Global Ideals and Regional Realities: Problems and Prospects for East Asian Progress Toward Nuclear Disarmament

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The New Context of Disarmament

Disarmament efforts during the Cold War were necessarily shaped by the "bipolar" configuration of international power under which the world's two dominant states, the United States and the Soviet Union, were locked in pitched ideological confrontation frozen by the specter of nuclear war. The rest of the world's states, to the extent that they were free to choose, necessarily defined their international positions with respect to the two alliance systems anchored by the two most dominant states. In the context of such superpower competition, localized disputes frequently aroused the interests of one or both dominant states, and often became proxies for superpower competition. In this manner, the superpower nuclear competition cast its shadow as well over more generically regional conflicts.

Because the advent of nuclear weapons in the world took place contemporaneously with the emergence of this bipolar, ideologically-driven competition, the problems of nuclear arms control, nonproliferation and eventual disarmament were defined by this structure and rarely conceived of outside it. This was inevitable and appropriate, for imagining how these problems might manifest themselves in a multipolar and/or non-ideologically divided world were mere speculations with little relevance to the practical challenges of the nuclear age.

Accordingly, the pursuit of nuclear disarmament focused on the United States and the Soviet Union. Bilateral arms reductions were understood to be the top immediate priority. Curbing dangerous deterrence policies was an adjunct to this priority. Similarly, stemming "horizontal" proliferation of nuclear technology to more states was perceived to be intrinsically linked to rolling back "vertical" proliferation by the two superpowers – a linkage enshrined in the Nonproliferation Treaty's "grand bargain" committing the five "permanent" nuclear weapons states to the ultimate goal of disarmament. The major multilateral nuclear weapons agreements of the Cold War era, as well as bilateral arms control, hinged upon the participation of the two superpowers. Most arms control advocates assumed that control of nuclear weapons could only be effectively pursued at this global level, and that a universal global abolition of nuclear weapons was the necessary ultimate outcome.

The immediate aftermath of the Cold War saw encouraging progress toward this end. Negotiated and unilateral progress included elimination of an entire category of nuclear weapons in the INF treaty, significant strategic reductions under a new START agreement, US withdrawal of overseas and surface vessel nuclear deployments and US-Russia cooperation on fissile materials control in the former Soviet Union. Multilateral achievements included indefinite extension of the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), negotiation of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and strengthening of related nuclear technology export and safeguards regimes.

Over the course of the 1990s, however, progress toward nuclear disarmament languished. Negotiations for further strategic arms reductions by the United States and Russia slowed and stalled. Efforts in the United States to reduce nuclear risks by de-targeting and de-alerting US nuclear forces met stiff resistance. Fissures emerged in the NPT regime over both the lack of diligence by the "permanent" nuclear powers in upholding their disarmament commitments and the problematic cooperation among many key non-nuclear states with strengthened protocols for safeguarding NPT-permitted nuclear activities. The 1998 nuclear tests by non-NPT members India and Pakistan dealt further blows to both the NPT and CTBT, with the US Senate's refusal to ratify the CTBT effectively neutralizing that treaty's impact. For advocates of nuclear disarmament, the post-Cold War "window of opportunity" appeared to be closing.

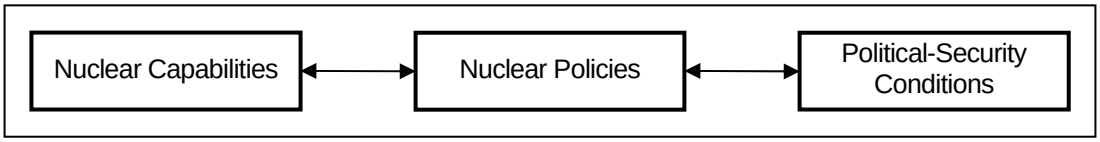
Many explanations have emerged for the failure to realize the promise for progress toward nuclear disarmament that the end of the Cold War initially seemed to offer. Some of these explanations are political in nature, pointing to failures of will or policy on the part of individual leaders or governments as a whole (including endemic resistance to arms control among governmental, military and defense industry interests, particularly in the United States). Other explanations highlight the intractability of security dilemmas in international politics and the inevitable appeal of nuclear weapons as both strategic tools and symbols of national power and prestige.

This paper offers a third category of explanation for the slowed – and in many cases reversed – progress toward nuclear weapons disarmament experienced since the mid-1990s. The essence of this third category is failure to recognize how the end of the Cold War shifted the terrain of international politics in ways decisively important to pursuit of nuclear disarmament, and the tardiness of both governments and disarmament advocates to adjust priorities accordingly. Clearly understanding how the end of the Cold War has created a new nuclear era, with different challenges and different pathways to disarmament, is essential to reconfiguring goals and priorities to effectively meet these challenges.

Two elements of the changed circumstances of this new era stand out most prominently: the role of nuclear weapons policies as distinct from armament levels, and the emerging regional autonomy in nuclear strategizing and decision-making.

Nuclear Arms and Nuclear Policy

The distinction between nuclear capabilities themselves (deployed nuclear weapons & associated material assets) and policies pertaining to those capabilities (including but not limited to nuclear deterrence) is a critical one. Nuclear policies – including military policies of deployment and use planning as well as political policies utilizing nuclear threats for specific international relations ends – function as the conduit through which specific and unique nuclear weapons capabilities and practices, on the one hand, and the political-security conditions within which nuclear strategies are promulgated, on the other, interact synergistically. The following figure depicts this relationship:



The importance of nuclear weapons policies was recognized during the Cold War, typified by the perpetual debate between advocates of "minimum deterrence" and "war-fighting" nuclear strategies. The relevance of such nuclear weapons policy alternatives to pursuing nuclear disarmament was also widely understood.

In this period, however, concern for the *autonomous* role of nuclear policies in driving nuclear dangers, and shaping disarmament prospects, was relatively muted. This resulted mainly because, in the ideologically-polarized climate of the Cold War confrontation, both nuclear strategists and nuclear

abolitionists tended to regard nuclear weapons issues as largely independent of politics. For the former, the existence of nuclear weapons imposed a logic of its own, bestowing a certain universality to theories of deterrence and warfighting. For the latter, a parallel independent logic obtained: the cataclysmic potential of widespread nuclear warfare rendered their use as a weapon of war "unthinkable" and established the primacy of the imperative of nuclear disarmament.

The manner by which the Cold War ended belies this political autonomy of nuclear weapons. Despite force levels and launching capabilities as lethal as ever, the perceived threat of deliberate nuclear war between the United States and Russia has been dramatically reduced. A fundamental source of this reduced threat of war was the elimination of the ideologically-driven animosities and uncertainties between these countries that always lurked behind the abstract veneer of strategic theory. A prior equally important source was political transformation within the Soviet Union (and then Russia and the other Soviet successor states) – for if the Cold War's ideological divides had ended instead with a US descent into totalitarianism, one can hardly imagine that superpower relations would have improved as dramatically.

Thus, improved political circumstances within Russia and consequent improved US-Russia relations, not arms control per se, moved the superpowers toward greater actual peace. Indeed, the transformed US-Russia relationship marking the end of the Cold War enabled dramatic nuclear arms reductions dwarfing the achievements of decades of arduous Cold War arms control negotiations. The historical lesson is that evolving political conditions are far more determinative than abstract strategic logic or operational doctrines of the ultimate role and disposition of nuclear weapons.[1]

These conditions created opportunities for moderating nuclear weapons *policies*, as well as reducing nuclear weapons levels. Unfortunately, this second opportunity went largely unrealized: progress in reducing reliance by states on threats to use their nuclear weapons for security policy purposes did not match progress toward reducing the dangers of deployed nuclear weapons. The United States reinforced rather than relaxed its reliance on nuclear deterrence, and other states similarly expanded security reliance on nuclear weapons threats (including the threat to develop nuclear capabilities). Such continued dependence on nuclear deterrence and nuclear blackmail reflected sustained belief in the coercive value of possessing nuclear weapons. Following the September 11 attacks, the attraction to non-state actors of gaining such coercive capacity is now also clear.

In the absence of a corresponding disengagement from reliance on nuclear weapons *threats*, progress in control of non-conventional weapons *capabilities* inevitably slowed and stalled. This stalling has, in turn, increasingly impinged on further improvement in US-Russia political and security relations. The continuing role of nuclear threats also increasingly obstructs conflict resolution in key regional contexts throughout the world. In whatever contexts nuclear weapons threats have remained salient, these threats have served not only to increase the risks and dangers of outbreaks of violence, but also to entrench status quos and impinge progress toward domestic political reform, international stability and peace.

