

Promoting Dialogue between the U.S. and Asia Presents: Six-Party Talks, What does North Korea Really Want?

by
Mr. Ralph Cossa

Ralph Cossa: Thank you, John. It's a great pleasure to be here to see so many friendly faces, although whenever I come to Washington it reminds me of the pleasures of living in Honolulu, and after watching the weather out there today, I'm already getting ready to escape back home.

I'd like to start off my comments with a couple of basic assumptions, just so you know where I'm coming from on this argument. And then obviously in the Q&A session, you're more than welcome to challenge those assumptions, as well as challenging some of my other points. My first assumption is that the term "North Korea Expert" is an oxymoron. And anyone who claims to be one fits at least half of that description.

So, I will acknowledge that when I talk about what the North Koreans are up to, I'm guessing just like everyone else. Hopefully it's a somewhat educated guess based on years of experience, but ultimately, we're all guessing when we're trying to figure out exactly what North Korea is doing.

Basic Assumptions of North Korea's Behavior

A second basic assumption is that neither Kim Jong-il nor George Bush is crazy. Neither one of them is seeking a war. Both of them are pursuing what they perceive to be their own national interests, and this is a dangerous game in many respects. It's cer-

tainly a serious situation, but I do not believe that war is either inevitable or imminent, and I don't believe that any of the parties around the table want war. At the six-party talks, the one thing they all have in common is that none of them sees a military solution as a desirable solution, and it's one that they want to avoid.

I think that when you look at the situation, almost everyone agrees that one possible solution, perhaps even a desirable solution, is regime change. Some think that applies to Pyongyang, other say Washington, but the point is, in either case, no one can bank on that. And as a result, I think the only sensible strategies are ones that assume that there will not be a regime change and that we have to deal with the players that we have around the table. My own view is that as you look for solutions to this, you can't count on either regime changing, or the North Korean state collapsing or going away, even though no tears would be lost if that were to happen.

My other basic assumption is that the U.S. objective and the objective of at least five of the six parties in the six-party talks, which is a complete verifiable, irreversible freeze or end to North Korea's nuclear program, is the right objective. You may disagree with the way the U.S. is going about trying to get there and I have some disagreements, which I will certainly lay out. But, ultimately, this is the right objective and it serves no one's interest to see nuclear

weapons in North Korea, or to see them pursuing a nuclear weapon program with all the dangers to both stability on the peninsula and proliferation that are included in that. So, those are my basic assumptions as we go into this. The other basic assumption is that I don't know, I don't have a clue what North Korea really has. I don't know what kind of capabilities they have. I'm not even sure what they've acknowledged having. When you pick up the newspaper, it keeps talking about how North Korea has declared that it has nuclear weapons. I have found no reference to that. They talked about having a powerful deterrent; they talked about having a nuclear program or a deterrent program.

But when you put the question directly to someone in North Korea and say, "Are you saying you have nuclear weapons?" They say, "We will neither confirm or deny we have strategic ambiguity, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera." The reality is, as uncomfortable as this might be to acknowledge, we had better evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq than we have of nuclear weapons in North Korea. But, you have to assume that those weapons are there.

And when you build a strategy when you try to deal with the North Koreans, you have to go by what I call the "Two Percent Rule." There may only be a two percent chance that North Korea has nuclear weapons. And if there's a two percent chance of rain, you'll leave your umbrella at home. But, if there's a two percent chance that if you walk out this door over here, you're going to be shot, you're going to walk out that door over there. The same likelihood, but the consequences are so much greater. And I think that essentially, when we deal with the North Koreans, even though we really don't know what they have and this all could be a major bluff, you have to

assume that those weapons are there and that they have the ability to weaponize the material, that they have the ability to re-process, whether they have or not. And you have to go from that assumption as you're dealing with them, and it's certainly something that we have to hold in check.

So, those are my assumptions going into the discussion, as far as what they have and where they're going, and I'll talk a little bit more on what I think they're trying to achieve later.

I also believe that the multilateral approach makes sense. It makes sense for a variety of reasons, which I'll discuss in the course of my remarks. But, I think that's the only solution that's going to be pursued, even though obviously, within that multilateral setting, the two primary antagonists are the U.S. and North Korea, and at some point the two of us have to be talking to one another, regardless of the setting, in order to solve this problem.

Any Solution Must Include South Korea

To me, the main reason why it needs to be multilateral is because any solution that deals with peace on the Korean Peninsula has to have South Korea at the table. I think it's important; it's desirable to have Japan and China at the table as well. I think the Russian presence is not harmful. It could go either way, but it is absolutely essential that South Korea be at the table.

This is not only my belief, it's in fact stated U.S. policy since 1996 at the Cheju Summit between Clinton and Kim Young-sam, when essentially we put in writing that the U.S. would not pursue or accept any solution dealing with peace on the peninsula that did not involve South Korea as a key participant at the meeting.

You may recall back in 1994, when we did the original Agreed Framework. There was this great deal where we sat down with the North Koreans and agreed to a solution and then sent the Japanese and the South Koreans the bill. We discovered that this wasn't really the way to strengthen your alliances and to make your allies happy. I think one of the lessons learned from the '94 agreement also was that you had to have all the parties around the table. But, the main reason to have South Korea there is not financial.

The main reason is that it's South Korea's peninsula. It is their lives that are most at risk, and one strategy that the North Koreans have pursued for many years has been to isolate, to marginalize the South, to in effect say that the South is really not a legitimate state, that South Korea's leaders are puppets of the United States and therefore Pyongyang can cut a deal separately with us, and the South Korean puppets have to go along. This was unacceptable ten years ago. It's much more unacceptable today, given the blossoming democracy in South Korea.

For those reasons in particular, I think that any solution not only has to be agreeable to South Korea at the end of the day, but South Korea needs to be a party to the dialogue. I would argue that one of the reasons why North Korea would rather have a bilateral rather than multilateral security assurance is because they're not prepared to put South Korea's name on the piece of paper, and in fact want to gain the propaganda value of having something bilateral with the U.S. to prove their point that South Korea is not a legitimate interlocutor. And I'm pleased that Mr. Clinton, in his negotiations with North Korea, did not fall into that trap, and I'm pleased that Presi-

dent Bush, with his negotiations, also has refused to fall into that trap.

Basic Problem Is North Korea Pursuing Nuclear Weapons

So, those are my basic prejudices as we go into this. I think it's very useful, as we take a look at where we are today and where we want to go, to remind ourselves of how we got here and why we're in the position that we are. The basic problem is North Korea: it's North Korea pursuing a nuclear weapons program.

Now it's become very convenient, particularly if you have the philosophy of always blaming America first to say, "Well, the Bush administration made them do it." I believe that Bush's policies toward North Korea have not been particularly helpful. I had written at the time and continue to believe that the "axis of evil" speech was not a very savvy speech, if your purpose was building international relations. Of course, the purpose of that speech was not to build international relations, it was to sell missile defense. And whether it worked that way or not remains to be seen, but obviously it was a problem.

But, it's also very clear that the North Koreans have been pursuing nuclear weapons and have seen the value of nuclear weapons for at least the last 10 or 12 years. And at the same time that they were welcoming Madeline Albright to Pyongyang, and at the same time they were welcoming Kim Dae-jung to Pyongyang, at the same time they were doing all these other things in the late '90s, they were also still acquiring the uranium enrichment program and finding other ways to pursue nuclear weapons.

Some of our policies in the last year or two and the examples of what happened in Iraq

may have caused them to accelerate, may have caused them to become convinced that they really did need this. But, the ultimate goal of pursuing nuclear weapons and the decision to cheat, not only on the agreed framework, but also on the North-South 1992 De-nuclearization Agreement and also on their IAEA and NPT commitments, started well before the Bush administration, and I think we're still dealing with that.

