not only a reflection of its normative intention that strengthening political and existing dialogues should be key in dealing with general security issues,<sup>23</sup> it is also indicative of its strategic intention of circuitously supporting the SPT.<sup>24</sup>

Third, the EU has also made efforts to cooperate with international society, assuming that this helps to justify its normative position in terms of how and in which form to address the current nuclear crisis. It has been observed that the EU has, on every occasion, joined international efforts to condemn North Korea's actions. Examples of this include its participation in the international impositions of economic and political sanctions, and its support of UN resolutions adopted in response to North Korea's continued nuclear-development activities. Its sanctions participation has taken the form of either a unilateral move or its participation in UN-led restrictive measures. Through these activities, the EU aims to take part in international moves aiming to prohibit the trades of goods, services and technology if these are suspected of contributing to the DPRK's nuclear-development programme. Alongside this, the EU has also vehemently supported relevant UN resolutions, which date back to Resolution 1718 of 2006,<sup>25</sup> and has expressed its unrelenting will and intention by its support of the most recent Resolution 2270 in 2016.<sup>26</sup> By doing so, the EU makes clear that the approach upon which it relies is not particular but universal in nature, that North Korea's brinkmanship is not acceptable according to international standards and that the only way to extricate parties from the current conundrum is to return to the existing framework of Six-Party Talks and restart dialogue.

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Asia-Pacific", in Thomas Christiansen, Emil Kirchner and Philomena Murray (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of EU-Asia Relations*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 353.

<sup>22</sup> Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), *Chairman's Statement of the Sixth Asia Europe Meeting*, Helsinki, 10-11 September 2006, [http://www.aseminfoboard.org/sites/default/files/documents/060911\\_ChairmanStatement.pdf](http://www.aseminfoboard.org/sites/default/files/documents/060911_ChairmanStatement.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> Nicola Casarini, "The Securitisation of EU-Asia Relations in the Post-Cold War Era", in Thomas Christiansen, Emil Kirchner and Philomena Murray (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of EU-Asia Relations*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 188.

<sup>24</sup> Seock-Jun Yoon and Jae-Jung Suh, "Nuclear Non-Proliferation", in Thomas Christiansen, Emil Kirchner and Philomena Murray (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of EU-Asia Relations*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 407.

<sup>25</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 1718 (2006), 14 October 2006, [http://undocs.org/S/Res/1718\(2006\)](http://undocs.org/S/Res/1718(2006)).

<sup>26</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 2270 (2016), 2 March 2016, [http://undocs.org/S/Res/2270\(2016\)](http://undocs.org/S/Res/2270(2016)).

### 3. The limits of the EU's engagement

There are sceptical views that despite the EU's continued interest in the North Korean nuclear issue, its role and impact will turn out to be at best indirect or at worst marginal. There are two reasons behind this. The first is related to the Union's lack of political will. Given its past experience of failure to deliver desired outcomes under the KEDO programme, the EU decided not to participate directly in the SPT from the outset. Moreover, its lack of will is also related to EU member-state politics, which determine the scope and type of its foreign policy. What this means is that although the EU pursues a common foreign and security policy, this is intergovernmental in nature and the remit of action also depends on where the "lowest common denominator" of member states lies.<sup>27</sup> So, as Schmidt argues, as long as an appreciable number of member states show lukewarm interest in the EU's role within the SPT, its contribution both within and outside the talks will remain constrained.<sup>28</sup>

The second reason is that as the attitude of the EU is critical, so are those of the participating parties to the talks. In principle, the participants in the SPT would not necessarily deny the value and experience of the EU since it has been successful in addressing regional conflicts within the context of regional cooperation and integration. However, when it comes to the question of its direct participation as a dialogue partner, their positions remain somewhat reserved. For instance, the US, both as a contributor and a problem-solver in the current crisis, does not see the EU as a direct stakeholder – and nor does China. In addition, North Korea's attitude towards multilateralism also matters. For North Korea, the EU must be an agreeable partner for dialogue as compared to the US, but – given the ulterior motives behind the DPRK's participation in the SPT, and its fundamental suspicion regarding the so-called unbiased role of multilateral frameworks – the effectiveness of the EU's contribution may be open to question. That means North Korea's innate suspicion of external forces would not help the EU to play a more active role in the talks. As Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde argue, if such multilateral frameworks can easily degenerate into forums in which the US manages to mobilize others in support of its actions toward North Korea by referring to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and if they only serve to highlight the potential threats of the North Korean nuclear crisis to the local and international audience,<sup>29</sup> then the DPRK's resistance to embracing multilateral frameworks of discussion such as the SPT in order to address the current crisis becomes understandable. Consequently, the leeway for the EU to endorse the legitimate contribution of the talks is much impaired.

