

Reflections on KEDO

A 38 North Discussion

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Discussants: Joel Wit, Visiting Scholar at the U.S.-Korea Institute at SAIS; Ambassador Stephen Bosworth, former U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy and current Dean of The Fletcher School at Tufts University; and Robert Carlin, Visiting Scholar at the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University

TRANSCRIPT

Part I: Establishing KEDO

Joel Wit: So I'd like to structure today's discussion along the lines of first we'll talk about your KEDO (Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization) experience, which I think is quite interesting and of course very different from the situation you're in today, and then we can talk some more about the more recent developments with regard to North Korea. So to just start the discussion, maybe what you can do is describe initially your experience as KEDO's first executive director and what that was like for you.

Bosworth: Well, the Agreed Framework was signed in October of 1994 and almost just a couple of weeks after that I was asked by the State Department, Tom Hubbard exactly, whether I would be willing to take on the task of establishing and then directing the Korean Energy Development Organization. And after a bit of reflection, I agreed to do it on a part-time basis because I wasn't quite confident enough to leave the job I had, which was being President of the US-Japan Foundation; to kind jump off a cliff and take on this new task, this new institution. So I agree to do it on a part-time basis for several months, but in any case I was the first employee of KEDO. The second and third employees were my two deputies: Itaru Umezu who was from Japan from the Foreign Ministry, and Young-jin Choi who was from Korea. So we had no office, we had no staff, we had no regulations, we had nothing. So we rented space in a temporary, temporary space, in an office building on Park Avenue and moved in. Umezu immediately went out and starting looking, rustling for space. So within the next several weeks the staff began to trickle in. We hired a few Americans and then the, both the Koreans and the Japanese seconded people to KEDO, coming from their own bureaucracies. And eventually we found office space down on 3rd Ave, and we moved there. I don't think KEDO still has any space there; they may have a mail box there, I'm not sure.

Anyway, that's where we were. And soon after that, I had my first encounter with the North Koreans. In contrast to other Americans who were involved in this, I had not been involved in the Agreed Framework negotiations. So my experience with the North Koreans was a kind of baptism if you will. And I met with Ho Jung who was my counterpart as the head of the North Korean negotiating team. We had our first meeting in Kuala Lumpur, and we'd all trekked out there and met and discussed what we had to do. We were really making it all up because while the Agreed Framework was handed over to us as a complete, completed diplomatic document, it didn't say anything about how we were supposed to carry it out and

implement it. And the first task was to agree with the North Koreans on exactly what we were going to do. There was an agreement that the light-water reactors would be provided. In very general terms the technology was specified, but we then had to negotiate the details of what the technology would look like and how we would deliver these light water reactors.

So, actually it was a very fascinating experience because we were feeling each other out on all sides, the South Koreans and the Japanese were feeling us out, the Americans, not being all that certain about what the division of responsibilities was going to be like. And of course the North Koreans were feeling us all out and it was a very interesting beginning for what turned out to be I think a unique, and to some extent remarkable exercise.

Wit: Well, you bring up a number of different issues which I think are very interesting to delve into. So, why don't we take each one and...

Bosworth: Sure.

Wit: The first one is of course here you are sort of establishing basically a new, international or multilateral organization. And so to me that's very interesting because all of a sudden you're throwing together Americans, Japanese, and South Koreans as the main players and eventually more were added from other countries. What was that like from the very beginning? And describe I think the experience of trying to mold together people from these different countries into a functioning organization.

Bosworth: It was challenging, never boring. The big picture was one in which governments were supposedly doing all of this. But on the ground, in New York, where we were, we were talking with people, people had to do this. And with very few exceptions, none of the people who were working at KEDO had previously worked in a collaborative, team environment with people from the other countries so it was a first experience for all of them. And one of the things we did early on; I decided that we were having a little trouble crossing cultural barriers, I mean small things, for example, everyone would come to work in the morning and the Americans were all kind of ebullient and hail-fellow-well-met and they would say "good morning" to the Japanese and Koreans who were coming in who couldn't understand why this greeting process was necessary every time we started a new work day. So Americans were drawing back and saying well they're not very friendly. So I found a couple of cross-cultural trainers in New York and brought them in and they began trying to work on all these problems and I think everyone had tremendous good will on all sides; everyone wanted to make this happen, and make it truly collaborative and productive. But there were some of these cultural difficulties that in retrospect I think we worked our way through pretty successfully. And eventually we developed – my objective always was to develop a KEDO spirit, a feeling that the enterprise we were trying to conduct jointly was larger than the individual interests of any of the governments concerned. And I think for the most part we pulled that off. We had to contend frequently with intrusions from capitals. But we quickly developed a sort of ethos in which we were united against capitals because they were the guys who were trying to screw us up.