It's also important to note that, unlike their press clippings, Jim Kelly, the assistant secretary of state, went to Pyongyang last October, a year ago October, he essentially laid on the table to the North Koreans that before the Bush administration was ready to move forward with the North, he told the North privately that there was this little matter of them cheating on their previous agreements that had to be dealt with. If you think back to then, if you recall back what happened, Kelly had what we later learned to be a very contentious meeting in Pyongyang, but when he left North Korea and went to Seoul and then to Tokyo to debrief our partners in the event, his only comment to the press was it was a useful meeting, very candid—which means contentious, but potentially useful.

North Koreans Miss Opportunities

The North Koreans understand what we want, we understand where they're going, and the door is open for continued dialogue, Kelly reported. There was a window of opportunity at that point where the North Koreans could have allowed diplomacy to work. They choose to allow that window to close. I've argued in the past that North Korea never misses an opportunity to miss an opportunity, and I think that three or four times since October they've had opportunities to move forward, and in each case

have missed that and have chosen instead to try to escalate the situation.

The second major opportunity that the North Koreans had was in January of this year when the TCOG, the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group meeting occurred in Washington, involving Japan, South Korea and the United States, and I don't think people give enough credit in this regard to Japanese diplomacy. But, when the three went into that meeting, the U.S. was too hard and the South Koreans were too soft and the Japanese were right in the middle.

When they came out of that meeting, they were all pretty well in lockstep, and I think there was some effective Japanese diplomacy in convincing the U.S. it needed to at least appear to be a little bit more open and flexible, and the South Koreans that they needed to be a little bit harder and firmer in dealing with North Korea. At that point, the U.S. did its famous "we still refuse to negotiate, but we're willing to talk." There's sort of the redefinition, which opened the door for discussions and put into writing, in the TCOG statement, the president's earlier verbal assurances that the U.S. had no intention of invading North Korea.

So, again, if the North Koreans were looking for an opportunity to say, "Okay, let's sit down and talk, let's try to move forward," this provided them with another window of opportunity. Within 48 hours the North Koreans announced that they were formally withdrawing from the NPT. They had already thrown out the IAEA inspectors several months earlier, but they hadn't taken that last step.

What they also did was validate the Bush administration's argument, because from the first day, President Bush had been say-

ing, “We seek a diplomatic solution, we see military force as a last option.” But it has to be a multilateral solution, not a bi-lateral solution, for many of the reasons that I mentioned earlier. This is a global problem; it’s not just a problem with the U.S. Well, until the North Koreans walked out of the NPT you might have made the argument that it was a problem just for the U.S. When they walked out of the NPT, that solidified that it was now an international problem.

It raised the stakes. It gave just cause for the next step to be a UN Security Council meeting, something that neither the South Koreans nor the Chinese nor the Russians and others were particularly eager to see. But, in a sense, the North Koreans, by being North Koreans, by deciding to be confrontational rather than challenging us to take yes for an answer—which would have been the hardest strategy for the Bush administration to deal with—they continued to act true to form and as a result created and solidified the fact that this was now an international, multilateral incident that required not just the U.S. response, but a response by all of North Korea’s neighbors, and in fact by the international community.

I think a variety of changes since that time have essentially convinced the North Koreans that they’ve gotten about as much mileage as they could get and do about as much damage to their own interests as they could do by continuing to refuse to participate in the multilateral approach. To me, it’s no accident that the Chinese officially adopted and endorsed a multilateral dialogue 24 hours after the new South Korean government announced that it supported and indeed demanded a multilateral dialogue with South Korea at the table.

This was right after Roh Moo-hyun was inaugurated in late February and early March. And I think that was, in fact, one of the turning points where the North Koreans then started seeking different formulas. And many of us, myself included, were approached by the North Koreans during that period in March and April saying, “Okay, how can we do this? What is the minimum number of countries we can keep at the table? How can we allow the South Koreans in but keep those Japanese out? And how do we deal with the Chinese?” And even at one point, you may recall approaching the Russians and asking them if they would host the talks, in a very transparent effort to play China against Russia.

The Russians were obviously too smart to fall into that trap and said, “We’d like to be part of the table, thank you very much, but we’ll let the Chinese continue to host it.” All of that got to where we were in August, which was the first round of the six-party talks, which I don’t think anyone was surprised went nowhere. It was essentially the throat-clearing, posturing talks. I think the North Koreans came out of it understanding that they needed to go into a second round. They also needed to analyze what the U.S. actually said at the talks, because again, there was some flexibility put forth by the U.S. side, assurances by Jim Kelly, according to the Chinese.

The U.S. has actually never reported officially what it said at the six-party talks, but the Chinese gave a press conference and said that Kelly’s comments included a pledge not to invade, not to pursue regime change, to seek a diplomatic solution, et cetera, et cetera, and also to accept the phased approach. One of the previous U.S. demands was the quid pro quo. It was all quids before any quos. First the North Koreans had to do everything then we’d

start talking. Here we've at least acknowledged that we can phase things in, but the first step, the first absolute mandatory step, is for the North Koreans to agree to freeze and halt their nuclear program.

My own sense is that once the North Koreans see how much the Chinese had at stake in this game diplomatically, how much China's reputation is now becoming tied in to moving this process forward, they decided that even though the round of talks was in their interest, they would hold out until they could see how much they could get from the Chinese to come to the next round of talks. And when the parliamentary leader, Wu Bangguo went to Pyongyang last month, he brought with him a very generous economic package and all sorts of additional incentives. There were rumors in the Japanese press - I have trouble sometimes believing everything I read in the Japanese press, but there were certainly rumors that said that among the Chinese inducements was 500,000 tons of fuel which, not coincidentally, is exactly how much we stopped giving them, "we" being the KEDO partners, when that agreement failed.

So, one of the North Koreans' traits is even if something is in their interest, if they think you want it more than them they're going to insist that you bribe them in order to come to the table. It used to be the briber of first choice was South Korea. It's become extremely difficult now for South Korea to do that, all of the people who are proficient in bribery in South Korea are now either in jail or on their way to jail. So, that sort of put a damper on that South Korean approach. And clearly President Roh has pledged greater transparency in dealing with the North Koreans. With essentially a hostile legislature, he has very little flexibility in how much he can offer.

So, I think what we're now doing is moving into, hopefully, the next round of talks. A lot of eyes will be watching what the U.S. says, what the U.S. does.

I found it somewhat amusing as I read the news reports that were coming out of President Bush's statement in Bangkok at the APEC meeting when he said that the U.S. was prepared to provide some type of security assurances and was committed to following a diplomatic solution. And this was broadcasted in every newspaper that I read as a "shift" in U.S. policy, while the reality is that since the first day the U.S. has said that it preferred a diplomatic solution. And for at least the last four months it has been announced U.S. policy that we would prepare to provide written assurances. One of, I think, the saddest things that has occurred, not only in this particular crisis or situation, but in the conduct of American foreign policy in general, is that in the old days, when the secretary of state announced something, people understood that that was U.S. foreign policy.

Today when the secretary of state announces something, he thinks he's announcing U.S. foreign policy and everyone else in the world, including many skeptics in the U.S. says, "Well, that's what Colin Powell thinks, but I wonder if Bush really believes that and whether he's going to really support it." And to me, the even more depressing thing is, after President Bush announced this in Bangkok and essentially said, "Yes, what Colin Powell has been telling you for the last four months really is my policy and I'm really behind it." Half the people thought that this was now a new policy as opposed to a confirmation of what we'd been saying, and the other half still didn't believe it. I've just spent the last two weeks in Japan and in Korea, and when I say, "Here's U.S. policy, as stated by the

president.” They say, “Well, yes, he said that just to make Colin Powell happy, but we really know he doesn’t believe it. And when John Bolton opens his mouth, that’s when the real Bush speaks.” This is a serious problem in U.S. credibility in dealing with East Asia. There is a sense that U.S. foreign policy is in shambles. And yet, when you talk with the Japanese, they will tell you that U.S.-Japan relations have never been better.

