

THE MULTILATERAL DIMENSIONS OF THE KOREAN PROBLEM¹

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Introduction

Most of the negotiations which led to the earlier important breakthroughs in arms control, such as the SALT, INF, and START Treaties, were bilateral, carried out between the United States and the Soviet Union, and concentrated on armaments in Europe and North America. Meanwhile, some smaller countries such as Canada have pursued a more multilateral approach to the subject of arms control.

Ever since 1950 the Republic of Korea (also known as the ROK, or South Korea) has been facing a crucial security problem in its relations with the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea (also known as the DPRK, or North Korea), something which has extremely serious implications for several neighbouring countries, and in fact for all of Northeast Asia as well as other states on the Pacific Rim. While the question of the reunification of the two Koreas is fundamentally a bilateral matter for the two principals, the question of arms control on the Korean Peninsula has repercussions for the security of so many other countries that its analysis demands a multilateral approach.

To quote retired US Lieutenant-General William Odom,

The Korean peninsula is the only place in the world where a military confrontation directly involved the four great powers — the United States, the Soviet Union, China, and Japan.²

This 1997 Korea/Canada North Pacific Arms Control Workshop (NPACW III) continues the series in which unofficial representatives

¹ The views expressed in this paper are those of the author only.

² William Odom, *Trial After Triumph: East Asia After the Cold War* (Hudson Institute, 1992). p. 46.