

The second paper, "Resolving the North Korean Nuclear Issue: A South Korean Perspective" by Dr. Man-Kwon Nam, explored South Korean attitudes and options in a very focused and practical manner. This paper argued that the North Korean government had pursued a deliberately devious course in initiating its nuclear weapon programme in order to offset growing South Korean conventional military advantages and to strengthen its very weak diplomatic hand in dealings with the South and the United States. The Kim regime was almost certain to continue its tactics of brinkmanship, stalling, and blackmail in protecting the programme. The nuclear programme was initiated to protect the fundamental survival of the Kim regime and the regime would abandon the programme only if it felt that its very survival was at risk.

Dr. Nam argued that any attempt to develop a responsive policy must begin with a good understanding of the origins and nature of the Kim regime and its "Juche" ideology. He also stressed the double-edged nature of the North's basic policy: It plays a clever negotiating game with the South, the US, and the IAEA in order to avoid international sanctions but works aggressively to sustain a maximum sense of "nuclear suspicion." Of course, even if IAEA safeguards and inspections were accepted by the North, there is little chance that bombs or major portions of the nuclear weapon-making infrastructure would ever be uncovered.

Dr. Nam stressed the importance of understanding the North's extremely strong desire to drive a wedge between the South and the US. Much of the North's manoeuvring was designed to achieve this. The best course of action, in the paper's view, was to press for the introduction of sound IAEA controls to prevent any further weapon development in the North (accepting that some weapons may already exist or be close to completion). The full support of Russia, Japan, and (especially) China would be necessary to persuade the Kim regime that this was the best course to pursue. The use of sanctions and other aggressive measures must be viewed as very risky and these options (with their risk of precipitating war on the peninsula) must be weighed against the risk of allowing the North to pursue its nuclear policy. Attempting to tie Northern acquiescence to various types of economic incentives might be the better course. Ultimately, however, it was difficult to see how incentives or concessions would work.

The discussion following Dr. Nam's presentation began by noting the interesting possibility that the North's nuclear programme might be a bluff. The North Korean reactors create plutonium as a byproduct of technological limitations. The Kim regime might be pretending to develop nuclear weapons in order to gain maximum political leverage. Others noted that even if this were true, the Kim regime nevertheless has a long-term goal of acquiring nuclear weapons and would likely act in the same way regardless of its current success in developing weapons. Although an interesting possibility, it was best to assume that the North Korean programme was genuine and act accordingly.