I just ran a conference in Tokyo that was a trilateral U.S., Japan, China conference. This is the seventh year of a program that we have been doing. At this meeting, for I think the first time, both the Japanese and the Chinese were saying our relations with the United States have never been better. Not only that, neither one felt threatened by the fact that the other one was also saying that. That to me shows that we’ve actually had a somewhat successful foreign policy in East Asia, at least in dealing with the two main players, with Japan and with China. And yet, the appearance of U.S. foreign policy is, as someone said, “It’s sort of like Wagner’s music. It’s not as bad as it sounds,” and that’s what we’re dealing with when we look at the policy.

Five Countries Agree on Stance Toward North Korea

I think the real success story has been the ability to at least get five out of the six members of the six-party talks talking from the same sheet of music and saying the same things as far as what our basic demand is from North Korea and that’s the full, verifiable, irreversible end to the nuclear weapons program. And I don’t think this happened by accident. I keep hearing people tell me that Bush doesn’t have a foreign policy, but really what that normally means is A, you don’t understand it, or B,

you don’t agree with it; normally the latter. But we didn’t get to have those five countries all agreeing to an approach by accident.

There was a lot of, I think, very successful, very hard diplomatic work. Now, I think that we could have done things a lot better, and we could have done things a lot earlier, and we could have done things prior to last October that would have made everything work smoothly as well. I don’t mean to come across as either an apologist or a cheerleader for the way we’ve handled the situation in North Korea, but it hasn’t been all that inept either. In fact, I think as compared to our policy in the Middle East and other places, it’s been actually fairly successful in dealing with North Korea and not trying to validate to North Korea their previous practice that bad behavior and blackmail will be rewarded.

Now, the reality is at some point they will be rewarded. The question is not if, but when. We’ve at least come to the conclusion that we can’t reward them in advance anymore. They have to at least demonstrate that they’re willing to do things and have verification that they’re willing to do things before the rewards start. And that, to me, is at least a step in the right direction.

South Korean Credibility Prerequisite to Future Success

One of the prerequisites to success of the future; I think first and foremost the major prerequisite is South Korean credibility. South Korea has to stand firm in dealing with the North. Right now the South Koreans are sending, in my view, very mixed signals to North Korea. They have stated – and I met with the national security advisor just a couple of days ago, who reinforced his early public comments – that if the

North Koreans go down the nuclear path, South Korea will cut off all aid and all cooperation with North Korea. That's a very serious statement. It's a statement that he seems to believe. The question is, A, do the North Koreans believe it and B, how much more proof does South Korea they need? The North Koreans have already told us they've done all of these things that have violated their agreement with South Korea. At some point, we have to say, "Here are the red lines." It may not be very smart. It may prove counterproductive to announce red lines in advance, but at least privately you have to make sure the other guy knows where those red lines are and what's going to trigger that response.

It's not clear to me that the South Korea has done that. It's also not clear to me that the U.S., South Korea, Japan, China and Russia have sat down and said, "Here's what we need to do if the talks fail. Here's what we need to do if at the end of the day, after we provide all these inducements, after we express our willingness to put our name on the line, the North Koreans say, 'Not good enough,' and detonate a nuclear weapon or declare themselves a nuclear weapon state." That, to me, is the next step that is still needed. Obviously, I would hope that it's going today, but I don't have a great deal of assurance that it is. Maybe we're once again being effective at keeping a secret. That would be somewhat out of character, but I would hope that perhaps that's true.

As far as the next round of talks are concerned, I don't expect that there will be any major breakthroughs. It's certainly not going to be a final solution. Everyone, to include again, the U.S. has said publicly, this is going to be a long, difficult process. But, in my own opinion, the talks will have failed if, at the end of the next time we sit down, we haven't at least gotten an agree-

ment from North Korea to freeze their current activities. It may not be a verifiable agreement, but at least the statement and principle that as long as the talks are going on, A, we won't attack them and B, they won't make matters worst. And if we can't at least reach that, then it raises the question of whether or not the North Koreans are just really playing for time and are just stalling so that they can do more reprocessing and build more little bombs in their basements somewhere, and that's not going to serve anyone's long term interest.

Let me stop there and then we'll open it up for a Q&A later. Thank you.

Naoyuki Agawa: I'm very happy to be here and thank you very much for Dr. Ikenberry's very generous introduction at the beginning of this seminar. You may have noticed that he didn't mention anything about my expertise on Korea, because I don't know anything about Korea. So I talked to some of my colleagues at the embassy who do Korea and asked if I should accept the invitation to speak here today and they said I should. They have decided that way perhaps because I have no risk of disclosing any secret information.

But, having said that, perhaps the only credential that I have about talking about this subject matter is that as press secretary, I have often talked about North Korean issues with Ambassador Kato and other colleagues of mine at the embassy. And from that perspective, perhaps I could report to you the sense of the embassy here on the Korea issue, collectively. And by the way, these are solely my own personal views, which should not be attributed to the Japanese government. In any event, I'd like to give my sense of what's happening based upon my conversation with my colleagues at the embassy.

Status Quo Will Continue for a Long Time

I have listened to Mr. Cossa and I think I completely agree with everything that he said. My basic message is that I don't think anything will change very dramatically in the next year or so. I think the status quo will continue for a long time to come.

One thing that I noticed doing press conferences at the embassy is that the press people want to believe that some concrete result will come out of the next six-party talks. They need something new. They need something important. They need something drastically different from the past. And unfortunately, the news doesn't happen only because the news people want to have a news item.

I think things will go on unchanged with lots of difficulties. I believe that the things will remain roughly about the same for a long time to come for several reasons. One is that it seems that North Korea doesn't have any reason to hurry up the thing at the moment. I don't think we have seen, as Mr. Cossa said, any material improvement or deterioration, with respect to their nuclear program in the recent past. Yes, they say things, but I don't think that there is anything substantive there. And from the North Korean point of view, as Mr. Cossa said, and I'm guessing here, they may think: "Why do you have to hurry? The Bush administration doesn't seem to be that popular. There may be a new democratic administration next year; why don't you just wait?"

South Korea's position on this issue is something that I don't fully understand. I will defer to Dr. Lee's wisdom about that and ask her to enlighten us about what's happening in South Korea. But, at least one

thing is certain. That is, South Korea doesn't seem to be in a very strong position right now to take any strong initiative.

The United States, although the president of the United States seems to have softened its position by saying he is willing to issue some kind of security assurance, I think it's a tactical change and not a major strategic change. I don't think anything has changed, and I suspect that there's still a lot of discussion within the administration as to how to deal with North Korea. Therefore, I don't think they're in the position to hurry up and do something either.

Japan, frankly, doesn't have any leverage on this matter other than conducting good diplomacy that you kindly mentioned and I will send a message to my colleagues. As I understand the six-party talks, the Japanese diplomats have played a very constructive role. Particularly, Japan is the closest to the American administration in terms of what message to send to the North Koreans. But, there is this abduction issue on the part of the Japanese, and I don't think that we have any easy solution to that. And as the ambassador has often said, he doesn't know how the next six-party talks will evolve, but we do know that the United States and Japan in particular are very close together in that the ultimate package should include resolution of the abduction issue. We don't know anything about Russia, but it's all right to have Russia in the party.