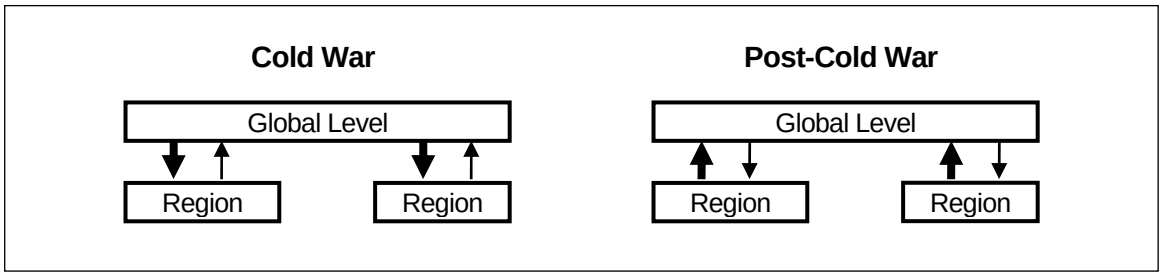
These developments highlight the critical linking function between nuclear capabilities and security conditions that policies premising nuclear threats serve. This linking function has become all the more salient to nuclear disarmament in the context of the post-Cold War global political-security climate, in which ideologically frozen polarization has given way to more fluid and diffuse security relationships and focused bipolar nuclear arms racing has been supplanted by more diversified arms development and proliferation challenges. The more nuclear threats and counter-treats interact and overshadow security relations, the more difficult it becomes to achieve meaningful reductions in the armament capabilities that give credibility to those threats, or to achieve progress in solving the political and security tensions that inspire resort to those threats.

[1] For an early theoretical exposition of this point, see Patrick Morgan, *Deterrence: A Conceptual Analysis*, Beverly Hills: Sage, 1977, pp.13f.

Regional and Global Dynamics

During the Cold War, the globalized nature of major security issues imposed a global dimension on even generically regional problems. Consequently, disarmament advocates focused on global determinants of states' nuclear policies, prioritized control of nuclear weapons at the global level, and sought global nuclear disarmament as the principal goal as well as the necessary ultimate outcome. As a consequence, during the Cold War, pursuing disarmament through regional initiatives, such as the generation of regionally defined "nuclear free zones," was often viewed as supplemental to globally focused efforts, rather than as principally useful in its own right.

The end of the Cold War has "loosened" world politics by lessoning the influence of overarching global security circumstances on many regional security environments. In the absence of superimposed superpower competition, more geographically proximate and immediate security concerns take on higher priority in state security policy-making. The heightened salience of regional over global perspectives in many states' security outlooks drives autonomous development of regionally-identifiable security environments. Events and trends in these regional contexts have, in turn, taken on a greater role in shaping the overarching global security motif. Thus, while the global and regional security "levels" continue to interact bi-directionally, the end of the Cold War has shifted the weight of influence from the global to the regional level, as the following graph depicts:



Nuclear policy decision-making has followed this trend, exemplified by developments in Northeast Asia. North Korea's nuclear ambitions appear driven almost exclusively by its government's concerns over the country's own territorial integrity. Any decision in Japan to exercise its latent nuclear capability would almost certainly be triggered by security developments in Korea or China. China, while still concerned about the United States in its nuclear weapons policies, is no longer concerned about its position vis-à-vis a global superpower competition and is focused mainly on potential US nuclear coercion with respect to Taiwan.

The United States emerged from the Cold War as the world's only truly global power. Yet, its nuclear weapons policies are also evolving toward greater regional specification. During the Cold War, the United States established a network of alliance relationships, girded by extended nuclear deterrence guarantees, as a bulwark to protect vital interests from Soviet threats and contain Soviet influence. With the end of the Cold War, US extended nuclear deterrence relationships are no longer embedded in an encompassing strategic deterrence framework. In Northeast Asia, in particular, maintaining extended nuclear deterrence alliance relationships with Japan and South Korea is increasingly justified on regional bases, including not only protection against regional threats but also the supposition that any relaxation of nuclear deterrence guarantees would signal a weakening of broader US security guarantees and catalyze US allies to act to preserve their security by more independent means.

Consequently, the regional determinants of states' reliance on nuclear threats and nuclear capabilities (latent or extant) are now of vital concern to the pursuit of nuclear disarmament – at regional and global levels. The implicit assumption of many Cold War era disarmament efforts – that regional progress would follow progress at the global level, and could not be realized in its absence – no longer conforms to current circumstances. Thus, rather than asking only how progress toward global nuclear disarmament could help improve regional security situations, the question now becomes what states in

a specific region can do to move toward nuclear disarmament within their region, and thereby facilitate global disarmament in the process.

In an age in which nuclear disarmament seems as distant and unachievable as ever, this perspective offers a crucial measure of hope. The disaggregation of world security relations and nuclear decision-making determinants creates more potential than existed in the Cold War for progress on arms control & nonproliferation to occur in regional contexts relatively independently. Moreover, such autonomous progress in one region or circumstance can positively (albeit not determinably) influence developments in other contexts.

To concentrate on regional determinants does not mean simply shifting the weight of attention from global to regional levels to align with shifted realities. Rather, highlighting the salience of regional determinants of nuclear weapons decision-making can serve to emphasize the synergistic relationship of regional and global factors, and hence the need to pursue disarmament at both global and regional levels in a similarly synergistic fashion. Elucidating the links between disarmament efforts at the regional and global levels will help promote understanding of disparate contemporary arms control and nonproliferation challenges and facilitate integrative disarmament efforts addressing these diverse challenges in mutually reinforcing manners.

Such an approach will emphasize resolving regional security dilemmas as a necessary condition for achieving regional disarmament objectives. Establishing regional "nuclear-free zones" as an element or product of regional collective security mechanisms offers one concrete expression of this linkage. As with disarmament efforts, progress toward instituting viable collective security at regional levels can also contribute to strengthening collective security at the global level (e.g. through the United Nations).

Post-Cold War Nuclear Policy in Northeast Asia

Developments in Northeast Asia over the past fifteen years exemplify how proliferation of nuclear capabilities and propagation of nuclear threats now proceeds primarily along regional lines and for regionally defined purposes. All the principal states in Northeast Asia now rely upon some form of nuclear deterrence or coercion as a central element of their security postures. Hence, it is not surprising that recent developments in the region – centered on US and North Korean nuclear policies and practices but abetted by the contingent policies of other states – have propelled the recent erosion of nuclear nonproliferation efforts and increased the dangers of nuclear proliferation globally.

Yet reliance on nuclear threats in regional contexts is under-recognized as a priority for disarmament advocates. The centrality of region-based reliance on nuclear threats as a motivation for nuclear arms buildups, as an impediment to cooperative security development and as a corrosive influence on global disarmament mechanisms and aspirations (such as the NPT and a potential space weapons ban) remains underappreciated.

US Nuclear Strategy

During the Cold War, the United States employed extended nuclear deterrence to protect overseas interests and allies and to contain perceived Soviet global ambitions. In East Asia, extended nuclear deterrence applied primarily to Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.[2] Throughout this period, US strategic planners were rarely content that the United States had sufficiently established the credibility of the retaliatory threat at the heart of extended deterrence. Forward deployments of an array of tactical and battlefield nuclear weapons, backed by a global network of bases, command and control systems, and alliance relationships, offered "limited" nuclear options while also preserving the threat of later use of

[2] The notion also informed other US alliances in Asia at various times, including SEATO, South Vietnam, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand, and Pakistan.

strategic forces – a "flexible response" posture intended to establish the credibility of deterrence at all "rungs" of the "escalation ladder."[3]

The end of the Cold War fundamentally changed the political and military conditions to which extended deterrence had been the response. The disintegration of the Soviet Union eliminated the threat Soviet conventional forces had posed in Europe and Asia, and with it the need for the United States to threaten the use of nuclear weapons to deter attacks by those forces. Accordingly, the United States made unilateral cuts in the absolute size of its nuclear arsenal and drew back most of its forward deployed nuclear forces. In September 1991, President Bush removed US forward deployed nuclear weapons from the Korean peninsula and, in a move particularly significant in the Asia/Pacific context, removed all nuclear weapons from its surface naval vessels.[4] Thus, the end of the Cold War dramatically changed both the general political-security conditions and the capabilities and operational practices associated with US extended nuclear deterrence in East Asia.

However, US nuclear planners continued to rely on Cold War era nuclear deterrence, including extended deterrence. In East Asia particularly, this continued reliance on extended nuclear deterrence curtailed the ability of US declaratory nuclear policy to perform its critical linking function between transformed political-security conditions and reduced force structures in the region. This disjunction inevitably created, in the minds of strategic planners, a new generation of concerns over regional deterrence credibility. US strategists remained concerned about deterring attacks from other nuclear weapons states, such as China, and also did not want to appear to be relaxing security guarantees to allies like Japan and South Korea. Ironically, although diminished Russian capabilities and interests ostensibly increased US latitude to escalate to first use of nuclear weapons in future confrontations with non-nuclear or newly-nuclear adversaries, US planners worried that reduced US stakes in regional conflicts and elimination of many tactical nuclear capabilities impinged the credibility of such threats.

This disjunction also introduced new, pernicious sources of regional instability. Russia, China, and North Korea perceived continued US adherence to flexible response strategies in Asia, despite the evaporation of the Soviet threat, as evincing a US determination to compel and coerce them, rather than merely to deter them, across a wide range of conflict scenarios. These perceptions encouraged destabilizing responses, including North Korean nuclear ambitions and more assertive Chinese nuclear policies (as discussed below). Meanwhile, for US allies Japan and South Korea, questions as to the credibility of US nuclear deterrence guarantees were reinforced by perceptions that, by continuing to rely on Cold War era security architectures, US policy was unsympathetic to the new regionally-specific security concerns US allies faced. These perceptions fueled restiveness in US alliances with both Japan and South Korea, and in Japan particularly began eroding the function of the US nuclear umbrella to discourage US allies from seeking nuclear capabilities of their own (as discussed below).

