

SENIOR POLICY SEMINAR



**Asia Pacific Security:
Dilemmas of Dominance,
Challenges to
Community**



EAST-WEST CENTER

SENIOR POLICY SEMINAR 2003

**Asia Pacific Security:
Dilemmas of Dominance,
Challenges to
Community**



EAST-WEST CENTER

The Senior Policy Seminar Series summarizes discussions and conclusions at an annual meeting of senior security officials and analysts from countries of the Asia Pacific region sponsored by the East-West Center. These seminars facilitate nonofficial, frank, and non-attribution discussions of regional security issues. The summary reflects the diverse perspectives of the participants and does not necessarily represent the views of the East-West Center. The price per copy is \$7.50 plus shipping. For information on ordering, contact:

Publication Sales Office
East-West Center
1601 East-West Road
Honolulu, Hawaii 96848-1601
Email: ewcbooks@EastWestCenter.org
Tel.: (808) 944-7145
Fax: (808) 944-7376
Website: www.EastWestCenter.org

© East-West Center 2004

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- v Preface
- vi Executive Summary
- 1 Introduction
- 2 **Part I: The United States in the Asia Pacific Region**
 - 2 The United States as Sole Superpower: Perceptions from Asia
 - 3 The U.S. Response to Terrorism and Iraq
 - 4 Power and Multilateralism in the Aftermath of Iraq
 - 5 U.S. Alliances and Military Engagement with the Region
 - 7 Economic-Security Linkages
- 8 **Part II: Security Issues**
 - 8 Overall Assessment: Relative Stability
 - 8 Southeast Asia: Insurgency and Terrorism
 - 9 Nuclear Proliferation
 - 10 The Korean Peninsula: Living with Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)
- 12 **Appendix: Seminar Participants**

PREFACE

Charles E. Morrison, President, East-West Center

The 2003 Senior Policy Seminar at the East-West Center was the fifth in an annual series of high-level seminars focusing on security issues in the Asia Pacific region. The Senior Policy Seminars bring together senior security officials and analysts from countries around the region for nonofficial, frank, and non-attribution discussions of the differing perspectives on these issues.

In keeping with the Center's founding mission, the objective of the Senior Policy Seminar series is to promote mutual understanding and to explore possibilities for improving the problem-solving capabilities and mechanisms in the region. The Seminar series also supports the Center's contemporary institutional objective of facilitating the building of an Asia Pacific community that includes the United States as a natural and leading member. In addition, the discussions at this Seminar series help inform the agenda of the Center's other research, dialogue, and education activities.

As in previous years, the 2003 Seminar and this report reflect the efforts and contributions of many individuals. Dr. Muthiah Alagappa, director of East-West Center Washington, served as co-convenor and co-moderator of the Seminar. Richard Baker, special assistant to the East-West Center president, also helped organize the Seminar and coordinated the preparation of this report. Dr. Anthony Smith of the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies served as rapporteur and drafted the report.

The Seminar was ably organized and supported by East-West Center Seminars Coordinator Sheree Groves, Program Officer Jane Smith-Martin, Seminars Secretary Marilu Khudari, Seminars Program Assistant Donna "Suzi" Johnston, student assistant Jane Im, research intern Sarabecka Mullen, and student volunteers Sang-Young Park and Maliki. The staff of the East-West Center's Imin Conference Center under Marshal Kingsbury again smoothly prepared the conference venue and associated facilities. Editorial and production assistance for the report were provided by copyeditor Deborah Forbis, and the East-West Center Publications Office under Publications Manager Elisa Johnston. All have my deep appreciation.