Japan Did Not Have Any Sense of Danger for Past 50 Years

Let me just touch upon the different perspectives on this, and that is the North Korean impact on Japan, because I'm representing Japan and I'd like to hear Dr. Lee talk about South Korean domestic issues as well. I think this whole North

Korean thing, as Mr. Cossa went over the history of it, has had major impact on the psyche of the Japanese people. It is strange to say that we didn't have the sense of any clear and present danger for the past 50 years. This is because although we did have a Soviet threat to the North throughout the Korean and Cold War period, we didn't feel it. This was partly because I think the Soviet threat was taken care of by the Americans. We didn't do anything about it. But, for the first time in our vicinity, we have had missiles flying over our heads, we have had suspicious ships coming in and out, and we have had the abduction issue. And this is the first time really that the Japanese, after the war, had the sense of clear and present danger. But the fear that one of your loved ones could be abducted all of a sudden from our coast was a major, major change in psyche. And therefore, I think that has impacted the way in which we view not only the North Korea situation, but the whole security issue as well - for instance, the Iraqi issue.

One of the reasons I think the Japanese, although fairly critical about the Bush war in Iraq, is more close in position to the United States than Europe is the fact that we do get impacted by what we see in the North Korean situation. One indication of that is the fact that the head of the socialist party, Ms. Doi, failed to be reelected. And that happened partly because she was very close to the North Korean position and she denied that anything like abduction took place. So, overall, I think that if we were to take a longer view of the things, this change in the Japanese framework of mind with respect to security issues is significant. The North Korean threat, that is to say, is going to have a long-term impact upon the East Asian situation.

I do not know how the Chinese friends of ours will look at it. I don't know how the Korean friends of ours will look at it. But, ultimately, that's one factor that we have to deal with and I don't think that that's a bad thing. I think it's a good thing, from my perspective. But, that may be debatable.

I will yield to Dr. Lee for further comments. Thank you.

Sook-jong Lee: Thank you, Mr. Agawa and thank you Mr. Cossa for the very succinct presentations.

Mr. Cossa has claimed that every North Korean expert is just guessing, so even North Korean experts say such a thing. I'm not a North Korean expert, and so I don't know what to say. Maybe Kim Jong-il himself doesn't know what he really wants from the six-party talks or his dangerous game in this stalemate to nuclear crisis. I want to push a little bit before I raise questions. I absolutely agree with all the assumptions Mr. Cossa has laid up, but I want to just make one comment. I'm not sure whether the South Korean government really appreciates the American effort to include South Korea to the table negotiating with North Korea.

Kim Young-sam's government in the past strongly protested against the 1994 U.S. support to North Korea by passing South Korea and Mr. Cossa has mentioned USA has learned a lesson that South Korea of course, naturally and logically, has to be part of any security dialogue with North Korea, even if the USA leads the discussion. But, as you may recall, in the early spring, right after the Roh Moo-hyun government was sworn in and the talks of expanding, talks to include China first, and then Korea and Japan, the first reaction from the South Korean government was

that, “Well, we cannot delay that just to emphasize on this bilateral issue, bilateral talk, just for the sake of success, just to cajole North Korea to the negotiation table.”

Theories on North Korea

So, at that moment, even now, I’m not sure that the South Korean government is really appreciating that kind of American strategy to change the format to multilateral talks. Since the title of this talk was *Six-Party Talks: What Does North Korea Really Want?* I want to hear more about the prospect of a six-party talks from Mr. Cossa, so let me give these theories. I’m saying “theories,” because in Korea security experts in North Korea are so divisive; they are very much divided. So, there are differing interpretations of North Korea’s motive. The Kim Jong-il motive is like that.

North Korea has a nearly difficult situation economically. Many poor kids are dying for famine and many other Koreans are fleeing to the borders of China. And it’s a very appalling situation, so therefore they need the money to solve the famine issue and to start the economic development. So, as long as the USA promises security, they’ll just open up and then they will give up the nuclear card. So, therefore the nuclear program is just a negotiating card. They’re not interested in really building nuclear weapons.

Now, there’s a typical pro-sunshine argument in Korea. If it’s the truth, if their arguments are true and logical from the six-party talks, as all six parties are with changing the basic approach of the Bush administration, they are working on providing the written form of a security guarantee to North Korea. So therefore, if it can work out, North Korea will say, “Okay, we’ll

accept the deal,” and they say, “The USA is promising our regime stability, we’re going to give up the nuclear program.” That’s nice too, and very optimistic, and I hope that can be our future.

But, the past North Korean records were not good, as Mr. Cossa mentioned. North Korea just escalated tensions even though there was a good chance in October 2002 and January of this year. There’s no guarantee in the coming six-party talks that North Korea couldn’t just come up with a positive attitude because of this security thing. That’s the kind of suspicion we’re dealing with. Then what’s the conservative’s argument in the petition? They’re saying that North Korea’s real motive is having nuclear weapons no matter what. So, they already starting very secretly, they’re preparing nuclear bombs, so therefore they all lied about it and broke the deal with South Korea and the agreed framework, and so forth. And why did they want it? Because they think it deters power from any threat from the West, especially from USA, and also, if North Korea has nuclear weapons, it’s good for them to have the upper hand in any unification process.

South Korea is becoming a pacifist these days. Let’s say that North Korea has a nuclear weapon, I guess the South Korean side will appease more than now. So, therefore, the conservatives will argue that although the North Koreans accept a written form of the security guarantees, like a non-aggression pact in the six-party talks, they will soon break it, saying, “We cannot stand up to accompanying a very intrusive inspection process, because it is broaching our sense of a nation of sovereignty.”

Big Gap Between Liberal and Conservative Arguments

And then, of course, the USA and other parties will stop economic aid, but still North Korea will gain very important things, saying that if there is a non-aggression pact, even in a multilateral form, North Korea will, in a legitimate situation, say that since we had a non-aggression pact and we are recognizing each other, why are U.S. forces in South Korea necessary? So, they may link this stationing of U.S. forces in South Korea with a non-aggression pact. These are the conservative arguments. Therefore, there is a huge gap between liberal arguments and conservative arguments.

So, my question to Mr. Cossa is: where do you stand, in between or on either side of that, and if so, what is your rationale? Why are you supporting specific arguments?

Mr. Cossa has raised this issue of the South Korea's credibility because both the Kim Dae-jung government and the Roh Moo-hyun government have pursued the unilateral engagement policy with North Korea. And therefore, they have sent mixed signal. One of the concerns for many people, including myself, is does South Korea really have a red line? "Red line," many key top officials have mentioned that.

Let's say if North Korea tested nuclear bombing, South Korean top officials vowed to stop economic aid immediately. Mr. Cossa asked whether North Korea would believe that. My question is whether South Korean themselves would believe that. In current politics of deep division, progressives would like to oppose stopping of humanitarian aid and South Korea's joining to coercive pressure with other parties of the six-party talks arguing that these hostile policies would escalate more tensions in the

Korea Peninsula. However, my guess is that North Korea is not that stupid demonstrating the nuclear test publicly. South Korean public opinion is in a delicate situation of equilibrium. North Korea would not want to destabilize this equilibrium so that an alarmed public will subscribe much tougher policies against the North.

Conservatives wouldn't tolerate it if North Korea were going for the test. And, as you know, the majority of the National Assembly is under the hand of the opposition party. But, of course, we have a coming election next April. Who knows? My guess is that the opposition party will remain the majority party as voters are disillusioned with recent scandals revealing corruption among the president's key aids. If that's the case, there'll be very strong criticism and domestic pressure for the South Korean government to stop aid. That's a very likeable situation.

