



IIPS Lecture Series 2006

North Korea and the Future of Northeast Asian Security

Lecture by Dr. Patrick Cronin
Director of Studies at the International Institute for Strategic Studies

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On December 12, 2006 the Institute for International Policy Studies (IIPS), with the support of the Nippon Foundation, hosted a lecture on the topic “North Korea and the Future of Northeast Asian Security,” delivered by Dr. Patrick Cronin, Director of Studies at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). The venue for this event was the Hotel Grand Hill Ichigaya.



Dr. Cronin began his lecture by citing the problems in the Middle East as an example of conflict, and by noting that the 9/11 terrorist attacks of 2001 had caused the focus of US strategic interests to move away from Asia and towards the Middle East and countermeasures against terrorism. After pointing out that the world has changed in the five years that have elapsed since 9/11, he then proceeded to make the following observations.



With regard to the North Korean problem, the USA harbors a deep-seated distrust of North Korea and has conventionally chosen to press them with ultimatums. However, whatever the symbolic significance of financial sanctions, they would not be effective enough to cause a weapons of mass destruction program to be abandoned. In reality there is also internal disagreement within the US administration over whether to encourage regime change or policy change in North Korea.

The US should adopt an all-encompassing approach to North Korea by including five essential elements: deterrence, containment, negotiation, alliance operations, and nation-building.

In particular, in terms of containment, both missile and nuclear development represent extremely urgent problems. Although sanctions may be more effective, it is

extremely important to leave the door open for dialogue and to strengthen the operational management of the alliance at the same time.

Judging from the present situation, there is also the possibility that the internal collapse of North Korea would lead to regional instability. Accordingly, it is impossible to ignore China's regional rise, which makes coordination between the principal nations vital. Although the USA wields overwhelming power, it would be unwise for the USA to make decisions unilaterally.

Since Japan exercises power of a kind that is unique within the international community, its cooperation will also be indispensable. In terms of global security, it is undesirable for countries such as Japan to be left completely on the sidelines. It is essential that Japan contribute willingly.



The USA cannot afford to take a laissez-faire attitude towards existing problems over the next few years—it must without fail display the required leadership. It is to be hoped that, in cooperation with the USA, Japan will pull its weight and make a contribution to international security.

Having made these wide-ranging comments, Dr. Cronin concluded the lecture by responding to questions from the floor.