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Asian Views of the North Korea Crisis and U.S. Policy April 9, 2003

Conference Summary

by John Fei, Administrator, Carnegie China Program

Overview

The Carnegie China Program sponsored a special forum examining the views and strategies of the five concerned powers--South Korea, Japan, Russia, China and the United States--towards resolving the crisis on the Korean peninsula. Four speakers delivered on-the-record remarks regarding South Korea's, Japan's, Russia's and China's views on North Korea, while Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Donald W. Keyser's remarks on U.S. policy towards Pyongyang were strictly off-the-record.

Victor Cha, D. S. Song-Korea Foundation Chair in Asian Studies, Georgetown University, on South Korea

Professor Cha began his statement by addressing South Korea's recent leadership transition, noting that when the new Roh Moo Hyon South Korean government came into power, there were a lot of concerns about the future South Korean alliance with the U.S. However, he believes that new South Korean government policy with regard to North Korea will not stray too far from that of the U.S. Although Roh campaigned on an anti-American platform, he must move to the center now that he is President, in order to represent the views of the entire country. Professor Cha indicated that Roh is a pragmatic

and smart individual, who, despite his lack of foreign policy experience, is a good listener and will heed expert advice. The fact that Roh has called upon the U.S. forces to remain in South Korea, held talks with Secretary Colin Powell early in his presidency, and sent South Korean troops to support the war in Iraq, is evidence of Roh's pragmatic, pro-American foreign policy.

Cha added that there are larger geostrategic reasons that South Korea would not stray too far from U.S. foreign policy in the region. Because South Korea will always remain a small country surrounded by big powers, it will want to stay allied to the country that is furthest away and that happens to be of the same regime type--namely, the U.S. In this sense, all the discussion about a "China School" in South Korea is really more a knee-jerk reaction to perceived problems with the Bush administration's policy rather than a serious discussion about long-term South Korean strategic choices. If the discussion of China as an alternative to the U.S. rises to the level of a national debate, it would require much deeper thinking than simply an emotional reaction to U.S. policy.

Professor Cha then went on to analyze the nature of the current crisis on the Korean Peninsula. The North Koreans clearly want a bilateral dialogue with America, a nonaggression pact with the U.S., and implicitly, international recognition. However, it is important to understand that the North Korean notion of a nonaggression pact, or treaty, is different from the commonly held, U.S. view of a nonaggression pact or treaty. While America understands a nonaggression pact with North Korea to be analogous to a peace treaty ending the Korean war, North Korea seems to believe that a nonaggression treaty involves: the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Korean peninsula; the capitulation of the South Korean government to the North Korean form of government; and the "liberation" of the South Korean people. On this topic, some in South Korea point to the different meanings behind the terms "nonaggression pact" and "treaty."

Professor Cha pointed out the inconsistency inherent in North Korean behavior. He noted that while North Korea wants a bilateral dialogue with the U.S., Pyongyang seems to spurn (though quietly and not publicly) the efforts of many other countries to bring North Korea to the negotiating table.

As for the motivations behind what the North Korean demands, Professor Cha argues that basically, they want to "have their cake and eat it too." If Pyongyang wants

food, fuel, security and diplomatic recognition in exchange for trading in the proliferation threat, the Agreed Framework of 1994 should have satisfied its needs. The conclusion one reaches is that North Korea does not necessarily want to trade in their proliferation threat for benefits; the Kim Jong Il regime wants food, fuel, security, *and* nuclear capability.

One of the reasons the Bush administration has been averse to a bilateral dialogue with North Korea is that Washington believes the only way to convince Pyongyang that it cannot "have its cake and eat it too" is to bring as many nations together to convey that message. In other words, the more countries that are aligned with the U.S., the weaker the negotiating position of North Korea. But, Cha added, it is hard to say whether, and how well, multilateral talks with North Korea will actually work. North Korea normally responds well when presented with a face-saving solution only when it feels that it is about to be completely isolated by the international community. If multilateral negotiations do not bring about the desired result, North Korea will become nuclear. And this would result in an American strategy of isolating and containing Pyongyang.

Additional hypotheses as to why the U.S. does not want to negotiate bilaterally with North Korea include U.S. concerns that it would be difficult to verify any agreement with North Korea. The North would like to draw the U.S. into a bilateral inspection regime where they could basically "sell" each facility/cave to the U.S. for disarmament verification. This is not in U.S. interests and would not be preferable to an IAEA-based inspection regime. If an agreement were reached concerning both the Yongbyon facility and verifiable dismantlement of HEU facility, verification of HEU dismantlement would require levels of openness in North Korea that would make inspections in Iraq look easy. Addressing the question as to why the U.S. does not currently want to negotiate with North Korea, Cha cited the reason being that some in the Bush administration believe that North Korea has already chosen to go nuclear because it wants to "have its cake and eat it too." As such, there is no need to rush into negotiations.