Kim Jong-il's Ambiguous Tactics

I think Kim Jong-il will take a tactic of ambiguity again without testing, but with some evidences that will make other countries believe North Korea is a virtual nuclear state. As for the timing for resolution of North Korea's nuclear problem, North Korea would think they can buy time since hawks in the Bush administration will be facing the Iraqi quagmire and coming election. They are likely to expect that the USA will make a further concession. So, until next summer or fall, talks are likely to be continued but without a major breakthrough. Some people expect that President Bush will take a much tougher policy against North Korea if he is reelected. But, I want to ask to Mr. Cossa: Does the USA have a red line? It seems to me they don't. Maybe selling the nuclear materials to terrorist countries can be their red line, but

how can we prove it? North Korea wouldn't be that stupid to sell those materials to obvious terrorist groups.

My question is: it's been more than a year since we've been into this second nuclear crisis posed by North Korea, but what have we done? We have done nothing. The USA has been concerned too much with the forms and procedures of negotiation. But, for me, whether the form should be bilateral talks or multilateral talks doesn't matter. The format is not important. The important thing is we have to have a road map or a substantive way of solving the problem. But, does the Bush administration have it? I don't think so.

Look at the Iraqi case. The White House and Pentagon and CIA and NSC, they are all divided up among one another and there is a division within one agency. If that's the case for Iraq, it may be more so in case of North Korea. Worse is that North Korea does not have their immediate attention at all. They have continued neglecting policy toward the Korean Peninsula. My question to Mr. Cossa is that well, this new argument of "phased approach" or "sequencing policy" or whatever: do you really think there is a substantive road map in the Bush administration?

Thank you.

Q&A

John Ikenberry: Well, we're going to open it up now and I know that Ralph wants to respond, but I'm going to let him weave his response in to our two discussants into his response to you. So, just let us know if you want to ask a question or make a comment and introduce yourself and we'll take it from there.

Questioner: I'd like to follow up on Dr. Lee's comments and ask Ralph if your basic assumption is that the four parties plus the United States all accept as principle, number one, complete, irreversible, verifiable? And my question is, is that more than just rhetoric? Because I think Dr. Lee correctly points out that in terms of the bottom line, in the case of South Korea for example, maybe the least-worst option is quiet, let them be a nuclear state. For the United States, maybe the least-best option is quiet, let them be a nuclear state.

In fact, a couple years ago on TV, Colin Powell said, "Well, they have one or two more bombs, what's the big deal?" Now, that was not an official statement of U.S. policy, it was in a dialogue with a journalist, but I think it did reflect, perhaps, the notion that there are worse things in life, like a war. And China, for example: they don't want refugees, they don't want a collapse in the regime, maybe the least worst option for them is a quiet, nuclear North Korea.

So, it's very easy to say the number one objective; Roh Moo-hyun says it's unacceptable. We all say unacceptable. But, there are a lot of other things that may be more unacceptable and that's where I'm wondering if there's any reason for optimism of any progress, any reason for North Korea to do a damn thing to help move this process forward?

Ikenberry: Watch it Ralph, that's the big question, so we can't avoid that one.

Cossa: All right. Thanks Joe for starting off with an easy one. But, we'll sort of build from there and I'll address some of Dr. Lee's comments as I talk about that.

In Search of the Least Worst Solution for North Korea

First of all, the thing that I most agree with you on is the implication that there is no good solution. We, as Americans, like to find the ideal solution and then apply it. We're all in search for the least worst solution and it may be that the least worst solution is accepting North Korea as a de facto nuclear state, as long as they don't declare it and push it.

Red Lines for the North Korea Situation

I do think that there are some red lines. I think if the North Koreans were foolish enough to conduct a test—and I agree it would be foolish and they're probably smarter than that—the U.S. would have no option other than to take it to the Security Council, and the South Koreans and Chinese would have no option other than to accept and support sanctions, and then regime change would, in fact, become the official policy and they would put enough pressure on North Korea to try to make it essentially “cry uncle.” That is not the least worst option, but it may be an inevitable option if the North Koreans push it to that degree, and I think a lot of people have spent a lot of time explaining to the North Koreans that that is a red line, and if you go over it, we can't help you anymore, and I think the Chinese and the Russians have both told them that.

I think it's also a red line for the U.S., if we catch them trying to export fissile material or nuclear weapons. And when we talk about negotiating and verification, the pressure is then on us to try to come up with a 100 percent solution, which nobody can envision. But, when you talk about exporting, the North Koreans have to be 100 percent sure that they're not going to get

caught, because the consequences for them if they export are very high.

So, I disagree with those people who say the North Koreans, if they have it, will sell it. Again, I think that they understand that that's a red line. But, they've proven me wrong in the past, and they've proven every person in this room that deals with North Korea wrong at least once or twice in the past, and they may be dumb enough to do that. But, if those situations occur, I think that puts us down the slippery slope toward sanctions and I think they're inevitable and there will then be a lot of pressure put on the North Koreans. Beyond that, I don't think that anyone believes that allowing North Korea to become a de facto nuclear state is a long-term solution.

I also don't believe that anyone is dealing with this situation right now with a great sense of urgency, because they all understand that nobody is going to initiate a war and there are certain built-in locks to how far you're going to go. But I think there still is a belief in the U.S. and I think a belief in South Korea and China that they can, in fact, tighten the screws enough on the North Koreans that ultimately they're going to sit down and negotiate and will come up with some kind of an agreement which they will then try to cheat on again, and we'll sort of repeat this cycle. But hopefully, we will make it harder for them to cheat the next time—and more expensive with some consequences if they get caught. And that will be the least-worst solution that ultimately we all settle on.

I don't know that that fully answers your question, but it's my best guess.

Ikenberry: Do either of our discussants want add anything?

Agawa: I agree with Mr. Cossa and I think ultimately, the solution is regime change. And nobody talks about it, but I think it's obvious. But, the question is how soon, and I don't think anybody is in a hurry to forcefully bring that to take place. And therefore, as I said, I think the status quo will continue. I think that the Chinese, in particular, do want the North Koreans to behave more logically and better, but I don't think they are interested in doing anything further to change that regime.

So, that having been said, I think that this very negligent situation will continue unless we see the clear crossing of red line or unless the North Korean situation all of a sudden deteriorates or something. Unless that happens, I think things will continue to be as they are, at least until the next election or thereabouts.

North Korea Has Penchant for Survival

Lee: It's amazing to hear that still, in the U.S., many security experts are expecting regime change, either by coup or internal collapse. But I guess consensus among North Korean experts in Korea and Japan is that regime change is not going to happen without external interference. North Korea has proven that they can survive during a harsh situation, on and on. And right now, South Korea is spending economic exchanges and trying to build up factory sides. I think some U.S. experts are trying to rationalize why they are not taking any action, either pressuring North Korea together with allies, or just to engage in serious dialogue. They are not choosing either of them, in my opinion, and instead are just idly waiting for possible regime change? That's nonsense for me. So, I don't know.

Every Korean Dreams About Reunification

Cossa: I mention in the beginning that A, I don't believe that the U.S. policy right now is to pursue regime change, as much as everyone would like to see it. I don't think that that's the intended course. And I think that if we were trying to do that, it would not be very smart. But, on the other hand, I think that everyone realizes that ultimately, the solution on the Korean Peninsula - every Korean dreams about reunification.

I don't think when people in South Korea go to bed at night they dream about being a United Korea under Kim Jong-Il; they dream of the United Korea where North Korea has gone away. That's more than regime change, that's regime dissolution. That's a North Korean collapse. We just hope that somehow or other they will peacefully and quietly die in their sleep as opposed to it being an ugly event.

Lee: Mr. Cossa, maybe the older Koreans would have such a nighttime dream, but for the younger Koreans, they say, "This is okay, we don't have any problem, just as long as the Kim Jong-il regime and South Korea coexist without any war."

Cossa: And I think that the least worst solution is to have that coexistence.