As in the past, however, the greatest appreciation and credit for the success of the Seminar go to the participants, for giving their time and sharing their expert knowledge and insights on the multiple complex developments and challenges in this vital world region.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Participants in the East-West Center's fifth annual Senior Policy Seminar agreed that the overall strategic environment of the Asia Pacific region in 2003 is positive. Nevertheless, a number of continuing issues are cause for concern. The threat of terrorism and the potential for the Korean peninsula to lurch into deeper crisis remain the paramount concerns of the United States in the region. On the other hand, non-American participants expressed concern, and in some cases alarm, over the overwhelming power of the United States in international affairs. The multilateral world that many had expected to emerge after the end of the Cold War has not eventuated, and America's position as the sole superpower has strengthened. Much of the Seminar was devoted to discussions of what this means for the countries of Asia as they seek to deal with the United States.

Key points that stood out in the Seminar discussions were:

■ The United States remains predominant in the Asia Pacific region, as throughout the world. U.S. power, rather than giving way to multipolarity, has arguably grown and will continue at least into the medium term. Current international institutional structures, however, are incongruent with the reality of American military and economic dominance.

■ U.S. relationships in the region are being influenced directly by the war on terrorism. The violent attacks of September 11, 2001, caused both an outpouring of sympathy for the United States and recognition by many countries in the Asia Pacific region that terrorism represents a shared threat. However, the war in Iraq has generally worked to lower public esteem for the United States, and not just in Muslim majority countries—although sentiment against U.S. foreign policy is strongest in the latter group of countries.

■ There is a strong perception in the region that the United States, under the Bush administration, is a unilateralist power. Although there are many situations where the United States has chosen to work through multilateral architecture (for example, on North Korea), the war in Iraq has dramatically overshadowed these other cases in the public perception. The contention within the United States, however, may be less between multilateralism and unilateralism than between institutionalized and “a la carte” multilateralism.

■ The United States will maintain its guarantee of Asia Pacific security, a situation welcomed by all. A rearrangement of U.S. forces in South Korea will not

alter the U.S. commitment to that country, or diminish defense capacity in the event of hostilities with North Korea. The Bush administration will continue the Clinton era policy of seeking “places, not bases,” but, where it has bases (Korea and Japan), it is seeking to use them more flexibly and efficiently.

■ The U.S. current account and budget deficits may impose limits on U.S. geopolitical power. Much of this deficit is financed by foreign exchange reserves in East Asian banks. There is little danger that East Asian governments will work in concert to undermine the U.S. currency, but there may be limits to their willingness to hold dollars.

■ Relations between the larger powers in the Asia Pacific region are far more benign today than at the end of the Cold War. Reasons include the absence of the Soviet Union/Russia as a strategic player in the Pacific Ocean, China’s emergence as a market economy and constructive player in global affairs, and moves toward democratization in the region.

■ The war on terrorism has given Southeast Asia a level of prominence for Washington not seen since the Vietnam War. The United States is encouraging the countries of maritime Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines and Indonesia, to improve their security capabilities, including their capabilities in the field of counterterrorism. However, in collaborating on antiterrorism there is a danger that the United States will become entangled in local conflicts such as in Mindanao, which have their origins (and solutions) in local problems rather than in their links with al Qaeda.

■ The war on terrorism has also given an impetus to increased regional security cooperation. However, the threat of terrorism in itself will not likely provide a long-term basis for organizing security arrangements in the region.

■ Nuclear proliferation is a major security problem for the region. Most immediately, North Korea’s nuclear program has the potential to cause neighboring nations to reconsider their own nonnuclear status. The U.S. government sees North Korean nuclear material as a direct threat to its own security, not just a threat to its allies.

■ North Korea’s assertive pursuit of nuclear weapons has created a renewed, grave crisis in Northeast Asia. Its twin goals of regime survival and massive external assistance present serious challenges to U.S. policy and to regional cooperation. There is every possibility that the United States—and the regional and global community—may have to live with a nuclear North Korea.

INTRODUCTION

The 2003 Senior Policy Seminar, the fifth in the annual series, was hosted by the East-West Center on August 17–19. The participants in the Seminar are listed in the Appendix. They included serving and former senior policymakers, journalists, and academics from the United States, Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Australia. The diversity of backgrounds and geographic origins of the participants gave a high degree of heterogeneity to the discussions.