New nuclear weapons initiatives under the Bush administration can be seen, in part, as attempts to answer these concerns. The administration's recent Nuclear Posture Review (NPR)[5] calls for

[3] It is useful to observe that Cold War era defenders of US "flexible response" and "first use" strategies justified these positions strictly in terms of bolstering deterrence; see Casper W. Weinberger, "A Rational Approach to Nuclear Disarmament," *Defense* (August 1982). The Bush administration has abandoned deterrence as a limiting justification for diversified nuclear capabilities and strategies, as noted below.

[4] However, many US nuclear warheads, delivery systems, and organizational capacities to fight limited and battlefield nuclear wars from forward deployment in the region had already been withdrawn. See D. Lockwood, "The Status of U.S., Russian and Chinese Nuclear Forces in Northeast Asia," in P. Hayes and Y. W. Kihl, *Peace and Security in Northeast Asia: The Nuclear Issue and the Korean Peninsula*, M.E. Sharpe, 1997.

[5] The NPR was first publicly summarized at a Department of Defense briefing on January 9, 2002. The classified review was subsequently obtained by *The Los Angeles Times* and *The New York Times*. Substantial excerpts of the review are available at: http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/policy/dod/npr.htm

developing a new generation of low-yield, earth-penetrating, and damage-limiting nuclear weapons suitable for tactical, first strike missions.[6] More significantly, the NPR introduces a newer vision to use nuclear weapons threats also to deter "rogue state" attacks with biological, chemical, and radiological (as well as nuclear) weapons, and to deter even *acquisition* of such WMD capabilities. Although such an expansion of the role for US nuclear threat-making emerged in the 1990s, the advent of the Bush administration and the September 11 attacks pushed this thinking to the forefront of US strategic policy. The vision, elaborated in the Bush administration's subsequent *Strategy to Combat WMD*), essentially dismisses nonproliferation – the conclusion of its single paragraph on the role of "active nonproliferation diplomacy" simply states the need for "a full range of operational capabilities" if nonproliferation efforts fail.[7]

Moreover, although Bush administration nuclear policy initiatives aim to stretch the scope and gird the credibility of US extended nuclear deterrence, the rationales for the initiatives also highlight concerns over potential deterrence failure. Hence, the NPR calls to supplement deterrence with "new concepts" (such as counterproliferation and compellance), "active defenses" (principally meaning missile defense), and "responsive infrastructure" (principally meaning a reconstituted nuclear weapons production capability). The NPR also calls for replacing the U.S. Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP) with an "adaptive planning" approach, to complement broadened tactical nuclear weapons use options with increased non-nuclear "strategic strike" capability. Although from a nuclear disarmament point of view plans that replace nuclear with conventional weapons appear progressive, in fact adaptive planning blends conventional and nuclear capabilities as interchangeable options, eroding – from both sides – the "firebreak" between conventional and nuclear war long seen as a key psychological impediment to nuclear engagement.[8] Such integration of planning for use of nuclear and conventional capabilities clearly reflects how US policy has responded to the growing autonomy of regionally-based security concerns by reinforcing and expanding reliance on nuclear weapons threats in those contexts.

The primacy given to capabilities and strategies to threaten preemptive nuclear use for purposes beyond deterring attack, and to expanding flexibility to follow through on these threats, marks a significant new departure of US strategy even from Cold War era "war-fighting" strategies. East Asian regional concerns – particularly North Korea scenarios – are a principal motivation for these new initiatives, which are intended to bolster the credibility of continued US reliance on nuclear threats among both allies and adversaries in the region.

Unfortunately, the shortcomings and dangers of these new nuclear initiatives also exceed those familiarly associated with Cold War era "war-fighting" strategies. First, it is neither empirically or logically clear that threats of *preemptive* attack to deter an adversary's *acquisition* of WMD are as inherently credible as threats of *retaliatory* attack to deter an adversary's *use* of WMD.[9] Second, the acquisition deterrence credibility of counterproliferation threats is further undermined by the core intractable questions concerning the effectiveness and usability of both nuclear and non-nuclear counterproliferation technologies.[10] Third, there is the prospect that whatever weak acquisition

[6] For critical overviews, see Levi, Michael A., "Fire in the Hole: Nuclear and Non-Nuclear Options for Counterproliferation," Carnegie Endowment Working Paper #31, November 2002; and Alexander, Brian and Alistair Millar, eds., *Tactical Nuclear Weapons* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, Inc., 2003).
[7] *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*, White House, December 2002, pp.3-4.
[8] It is worth noting that post-Cold War advocacy of these strategies also preceded the Bush Administration. See, for example, Dowler, Thomas and Joseph Howard II, "Countering the Threat of the Well-Armed Tyrant: A Modest Proposal for Small Nuclear Weapons," *Strategic Review* 19/4 (Fall 1991), pp.34-40; and S. Cambone and P. Garrity, "The Future of US Nuclear Policy," *Survival*, 36(4), Winter 1994-95, p.88.
[9] Although this distinction is obfuscated in the most recent NPR, US Strategic Command advisories to deliberations over the 1994 Nuclear Posture Review were skeptical that nuclear weapons could deter WMD acquisition. See "Questions for Nuclear Posture Review: Formal STRATCOM Answers as of 22 Nov 93," p.12, available at: www.nautilus.org/nukestrat/USA/npr/19usstratcom112293.pdf
[10] See Levi, Michael A., "Fire in the Hole: Nuclear and Non-Nuclear Options for Counterproliferation."

deterrence might accrue from counterproliferation threats would be more than offset by US adversaries' increased motivations to obtain nuclear and/or other non-conventional capabilities to deter US action. North Korea, for one, has clearly taken this point (see below).

Finally, there are the global implications of these regionally-motivated US initiatives. US threats of nuclear retaliation against non-nuclear WMD attack contravene US legal commitments under the NPT never to use nuclear weapons against a state not nuclear-armed itself or supported by a nuclear-armed ally. More generally, US expansion of the breadth and depth of its reliance on nuclear weapons threats in regional contexts, given its preeminent position at the global level, cannot help but undermine nuclear non-use and nonproliferation norms and reinforce the motivations of other, conventionally weaker states to seek "equalizing" nuclear capabilities.[11]

North Korean Nuclear Proliferation

The principal achievement of the 1994 US-North Korea Agreed Framework was to freeze and contain North Korea's plutonium-based nuclear program for nearly a decade. The principal shortcoming of the Agreed Framework – at least from the US point of view – is that North Korea's spent plutonium stockpile would remain in the country until new nuclear reactors called for in the agreement had reached relatively advanced stages of construction – allowing North Korea to retain the threat to resume its nuclear program on relatively short notice.

This circumstance provided the Pyongyang government with a latent nuclear threat that it utilized to considerable effect for much of the ensuing decade. Had the United States in the 1990s not suspected North Korea of having diverted sufficient nuclear material to construct at least one nuclear weapon, US policy toward North Korea in this period likely would have been very different. Whether North Korea had actually weaponized its material mattered little to its ability to use its latent nuclear capability coercively.

In October 2002, the United States used a visit by James Kelley to Pyongyang to charge North Korea with developing a second, secret nuclear weapons program based on uranium enrichment (US officials claim North Korea admitted the program at this meeting, but the North Korean government denies this). Confrontation over these charges precipitated a sequence of actions & responses leading to a cascading breakdown of the 1994 Agreed Framework structure, culminating at the end of the year when North Korea expelled International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors at its Yongbyon nuclear complex, removed seals and monitoring equipment from safeguarded nuclear facilities at the site, and prepared to resume reprocessing of the spent plutonium stored there. Early the following year the IAEA referred North Korean "chronic noncompliance" with its safeguards agreements to the UN Security Council.[12]

Successful reprocessing would provide North Korea with enough weapons-grade plutonium for a half dozen nuclear weapons, beyond the one or two weapons-worth of fissile material the regime is believed

[11] This factor was also recognized by the US Strategic Command in its advisories to the 1994 Nuclear Posture Review: "As the only true superpower, the approach the U.S. takes to such issues as nuclear policy, START I & II treaty execution, pursuit of a CTBT, and the NPT extension will have a major influence on the action of other countries." See "Questions for Nuclear Posture Review: Formal STRATCOM Answers as of 22 Nov 93," p.12; cf. Jeffrey Record, "Bounding the Global War on Terrorism," U.S. Army War College, December 2003, pp. 29-32 (http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ssi/pubs/2003/bounding/bounding.htm).

[12] IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei, "Introductory Statement to the Board of Governors," Highlights of IAEA Press Briefing, Vienna, 12 February 2003 (http://www.iaea.org/worldatom/Press/Statements/2003/ebsp2003n004.shtml). In the context of the impending US-led attack on Iraq, the IAEA simultaneously reported that in Iraq it had been able to maintain its accounting of safeguarded nuclear materials even during the 1998-2002 suspension of inspections and had found no evidence of a revived nuclear program during resumed inspections in the preceding months.

to possess already. By dispersing the reprocessed plutonium to multiple hidden locations, North Korea becomes unobserved and unimpeded in producing nuclear weapons. Pyongyang now claims that this reprocessing is almost complete; although US officials state publicly that they cannot confirm these claims, reports indicate that activity at the Yongbyon facility consistent with reprocessing began last winter.