Wit: Well and that's the thing, most people don't understand that with the exception of the Americans the other personnel at KEDO had to go back to their governments and they kept very close ties with their governments and so they were being told, essentially, what they should be doing by their governments,

and at the same time you're trying to develop this KEDO perspective and that must have been an extremely difficult process.

Bosworth: Like I said, it was challenging. There were a couple of things I think that were critical and barriers. One was that the Japanese and the South Koreans were convinced – with some reason – that the United States had brought them in, in order to pay for American foreign policy. They were not participants in the negotiation of the Agreed Framework. In fact they had to wait until the Americans and the North Koreans finished talking before they knew exactly what was being transacted. Now, they were aware of the goals and in general they signed off on the process. But, it was an affront to their sort of sense of independence and sovereignty. So that was always a problem. The other problem was within the United States government, you may recall that three weeks after the signing of the Agreed Framework, there was an election in this country, 1994, and the Republicans won control of both houses of Congress. And the Republicans collectively hated the Agreed Framework; they really did not want to try to negotiate with the North Koreans. They had been opposed to that from the beginning and they were not of a mood to be supportive to the American engagement in KEDO. And unfortunately we needed things from the Congress...

Robert Carlin: Like...?

Bosworth: Like money, because the Agreed Framework was not self-funding so we had to figure out ways to finance the heavy fuel oil that we had committed to give the North Koreans and then we had to go out and hire a contractor who would actually be in charge of building the Light Water Reactors. So, from the beginning, the American component at KEDO was to some extent not an orphan, but certainly was not nearly as tied into the bureaucratic process as were the South Korean and Japanese components. So meshing all of this on a day-to-day basis was challenging.

Carlin: What was your relationship like with Washington? Were you getting instructions, were you getting advice?

Bosworth: Not very much. No. In one sense that was good because it left us free to sort of use our own judgment. In another sense, there were times when we could have probably used more. But as is typically is the case in the U.S. government, having negotiated the Agreed Framework, which was a major accomplishment, Washington kind of moved on. Bob Gallucci left and he went to Georgetown as dean. You guys who were deeply involved sort of went off and did other things as well, or at least back to your regular jobs. So you know there wasn't a lot of contact there. Tom Hubbard was there for a time and then he left, but everybody was then worried about China and other things that didn't really include worrying too much worrying about North Korea. The assumption was, the operating premise was: we had taken care of the North Korean problem, now it's just a question of moving on.

Wit: You know, one of the things, while there are a couple more issues here that I find interesting. The first is that not only were we creating this new, multilateral organization, which wasn't really big, I mean I don't know how many people...

Bosworth: No, very small.

Wit: Very small. But secondly, the responsibilities were enormous. I mean when you think about it, you were building multibillion dollar reactors and on top of that you had to deliver fuel oil, that was, those were the two main activities. So I'm interested in developing how you built the organization a little bit more and talk about how did you gear up to do these things aside from having 30 people sitting in New York?

Bosworth: Well, after a few near misses, I think I concluded that this had to be truly a collaborative effort. And I was very fortunate in my two deputies, each of whom was very, very competent, very engaged in the KEDO process and very committed to it and they've both gone on to have very successful careers in their own governments. In fact, Young-jin Choi just recently arrived here, as you both know, as the new South Korean ambassador to Washington. But I learned that I had to ask their opinion and actually listen to it and try to form a collective judgment. It didn't work for me to try to instruct them as to what we were going to do. We really had to build this consensus and you had to operate from that consensus. And whenever this consensus began to fray, you had to go back and talk more about what you were trying to do. It was time consuming; we worked long days. And it was occasionally quite frustrating. But I concluded that in the end, there was no real alternative. The United States, we could impose our views on the macro picture, but if we didn't have consensus among the three of us, there was no way that this enterprise was ever going to do anything.

Wit: And I assume part of that also involved you going to Seoul and Tokyo and meeting with government officials, trying to build your own separate relationships with them as well.