<sup>27</sup> Andrew Moravcsik, "Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist Approach", in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (December 1993), p. 487, <https://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/preferences1.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> Hans-Joachim Schmidt, "Peace on the Korean Peninsula: What can the EU Contribute to the Six-Party Process?", in *PRIF Reports*, No. 75 (2006), p. 33, [https://www.hsfk.de/fileadmin/HSFK/hsfk\\_downloads/prif75.pdf](https://www.hsfk.de/fileadmin/HSFK/hsfk_downloads/prif75.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security. A New Framework for Analysis*, Boulder and London, Lynne Rienner, 1998, p. 26.



The fundamental question regarding the effectiveness of such a multilateral framework itself also undermines the EU's role in the foreseeable future. When it comes to the hard-security issue, particularly revolving around North Korea's nuclear efforts, attitudes diverge – over what kind of methods should be adopted, who should be “in the driver's seat” and who should be invited into this discussion. First, the US, amongst others, does not want its “hub-and-spokes” system,<sup>30</sup> the cornerstone of its East Asian security policy,<sup>31</sup> to be challenged by excessive emphasis on the necessity of multilateral frameworks of dialogue such as the SPT: the latter should, rather, play a secondary, complementary role. Meanwhile, China's mixed attitudes towards the SPT should also be counted as an undeniable impediment. It appears that China has supported the critical role of the talks but still wants them to be operated in such a way as to serve its own national interests, even to the extent of what should be discussed and who should participate. Therefore – amidst discrepancies and controversies in terms of the formats, participants and objectives of the SPT, which are also connected with the political, strategic and security reality revolving around the Korean Peninsula – the role of the EU is not likely to be fostered.

It follows that, given controversies over the limits of the EU's contributions, future prospects for its role appear to depend on the interplay of key stakeholders' desires and interests, and the contextual constraints posed by geostrategic situations. Such a scenario looks increasingly plausible, especially if we take into account the conflictive inter-Korean relationship, which is now facing its worst diplomatic crisis because of the closing of official channels between the two Koreas. It has also sharpened emerging rivalries between the US and China for the regional hegemonic position, which renders the Northeast Asian security landscape ever more competitive and unstable. Even so, however, such a stark reality does not necessarily mean the end of the EU's role itself. Despite differences in terms of motives and strategies for addressing the present standoffs, most of the directly involved parties seem to admit that resorting to armed force is undesirable and are principally in favour of non-military approaches. As a result, the existing framework of the SPT, although currently at a stalemate, can be reactivated at any time as a prime forum for discussing the nuclear issue, and the norms and values of multilateralism that the EU has thus far striven to promote and externalize through its Asian policy continue to be persuasive. Of course, the push to make this happen is now being made in circuitous ways, as argued previously, but direct contribution – e.g. as a participant at the talks – may not entirely be discounted if the EU feels it imperative, and if the other parties also consider it necessary, both in normative and strategic terms.

<sup>30</sup> This means that the US plays a central role in the Asian security policy, while its allies in the area play supplementary roles, along with the US.

<sup>31</sup> Victor D. Cha, “Powerplay. Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia”, in *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Winter 2009/2010), p. 158.

### Conclusion

A discussion concerning the EU's role in the Six-Party Talks has generated three implications. While the first two relate to the preconditions to be met in order for the role of the EU to be enhanced, the last one concerns the ongoing debates seeking to rediscover the significance of the EU for the talks. First, for the talks to operate effectively and to make some, if any, contributions to bring about peace, the conflictive contextual conditions currently causing stalemate have to be eased. Otherwise, discussion of the possible role of the EU might turn out to be empty or meaningless. This means that as long as the US and the DPRK perceive each other as unreliable partners for negotiations, and see each other as a source of uncontrollable existential threats, a vicious cycle will continue – thus undermining the EU's desire for, and capability of, contribution. At the same time, principled commitment on the part of the EU is also essential in the context of this argument. Its future role as a key player in SPT, not to mention its reliability, is still open to question – not least while the EU is not directly involved in the talks, and particularly when its future engagement is questioned given its internal challenges. Foremost amongst these is the sovereign-debt crisis; however, this has been compounded more recently by the UK's Brexit vote, currently the most evident consequence of the continent's resurgent nationalism.

Nonetheless, it is still important to acknowledge the counter-argument highlighting the EU's position as a promising player. This is indeed the case when its normative inclination – promoting the SPT, which aim at peace and prosperity in the region – is taken seriously. Making the most of the Six-Party Talks is a plausible option, and one that is available at the moment. If this is overlooked and disregarded, no other options seem open. Resorting to the use of military force in dealing with the current crisis does not look desirable, or feasible – which is exactly the case that the EU has made over the last few years.

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