

NHK Interview  
November 5, 2008

Question 1. Obama's future policy on North Korea (differences from Bush's including Six Party Talks and dealing with China)?

Answer: President Elect Obama can be expected to continue relying on the Six Party Talks as the primary forum for negotiations with North Korea to end its nuclear program. Obama's goals will be similar but methods for achieving them very different.

He will shift emphasis from a unilateral to a multilateral approach. This means he would most likely stop trying to use China as a diplomatic hammer to pressure Pyongyang to cooperation. Instead Obama would rely on building a united front within the Six Party Talks as the main tool to press Pyongyang. Also Obama could restore emphasis on trilateral cooperation between Tokyo, Seoul and Washington, something Bush never favored.

Also Obama most likely will permit more frequent exchanges between the United States and North Korea in all areas from negotiations to humanitarian and educational exchange.

Eventually I would expect Obama to allow the State Department to begin talking with North Korean officials about "high level" bilateral negotiations that could open the way for the Secretary of State to visit Pyongyang and possibly eventually a summit between Obama and North Korea's leader. Such a summit, however, would not take place until after several months of intense bilateral negotiation and significant progress toward North Korea's ending of its nuclear program.

Question 2. How will the Bush Administration deal with North Korea in the last two months of its tenure?

Answer: I do not expect any major changes in Bush's current approach to North Korea. Bush will most likely press North Korea very hard to agree to a thorough verification process. North Korea, however, can be expected to resist.

Bush might prove so eager to have some foreign policy success as part of his legacy that we would approve a very weak verification process, one much weaker than the normal international process. This means he might compromise regarding the taking of samples and implementation of "surprise" and comprehensive inspections.

Question 3: North Korea's reaction and tactics to Obama's election and the last weeks of the Bush administration?

Answer: North Korea will move cautiously. At the Six Party Talks North Korea will reject Bush Administration demands for a "vigorous" verification process in the hope that Bush's resolve collapses as was the case with his decision to remove North Korea from the U.S. terrorism list. Once Obama is in office, I am confident that North Korea will attempt to send a delegation to Washington, DC to resume bilateral talks

about numerous issues other than the nuclear issue. North Korea will press Obama to publicly renounce Bush's strategy of "pre-emptive" nuclear attack.