

THE NORTHEAST ASIA COOPERATION DIALOGUE

A Report on the second meeting of Northeast Asian Cooperation Dialogue, co-hosted by the National Institute for Research Advancement (NIRA) and the University of California's Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation (IGCC).

After the Cold War, the international situation has become vague. There are still sources of instability and therefore, there is a real need for a security dialogue in Northeast Asia. Such a dialogue is now underway on an unofficial basis among the six countries of Northeast Asia. The Tokyo meeting follows the first meeting in this dialogue, which was held in October of last year in the United States. The Northeast Asian Cooperation Dialogue aims at building the sense of mutual confidence among the nations of this region and to ensure long term stability.

There is a new appreciation within the Asian-Pacific region for the potential value of such a multilateral discussion of security and other issues to supplement the bilateral relations that have traditionally characterized this region. Region-wide cooperation is already occurring in the economic sphere through APEC and is beginning in the security sphere in the post-ministerial conference (PMC) of ASEAN, and is assuming a concrete form through the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). This leaves one major gap in the developing network of multilateral forums for discussion of security and other-issues--Northeast Asia.

The second meeting of Northeast Asian Cooperation Dialogue was held under the co-sponsorship of IGCC and NIRA in Tokyo (at Keio Plaza Hotel) on May 16-17, 1994. At this May meeting, each country's perspectives on Northeast Asian security, opinions about measures to improve a sense of confidence, detailed confidence building measures (CBMs), and how to proceed at future meetings was discussed. Background papers were prepared on some of these topics. The participants consisted of two private researchers, one staff member of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, one defense-related civilian, and one uniformed defense officer from each country. All government officials and military personnel participated in their private capacities.

A common understanding was reached as to the need for mutual reassurance among the nations of this region. Towards this end, there was a general understanding that military Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) might be too narrow a concept for this region. CBMs also carry a strong connotation of European institutions and experiences that might not be applicable to Northeast Asia. Instead, there was a common understanding on the need to develop Mutual Reassurance Measures, or MRMs as a concept uniquely suited to the Northeast Asian region. MRMs are designed to promote a base of mutual confidence and reassurance. MRMs encompass not only military CBMs, but also broader measures as

We contacted North Korea on numerous occasions and through numerous channels to ask them to participate in the meeting, and they did send a supportive note. In the end, however, North Korea did not attend this meeting.

There was a general perception that the North Korean nuclear issue is the most important security concern in the region. All participants also agreed that multilateral forms of security cooperation have real potential in Northeast Asia.

The participation of North Korea is indispensable to make this meeting effective. In fact, North Korea is a member of this dialogue, having participated at the founding organizational meeting in July 1993. A strong desire was unanimously expressed to see North Korea participate at all future meetings.

A unanimous understanding was reached concerning the desirability of continuing the Dialogue process. We will announce the next meeting in the Dialogue series in the near future.