

**Japan Chair Forum**  
**“Outlook for U.S.-Japan Relations and East Asian Security”**  
**Hisahiko Okazaki, Director of the Okazaki Institute**  
**CSIS, Washington DC**  
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**Summary of Remarks by Ambassador Hisahiko Okazaki**

In his remarks, Ambassador Hisahiko Okazaki focused on North Korea.

North Korea presents a difficult problem, he said, but not one that is impossible to solve. Ambassador Okazaki noted that because the two basic conditions that enabled the United States and North Korea to arrive at compromises in 1994 and 1999 have not changed, it should be possible for those countries to reach another agreement. These two conditions are the military balance on the Korean Peninsula and North Korea's failed economy.

North Korea has about 10,000 artillery pieces just north of the armistice line, which target a significant portion of South Korea, including Seoul. In the event of war, these guns would contribute to enormous number of deaths, according to General Gary Luck, former Commander-in-Chief of U.S. forces in Korea. Former Defense Secretary William Perry wrote in his 1999 analysis of North Korea (now known as the “Perry Report” and regarded by Ambassador Okazaki as still one of the best analyses of the North Korea situation) that the onset of war would cause at least 500,000 casualties. Okazaki believes that these immense costs serve to deter the beginning of military action.

Okazaki continued by noting that even if tremendous improvements in military technology increase the ability of the United States or South Korea to eliminate more of the North's artillery pieces in one strike, and thus reduce the number of probable casualties to half of what Luck and Perry predict, the price is still too great. In his view, because no South Korean politician can say that South Korea is ready to make such a sacrifice, South Korea is definitely against the military option. The same goes for Japanese and U.S. politicians.

The second element that made compromise possible twice before was the failed North Korean economy. Every economic indicator tells us that the North Korean economy is in terrible shape, Okazaki said. The country, which is in the midst of a fourteen-year decline, has only 20-30% of its factories working. Okazaki believes that North Korea is in dire need of everything, from food to oil. He thinks that the poor state of the North's economy brought it to the bargaining table in 1994 and 1999 and will do so again.

While two major conditions have not changed since 1999, however, Okazaki noted that he has had to modify his view on the situation in North Korea since the Bush Administration came into power. The hurdle for compromise is now much higher than the one under the Clinton Administration. One major obstacle to compromise was brought about by President Bush's inclusion of North Korea in his “Axis of Evil” speech.

Since the compromise becomes more difficult, North Korea may think that nuclear armament is the only way of deterrence. This was one reason that Okazaki thought the crisis would come to a head this summer. He no longer believes this, however.

With the massive changes in the world following the Iraq war and the consequent shift of U.S. policy priorities, Okazaki now believes that finding a solution to the North Korean crisis hinges on the Middle East. Until the U.S. begins to resolve the serious problems it faces in both Iraq and Israel/Palestine, it cannot and will not focus on North Korea. Therefore, in order to get the prospects of the North Korean issue, you have to see the prospects of the Middle East situation first. As the issues in the Middle East are extremely thorny, however, it will be at least another two years before the White House will turn its full attention to North Korea, according to Okazaki.

Ambassador Okazaki noted that while the Bush Administration's policy toward North Korea has been criticized as a non-policy, it has succeeded in containing Pyongyang thus far. He praised the 1994 Agreed Framework as having kept North Korea from obtaining twenty to thirty nuclear weapons but at the same time, urged Washington to maintain a tough stance to deny North Korea nuclear arms. A policy of containment with the threat of massive retaliation is the best course for now, Okazaki said.

To close, Ambassador Okazaki addressed Japan's role in the North Korea situation. Given that there should be another two years before the United States will be able to fully focus on North Korea, Japan could use that time to improve its missile defenses and offensive capabilities, he said. According to Okazaki, the crisis will come in two years, and should be planned for accordingly.

### **Summary of Selected Questions and Answers following Ambassador Okazaki's Remarks**

*Q. What is Ambassador Okazaki's opinion on the debate over whether or not Japan should become a nuclear nation?*

Okazaki declined to say whether he advocated Japan obtaining nuclear weapons or not, but he said that it is strategically feasible. He cited the closeness of the U.S.-Japan relationship and compared it to that of the U.S. and Britain when Britain first built nuclear arms. Because the United States did not object at that time, Okazaki thinks that Japan could acquire nuclear weapons without severely damaging the U.S.-Japan relationship, as long as Japan makes it clear that U.S.-Japan alliance is intact and that Japan will coordinate its policy with the United States.

*Q. Will having four other countries besides the United States and North Korea at the negotiating table in the upcoming Six-Nation Talks affect the dynamics of the situation?*

*Will the six-party talks end up putting a maximum pressure on the United States to lead the talks to a success?*

Okazaki answered that if South Korea and China brought pressure to bear on the United States to lessen its demands, the U.S. might accept a temporary freeze on the production of nuclear weapons rather than total elimination of nuclear program and facility.

*Q. What are Ambassador Okazaki's views on the danger posed by possible North Korean proliferation of nuclear weapons or fissile material while the United States and other countries contain North Korea?*

Ambassador Okazaki downplayed the possibility of North Korea selling nuclear arms or fissile material, saying that the United States has effectively eliminated all the probable buyers by destroying the Taliban and Saddam Hussein's regime. He went on to say that he thought it unlikely that any terrorist organization would be able to afford to buy a weapon from North Korea.

*Q. Does Japan actually have a policy vis-à-vis North Korea?*

Okazaki answered that Japan's policy on North Korea is one that recognizes the more important roles played by South Korea and the United States and seeks to follow the leads of those countries. Two issues that have complicated that policy are the abduction of Japanese citizens and the possibility of a North Korean nuclear strike against Japan, which Okazaki deems improbable. As for the abduction issue, it is up to Japanese government's judgment whether or not it strikes a compromise with North Korea despite expected strong opposition from Japanese public.