Bosworth: Yes, and I usually traveled to Seoul with Choi Young-jin and to Japan with Itaru Umezu. And we spent a lot of time in both capitals, basically negotiating with those two governments. Trying to make sure that everybody was more or less comfortable with what we were doing. And in the case of both of them, a key question was not just the policy, but the money because we were relying on them to pay for this enterprise. And they had their own concerns with their internal finance ministries and all of the other people who obviously wanted to have a role in this.

Wit: And I'm just curious, of course looking back, when you visited Seoul, when you visited Tokyo, I'm assuming everything wasn't yes, we're 100% behind you, just tell us what you need. I'm curious about the interaction there and how they were reacting to this requirement that they lay out billions of dollars for this project?

Bosworth: Well, their governments had signed off on the notion, the general notion. But, as they say the devil is in the details. And the devil was present in all of this in that you had to be sure that you had agreement on all the major elements of the project as you were moving forward. And in both cases, in both Japan and in South Korea, perhaps even more so in South Korea, these were controversial things within the body politic. Dealing with the North Koreans as we were doing on behalf of South Korea was a very delicate enterprise. Because you had to be very sure that you were not going too far and you had to be very sure that the South Koreans were comfortable every step of the way. I remember negotiating the supply agreement, one of the major considerations was how South Koreans and North Koreans would communicate with one another in the building of the light water reactors because KEPCO was going to be our prime contractor. They brought the technology; they brought the experience, the expertise. So they had to be willing to deal with the North Koreans and the North Koreans had to be willing to deal them.

And yet, formally, there was no way that we could write an agreement that had North Koreans coming into contact with South Koreans without the United States being there as the intermediary, and basically the channel of communication.

Now I was fairly confident that once we got it all set up and began working that that would become much easier, but in the initial establishment of all of these processes and procedures, it was a real problem.

Part II: Dealing With the DPRK

Wit: So, in addition to forming a new international organization, there is also the added problem of dealing with North Korea. And that's of course a very serious problem. As you know, the current thinking is that we need to modify North Korea's behavior because it hasn't been very good over the years. So I'm very interested to thinking back to those years, your views on how difficult was it dealing with the North Koreans and how did that evolve over time?

Bosworth: Well initially, it was very difficult. Our first meeting with them took place in Kuala Lumpur; we met there for about three days and had two or three sessions with Ho Jong and his team and ourselves. And they were obviously; these were not senior officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For the most part, there were some of those there. This included people who had never dealt with the outside world before. And they were obviously very wary and very nervous and we were going to meet with them in Kuala Lumpur. And we invited them to come to New York for the actual process of negotiating the supply agreement. I remember Ho Jong, who speaks good English, which was very helpful at that point, although in a formal negotiating session, he would always use an interpreter. But I remember meeting him for the first time and I was struck by the fact that he had obviously spent some time outside of Pyongyang; he had served in their mission in New York and struck me as somebody who was more than just a suit and a tie. He actually had a bit of personality to him. And that turned out to be the case. I remember we gave a reception for the North Korean delegation, KEDO gave a reception, and at one point I looked up and here in this rather large banquet hall. E

Everybody was standing around and I noticed in each corner there were north Koreans standing and there were south Koreans standing around drinking and smoking and the Japanese and Americans were sort of standing in the middle of the room sort of looking off to the sides wondering where the Koreans had all gone and for many of the North Koreans and South Koreans, this was of course not all, but many, the first time they had actually met with and talked to someone from the other side of the DMZ. So it was a very unique experience for them and they were taking full advantage of it.

After that, when we started working in New York, we also constructed a couple of occasions when we had some social interchange and engagement, including a reception that my wife and I gave in our apartment in Manhattan and it was quite an evening. My wife particularly is still struck by the fact that after an initial awkwardness in which the North Koreans said they could only spend 15 minutes, they ended up spending three and a half hours. And again, North Koreans and South Koreans tended to clump together and you could see the personal barriers begin to melt away. And it was quite heartening. But their behavior by and large, I mean there were moments in which we screamed at each other and they screamed at us, but their behavior actually was quite business like and quite determined to try to focus discussion on where they wanted to be and what they wanted to do.

Wit: And it seems to me also it wasn't just these initial meetings, but as KEDO got off the ground, that your contacts with the North Koreans kind of grew and broadened out. So KEDO was negotiating all these protocols to the supply agreement, you had North Koreans coming to New York and meeting with KEDO on a regular basis and then people from KEDO going to North Korea once the project got off the ground, so it was a developing process.