The Seminar reviewed the leading security issues of the wider Asia Pacific region. Much of the discussion related to the preeminent position of the United States in global and regional affairs. Other areas that received attention were, *inter alia*, control of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), North Korea, the war on terrorism, and economic security.

The Senior Policy Seminar series is conducted on a non-attribution basis: The source of statements made during the course of the Seminar may not be identified without the explicit permission of the speaker. The summary of proceedings in this report adheres to the non-attribution principle, and no inferences should be drawn connecting any specific statement or viewpoint with a particular participant.

PART I: THE UNITED STATES IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

The deliberations of the 2003 Senior Policy Seminar repeatedly gravitated toward the subject of the overarching power of the United States. The prevailing view was that the United States is basically a “nonthreatening” superpower in the Asia Pacific. However, many participants expressed concern that the Bush administration prefers unilateral solutions to multilateral solutions, and that the United States might attempt to transform countries, and even entire regions, undermining the Westphalian system of state sovereignty. Others differed, arguing that the war in Iraq is an exception and a likely learning experience for the Bush administration.

The United States as Sole Superpower: Perceptions from Asia

The United States is the most powerful actor in the world, and clearly dominant in the Asia Pacific region. When the Cold War ended, many anticipated that a more multipolar world would emerge, but this has not transpired. U.S. power may well be greater now relative to other actors than in any previous historical period. The United States was characterized (in the words of one participant) as a “hyper power” that is willing to use its supremacy even if this brings Washington into conflict with its traditional allies. An American participant stated that the “vague doctrine” of preemption has further contributed to this image even though preemption is rare.

There was discussion in this context of the idea of the United States as an “empire.” The Bush administration’s assertion of the right of preemption, coupled with the Iraq precedent led some to be concerned that the United States may undertake similar ventures in North Korea or elsewhere. However, other participants argued that such fears are exaggerated, noting that the American public does not want an empire and in fact wants out of Iraq, and that in any case the United States could not afford imperial responsibilities for any significant period of time.

American predominance raises the question for other states, including those in the Asia Pacific region, of how to relate to the United States, and in particular how to influence—especially restrain—the use of U.S. power. Options range from organizing direct opposition to U.S. policy to seeking influence through cooperation (for example, Great Britain seems to have had the most impact on U.S. decision making on Iraq, because it was the United States’ closest ally in the effort). Direct opposition can be dangerous, because of the ability—and

willingness—of the U.S. administration to punish people who disagree. By contrast, countries that supported the United States over Iraq are more likely to gain such benefits as favorable trade deals (e.g., Singapore or Australia).

Seminar participants agreed that there is no one “Asian view” or response to U.S. power. While most countries in the region have a stake in U.S. dominance continuing into the foreseeable future, there is a perception in some quarters that the United States is using its power to promote its own selfish interests, and some governments are alarmed by U.S. arguments in favor of regime change. One participant commented that the U.S. government has become “less democratic than before” in its treatment of its own citizens’ rights, and that U.S. foreign policy follows double standards: Sometimes the United States is a “protector” and sometimes a “bully.” Post–September 11, U.S. foreign policy has become a stronger element in the domestic political debate in many Asian countries. One participant noted that governments in Muslim majority countries must be sensitive to publics that are more suspicious of U.S. foreign policy, with many Muslims convinced that the U.S. response to September 11 was not simply an attack on specific actors (al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein) but a war against Islam.

The U.S. Response to Terrorism and Iraq

Seminar participants noted that the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, have resulted in a “tectonic shift” in the orientation and prioritization of U.S. foreign policy. The key factor was the dramatic demonstration of American domestic vulnerability. The implication drawn by policymakers was that the United States cannot stand by if states fail (like Afghanistan), because the fall-out can have catastrophic implications for both the United States and the international community.

