

CONFERENCE REPORTS



THE COURAGE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY
20TH ANNUAL FORUM 2000 CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 16–19, 2016, PRAGUE AND OTHER CENTRAL EUROPEAN CITIES

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The Future of North Korea: Democracy and Respect for Human Rights in Sight?

In cooperation with Embassy of the Republic of Korea
October 18, 2016, 10:00 - 11:30, Goethe-Institut

Moderator: *Pavel Fischer*, Director STEM, Czech Republic

Panel discussion:

So-yeon Lee, President, New Korea Women's Union, North Korea

Geun-wook Lee, Professor, Department of Political Science, Sogang University, Korea

Jin-sung Jang, Poet, Spy, Escapee, North Korea

Michael Staack, Co-Director, Institute of International Politics, Helmut Schmidt University, Germany

Scott Snyder, Director of the Program for the U.S.-Korea Policy, Council on Foreign Relations, USA

Issues from human rights, genocide, international engagement or refugees were some of the most important points discussed. To sum up in a few points, the discussion concerned: 1) How to bridge the mistrust space created in the relations between USA and China in the context of North Korea; 2) How to engage, carrot and sticks policy a solution?; 3) A dissemination of the 2014 UN Human Rights Report; 4) The condition of the North Korean refugees.

The panel started with a speech from the Ambassador of Human Rights from South Korea, Lee Jung-hoon, making some general remarks on the atrocities that are being committed in North Korea and continued with his presentation on the political situation in North Korea. He has described in great detail the variations of each of the regimes of the Kim dynasty. Furthermore, in comparison to his grandfather and father, Kim Jong-un is a failed leader.

After this presentation, the discussion was taken over by **So-yeon Lee**, who as well described in great detail the pain and the crimes that the regime commits. Even though her presentation was focused generally around women of North Korea, many of the things she described do apply to men as well. An issue that she identifies across most women from North Korea is that they are brought up in a manner to idolatry the Kim dynasty.

Geun-wook Lee tackled the very issue that is within the very title of this panel and he said that there are many issues with North Korea and that if the regime will fall it is unknown what will happen. The lack of a middle class, the lack of properly educated people, the lack of democratic culture will prove to be enormous hurdles for their society to overcome.

Scott Snyder and **Michael Staack** expanded the discussion on the issue and brought into the discussion other international actors. Snyder points to the fact that interest in North Korea in American circles is a thing that started only in the 90s, after The Great Famine. Staack refers to some similarities between a potential reunification of the Korean peninsula and the German reunification. However, he dismisses most of the similarities due to the fact that two cases are essentially very different. Moreover, the international community must try more and engage into dialogue with North Korea. They insist, that even though they are viewed as the "villains" in this case, they must be invited to dialogue. Especially because by having them isolated, the other international actors are playing according to the North Koreans' wishes, to stay isolated.