Professor Cha ended his presentation with a commentary of how the war in Iraq has likely been perceived by the North Korean regime. The optimistic assessment is that Kim Jong Il, seeing the U.S. is not a paper tiger and realizing that the U.S. is more risk-acceptant in pursuing homeland security in a post-September 11 environment, may be more amenable to negotiations to seek a face-saving way out of the crisis. On the other

hand, North Korean leaders may see that the U.S. is not a paper tiger, and reach the exact opposite conclusion -- i.e., they conclude that they were absolutely right in their initial assumption that the acquisition of nuclear capabilities, as quickly as possible, is the only way to deter the U.S. from attacking North Korea. The war in Iraq has also led some in North Korea to argue that a nonaggression pact with the U.S. will no longer be enough to guarantee North Korean security. Such views could further justify the need for nuclear weapons and a midsize arsenal. The problem now is that we are uncertain which lesson Kim Jong Il has learned. The mixed messages that come out of the regime since the U.S. military victory in Iraq compounds the problem.

Katsu Furukawa, Senior Research Associate, Monterey Institute of International Studies, on Japan

In his remarks, Mr. Furukawa highlighted the recent change in Japan's strategic culture and threat perceptions, assessed Japanese views of recent China, South Korea, and U.S. policy vis à vis the North Korean crisis, and offered insights into likely Japanese contributions to any multilateral discussions in the coming months.

Among Asian countries, Japan now stands out as one of the closest partners of the Bush administration. Mr. Furukawa indicated that the U.S.-Japan alliance has steadily evolved, has been continuously strengthened over the past decades, and that the two countries' policies towards North Korea have become closer than ever before. Several factors have contributed to Japan's strong support of the U.S. Kim Jong Il's admission that North Korea had abducted numerous Japanese citizens decades ago only confirmed and strengthened Japan's distrust of North Korea. When the Japanese media reported heavily on the abductions in 2002, Pyongyang voiced its displeasure by sending repeated warnings to Tokyo that it may abrogate the suspension of missile testing. Even these warnings were, however, virtually overwhelmed by Japan's criticism over the North's abduction. Such escalatory and provocative behavior, coupled with recent test firings of short and medium range missiles, and the threat of a traditional military attack, have transformed Japan's threat perception. Now, the possibility of attack on Japan's homeland from the Korean Peninsula is perceived as more imminent than before. Given America's emphasis on human rights issues, including the kidnapping of Japanese citizens, and strong rhetoric

against North Korea, Japan has come to adopt a North Korea policy that is similar that of the Bush administration.

Indeed, homeland security has become one of the most pressing concerns among the Japanese populace. If one were to poll Japanese politicians and government officials, a majority of them would argue that it is already a given that Japan needs a missile defense system, and that the country is likely to start developing a missile defense system jointly with the U.S. In fact, some Japanese politicians have become so anxious about the North Korean threat that they feel that they cannot wait until the operational use of a U.S. missile defense system in 2004 or 2005, and that Japan needs to develop and deploy missile defense systems as soon as possible. Support for missile defense has become a bipartisan phenomenon. Reportedly, Japan has already decided to purchase and deploy the Patriot PAC III system.

A heightened perception of threat has also led to a debate within Japan as to whether it should develop a preemptive strike capability against North Korean missile batteries. Prime Minister Koizumi has flatly rejected the idea of acquiring preemptive strike capabilities, because under the current division of roles and missions between the two countries within the U.S.-Japan alliance, the U.S. is responsible for offensive operations, while Japan is responsible for the protection of its homeland, including U.S. military bases on Japanese soil. But amongst the public and politicians, there is steadily-increasing support for developing Japan's capability to conduct preemptive strikes against North Korea.