The specific point was made that, prior to September 11, the Bush administration was organizing its foreign-policy doctrine around the assumption that the next strategic challenge would come from China. While competition with China has not completely disappeared from the radar screen of the Bush administration, issues such as Taiwan and national missile defense (NMD) are now on the back burner, while cooperation has been forged on the issues of war on terrorism and the nuclear threat from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK).

Many participants, however, voiced the opinion that consciousness of the terrorist threat itself—the concept of “civilization versus anarchy” in the words of one participant—is not likely to be sufficiently sustained and focused to

provide a basis for building security cooperation within the Asia Pacific region (including China) over the long run. One American stressed that the terrorism issue provides only a limited time window to establish a new international security system to succeed the Cold War system and deal with the new uncertainties and conflicts. Others added that in this situation the United States should develop an overarching strategic framework to respond to terrorism, parallel to U.S. leadership in reshaping the global order after World War II.

Asian participants noted that the countries of the Asia Pacific had supported the United States after September 11 in part because many had also experienced terrorism. However, the United States has subsequently lost some goodwill through its failure to establish clear moral legitimacy for its actions. In the words of one participant, the United States has some way to go to demonstrate its “maturity of power.”

Other participants observed that as the war on terrorism has assumed prominence for Washington, concern over human rights abuses has lessened, especially for countries regarded as important allies against terrorism. One American pointed out that previous American presidents have faced similar contradictory objectives and ultimately found themselves having to “accommodate” dictators of one kind or another. In the aftermath of September 11, the countries of South Asia have particularly benefited from this reordering of priorities. Western criticism of Russia’s Chechnya policies has also grown noticeably quieter.

Some participants were concerned that the war in Iraq may actually work against the establishment of a more comprehensive international strategy for dealing with the terrorist problem. Failure to get a final UN approval before the attack created problems—even among traditional allies—for U.S. diplomacy. One American participant foresaw that the Iraq operation could radicalize a whole new generation of Arab youth.

Others noted in this connection that the United States has failed to make a clear distinction between local terrorists and those of global reach. For example, the problems of the Philippine Muslim south are of long standing, and although al Qaeda may have had contact with individuals within the separatist movement, it would be a mistake to confuse a historic regional struggle with international terrorism.

Power and Multilateralism in the Aftermath of Iraq

A common criticism by Asian participants was that the Bush administration now only looks to multilateralism on a selective basis, when it suits U.S.

interests. In this view, if Washington cannot get the answer it wants from the international community, it is prepared to take unilateral action (as in Iraq).

While acknowledging these sentiments, American participants generally cautioned against overemphasizing the Bush administration's unilateralist tendencies. One pointed out that attention to Bush's decisions over the Kyoto Protocol, U.S. withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, and the war in Iraq—all deemed to have breached multilateral agreements and understandings—has simply overshadowed instances where multilateralism has been the key approach to handling emerging crises. North Korea and Liberia are recent examples. Another participant saw essential continuity between the Clinton and Bush administrations in this regard, noting that Clinton had grown lukewarm on institutional multilateralism during his second term. These participants argued that the real policy debate within the United States is between institutional multilateralism and ad hoc multilateralism. The Bush administration, they said, will try the former before moving to the latter, but will ultimately take whatever steps are necessary to preserve fundamental national interests—as all states do.

U.S. Alliances and Military Engagement with the Region

There was broad agreement in the Seminar that U.S. armed forces are, on the whole, welcomed in the Asia Pacific region. As one Asian participant put it, in Northeast Asia the United States remains a “nonthreatening” superpower. Some asserted that the alternative of U.S. military disengagement from the region would likely lead to a nuclear and conventional arms race in East Asia, causing China and others to divert resources into military buildups. Most governments accordingly see a continued U.S. presence as important to avoid unnecessary military competition in the region.