At these very small numbers of nuclear weapons, the regime's quadrupling of its capacity matters. It would allow Pyongyang to consider exporting a portion of the materials to other states or non-state actors and/or conducting an explosive device test, adding significantly to range of nuclear threats the regime can pose.[13] Thus, the resumption of North Korea's much more advanced plutonium-based nuclear program, coupled with a potential new uranium-based nuclear program, has created a twin proliferation danger surpassing even the apex of 1993-4 North Korean crisis that nearly triggered a US military attack.

Despite its prior claims to have no intention to build nuclear weapons, North Korea has now explicitly acknowledged plans to develop a "nuclear deterrent" and possibly to declare itself a "nuclear power." North Korea withdrew from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), becoming the first state ever to do so, and has also released itself from the 1992 agreement with South Korea to keep the Korean peninsula nuclear free. The regime has recently threatened to conduct a nuclear test as well as resume ballistic missile testing, and it has declared that imposition of UN sanctions would be considered "an act of war."[14]

North Korea's nuclear program and proliferation activities constitute perhaps the gravest threat to the integrity and sustainability of the nuclear nonproliferation regime since the achievement of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) itself. North Korea's withdrawal from the NPT alone would be a tremendous blow to the NPT – a treaty that has successfully prevented proliferation around the world. In the words of IAEA Director General Mohamed El Baradei, leaving North Korea's actions unchecked could "open the door for countries to walk away from nonproliferation and arms control agreements."[15]

North Korea's ambition to develop nuclear weapons is partially a response to decades of being subject to US nuclear threats, exacerbated by the loss of Soviet extended deterrence and, more recently, by the Bush administration's explicit revival and expansion of US nuclear threats aimed specifically at North Korea. In addition to the expansion of potential nuclear weapons use evident in the public version of the Nuclear Posture Review (noted above), a leaked version of the classified portions of the review lists North Korea among a small number of countries specifically targeted with nuclear weapons.[16] The

[13] Under the recently launched the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), the United States, Japan and other countries have undertaken measures to intercept any materials North Korea may try to export. However, few experts believe this initiative can assure that North Korea could not smuggle a soda-pop can sized quantity of plutonium if it was determined to do so.

[14] Joseph Kahn and David E. Sanger, "North Korea Says It May Test an A-Bomb," *New York Times*, August 29, 2003.

[15] IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei, "IAEA Director General Sees Compliance as Key to North Korea Issue," Highlights of IAEA Press Briefing, Vienna, 12 February 2003 (http://www.iaea.org/worldatom/Press/News/2003/02/13-663396.html). Perhaps because handicapping the NPT would also remove the strongest legal mechanism to compel disarmament by its five nuclear weapons signatories, the Bush administration evinces little remorse for this particular effect of North Korean nuclear ambitions.

[16] As cited earlier, the classified NPR was subsequently obtained by *The Los Angeles Times* and *The New York Times*. Substantial excerpts of the review are available at: http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/policy/dod/npr.htm.

Bush administration's subsequent National Security Strategy emphasized preemptive action to counter threats from countries developing weapons of mass destruction.[17]

The Bush Administration's political policies enhanced this threatening US strategic posture. While eschewing any direct contacts for nearly two years, administration officials routinely characterized North Korea as an irredeemable threat to US interests, and made clear that pre-emptive strikes and other strategic policy innovations were meant to thwart exactly the kind of proliferation that the administration viewed North Korea as likely to undertake. President Bush's linking of North Korea to Iraq and Iran in the "axis of evil" in his January 2002 State of the Union speech was evidently intended to bolster intimidation of Pyongyang by embedding US policy toward North Korea within the broader, newly declared "war on terror," signaling that North Korea could be subject to the same kind of military action then commenced in Afghanistan and under consideration in the Middle East.

Unfortunately, the administration's hostility toward North Korea appears to have fueled Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions by challenging its confidence that its conventional threat against South Korea alone would deter a US attack. This presumption of North Korean threat perception helps explain the regime's willingness to "hedge" against breakdown of the Agreed Framework by resisting further concessions on its plutonium-based program and by clandestinely accelerating the uranium-based program, even though this hedging itself increased the risks of breakdown.

The US-led attack on Iraq appears to have exacerbated this effect: Pyongyang's first explicit comment on the conflict stated, "The Iraqi war teaches a lesson that in order to prevent a war and defend the security of a country and the sovereignty of a nation … it is necessary to have a powerful physical deterrent."[18] Although Bush officials probably anticipated that the aggressive policy to disarm Iraq would yield the side benefit of also intimidating Kim Jong-il, the North Korean leader instead appears to have seen US preoccupation in Iraq as a "window of opportunity" to act boldly, while his desperation to avoid Iraq's pending fate may have convinced him of the need to seize this opportunity, despite the risks. Whether Kim's ultimate goal has been to enhance North Korea's negotiating position vis-à-vis the United States or to actually achieve a full-fledged nuclear capability, the clear logic of nuclear threat brinkmanship is evident.

To state that North Korea's reliance on nuclear threats for its security is responsive to the US nuclear threats it perceives, however, does not mean such reliance is North Korea's best or only choice. The nuclear ambitions of the government in Pyongyang also have roots independent of US actions, some deeply coursed through the regime's own autocracy and xenophobia.

Contrasting the situations of North Korea and Vietnam is illustrative. Both countries experienced US-led wars on their lands and were subject to US nuclear threats. Both countries were subsequently ostracized within their regional communities and became dependent on alliance with the Soviet Union. Yet since the Soviet collapse the countries have followed very different paths. In Vietnam, pursuit of economic and political liberalization led not only to renewed US economic and political relations, but also to membership in ASEAN and reintegration into regional and global international society. North Korea, despite efforts from its Chinese compatriots, has proven unable and/or unwilling to follow a similar path. Admittedly, North Korea has faced an international environment significantly different from Vietnam's. However, these external differences are less determinative of the two countries' divergent courses than the differences in the characters of the ruling regimes themselves.

The North Korean ruling regime's determination to rely on nuclear threats to insure its security dismays and worries all of North Korea's neighbors. The experiences of Vietnam and many other countries in

[17] *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, White House, September 2002, especially section V, pp. 13-16, dealing with WMD threat.
[18] Howard W. French, "North Korea Says Its Arms Will Deter U.S. Attack," *New York Times*, April 7, 2003, p.13.

the Asia-Pacific region demonstrate that other choices are equal if not superior to serve security needs. The Pyongyang government's choice to rely on nuclear threats thus reveals that its conception of security entails not just protecting territorial sovereignty but also preserving the regime's own domestic authority and legitimacy. The regime's failure to institute the domestic reforms needed to lift its people out of poverty and starvation – which would also probably relieve the pressures from the international community (especially the United States) that the regime deems threatening – stems less from the threats to the country's national security than from the regime's concern that such reforms would threaten its ability to remain in power. Thus the Pyongyang government's nuclear ambitions are directly linked to the regime's shortcomings in serving the genuine human security needs of its own people.

The point of the preceding observations is not to endorse the neoconservative call for "regime change" in North Korea. Rather, in the context of examining prospects for reducing reliance on nuclear threats throughout Northeast Asia, the purpose of highlighting the plain link between Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions and the regime's concern for the survival of its own rule is twofold. First, this specific link is a palpable example of the more general relationship, discussed earlier, between improved domestic political (and socio-economic) circumstances and improved prospects for progress toward nuclear disarmament. Developing improved regional security relationships providing less threatening avenues for political conflict resolution is a prerequisite for reducing and ending reliance on nuclear threats for security purposes.

Second, this linkage reinforces the conclusion that on the Korean peninsula a peaceful nonproliferation outcome is possible only through a negotiated settlement involving all the principal countries of the region. Such a conclusion already follows from more immediate considerations: military action (for limited counterproliferation or for full regime change) would risk a devastating war, and might not produce a nonproliferation outcome anyway; while continued threat-based coercion and containment might preserve peace, at least in the short run, but almost certainly will allow North Korea to become a nuclear armed state.[19] But beyond these more immediate considerations, there is the added factor that only a negotiated settlement will create the *regional* preconditions for nuclear nonproliferation to endure.

Some observers have hoped that the process of negotiation itself (such as the six-party talks) might spawn a more lasting and encompassing mechanism for security cooperation in Northeast Asia. The importance of the linkage between prospects for nuclear disarmament and the encompassing security environment highlights that emergence of such durable security cooperation from the present crisis would also be a prerequisite to moving from the immediate challenges posed by North Korea's proliferation activities to a more encompassing agenda of reducing or eliminating the role of nuclear weapons threats in Northeast Asia entirely.