I wanted to mention one other point, because as I said, I agree very much with Dr. Lee that a North Korean test would really be counterproductive and would be foolish. But, I attended a meeting here not too long ago with a large group of American experts, and one of them made the counterargument that North Korea, in August or September, if they thought the race for president in the U.S. was close, they could demonstrate the ineffectiveness of U.S. policy by con-

ducting a nuclear test, and would do that in order to demonstrate how terrible the Bush administration policy is, and help to prompt Bush's defeat.

Not Likely that North Korea Will Test Nuclear Weapons in the Next Year

I was not particularly convinced with that argument and continue to argue my way, but I took a vote of 30 some people in the room, all of whom were fairly savvy specialists on East Asia security, if not on North Korea, and two-thirds of them answered the question, "Will North Korea test in the next year?" with "Yes." So, our view that they won't is not a universal view. And my argument is that, while I don't believe that it's likely, I certainly hope that the U.S., South Korea and the others are in fact taking a look at what to do if this occurs, because it's not so outlandish a possibility that we shouldn't be trying to prepare in advance.

Questioner: I had two comments, the first on the discussion of the collapse of North Korea. I'd just say Harry Truman, after World War II, because of the lack of contingency planning for Pearl Harbor, set up the CIA. They had the three great failures, if we borrow from our Chinese friends. September 11th was one, of course, the other was the nuclear testing on the Indian Subcontinent, and the third was the collapse of the Soviet Union. If we had been in a conference in 1987, as late as that, no one would have predicted what has happened.

So, I would just say I don't know when North Korea will collapse, or what will happen, but I think it's also foolish not to be planning for humanitarian or security issues ahead of time. Because, what the

Soviet Union taught us is that the surprising can happen.

On the discussions about American foreign policy, I just wanted to add some perspectives from congress. You mentioned earlier Colin Powell and whether he spoke for the U.S.; while our constitution was set up where treaties are ratified by the senate, budget and financial issues are started in the house. I think in a discussion of whether President Bush wins next year's reelection or whether it's Howard Dean, equally important is who controls the congress. And if you look at the retirement of four southern Democratic senators and maybe five, and you look at the redistricting plan for house seats in Texas, it seems very apparent there will be a republican congress no matter who's president.

My comment is, in my workings with Congress, I think on the question of a non-aggression treaty, one reason, as Dr. Lee mentioned, that the Bush administration didn't pursue a non-aggression treaty is fear that bilateral agreements could delegitimize Seoul. And the second is: would a non-aggression treaty have passed the U.S. Senate? Neither President George Bush nor President Howard Dean, if he becomes president, wants to walk in the steps of Woodrow Wilson, who had the greatest foreign policy failure, probably of the presidency, and suffered a stroke when the U.S. Senate turned down the Treaty of Versailles. I also find use that maybe the solution will be paying off North Korea later, after a settlement, rather than before. I also question whether a republican congress with a republican president would vote for funding if they viewed this as a payoff to North Korea.

So, I think people looking at the U.S. election process as a means of trying to solve

the North Korea problem should also consider the congressional elections as well as the presidential. Thank you.

Ikenberry: The gentleman here?

Questioner: North Korea recently agreed to take part in the six-party talks. My question is very short and simple: why did Kim Jong-il change his mind? The available information is very limited, almost non-existent, and therefore, like Ralph said at the outset, the only thing we can do is to guess. And what I do very often under this kind of situation is to try to think what would I do if I were in their shoes? And here's what I might think if I were Kim Jong-il: I want more security and aid. How can I do it?

Security arrangements, bilateral or security arrangements with the United States could be canceled anytime unilaterally by this administration. So, it might be a better idea for me to have other major regional powers involved in the framework so that they can serve as a safeguard against unilateral actions by the United States later. And, in addition to that, by involving many parties, maybe, hopefully, the abduction issue can be excluded from the larger framework among the six countries, and Japanese aid will be included in the framework, so this is a win-win situation for me.

So, my real question is: could the six-party talks could be a trap, not for North Koreans, but for the United States and Japan as well? What do you think?

North Koreans Realized Insistence on Bilateral Talks Was Counterproductive

Cossa: Well, hopefully we'll be smart enough not to have it that way. If I tried to think like Kim Jong-il, the first thing I

would ask is whether that house that we gave to former Philippine President Marcos in Hawaii was still available for rent and figure out how to get out of town. But, I think that the North Koreans came to the conclusion that their old tactic of trying to escalate and trying to force the U.S. into a bilateral agreement wasn't working anymore. It was proving counterproductive. First, they were running out of room to escalate without it becoming counterproductive, and secondly, what we were doing was driving the U.S. and China and everything closer together. So, they figure if they come to the talks, they may be able to find ways to divide us again. And I think that's the real danger, not that they're going to somehow trick us into a deal, because again, for the deal to work the congress has to buy it, and that means it's going to have very strict verification and other things.

But, I think that they see this as a way to play divide and conquer, which is what they've always tried to do and also, my own sense is that the Chinese are paying them to come, and that's sort of reinforcing the bad behavior in some respects, but at least getting them to the table. They have nothing to lose by sitting down. Whether in the final analysis they're going to be willing to negotiate away their nuclear program is the big question. And that's one of the other questions that Dr. Lee had asked me is what do I believe: whether or not the nuclear weapon is a bargaining chip, or something that they see as essential.

The answer, first of all, is that I don't know. Secondly, it may not matter, because if they only think it's a bargaining chip, but they think it's a good bargaining chip, then they're going to continue to hedge their bets and cheat. And either way, at the end of the day they're going to have a secret nuclear program.

U.S. Must Convince North Korea that Negatives Outweigh Positives

The solution is that we have to convince North Korea that the negatives associated with having nuclear weapons outweigh the positives. It is going to decrease their security to pursue nuclear weapons. And the only way we can do that is to have enough military, political, and economic consequences to prevent them or to convince them that they can't go down that road. If we can do that, then they will negotiate. If we don't, they're not going to do that. And as I've argued, I think even after they've done that, they're going to try to find another way to cheat or hedge their bets, but at least we will have temporarily solved the problem.

Bill Perry, at one time when he was criticized for the agreed framework, said, "Hey, it bought us eight years. I'll take another eight years, wouldn't you?" And that may be ultimately what we end up with.

Ikenberry: Dr. Lee, did you have another response?

Lee: I don't think North Korea chose to participate in the six-party talks because they saw a win-win situation. They had to because of a strong position of the USA saying that if you want to talk to us, you have to sit at the table, the larger table inviting more neighboring countries. And secondly, because China pressed North Korea strongly to be at the table. And I just read in the newspaper that even now, North Korea wants to distinguish the level of a partnership among five parties, saying that, "Okay, we want a security pact, a non-aggression security pact as a cosigner between North Korea and the USA, and the remaining four countries, including South Korea, Japan and Russia as a witness."

Obviously the USA declined saying that the U.S. is not going to work on that with distinguishing the five parties. Still, they want some kind of bilateral commitment from the USA for the security of their regime.

Questioner: I want to ask two questions. The first question will be: which country should take the driver's seat toward North Korea? Should South Korea or the United States should take the driver's seat? Who will draw the red line? Should the United States draw the red line or should South Korea draw the red line?

And the second question is in respect to a peaceful coexistence with North Korea. We don't expect the quick collapse of North Korea; I think South Korea should pursue peaceful coexistence with North Korea.

I'm from South Korea. I think I belong to the younger generation of South Korea and I want to ask a question of other American friends here that in the 1970s, when Nixon opposed China, the former member of the axis of evil, how did you guys feel? The United States pursued the peaceful coexistence with China and Russia, a former member of the axis of evil, so why didn't we pursue the peaceful coexistence with North Korea? That is my question.

Cossa: Good questions. Obviously, you have a good teacher. You've asked very good questions. I think the point that I was trying to make was that I think there has to be several drivers. I don't think that in some areas the U.S. has to take the lead and in other places the ROK needs to take the lead.