Most of the discussion of the U.S. regional presence focused on the planned restructuring of the U.S. forces in the region, particularly in the Republic of Korea (ROK). Concern was expressed that the reconfiguration would be seen as tantamount to, or at least presaging, a withdrawal, which would be unsettling in the ROK and might lead to miscalculation by the isolated and unpredictable North Korean regime. U.S. commentators made the case that the eventual strategic relocation of U.S. forces in South Korea to south of the Han River (in Seoul) is not intended to remove the U.S. “tripwire” on the peninsula. In the age of missile technology, U.S. forces anywhere in ROK act as a tripwire deterrent. Relocation will give the United States both better accommodations and the flexibility to utilize its forces throughout the region (and beyond) with greater access to transfer troops by sea and air. It was also

pointed out that the projected relocation will probably be undertaken only within a three-to-five-year time frame. Finally, the ROK's indigenous defense capability has also improved markedly since the 1990s. In sum, most American participants did not see the relocation of American forces as a reduction of defense capacity in South Korea.

Participants also commented that the Bush administration's general policy on a forward presence in Asia is consistent with that of the previous Clinton administration. Forces will be retained in Japan and the ROK, while in Southeast Asia the United States will look for "places not bases." Outside of its existing bases the United States will look to enhance its access without establishing "home ports." These participants dismissed rumors of U.S. plans to establish bases in the Philippines or Singapore as simply unfounded—although they acknowledged that expansion of military cooperation with both countries is well underway.

A major outcome of the war on terrorism is that the United States has been able to restore, or enhance, military-to-military relations with a number of countries in the Asia Pacific region (as part of generally improving diplomatic relations), including in cases where this was previously thought to be extremely difficult. Speakers noted that Indonesia is something of an exception in this regard. The Bush administration would like to restore military-to-military relations with the Indonesian military (TNI), in view of TNI's important role in maintaining Indonesia's stability and in dealing with terrorism. Equally, Washington realizes that TNI must be reformed. The case for normalized military-to-military relations was seriously undermined by the murder of two U.S. citizens (and one Indonesian) in Papua in 2002. This incident, accusations of the possible involvement of Indonesian army personnel, and Jakarta's unwillingness to face the issue openly are considered the main reasons for continuing congressional opposition to restoration of military cooperation and assistance.

One American participant argued that the U.S. alliance structure in the Asia Pacific region looks increasingly less stable in the medium term. In contrast to the European alliance structure, which was formed in opposition to the Soviet Union, a series of bilateral "hub-and-spoke" relationships evolved in East Asia. There is no prospect of forging a NATO-type alliance in Asia as there is no common threat requiring a traditional alliance. At the same time, the emergence of China is altering the landscape, and may in time create a "two hub" Asia Pacific. Japan's prolonged economic stagnation has had a negative impact on Japan's influence in the region and thus on this major leg of the American alliance network. The South Korean alliance is even shakier. Particularly among young Koreans, the need for a foreign military presence is unclear. This does

not suggest that the alliance relationships are “collapsing,” but the power configuration may alter in the foreseeable future. The alliance framework will require careful management by the United States and its regional allies.

Economic-Security Linkages

A Seminar agenda item on economic-security linkages occasioned a very focused and compelling discussion of a subject that is frequently neglected in political-security forums, yielding a keener appreciation of the importance of interactions between national economic policies and geopolitical issues.

Participants agreed with the general perception that the countries of Northeast Asia see the U.S. economy as indispensable to the health of their own economies. Likewise, the health of the U.S. economy, and therefore its ability to project power, is dependent on trade and financial linkages with East Asia—the combined economies of which now total one quarter of global gross domestic product (GDP). However, an American speaker sounded a strong warning note that because of this dependency, in the future “the United States will be constrained by economics.”

The international financial standing of the United States has serious medium-term vulnerabilities. On top of spiraling budget deficits, Iraq and Afghanistan require more resources than was initially thought necessary. The bill may yet prove too costly for Congress, and/or the American people, to accept. These expenditures, combined with the large tax cuts, have led to a budget deficit that may reach 6 percent of gross national product (GNP), well above its peak of 3 percent during the Reagan years. As a result, the United States depends on the willingness of foreign governments and financial institutions, particularly in East Asia (which now accounts for 70 percent of global foreign exchange reserves), to fund the deficit. It is considered very unlikely that East Asian governments will decide to exercise this power to undermine the U.S. dollar—as France did in the 1960s—because any such action would also destabilize their own economies. But they are unlikely to continue buying low-yielding dollars indefinitely. Once they stop, dollar values will fall and U.S. bond yields will have to increase. Thus this dependency imposes limitations on the U.S. ability to “go it alone.”

