



**IIPS**  
**Colloquium**  
**30 June 2004**

**Outlook of the US Policy towards the Korean Peninsula**

**Speaker: Mr. Joel S. Wit, Senior Fellow with the International Security Program, Center for Strategic & International Studies, USA**

**Report by Hisao Maeda**  
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The Institute for International Policy Studies held a colloquium on June 30, 2004 on the theme “Outlook of the US Policy towards the Korean Peninsula.” The colloquium featured guest speaker Mr. Joel S. Wit, Senior Fellow with the International Security Program, Center for Strategic & International Studies and an expert on security in Northeast Asia and nuclear nonproliferation issues. We asked Mr. Wit to explain the perspective of negotiations on North Korea’s nuclear issue and the anticipated impact of the US presidential election on the issue.

First, Mr. Wit criticized the Bush administration’s policy towards North Korea for having neglected to take measures due to its inability to decide on a solid policy because of disruption between the moderate and the hardliners in the administration. On the other hand, Mr. Wit highly evaluated, as a desired move, President Bush’s recent positive attitude towards the negotiations from a third-party viewpoint by respecting the opinions of the two countries. With regard to the reasons for a shift in attitude, Mr. Wit cited among other things pullback of the hardliners influenced by the Iraq issue, learning of lessons by the decision-makers, intention of other countries participating in the talks, and the presidential campaign.



As for the course of negotiations in advance of the presidential election, Mr. Wit commented that it would be difficult for President Bush to drastically shift his attitude and that the negotiations would progress by seeing what North Korea does first. Regarding the possible attitude of North Korea, he referred to four possible scenarios, including a buildup of demands, flexible response, forcing US to make a difficult choice, or incremental growth in

threat. He continued, however, that whether or not the country ultimately intends to give up the nuclear program as an outcome of negotiations will be a wild card, and therefore that what can be done before November is to establish a solid negotiation



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framework for the Six-Party Talks while eyeing the development of the negotiations following the election.

Next, as for the view projecting a shift to a hardliner attitude in the next US administration upon reelection of Bush, Mr. Wit gave his views that the Bush administration had already shifted to multilateralism and the current prudent attitude will be maintained. Referring to an observation that North Korea may find a Kerry administration easier to deal with, Mr. Wit indicated an opposite view. He said that although it would show a positive attitude towards negotiation-based resolution, a Kerry administration might be viewed as difficult to gauge should the negotiations fall apart.



Mr. Wit pointed to new initiatives which should be taken towards problem solving—ending of the state of war between South and North Korea, demilitarisation and modernization of North Korea, inclusion of North Korea into international society, and promotion of respect for human rights.

Questions were actively raised by attendees such as a possible third crisis in the future if a settlement should be reached through negotiations, what lessons have been learned from the previous crisis, the pros and cons of the peaceful utilization of nuclear energy by North Korea, the inspection issue, the role of Europe, and others.