



The Future of Extended Nuclear Deterrence in East Asia

DISARMING DOUBT

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Disarming Doubt

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Abbreviations

A2AD	Anti-Access and Area-Denial
ASBM	Anti-Ship Ballistic Missiles
ASCM	Anti-Ship Cruise Missile
BMD	Ballistic Missile Defence
BMDR	Ballistic Missile Defense Review
C4ISR	Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
CBW	Chemical and Biological Weapon
CPGS	Conventional Prompt Global Strike
DCA	Dual-Capable Aircraft
DPJ	Democratic Party of Japan
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EDPC	Extended Deterrence Policy Committee
END	Extended Nuclear Deterrence
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
ICNND	International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament
KAMD	Korea Air and Missile Defense
LACM	Land Attack Cruise Missile
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party (Japan)
MRBM	Medium-Range Ballistic Missile
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDPG	National Defense Program Guidelines (Japan)
NFU	No First Use
NPR	Nuclear Posture Review
NPT	Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty
NSA	Negative Security Assurances
OPCON	Operational Control
OPLAN	Operation Plan
PAC	Patriot Advanced Capability

QDR	Quadrennial Defense Review
ROK	Republic of Korea
SCM	Security Consultative Meeting
SRBM	Short Range Ballistic Missiles
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
TLAM-N	Nuclear-Armed Tomahawk Land Attack Missile
USFK	US Forces Korea
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

Introduction and Overview

Rory Medcalf and Fiona Cunningham

In March 2012, leaders of many nations from across Asia and the world gathered in Seoul to oppose nuclear dangers. The Nuclear Security Summit was convened primarily to reduce the risks of nuclear terrorism. But it also involved statements and bilateral discussions about wider nuclear challenges, and occurred in the shadow of another looming North Korean long-range rocket or “satellite” test. On some of the most crucial nuclear arms control and disarmament issues, Asia remains far less united than the solidarity of the Seoul summit would suggest. In particular, there is a troubling tension between the mistrustful state of great-power relations in a changing Asia and the relatively harmonious conditions needed for the global push for nuclear disarmament to make progress in this vital region.

Two facts are clear. Asia is entering a period of great strategic uncertainty. At the same time, the United States has been advancing a vision of a world freed of the horrendous destructiveness of nuclear weapons. One important area where these two trends intersect – some would say collide – is the policy of extended deterrence: the US commitment to use military capabilities, conventional or nuclear, to protect allies from attack or threat. This publication assesses the future of extended nuclear deterrence in East Asia, and takes as a starting point that this subject cannot be understood in isolation from those two trends.

Strategic Uncertainty and Disarmament

In the past decade China's booming economic growth, expanding geopolitical influence, rising confidence and modernising military capabilities have rippled throughout the East Asian region. This has generated both wealth and worry among its neighbours and across the Pacific in the United States. The East Asian strategic environment is in a state of major change, as multiple countries strengthen their militaries, historical and territorial differences sharpen, and new tensions emerge. Prominent among these challenges are North Korea's nuclear program and provocations, and clashes between China's expanding horizons of interest and the United States' longstanding strategic pre-eminence in the region.

The gravity of these challenges is illustrated by the anxieties provoked by China's episodes of assertiveness in the South and East China Seas, particularly in 2010, and its refusal to condemn North Korea's sinking of the *Cheonan* and bombardment of a South Korean island. For its part, North Korea's announcement that it will test-launch a satellite, with clear applications to its long-range ballistic missile development, despite reportedly making recent undertakings on its nuclear program, hints that Kim Jong-Un is sticking with the provocation-concession cycle perfected by his father.¹

Within nations long-allied to the United States – including Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Australia – uncertainties are arising about the strategic environment and the ability of US alliance and extended deterrence protection to withstand the stresses of regional change. Washington may have signalled a diplomatic and military “pivot” to the Asia-Pacific,² but questions remain about its determination and ability to follow through, especially in times of domestic economic strain and war fatigue. It is impossible to gauge precisely how the contours of the East Asian strategic landscape will change over the decades ahead, but countries in the region are hedging against dangerous contingencies, even while economic and financial interdependence deepens and endures.

Meanwhile, at a global level, a very different security narrative has unfolded in recent years. Momentum for serious consideration of how to achieve global nuclear disarmament gathered pace following the election of President Obama, leading to some important accomplishments in 2009 and especially 2010. Civil society efforts and fresh ideas had taken shape over the preceding years.³ These reached official circles and – at last – found resonance in the White House. President Obama's landmark Prague speech was followed up with an extraordinary series of multilateral nuclear summits, a show of relative unity at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) 2010 Review Conference, the renewal of US-Russia arms control through the 2010 New START treaty and consensus-building efforts such as the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND), sponsored by the governments of Australia and Japan. The 2010 US Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), for the first time a public document, took cautious steps towards President Obama's vision of a world free of nuclear weapons, strengthening negative security assurances, calling for strategic stability dialogue with China and Russia, and expressing an intention to move in the direction of the No First Use (NFU) of nuclear weapons – a so-called “sole purpose” declaration – should future conditions permit.⁴

The NPR is proving something of a touchstone in the Asian debate on nuclear weapons, but the research presented in this volume suggests that it is far from the final word. As will be explained presently, the research also suggests that the NPR may mark something of a plateau in the climb towards nuclear disarmament in East Asia: crafting this policy review may well have been hard work for Washington, but the truly difficult ascent still lies ahead. President Obama has not shied away from beginning that ascent, calling for further bilateral cuts to the US and Russian arsenals, including tactical weapons and warhead stockpiles, as well as a renewed invitation for China to commence a nuclear dialogue with the United States.⁵ But in Asia, as this book indicates, bringing along allies and potential adversaries will be exceedingly difficult.

Setting the Scene: About this Project

This book is the result of a wider project examining the future of extended nuclear deterrence in East Asia. Expert and non-government policy roadmaps for nuclear disarmament typically identify extended nuclear deterrence as an obstacle to that goal, while recognising its basis in the security needs and threat perceptions of the states under its apparent protection. Accordingly, the standard argument has become that extended deterrence must incrementally be disarmed of its nuclear element, initially by reducing the range of contingencies a nuclear response might be expected to cover.⁶ But, given the regional changes occurring in East Asia, extended nuclear deterrence also has a powerful stabilising role: it functions to dispel strategic doubts about the future among US allies, and may even obviate the need for those countries to consider their own sovereign nuclear weapons.⁷ Moreover, nuclear relationships in East Asia, in particular that between the United States and China, have no history of strategic stability,⁸ arms control or other cooperative threat reduction measures – an immediate problem for regional security as much as it may be one for disarmament.

In the context of these problems, the present project examined how the nuclear disarmament agenda might apply to East Asia, the strategic doubts that some key US allies and China face in the region, and whether disarmament and such doubts can be reconciled in a region bereft of the institutions or confidence that appear necessary for an equivalent to Cold War arms control.⁹

This project began, fittingly, in Hiroshima, in a conversation between two advisers to the Australian-Japanese ICNND. At that Commission's final drafting session in October 2009, Nobumasa Akiyama and Rory Medcalf discussed the need for further work to reconcile the conflicting views in Asia on extended deterrence and its problematic relationship to nuclear disarmament.

With a subsequent grant from the Nuclear Security Project of the Nuclear Threat Initiative, the Lowy Institute for International Policy collaborated with the Center for the Promotion of Non-Proliferation

and Disarmament, Japan Institute of International Affairs, to convene a series of second track dialogues in the region in 2010. These were essentially consultative workshops, intended in particular to provide a platform for Asian views on extended deterrence. The largest two of these workshops – in Seoul and Beijing – were assisted locally by partnerships with the Institute for Foreign Affairs and National Security (IFANS) in Seoul and the Institute of International Studies at Tsinghua University in Beijing.

The four workshops – in Tokyo, Sydney, Beijing and Seoul – involved several dozen of the leading scholars, analysts and former policy practitioners in Japan, Australia, China and South Korea, as well as some notable American and European voices in the field. The workshops covered Asia's future nuclear order and strategic dynamics, the likely future of extended nuclear deterrence, prospects for conventional forces to substitute for nuclear deterrence and the role of diplomacy. The diversity of perspectives, depth of discussion and rigorous, high-quality debate at all the workshops enriched the contributions to this book. As an interim step towards the present publication, the Lowy Institute also hosted a debate on its blog, *The Interpreter*, which became the basis for *Weathering Change*, a compilation of short essays looking at extended deterrence globally.¹⁰

Our principal concern, however, is that regional voices are clearly heard and comprehended in the extended deterrence debate. Policy-makers in the United States, whose decisions will ultimately shape the future of extended nuclear deterrence, need to have a full understanding of the range of views from across the Pacific, and in particular those of US allies and China. Accordingly, we invited prominent experts on nuclear and strategic issues in Japan, China, South Korea and Australia to author the in-depth studies published in this volume.

Each author participated in at least one of the workshops, which served as robust testing grounds for the key ideas in each chapter. Each author was given a broadly similar task: to examine the connections among strategic stability, extended deterrence and what might be termed

comprehensive “mutual threat reduction” involving both nuclear and non-nuclear capabilities.¹¹ The authors were asked to address the following key questions:

- What is the likely future of extended deterrence in East Asia in light of changes in the regional strategic order and any US movement towards a smaller and more restrained nuclear arsenal? What is the most desirable future for extended deterrence and why?
- What are the implications of the 2010 US NPR for the future of extended deterrence and strategic stability in East Asia?
- Does US declaratory policy have a bearing on the effectiveness or credibility of extended nuclear deterrence? Can effective and credible extended nuclear deterrence be reconciled with movements towards a “sole purpose” or No First Use policy by Washington?
- To what extent can non-nuclear capabilities such as advanced conventional strike options and missile defence substitute for nuclear weapons in providing extended deterrence to allies? What might be an effective mix of such capabilities for extended deterrence purposes and what are the prospects for the US and its allies developing such a mix?
- What are the implications of continued extended nuclear deterrence for strategic stability in East Asia?
- What are the prospects for what might be termed “mutual threat reduction”¹² in the region? How important and viable might be an enhanced US-China strategic dialogue (including possible future arms control talks) as a way of ensuring strategic stability in the region?
- How might the future of extended deterrence, strategic stability and mutual threat reduction relate to potential scenarios in US-China relations, including possible confrontation over Taiwan?

- What is the role and relevance of North Korea and its nuclear weapons program in considering the future of extended deterrence in the region? How might extended deterrence operate under future North Korean scenarios?

In the following four chapters, the authors have thoughtfully explored the contradictions, capabilities and challenges of extended deterrence from the perspective of both the beneficiaries and one of the potential targets of the policy. The uniqueness of these contributions lies in the authors’ ability to speak authoritatively with an understanding of their countries’ national security interests while also being able to critically examine government policy. The authors combine a sensibility regarding their countries’ defence and security policy debates, sharp analysis of regional nuclear dynamics and an appreciation of the challenges of global nuclear disarmament. They demonstrate that in many East Asian or Asia-Pacific capitals there is an unresolved debate about nuclear disarmament, national security, deterrence and regional stability – including whether and how these imperatives can be reconciled. This debate may be conducted largely by experts, militaries and policy-makers away from the public or media spotlight. But the generally low public profile of this debate belies its crucial importance to the peace and security of Asia and thus the 21st century world.

Four National Perspectives

Nobuyasu Abe and Hirofumi Tosaki thoughtfully analyse the tension between Japan’s disarmament advocacy and embrace of US extended nuclear deterrence. Abe and Tosaki begin by tracing the swings in Japanese official policy from emphasising deterrence to emphasising disarmament in response to both domestic political changes and regional events. They then discuss what missions Tokyo expects US nuclear weapons to fulfil in the defence of Japan, concluding that it would be satisfied if the US arsenal were able to deter attacks with a credible threat of punishment. The authors welcome many of the measures that the United States

proposed in the NPR and accompanying reviews in 2010, including the need for greater burden-sharing and consultation within alliances, the development of conventional means to defeat Chinese anti-access/area denial (A2AD) capabilities, the need to pursue strategic stability with China and, eventually, to build arms control and cooperative regional security measures and arrangements.

But, along with their stated support for disarmament, Abe and Tosaki are realistic in their assessment of its immediate prospects. War in East Asia remains possible, extended deterrence is thus necessary, it is inconceivable that nuclear weapons can entirely be removed from extended deterrence, and the near-term outlook for China-US arms control is weak. Moreover, the authors recognise that even achieving strategic stability in the region will be a challenge: change is outpacing the efforts of countries to adapt, the United States and Japan are not succeeding in their attempts to persuade China that their alliance is a hedge and not a threat, and Japan will need to be reassured in any bilateral China-US dialogues on strategic stability. Abe and Tosaki conclude that the desire for disarmament in Japan is genuine, but disarmament is a distant goal in the absence of trust and stability, and insofar as extended deterrence allows for stability by assuaging Japanese security concerns, it is not inconsistent with disarmament advocacy.

Li Bin and He Yun provide an insightful and nuanced Chinese perspective on extended nuclear deterrence, which acknowledges some of the concerns of US allies. According to Li and He, US extended deterrence would be more credible and stable if it were limited to retaliation against a nuclear attack or to an exceptional kind of conventional assault – one that threatened “annihilation”, or the national survival and independence of a US ally. By not thus limiting extended deterrence, the US compromises the credibility of its assurances and potentially increases the risk of escalation by an ally seeking to prompt US intervention. To support this view, the authors cite moves by South Korea and Japan in recent times to increase the speed and scope of responses to attacks in their independent deterrence postures. Interestingly, they also discount the value of conventional capabilities for extended deterrence, arguing that

adversaries will tend to view such capabilities as geared towards actual use in a conflict. Conventional “deterrence” and ambiguous nuclear guarantees in US extended deterrence, they argue, are likely to be destabilising, as an adversary could perceive them as intended to coerce rather than deter. Accordingly, they argue for the United States and its allies to clarify and reduce the role of nuclear weapons in their alliances.