Could the transformation of Japan's threat perception be so great as to lead it to become a nuclear weapon state? Many U.S. experts on nonproliferation and counter-proliferation are concerned whether Japan may become a nuclear state or reconsider its position on the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) in response to North Korea's recent "withdrawal" from the NPT and its nuclear brinkmanship. However, Japan experts argue that Japan will not go down the nuclear route for a long time due to the strengthening of the credibility of the U.S. deterrence, and a solid U.S.-Japan alliance. In fact, current evidence indicates that Japan is not going down the path to becoming a nuclear state. Dr. Shinichi Ogawa of Japan's National Institute of Defense Studies lamentably stated: "Since Japan and South Korea are (already) under the U.S. nuclear umbrella, North Korea's

nuclearization does not necessarily push these countries onto the road of indigenous nuclear development. If U.S. nuclear weapons would not be able to deter the North's use, or threat to use, of nuclear weapons (as advocates of Japan's nuclearization assert), then how could we expect that Japan's and South Korea's nuclear weapons (which would be far inferior to those of the U.S.) would be able to deter North Korea's nuclear strikes?" On the contrary, Japan has intensified its efforts in the areas of arms control and nonproliferation, as shown by its initiative in promoting nonproliferation education among Southeast Asian countries, and leading preparations for the NPT Review Conference.

Furukawa stated that Japan will not allow North Korea to withdraw from the NPT. In general, North Korea has stated that it would go back to the position it held in June of 1993. The international community ignored the statement, and allowed Pyongyang a 90-day grace period from withdrawal from the NPT. However, if North Korea truly wanted to leave the NPT, the North would have to clarify that remaining in the treaty is against their supreme national interest. And, Pyongyang would also have to notify all member states. Furukawa noted that North Korea only mentioned that it would leave the NPT barely a few times. As a result, some experts in Japan who are close to the government read the North's behavior as leaving some room for ambiguity and indicating it did not necessarily want to clarify its true intentions concerning withdrawal from the NPT. Japan did not want to clarify its position on this matter until April 10, 2003, when Japanese Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda clearly said that Japan believes that North Korea is still a member state of the NPT, irrespective of some countries saying that the North has withdrawn from the treaty.

Mr. Furukawa noted that, especially since early 2003, Japan has strongly supported the U.S. view that any dialogue with North Korea must take place within the multilateral context. But, Japan has concerns with several of the nations that would be part of a multilateral approach. In the case of China, Japan initially saw a leadership in Beijing that is as divided as that in Washington concerning approaches to North Korea. Japanese politicians and media were also concerned with China's resistance to including Japan in multilateral negotiations.

Although Tokyo-Seoul relations have been generally good, Japan's primary complaint was that South Korea seemed to be too soft towards North Korea, and was not

very helpful in promoting multilateral negotiations. Initially, Japan was particularly concerned that Roh Moo Hyon's government had been reluctant to refer to the 1992 North-South joint declaration on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. There was a view in Japan that South Korea's soft stance towards North Korea's nuclear weapons program could be a reflection of thinking among some senior officials of Roh's administration who were not willing to rule out a future nuclear option. Japanese experts were surprised, for example, by the frank comments suggesting such intentions by those who were close to the new South Korean senior officials. These Japanese experts were even concerned that a delay in South Korea's ratification of the Additional Protocol of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)--a protocol which legitimizes IAEA special inspections on undeclared nuclear facilities--could be an indication of such thinking in Seoul. Certainly, South Korea has already signed this protocol, and its delay in ratification has been generally understood as a reflection of technical, not substantive, reasons. However, Furukawa noted that unless a country signs *and* ratifies the Additional Protocol, it is still possible, at least in theory, to keep open the future nuclear option. If South Korea does not ratify the IAEA Additional Protocol, it could weaken the U.S' and international community's negotiating positions toward the North in enforcing IAEA special inspections in North Korea. Despite the fact that there is no indication South Korea intends to nuclearize, Japan feels that some in Seoul would still like to avoid ruling out the future nuclear option.

In addition, Japan was concerned about the South Korean administration's emphasis on autonomy in its conduct of foreign policy. This is because several top officials in the new Roh Moo Hyon government, especially the ones who are in charge of activities and budgeting related to the South's unofficial contact with the North, are causes for concern in Tokyo. Japan is concerned that these officials may still harbor anti-American sentiments. As a result, it is possible, in Japan's view, that they could strike a benign deal with North Korea through their bilateral talks, straying away from multilateral efforts to negotiate with the North over disarmament of its nuclear weapons program in a verifiable and irreversible manner.

With respect to the U.S., Furukawa noted that some in Japan, especially within the arms control community, are frustrated that the Bush administration has not placed enough

emphasis on the importance of the NPT regime. During the 1993-1994 North Korean crisis, there was strong momentum in the Clinton administration to get North Korea to stay within the NPT and conclude an agreement with the North. This momentum was due to the impending negotiations on the indefinite extension of the NPT that was taking place during that period. But, Japanese arms control experts and officials feel that such momentum is almost absent behind recent negotiations with North Korea. Japan believes that there should not be a precedent where a country can withdraw from the NPT, which would significantly undermine the legitimacy of the regime.