Bosworth: It was an emerging cultural experience in many ways. I mean the substance was constantly growing and we started with the supply agreement which was very difficult. We finished that, it took us almost three months to finish that negotiation. We finished it just before Christmas in 1995 and then went on from there. Yea, '95. And then we started, as you suggest, with the various protocols: Grants of immunity, privileges and immunities. Some very technical issues, including how we would describe the light water reactors themselves and experts going back and forth and KEDO people going as you said to North Korea both in Pyongyang and elsewhere, scattered around the countryside. I went to North Korea in early 1996 for the first time as part of KEDO. And we had meetings there; we also took a night train over to visit Shimo, the site of the reactors where we were going to build them. We were riding at night in a train across North Korea in a train that kept stopping every three kilometers because the power cut out.

Wit: Describe a little bit, I'm interested in, this was your first visit to North Korea and describe a little bit about that experience: what you saw, what you had anticipated, how was it different from what you thought it would be? And also the North Koreans you met with too.

Bosworth: I had very limited expectations as to what it was going to be like because I had never been to North Korea. But we flew into Pyongyang from Beijing on Air Koryo which was at that time itself an experience. As the plane took off and people were still wandering in the aisles and finding their seats. And we landed in Pyongyang and I remember this huge airport, it seemed to go on and on forever and there were no airplanes there. And all the airplanes that were there were parked and they looked like they'd been parked for 15 years. In the times I have been back since then, those same airplanes are still parked in the same places and there are still no active planes in site.

But we met, Ho Jong was our host and we had a big banquet the first night we were there and ate a lot and drank a lot; to a certain extent alcohol was the lubricant that kept KEDO going forward. But then I met also with the vice foreign minister Kang Sok Ju, who had been the principal negotiator for the North Koreans on the Agreed Framework and who had a reputation of his own within the US establishment and other places. And he had a very assertive, almost flamboyant personality who used his modulations in his voice to some effect trying to show that he was in charge, etc.. But I met with him, it was Ho Jong, Kang Sok Ju and myself and an interpreter in the Great Hall of the People, the National Assembly building in this huge conference room sitting at this table that probably would have had room for 40 people on each side. And it was cold, it was still winter in Pyongyang and it just seemed other worldly. I kept sort of sitting on my own shoulder looking around saying "what is going on here?"

But, you know, they were quite actively and constructively engaged in this enterprise. After all, they had a stake in the success of the Agreed Framework and I think at that time, the officials in the North Korean government really wanted this to work. Now, there were certain things that they could do and certain things that they couldn't do, but they really wanted this to work and by and large we found in KEDO that

once we'd reached agreement with the North Koreans, and it was never easy, once we'd reached agreement by and large, if we stuck to what we'd committed to, they stuck to what they had committed to. Now that has not always been the case in subsequent years, but that kind of pact, if you will, lasted for six, seven years until the early 2000s.

Carlin: I have a question about the US commitment to LWRs, but first I want to note a great divide in KEDO's history and that is some of us say "KEE-DO" and some of us say "KAY-DO" and we have never reconciled it, it might have a genetic basis I don't know. In any case, there was a story that came out very soon after the Agreed Framework was signed and has been repeated subsequently many times that the only reason the United States signed the Agreed Framework and agreed to LWRs was the calculation that North Korea would collapse before we ever had to finish the LWRs. And here we are in KEDO, KAY-DO, did you ever hear that, did you ever get a sense that that was the policy really?

Bosworth: Sure, all the time. It came up first when we were negotiating the supply agreement because we had to stipulate when we were going to finish the light water reactors. And the North Koreans quite understandably wanted a firm, hard date. When are these things going to be ready? When are you going to give them to us? And we, for many reasons, including the fact that nobody had ever done anything like this before, recognizing all the political uncertainty that existed, we were unwilling – and this was something I believe very strongly – we couldn't go beyond the best effort formulations that we sort of eventually ended up with in KEDO. And I had, I had long arguments and discussions with Ho Jong about all of that. And he would keep going back for new guidance from Pyongyang and then call me; he tended to call me late in the evening after he'd talked to Pyongyang. I learned very early on that it was a good thing to have my wife answer the phone so that if I was in a position where I didn't really want to talk to him, she could say that I wasn't available. And even if I were available, she would sort of soften him up a little bit for me.