In this discussion Li and He touch upon one of the most difficult issues discussed in this volume: the effect of nuclear weapons, and extended nuclear deterrence guarantees, on relatively small-scale conventional conflicts. These conflicts are of serious concern to US allies, and of course cannot be categorically defined as small until they have ended and the risks of escalation have passed. From a Chinese perspective, these authors cite a concern that a US ally might be emboldened to escalate a small-scale conventional conflict in order to leverage the protection afforded by US nuclear weapons. Li and He also refer to some of the deeper impediments to stable relations between the US, its allies and China. They argue that any future US-China strategic stability would need to be premised on the United States’ eschewing a quest to neutralise China’s retaliatory capability, notably through missile defences. Li and He recognise that if their proposed reduction in the scope of extended deterrence is to occur, changes to US declaratory policy will be necessary, as will extensive intra-alliance consultations. Notably, all authors agree on the need for such consultations – albeit to differing ends. The Chinese contributors also recognise that full consistency in China’s declaratory nuclear policy will be necessary to allow and encourage the US and its allies to make positive changes. Finally, they argue that China needs at an early stage to reach a shared understanding of the meaning of strategic stability with the United States, which one might presume to be a precursor to the possible opening of such a dialogue.

Hyun-Wook Kim’s chapter on extended deterrence on the Korean Peninsula brings into sharp focus the tension between disarmament and South Korean security, and delves further into the dilemma about the role of nuclear weapons in small conflicts. He outlines some of the challenges

created by the strengthening of the US negative security assurance (NSA)¹³ in the 2010 NPR for dealing with North Korea and its provocations, as well as the lingering implications of George H W Bush's decision to withdraw tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea at the end of the Cold War. Kim considers the hypothetical reintroduction of tactical nuclear weapons into South Korea and concludes that while this might correct the present imbalance in nuclear forces deployed on the Peninsula, it would be politically impossible for the United States and bad for US-China relations, so South Korea will need to find other ways to restore the strategic balance between North and South. Kim is cautiously positive about the prospects for the United States and South Korea to construct a tailored deterrence posture for the Peninsula through consultations in the newly formed US-ROK Extended Deterrence Policy Committee as well as through limited cooperation in missile defence. The most recent developments in US defence policy will have mixed effects on South Korea: its fiscal pressures and 2012 Strategic Guidance (which refers to winning major conflicts sequentially rather than simultaneously) are not entirely reassuring,¹⁴ but Seoul may be able to expect more US engagement on the troubled Korean Peninsula given Washington's declared "pivot" to Asia.

One of the distinctive features of Kim's contribution is the immediacy of the national security threats he considers – the North Korean military attacks on the South in 2010 and the failure of both diplomacy and deterrence to prevent them make Kim's concerns more tangible than the threat perceptions mentioned by other authors. The fact that our project's Seoul consultative workshop happened to occur on the same day that North Korea chose to bombard the South's Yeonpyeong Island, in November 2010, left a certain – dare we say visceral – impression on many of our participants and contributors. Certainly Kim is pessimistic that the US can preserve stability and security in East Asia if it continues to reduce its nuclear arsenal. His concern lies not in the number of nuclear weapons the US possesses but rather reductions in the types of weapons it is seen as willing to deploy to protect its allies, plus the role of nuclear weapons in alliances. His disarmament worries are closely intertwined

with concerns about the adequacy of US conventional deterrence and forces on the Korean Peninsula in the event of large-scale conflict with North Korea. Kim's chapter is a warning of the way in which support for disarmament, and even for regional arms control diplomacy, can prove fragile in the event that a US ally is attacked. His work illuminates the anxieties that such an attack may provoke.

Stephan Frühling and Andrew O'Neil seem somewhat less troubled about the future of East Asia, in part because of their confidence that US extended nuclear deterrence will continue as an effective tool for mitigating great-power conflict and preventing proliferation among US allies. They marshal some powerful arguments to point out, however, that any profound changes to the role of nuclear weapons in US defence policy in support of disarmament would raise difficult security questions for policy-makers in East Asia. This is partly because, in their assessment, growing and real concerns about China's challenge to US conventional dominance of the region may increase the salience of nuclear weapons in US alliances. They also emphasise the importance of extended deterrence in suppressing proliferation in East Asia among states that might otherwise pose proliferation risks due to their uncertain security situation and advanced nuclear technology. In their view, it remains conceivable that Japan and South Korea would consider acquiring their own nuclear weapons if circumstances changed dramatically and if confidence in the credibility of US extended deterrence was severely undermined, for instance by its failure to support an ally. Even Australia, they argue, has old currents of thinking about an independent nuclear capability that might begin to resurface in certain perilous future scenarios. Frühling and O'Neil thus caution against transplanting the global disarmament discourse into East Asia without an acute sensitivity to regional conditions. Any movement to disarm will need to proceed on the basis of a strong understanding of regional dynamics and the particular importance US allies place on nuclear deterrence.

Frühling and O'Neil explicitly argue that major-power tensions, of which the changing conventional balance between the United States and

China is an important factor, constitute a greater threat to East Asian security than the presence of nuclear weapons. The ability of US nuclear weapons to offset conventional capabilities will be a serious consideration for Japan, South Korea and Australia in the future, and discussions of extended deterrence will need to extend to the operational details of the policy as the conventional balance in the region changes. In the Australian contributors' opinion, East Asia is moving away from the sort of conditions that may have until recently been conducive to nuclear disarmament, so that any future disarmament initiative will need to preserve robust extended deterrence and make strategic as well as moral and political sense. They conclude with policy recommendations that are markedly less ambitious than those of Abe and Tosaki as well as Li and He, but that still give diplomacy a chance. To be precise, Frühling and O'Neil focus on modest confidence-building measures and the need for broad, regional security dialogue in which to situate eventual US-China nuclear dialogue.

Signposts for Policy

These four rich contributions add up to a complicated picture. Does it carry any straightforward policy messages? One is that the United States will have an exceptionally difficult time managing – let alone trying to reconcile – the diverse pressures of allies and potential adversaries in shaping the future role of its nuclear weapons in East Asia. Another is that zealotry, whether from the advocates of deterrence or those of disarmament, will have little place in delivering stability in East Asia.

As our concluding chapter will explain in depth, the common thread to the complex debate set out in this book is the need for greater communication among all players, from consultations among allies to strategic stability talks between the United States and China. The chapters herein and the discussions at the regional consultative workshops both suggest that the policy of extended deterrence and the agenda of nuclear disarmament will need to be marked by fresh efforts at compromise if they are to co-exist in East Asia. At the same time, East Asian analysts and their governments tend to be wary of any modification to time-tested deterrence

policies at a time of exceptional strategic uncertainty, when some nations are anticipating a future in which Chinese military modernisation might be able to neutralise conventional American power projection.

The recent wave of support for global nuclear disarmament does not seem to have taken full account of the entrenched and worsening nature of strategic tensions in East Asia, the pace at which the conventional military balance may be changing, or the anxieties this brings with it. The political symbolism of US nuclear weapons, the differences between nuclear and conventional deterrence, and allies' desires for the clearest possible US political commitments to their defence are all very real factors in the nuclear debate in Asia.

The disarmament agenda will have a chance of advancing in East Asia only if closely informed by and integrated with the realities of strategic change in the region and the role of extended nuclear deterrence in managing those changes. And transcending all of the debates about capability, posture and doctrine is the question of strategic intent. Deep-seated doubts about strategic intentions will need to be dispelled, especially between the United States and China, before East Asia can take its place in any vision of a world without nuclear armaments.

The contributions to this book are a confronting mosaic of pieces that together indicate how hard it will be to eliminate such doubts. The process of building trust, confidence and institutions to support regional stability will be difficult for many reasons, including history, territorial differences, nationalism, resource pressures and the changing strategic balance. But not to be overlooked is the basic fact that key countries hold very different views of the appropriate role of nuclear and conventional armaments. As this book illustrates, there are strong differences between (and sometimes within) the United States, Japan, South Korea and China about the nature and role of deterrence, extended deterrence and nuclear weapons.

This volume is intended to provide insights for policy-makers and experts to identify the key problems posed by and for extended deterrence and the diverging agendas of regional security and disarmament in a

changing East Asia. The four central chapters are intended to assist experts and policy-makers in understanding how China, Japan, South Korea, and Australia prioritise or integrate these three features of their security environment.

In the conclusion, we identify avenues for future research and note some broad areas of practical policy recommendation for governments to consider. These touch on:

- The need to refine extended nuclear deterrence towards countering existential threats only, and for US allies and partners to accept this;
- The value of regular consultations between the United States and its allies and about the purpose and nature of all forms of extended deterrence;
- The importance of the United States' maintaining the effectiveness of its overall security role and presence in Asia, even as it makes large cuts to its global defence budget;
- The need for US allies to carry more of the burden to provide for their own conventional defence and contribute to regional stability;
- The critical importance of the United States and China moving towards an increasingly substantial set of security dialogues and confidence-building measures, including the commencement of a strategic stability dialogue;
- The need for China to accept that US alliances can be a stabilising force and that the allies see them as defensively motivated and essential for security;
- The wide regional security benefits that would flow from China's reconsidering its policy of relative tolerance and indifference towards North Korea's nuclear and missile programs and destabilising behaviour.

We should emphasise that these are our broad categories of recommendation as editors, including taking into account the many arguments presented at the consultative workshops, and should not be taken as being necessarily endorsed by all contributing authors.

What is striking about the nuclear and strategic challenges of a changing East Asia is how little immediate room for manoeuvre key governments possess. This is, after all, a so-called "wicked" problem – in which the obvious solution to one part of the problem may exacerbate another part of the problem.¹⁵ Nonetheless, we are convinced that policy-makers have yet to exhaust all policy options. As our conclusion outlines, the wicked, interconnected nature of the challenge means that a way forward will require simultaneous efforts on multiple policy fronts. Given Asia's centrality to world affairs in the 21st century, and given the certain and devastating consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, it is incumbent on governments to do all they can to disarm doubt and minimise the risks associated with nuclear weapons and strategic dynamics in a changing Asia.

Notes

- 1 “North Korea Proclaims Intention to Fire Long-Range Rocket into Space,” Global Security Newswire, March 16, 2012, <http://www.nti.rsvp1.com/gsn/article/north-korea-proclaims-intention-fire-rocket-space/?mgh=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nti.org&mgf=1>.
- 2 “Remarks by President Obama to the Australian Parliament,” Canberra, Australia, Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, 17 November 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament>.
- 3 See, for example, George P Shultz, William J Perry, Henry A Kissinger and Sam Nunn, “A World Free of Nuclear Weapons,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 4 January 2007; George Perkovich and James M Acton, *Abolishing Nuclear Weapons*, Adelphi Paper 396 (London: Institute for International Strategic Studies, August 2008).
- 4 Department of Defense (US), *Nuclear Posture Review Report*, 2010, 15, 16, 28-9.
- 5 “Obama Seeks Additional Nuke Cuts with Russia,” Global Security Newswire, 26 March 2012, <http://www.nti.rsvp1.com/gsn/article/obama-seeks-news-russian-nuclear-arms-reductions/?mgh=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nti.org&mgf=1>.
- 6 See George Perkovich and James M Acton, *Abolishing Nuclear Weapons*, 30-2; International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, *Eliminating Nuclear Threats: A Practical Agenda for Global Policymakers* (Canberra: Paragon, 2009) 65-7, 173.
- 7 A number of recent academic studies have reinforced the view that security assurances help prevent proliferation, see, for example, Matthew Kroenig, “Importing the Bomb: Sensitive Nuclear Assistance and Nuclear Proliferation,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no 2 (April 2009): 161-180, 171-172.
- 8 In its simplest sense, “strategic stability” refers to “the balance between two roughly equivalent nuclear powers”: Lora Saalman, *China & the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review*, The Carnegie Papers, Carnegie-Tsinghua Center

- for Global Policy, Washington, DC and Beijing 2011, 4. James Acton has identified two components to strategic stability: crisis stability and arms race stability. Crisis stability refers to a situation in which neither party sees an advantage in striking the other first with nuclear weapons where a crisis occurs between them and arms race stability refers to a situation in which neither has an incentive to build up their nuclear arsenal in peacetime: James Acton, *Deterrence During Disarmament: Deep Nuclear Reductions and International Security*, Adelphi Series 417, International Institute for Strategic Studies (London: Routledge, 2011) 15-17.
- 9 Jonathan D Pollack, “Worlds Apart: NATO and Asia’s Nuclear Future,” in *Reducing Nuclear Risks in Europe: A Framework for Action*, eds Steve Andreasen and Isabelle Williams (Washington, DC: Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2011), 174, 181-2.
 - 10 Rory Medcalf, ed, *Weathering Change* (Sydney: Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2011).
 - 11 The need for a comprehensive treatment of both conventional and nuclear capabilities has been emphasised by Nobumasa Akiyama. See Nobumasa Akiyama, “Session V: Global Zero: Asian Responses,” Discussion Paper, 5th Berlin Conference on Asian Security, Berlin, 30 September-1 October 2010, http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/projekt_papiere/Akiyama_BCAS2010_web_ks.pdf.
 - 12 This refers to a process of arms control and potentially the wider reduction of threat perceptions, not confined solely to nuclear weapons.
 - 13 Negative security assurances (NSA) and positive security assurances (PSA) are nuclear-armed states’ policies towards non-nuclear weapon states who abide by their non-proliferation obligations. NSA means that nuclear states would not use their nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states; PSA means that nuclear states would help to protect non-nuclear states should they become victims of nuclear attacks
 - 14 Department of Defense (US), *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, 2012 http://www.defense.gov/news/Defense_Strategic_Guidance.pdf.

- 15 See Rory Medcalf, *Wicked Weapons: North Asia's Nuclear Tangle* (Sydney: Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2009).

Untangling Japan's Nuclear Dilemma: Deterrence before Disarmament

Nobuyasu Abe and Hirofumi Tosaki

Introduction

In his historic Prague speech in 2009, President Barack Obama committed the United States to take concrete steps towards a world without nuclear weapons while maintaining a safe, secure and effective nuclear arsenal for deterrence and reassurance as long as nuclear weapons exist.¹⁶ In response, Tokyo expressed strong support for his first goal, but also concern that a reduced role and size of US nuclear forces might weaken US extended nuclear deterrence, the so-called nuclear umbrella. This seemingly paradoxical response reflects a long standing dilemma in Japanese security policy regarding nuclear weapons.