In general, Japan seems to believe that there is a high chance that North Korea will join multilateral talks. In light of the recent U.S. attack on Iraq, many in Japan feel that North Korea may fear that it is next on Bush's target list, and could very well be more cooperative by stopping its push for bilateral talks with the U.S. The incentive for North Korea to participate in multilateral talks would be the expectation that China, and possibly South Korea, could be of assistance to North Korea.

Unless the U.S. and Japan can forge a united front with China and South Korea, Japan feels that there is little prospect that the international community can reach an agreement with the North, even after resumption of multilateral talks, to enforce nuclear disarmament in a verifiable and irreversible manner. Therefore, Japan believes it might only be a matter of time before the next stage of deadlock if such an international front could not be forged. Given that North Korean key officials are the same ones who led the 1993-1994 negotiations, there is a view in Japan that the North Koreans may believe that they have more knowledge and expertise about this kind of negotiation than the officials in the U.S., Japan, and South Korea--which have gone through numerous leadership changes since 1993. The presence of institutional knowledge and wisdom in Pyongyang, and relative lack thereof in Washington, Tokyo and Seoul, suggests that North Korea may most likely attempt to extract more concessions in negotiations (believing that they can still replay the previous game), and be more willing to "push the envelope" further than during the 1993 crisis, by, for example, starting reprocessing of its spent nuclear fuel.

What will be the likely Japanese strategy in the months ahead? Furukawa predicts that Japan will strengthen its "carrot" and "stick" strategy. On the positive side, Japan wants to make sure that North Korea has a concrete and clearer understanding of the

economic assistance they can receive if they cooperate with the international community, and if they succeed in normalizing relations with Japan. But, if North Korea were to begin separating plutonium, Japan will seriously consider abrogating the September 2002 Pyongyang declaration, an official document which Kim Jong Il signed himself. Though Japan has been reportedly conducting back channel diplomacy with North Korea, messages must eventually be conveyed through the highest-level, political channels. However, because of the continuing deadlock over the format of Japan-North Korea interaction, especially on the abduction issue, the prospects for a resumption of official North Korea-Japan meetings are dim.

If the U.S. adopts economic sanctions against North Korea, even without the consensual support of the multilateral community, Furukawa predicted that Japan will side with Bush administration. But, if the situation deteriorates to the point of American military strikes against Yongbyon, Japan will be faced with a difficult decision. Japan's current stance is that it hopes for a diplomatic solution to the current crisis, and that it wants to avoid the collapse of the North Korean regime, if at all possible. In the near future, however, Japan might possibly come to support a regime change in the North, contingent upon how the crisis escalates.

Furukawa predicted that the international community may face a real challenge sometime later in this year, when North Korea may face even stronger economic pressures. Presumably, the North may have already faced such pressures to some extent, given that the U.S. has suspended provision of heavy fuel oil to Pyongyang since the end of 2002. However, this may not have brought sufficient pressure on the North yet because, originally (since 1994), most shipments of heavy fuel were delivered in the latter part of the calendar year--regardless of whether economic sanctions were enforced. It is not unusual for the North not to receive a significant amount of heavy fuel in early part of the year. Thus, there is a view in Japan that the North may escalate the crisis sometime later this year, when it faces serious economic difficulties.

This timing of an escalation of the crisis could be sensitive, given that an election for a leader of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party will be held in September 2003. The pressures of a deteriorating economy might reduce Koizumi's political maneuvering room, limiting Japan's ability to compromise with North Korea, especially with regard to

the abduction issue. Also, the U.S. will hold primary elections for the presidential race in February of 2004. How will North Korea perceive and react to this timeline? How would the Bush administration react if a crisis should escalate before the U.S. primaries? Furukawa concluded his remarks by emphasizing the importance of the implications of such domestic political dynamics vis à vis the potential escalation of the North Korean crisis in the upcoming months.

Andrew Kuchins, Senior Associate and Director, Russian and Eurasian Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, on Russia

Dr. Kuchins discussed Russia's perceptions of the North Korean crisis by framing his remarks along four themes: Russia's response to Bush's "axis of evil" phrase; Russia's perceptions of contradictions and double standards, Russia's perception of the nonproliferation regime; and Russia's lack of leverage in North Korea.