But, the critical thing is that we all speak with one voice. We have to agree amongst ourselves where the red lines are. Nothing will be more disastrous than if the U.S. and

South Korea and China all have different red lines and our button gets pushed before theirs. So, that's why I think we need to be sitting down and having a mutual agreement A, of what the red lines are and B, what are we going to do when they're crossed. I'm not sure of my sense in talking to leaders in all three of those countries that that hasn't been done and maybe that's what Jim Kelly is doing in Korea today, even as we speak. I certainly hope so.

Peaceful Coexistence Makes Sense

I think peaceful coexistence makes sense. And I think the real strength of the sunshine policy—and I was a big supporter of the sunshine policy—was that it was essentially the South Korean version of the Helsinki process, which is to aim at peaceful coexistence, to aim at gradual change over time. It's the difference between “carrot and stick” and “carrot or stick;” the latter of which is the U.S. policy. If you're good, you're going to get some carrots and if you're bad, we're going to hit you with a stick.

The sunshine policy is carrot and stick. And the carrot and stick is the old fable where you put the carrot at the end of the stick and you lead the donkey in the right direction. And hopefully we're going to lead them toward reform and opening up and at the end of the day; gradually the North Korean people's expectations rise like the Eastern Europeans' did, and the wall comes down and we all live happily ever after.

To beat that analogy to death, to me the problem with the sunshine policy was that the stick was too short. So, the North Koreans just continued to sit there and eat all the carrots. They never were compelled to get up and move in one direction and that's where I think the process has broken

down is that the North Koreans have become accustomed to getting whatever they want without having to move in that direction.

The key word and it's a word that President Roh used in his inauguration address, which I think he is both psychologically committed to and politically committed to because the South Korean legislature and others won't accept any alternative as “reciprocity.” Reciprocity was a key element of the sunshine policy that was never pursued and demanded. And to me, that's where the process broke down.

Serious Generation Gap in Korea

Lee: You can see the younger generation of today. He's in the early 30s, but he's working for the Korean foreign ministry. So, you can see the changing perception of younger Koreans today. But, my question, because I'm old enough to be in the mid-40s, is: if the South Koreans are prepared to live peacefully and coexist with North Korea, which has a nuclear bomb? I think many Koreans will say yes. That's a serious generation gap we have today. I cannot say “Yes,” but the younger Koreans in their 20s and 30s can.

And also, a second question too: who's going to be in the driver's seat? Well, I'm not sure with all these years of sunshine policy how much political leverage the South Korean government has over North Korea. Even if we are at the position of the driver's seat, I'm not sure if we can drive well, because this government and the previous government has shown too many cards to North Korea, so they are not taking North Korean policies strategically. They are just obsessed with expanding ties and political consolidation. I don't think that's a good national security policy.

Nothing Has Changed in North Korea

Agawa: Well, I may be considered to be the old generation of Japan, because I have provoked the discussion of regime change. I don't want to be quoted as one of the Japanese government officials who have stated that I somehow advocated changing the North Korean regime. I didn't mean that. I don't think that peaceful coexistence is bad at all, I think it's wonderful. What I meant was that the ultimate solution to this problem is regime change, not that anybody will try in the near future to do that or force that. I think, contrary to what you have said, I think the American policy makers have succeeded in regime change with respect to China and the Soviet Union. Because, if you look at what is taking place, A, market economy's taking place and a gradual, perhaps still small scale democratization is taking place. The difference between North Korea and these countries is that nothing has changed in North Korea, no democratization is taking place, and no market economy seems to have succeeded there.

I don't think that America or Japan or anybody else will try to force regime change upon North Korea, but I think that we do hope that they will change gradually some time to be more like China and more like Russia. And I think what I'm saying is that both the United States and Japan could wait for that. With respect to the discussion of the red line, I think - and correct me if I'm wrong, Dr. Lee - the objective of the North Korea regime is survival out of weakness, rather than winning something out of strength. And therefore, it seems that when you have five parties against you, you have exhausted almost everything that you have in terms of scaring everybody else.

And you may be right that they still do some stupid things, but it seems that part of

the reason that things have been a little quieter these days is because North Koreans may have a sense that they don't have any more scary tactics to use. So we'll just wait. We'll just wait whether there will be a change, and that's my attitude. I may be of the old generation of Japan, but that's fine.

Ikenberry: That seems consistent with what this last exchange reveals, which is that the South Korean position is probably going to be reinforced by a younger generation that doesn't see North Korea as a threat, or even a nuclear North Korea as a threat. But, that's the critical factor, because then South Korea will not engage in the kind of embargo or sanctions that would force Pyongyang to radically reassess whatever capability they have.

So, I don't see how, given South Korea's overall position on this, how there's any underlying stick that forces Pyongyang to move from a kind of de facto position where they have some capability. And if you add to that their view, and probably a view that some South Koreans find sympathetic, mainly Washington looks like the aggressor here. Having a nuclear capability, given the American national security strategy and the overall position of the Bush administration, they look like they're acting quite prudently.

So, Ralph, I think you would agree with that in your talk, and in your remarks you said the linchpin is South Korean credibility, which I think is kind of a code word for actually drawing a red line that it sounds like maybe they aren't willing to draw. How do you see that? Or do you assess South Korea slightly differently than this last exchange?

Cossa: My own sense, and obviously there are people in the room that know South

Korea much better than me, but I've been there five times this year and I have visited probably 100 times in the last 30 years and have tried to talk with a lot of people from across a broad political spectrum. And the sense I get is that South Korea is a very schizophrenic nation right now. It is divided by generation and by political philosophy. But I think the president has been trying to go both ways and has not really made his decision on which way to go, and I think the North Koreans have been masters for their entire existence.

They have existed by being able to play people against one another. For years they played the Soviet Union against the Chinese. Then the Soviet Union went away and they were in some hard times, and I would say that the single most important factor in convincing the North Koreans to develop nuclear weapons was not George Bush or Iraq or even the United States. It was the collapse of the Soviet Union, and they're watching capitalism breakout in China under another name and the fear that they couldn't rely on their own security blankets. And they've been trying to figure out some new way of doing that.

U.S. Should Take North Korea's Security Concerns Into Account

So, at the end of the day, I agree with those people who say we have to take North Korea's legitimate security concerns into account and find some way to address those. But, I think South Koreans have buried their heads in the sand and seem to just hope for the best.

It amazes me and I will apologize in advance if I hurt anyone's feelings. I think that it was a terrible tragedy, but it was a tragedy that two young teenagers were run over by an armored vehicle. There were

hundreds of thousands of South Koreans with candles protesting and mourning. That's fine. Within a week of that the North Korean Navy sank a South Korean ship and killed, deliberately, 19 South Korean sailors.

There has not been a candle lit in South Korea for those 19 young men who sacrificed their lives defending their country. To me, this is a stage of denial in South Korea among the young people who want to believe that North Korea is truly represented by the boatload of cheerleaders who come down with pom-poms, and not by the soldiers who are still killing your forces. This, I think, is a real problem that can only be addressed by strong leadership in the Blue House, by someone who is willing in the Blue House to stand up and give a consistent message.

President Roh, on occasion, says the right things and then he immediately starts backing away from it. So, I'm not overly optimistic. I think the solution is there, if there could be strong leadership. I think people are smart enough to grasp this and understand this, but the sense of denial that there's even a problem is what's particularly concerning to me when I talk to leadership in South Korea.

Ikenberry: One last question in the back, sir.