The total elimination of nuclear weapons has been an earnest and pervasive desire in Japan since the time of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan also sees the promotion of nuclear disarmament as strengthening its security by mitigating the nuclear threats that it faces. But, given the security imperatives imposed by its fragile security environment, Japan has depended on US extended nuclear deterrence for many decades. The fact that former Prime Minister and Nobel Laureate Eisaku Sato had to accept a secret understanding with the United States that undermined Japan's Three Non-Nuclear Principles is testimony to the depth of the dilemma

that Japan faces. While Japan maintains this set of policies renouncing the possession and manufacturing of nuclear weapons and their introduction into Japanese territory, in 2010 a government-organised committee headed by Professor Shinichi Kitaoka confirmed the existence of a secret “tacit” agreement with the United States to allow passage of American nuclear weapons through Japanese territory.¹⁷

Unlike the situation for US allies in the European theatre, the collapse of the Soviet Union did not alleviate all of Japan’s security concerns. Rather, Tokyo perceives that the security environment in Northeast Asia is becoming more unstable and complicated, with such diverse threats and challenges as the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait; North Korea’s development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles; China’s rapid and aggressive military modernisation; unresolved issues over territory and maritime interests; and the possibility of a power transition due to China’s rise and the relative decline of US power. It is true that thick and complex interdependence has developed among Northeast Asian countries (except North Korea), making it difficult for them to resort to war in order to resolve disputes or enforce their will on others. Still, “[m]ilitary-political security has priority, and the use of force, even all-out war is understood as a possibility”¹⁸ in this region.

Policy Volatility

Tokyo’s attitude towards nuclear and security issues, including extended nuclear deterrence, has shown great volatility in the past few years due to a combination of changes in domestic politics and international developments. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s reaffirmation of US resolve to defend Japan soon after the first North Korean nuclear test in October 2006 was very much what Tokyo wanted. In 2009 in the wake of North Korea’s second nuclear test, the security concerns of the Liberal Democratic Party’s (LDP) Taro Aso Administration included not just a nuclear North Korea but also China’s rapid military modernisation. At this time Japanese officials were reported to have requested that the

United States retain the nuclear-armed Tomahawk land attack missiles (TLAM-Ns) as a symbol of reassurance as well as a means of escalation.¹⁹

This swing to the right came to an abrupt end when the centre-left Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) won a landslide victory in the lower house election at the end of August 2009.²⁰ The new foreign minister, Katsuya Okada, had previously chaired the DPJ Parliamentarians for Nuclear Disarmament Group and advocated for the No First Use (NFU) of nuclear weapons by nuclear-weapon states as well as the establishment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Northeast Asia. He sent a letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on 24 December 2009 denying any earlier Japanese request to reconsider the retirement of the TLAM-N. While acknowledging the fact that Japan depended on US extended deterrence, he also expressed interest in the idea of limiting the role of nuclear weapons to the sole purpose of deterring nuclear attacks and support for President Obama’s vision of a world without nuclear weapons.²¹

The swing to the left then came to an end when Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama resigned in March 2010 after being unable to settle the relocation of the US Futenma Marine Corps Air Station. In addition to the need to mend fences with the United States following the Futenma debacle, a series of events in Northeast Asia during 2010 forced the DPJ’s Naoto Kan Administration to pay more attention to deterrence. These included North Korea’s sinking of the *Cheonan*, revelation of its uranium enrichment program and shelling of Yeonpyeong Island, as well as China’s increasing assertiveness against the backdrop of its continuing military modernisation, for example during the Chinese fishing boat incident near the Senkaku Islands.

These swings in Japan’s security policy imply that Japan’s dilemma regarding nuclear issues is still deep-seated. At the same time, Japan is still in the process of crafting a clearer vision and strategy regarding security and nuclear issues, particularly extended nuclear deterrence, to respond to the drastic changes in the regional and global security environment. In a situation in which US extended deterrence provided to Japan seems

to have been adjusted and increased in complexity, as mentioned in the following section,²² what are the roles and limits of extended nuclear and conventional deterrence? What efforts should Japan make in order to enhance the credibility of extended deterrence? How does diplomacy play a role in strengthening extended deterrence? Is dependence on US extended nuclear deterrence inconsistent with a strong commitment to disarmament, a central pillar of Japan's nuclear policy? These are the questions that Japan must attempt to answer in crafting a clearer vision for its security policy.

Japan's Nuclear Umbrella Dilemma: Between Aversion and Abandonment

The US nuclear umbrella over Japan has been characterised as existential deterrence based on the US possession of massive nuclear forces, mutual defence commitments under the Japan-US Security Treaty and occasional reaffirmations by Washington. Unlike in North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries and South Korea during the Cold War, US nuclear forces were not deployed in Japan, nor were operational plans for the use of nuclear weapons or a so-called "escalation ladder" established. Indeed, Tokyo and Washington had not even discussed the details of extended deterrence until recently.

The credibility of the nuclear umbrella was never a significant issue for Japan during the Cold War except when China conducted its first nuclear test in 1964 and Japan was seriously considering its accession to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) during the 1960s and 1970s. In Northeast Asia, US nuclear and conventional forces were superior to those of the Soviet Union, and, in particular, the combined naval and air capabilities of Japan's Self-Defense Forces and US forces had a high denial capability. In addition, the possibility of US counter-attack, including the use of nuclear weapons to defend Japan, was regarded as realistic because of Japan's importance to the US strategy to contain the Soviet Union. Japan's fear at this time was of "entrapment" in a US-Soviet clash rather than "abandonment" by the United States.

Given the changes in the regional and international security environment after the Cold War, Japan's interest in extended nuclear deterrence has been increasing for some time now. Its primary concerns have gradually shifted from entrapment to abandonment and the potential weakening of the credibility of the nuclear umbrella. President Obama's commitment to reducing the role and number of US nuclear weapons has thus exacerbated Japan's fear.

Minimum Deterrence

Theoretically, even if the United States drastically reduced the role and the size of its nuclear arsenal, and, for example, adopted a minimum deterrence posture, the deterrent effect of its nuclear umbrella could persist due to unpredictability in the use of such tremendously destructive weapons. A prospective attacker simply could not be confident that Washington would never use its nuclear weapons to defend Japan.²³ Besides, as indicated in the Joint Statement of the Japan-US Security Consultative Committee (2+2) in May 2007, "the full range of U.S. military capabilities – both nuclear and non-nuclear strike forces and defensive capabilities – form the core of extended deterrence and support U.S. commitments to the defense of Japan."²⁴ The role of US conventional deterrence has been expanding significantly and complements nuclear deterrence. Still, Japan could well be concerned about deeper cuts in the number of US weapons to the extent that it expects the US nuclear umbrella to perform roles other than minimum deterrence.

Deterrence by Denial

One possible role Japan might expect of the US nuclear forces is deterrence by denial and damage limitation through counterforce operations if deterrence failed. The establishment of an effective denial posture would reduce the probability that the United States and/or Japan would suffer serious damage from a nuclear attack. In theory, such a posture would

also enhance the credibility of US extended deterrence. This would seem to require a large number of nuclear weapons and a broad range of strike options, including first strike or even pre-emption.

However, Tokyo does not appear to be wedded to this potential role for the US arsenal. Japan did not express concern or opposition, at least officially, when the Obama Administration decided to terminate programs for the research and development of new nuclear weapons, including the robust nuclear earth penetrator and “mini-nukes”, which the George W Bush Administration had abortively sought to develop for attacking and defeating hard and deeply buried targets, mobile and relocatable targets, and chemical or biological agents. The lack of Japanese opposition might have reflected Japan’s basic position calling for eventual complete nuclear disarmament, or a judgment that existing US nuclear forces could fulfil the requirements of a denial posture. At the same time, considering that the Bush Administration pursued these capabilities because of a perceived lack of capabilities for a denial posture, Japan’s indifference may also imply that it perceives denial as a less important role for US extended nuclear deterrence.

Deterrence by Punishment

If Japan indeed accords little importance to deterrence by denial, the remaining role that it expects the US nuclear arsenal to play is deterrence by punishment. As Japan is unable to possess any retaliatory capability against enemy territory under the current interpretation of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, Tokyo has counted upon the US nuclear umbrella to deter not just nuclear but also biological, chemical and even massive conventional attacks or threats of such attacks. This is one of the reasons Tokyo is concerned about the possible curtailment of the roles of US nuclear weapons at a time when Japan still faces those threats.

Some Japanese security officials and experts express concern about the consequences were the United States to reduce its strategic nuclear arsenal to below 1,000 warheads in the current security environment. This

number does not seem to reflect a thorough calculation of the number of weapons needed for the missions and targeting necessary to maintain extended nuclear deterrence by punishment on Japan’s behalf. Rather, it is more likely to be a largely psychological calculation: Japan would only feel reassured if the US nuclear capability remains undoubtedly second to none. These concerns are derived from the perception that China may narrow the gap with the United States in strategic nuclear forces by developing a credible second-strike capability, and that the United States would simultaneously reduce its strategic nuclear arsenal so deeply as to generate a perception that the United States would lose the edge over China in a nuclear exchange. While it might be true that both Washington and Beijing could retaliate against each other and “[h]ence, it is possible that each could be deterred from escalating the conflict, and any conflict would remain conventional,”²⁵ even a conventional armed conflict between China and the United States would have serious implications for Japan. In such a situation, Tokyo would also be concerned that US-China mutual vulnerability might lead to its abandonment by the United States.

Reassurance and the TLAM-N

The credibility of deterrence by nuclear punishment is not high even in a situation of direct as opposed to extended deterrence. An adversary may fail to be deterred because: its stake in a regional conflict is higher than that of the United States; the United States is deterred by that country’s own capability; or the United States is self-deterred from nuclear retaliation due to the constraints of the nuclear taboo, humanitarian concerns or the principle of proportionality. The credibility of deterrence is even further reduced in the context of the nuclear umbrella: it is highly unlikely that US resolve to use nuclear weapons to defend its allies is stronger than for defending itself, while the possibility that extended deterrence might fail due to the other side’s underestimation or miscalculation of US intentions is more likely than in a situation of direct deterrence.

Of course, the United States may retaliate with nuclear weapons to defend its allies when it considers that such an act serves its vital national interest. This will in turn depend upon the strategic, political and/or economic importance of the ally attacked, as well as the importance of sending an unequivocal message to the immediate adversary and potential adversaries about US resolve to provide extended deterrence or maintain the credibility of its wider defence commitments. Besides, an opponent may presumably be deterred by the prospect of the enormous damage caused by nuclear retaliation even if the probability of this occurring is not great. Despite all of this, US allies cannot dismiss questions about the credibility of the nuclear umbrella: there is always ambiguity about deterrence postures. Moreover, US policy and the value of a particular ally to Washington can change.

As a consequence, allies like Japan yearn for more visible reassurance of US nuclear commitment than statements or declarations. This is illustrated by differing Japanese and US perceptions of the TLAM-Ns that were withdrawn in accordance with the US unilateral disarmament initiative in December 1991. For the United States, the obsolete TLAM-Ns were simply a less credible deterrent, but for allies like Japan there was something more to them – a visible, symbolic value. This was a typical case of differing perceptions between the nation receiving an extended deterrence commitment and the one providing it.²⁶

Tokyo was reported to have expressed concern when the Obama Administration was contemplating the permanent retirement of the TLAM-Ns. In his letter to Secretary of State Clinton, while denying that Japan had asked the United States to retain this weapon system, Foreign Minister Okada expressed hope to receive ongoing explanations of the US Government's extended deterrence policy, including any impact the retirement of TLAM-Ns might have on extended deterrence for Japan and how this could be supplemented.²⁷

Washington has decided to retire the TLAM-N in 2013. The 2010 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) stated that “the deterrence and assurance roles of TLAM-N can be adequately substituted by...other means,”²⁸

in particular heavy bombers and dual-capable aircraft (DCA) that are “visibly forward deployed, thereby signalling US resolve and commitment in crisis.”²⁹ However, Japan's concerns have remained. Aircraft are more vulnerable than TLAM-Ns loaded on US attack submarines. US bases in Japan are within range of perhaps a few hundred North Korean Nodong medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs), about a hundred Chinese DF-21 MRBMs and 200-500 Chinese DH-10 land attack cruise missiles (LACMs). As both China and North Korea continue their build ups, even Andersen Air Force Base in Guam may come within the range of their ballistic missiles in the future, increasing the vulnerability of US aircraft and making their forward deployment problematic.³⁰

US Declaratory Policy

Japan has also carefully watched the debate over US declaratory policy. The declaratory policy set out in the 2010 NPR seems to have been a meeting point between those who favoured a reduced role for nuclear weapons (with an eye toward a world without such weapons) and those who favoured maintaining nuclear deterrence and thus reassuring Tokyo. On the one hand, reflecting the vision of nuclear-weapon-free world advocates, the NPR declared that “the fundamental role of U.S. nuclear weapons ... is to deter nuclear attack on the United States, our allies, and partners,” and the United States “will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states that are party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations.”³¹ On the other hand, it satisfies the concerns of supporters of extended deterrence with statements such as “in the case of countries not covered by this assurance – states that possess nuclear weapons and states not in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations – there remains a narrow range of contingencies in which U.S. nuclear weapons may still play a role in deterring a conventional or CBW attack against the U.S. or its allies and partners.”³²

However, the 2010 NPR also stated that “the United States will consult with allies and partners regarding the conditions under which it would be prudent to shift to a policy under which deterring nuclear attack is the sole purpose of U.S. nuclear weapons.”³³ This reflects its perception that “the role of U.S. nuclear weapons to deter and respond to non-nuclear attacks – conventional, biological, or chemical – has declined significantly.”³⁴

These questions, compromises and concerns about the adequacy of US nuclear posture and capabilities to support the nuclear umbrella give rise to a number of challenges that Japan and the United States must manage cooperatively.

The issue regarding the TLAM-Ns and US declaratory policy seems to reveal the gap between the perceptions of the United States and its allies. The fact is that certain allies continue to attach importance to particular weapons systems or measures while the United States sees particular weapons systems in narrower terms of their practical effectiveness in providing deterrence. It will be vital for regional stability and Japan’s security for the United States and its allies, including Japan, to find ways to manage the challenges posed by these perception gaps in terms of deterrence and reassurance so as to maintain alliance cohesion and integrity.