Wit: But you're saying that was the North Korean, you thought that that was one of their concerns and they wanted to nail down those kinds of specifics or...?

Bosworth: Well, there was a view within the U.S. government and elsewhere that North Korea had to be on the verge of collapse, there was no way this government could continue. I would argue that the expectation that North Korea was going to collapse has been an underpinning of U.S. policy for the last 25 years, and continues as such today. We've always had difficulty, whether it was in the Agreed Framework context or later when Bill Perry was involved in North Korea policy or even more recently when I was involved as Special Representative for North Korea policy; we've always had difficulty accepting North Korea as it is; awful place, awful government, but we've always sort of deluded ourselves, I think, that in the end, we really wouldn't have to deal with them because they were going to collapse and go away. Well, they may at some point, but they've been around for a long time.

Wit: Yea, as having been present at that same time period, there may have been people who thought they were going to collapse, but if you look at the effort we made to get KEDO running, to start the reactor project to try to move forward, I mean that was an enormous effort that cost billions of dollars and to me, there just its two contradictory things. Some people may have thought they were going to collapse, but that didn't stop us from moving forward with all this work.

Bosworth: No, but there were people involved in all governments, particularly here in Washington, who never thought I think never thought we would see the day, and they may still be right, when we would actually have functioning light water reactors in North Korea. And there were things being written at the time or even spoken of orally which would say that KEDO's job was not to build light water reactors, KEDO's job was to act as though we were building light water reactors. And there was a certain cynicism in the whole exercise.

But we at KEDO were really determined to build these things. So that was the task we'd been given; we hired nuclear engineers, we hired KEPSCO, we hired Duke Engineering and there is still a lot of poured concrete up there in North Korea that testifies that that's exactly what we were trying to do.

Carlin: You mentioned earlier that the KEDO fit in with the Agreed Framework, but had carved out a specific task and yet there's a point at which that task crosses into implementation of the Agreed Framework in many, many different ways. Did you consciously worry about that as you were putting the organization together? Did you realize where those lines were going to cross?

Bosworth: Well I knew that they were going to cross at some point because the need or the stipulation of a special inspection to take place to try to assess what North Korea had really been doing in the nuclear field was clearly stipulated in the Agreed Framework. We talked quite a bit about what substantial completion, whatever the exact language was; it's any longer etched in my mind. But I knew that at some point we'd come to that. But in the meantime we had to make progress, we had to move along.

And I think, had we ever come to that point, and this began to be even more possible while I was in South Korea's ambassador, that would have been a real crisis because there were very strongly conflicting views of what would be required to be done in that special inspection. And some people thought, the North Koreans thought well the IAEA would come in and there would be a few weeks when they were looking around and we're providing some records to them and that's in a sense what happened in 2007, 2008, but we never really got there. Whereas many people in Washington, in the policy process, began talking about need for a 2 or 3 year process of inspecting. Well that clearly would never have flown.

It's obviously, you look back on sort of a counterfactual formulation of what would the world be like had there never been an Agreed Framework? I think the thing that is clearer than anything else is that North Korea would have a lot more fissile material in the form of plutonium than it does now because it would have continued to produce plutonium. And in fact, it could have produced a lot if they'd ever been able to start up the other two reactors.

On the other hand, I think it's quite clear, although we again don't know enough of the details to make a full assertion, but it's at least quite clear, that North Korea was – as many of us at KEDO assumed – that they were hedging because while we didn't trust them fully, they certainly didn't trust us. So I always assumed that they had something going someplace they could rely on if we indeed did not follow through on what they viewed as our commitment to provide light water reactors. And we didn't know precisely what that was, but I assume that all of those scientists and engineers of theirs were still doing something. And as it turns out, they were, possibly they were moving in the area of uranium enrichment. But they were not doing anything on plutonium, we knew that. And that in of itself was a worthwhile

accomplishment of KEDO, because as long as KEDO was working and moving ahead, the reactor at Yongbyon was frozen and they were not reprocessing spent fuel rods.

Carlin: OK, you mentioned the series of very detailed protocols that KEDO signed with the North Koreans and I presume it took many months of negotiating and therefore you had a chance to observe the North Koreans as they were in these negotiations. Did you have a chance to draw any conclusions about how serious they were at that point in moving ahead?