Another example mentioned of the complicated economic-security nexus was trade policy. The Bush administration is actively pursuing bilateral or “mini-lateral” free trade agreements with a number of countries. At the same time, protectionist pressures are mounting on Washington, which could undermine the administration’s international economic goals as well as its political relations with these countries.

PART II: SECURITY ISSUES

Overall Assessment: Relative Stability

Participants generally agreed that relations among governments in the Asia Pacific region are more benign now than at the end of the Cold War. Major factors are: (1) the security dynamics are simpler, with the Soviet Union/Russia no longer a strategic player and China seeking to integrate into the global economy; (2) with a grave threat from international terrorism, the larger powers have found common interest in meeting this threat; (3) interdependence is now far greater, with all the main actors in the Asia Pacific either market economies or quickly heading that way; and (4) former ideological divisions have largely disappeared.

Nonetheless, a variety of security concerns remain and could undermine the present sense of stability.

Southeast Asia: Insurgency and Terrorism

After September 11, President Bush initially spoke in sweeping terms about tackling terrorism everywhere, but the administration quickly narrowed its declared focus to terrorism with a “global reach”—principally al Qaeda and affiliated groups. Thus in practice, the U.S. targets are groups with the capability and will to attack U.S. interests. Within the Asia Pacific region, Southeast Asia has come into the sharpest focus because of the presence of terrorist elements with links to al Qaeda. And yet in Southeast Asia (as elsewhere), it is not always clear which specific groups constitute a terrorist threat.

Participants pointed to the southern Philippines as an example of a situation where Washington may have overfocused on a local group, diverting attention and resources from its true targets. It was noted that the United States has given substantial assistance to the Philippines government to fight Abu Sayyaf, a relatively small criminal band with some personal al Qaeda connections. But at the same time, the U.S. government has not labeled the much larger and more politically significant Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) as a “terrorist organization” even though some MILF leaders have had contact with al Qaeda and maintain training camps open to militants in the region. (This was in deference to Manila’s hopes to negotiate an accommodation with the MILF as it had done with another, larger Muslim militant group some years ago.)

The terrorist threat in Indonesia also involves complex local circumstances. The ability of Indonesia to rein in the terrorist threat is considered very limited. As one participant noted, Indonesian officials have long realized that there was a terrorist problem in the country, but their ability to deal with it has been constrained by the influence of political Islam. The Indonesian government's reluctance to act against the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) prior to the Bali bombing in October 2002 was due to concern that mainstream Muslim opinion might have misinterpreted a crackdown on radical groups as an affront to Islam. There was, in fact, little perception in Indonesia that these groups constituted a significant threat. The Bali bombing demonstrated the reality of the threat, and President Megawati's government quickly moved to arrest large numbers of JI members. However, the Indonesian public still needs assurances that counterterrorism is not aimed at "a particular community" within Indonesia. In the Indonesian case as in others, while arrests of terrorists are important, long-term success in countering terrorism requires elimination of the conditions that give rise to terrorist groups.

Nuclear Proliferation

For much of the post-World War II era, nuclear proliferation has been contained in Asia, but this situation could change rapidly, and it is not difficult to imagine a situation where there is a band of nuclear states from Iran to the Koreans. In order to keep the lid on the Pandora's box of nuclear weapons, one American participant argued that the international community should: (1) attempt to prevent the DPRK becoming a nuclear weapons state; (2) reinforce the nonnuclear status of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan; (3) accept that elimination of weapons in South Asia is not possible, but aim to reduce tension and bring India and Pakistan formally into the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) regime; and (4) pressure Pakistan and China to stop the transfer of questionable, and outright illegal, materials for use in nuclear weapons programs in other countries.