Another challenge is how reasonably to limit Japan’s expectations of the US nuclear umbrella. How can Japan resist the temptation to expect extended deterrence to do more than that of which it is capable? Extended nuclear deterrence remains the ultimate guarantor of Japan’s security, but it is also true that this umbrella cannot deter all the contingencies Japan may face. Therefore, it is important to establish postures for deterring and countering the wide range of contingencies that Japan may face in the future, and do so using non-nuclear capabilities to a much larger extent than before.

The 2010 NPR hinted that the United States would require its allies to strengthen their own defence capability, stating that the US “Administration is pursuing strategic dialogues with its allies and partners in East Asia and the Middle East to determine how best to cooperatively

strengthen regional security architectures to enhance peace and security.”³⁵ This implies that Japan is required to strengthen its own conventional deterrence to compensate for reduced US reliance on nuclear deterrence.

Extended Conventional Deterrence

According to one US analyst, “bureaucratic reorganization and reform, procurement and modernization programs, and even the missions assigned to deployed military units have changed in ways that deemphasize the role of U.S. nuclear forces in military operations and planning.”³⁶ This change is reflected in the various US Nuclear Posture Reviews. In the 2002 NPR the Bush Administration introduced a “New Triad” which consisted of offence (nuclear and non-nuclear), defence and responsive infrastructure. The Obama Administration embarked on quest to fulfil its unequivocal commitment to maintain deterrence with a reduced role for a smaller arsenal of nuclear weapons by continuing to strengthen its overwhelming conventional capabilities. Regarding regional issues in particular, the 2010 NPR indicated that “enhancing regional security architectures are key parts of the U.S. strategy for strengthening regional deterrence while reducing the role and number of nuclear weapons. These regional security architectures include effective missile defense, counter-WMD capabilities, conventional power-projection capabilities, and integrated command and control,”³⁷ in addition to forward-deployed nuclear forces.

The physical and psychological impact of conventional forces falls short of that of nuclear forces, and US conventional deterrence may fail if the other side underestimates US capabilities. Just as worryingly, an adversary that perceives its forces to be greatly inferior to US conventional forces might be tempted to bolster its position by acquiring and building such capabilities as weapons of mass destruction (WMD), ballistic missiles and special forces.³⁸ Conversely, it has been argued that US punitive use of nuclear weapons against WMD or massive conventional attack may be effective as intra- and post-war deterrence. (There is, however, no historical evidence to confirm this line of argument.)

Regardless of such arguments, it cannot be denied that improving the accuracy and yield of US conventional forces provides a greater range of more flexible options for retaliation prior to any need to use nuclear forces, ranging from a decapitation attack against the opponent's leadership to a large and devastating conventional military response. Since the threshold for using conventional forces is much lower than that for nuclear use, a broader and more flexible range of options for conventional retaliation can complement nuclear deterrence by punishment, the credibility of which is often questioned. Furthermore, "when U.S. priority goals include post-conflict 'nation-building' and the reconstruction of a defeated opponent, U.S. advanced non-nuclear capabilit[ies] may be more credible."³⁹

Certainly the development of US conventional forces has also strengthened its denial posture. Dramatic improvement of conventional offensive capabilities, including the development of a conventional prompt global strike (CPGS) capability, would help expand the options for attacking an enemy's high-value assets. The United States is also developing and deploying a missile defence system. The United States is seeking to build a denial posture with effective conventional damage limitation capabilities.

Still, this requires enormous investment of money and time – and both may be in short supply, given the new constraints on the US defence budget from 2011 onwards and the rate at which the region's strategic balance appears to be changing. In addition, since capability rather than will is the essential ingredient for effective conventional deterrence, its reinforcement may be more likely to stimulate an arms race among the countries concerned than would nuclear deterrence. It could be argued that an adversary that faces US overwhelming conventional capabilities might be tempted to use its WMD and ballistic missiles at an early stage of a conflict before losing them.⁴⁰ Moreover, a war-fighting capability may not always be interpreted as a deterrent capability.⁴¹

All of these limits inherent in conventional deterrence mean that, although the United States may prevail in most regional conflicts without using nuclear forces, it is inconceivable that conventional deterrence would completely replace the nuclear umbrella in regions such as

Northeast Asia in the near future. Without extended nuclear deterrence, Washington's allies, including Japan, would question the credibility of the US commitment to their security and the region's security. Therefore the United States and its allies need to work together to construct a "regional security architecture" tailored to meet a mix of nuclear and conventional threats and challenges.

Allies must recognise that the construction of a regional security architecture is not a task for the United States alone. The Obama Administration's emphasis on the importance of cooperation with allies and partners in its various 2010 strategic review documents – reinforced in the Pentagon's published Strategic Guidance in early 2012⁴² – is a genuine sign of the need for allies to take on a greater share of the burden and responsibility for their own defence. For Japan, such cooperation could admittedly be a heavy burden and may require the allocation of greater resources to defence. But it is also a chance for Japan to both reinforce its own deterrent capability as well as the credibility of extended deterrence. Japan and the United States have already reached an understanding about "the need to continue examining the roles, missions, and capabilities of Japan's Self Defense Forces and the U.S. Armed Forces required to respond effectively to diverse challenges in a well-coordinated manner."⁴³ However, it seems that the rapidly changing security environment in Northeast Asia is outpacing US and Japanese efforts. The new Japanese National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG), issued in late 2010, describe some of Japan's renewed efforts to this end:⁴⁴

- Developing a Dynamic Defense Force that possesses readiness, mobility, flexibility, sustainability and versatility;
- Further deepening and development of the Alliance to adapt to the evolving security environment; and
- Continuing to engage in strategic dialogue and specific policy coordination with the US, including bilateral assessments of the security environment and bilateral consultations on common strategic objectives, and roles, missions and capabilities.

The new NDPG also indicates that “Japan will strengthen its cooperation with the Republic of Korea and Australia through bilateral initiatives and multilateral cooperation involving the United States.”⁴⁵ What Japan can do in terms of defence cooperation is still limited under the government’s current interpretation of the Japanese Constitution, but initiatives such as sharing information, observing military exercises and joint missions in areas of non-traditional security are worth expanding for the purpose of regional stability and reinforcing deterrence.

While Japanese and US efforts to strengthen deterrence should be conducted in various areas, the top priorities seem to be the development of missile defences and countering anti-access and area-denial (A2AD) capabilities.

Reinforcing missile defence capabilities has been one of the most significant agenda items for Japan since North Korea and China began increasing their missile capabilities, some of which bring Japanese territory within range. Japan has already deployed Aegis ballistic missile defence (BMD) and Patriot PAC-3 batteries, and will strengthen them, including by the deployment of six BMD-capable Aegis destroyers (currently four vessels are assigned to this mission). Further promotion of Japan-US BMD cooperation would include co-development of an advanced SM-3 Block IIA interceptor for the Aegis BMD system, and information sharing and close coordination in the joint operation of the BMD system. This is expected to enhance both countries’ denial capability as well as the alliance relationship. Additionally, US deployment of its BMD system in Japan may have a similar symbolic effect to the forward deployment of nuclear weapons, representing the US commitment and reassurance to defend Japan and reducing its fear of abandonment. In addition, creating a regular consultative framework for BMD cooperation helps Japan to influence US defence policy directly.⁴⁶ Furthermore, if Japan’s BMD system directly or indirectly contributes to the defence of US forces abroad or the US homeland through information sharing or intercepting ballistic missiles, this would help strengthen the alliance by creating a more

reciprocal and balanced defence relationship, and thus the credibility of extended deterrence.

The United States and Japan also need to urgently address the A2AD capabilities that China is building up, including short range ballistic missiles (SRBMs), MRBMs, LACMs, anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs) and anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBMs),⁴⁷ as well as naval and air forces and asymmetric capabilities such as anti-satellite and cyber warfare. The primary objective of China’s A2AD capabilities appears to be to deny the United States the ability to intervene in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in a future Taiwan Strait crisis, “thereby allowing aggression or other destabilizing actions to be conducted”.⁴⁸ In the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), the US expressed its concern over China’s development of A2AD capabilities, warning that “without dominant US capabilities to project power, the integrity of US alliances and security partnerships could be called into question, reducing US security and influence and increasing the possibility of conflict.”⁴⁹

The QDR lists US capabilities and strategies that should be developed for deterring and defeating aggression backed by A2AD capabilities: developing a joint AirSea Battle concept; expanding future long-range strike capabilities; exploiting advantages in subsurface operations; increasing the resilience of US forward posture and base infrastructure; assuring access to space and the use of space assets; enhancing the robustness of key command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR) capabilities; defeating enemy sensor and engagement systems; and enhancing the presence and responsiveness of US forces abroad.⁵⁰ Japan’s close cooperation with the United States in developing such capabilities will contribute to the defence of Japan and to securing stability in the areas surrounding it, including at sea, in the air and on islands. Among others, the priorities for Japan are: reinforcing remote islands defence; strengthening anti-submarine warfare capabilities; increasing the resilience of Japanese and US bases in Japan; and developing measures to intercept or counter Chinese ASCMs and ASBMs.

Japan-US enhancement of the capabilities for deterring and countering threats at the theatre level would help reduce Japan's concern over a "stability-instability paradox" playing out in Northeast Asia. If a US-Chinese "stable" relationship of mutual deterrence emerges through, for example, China's acquisition of a highly survivable second-strike capability vis-à-vis the United States, and the United States simultaneously further reduced its strategic nuclear forces, China may think that the United States would be sufficiently deterred from defending Japan. This raises the possibility of Chinese low-intensity or limited military actions or coercion to settle disputes on its own terms or to change the status quo in the region.

Lastly, the enhancement of Japan-US deterrence inevitably requires in-depth bilateral consultations. As mentioned above, such a framework between the two countries has only just been created. During the Cold War the necessity of establishing a framework similar to the NATO Nuclear Planning Group was low and Japanese policy-makers avoided elaborating on how US extended deterrence worked, in view of Japan's anti-nuclear sentiment.⁵¹ However, since the end of the Cold War, Japan's security experts have increasingly argued for the creation of a bilateral consultative mechanism on extended deterrence to maintain and enhance its credibility in Japan's changing strategic circumstances, and to contemplate how Japan and the United States may cooperate to strengthen it.⁵²

The consultative meetings on extended deterrence between the two countries' top foreign and defence officials, launched in February 2010, was an encouraging development. Continuous, in-depth consultations certainly enhance the credibility of extended deterrence, serve as a symbol of reassurance, and accelerate bilateral efforts to construct a regional security architecture. One question that will need to be considered is whether formally institutionalising this framework in a manner similar to the US-South Korean Extended Deterrence Policy Committee is suitable in Japan's case. The more important questions, however, relate to how close and substantive these consultations can be, as well as the extent to which genuine bilateral coordination can be achieved through such talks.

The fact is that Japanese and US security policies and threat perceptions are not always the same. By offering Japan the opportunity to understand US policies and intentions more clearly, and to have Japan's interests and concerns taken more clearly into consideration in US security, deterrence and nuclear policies, such a bilateral framework would help reduce possible future Japanese anxiety over US nuclear arsenal reductions, as well as any mutual suspicion arising from perception gaps over nuclear disarmament and extended deterrence.

Roles of Diplomacy

Japan has tried to adjust its security policies to the new security situation after the Cold War, albeit at a slower pace than was expected. Such adjustment was no doubt triggered by North Korea's provocative actions, such as its nuclear and ballistic missile tests and abduction of Japanese citizens. Japan's security establishment has also had China's security and defence developments in mind, explicitly or implicitly, which have wider and deeper implications for Japan's security than do the challenges posed by North Korea.

Both Japan and the United States do not consider a confrontation with China inevitable, and perceive the benefits of maintaining a cooperative relationship with Beijing. Yet they also remain suspicious of China's intentions regarding its rapid military modernisation; assertiveness on territorial and maritime issues; development of a sphere of interest in the Asia-Pacific; reshaping the regional and international order to favour itself; and preventing US intervention in the Taiwan Strait.⁵³ As a result, they recognise the need to maintain a deterrence posture vis-à-vis Beijing as a hedge against a possible revisionist swing and to encourage China to keep its strategic behaviour within reasonable and stable bounds.

But excessive reinforcement of Japan-US deterrence by over-emphasising the "China threat" might bring about a self-fulfilling prophecy – prompting China to accelerate its military modernisation, move towards a more aggressive posture, and confront Japan and the United States. It is not easy to persuade Beijing that the aim of US-Japan bilateral efforts to

strengthen deterrence is a defensive act of hedging vis-à-vis China. China perceives what it considers to be hidden motivations for reinforcing the Japan-US alliance: to contain China, prevent it from unifying with Taiwan, and maintain US primacy and hegemony under which US values such as freedom, democracy and human rights prevail.⁵⁴ China has expressed its concern by advocating a multipolar system, which would enable China, as a major power and one of the pillars of the international community, to secure its national interests and maintain its political regime free from US criticism, intervention or coercion.⁵⁵

Thus, Japan and the United States need to be cautious in their reinforcement of deterrence, even though their aims do not go beyond hedging. Japan, the United States and China should also make a more dedicated effort to improve the regional security environment and avoid falling into the spiral of a security dilemma.

As has been widely argued, the first step toward these goals is to enhance mutual transparency on both the capabilities possessed by the United States and China, and the nature of their security and deterrence policies towards each other. The United States and Japan have repeatedly called upon China to be more transparent. China has explained that the purpose of its military modernisation is defensive and insisted that its intentions are transparent, for example, through its NFW declaration and unconditional negative security assurances (NSA). However, when carefully examined, the trend of China's military modernisation appears to exceed what is necessary for its defence, and some suggestions have been made that China's NFW policy may not apply in all circumstances.⁵⁶ Unlike other nuclear-weapon states, Beijing has yet to declare either the number of nuclear weapons it possesses or a concrete target for reducing that number. While China's concern that greater transparency may increase its vulnerability⁵⁷ is somewhat understandable, it also has to recognise that if greater transparency is not provided, other countries will have to speculate about China's true intentions largely by analysing its capabilities.