Russia's Response to Bush's "Axis of Evil" Label

Kuchins began by noting that Russia's reaction to Bush's labeling of North Korea as within the "axis of evil" has been consistent with its general objection to a policy of threats, sanctions and military action against Iraq and Iran. The reason behind Russia's more measured policy is tied to their fear of destabilization of regimes located about their periphery. Moscow is primarily concerned that the U.S. policy of threats and military action is more likely to destabilize the Northeast Asian region, rather than enhance security. With America's successful military campaign in Iraq, Russia worries that it will become "dizzy with success," and move onward to North Korea and Iran. This sentiment was captured clearly by General Nicolaev, Chairman of the Duma's Defense Committee, who said "after Iraq, they [the US] will raise the issue of Iran, then North Korea, then some other state. There will be a permanent crisis flowing from one nation to another. All this next door to Russia, China and India. But not [next to] America. America is far away. All of us are close by, and it will be we who reap the harvest of the experiments the Americans are conducting on the international community."

Generally Russia prefers what Chester Crocker might have called, in the 1980s, "constructive engagement" with these "axis of evil" regimes. The two components of such

a strategy are political and diplomatic tools. The Russians have tried to employ these tools by having served as a mediator between the U.S. and Iraq. Kuchins pointed specifically to Russian Premier Yevgeny Primakov's trip to Iraq, and Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Losyukov's trip to North Korea back in January as evidence of Russian preference for diplomacy.

To place Russian attitudes towards North Korea in a broader context, Kuchins stated that Russian displeasure with Bush's harsh rhetoric can also be explained by the fact that it has economic interests in all three "axis of evil states." Iran is tied to Russia by trade and agreements in civilian nuclear technologies (for example, the nuclear reactor in Bushehr), as well as conventional military sales. Russia has many interests in the development of Iraqi oil fields and energy resources, and recovering debt incurred by Iraq during the Soviet era. Regarding North Korea, Russia is eyeing energy deals, such as a gas pipeline and thermopower deals, and possible contracts for civilian nuclear reactors. Russia is also keen on extending the trans-Siberian railroad, which would go through North Korea and terminate in South Korea, to complete the Eurasian Corridor. This railroad project is seen by the Russians as an important economic opportunity.

A Frustrated but Schizophrenic Russia: Double Standards and Contradictions

Russia has, for many years, been disappointed with the different standards applied to Russian nuclear energy projects versus those of other states. Such dissolution with having to face a different standard has also resulted in Russia's weak support for U.S. policy in North Korea. For example, strong U.S. opposition to Russian construction of a light water reactor in Bushehr, Iran, frustrated a Moscow leadership that claimed the reactor was not in violation of UN standards. The Russians compare this with the 1994 Agreed Framework that calls for KEDO to build similar reactors in North Korea. To add insult to injury, the Russians were not awarded any part of the contracts to construct the light water reactors in North Korea.

Dr. Kuchins observed that Russia, with regard to bilateral versus multilateral approaches to dealing with "axis of evil" states, cannot claim to be entirely consistent itself recently. Since the collapse of the USSR, it has been a fairly consistent Russian position to rely on multilateral mechanisms for problem solving. This is not surprising given the fact

that Russia does not have the kind of leverage it used to have in foreign policy, and is a reflection of Russia's weakened status in the international community. Whereas Gromyko and Molotov of the USSR used to say that there was no international problem that could not be solved with the participation of the USSR, Russia is now taking a much lower profile in the international arena. However, the Russian approach to North Korea has been somewhat contradictory in that they have been reluctant for the North Korean issue to be taken to the UN Security Council, and have, instead, been consistently urging the U.S. to deal directly with North Korea. While the Russians have been encouraging a bilateral approach to North Korea, they have also been making various multilateral proposals. One proposal, referred to as a "five-plus-five" plan, involves the five permanent members of the Security Council, along with the EU, Japan, Australia, South Korea and North Korea. But, noted Kuchins, "five-plus-five" is a rather unwieldy situation.

Russian Views of the Nonproliferation Regime

Russia is concerned that U.S. preemptive action, as demonstrated in Iraq, is encouraging other states to hasten their acquisition of nuclear weapons to prevent an analogous American attack. In this sense, Iran and North Korea, with Iraq, have become a trifecta in the nuclear proliferation/axis of evil "competition."

On the part of Russia, there is a fairly consistent tendency to place the blame on the *causes* of proliferation, as opposed to the proliferators themselves. This is part of the legacy of the Soviet period, particularly in the Russian Foreign Ministry, but also in Ministry of Defense, which tended to point the finger of fault at the U.S., rather than at the proliferation source/state.