Bosworth: My personal conclusion was they were very serious about what they were doing, the enterprise that we were involved in. This was not something just being done for show. For them of course, it was not just KEDO and the Agreed Framework and light water reactors. But, it was clear for many of them and in fact Ho Jung would actually say this – for many of them this was important because it was setting a series of precedents for how North Korea could begin to engage with the rest of the world in a more direct and active fashion. And I always thought that in some ways KEDO, the Korean Energy Development Organization was misnamed, and in a more perfect world, it would have been named the Korean Economic Development Organization because it became clear to us that KEDO dealing with the questions we were dealing with, that this was just the tip of the iceberg in terms of what North Korea would require in order to begin to develop its economy. Now there are all sorts of reasons why that may never happen because of the nature of their political regime, but they were looking at KEDO as more than just KEDO. They were looking at it as an institutional point of engagement for North Korea and the rest of the world. And that made them very anxious and very wary, but they took it very seriously.

Part III: Final Assessment

Wit: You know I remember the day that I guess I was in North Korea and we learned that you had been asked to be Ambassador to South Korea. I can't remember, was that 1997?

Bosworth: 1997, Yes.

Wit: Yes, 1997. So I remember that day very well because most of us were sorry to see you go. By 1997, of course, this organization had been working for a couple of years. 1996 had been a difficult experience because of the submarine incident in South Korea and the North Korea submarine running aground there, but at the end of '97 when you left, what was your feeling about this experience? Did you think to yourself, well, gee this was going to work? Gee this was just too difficult? Or how did you feel about what had been done and where it was going in the future?

Bosworth: I think by and large I felt pretty good about it. I thought we had built an institution, small and to some extent fragile. But we'd developed a set of practices and procedures for dealing with the North Koreans on some of the most sensitive issues imaginable. Even then, of course, it was unclear as to what the future might bring because we were operating in an area of real uncertainty. And always were aware of the fact, particularly in the case of Washington and South Korea, we were in areas of real political uncertainty and that what we were doing was never without controversy. But when I left, I left in the fall of 1997, and I felt pretty good about KEDO; it gained some real traction and I think for the next two or three years that traction process continued.

Carlin: You mentioned that when you were trying to get this cross cultural melding and, excuse me, you put together some ideas to facilitate that. One of them you didn't mention was the KEDO lunch which was that I think it was if three, if Japanese, South Koreans, and Americans would go to a lunch, KEDO would pick up part of the tab. And whenever there was a knock at the door at lunchtime I knew...

Bosworth: They were trying to fill out their ranks.

Carlin: [Laughing]...It actually worked very, very well.

Bosworth: It was very effective, it was very effective. Money does have a sort of certain drive. No, I was trying to break down these national silos because I noticed after the first a few months; Americans went to lunch with Americans, Japanese with Japanese and Koreans with Koreans. And Umezu and Choi Young-jin and I, we would go to lunch the three of us. And I thought well there must be some way to spread that so we did and it worked.

Wit: Actually, this is going to be a little bit of a surprise, but as you know, Bob came after you in KEDO, from what year did you start? 2002 to 2005 I guess, right?

Carlin: 2006.

Wit: 2006, and I'm curious having listened to Ambassador Bosworth talk about the early years and you came at the end. I'm curious for your perspective. How far along...did you see the results of what he had done initially, in terms of how the organization functioned when you were there? And what was the feel of the organization at that point and the project too?

Carlin: When I stepped on to this escalator.

Bosworth: Going up or down?

Carlin: We weren't sure at this point; there were still a lot of the ethos, the organization working together, the organization as something separate from the governments themselves. And in fact, we had this established with the North Koreans, this was very important, a separate identity so the North Koreans could deal with us even if there were problems with any bilaterally, with any one of the governments, for instance, they could deal with KEDO in a constructive way. But that fell apart very quickly when the Americans essentially decided they wanted nothing to do with KEDO anymore. And once you had a lack of American leadership in the organization, the parts began to squabble. And it unfortunately got really very ugly between, for example, the Japanese and the South Koreans near the end. It was really very sad. Because not only was it hollow, but it got rough and very uncomfortable. I think those people who had been there a while felt very sad to see this organization that had been built over so many years and had been so effective with the North Koreans, fall in and start devouring itself.

Bosworth: I'm sure that's true and it's sad. But you know, Washington's reaction frequently to North Korea's bad behavior is the conclusion that the way to modify that bad behavior is to not have any contact with them. And that's what happened in 2001, 2002 and that's not the only time it happened.