This may then lead them to doubt the credibility of China's declaratory policy and its expressed intentions, and given that such estimates tend to be inflated, could fuel an overreaction. At the same time, Japan and the United States should not forget that China will also require them to be transparent about their capabilities and intentions. It would, therefore, be beneficial to determine what sort of concrete measures the three countries need to take, either bilaterally or trilaterally, to provide each other with an adequate level of transparency on their respective capabilities, security policies and intentions, for example: the number, location and roles of certain weapons; precise data about defence budgets and their breakdown; and details of deterrent posture and other security policies.

Furthermore, the United States and China, and preferably other major countries including Japan, should engage in discussions to enhance strategic stability. China seems to define strategic stability as a situation where its national interests, political regime and status as a major power are secured, and its retaliatory capability against the United States – its ultimate recourse to counter the US influence or pressure – is not threatened. On the other hand, it will be useful if there is a clearer indication of how the United States defines “strategic stability”, especially since it expressed interest in commencing dialogues on strategic stability with China and Russia in the 2010 NPR.⁵⁸

It is not easy to speculate how the United States and China would define “strategic stability” once a serious dialogue was underway. It may be a traditional definition that continues to focus exclusively on military elements, or a broader definition based largely on political and diplomatic dimensions. If the latter is preferred, the United States will be required to show restraint and tolerance as well as respect for China's status as a major power. Meanwhile, China would need to accept that its status as a major power is derived from its behaviour as a responsible stakeholder and that the pursuit of regional hegemony or a sphere of influence at the expense of the security and interests of others will not be tolerated. In the context of such discussions, it will remain difficult for a democratic country to close

its eyes to questions of democracy, human rights and self-determination, and here the Taiwan issue may prove to be the most difficult.

There is also a need to pursue arms control measures that increase transparency, reduce uncertainty and promote a cooperative relationship. In particular, measures that include restrictions on the location of weapons deployments, or for example the reduction and eventual elimination of China's theatre missiles, would help reduce instability in Northeast Asia, and with it the incentive for further strengthening Japan-US deterrence. In the short term, however, little progress can be expected. China would not accept an arms control regime which, from its perspective, perpetuates its inferiority to the United States in nuclear and/or conventional forces. Nor would the United States agree to a regime which stipulates numerical parity between their strategic forces, in particular, or which would allow China to veto the US action to defend itself and assist its allies.

In the meantime – until some momentum or overriding incentive towards regional arms control can be found – it is imperative that efforts are made to prevent the regional security situation from deteriorating.

Settlement of the North Korean issue is a top priority for improving the regional security environment and reducing the urgency of alliance reinforcement in Northeast Asia. Pyongyang appears to have no intention of renouncing its nuclear capabilities. It considers them an indispensable asset for maintaining the regime. At least in the short term, solutions to the problems posed by determined proliferators like North Korea are hard to foresee.⁵⁹ The only remaining option would be for China, as a responsible stakeholder, to exert greater pressure on North Korea. China's geostrategic sensitivity should, of course, be taken into account, and it most certainly cannot control all North Korean activities. Still, China has the greatest influence over Pyongyang and is a key player in solving the issue. In order to encourage China to take further steps to offer not only carrots but also sticks to North Korea, other countries involved need to consider how to reduce China's concerns about instability in North Korea, including in the aftermath of a possible regime collapse.⁶⁰ To this end, the United States, South Korea and Japan may commit themselves

to help alleviate humanitarian, economic and social consequences of a North Korean regime collapse and not to take advantage of it for their security, e.g. not to move their military forces closer to Chinese borders except for police forces necessary for maintaining domestic order.

In the end, it is up to all countries in the region to make continuous efforts to build a pluralistic and stable Northeast Asian regional framework where reliance on military forces, including nuclear weapons, is greatly reduced. Current trends in the region seem to be heading in the opposite direction – the security situation is deteriorating such that reliance on military forces is increasing. Some see a foundation being built in the increasing economic interdependence among regional players that may work, alongside military forces, as another kind of strong deterrent to disruptive behaviour. This, however, remains to be seen. In the 2010 Sino-Japanese diplomatic clash over the Senkaku Islands, Japan succumbed to Chinese flexing of its economic muscles. Whether this dynamic works in the other direction as well is also yet to be seen.

Conclusion

Japan has adjusted its security policy in order to hedge against an uncertain future in Northeast Asia. While the nuclear umbrella provided by the United States will continue to play a significant role as the ultimate guarantor of Japan's security, the role of conventional deterrence has been increasing. Under these circumstances Japan needs to increase its efforts to strengthen its own deterrence capability rather than rely exclusively on US extended deterrence. This will also bolster conventional deterrence within the alliance.

At the same time, in order to reduce the negative consequences of strengthened deterrence, such as the security dilemma and demands on defence budgets, diplomacy is of obvious importance. Therefore, Japan should also take proactive steps toward establishing a stable security environment in Northeast Asia. Until such a goal is achieved, extended deterrence under the Japan-US Security Treaty will play an important stabilising role, maintaining regional and Japanese security by

detering attempts to change the status quo or threaten regional order. In addition, the US provision of extended deterrence has mitigated the effects of Tokyo's concerns about instability in the region, reducing the need for Japan to consider more drastic measures such as a rapid and massive conventional build-up, major changes in its security policy or the acquisition of nuclear weapons, which might trigger further instability or arms racing in the region.

Ultimately, these multilayered efforts can be understood as a method of realising a Northeast Asia where the US nuclear umbrella is no longer needed. In other words, they can prepare the way to a world without nuclear weapons. In this sense, US provision of extended deterrence, including the nuclear umbrella and the US-Japan reinforcement of deterrence with conventional capabilities do not contradict nuclear disarmament. When understood this way, Japan's apparent nuclear dilemma between disarmament and extended deterrence has the potential to frame a strategy for reconciling Japan's disarmament idealism and actual circumstances in a way that permits its ideals to be progressively realised.

Notes

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Credible Limitations: US Extended Nuclear Deterrence and Stability in Northeast Asia

Li Bin and He Yun

Introduction

Extended deterrence has been central to US security and alliance strategy in Northeast Asia since the start of the Cold War. During the Cold War it was rooted in the deep-seated suspicion and resentment between the Eastern and Western blocs, but it did not fade into history upon the collapse of the Soviet Union. On the contrary, the concept, with much broader content today, has moved to the centre of discussions about security in Northeast Asia as the United States and its allies set out to strengthen their existing relationships.

For China, this is not a happy prospect. China has been one of the “imagined enemies” of US extended deterrence in this region from the beginning. As one of the only large-scale military alliance networks remaining after the Cold War, the United States and its Northeast Asian allies are strengthening the policy of extended deterrence rather than relaxing it. For instance, the 2010 Japanese Defense Program Guidelines state that Japan “will continue to maintain and improve the credibility of US extended deterrence, with nuclear deterrent as a vital element, through close cooperation with the US.”⁶¹

This is the first time that the Defense Program Guidelines have referred explicitly to “extended deterrence”. To China, it is hard to believe that this is a benign gesture. The implications of the US extended deterrence policy need to be managed to stop a further deterioration of relations among countries in this region. Even if the policy of extended deterrence cannot be replaced by a more cooperative one, the most dangerous element of the policy should be identified and its negative implications avoided.

It seems that US allies in the Asia-Pacific region are trying to blend a number of different military approaches under the banner of extended deterrence: deterrence by punishment and denial, conventional and nuclear deterrence, common war-fighting capabilities and so on. No matter what the intentions behind this are, the blurring of nuclear and non-nuclear postures, including both approaches and targets, may be the most dangerous part of the policy and should be carefully managed. The scope of extended nuclear deterrence should be limited to countering nuclear attacks and arguably conventional annihilation. The reasons for this are that nuclear deterrence against conventional conflicts below the level of annihilation is aggressive, threatening and lacking in credibility.

This chapter first identifies a number of different military approaches that are being mixed under the banner of extended deterrence. It then moves on to discuss the current position of the United States toward the use of nuclear weapons and the resulting policy debates, and illustrates the negative impact of extended deterrence on disarmament, regional security and alliance relationships if the role of nuclear weapons is not clarified. It concludes with a discussion of policy suggestions to clarify this role.

Elements of “Extended Deterrence”

Traditional discussions of deterrence were mostly about “deterrence by retaliation”, defined as dissuading an attack by threatening to punish the potential attacker. However, it now seems that the United States and its allies in the Asia-Pacific region are putting all possible military approaches, in addition to deterrence by retaliation, under the banner of “extended deterrence”.⁶² Some of these additional military approaches

may be categorised as “deterrence by denial” while others are common war-fighting tools.

One big question here is whether the mixture of different military approaches in the one package is good for regional and international security, or whether an explicit demarcation should be drawn between the circumstances under which each of these different approaches applies.

In principle, we may divide possible military approaches into ten categories according to the different tools, timing and targets involved:

- (1) Threat of nuclear retaliation against a nuclear attack;
- (2) Threat of nuclear retaliation in a conventional conflict;
- (3) Threat of conventional retaliation against a nuclear attack;
- (4) Threat of conventional retaliation in a conventional conflict;
- (5) Denial of nuclear attack by a conventional system e.g. hit-to-kill missile defence;
- (6) Denial of conventional attack by a conventional system e.g. hit-to-kill missile defence;
- (7) Denial of nuclear attack by a nuclear system e.g. the old nuclear-tipped anti-ballistic missile system;
- (8) Denial of conventional attack by a nuclear system e.g. the old nuclear-tipped anti-ballistic missile system;
- (9) Nuclear war-fighting; and
- (10) Conventional war-fighting.

Categories (1) to (4) in the deterrence sense are deterrence by punishment; categories (5) to (8) are types of deterrence by denial; and categories (9) and (10) are types of war-fighting. Category (1) nuclear retaliation against a nuclear attack is accepted as the least destabilising form of nuclear use both in the sense of actual use and deterrence, while category (3) conventional retaliation against a nuclear attack would be accepted as very limited deterrence and an extremely restrained way of responding. The authors therefore will not discuss categories (3) and (4) here in depth. Category (5) denial of nuclear attack by a conventional system falls

under offence-defence relations and strategic stability. The most acute manifestation of this today is the issue of missile defence, which will be discussed later.

The rest of the categories may be combined into two groups. The first group is defined by the first use of nuclear weapons, albeit for different reasons. It includes categories (2) nuclear retaliation in a conventional conflict and (9) nuclear war-fighting. In category (2), a country may use nuclear weapons first if its warning of nuclear use in a conventional conflict fails to deter certain military action. In category (9), a country may use nuclear weapons first against an enemy's military targets on a conventional battlefield. Category (2) involves possible escalation to nuclear use in order to respond to a perceived conventional conflict and may involve attacks on strategic targets using strategic nuclear weapons. For instance, during the Cold War, the United States warned the Soviets against a large-scale conventional military invasion of Western Europe with the threat of nuclear retaliation against Soviet homeland. On the other hand, category (9) involves escalation to nuclear use in order to alter the course of a conventional conflict and may involve the use of tactical weapons to destroy an adversary's battlefield military assets to gain tactical advantage. For instance, the United States also had war plans to employ tactical nuclear weapons on the battlefield in case its forces became overwhelmed by the adversary's conventional superiority.

If a country threatens or implies that it will use nuclear weapons against an adversary's conventional military operations, it is essential that the adversary does not misinterpret the former's message as one that aims to gain a battlefield advantage, because this would be significantly more provocative than a purely deterrent intent. Theatre nuclear options may have limited strategic deterrence utility and can be regarded primarily as options to gain a tactical battlefield advantage. For instance, a leaked draft of the 2001 US Nuclear Posture Review reportedly considered US threat or use of a nuclear weapon against China in a Taiwan contingency.⁶³ This case has often been cited by Chinese military experts, along with concerns about the possibility of the US developing smaller tactical nuclear weapons

such as bunker busters. Instead of boosting deterrence credibility, tactical level nuclear threats may actually undermine stability and even induce a nuclear arms race.

In this paper, we will not discuss in further detail the difference between categories (2) and (9). Instead, we will put (2) and (9) in the same group of 'first use of nuclear weapons' though we will treat nuclear retaliation against conventional annihilation as an exception to this categorisation. It is notable that the United States and its allies in the Asia-Pacific region do not exclude military approaches involving the first use of nuclear weapons from those available under extended deterrence guarantees.

The second group of military approaches involves the use of conventional means against conventional threats. This includes categories (4) conventional retaliation in a conventional conflict, (6) denial of conventional attack by a conventional system, and (10) conventional war-fighting. The difference between the three lies in their timing. A country may launch a conventional response after a rival's conventional military action in category (4); or during a conventional attack in category (6); or before, during or after a conventional attack in category (10). Categories (4) and (6) are more reactive approaches while category (10) may include pre-emptive actions. All military approaches in this group appear to be available to the United States and its allies in this region as part of US extended deterrence guarantees.

Although both the first use of nuclear weapons and use of conventional capabilities fall under the same banner of "extended deterrence", they differ because of the nature of the military capabilities employed. Below we examine the policy implications of the availability of both nuclear and conventional approaches under extended deterrence guarantees.

Conventional Deterrence

All of the military approaches in the aforementioned second group, retaliation in conventional conflicts, conventional denial, and conventional war-fighting are available to the United States and its allies under the banner of conventional deterrence, although war-fighting is not technically

deterrence according to its nature. At the operational level, deterrence could include anything. As one US military expert confided, at the operational level, deterrence can be mostly about moving forces to the theatre in order to seize the initiative rather than deterring conflict from occurring.⁶⁴ The reason the United States and its allies call such a wide range of approaches “deterrence” is because “deterrence” in Western discourse is the successful long-term branding of the military strategy of the United States and its allies. Although it is not quite accurate, it sounds more defensive than aggressive and is thus a convenient public relations slogan.

It can be difficult to distinguish between deterrence and war-fighting in a conventional context because the same conventional capabilities can be used for both purposes. Unlike nuclear war, where it is clear who is the first to launch a nuclear attack, sometimes it is not easy to differentiate between the attacker and attacked in conventional conflicts, especially in small ones. Countries tend to believe that their conventional military actions are only reactive and should be considered as an act of punishment in the deterrence sense.