Prior to discussing Russia's current lack of leverage in the North Korean crisis, Kuchins indicated that, at the official level in Russia, there appears to be some disagreement about the success of North Korea's nuclear program. At the public level, Russian Minister of Atomic Energy, Alexander Rumyantsev, has categorically denied any possibility of the North Koreans having built any nuclear weapons, or being close to building such weapons. However, if one looks beneath the surface of what Rumyantsev said, and examines the writings of Russian academics, then the Russian position is not actually so far from the U.S. public position--which is that the North may already have, or

is very close to having, nuclear weapons. If one talks to other Russian government officials privately, they will present a position which is closer to that of America's public position. In addition, a recent paper written by Russian academic Yuri Fedorov, and published by the Institute of Applied International Research, uncovered a transcript of the presentation of a Kryuchkov (the last director of the KGB) signed document, dating back to 1990. According to the transcript, Kryuchkov asserted, when he presented the signed document to the Politburo, that it was likely that North Korea had in fact developed nuclear capabilities and possibly already had nuclear devices at that time.

Russia's Lack of Leverage in the Current North Korea Situation

Dr. Kuchins explained that Russia's weak influence over North Korea is the result of a long trend towards emphasizing relations with South Korea over those with the North. The decision to switch allegiance from the North to the South was actually started by Gorbachev back in 1990, and subsequently pursued for the most part by Russia until recently. Initially, Russia had hoped that economic aid, development assistance and investment from Seoul would result from opening relations with South Korea. At the same time, the South Koreans were hoping that, by opening their relations to the Russians, they would benefit from Russia's influence over North Korea. But, the result for Russia was not good. They not only failed to receive the economic dividends for which they had hoped from the South, but also lost the influence they had over the North. Kuchins noted that there was tremendous criticism within Russia about the government's decision to abruptly break off ties with North Korea.

In this process, Russia also broke its military ties with the North. Moscow did not renew its friendship treaty with Pyongyang, which had security guarantees in it. Due to Russia's economic collapse in the early 1990s, Moscow could also no longer afford to subsidize its arms sales to North Korea.

Russia's lack of influence over North Korea led to Putin's reliance on personal diplomacy vis à vis North Korea as a means to regain leverage. It is interesting to note that Putin has the dubious distinction of having the closest relationship with Kim Jong Il of any major international leader, having met with the Dear Leader three times in the past three years.

Such a dependency on Putin's personal diplomacy has led Russia to try to "punch above its weight," meaning that Russia has tried to create the impression that they have more influence over Pyongyang than they actually do. This has resulted in some embarrassments for Russia, as in the case when Putin attended a G8 meeting after having met with Kim Jong Il in 2000. He made his debut to the G8 by debriefing other leaders about the Dear Leader, and reported to them a supposed deal that Kim had proposed, which involved trading away the North Korean ballistic missile program in exchange for an opportunity to participate in satellite-to-satellite launches. Shortly after Putin's announcement, Kim Jong Il said that what he had proposed was just a joke.

Kuchins wisely observed that Russia's desire that North Korea remain nuclear-free, coupled with its desire to have some influence over the North, is an inherently conflicting, "Catch 22," situation. On the one hand, the Russians should be more clear, and stronger, in their statements and discussions, with Kim Jong Il and the North Korean leaders, about the dangers of their position on nonproliferation. However, to increase their leverage, they have to develop their political and diplomatic relationship with the North.

Conclusions

The Bush administration has said repeatedly that Russia and China should do more about North Korea. As for Russia, it is unclear what this would involve. It is likely that the Russians could improve their rhetorical position by sending stronger, personal messages to the North Korean leadership. But, in some regard, the Russians are doing a lot through their diplomatic engagement with the North Koreans. Supposedly, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Losyukov met with Kim Jong Il for six hours in January 2003. But the Dear Leader has been virtually secluded ever since. Since that trip, the Russian foreign ministry has been quite consistent in concluding that the U.S. has to do more, and that North Korea is ready to be engaged. But the Russians see that the U.S. has been too preoccupied with Iraq, which, in the Russian view, is a far less dangerous situation than North Korea. It is the concurrence of the North Korean and Iraqi situations over the last six months, and America's divergent policies towards the two situations, which makes the Russians all the more dubious that America's Iraqi policy is about nonproliferation and disarmament. Instead, the Russians feel that Washington's Iraq policy

is more about removing Saddam Hussein and/or U.S. domestic politics. If the U.S. cared more about nonproliferation, then it would in fact have focused more policy energy on North Korea. Dr. Kuchins ended by saying that while there are lots of differences between the U.S. and Russia about the Axis of Evil, the two countries see more eye-to-eye on North Korea than on Iraq and Iran. This has a lot to do with Russia's weak geostrategic position in Asia. The Russians genuinely do not want to see the Korean Peninsula nuclearized, and they genuinely do not want Japan, and possibly other states, to go nuclear.