Wit: What's also interesting about the later period, and I remember we discussed this, it became pretty clear to people after 2002 when the Agreed Framework essentially collapsed that this wasn't going to go

to the end, this whole process, and yet I remember the North Koreans continued to sort of hold on in dealing with KEDO, continued to try to find some light at the end of the tunnel. That's a very interesting development that most people aren't aware of.

Carlin: It's true. They stuck rigorously to the protocols. Even when we were essentially squatting on their soil and no longer building the LWRs – and it was clear we weren't – they did not really breach those protocols and they told us they would continue to abide by them until that became impossible virtually to do that because we made it clear that we were about to pull out.

Bosworth: It was interesting to me because in late January 2009 I went to North Korea as a private citizen, as part of a small delegation, and we met with senior North Korean officials, including Kim Gye Gwan, who made a point of telling me in our first meeting that they were taking good care of “my,” as he said, “your” light water reactor project in Shimpo. He said, “It's still there, it's all ready to go.” And I was a bit taken aback there eight years later, it was still my project and they were still taking care of it. But I think that's exactly right. I think they hung on because in some ways, over time, this was the only really effective point of engagement that they had with the outside world. It was a way in which they could engage with Seoul, which was critical to them, and it was a way in which they could try to engage with the United States.

Part IV: The Obama Years and Beyond

Wit: OK. So we have this very interesting experience during the 1990s up until 2002 and of course since then, we've had a somewhat different experience and leading up to the events of the past month or so where we had an agreement with North Korea, the so called Leap Year agreement, and now that's collapsed. So there are a number of different issues this raises. First of all, obviously, the past experience is different from the current experience and I'm wondering on your take on that and secondly, of course, I'm very interested on your view on the recent developments.

Bosworth: Well I think past experience was quite different from recent experience. In some ways, that's I think a reflection of a change in the general context in which all of this is occurring. When I mentioned earlier that I'd been to North Korea in January of 2009, I came back to New York to be asked by Secretary Clinton, as I got off the plane, literally, whether I would do, come back and be a Special Representative for North Korea policy. And the expectation in Washington, at least in some quarters then as the Bush administration exited, was that a lot had been done. It was almost a question of figuring out how to tie down these last few issues and then go collect the plutonium.

Carlin: Within the Six Party Talks?

Bosworth: Within the Six Party Talks. China's involvement had made a major difference. That North Korea was constructively engaged in the Six Party Talks, etc, etc. Well, But when I had been in Pyongyang, there had been speculation in the press outside before I went in that the North Koreans were preparing to test another long range missile and this subject came up in the conversations that we had with Kim Gye Gwan and others in North Korea and I specifically said that were they were to do that, I thought it would be a very severe blow to the prospects for progress in the Six Party Talks because it would be a very inauspicious way, to say the least, to start a relationship with the new U.S. administration, an

administration, even then though I was no then working for them, what I stressed thought on what was supposed to be constructive in its engagement with the North.

They told me, Kim Gye Gwan told me explicitly, “that’s not my decision, that’s a military question and I have no control over it.” Well as it turned out, they did it and that started a kind of a rolling descent into negotiating no-man’s-land. That was followed by the nuclear test, etc. I think there were various times over the last couple of years when we seemed to be sort of on the verge of launching what seemed to be a potentially constructive negotiating process. I went to North Korea in December of ‘09, we had generally good conversations. We identified a couple of major issues that required resolution before we could go reengage and go back to the six party process and those had to do with sanctions and some other things. But by early March of 2010, we were preparing to invite the North Koreans to come to New York and to continue the conversations we’d had in Pyongyang. And I remember vividly, we were literally on the verge of sending in the next day or two of sending a message through the New York channel suggesting that they go in and pick up their visas in Beijing and we got word that the Cheonan had been sunk. Well that of course threw everything into a [inaudible] for the next several months.

Nonetheless, by the end of 2010, we were once again at the point of sort of leaning forward and trying to figure out how we could get back to the table. And that’s when I was flying from Japan to Beijing and flew over those tiny little islands in the Western Sea to land in Beijing to be greeted by someone from the US embassy to say “You won’t believe what just happened, or what is happening – the North Koreans are shelling this island.” Well that to say the least put another, threw the whole thing back into a [inaudible] once more.