This is why conventional deterrence, although it has existed since the invention of conventional weapons, has never been recognised as being as important as nuclear deterrence, due to the large number of uncertainties encountered in conventional operations.

One source of uncertainty is the difficulty of identifying who is the attacker and who is the defender in a conventional conflict. Deterrence is coercion by the defender against the attacker while coercion by the attacker against the defender is compellence. Compellence is much more difficult to achieve than deterrence.⁶⁵ Sometimes the two sides to a conflict both believe that they are the defender and the other is the attacker; defensive actions from one side may be regarded as offensive ones by the other side. Neither of them is willing to yield to the other, as they both consider that what the other side claims to be deterrence is actually compellence.

Another source of uncertainty comes from the difficulty in calculating the costs and benefits of conventional operations. The performance of conventional weapons systems may fluctuate due to technical and human

imperfections. This may encourage opportunistic, pre-emptive actions, making conventional capabilities appear as better tools for war-fighting than for deterrence. For instance, the belief that there is an advantage in using conventional weapons pre-emptively prompted countries to abandon caution and rush to mobilise before the First World War. Deterrence only acquired a new significance and increased effectiveness with the arrival of nuclear weapons.⁶⁶

Because conventional deterrence and war-fighting use the same weapons, what is intended as conventional deterrence may be considered by the adversary as geared towards war-fighting. This problem of perception needs to be addressed if the United States and its allies in Asia begin to place more reliance on conventional forces and less on nuclear forces.

As the posturing and demonstration of conventional war-fighting capabilities are key elements of conventional deterrence, there exists a pertinent dilemma between signalling deterrence capabilities and not damaging a third country's sense of security. Applying this theory to extended deterrence, we would come to a situation similar to an alliance security dilemma.⁶⁷ Under this, moves which are designed to boost the alliance and demonstrate extended deterrence resolve may be considered bellicose by a third country, even more so if it is an intended target of deterrence. For instance, China felt threatened by the US-ROK military drill in the Yellow Sea in the aftermath of the sinking of the South Korean corvette *Cheonan* in 2010, even though the purpose of this exercise was to demonstrate deterrence credibility.⁶⁸

The United States and its allies need to recognise this limitation of conventional deterrence and the destabilising effects it can create. Conventional deterrence has been largely unsuccessful in deterring small military conflicts, either in a bipolar military context during the Cold War or in a framework more favourable to the United States and its allies after the Cold War. The reduction in the frequency of conflicts in the Northeast Asian region in recent years instead would appear to derive essentially from growing healthy political and economic exchanges and interdependence.

It would also be helpful to separate extended conventional deterrence and extended nuclear deterrence. A combined demonstration of war-fighting capabilities designed to enhance conventional extended deterrence, coupled with ambiguous extended nuclear deterrence that covers small conflicts, would likely be perceived by a targeted state as coercion instead of deterrence. This could induce a response that could result in escalation. It would be sensible to design policies that are targeted at a specific level of deterrence or war-fighting and prevent one level of deterrence from negatively impacting conflicts at another level. For example, clarifying the threshold of nuclear weapons use in extended nuclear deterrence could help prevent escalation in conventional conflicts.

Extended Nuclear Deterrence

Extended nuclear deterrence can take more than one form, spanning several of the categories we have outlined earlier. In particular, it could cover categories (1) nuclear retaliation against a nuclear attack, (2) nuclear retaliation in a conventional conflict and (9) nuclear war-fighting. Category (1) is compatible with No First Use of nuclear weapons while categories (2) and (9) involve first use. In Northeast Asia, the nuclear war-fighting element of extended nuclear deterrence has been reduced since the withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons at the end of the Cold War by the United States. This absence of tactical nuclear weapons has persisted in the Asia-Pacific region, despite objections from some voices in countries allied to the United States.

In principle, nuclear weapons are better tools for deterrence than conventional weapons for two reasons. First, nuclear weapons can usually guarantee greater and more assured destruction and therefore can convince a potential attacker that the likely punishment for any aggression, nuclear retaliation, would be unbearable. The second reason is that calculations of the impact of nuclear exchanges are assumed to give much more certainty than those involving conventional operations. This greatly reduces the incentive for opportunistic, pre-emptive nuclear actions, making deterrence an important function of nuclear weapons. If

nuclear deterrence is aimed only at a nuclear attack, it is also quite easy to identify the attacker and defender in a nuclear exchange.

However, if nuclear deterrence is applied to conventional conflict, the credibility of deterrence is not correlated with the defender's nuclear capability, as it would be, for example, in a purely nuclear or purely conventional exchange. This relates to the existence of the "nuclear taboo" or the self-deterrent effect of nuclear weapons, where the threshold of first use of nuclear weapons is extremely high.⁶⁹ This makes it nearly impossible for a country to launch a nuclear attack in response to conventional conflicts, especially small ones. For instance, it is inconceivable that the United States would have used nuclear weapons to punish North Korea for the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island, and that is why its nuclear deterrent failed to prevent this provocation. There may be an exception in which a country would launch a nuclear attack when it faces conventional annihilation because the prospect of annihilation would remove the moral restraint over the use of nuclear weapons. Only under this circumstance could nuclear deterrence against conventional military action be credible. Otherwise if a country threatens to respond to small conventional conflicts with nuclear strikes, the threat would be highly unlikely to produce any effect.

Henry Kissinger provided a simplified equation to determine the credibility of deterrence: $\text{credibility} = \text{will} \times \text{power (capability)} \times \text{assessment}$.⁷⁰ In other words, credibility consists of a mixture of the will to act, the power (capability) available, and the other side's assessment of these two factors. Nuclear weapons may have much greater destructive power than most conventional weapons, but national leaders have less of a will to resort to nuclear weapons than to conventional weapons in response to small conventional conflicts. It is thus hardly credible to say that the nuclear umbrella will deter small conventional military actions, when the role of the nuclear taboo is so compelling.

The primary reason for the mix of conventional and nuclear elements in "extended deterrence" – both in terms of capabilities employed and types of threats it is intended to deter – appears to be that US allies in Northeast

Asia want to take advantage of the influence of US nuclear superiority in conventional conflicts for the purpose of coercion. However, the smaller the scale of a conflict, the less credible are threats to use nuclear weapons and the less influence US nuclear weapons would generate. If a country wants to make use of the influence of nuclear weapons in a small conventional conflict, it has to claim that the conflict is important enough or it must increase the scale of the conflict itself. What is more, as mentioned above, the combined demonstration of conventional capabilities and signalling of nuclear deterrence in small conflicts will likely be perceived as coercion and blackmail rather than deterrence. In this sense, the desire to make use of nuclear influence in conventional conflicts may become a catalyst for wider conflict.⁷¹

US Position on Nuclear Use

The US position on the role of nuclear weapons in extended deterrence in East Asia remains unclear, perhaps dangerously so. It has in the past avoided being specific about what scenarios could involve nuclear use, remaining intentionally ambiguous about the role of nuclear arms in order to maximise their potential coercive effects and avoid creating sanctuaries that adversaries might exploit.

In its 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, the Obama Administration tried to adopt a more positive position by removing some ambiguity, stating that it would adopt a strengthened “negative security assurance” and declaring that the United States “will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states that are party to the NPT and in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations”.⁷² This is a laudable position and a sign of progress, but this negative security assurance does not apply to any of the three states against which US extended nuclear deterrence is largely directed in East Asia: Russia, China and North Korea.

The new NPR also states that “the US wishes to stress that it would only consider the use of nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the US or its allies and partners. It is in the

US interest and that of all other nations that the nearly 65-year record of nuclear non-use be extended forever.”⁷³ This is, again, a very positive position. But the actual strategic trend in Northeast Asia is moving in the opposite direction as a much broader scope of approaches and targets are proposed in the discussions of US extended deterrence. The questions of what kind of situation would qualify as “extreme circumstances” and what kind of interests would qualify as “vital interests” remain unanswered. This is problematic because sometimes a relatively marginal or moderate interest can still be claimed as “vital interest”, considering the domino effect of the United States’ determination to maintain its reputation as a defender. Alternatively, the United States and its allies may also disagree on what constitutes a “vital interest”.

The core element of US nuclear ambiguity in the region is that the United States never clearly states under what circumstances it is prepared to use nuclear weapons to defend Japan and South Korea. The United States neither explicitly commits itself to specific thresholds where it will not protect Japan and South Korea with nuclear weapons, nor explicitly rejects a threshold. The purpose is to give the United States more flexibility in how it will respond to any large-scale or small-scale crisis in Northeast Asia and to bring uncertainty into the decision-making calculus of potential adversaries.

The problem is that ambiguous deterrence seeks simultaneously to deter forceful actions from rival countries and provocations from allies.⁷⁴ To make this strategy effective, the United States must balance its actions on both sides. But this balancing act is exceedingly delicate and requires careful management. The current constraints on US resources and the dynamic political environment in Northeast Asia create too many variables to manage.

Furthermore, if the United States does not clarify the use of nuclear weapons in the context of extended deterrence in Northeast Asia, it could also prompt concerns that the US may be deliberately expanding the scope of nuclear coercion, even though some US allies appear to be concerned

about perceptions of the opposite message. This could in turn make future interactions among relevant countries much more complicated.

If the United States truly wants to minimise the risks that small conflicts might escalate, it should draw explicit boundaries for its use of nuclear weapons. At the very least, it should limit the protection of its regional allies under its nuclear umbrella to circumstances in which they are the victim of a nuclear attack or highly destructive conventional attack. This would avoid both the overestimation and overconfident misuse of nuclear influence by US regional allies and overreaction or misjudgement from countries potentially engaged in small conflicts with US allies.

US-China Strategic Stability

The Obama Administration was the first US administration to recognise a need for strategic stability in the US-China context, but did so without a definition of the concept. The *2010 Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report* states that “maintaining strategic stability in the US-China relationship is as important to this Administration as maintaining strategic stability with other major powers,” and the *2010 Nuclear Posture Review* promises that “the US will pursue high-level, bilateral dialogues on strategic stability with both Russia and China which are aimed at fostering more stable, resilient, and transparent strategic relationships.”⁷⁵ These all sound positive but neither of these documents gave an understanding or definition as to what the term “strategic stability” actually means in the context of US-China relations.

Since the release of the aforementioned documents, a few 1.5 and second track US-China strategic dialogues have attempted to explore a shared understanding of strategic stability. When US Defense Secretary Gates visited China in January 2011, media reports suggested that strategic stability was one of the topics he wanted to explore with the Chinese government. But so far no agreement on a definition has been reached. Some suggest that strategic stability would mean “mutual vulnerability” but most Americans policy thinkers feel that although mutual vulnerability is a fact, not a choice, the term would not be acceptable to the US

Congress for fear of showing weakness and drawing negative responses from regional allies.

Some Japanese and American experts worry that this “mutual deterrence” will result in what Glenn Snyder called a “stability-instability paradox”, where stability at the nuclear level could lead to conventional instability at lower levels.⁷⁶ They fear that China may exercise low-level aggression in the region in the knowledge that the United States and its allies cannot respond with nuclear weapons for fear of Chinese nuclear retaliation.⁷⁷ But this claim is based on a false premise as “nuclear stability” is not the only factor preventing a country from using nuclear weapons in low-intensity conflict. The nuclear taboo and moral pressures in fact play stronger roles. Regardless of whether there is “mutual deterrence” at all, the United States could not use nuclear weapons in a small conflict, and if it threatened to do so, such threats would not be credible.

As noted before, the existence of a nuclear taboo is sufficient to provide restraint, and history suggests that nuclear deterrence is not credible in cases of small-scale conventional conflict. The historical experience of the Korean War, Vietnam War, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan suggests that nuclear weapons may not help win conventional wars. The shelling of Yeonpyeong Island in 2010 suggests that nuclear superiority is not useful in deterring small conflicts, as US nuclear superiority over North Korea failed to deter DPRK involvement in the conflict. Instead, the potential for nuclear use against a conventional opponent can increase instability because, as noted earlier, it encourages allies’ provocative behaviour and is effectively a form of escalation to nuclear coercion, leaving the other side resentful and uncertain.

China worries about the costs of war much more now than it did before it launched the policy of reform and opening in the 1980s. This is not because the United States has increased its ability to neutralise China’s nuclear retaliatory capability in the same period of time. Instead, it is because China has increased its wealth and its economic dependence on the rest of the world. China now has much more to lose, but so does the United States. The mutual economic and political dependence between

the two countries mean that any military attack, let alone a nuclear one, could result in massive costs for both sides. A strategically stable US-China relationship would create a much better environment for regional players to work together towards cooperative solutions to security issues. Most importantly, strategic stability would need to be based on recognition in Washington that in the long run it is simply not achievable for the United States to fully neutralise China's nuclear retaliatory capability.

Missile Defence and Regional Instability

Missile defence is considered another obstacle to creating strategic stability between the United States and China as it could be used to neutralise China's small nuclear arsenal, whether on its own or as part of a wider strategy. Calculations are done to assess the utility of missile defence by comparing the capital cost per kill-vehicle to offensive missile.⁷⁸ So far China considers it effective to develop countermeasures to counter US missile defence threats, but this approach could change in future. While China is investing in countermeasures, the United States has said it will "increase investments in sensors and early-intercept kill systems to help defeat missile defense countermeasures."⁷⁹ The United States has, by restarting missile defence programs, inadvertently dragged China into a technological competition which for China is based on real concerns, not exaggerated fears.

China cannot afford to ignore missile defence developments. Similar concerns encouraged China to launch the so-called "863 Project" in response to Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative. The purpose of this project, which continues today, is to study and understand the most advanced science and technology to prevent China from being caught off-guard by sudden technological breakthroughs.

China's anti-missile test in 2010 was a result of these worries. China's goal is not to develop an anti-missile system, as many have speculated – it does not have the necessary early warning radars or space sensors. Instead, the real goal is to understand hit-to-kill technology. The 2007 anti-satellite test conducted prior to the anti-missile test should similarly not be taken

as indicating China's interest in anti-satellite weapons. Its purpose was to increase China's confidence in its later anti-missile test as satellites with more accurately-known trajectories are easier to shoot down.