Michael Swaine, Senior Associate and Co-Director, China Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, on China

In his presentation, Dr. Swaine discussed China's basic interests and objectives regarding the Korean peninsula, how China views the current crisis, and indicated where the Chinese may or may not be able to coordinate efforts with the U.S. and other regional powers in resolving the North Korean crisis.

Dr. Swaine began by noting that many policymakers feel that China has taken a very inactive position with regard to Kim Jong Il's antics, has not done enough to control the situation, and has been unwilling to apply, what some view as a considerable amount of influence, on Pyongyang. A minority of pundits believe that Beijing may actually be supporting North Korea's policies and approach to the issue, including its acquisition of nuclear capabilities, as a deterrent or distraction to the U.S. in various ways.

Yet, these perceptions are based on a misreading of how the Chinese perceive this situation. There is a considerable amount of overlap between China's interests and objectives regarding the North Korean crisis, and those of the U.S. and other powers. But, there are also some critical differences, particularly over the issue of means and processes to getting to some similar objectives. Indicating a likely, closer alignment to the position of the U.S. and other states, there are growing signs that China is not as close at all to having a "lips and teeth" relationship with North Korea. China seems to be increasingly irritated by North Korean behavior. And China is certainly not in favor of the kind of risk-taking in which North Korea has recently engaged, and its acquisition of nuclear capabilities.

However, to assess the degree of overlap between the policies of Beijing and relevant regional nations vis a vis North Korea, one must first examine the fundamental goals of the Chinese leadership. Concerning basic interests and objectives, there does not seem to be cross-the-board agreement within Beijing about China's long term objectives and preferences towards the Korean peninsula. Most likely, the majority of leaders would prefer a long term, unified, non-nuclear peninsula, free from any foreign military presence, and yet a peninsula which has close political and economic ties with Beijing. But, this long- term objective is not regarded as very likely in the minds of most Chinese leaders. In fact, some analysts in China believe that it is virtually impossible to achieve this kind of objective--which does not seem to be the focus of Chinese policy under the present condition. Realistically, based on Dr. Swaine's interactions with the Chinese, Beijing seems to prefer some version of a continuation of the status-quo--a divided peninsula without nuclear weapons--but with a more viable and stable North Korean regime. This regime would be one that is more receptive to Chinese-style reforms, and is evolving towards greater openness and interaction with the South.

In the absence of such reform, the Chinese certainly want a stable North Korea, and the avoidance of conflict escalation on the peninsula. They also want to avoid a "hard landing," a rapid, internal breakdown of the North Korean regime. For the Chinese, a precipitous collapse of the North Korean regime is gravely concerning because of the numerous, unpredictable consequences, not least of which would be a mass influx of refugees into China, or U.S. military intervention in the North.

Like the U.S. and other regional powers, the Chinese certainly do not want a nuclear Korean peninsula. They believe a nuclear peninsula would have serious implications, such as: increased pressure for greater capabilities in Japan, both nuclear and non-nuclear, and greater incentive for Japan to acquire missile defense, which could have applications on issues such as Taiwan. A nuclearized peninsula could also lead to American intervention and military action.

As a whole, the Chinese increasingly see North Korea as a potentially unstable former comrade. They see Pyongyang as rejecting their advice in many instances, and resorting to provocative behavior. But at the same time, they recognize that North Korea is highly sensitized to external pressure and threats. The Chinese are frustrated because they

do not have a level of clear, open communication with the North Korean regime that would allow them to determine, more effectively, how to influence the North's decision making. While this does not mean that there is no interaction, it does mean that the quality of interaction does not allow them to reliably predict the actions of the North Korean leadership. They see the North as employing a high-risk strategy of brinkmanship due to its strong sense of both insecurity and isolation.

China believes that, at least in the past, North Korea's leaders viewed its nuclear program as a "card" that was used to extract assistance and security, while doubting whether it was really a viable program. As a result, the Chinese saw this as something not to be seen as an imminent threat to security on the peninsula.