Chinese Nuclear Modernization

In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, some US observers began to anticipate that China might emerge as the United States' next global competitor. Fueled by its rising economic strength, China appeared to some to be poised at least to emerge as the new Asian hegemon, exercising the greatest influence over (if not posing the greatest threat to) security of the region.[20]

In terms of the nuclear weapons policies, the impact of the end of the Cold War on China has been somewhat the opposite of this. Consistent with the consequential "loosening" of world politics and the increasing salience of regional over global considerations, China has tended to view the role of its

[19] Wade L. Huntley, "Sit Down and Talk," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, July/August 2003 (http://www.thebulletin.org/).
[20] For a representative example see Denny Roy, "Hegemon on the Horizon? China's Threat to East Asian Security," *International Security*, 19:1 (Summer 1994).

nuclear weapons less as a means of independence from the global-level superpower competition and more as an instrument of foreign and security policies emanating from the country's immediate region.[21] At the top of the list of China's regional security concerns is protection of its claims to sovereignty over Taiwan. China utilizes nuclear weapons threats as an element of its approach to securing this singular priority.

Many in Beijing believe that only Chinese threats to respond with force deter an overt declaration of independence by Taiwan. At the same time, many Western analysts doubt China could successfully invade Taiwan to suppress independence.[22] However, China's improving short-range ballistic and cruise missile force does pose a significant threat to Taiwanese military and civilian facilities and to the island's ability to conduct military operations.[23]

The 1972 U.S.-China Shanghai Communiqué, initiating normalization of relations between the two countries, accepted the core position that China includes Taiwan.[24] However, the United States was unwilling—for both historical and strategic reasons—to abandon its interest in the security and relative autonomy of the Taipei government. The Taiwan Relations Act, adopted to accompany U.S. formal recognition of the PRC in 1979, pledges US "defensive" support of the island to insure that "the future of Taiwan will be determined by peaceful means."[25] Thus, China's priority concern to protect its claims to sovereignty over Taiwan entails the prospect of direct military conflict with the United States. This prospect links China's concern over Taiwan to interest in other US military activities in East Asia.

In the 1990s, this interest burgeoned into strenuous objections to US plans for deployment of theatre missile defenses in Japan. Although ostensibly intended to protect Japan & US assets there against missile threats from North Korea, the envisioned sea-based deployment under joint US-Japan development could be moved near Taiwan in the event of a conflict there, providing protection against China's short-range missile force. Chinese leaders additionally worried that such a deployment, combined with the open-ended regional scope of the 1997 revision of the US-Japanese defense guidelines, would open the door to Japanese direct involvement in a Taiwan conflict.[26]

These regional factors drive the further linkage of China's concern over Taiwan to the US-China strategic nuclear relationship. China currently possesses a small arsenal of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) capable of carrying nuclear weapons to targets in the continental United States.[27]

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[21] For a good discussion see Alistair Iain Johnston, "China's New 'Old Thinking': The Concept of Limited Deterrence," *International Security*, 20:3 (Winter 1995-96).

[22] Michael O'Hanlon, "Why China Cannot Conquer Taiwan," *International Security* 25 (Fall 2000), pp. 51-86.

[23] William S. Cohen, "The Security Situation in the Taiwan Strait," Report to Congress Pursuant to the FY1999 Appropriations Bill, Washington, DC, February 26, 1999. The U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency reportedly estimates that the PLA force of CSS-6 and CSS-7 short-range ballistic missiles near Taiwan, numbering less than 50 in 1997, will grow to as many as 650 by 2005. Bill Gertz, "Chinese Missiles Concern Pentagon," *Washington Times*, April 3, 2002.

[24] Joint U.S.-China Communiqué, Shanghai, China, February 27, 1972. See also "The Taiwan Question and Reunification of China," Taiwan Affairs Office and Information Office, PRC State Council, August 1993 (http://English.peopledaily.com.cn/whitepaper/7.html).

[25] *Taiwan Relations Act*, U.S. Public Law 96-8, 96th Congress, 1st session (April 10, 1979).

[26] For a representative objection, see Yan, Xuetong, "TMD Rocking Regional Stability." *Korean Journal Of Defense Analysis* 11/1 (Summer 1999): 67-86. For an analysis of the role of US missile defense planning in US-China strategic relations, see Wade L. Huntley, "Missile Defense: More May be Better – for China," *The Nonproliferation Review* 9:2 (Summer 2002) (http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/npr/vol09/92/abs92.htm#hunt). For a good more general discussion, see Tom J. Christensen, "China, the US-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia." *International Security* 23, no. 4 (Spring 1999): 49-80

[27] The United States considers China to have "about 20" deployed single-warhead silo-based ICBMs; see National Intelligence Council, "Foreign Missile Developments and the Ballistic Missile Threat Through

China's current strategic modernization program includes development of mobile, solid-fueled ICBMs to improve survivability. Although US analysts expect that the total number of Chinese deployed strategic warheads will rise, they also foresee that Chinese ICBM forces will for some time remain considerably smaller and less capable than US forces, and the US will retain a massive retaliatory deterrent.[28]

Accordingly, even in the event of direct US-Chinese military conflict, US analysts see the prospects of China launching nuclear missiles against the United States as slim, and so do not see these forces as an imminent threat.[29] However, US analysts do observe that "Chinese strategic nuclear doctrine calls for a survivable long-range missile force that can hold a significant portion of the U.S. population at risk in a retaliatory strike."[30] In this manner, Chinese nuclear capabilities pose a *politically* meaningful *coercive* instrument—in the event of a conflict over Taiwan, US war planners would still have to reckon with the possible use by China of nuclear weapons directly against the United States.

Thus, China views its strategic nuclear forces as an instrument to deter (or at least moderate) any US intervention in a Taiwan conflict (and opposes US plans for strategic missile defense precisely because it could neutralize this deterrent instrument). In other words, China's most enervated motivation for sustaining strategic nuclear capabilities is nevertheless regional, not global, in nature. Future developments of Chinese nuclear forces beyond specifically Taiwan applications are also likely to be driven more by regional rather than global developments.[31]

In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, US-China tensions over Taiwan, missile defense and nuclear threats became muted as China moved from "strategic competitor" to anti-terrorism "partner" in the Bush administration's eyes. However, some Bush officials remain distrustful of Beijing's intentions, and the administration has in general followed advice not to make significant concessions to China on defense issues or modify its commitment to defend Taiwan with the use of force.[32] Further dramatic events may reverse some of September 11's positive effects on US-China relations; over time, latent concerns in some corners of Washington over the "rise of China" are likely to reemerge.

In this context, China's role in working through the Korean peninsula nuclear crisis is especially crucial. China shares the goal of keeping the Korean peninsula nuclear free, and at present its diplomatic pressure functions as the only serious constraint to North Korea's nuclear ambitions, as evinced by the apparent success of its temporary suspension of oil supplies in inducing North Korea into the six-party talks. However, the Chinese leadership strongly favors a negotiated solution over "regime change," which at a minimum would create severe social and economic upheaval on China's border. This preference militates against strong US-China concordance in pressuring North Korea to end its nuclear weapons program. Beijing's influence in Pyongyang is tangible but limited, and it is unlikely to expend

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2015," December 2001 (http://www.cia.gov/nic/pubs/other_products/Unclassifiedballisticmissilefinal.htm or http://www.fas.org/irp/nic/bmthreat-2015.htm). Other estimates range from seven to twenty-four.

[28] U.S. intelligence estimates for 2015 range "from about 75 to 100 warheads deployed primarily against the United States. MIRVing and missile defense counter-measures would be factors in the ultimate size of the force." National Intelligence Council, "Foreign Missile Developments and the Ballistic Missile Threat Through 2015," December 2001.

[29] Department of Defense, "Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China," Pursuant to the FY2000 National Defense Authorization Act, June 2000.

[30] National Intelligence Council, "Foreign Missile Developments and the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States Through 2015," September 2000 (http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/nie/nie99msl.html).

[31] D. Lockwood, "The Status of U.S., Russian and Chinese Nuclear Forces in Northeast Asia," in P. Hayes and Y. W. Kihl, *Peace and Security in Northeast Asia: The Nuclear Issue and the Korean Peninsula*, M.E. Sharpe, 1997, p.334.

[32] See Bonnie S. Glaser, "Testimony on U.S. China Relations and the Taiwan Strait in the Aftermath of September 11," Subcommittee on East Asia and the Pacific and Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives, November 15, 2001.

what influence it does have to back US policy goals whose ultimate effects China would not welcome, especially when doing so would likely undermine that influence as well.[33]

Thus, the experience that the United States and China garner working toward a multilateral negotiated solution to North Korea's nuclear challenges will likely have a much more enduring impact than September 11 on the future course of US-China relations. In particular, success in moderating nuclear weapons threats on the Korean peninsula could ease China's own reliance on nuclear weapons threats, especially if it leads to reduced US reliance on nuclear threats in the region as well.

Japanese Nuclear Latency

Although Japan does not possess nuclear weapons, the country's security policies rely fundamentally on nuclear weapons threats. This reliance takes essentially two forms. The first form is acceptance through the US-Japan alliance of the role of US threats to respond with nuclear weapons to any attack on Japan. The second form is the international coercive resource flowing from Japan's latent capacity to develop nuclear weapons of its own.