Although missile defence has yet to pose serious military threats to China, it could play a very negative role in ambiguous US extended nuclear deterrence, potentially creating scenarios – perhaps involving a Taiwan Strait crisis and/or Japan – that could draw both China and the United States into dangerous confrontations. To avoid such situations, not only it is necessary for the United States to expressly limit its use of nuclear weapons in Northeast Asia to responding only to a nuclear attack or annihilation-scale conventional attack, it is also necessary to conduct talks with its allies to limit missile defence activities to their own direct protection. This would send a strong signal not only on their behalf but also on behalf of the United States.

Extended Deterrence, Dynamic Deterrence and Proactive Deterrence

The US extended deterrence posture inevitably shapes the defence policy of its allies in Northeast Asia, but its key allies' defence policies will likewise have an impact on the security interests of the United States in this region.

Because of strong US extended deterrence capabilities, Japan and South Korea have not had to develop independent deterrents for their own defence. In fact, because US nuclear and conventional capabilities are so overwhelming, Japan once reasoned that it did not even need to know the details of how they would operate.⁸⁰ In recent years, however, this has changed. With the growing threat from North Korea's missile and nuclear capabilities, and the perceived risk from the growth of China's military capabilities, not only has the United States begun to work closely with Japan and South Korea to strengthen US extended deterrence in the region, but Japan and South Korea are also beginning to adopt their own deterrence policies.

From 2010 there have been signs of a growing US defence commitment to South Korea. At the 2010 US-ROK Security Consultative Meeting, Defense Secretary Gates reaffirmed the continued US commitment to provide and strengthen extended deterrence for the ROK, using the full range of military capabilities. Subsequently the United States institutionalised an Extended Deterrence Policy Committee with South Korea, and also an Extended Deterrence Dialogue with Japan – both aimed at strengthening the existing US defence commitments.⁸¹ The United States has also signed a Counter-Provocation Plan with South Korea, signalling a stronger and better coordinated deterrent effort against North Korea.⁸²

Amid the growing efforts to strengthen extended deterrence, Japan and South Korea also began to develop their own deterrence policies tailored against perceived threats in Northeast Asia. Japan's recent National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) envisions a “dynamic deterrence” which puts emphasis on “clear demonstration of national will and strong defense capabilities through such timely and tailored military operations as regular intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance activities (ISR), not just maintaining a certain level of defense force.” This is a shift from Japan's previous “Basic Defense Force Concept”, to the building of a “Dynamic Defense Force” whose “comprehensive operational performance such as readiness for an immediate and seamless response to contingencies is increasingly important, considering shortening warning times of contingencies due to exponential advances in military technology.”⁸³

The problem with “dynamic deterrence” is that it shortens warning times of contingencies and seeks “an immediate and seamless response” which gives both sides to a potential conflict very little time to evaluate each other's intentions and calculate risks. It is true that Japan's new defence policy is somewhat independent of the extended deterrence framework. Nonetheless, there are some dangers here. An ambiguous US extended deterrence commitment could embolden Japan to take a more escalatory response than required. And escalation could result in scenarios that would require the United States to fulfil its extended deterrence commitment. This could create a problem akin to the economic concept of “moral hazard”,

where Japan might hastily respond and escalate a crisis, with the United States then entrapped in an unwanted and unnecessary confrontation.⁸⁴

A similar situation could be developing with regards to South Korea. After the sinking of the *Cheonan*, South Korea adopted a policy called “proactive deterrence”. This new deterrence formulation goes beyond South Korea's past limited defensive response, and promises to thoroughly retaliate against not only the origin of North Korean attacks, but also their supporting forces and structure.⁸⁵ Some suspect that it also implies pre-emptive action against North Korean targets if there is an imminent danger of North Korean attack.⁸⁶ This modification to Seoul's declaratory policy may have serious implications because it seeks to boost deterrence by demonstrating the will to broaden the scope of conflict and to escalate it to a higher level.

South Korea did not specify how far up the chain of North Korean command and supporting structure it is willing to go when retaliating. Would it target the direct supporting structure only or could it also target North Korean central command and control? While this policy might work to deter future aggressive behaviour from North Korea, it also entails a high risk of escalation that could be destabilising. Again, the United States could be dragged into a war that it does not desire.

There is no easy fix to the problem here: US key allies in Northeast Asia wish to strengthen their deterrence credibility by adopting postures that would either minimise the time to respond or increase the scope of retaliation, but both policies run the risk of unwanted escalation that would involve US military intervention.

An ambiguous extended nuclear deterrence policy that potentially covers conventional conflicts from small to large would not help in this situation. With the US nuclear threat looming in the background, and its ally threatening escalation, a potential adversary could easily perceive the combination of the two as coercion rather than deterrence. At the same time, a US ally might have an interest in escalating a smaller conflict to a larger one, so as to invoke the US nuclear threat to boost its own deterrence credibility. Conversely, if the United States were to explicitly remove its

nuclear extended deterrent from small conflicts, and limit its scope to cover only nuclear threats and conventional annihilation, it would induce its allies to be more cautious about the level of escalation they might wish to reach. This in turn would reduce potential adversaries' anxiety that the United States and its allies might be looking to take advantage of a conflict.

Other Regional Consequences

Retaining ambiguities in extended nuclear deterrence may have a variety of negative impacts on the security of the region. First of all, with no clear threshold for nuclear retaliation, the possibility that the United States will use its nuclear option becomes less convincing. At present, in theory, a US nuclear attack cannot be excluded in case of any attack on a US ally in Northeast Asia. In practice, the nuclear taboo stops the United States from launching nuclear attacks to respond to conventional conflicts. Such a threat is convincing neither to allies nor potential adversaries.

In particular, the application of nuclear capabilities to deter small conventional attacks can produce several unfortunate consequences. As mentioned above, combined with a demonstration of conventional forces, or allies' seemingly escalatory posture, nuclear deterrence could very likely be viewed by a potential adversary as nuclear blackmail, damaging the possibility of peaceful dispute resolution. Anti-disarmament forces in the United States or its regional allies could also cite this false utility of nuclear weapons to put pressure on the US government to increase its nuclear strike capability. This hinders the process of further arms reduction and is a worrying irritant that obstructs attempts at a US-China strategic stability dialogue.

It also places strain on US-Japan-China triangular relations. It is hard to foresee the United States using nuclear weapons in any conventional conflict less than a full-scale attack on one of its allies in Northeast Asia. But in order to convince both its ally and potential opponents that it might do so, the United States may be forced to take a more hard-line policy on conventional disputes, for instance those between Japan and China.

China's growing conventional military strength, as well as disputes over the Diaoyu Islands and elsewhere, has led to increasing levels of concern in Japan. In a government poll conducted in December 2010, 78% of Japanese respondents said they did not feel "friendly" toward China, a leap of 19% from the previous year and the highest figure since the annual poll began in 1978.⁸⁷ For the United States, the appearance of resolve and the façade that it will use every capability for the defence of Japan has to be kept up, despite the diplomatic costs and potential consequences. But this US support in turn stirs up nationalistic anti-Japanese and anti-American feelings among the Chinese people. Many Chinese people voiced resentment and anxiety when Japan and the United States conducted major military exercises around the Diaoyu Islands in December 2010 following a fishing boat collision incident earlier that year. The United States, Japan and China need to discuss further confidence-building measures, including to prevent such public feelings in China from spinning out of control.

A lack of boundaries in US extended nuclear deterrence, and extended deterrence in general, may cause a problem of "moral hazard" in the alliance relationship. It is very tempting to assume that states that depend on others for security have defensive intentions only and that they would not exploit the protection provided by extended deterrence to pursue offensive ambitions in a conflict.⁸⁸ This is not necessarily always the case.

South Korea faces far greater and more genuine security risks than does Japan, but a voluntary renunciation of nuclear weapons by North Korea is highly unlikely without a guarantee that the United States would not use nuclear weapons first against it. The United States made such a guarantee in order to secure the Agreed Framework between itself and North Korea in 1994 during the first North Korean nuclear crisis,⁸⁹ but this is inherently incompatible with the calculated ambiguity of its extended nuclear deterrence policy. More importantly, ambiguity has not proven useful in deterring small conflicts. Although the United States enjoys absolute nuclear superiority against North Korea, this has not stopped small clashes between North and South Korea.

The possibility of the United States using nuclear weapons against North Korea in a conventional war could also be used by Pyongyang as an excuse for legitimising its own possession of nuclear weapons. Under Article X of the NPT, countries can withdraw, as North Korea did, from the treaty in the event that “extraordinary events, related to the subject matter of this treaty, have threatened its supreme interests”. North Korea argues that the possibility of nuclear attack from the United States poses such a threat and that its development of nuclear weapons is for the purpose of “self-defence”.⁹⁰

American nuclear policy also sets a bad example to North Korea in terms of nuclear posture. The DPRK, looking at US policy, may be convinced of the utility of maintaining ambiguity over the possible use of its own nuclear weapons in order to deter other nations from launching conventional attacks or punishment. Yet the possibility of an attack that threatens the very survival of the state is much more acutely perceived by North Korea than by either the United States or its regional allies, and its relations with its neighbours are thus much more volatile. This makes it even more vital for Pyongyang to set clear limits on the role of its nuclear weapons.

The North’s overblown and aggressive rhetoric of the “sea of fire” variety makes it hard for observers to determine exactly where its red lines for nuclear use might lie. If the DPRK were to imitate the US example and hint at the possibility of nuclear warfare over even limited conventional attacks, instead of setting a clear line for nuclear retaliation, it would worsen the risk of broadening small-scale clashes, such as the exchange of artillery fire in November 2010.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The 2010 US Nuclear Posture Review limits the scope of US nuclear weapon use in general. This was an encouraging and welcoming start. However, in the context of US extended deterrence in Northeast Asia, the trend remains in the opposite direction. In this region, the scope of US policy regarding possible nuclear weapon use is complicated by the mixture of different military approaches and targets. This is harmful to regional stability, disarmament and even to the United States’ alliance relationships.

The United States and its allies should recognise the limitation of conventional deterrence, and acknowledge that most of what is described as conventional deterrence is potentially a form of war-fighting. Accordingly, such US and allied conventional “deterrence” policy should be applied more cautiously in order to avoid unwanted conflict or escalation.

The United States should also publicly limit the use of nuclear weapons in the context of extended nuclear deterrence to countering existential threats: that is, nuclear assaults or conventional attacks that threaten the survival of one of its allies. The United States needs clearly to close off the possibility of nuclear retaliation for small conflicts in which its regional allies may get involved. While this might initially disappoint some of its allies, they should recognise that limiting the use of the nuclear deterrent will only render it more credible. For the United States, this will discourage allies from pursuing provocative behaviour and thus reduce the risks of crisis escalation.

The United States, Japan and South Korea should work closely to clarify the role of nuclear weapons in their security alliances. This does not have to be limited to the sole purpose of deterring nuclear assault; the use of nuclear deterrence to protect Japan and South Korea against conventional attacks that threaten their national survival would be both credible and acceptable to China and other regional players. Such a demarcation of the role of nuclear weapons in extended deterrence may also encourage more constructive security dialogues in the region and the pursuit of strategic stability.

For China, it is necessary to work with the other regional powers to reach an agreement committing all relevant parties to the non-use of force or threats to use force in regional disputes or conflicts, in order to prevent the escalation of potential crises. China should also uphold its current nuclear posture and No First Use policy. China needs to conduct practical dialogues on reaching a shared understanding of strategic stability with the United States and start broader dialogues with other countries on nuclear issues and wider security issues to build confidence and clarity in the face of misunderstandings.

Notes

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- 61 Ministry of Defense (Japan), “National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2011 and Beyond,” 17 December 2011.
- 62 According to US Defense Secretary Robert Gates, extended deterrence means “through both conventional and nuclear capabilities...we will extend an umbrella of protection over our allies.” See “Remarks by Secretary Gates at the Shangri-La Dialogue, International Institute for Strategic Studies, Singapore,” News Transcript, Department of Defense (US), 4 June 2010, <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4634>. But there are different opinions regarding whether conventional weapons should be placed within the framework of extended deterrence. For instance, the glossary provided on the NTI website, refers to extended deterrence as, “a country protected from potential adversaries by the nuclear weapons’ backed security guarantee of an ally is said to be under an (extended deterrence) nuclear umbrella”. See “Extended Deterrence,” Glossary, Nuclear Threat Initiative, <http://www.nti.org/glossary/#extended-deterrence>.
- 63 See Yao Yunzhu, “Chinese Nuclear Policy and Future of Minimum Deterrence,” *Strategic Insights*, IV, no. 9, 2005.
- 64 James Blackwell, “Deterrence at the Operational Level of War,” *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 30-31.
- 65 Thomas Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 98-133.
- 66 Patrick M. Morgan, *Deterrence Now* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1-41.
- 67 Glenn Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 192-194.
- 68 General Luo Yuan, “Why China Opposes US-ROK Military Exercises in the Yellow Sea,” People’s Daily Online, 14 July 2010, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90780/91342/7069743.html>.
- 69 Also called self-deterrence, the existence of a nuclear taboo has been recognised by most policy-makers and analysts. See Nina Tannenwald, “Stigmatizing the Bomb – Origins of the Nuclear Taboo,” *International*

- Security* 29, no. 4 (2005): 5–49; and Thomas C. Schelling, “The Nuclear Taboo,” *Wall Street Journal*, 24 October 2005, <http://www.cissm.umd.edu/papers/display.php?id=59>.
- 70 Henry Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 12. For other discussions of deterrence credibility, see: Thomas Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, 98-133; Glenn Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961); Paul Huth and Bruce Russett, “Testing Deterrence Theory: Rigor Makes a Difference,” *World Politics* 42, no. 4 (July 1990): 466-501; and Robert Jervis, “Deterrence Theory Revisited,” *World Politics* 31, no. 2 (January 1979): 289-324, 314-317.
- 71 Some may argue that allies want the security of nuclear guarantee without specifying the threshold of nuclear use to prevent nuclear escalation. For instance, South Korea viewed the role of nuclear weapons as preventing more opportunistic behaviour by North Korea. But this argument does not explain what incentive North Korea would have to escalate to nuclear use given the very limited number and range of its nuclear weapons.
- 72 Department of Defense (US), *Nuclear Posture Review Report*, 2010, 46.
- 73 Ibid, 16.
- 74 This type of deterrence is referred to in the scholarly literature as dual deterrence or pivotal deterrence.
- 75 Department of Defense (US), *Nuclear Posture Review Report*, 2010, 28.
- 76 Glenn Snyder, “The Balance of Power and the Balance of Terror,” in the *Balance of Power*, ed. Paul Seabury (San Francisco: Chandler, 1965), 184-201.
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US Extended Deterrence and the Korean Peninsula

Hyun-Wook Kim

Introduction

This chapter raises crucial regional security questions about whether the United States can continue to protect and reassure its allies in Asia, notably South Korea, while pursuing nuclear disarmament. In line with the Obama Administration's initiative to make the world free of nuclear weapons, the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) stipulated five objectives of US nuclear weapons policies: preventing nuclear proliferation and terrorism; reducing the role of US nuclear weapons; maintaining strategic deterrence and stability at lower nuclear force levels; strengthening regional deterrence and reassuring US allies and partners; and sustaining a safe, secure, and effective nuclear arsenal. An important characteristic of these objectives is that the US provision of extended deterrence⁹¹ to its allies and partners is premised on the understanding that the United States will also pursue disarmament. The Obama initiative to reduce the role of nuclear capabilities in the 2010 NPR may reflect changes in the international security environment since the end of the Cold War. It is, however, not easily reconciled with the US extended deterrence policy towards its regional allies, as it involves the United States reducing its nuclear deterrence capabilities and developing its conventional strike

capabilities. It is not at all clear how conventional forces can substitute for a reduced reliance on nuclear weapons in the defence of South Korea.