Questioner: The question is to Mr. Cossa. And I may be repeating a discussion, but what condition can Kim Jong-il accept in order to give up their nuclear program? I think the nuclear program is the only thing he has and is so intertwined with the survival of his regime and the survival of his own life. I haven't had any persuasive opinion he has anything else. Is it political, economical? Does he really have it, or is he

just talking about it? But, he has only that. What condition can you imagine? That's my question to Mr. Cossa.

Also, my question to Mr. Agawa. You told us that you think that this situation will continue, and without much change and also, you said that Japan insists that the abduction issue should be a part of the talk, but don't you think that Japan should have its own strategy of tactics, at least in the direction of solving But I feel that there is no policy at all, just waiting, sitting, watching other players do something.

Ikenberry: Are you asking for a strategy in generally dealing with North Korea, or on the abduction?

Questioner: On the abduction issue.

Agawa: Well, if I sounded like that, if you thought I said that we will just have to sit down and do nothing about the abduction issue, I didn't mean that. I think we have to do everything possible to solve the abduction issue. I just recently talked to my colleague, whose job is to watch North Korean situations at the embassy. And I think I can tell you two things. One is that the abduction issue is a very difficult issue to solve, precisely because we are dealing with a very bad regime called North Korea, and sorry to the young generation in South Korea, but they are a terrible, terrible savage regime, and they will not simply say yes to solving this thing.

Having said that, I think that if we were to put ourselves in the mind of Kim Jong-il and others, this abduction issue must be a nuisance at least, and an embarrassment to the North Koreans. I thought it was very interesting—and this is just guessing again, but the fact that recently, North Korea all of a sudden talked about and announced that

they demanded Japan do something to compensate for all of the abductions and the human rights violations that were committed by Japanese over the past 70 years or so. And I think that indicates that A) they want to have a counterpoint to the abduction issue and B) this may be an approach to say something about the abduction issue. And I'll tell you that my colleagues at the foreign ministry are doing everything possible, both at the six-party talks and other places to deal with that problem, and I promise that we will do our best and we'll see how we can go.

I agree with you that Japan has to have a coherent policy and strategy, but that has to be part of the six-party multilateral talks, and I'm happy to report that in that respect, the United States and Japan are very, very closely working together, and I think that our being close to the United States' position—and the United States' position being close to our position—have been mutually very beneficial in dealing with the North Koreans.

Ikenberry: The last word from our speaker.

Cossa: First, let me say on the abductee issue, I have great sympathy and support for Japan taking the tougher line on that. I think that the North Koreans today have essentially come to the conclusion that they don't gain anything by solving the problem now, that if tomorrow there were a solution, that will not make Japan any more friendly toward them. It certainly won't open the door for Japanese aid. The nuclear issue is the big one.

I'm also convinced that the North Koreans understand that if they solve the nuclear issue, they still won't get a penny from Japan until the abductee issue is solved. And my guess would be that the day that

we reach agreement on the nuclear issue, within about 20 minutes from that, the abductee children will come home. I would add that I wrote an article about six or eight months ago suggesting what I thought was a sensible solution and that's that the Japanese government and the North Korean government both agree to allow the former abductees and their children to meet in a neutral third location, and I had suggested Mongolia. And then, without any interference by either government, allow them to decide which plane each one of them wanted to get on, going either toward Japan or toward North Korea. And that to me was a sensible solution. I know the government in Mongolia is prepared to do that, to act as an honest broker and hopefully, maybe some day, they'll both see that this is a useful alternative.

Military Force Has Kept North Korea Alive

Regarding under what condition type thing, I think that it's fair to say that the only thing that has kept North Korea alive, essentially, is its military force. Military force, not necessarily nuclear, but military. We have tolerated North Korea for a very long time because of their ability, essentially, to put 20 million South Koreans at risk. The population of Seoul is between 12 and 14 million and the number of people essentially in South Korea that live within artillery range of North Korea is close to half the population of the south. The North Koreans apparently believe that adding nuclear weapons to their current military deterrent increases the value of that deterrent. As long as they believe that, they're going to continue to pursue nuclear weapons.

We have to convince them that it has decreased their deterrent, that before, the cost of a war was too high and we decided we

would tolerate North Korea, but now the cost of tolerating a North Korea with nuclear weapons is too high. And that makes us recalculate what we're willing to do. And we also have to make it clear to them that we could destroy North Korea without firing a shot. And the way that you do that is through political isolation and economic strangulation, which requires South Korea and China to credibly say, "Keep this up and you're going to pay a terrible price for it. Give up the nuclear weapons, and you still have a sufficient deterrent in your conventional capabilities to ensure that we're not going to attack you—and we'll add to that written security assurances." But, the real assurance is the North Korean artillery that can destroy Seoul, not what somebody puts on a piece of paper.

So, we have to convince them that adding nuclear to their already incredible deterrent has made them less secure, rather than more secure. If we can do that, they'll bargain. If we can't, they're not going to. The only way we can do that is if all five countries speak with one voice and they're willing to apply political and economic, as well as military pressure, against North Korea.

Let me add as a final point that my organization, the Pacific Forum in Honolulu, publishes a journal and a weekly pack-net newsletter. They're all free of charge. They cover what's going on in East Asia. Anyone that would like to be on our mailing list, give me your email address, or send us an Email (pacforum@hawaii.rr.com) and I would be more than happy to put you on distribution. Thank you.

Ikenberry: Excellent. Thanks Ralph. Please join with me in thanking our distinguished panel for a great evening. Thank you very much. [End]

About the Panelists

Main Speaker **Mr. Ralph Cossa** is President of the Pacific Forum, CSIS. He manages the Forum's programs on security, political, economic, and environmental issues. He sits on the steering committee of the Council For Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific, serves as Executive Director of the U.S. Committee of CSCAP, and is a board member of the Council on U.S.-Korean Security Studies. Mr. Cossa has over 25 years of experience in formulating and implementing U.S. security policy in the Asia-Pacific and Near East-South Asia regions. He is a retired USAF Colonel and a former national security affairs fellow at the Hoover Institution. Mr. Cossa holds a B.A. from Syracuse University, an M.B.A. from Pepperdine University and an M.S. in strategic studies from the Defense Intelligence College.

Discussants **Mr. Naoyuki Agawa** is Minister for Public Affairs and Director of the Japan Information and Culture Center at the Embassy of Japan. Previously, he was a professor at Keio University, Georgetown University Law Center, and the University of Virginia Law School, among others. Minister Agawa has also worked as an attorney at Nishimura and Partners and Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher in both Tokyo and Washington, D.C. He has been a member of an advisory group to Foreign Minister Kawaguchi on the reform of the Foreign Ministry and a member of the U.S.-Japan Study Group, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan. He received a B.S.F.S. and J.D. from Georgetown University. Minister Agawa has published many books and articles, including *I am Proud to be Pro-American* (2003), *Dialogue on America* (co-author, 2002), and *Friendship on the Seas: A History of the Relationship between the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and the United States Navy* (2001).

Dr. Sook-jong Lee is Visiting Fellow at the Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies, the Brookings Institution and Senior Research Fellow at the Sejong Institute in South Korea. Previously Dr. Lee was a lecturer at Yonsei University, a visiting fellow at the University of Tokyo and a visiting fellow at Cambridge University. She received a B.A. from Yonsei University and an M.A. and Ph.D. from Harvard University. Dr. Lee has published many articles, including *Civil Society and Democratic Governance in Japan*, (forthcoming, 2003) and *Sources of Anti-Americanism in Korean Society: Implications for Korea-U.S. Relations* (2003).

Moderator **Dr. G. John Ikenberry** is the Peter F. Krogh Professor of Geopolitics and Global Justice at Georgetown University. In addition, he was a Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and a Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. Dr. Ikenberry is the author of numerous publications, including *State Power and World Markets: The International Political Economy* (2002), *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (2000), and *Reasons of State: Oil Politics and the Capacities of American Government* (1988).