

Another consideration that emerged in the discussion was the fact that people in the region tended not to know very much about each other. There was quite profound ignorance about the history and concerns of neighbours, even amongst elites. Indeed, the people in some states were ill-informed about their own countries, usually as a result of deliberate government efforts. The role of the media in countering this tendency was discussed but it was unclear what impact it could have, particularly given the decision of some governments in the region to control the content and nature of media reports. This was at least in part a function of the political culture of the states in the region and Westerners had to be cautious in recognizing these differences. Reiterating an earlier point, one participant remarked that there was a fair degree of latent animosity in the region, in large part a function of well-remembered history. This was partly responsible for the tendency of each state to consider virtually every neighbour a potential threat.

The discussion concluded with two contrasting assessments of the degree of perceived threat in the region. One participant suggested that only North Korea posed a real threat and that primarily to South Korea. Other states were dealing with potential threats that didn't, perhaps, warrant special efforts to develop confidence building or other security management arrangements. Another participant, however, stressed that there was ample reason for virtually every state in the region and those nearby to be concerned about its security. There was plenty of potential for concern and things looked as if they might get worse rather than better. Therefore, security management efforts — including confidence building agreements — were definitely worth exploring and promoting.

The second day's session began with the presentation of Dr. Jin-Pyo Yoon's paper, "North Korea's Nuclear and Ballistic Missile Programs from a Non-Proliferation Perspective: Challenge to Verification." Dr. Yoon argued that different perceptions of what motivated the North Korean government to pursue its clandestine nuclear programme could suggest different policy options and approaches. Understanding the motivations of the Kim regime would suggest the most appropriate response. The paper's main theme held that the North Korean government had decided to develop nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles in order to sustain the faltering and extremely insecure Kim regime. These programmes served both a military and a diplomatic objective: (1) They offset increasingly powerful South Korean conventional military capabilities and (2) they increased negotiating leverage with the international community (especially the United States and Japan) by obliging it to deal directly with North Korea. Although these might seem to be inconsistent or contradictory objectives, the Kim regime did not see them in this way. Additionally, the North Korean government could sell its technological expertise in the nuclear and ballistic missile areas as well as the products of that expertise — the nuclear weapons and missiles themselves.