The provocative behavior of North Korea constitutes a major international problem. So far, two solutions have been advanced. The left-leaning liberals tend to believe that the North Korean regime can be reeducated through generosity. They hope that if the North Korean leadership is provided with large amounts of aid and not put under stress, it will gradually change itself. Meanwhile, the political Right believes in the magical power of the economic sanctions which, they insist, is the way to intimidate the North Korean elite into making concessions and stopping its provocative behavior. Unfortunately, there are reasons to believe that both approaches are not going to work—and if one analyzes how the North Korean society is structured, the reasons for this inefficiency become clear.

If sanctions won’t work and kindness is not productive either, what is to be done? It seems that the only solution is to increase the likelihood of what the North Korean leadership itself considers to be the greatest threat to their power and privilege—popular resistance to the regime. Given recent developments, it is increasingly possible. Such efforts will take a lot of time, but no quick fixes are available in the case of North Korea.

Andrei Nikolaevich Lankov completed his undergraduate and graduate studies at Leningrad State University in 1986 and 1989, respectively. While attending there, he went to Pyongyang’s Kim Il-sung University in 1985. In 1996 he moved to Australia to take up a position at the Australian National University, and moved back to Seoul to teach at Kookmin University in 2004. His major research interest is political and social history of North Korea. Recently he focuses largely on the transformation of the North Korean society which followed the death of Kim Il Song and dramatic growth of markets. His major English language publications on North Korea include: From Stalin to Kim Il Sung: The Formation of North Korea, 1945–1960. Rutgers University Press, 2003; Crisis in North Korea: The Failure of De-Stalinization, 1956, University of Hawaii Press, 2004; North of the DMZ: Essays on Daily Life in North Korea, McFarland and Company, 2007. He has also published in such major international journals as Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy and Asia Policy, as well as in many leading newspapers. This Asian Security seminar is hosted in association with the ANU Centre for Korean Studies.

The seminar is free and open to all but please RSVP to Ms Sheila Flores: E: sheila.flores@anu.edu.au