



IIPS
Colloquium
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The Problem of North Korea

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On 15 July 2003, the Institute for International Policy Studies hosted a colloquium on the subject of the problem of North Korea. The invited guest, Professor Park Cheol-Hee of the Institute for Foreign Affairs and National Security, a department of the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, delivered a highly thought-provoking presentation on this topic.

Professor Park discussed the recent diplomatic efforts to resolve the North Korean crisis and the Republic of Korea's concerns about recent discussion of possible changes in Japan's defense policy.

It is vital that a consensus be reached on measures for dealing with North Korea. (This was certainly not achieved in the cases of the nuclear problems in Iraq and Pakistan.) These measures must fulfill three criteria: firstly, they must be geared towards a resolution within a multilateral discussion framework; secondly, they must provide escalation control by drawing clear lines for Pyongyang; and thirdly, they must define a roadmap that features a staged approach to resolution that is based on reciprocity. Professor Park said that effort is required in each of these three areas.



In the second part of his speech, Professor Park discussed changes in Japan's defense policy. There is a perception in Korea that Japan's policy is changing from one of deterrence to one of response to threats. This prompts the question of what changes will emerge from discussions of Japan's threat perception and its possible responses. Professor Park stated that there is considerable anxiety in Korea that Japan's defense policy will cease to be rooted in a philosophy of non-aggression.

The audience posed several questions, including the following: "What are the limits that would trigger a response?" "Is there a consensus for a particular response if the limits are crossed?" "What would be the objective of such a response—regime change or a change in policy on the part of the government of Kim Jong-Il? On the topic of Japan's defense, questioners pointed out that, if in fact there has been no change in the essential non-aggressive nature of Japanese defense policy, healthy public discussion is indispensable for increasing the policy's transparency and credibility, and that such discussion should not yield any negative reaction from neighboring countries.