As an illustration of how quickly the situation could change, it was noted that while currently public opinion is a check on the development of nuclear weapons in Japan, if a decision were made by the government, Japan could go nuclear in approximately a month. It was argued that for the United States, even a friendly government going nuclear could be a disaster given the dramatic impact on the strategic landscape. (In this connection, one U.S. participant commented that talk by some Americans prior to September 11 supporting Japan's acquisition of nuclear weapons as part of a strategy of countering China had been extremely dangerous, unworkable, and had given a false impression of U.S. goals.)

Other participants, principally from Asia, stressed the problem of “vertical” proliferation. Some emphasized the failure of the United States (and other permanent members of the UN Security Council) to reduce nuclear weapons as called for under the NPT. They noted that the United States has withdrawn from the ABM Treaty, has refused to sign the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ), and is even developing the technology for tactical nuclear “bunker busters” to deter rogue states. Several speakers also argued that the United States has employed double standards in the enforcement of the NPT, making exceptions in the past for Israel and now for India and Pakistan. One speaker described Pakistan’s nuclear program as particularly dangerous given the clouded future of Pakistan’s government, and its possible inability to control nuclear know-how.

The Korean Peninsula: Living with Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)

There was broad agreement that North Korea’s nuclear weapons program is the most acute immediate security problem in the Asia Pacific region. The United States is particularly concerned over the possibility that North Korea might transfer weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to international terrorist groups. Any conflict with the North would wreak horrendous damage on South Korea, and DPRK missiles could also reach Japan. However, the North Korean regime appears to view nuclear weapons as the key to its basic objectives of ensuring regime survival and obtaining foreign aid flows, and it is not clear that North Korea can be persuaded to abandon its nuclear arms program.

There was also consensus that the most positive development in this area is North Korea’s agreement to multilateral “six party” talks (Japan, South Korea, North Korea, China, Russia, and the United States), apparently in response to strong Chinese pressure and after long insisting on direct negotiations with Washington over its security demands. The Bush administration for its part had staunchly resisted dealing bilaterally with Pyongyang, so it welcomed the multilateral framework despite the additional difficulties of achieving a coordinated position among the five.

Each of the parties, however, brings different agendas to the six-party negotiations. Japan has special concerns regarding Japanese citizens abducted by North Korean agents in the past and their families. China has grown increasingly dissatisfied with the DPRK’s nuclear strategy, but participants assessed that China will continue to resist the idea of regime change in the north. South Korea’s overriding concern is that military conflict be avoided, and Seoul favors more efforts toward dialogue on political issues and economic cooperation.

Seminar participants agreed that the essence of a negotiated deal is North Korean agreement to denuclearize in return for security assurances from Washington. But there was much skepticism that such an outcome is achievable. The Bush administration has publicly stated that it will not invade and that it has no “hostile intent” toward North Korea, but the leadership in Pyongyang either finds—or pretends to find—this hard to accept. Indeed some observers question whether the U.S. administration can in fact live with even a “nonnuclear” North Korean regime. One American participant pointed out that a security guarantee would not insure against further attempts by Pyongyang to extort aid from the United States, and another U.S. speaker opined that North Korea’s nuclear claims are basically a bluff, which means it will never allow proper verification anyway. An Asian participant added that the North Korean regime likely believes that its survival depends on maintaining its nuclear option, in order to have continuing negotiating leverage.

The discussion of the Korean situation ended on a somber note. One participant observed that the dilemma for the United States in this case is not actually whether or not it can live with a nonnuclear North Korea, because the reality is that there is every possibility that the United States—and the regional and global community—will have to live with a nuclear North Korea.