US policy threatening potential nuclear responses to attacks on Japan – the "nuclear umbrella" – has constituted the central pillar of the US-Japan relationship since end of World War II. During the Cold War this nuclear guarantee is generally understood to have been designed mainly to prevent the Soviet Union or China from coercing Japan by threatening the use of nuclear weapons. Thus, US extended deterrence had both a military function – deterring attacks on Japan – and a political function – preventing coercion of Japan through threat of nuclear attacks.

However, Japan's implication in US nuclear weapons policies has been much deeper than simply its acceptance of a US nuclear promise as the premise of its security posture. Throughout the tenure of the alliance, Japanese governments have knowingly abided the routine presence of US nuclear weapons in Japanese territory– particularly the presence of nuclear weapons on US warships in Japanese ports – as well as the involvement of US facilities in Japan in US nuclear war planning and the participation of Japanese Self Defense Forces in nuclear strike operations training. Indications that the US and Japanese governments collaborated to hide from public view (or at least refuse public acknowledgement of) the extent to which Japan was helping to sustain the US nuclear posture in East Asia lend credence to suspicions that the two countries concluded one or more "secret agreements" allowing nuclear weapons to enter Japan despite its violation of Japan's three non-nuclear principles.[34]

The end of the Cold War and the subsequent US decision to remove all nuclear weapons from surface naval vessels and overseas deployments eliminated tensions over US naval presence in Japanese ports. However, Japan's reliance upon US nuclear deterrence is as deep as ever. One principal reason for this continued reliance has been to avoid appearing to be relaxing security guarantees to allies like Japan and South Korea. US strategists also remain concerned about deterring attacks from other nuclear weapons states, most recently North Korea. Many of the new Bush administration nuclear initiatives (discussed above) are being developed specifically with North Korean contingencies in mind, and are intended both to bolster deterrence of any North Korean attack upon Japan and to neutralize the coercive power of North Korean threats to Japan – as well as to be utilized in the event that deterrence fails and a North Korean attack on Japanese territory transpires.

North Korean nuclear ambitions are also having wider implications for Japan, reshaping security perceptions and fueling desires in some quarters to increase Japan's autonomous military capabilities

[33] For a good discussion of these issues, see Evan S. Medeiros and M. Taylor Fravel, "China's New Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2003).
[34] See Hans M. Kristensen, "Japan Under the Nuclear Umbrella: U.S. Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear War Planning in Japan During the Cold War," Nautilus Institute (July 1999) (http://www.nautilus.org/library/security/papers/Japan.pdf).

and expand the range of permissible military operations. Under these auspices, US-Japan military collaboration is deepening. North Korean activities have served to legitimize Japanese participation in US sponsored missile defense research and planning by helping validate concerns among defense policy makers in both countries over the threat of missile attacks from North Korea. Among some defense planners in both countries, missile defense is seen as restoring credibility to continuing US extended deterrence guarantees following withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons and other operational deployments that had previously served that role.[35]

The North Korean nuclear crisis has also figured into Japan's adjustment to US reactions to the September 11 attacks. Anxious to sustain US engagement with Northeast Asian security issues, Tokyo has found that its support of the "war on terrorism" has increased opportunities to further strengthen security ties. Such support for post-September 11 US actions has facilitated the Japanese government's desire to cross new thresholds in overseas military involvement (although deployment of SDF troops for Iraq engendered a distinct level of domestic disquietude).

Most notoriously, the prospect of North Korea gaining overt nuclear weapons capability has spawned renewed speculation that Japan would feel compelled to develop nuclear weapons of its own in response. Many advocates of deepening US-Japan military ties observe that without this US commitment— including missile defense—Japan would be left to develop independent security capabilities, which could entail a considerable missile program as well as a nuclear weapons option.[36]

Reflecting this thinking, Japanese governments have developed the capacity to build a nuclear weapons arsenal and sophisticated missile delivery systems should a consensus emerge in Japan that this needed to be done. Japan has a peaceful nuclear power program that generates enriched plutonium, it has a space exploration program, and it has the technical expertise to reorient these activities into a nuclear weapons development effort.[37] If Japan were to withdraw from the NPT, it could become not just a nuclear weapons state, but one of the world's most powerful. The only questions are what kind of nuclear force Japan would want to develop and how much time it would take. A submarine-based intercontinental ballistic missile force, providing a secure second-strike capability, is within Japan's technical and financial capabilities.

The prospect of Japan developing its own independent nuclear weapons has long been a source of concern among Japan's neighbors, raising the specter of reawakened Japanese regional ambitions and of a regional nuclear arms race also involving Russia, China, and perhaps South Korea. In response, US and Japanese policy-makers have long argued that, because the US "nuclear umbrella" represses

[35] For a discussion see U. Tetsuya, "Missile Defense and Extended Deterrence in the Japan-US Alliance." *Korean Journal Of Defense Analysis* 12/2 (Winter 2000): 135-52; Patrick M. Cronin, et.al., "The Alliance Implications of Theater Missile Defense," in Michael J. Green, & Patrick M. Cronin, eds., *The US-Japan Alliance: Past, Present, and Future*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1999).

[36] For a representative example, see Ralph Cossa, "Nuclear forces in the Far East: Status and Implications for Proliferation," in P. Hayes and Y. W. Kihl, *Peace and Security in Northeast Asia: The Nuclear Issue and the Korean Peninsula*, pp.370, 382[41]. For more sanguine views, see P. Katzenstein & N. Okawara, "Japan's National Security: Structures, Norms, and Policies," *International Security*, 17:4 (Spring 1993) and T. Berger, "From Sword to Chrysanthemum: Japan's Culture of Anti-Militarism," *International Security*, 17:4 (Spring 1993).

[37] For contrasting views on this potential, see Selig S. Harrison, ed., *Japan's Nuclear Future: The Plutonium Debate and East Asian Security* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), 1996; cf. Burnie, S, Smith. "Japan's Nuclear Twilight Zone." *Bulletin of The Atomic Scientists* 57/3 (May-June 2001): 58-62, Katahara, Eiichi, "Japan's Plutonium Policy: Consequences for Nonproliferation", *The Nonproliferation Review* 5/1 (Fall 1997); Philips, Rosemarie, Selig S. Harrison (Editors), *The United States, Japan, and the Future of Nuclear Weapons: Report of the United States-Japan Study Group on Arms Control and Non-Proliferation After the Cold War*, The Brookings Institution; (August 1995); John E. Endicott, *Japan's Nuclear Option: Political, Technical, and Strategic Factors* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975).

incentives for Japan to develop nuclear weapons and delivery systems of its own, US extended deterrence in Northeast Asia actually serves the interests of the states against whom that deterrence is directed by helping to sustain regional nonproliferation and non-nuclear stability. On the basis of this argument, Japan's latent threat to become a nuclear weapons power provides Japan with a certain coercive leverage to mollify its neighbors to Japan's facilitation of the US forward presence in the region – and to increase US interests in sustaining the alliance as well.

However, many Japanese strategists debating Japan's nuclear option express little concern over whether US extended deterrence guarantees are credible and sufficient. Rather, a prime motivation has been desire for Japan to adopt an independent security posture and a more assertive international role. Many advocates of Japan acquiring its own nuclear weapons have long chaffed under security dependence upon the United States and coveted reestablishing Japan as an independent "normal" great power (although some others envision Japan acquiring nuclear capabilities in collaboration with the United States and becoming something of an Asian Great Britain[38]).

Most Japanese leaders still recognize that initiatives in this direction would face other overwhelming obstacles, including widespread Japanese public commitment to the country's non-nuclear status, the certain and strong negative reactions from Japan's neighbors that any Japanese move toward an independent nuclear capability would elicit, and an absence of strategic logic.[39] Additionally, US encouragement of Japan to exercise more autonomy within the auspices of the alliance has served to satisfy some Japanese desires for greater international activism, undercutting ambitions for more independence that are prominent features of pro-nuclear arguments. The 1997 revisions of the US-Japan guidelines for security cooperation exemplify this collaboration.[40]

At the same time, if Japan wanted to demonstrably limit its capacity to someday develop nuclear weapons, it could make its nuclear power and missile programs more transparent and take steps to make it harder to channel them into a nuclear weapons program.[41] Japan could also restructure its peaceful nuclear power program so that it does not produce weapons-grade plutonium. Most forthrightly, Japan could take the lead in negotiating a nuclear weapons free zone in Northeast Asia to transform the unilateral non-nuclear commitment by Japanese governments to the Japanese people into a binding treaty obligation.[42] Japan refrains from taking these steps, in part, because they would entail surrendering the immediate diplomatic coercive capacity that Japan's current latent threat to become a nuclear power provides.

While it remains difficult to imagine near-term circumstances under which any Japanese government would pursue nuclear armament, over time Japan would likely perceive the development of an overt

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[38] For an expression of this latter view, see Morimoto, Satoshi, "---," *Shokun* (2003).

[39] For a good concise discussion of why Japan should not go nuclear, see Kamiya, Matake. "Nuclear Japan: Oxymoron or Coming Soon?" *Washington Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 63-75; cf. Thompson, Jeff, "Why nukes aren't on Japan's agenda", Asia Times Online, Jul 19, 2003 (http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Japan/EG19Dh02.html).

