

NORTHEAST ASIA COOPERATION DIALOGUE V
Seoul, Korea
September 9-12, 1996
Korea Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security
University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation

The purpose of the Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD) is to enhance mutual understanding, confidence, and cooperation among countries in Northeast Asia through dialogue. The Dialogue is informal: participants include private academics and government officials who act in a private capacity, not as government representatives. Each country sends a foreign ministry official, a defense ministry official, a uniformed military officer, and two private participants (see attached participant list). The informality of the process encourages lively and frank discussion, but it means that consensus reached at meetings is not operational and can only serve as a suggestion for government departments of different countries.

The Seoul session was the fifth meeting of the NEACD process. To achieve its goal of promoting the habit of dialogue, NEACD rotates the hosting responsibilities among its members. This helps to expand understanding of the NEACD process among officials and citizens in each country. Previous Dialogue meetings were held in La Jolla, California in 1993; Tokyo in 1994; Moscow in 1995; and Beijing in 1996. The Seoul meeting included participants from the Republic of Korea, Russia, China, Japan, and the United States. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea attended the preparatory session in July 1993, and NEACD participants would welcome its participation in the Dialogue process.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

I. National Perspectives on Northeast Asian Security

At each Dialogue the first session is devoted to a discussion of the current situation in Northeast Asia as presented by the Foreign Ministry official. The presentation usually includes the country's policies in the region and its concerns about the policies of other states in the region. Following each presentation, there is a question and answer period when participants ask questions about issues raised in the presentation.

II. Military Perspectives on Northeast Asia Security

This session follows the same format as the first session, but involves either defense ministry officials or military officers giving brief presentations about military perspectives on the current security situation in Northeast Asia, with questions and answers following each presentation. This session provides a unique opportunity for defense/military officials from Northeast Asia to engage in this kind of discussion in a multilateral setting.

III. Principles to Govern State-to-State Relations in Northeast Asia

The Dialogue is engaged in an ongoing series of discussions about the normative basis for managing relations among the participant countries. Principles articulate common goals and can serve as the basis for regional cooperation. To formulate general principles of international relations during a period of rapid, pervasive change is a daunting task. But Dialogue participants have found that the process of discussing principles enhances mutual understanding and respect despite areas of disagreement.

IV. Mutual Reassurance Measures

A Dialogue study project has identified possible activities to enhance trust that Dialogue participants could undertake or suggest to their governments. The Dialogue is now engaged in an ongoing series of discussions about which activities would be practical and fruitful. The Dialogue's general approach to mutual reassurance measures (also known as confidence building measures) is to proceed in an incremental way, focusing first on dialogue and exchanges to cultivate a sense of cooperation and lay a sound foundation for future efforts.

V. Regional Economic Cooperation: The NEACD Energy Workshop

At each Dialogue meeting, a non-security issue is the basis of discussion for at least one session, when potential options for regional cooperation are examined. Subjects of past discussions included economic complementarity, the environment, and food and agriculture issues. In Beijing, the strategic implications of energy issues, especially the security implications of rising energy demand and nuclear energy use, were examined. This discussion proved so interesting that the NEACD decided to focus on the issue with an extended two-day Energy Workshop, held immediately after the Dialogue on Sept. 11-12, 1996. (see attached agenda and participant list)

FUTURE PLANS

NEACD VI will be held in New York in Spring 1997. The NEACD organized a working group which will discuss defense information sharing for the day before NEACD VI and report the conclusions of discussion to the NEACD VI. The NEACD also agreed to examine an economic issue (still undecided) in another Workshop after the NEACD VI as well as consideration of a future workshop on emergency response cooperation.