However, there are now indications that the Chinese have changed their assessment of North Korea's *modus operandi*, that they do see there is a serious nuclear program underway in the North, and that there is an urgency to that program because of the America's response to the North's admission in October 2002. At the same time, the Chinese also see the U.S. as having contributed, to a certain degree, towards this situation on the peninsula. China views the type of rhetoric the U.S. has used to describe the North Korean government, the labeling of North Korea as part of the axis of evil, and Bush's personal comments about "loathing" Kim Jong Il, as totally unnecessary, escalatory language that does not help ameliorate the situation. In particular, a leaked section in the administration's nuclear posture review, referencing the possibility of using nuclear weapons to deal with a nuclear Korean peninsula, has worried Beijing. Dr. Swaine believes that the Chinese fear a heightened U.S. willingness to apply coercion, or even military force, to the North Korea situation in the aftermath of a successful regime change in Iraq. They also believe that North Korea holds this perception in spades. This fear has probably energized the Chinese to increase their efforts to work behind the scenes to try and generate some kind of dialogue and control over the situation.

Unlike the U.S., China seems to want to avoid increasing North Korea's sense of isolation, and certainly wants to avoid losing any influence that it might be able to exert on North Korea by adopting any policy which would lead the North Koreans to shut them out even further. The Chinese also want to avoid increasing the chance of either the U.S. or North Korea resorting to military options on the peninsula. At the same time, the Chinese

strongly desire to have some kind of stability there, and a stronger basis for transitioning the North towards integration with the South.

On a macro-level, Beijing does not want to jeopardize its, rather delicate, two Koreas policy. It has already invested enormous amounts of diplomatic energy, and other activities, in improving its relationship with South Korea in the last decade. Beijing also believes that any reunification on the Korean peninsula will involve the absorption of the North by the South, and shares many of the assumptions of the South Korean government about how to approach the North Koreans. As such, China does not desire a strategy that is wildly out of sync with that South Korea, and wants to actively coordinate policy with Seoul.

What does the Chinese government feel most strongly about regarding the current crisis? Beijing believes that the best path to stability and possible eventual reform in North Korea is one of direct dialogue between the U.S. and North Korea. To be on course for this path of reform, concerned powers should attempt to obtain assistance and security for the North Korean regime in return for genuine denuclearization.

In terms of negotiating mechanics, China would be willing to accept a multilateral approach if North Korea concurs. In the view of Beijing, such a multilateral process would probably involve a small number of participants. But again, China sees the U.S.-North Korea element of any dialogue as an absolutely critical core of any multilateral approach adopted. China can support and facilitate a multilateral effort, but it certainly cannot make it happen. In the coming months, China should be willing to go to increasing lengths to get the dialogue going because of growing fears of what the alternative might be. As of today (April 9, 2003), there are signs that Beijing has apparently increased its level of cooperation with Washington in trying to encourage North Korea, behind the scenes, to agree to some sort of multilateral talks having a U.S.-North Korea dialogue as its core.

In contrast to the views of the U.S., China remains adamantly and consistently opposed to a sanctions-led approach; but China is certainly not averse to applying indirect, or subtle pressure, on the North Koreans at certain times. The case of the recent disruption of oil flow from China to North Korea, which was officially billed as accidental and due to "technical problems," is a good example of China's, strategically-timed, subtle signaling.

There are some analysts in Beijing that believe the Chinese need to contemplate greater use of sanctions or pressure on the North Koreans. However, these individuals do not wield enough influence on the government at this time. If an agreement were to be reached with Pyongyang, the Chinese are also concerned about the implementation of a reliable approach to verification. This would be absolutely essential, and would be key to the development of any coordinated approach over time. And, China would have to be on board in understanding the parameters of any kind of verification regime that might emerge out of discussions with the North.

China is opposed to referring this issue to the Security Council for fear that such action could lead to increased pressure for the application of, most likely, U.S.-led sanctions. China does not want to be placed in a situation of having to either veto or abstain from a vote on sanctions, which would make Beijing look ineffective. While today (April 9, 2003) marks the beginning of back-room Security Council deliberations on sanctions, it is likely that such talks will continue to remain behind closed doors.

Conclusions

Dr. Swaine summarized his presentation by noting that China is willing to provide support vis à vis the issue of creating a multilateral fora to deliberate the North Korean crisis. Beijing is willing provide increasing amounts of support and activity behind the scenes, but is not going to get in front of this issue in any public way. China is opposed to the idea of a sanctions led approach, but does want to see a trading of security and assistance guarantees to the North in exchange for denuclearization. Ultimately, China's main concern regarding any remedy to the North Korea problem will be the question of sanctions. It is highly unlikely that China will assent to any approach that incorporates escalatory logic. Instead, China will likely prefer a more moderated, incremental approach to resolving the crisis on the Korean peninsula.