[40] T. Akaha, "Beyond Self-Defense: Japan's Elusive Security Role Under the New Guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation." *Pacific Review* 11, no. 4 (1998): 461-83.

[41] For an argument that US denuclearization of its alliance relationship with Japan, rather than impelling Japan to exercise an independent nuclear option, instead could generate momentum to denuclearize the region and thereby impede Japan from developing nuclear weapons of its own, see Morton Halperin, "The Nuclear Dimension of the U.S.-Japan Alliance," Paper prepared for the Nautilus Institute, Berkeley, CA, July 9, 1999, <http://www.nautilus.org/nukepolicy/Halperin/index.html>. For a conception of Japan's potential role in promoting a nuclear-free East Asia, see Kumao Kaneko, "Japan Needs No Umbrella," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 52 (March/April 1996), pp.46-51, <http://www.thebulletin.org/issues/1996/ma96/ma96kaneko.html>.

[42] For a discussion see A. DiFilippo, "Can Japan Craft an International Nuclear Disarmament Policy?" *Asian Survey* 40, no. 4 (July-August 2000): 571-98.

North Korean nuclear weapons capability (or the emergence of a unified Korea with nuclear weapons) as specifically threatening to Japan. If North Korea also developed reliable capabilities to threaten North American targets and planned missile defense deployments turned out to be unreliable "white elephants," Japanese planners might begin doubting US security guarantees. In that event, long-repressed advocates of a more independent Japanese security policy would be likely to present a Japanese nuclear weapons capability as the only feasible alternative to insure Japanese security.

If such fundamental transition of Japan's security conditions is still a prerequisite to a Japanese decision to become a nuclear power, the recently emerging "thinkability" of this prospect nevertheless has consequences of its own.[43] For one, regional perceptions of an increased possibility of this move increase concerns about Japan's future role in the region and of the future course of US-Japan collaborative regional policies, inducing uncertainty and instability. For another, recent suggestions by some US analysts – a few close to the Bush administration – that Japan's acquisition of nuclear weapons might be not only inevitable, but desirable, has added an additional source of potential misperception and tension to the US-Japan security relationship at a time when its future directions are very much in flux.

Beyond its political and strategic relationship with the United States, Japan's Northeast Asian role is also at an important junction point. The many developments in Asia-Pacific security conditions over the past decade – some positive and others negative – have created both the opportunity and the need for Japan to revisit the premises of its security posture, and especially to critically examine whether a Cold War-level reliance upon US nuclear deterrence remains an effective means of achieving its security goals.[44] If the prospect of Japan obtaining its own nuclear weapons represents the dark side of this potential, there exists also an equally promising bright side, in which Japan seizes new possibilities to take a leadership role in solving regional security problems and building non-nuclear cooperative security mechanisms. In particular, if the current Korean crisis is contributing to Japanese nuclear ambitions, its collaborative resolution could both strengthen the non-nuclear status of Japan and Korea and promote a regional security framework establishing Japan's positive role in the region and undercutting concerns about being overshadowed by nuclear-armed neighbors.

Thinking Globally, Acting Regionally

The increased reliance on nuclear weapons threats by Northeast Asian states (and in US policy toward the region) has direct repercussions for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament globally. However, this increasing reliance within the region, combined with the post-Cold War increased autonomy of regional relations, is also reshaping the basic nature of regional international dynamics in ways that further influence prospects for global arms control and nonproliferation.

Pan-Asian Strategic Multipolarity

The increased salience of regional over global dynamics in an age still overshadowed by nuclear (and other non-conventional) weapons capabilities has introduced a relatively new phenomenon to

[43] Marc Erikson, **"**Japan could 'go nuclear' in months**,"** Asia Times Online, January 13, 2003. Some representative examples in Japanese language media include: Fukuda, Kazuya, "If nuclear armament is the only option for Japan?" *Bungei-shunju*, 6/1/2003; Akashi, Kazuyasu, "Japan is okay to arm with nuclear weapons," *World Affairs Weekly*, 2/4/2003; Ishihara, Shintaro and Kazuya Fukuda, "Conversation," *Shokun*, 2/1/2003; Sakurai, Yoshiko, Tadae Takubo and Nagao Hyodo, "We have an option for nuclear weapons," *Shokun*, 1/1/2003.

[44] For some recent discussions see P. Midford, "The Logic of Reassurance and Japan's Grand Strategy." *Security Studies* 11/3 (Spring 2002) pp.1-43; Y. Okamoto, "Japan and the United States: The Essential Alliance." *Washington Quarterly* 25/2 (Spring 2002) pp.59-72; and N. Okawara & P. Katzenstein, "Japan and Asian-Pacific Security: Regionalization, Entrenched Bilateralism and Incipient Multilateralism." *Pacific Review* 14/2 (2001) pp.165-94.

international politics: *regional strategic multipolarity*. The core element of this condition is the increasing security "self-reliance" of states in a given regional setting given by capacities to threaten neighbors with nuclear or other non-conventional weapons.

In the greater pan-Asian region today, five countries—Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and North Korea—now make use to some extent of threats to use nuclear weapons for purposes of coercive diplomacy. That in the case of North Korea the nuclear threats are largely latent, relying on capabilities yet to be demonstrated, makes them no less salient to near-term security interactions (as discussed earlier). A sixth country—the United States—relies heavily on nuclear threats to pursue its interests in the region. (In the Asian regional context, the dominance of the US position globally is neutralized to some extent by the burdens of power projection over geographic distance and by competing security priorities elsewhere in the world. Hence, recognizing the increasing salience of regional over global dynamics also suggests viewing the United States, in terms of the Asia region, somewhat less as the overarching dominant power it is globally and more as another relatively equivalent state in the regional system.)

In addition, Japan and South Korea incorporate strategic deterrence into their security approaches through reliance on the US nuclear deterrent threat (ambiguously, Taiwan does so as well). While this "nuclear umbrella" does not leave Japan or South Korea fully "self-reliant," it does provide them with more regional autonomy than they might otherwise possess. In Japan's case, its much-debated ability to fairly quickly develop a sizable nuclear arsenal offers an additional latent nuclear coercive capacity (as discussed earlier).

The shift in security reliance in these states from conventional to nuclear capabilities has been gradual and incremental, and for many of them strategic deterrence is still not the dominant aspect of their defense and security posture. Nevertheless, for each, strategic deterrence in some form now has a core role. Taking root in a multipolar regional context, this increased reliance on strategic nuclear deterrence alters the interactions of these states in some important, fundamental ways that did not characterize superpower relations during the Cold War and which therefore are somewhat novel:

Deterrence versus defense. Some of the strategic implications of relying primarily on deterrence rather than defense became apparent during the Cold War. In the pan-Asian context, these implications are also salient, and are additionally preconditions to more regionally-specific strategic interaction effects.

Nuclear weapons are sometimes referred to as the "great equalizer," because *relative* differences in nuclear capabilities tend to be less important than relative differences in conventional capabilities (to have an army twice the size of the adversary is very meaningful; to have twice as many nuclear weapons is irrelevant if the adversary has enough retaliatory capacity for credible deterrence).

The "equalizing" effect of nuclear deterrence is becoming increasingly apparent in the pan-Asian context, which is still characterized by wide asymmetries of nuclear capabilities. As noted above, China's minimal ICBM threat to the United States is a latent coercive capability with respect to Taiwan. North Korea's capabilities, yet even to be manifest, also exercise coercive influence over other states in the region. The insufficiency (or even irrelevance) of numerical nuclear superiority with respect to nuclear deterrence is the principal strategic logic driving US ambitions to deploy new *types* of nuclear weapons, missile defenses and other new non-traditional capabilities.

Self-reliance. Prior to the nuclear age, the importance of relative capabilities induced states to combine into rival alliances. Alliances came at a cost – an ally's behavior could prove problematic, or the ally could prove fickle and unreliable – but the costs were worth the benefits of combining conventional capabilities to common purpose.

Because numerical differences in nuclear weapons matter less, combining nuclear capabilities through alliance provides fewer such benefits. A state already possessing a credible retaliatory deterrent threat can feel relatively secure on its own, and has few incentives to take on the costs of forming alliances

when they would add little to the state's security. Multipolar strategic deterrence, because it both reduces the incentives for and decreases confidences in alliances, yields an international relations system that does not self-organize into alliance structures, but rather remains a more fluid environment of self-reliant states. Mutually beneficial relationships form, but are more tactical and transient. Unexpected relationships will also emerge, crossing more established lines, if they are tactically useful, particularly to help a state sustain its strategic self-reliance (e.g. Pakistan-North Korea nuclear cooperation). Thus, strategic multipolarity is less characterized by alliance formation than by loose and shifting short-term linkages of opportunity. Such a regional international relations system, while still essentially anarchic, can be thought of more as a network than as a structure.

Across pan-Asia, although some enduring traditional links (e.g. China-Pakistan, Russia-India, US-Japan and US-South Korea) reflect nascent alliance building in classic power-balancing fashion, other emerging cooperative links (e.g. US-Russia, China-South Korea, China-India and most recently India-Pakistan) cut across these lines. Although none of the significant Asian states depend exclusively on strategic self-reliance, its growing role, and consequent declining incentives to establish firm alliance relationships, accounts for the lack of coalescence of regional relationships into firmer alliances in the wake of the end of the Cold War. The principal regional alliance relationship that does exist – among the United States, Japan and South Korea – is a Cold War artifact under increasing strain.