APPENDIX

Seminar Participants

Dr. Isher Judge AHLUWAHLIA

*Chairman
International Food Policy Research
Institute*

Dr. Samina AHMED

*Project Director for Pakistan/
Afghanistan
International Crisis Group
Pakistan*

Dr. Muthiah ALAGAPPA

*Director
East-West Center Washington
Washington, D.C.*

Mr. Richard W. BAKER

*Special Assistant to the President
East-West Center*

Mr. Endy BAYUNI

*Deputy Chief Editor
The Jakarta Post
Indonesia*

Ambassador Stephen BOSWORTH

*Dean
Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy
Tufts University*

Dr. CHOI Young-jin

*Chancellor
Institute of Foreign Affairs and
National Security
Republic of Korea*

Mr. Ralph A. COSSA

*President
Pacific Forum/CSIS
Honolulu*

Secretary Jesus DUREZA

*Presidential Assistant to Mindanao
The Philippines*

Mr. Robert J. EINHORN

*Senior Adviser
International Security Program
Center for Strategic and International
Studies
Washington D.C.*

Admiral Thomas B. FARGO

*Commander
U.S. Pacific Command
Honolulu*

Dr. Fereidun FESHARAKI

*Senior Fellow
East-West Center*

Professor Leon FUERTH

*Research Professor of International
Affairs
Elliott School of International Affairs*

Mr. Allan GYNGELL

*Executive Director
Lowy Institute for International Policy
Australia*

Ms. Nasima HAIDER

*Director General (Americas & the
Pacific)
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Bangladesh*

Dr. David HALE

*Economist
Hale Advisers*

Ambassador John HOLZMAN

*Foreign Policy Adviser
U.S. Pacific Command
Honolulu*

Dr. H.H. Michael HSIAO

*Executive Director
Center for Asia-Pacific Area Studies
Academia Sinica
Taiwan*

The Honorable Thomas HUBBARD

*U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of
Korea*

Mr. Frank JANNUZI

*East Asia Specialist
Minority Staff
U.S. Senate Foreign Relations
Committee*

Dr. Michael MASTANDUNO

*Chair
Dept. of Government
Dartmouth College*

Mr. C. Raja MOHAN

*Strategic Affairs Editor
The Hindu
India*

Dr. Charles E. MORRISON

*President
East-West Center*

Dr. Sukh Deo MUNI

*Professor
School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
India*

Ambassador J. Stapleton ROY

*Managing Director
Kissinger Associates, Inc.*

Ambassador Charles SALMON, Jr.

*Foreign Policy Adviser
Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies
Honolulu*

Dr. SHEN Dengli

*Professor and Deputy Director
Center for American Studies
Fudan University
China*

Mr. Hiroshi SHIGETA

*Senior Fellow
The Japan Institute of International
Affairs
Japan*

Mr. H.C. STACKPOLE

*President
Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies
Honolulu*

Dr. Keizo TAKEMI

*Member
House of Councillors
Japan*

Dr. Sarasin VIRAPHOL

*Executive Vice President
Charoen Pokphand Co., Ltd.
Thailand*

General (Ret.) Agus WIDJOJO

*Former Deputy Chairman of MPR
Former Chief of Staff for
Territorial Affairs
Indonesia*

Dr. YAN Xuetong

*Director
Institute of International Studies
Tsinghua University
China*

The East-West Center is an education and research organization established by the U.S. Congress in 1960 to strengthen relations and understanding among the nations of Asia, the Pacific, and the United States. The Center promotes the development of a stable, prosperous, and peaceful Asia Pacific community through cooperative study, training, and research. Funding for the Center comes from the U.S. government, with additional support provided by private agencies, individuals, corporations, and Asia Pacific governments.

The East-West Center Senior Policy Seminars bring together senior security officials and analysts from countries of the Asia Pacific region for nonofficial, frank, and non-attribution discussions of regional security issues. In keeping with the institutional objective of the East-West Center, the series is intended to promote mutual understanding and to explore possibilities for improving the problem-solving capabilities and mechanisms in the emerging Asia Pacific community.



EAST-WEST CENTER