So, by in 2011, the food aid question began to arise and we again, it’s a little bit like Charlie Brown and Lucy and the football – we got it all geared up again and I met with Kim Gye Gwan in July in New York and then subsequently after I decided to step down as special representative, we met again in Geneva and Glyn Davies, who was my successor, accompanied us on that trip. And you know we were hearing all the right things. It was very clear what we expected, in terms of moratorium, and it was clear what they expected.

So I was not at all surprised when in February, we and they concluded the Leap Day, or whatever it is, Agreement. And I assume that they understood very well that we couldn’t have another replay of the missile launch of 2009, which also they had described as a satellite launch. And here we are. They’ve said they’re going to do it again.

Now I don’t think that this is just an exercise in diplomatic nonsense. I think this probably reflects a view on their part that what they really want is to have serious discussions with us and others, but in the context of their being an established nuclear weapons state. I think that’s going to be very difficult to pull off. So I don’t quite know where we go from here. I think it’s sad in many ways, but I think there was a genuine willingness on the part of the Obama administration and the other parties in the Six Party process to reengage.

Now, there have been big changes in the last decade. China’s role in all of this is enormous. And when we were at KEDO, I’d would go back and forth to Northeast Asia all the time and in those three years I went to Beijing once and met with an Assistant Vice Minister in Beijing who had some interest in what we

were doing but it was clear Beijing did not want to get involved in the Agreed Framework process, not at all. And we would go for months without ever really thinking about what China really wanted. That's not any longer true.

That has had a secondary effect which is that as Japan's problems have been exacerbated and deepened and China's rise has continued, our relationship with South Korea has become from a strategic point of view, even more important than it was in the late 1990s. So that means to me that South Korea's voice in all of this is much stronger and much more listened to than it was at the time of the negotiation of the Agreed Framework. So South Korea is now a principal, central player in a way that they weren't in the '90s. And they've gone through a political evolution in which having tried Kim Dae Jung's approach and having tried Roh Moo Hyun's approach, the progressive forces were in charge, they were trying to engage. Now you can say they made mistakes, and they probably did, but they by and large at that time had public support.

And then we had the election of 2008 and the conservative forces regained control. They are naturally much more skeptical, to say the least, of North Korea's intentions than were their predecessors. So we're operating in an entirely different political environment. I think we should bear in mind that the people who have really screwed this up are the North Koreans because they had their chance and they have not yet been able to take advantage of it. Where do we go from here? I don't know.

Carlin: Well I wanted to quote something back to you. It's actually something you said in an interview on *38North* as a matter of fact, as you'll recall. And you said...

Bosworth: With that guy James Church.

Carlin: You said my view, this is what you said: "My view is that engagement is an attempt to make the other party adjust its perceptions and behaviors. In the process, we may find that we have to adjust our own." You still think that's true?

Bosworth: Yes, I do.

Carlin: And how might we have to adjust our own?

Bosworth: I think moving forward, I want to be careful of how I phrase this, not that I have any aspirations for more government involvement, but I think moving forward we're going to have to figure out ways to recognize that while our principal interest with North Korea is their nuclear weapons program, or at least that's our pronounced principal interest, that we're going to have to deal with a lot of other aspects of the North Korean situation in order to get any leverage on the nuclear issue. Because even if we were to solve the nuclear issue, which I don't think we can under current circumstances, we would still be left with North Korea which is essentially a failed state; a failed state right at the center of Northeast Asia, which is vitally important not just to us, but to the world. And somehow you've got to come to grips with it. You've got to, I think go back to the September 2005 agreement. Remember, denuclearization was one of four principal goals and I think we've got to figure out ways to move forward on all four of those tracks if we're going to make any sustained progress on denuclearization.

We have to come to grips with the political reality on the Korean peninsula; the need for a more stable arrangement, like a peace treaty, recognizing how enormously difficult that is going to be. We have to come to grips with the question of the North Korean economy, recognizing how difficult that's going to be. And we have to come to grips with the issue of diplomatic recognition and relations among all of the parties concerned.

Now my big question is whether or not the American foreign policy process is capable of dealing with all these things because of the nature of our government, the nature of how we formulate and implement policy. When we've made progress with North Korea, I would say in the years following the Agreed Framework, in the years from 2004 to 2007, it has happened despite amazing opposition within America, the American establishment whatever the administration was, was trying to do. I don't think we're going to have that degree of, lack of consensus if we are going to make progress on these things going forward which sort of leaves me in a position of throwing up my hands.