The problem of collateral nuclear threat. Strategic multipolarity entails a significant unstable feature less evident in strategic bipolarity: in general, it is difficult to specify against whom one's strategic deterrence is targeted. Conventional forces are (to varying degrees) differentially threatening to potential adversaries depending upon various factors of their design and deployment. In contrast, a missile of a given range generally can be fired in any direction, and can be retargeted quite easily (although this distinction is not absolute—for example, targeting and hence threat perception of nuclear-capable short-range missile are more deployment-specific).

In bipolar conditions (e.g. the US-Soviet rivalry), the adversary against which a state seeks to enhance its strategic deterrence is clear. In multipolar conditions, however, the difficulty of targeting deterrence effects becomes problematic. Thus, for example, intermediate-range missiles in China could equally target Russia, Korea, Japan, India, Pakistan, Iran, or Iraq. Any neighbor may feel threatened by them – enhanced strategic capabilities intended to deter one state may inadvertently threaten others as well.

Although strategic capabilities are not especially combinable through alliances, and the "absolute" nature of nuclear weapons tends to insulate a state's confidence in its deterrent capabilities from the effects of new unintended threats, in practice states are rarely one-hundred percent satisfied in their deterrent capacities. Thus, in a multipolar context, any state's improvement of its strategic capabilities would tend to induce responses from all neighbors. This effect creates the potential for explosive nuclear arms racing.

The incentives for and dynamics of nuclear arms races are well understood from the US-Soviet experience. In a multipolar context, the same "action-reaction" dynamic familiar in the Cold War nuclear competition once again emerges, but multiplied in scope due to the multiplicity of potential unintended effects and reactions among states in the system. For heuristic purposes, if one imagines that the potential number of reactions to one state's arms increases is in proportion to the number of relationships in the system, then as the number of states in the system rises, the arms race escalation potential increases geometrically[45]:

Number of states	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Number of relationships (arms race potential)	**1**	**3**	**6**	**10**	**15**

[45] The applicable equation, where "N" is the number of states, is: (N * (N-1)) / 2

In practice, such a nuclear arms race has not yet broken out in Asia, despite lost shackles of the overshadowing Cold War dynamic and the increase in the number of territorially contiguous nuclear-armed neighbors. A number of explanations for the absence thus far of a dramatic nuclear arms race in Asia present themselves: the regions states have relatively reduced ideological animosities and political competition compared to the United States and Soviet Union, and relatively higher domestic competition for precious economic and social resources. Arguably, these factors are strong enough at the moment that a regional nuclear arms race appears unlikely.

However, this conclusion underscores the observation raised earlier in this paper: the political-security environment, not abstract strategic theory, is more determinative of states' incentives for obtaining nuclear capabilities. Recalling the increasingly important linking function that reliance on nuclear threats for security purposes plays between nuclear arms acquisition and the political-security environment, a further vital observation emerges: so long as Asia's principal states continue to rely on explicit or latent nuclear threats for security purposes, any erosion of the currently benign political-security environment would, through that reliance, quickly incite dramatic escalations in nuclear acquisitions.

Thus, the interest to prevent an Asian regional nuclear arms race compels reducing reliance on nuclear threats by all states in the region, as a bulwark against potential future increases in regional security tensions. More fundamentally, the interest to prevent such an arms race, and instead move toward nuclear disarmament in the region, compels the creation of durable cooperative security structures lifting the region out of the competitive dynamics of strategic multipolarity and eliminating the security incentives to rely on nuclear threats at all.

The Disarmament Uplink

In Northeast Asia, increasing reliance on nuclear threats (actual or latent) is a singular impediment to either stemming new nuclear acquisitions or enhancing cooperative security capacities. The combination of these developments has contributed to the devastating erosion in the global network of treaties and other international obligations that make up the nuclear nonproliferation regime.

In particular, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is under intensifying pressure from two directions. The first is the continued lack of progress by the five stipulated nuclear weapons states in moving toward the goal of nuclear disarmament, driven by the new US nuclear strategy initiatives which are themselves in large measure driven by Northeast Asia circumstances (as discussed above). The second is the burgeoning number and gravity of horizontal proliferation concerns, of which North Korea's flouting of its NPT obligations is but the most extreme. The repercussions of the nuclear weapons tests by India and Pakistan in 1998 and other developments have raised both incentives and opportunities for proliferation around the entire eastern and southern periphery of Asia. If North Korea becomes the first NPT signatory to withdraw and become an explicit nuclear power, other states may quickly follow this lead, creating a dramatically weakened regime by the time of the 2005 NPT Review Conference.

Other treaty regimes are also imperiled:

- Within a year of the Bush administration's taking office, US withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty has become a reality. Despite critics' charges that even aggressive missile defense planning need not break the ABM's restrictions, the Bush administration's fervent desire to escape the shackles of bilateral and multilateral arms control overcame concerns for tossing aside a cornerstone of arms control.
- The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), one of the singular arms control achievements of the 1990s, now lies in limbo. The defeat of US Senate ratification of the treaty under the Clinton administration stymied adoption by other key countries, raising doubts that the treaty would ever

attain formal legal status. Under the Bush administration, prospects instead are moving toward an eventual resumption of US nuclear testing, in order to insure the reliability of the "new generation" nuclear weapons necessary to implement the new flexible low-yield nuclear options policies.

Focusing Disarmament Efforts

Because regionally-oriented nuclear policy developments (especially in Northeast Asia) have been a principal catalyst for the recent deterioration of the global nonproliferation regime, reinvigorating global nuclear disarmament efforts now requires policy-based and regionally-based foundations. Progress toward regional nuclear disarmament has become a prerequisite to progress toward ultimate global disarmament.

Such regional progress presupposes solving the proximate security dilemmas that induce reliance on nuclear weapons threats for security policy purposes. Thus, with the Cold War's rigid ideological confrontation now history, resolving regional security dilemmas has become a necessary (albeit insufficient) condition for global nuclear disarmament.

In Northeast Asia, a genuine collective security structure that satisfies the security concerns of all the states in the region could not only forestall a regional nuclear arms race, but also create a more stable security environment than the region has seen for over a century. Such a structure could credibly aspire to minimize or even eliminate nuclear weapons threats as an instrument of security policy in the region.[46]

Resolving Korean peninsula security conflicts – not just North Korean nuclear issues – tops the agenda for establishing such a regional security regime. Minimizing the role of nuclear deterrence in the US-Japan security alliance, developing a cooperative Sino-Japanese security relationship and engaging Russia as a security partner in the region are also priorities. Last but not least is retraction of US regionally-applicable nuclear weapons threats to conform to its withdrawal of deployed nuclear capabilities (as opposed to introduction of new nuclear capabilities to reestablish reliance on nuclear threats). Such retraction would also constitute a significant US step toward fulfilling its NPT disarmament obligations.

Implementing this agenda would also require regional arrangements to constrain pending massive increases in latent and actual conventional military capabilities, modernization and arms trade.[47] Such a multilateral security system would surpass the scope of security cooperation envisaged under the rubric of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).[48] Yet, certain preconditions of such a structure already exist. Political relations in the region between its historically most adversarial states have improved, over the last decade particularly, exemplified by the burgeoning relations between China and South Korea. Most of the states of the region, on both sides of the old Cold War divides, have made progress in political and economic liberalization.

The issue is not whether or not a collective security structure is a practical alternative to the existing security system in Northeast Asia. The existing security system is an artifact of the Cold War eroding under the pressure of changing times. The question is thus how inevitable change can best be managed,

[46] See J. Endicott, "Great-Power Nuclear Forces Deployment and a Limited Nuclear-Free Zone in Northeast Asia," in P. Hayes and Young Whan Kihl, *Peace and Security in Northeast Asia: The Nuclear Issue and the Korean Peninsula*, M.E. Sharpe, 1997.

[47] See D. Ball, "Arms and Affluence: Military Acquisitions in the Asia-Pacific Region," *International Security*, 18:3 (Winter 1993-94).

[48] R. Betts, "Wealth, Power, and Instability: East Asia and the United States after the Cold War," *International Security*, 18:3 (Winter 1993-94), relates the view that the prospects for building and sustaining such collective security structures will be affected by the progress of domestic liberalization in the region, particularly in China. On this point see also the conclusion of W. Huntley, "Kant's Third Image: Systemic Sources of the Liberal Peace." *International Studies Quarterly* 40:1 (March, 1996).

and in particular how the ongoing transition can be guided away from increasingly naked balance of power machinations with incumbent arms races and increases in the risks of war, and toward the construction of viable regional security networks capable of improving the prospects for progress and peace. Continued reliance by all the states in Northeast Asia on some form of nuclear weapons threats obscures the new conditions in post-Cold War Northeast Asia and obstructs resolution of regionally-specific security conundrums remaining in the Cold War's wake. Construction of a genuinely multilateral regional security system thus requires steps at the outset to wean the states of the region from their nuclear reliance, and solve the security dilemmas that that reliance merely suppresses.