At a global level, the Obama Administration's nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament initiatives have advanced without much international opposition. The Administration has been successful in pursuing its "nuclear weapon-free world" agenda through, for example, the 2010 Nuclear Security Summit and the New START agreement with Russia, ratified by the US Senate on 23 December 2010, in which both states promised to reduce their strategic nuclear weapons down to 1,550 in seven years.

At a regional level in Northeast Asia, however, it is difficult to see how the Obama disarmament initiative can be reconciled with regional extended deterrence. South Korea officially supports the objectives of the current US nuclear policy: it hosted the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism meeting in 2011 and the Nuclear Security Summit meeting in early 2012. In addition, just before the 2010 NPR was released, President Barack Obama telephoned President Lee Myung-bak to give him advance notice of aspects of the review, notably the exclusion of North Korea from the negative security assurance (NSA)⁹² outlined in the document. This emphasised continuing solid US support for South Korea vis-à-vis North Korean threats. Notwithstanding all of this, North Korea's two nuclear tests (in 2006 and 2009), its various ballistic missile launches and its military provocations in 2010 have served to amplify domestic debates in South Korea concerning the adequacy of US extended deterrence as framed in the 2010 NPR.

Historical Review of US Extended Deterrence to South Korea

The US provision of extended deterrence to South Korea was based upon the Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Republic of Korea signed on 1 October 1953, after the Korean War armistice agreement of 27 July 1953. Article 3 of the Defense Treaty stipulated that "each Party recognizes that an armed attack in the Pacific area on either of the Parties in territories now under their respective administrative control,

or hereafter recognized by one of the Parties as lawfully brought under the administrative control of the other, would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes."

When hostilities concluded, President Eisenhower introduced tactical nuclear weapons to South Korea while simultaneously reducing the number of US soldiers in Korea from 325,000 to 85,000 in 1955.⁹³ During the latter part of the Vietnam War, President Nixon further reduced the number of US soldiers in South Korea. The withdrawal of the 7th infantry division was completed in 1971 and the United States provided \$1.5 billion to modernise the Republic of Korea armed forces and establish the ROK-US Combined Field Army.

In response to the withdrawal of US forces, President Park Chung Hee began to pursue a nuclear weapons program. Although South Korea ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1975, the program ended only with President Park's assassination in 1979. Meanwhile, in order to stop South Korea's nuclear weapons program, the United States decided to provide an explicit nuclear umbrella to South Korea, which was documented in the ROK-US Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) in 1978.

At the end of the Cold War, President George H W Bush withdrew tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea in order to encourage the dismantlement of the North Korean nuclear program. South Korea supported the US policy, in the hope that these measures would bring about the denuclearisation of the entire Korean Peninsula. The result was the signing of the Basic Agreement and the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in 1991. Since then, however, North Korea has tested its nuclear bombs twice, in 2006 and 2009. In response, the SCM re-emphasised US extended deterrence and the provision of the nuclear umbrella to South Korea in 2006.

In the "Joint Vision for the Alliance" adopted during a summit meeting in June 2009, the US and ROK presidents re-emphasised the role of extended deterrence, including the nuclear umbrella, in coping with

North Korean weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In the midst of a series of North Korean provocations in 2010 (the *Cheonan* incident and Yeonpyeong Island attack), the US Secretary of Defense and the ROK Minister of Defense agreed to establish the Extended Deterrence Policy Committee in the 42nd SCM on 8 October 2010. The two countries held the first high-level meeting in March 2011 and the second meeting in November 2011.

The 2010 NPR and Negative Security Assurances

The 2010 NPR provides an NSA that the United States will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states that are party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations. This implies that any state that uses chemical and biological weapons (CBW) rather than nuclear weapons against the United States or its allies and partners would face the prospect of a devastating conventional military response rather than being punished with nuclear weapons. However, the United States has also declared that it reserves the right to employ nuclear weapons to deter a conventional or CBW attack against the United States or its allies and partners by states that possess nuclear weapons or those not in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations.⁹⁴ This new NSA concept has three challenging implications for the Korean Peninsula.

First, the new NPR has narrowed the scope of nuclear use against North Korea, with the result that a DPRK conventional attack on the ROK would now not be deterred by the threat of the use of nuclear weapons, if the North were in good standing with the NPT. The first US NSA was explained in a speech by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance in 1978: the United States would not use nuclear weapons against those non-nuclear states which are members of the NPT, but there was an exception – the United States would use nuclear weapons if these non-nuclear states, in alliance or cooperation with other nuclear states, invaded the United States or its allies. The key effect of this so-called “conditional” NSA was that even though North Korea was a member of the NPT, it was also part

of a nuclear-armed Soviet bloc, and the United States therefore reserved the right to retaliate with nuclear weapons if it attacked the United States or invaded South Korea with non-nuclear weapons. Thus by leaving open the option of nuclear retaliation against the North (regardless of whether the North itself developed nuclear arms) in the event that it were to invade South Korea with conventional weapons, this condition maximised the effectiveness of extended deterrence against North Korea. But the 2010 NPR eliminated this condition. In future, as long as non-nuclear weapon states join the NPT and faithfully carry out their obligations, the United States would not retaliate with nuclear weapons even if they attack the United States or its allies with chemical, biological or conventional weapons.

Second, the NPR could in some ways be said to give North Korea a rationale for maintaining its nuclear weapons rather than an incentive to disarm. In the NPR, outlier countries such as North Korea and Iran that have violated their NPT obligations and continued to pursue nuclear weapons programs have been excluded from America’s NSA. After the NPR was publicised, North Korea announced it would further increase and modernise its nuclear deterrent as long as the United States continues to pose a security threat to the North.⁹⁵ Thus there is a high possibility that North Korea would refer to such provisions in the NPR to justify its possession of nuclear weapons. This does not mean that the United States is reneging on the commitment it provided to Pyongyang during the six-party talks.⁹⁶ In the joint declaration concluded by the six parties on 19 September 2005, the United States affirmed that it had no intention to attack or invade the DPRK with nuclear or conventional weapons.⁹⁷ The premise of this promise, however, was that North Korea would be in compliance with the NPT.

Even though the 2010 NPR makes it clear that a nuclear-armed North Korea is not covered by an American NSA, there is a tension between this declared policy and the past practice of the United States in making security concessions to the DPRK in an attempt to negotiate its denuclearisation. Throughout the six-party negotiations, the United States was signalling a

lowered guard against North Korea, for example repeatedly cancelling the “Team-Spirit” military exercise with South Korea.⁹⁸ The result, in effect, could be seen as the provision of a kind of security assurance to North Korea while leaving in question some aspects of the extended deterrence undertaking to South Korea.⁹⁹

Third, the new NSA concept is not realistically applicable to the overall North Korean military threat to South Korea, given that it includes a range of low-level threats. According to the NPR, if a state, possessing nuclear weapons or not in compliance with its non-proliferation obligations, attacks the US or its allies and partners with conventional weapons or CBW, the US has the right to employ nuclear weapons to deter it. But in practice there is a difference between a large-scale conventional attack, such as an invasion or CBW attack, and low- and mid-level threats such as the *Cheonan* sinking. The threat of retaliation with nuclear weapons becomes more realistic when states’ existential interests are in danger, and this rarely occurs in reality, and certainly not through low-level threats. The Korean Peninsula has hardly witnessed a large-scale conventional attack from North Korea since the Korean War. If a low-level provocation like the *Cheonan* ship sinking or Yeonpyeong Island attack happens again, would the US be able to use its nuclear weapons to deter North Korea? The answer seems to be clearly “no”. The United States would not use its nuclear weapons against these threats. Considering regional stability, the inter-Korean relationship and the likely response from China, the United States could not easily or realistically be expected to use its nuclear weapons against a North Korean non-nuclear attack.

Extended Nuclear Deterrence on the Korean Peninsula

The 2010 NPR stipulated that the security environment has changed in the post-Cold War period. It states that the changes in post-Cold War threats make it necessary for the United States to change its policy of extended deterrence, thus reducing the role of nuclear deterrence and enlarging the functions of conventional strike capabilities and missile defence mechanisms. This signifies that deterrence by punishment based

on nuclear capabilities is changing to deterrence by denial based on a missile defence system and conventional power projection.¹⁰⁰ This change in the configuration of extended deterrence gives rise to concerns as to whether the US attempt to strengthen extended deterrence while reducing the role of nuclear weapons can be successful on the Korean Peninsula.

Is the decreasing emphasis on the nuclear deterrent a problem for South Korea? Would not the reduction in the role of nuclear weapons in extended deterrence decrease the credibility of US assurances to defend South Korea? This is despite the fact that, in the Joint Vision statement on 16 June 2009, the two presidents of the United States and ROK reaffirmed the robustness of US-South Korean security cooperation, specifying “the continuing commitment of extended deterrence, including the US nuclear umbrella”.¹⁰¹

The role of extended nuclear deterrence, as opposed to conventional weapons, in reassuring an ally is particularly important to South Korea. On the Korean Peninsula, nuclear weapons exist in North Korea but do not exist within the territory of South Korea. This makes the South Korean people feel vulnerable to North Korean threats. After the first North Korean nuclear test in 2006, polling showed that more than 67% of South Korean people approved of the idea of South Korea developing its own nuclear weapons. What is more astonishing is that even in 2005, prior to any North Korean nuclear test, 66.5% already approved the development of South Korea’s own nuclear program. Even as recently as October 2011, 62.6 percent of South Koreans thought their country should pursue nuclear weapons to counter North Korea.¹⁰² Many South Korean experts and policy-makers especially became concerned about the effects of the reduction in the salience of extended nuclear deterrence in the NPR after North Korea’s *Cheonan* and Yeonpyeong Island attacks. For the South Korean people, nuclear weapons provide huge psychological security against the North Korean nuclear threat.

The probability that North Korea would actually use its nuclear weapons to attack South Korea is minimal. Rather, the problem comes from its use of nuclear weapons in blackmailing and intimidating South

Korea. Nuclear weapons embolden North Korea to use conventional weapons, an example of what strategic studies theorists call the stability-instability paradox. The mere existence of its nuclear weapons can bolster the North's conventional attacks on the South by making the South's retaliation against the North unthinkable. This so-called "nuclear-backed coercion" is used by the North to extract concessions from South Korea.¹⁰³ As demonstrated by the *Cheonan* ship incident and Yeonpyeong Island provocation, North Korea is free to pursue its low-level provocations, thanks to cover from its nuclear capabilities. Kim Jong-Il would have been confident that neither South Korea nor the United States would retaliate militarily for the attacks on the *Cheonan* and Yeonpyeong Island. On the Korean Peninsula only the North has nuclear weapons, there is no mutual vulnerability and no purely bilateral strategic stability, and the result, at least as shown in 2010, was the North's escalating provocations. Some voices in South Korea therefore advocate the reintroduction of US nuclear weapons to South Korea in order to strengthen strategic stability between the North and South.¹⁰⁴

The withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea was undertaken during the George HW Bush Administration. The Bush Administration did not want to talk directly with North Korea about the nuclear issue, but instead withdrew tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea so that the two Koreas would sign the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in 1991. However North Korea's ongoing development of its nuclear program violated the Joint Declaration and imperilled strategic stability on the Korean Peninsula.

If US nuclear weapons were deployed in South Korea, this would have two effects. First, South Korea would, in effect, have a locally positioned nuclear deterrent against North Korea, restoring full strategic stability to the Korean Peninsula. Second, as both Koreas would in effect "possess" nuclear capabilities, they would be able to start the denuclearisation process from an equal basis. However, this scenario is now highly unlikely for many reasons, including the Obama Administration's initiative to make the world free of nuclear weapons, the dangers associated with a

potential nuclear arms race between two Koreas and the likely negative responses of neighbouring countries including a possible nuclear arms race in the region.

Without the return of US tactical nuclear weapons to South Korea, Seoul will need to find other ways to ensure it can be confident in the solidity of extended nuclear deterrence guarantees from the United States. Only US extended nuclear deterrence can provide strategic stability not only between two Koreas but also between North Korea and the United States. The reduction of extended nuclear deterrence foreshadowed in the NPR and the surrounding US policy debate thus could become a serious policy problem and loophole if applied formulaically to the complex and specific regional situation of the Korean Peninsula.

The USFK's Strategic Flexibility

One argument made by those who advocate reducing reliance on extended nuclear deterrence is that conventional deterrence could somehow fill the gap. But South Korea has concerns over conventional deterrence and US extended deterrence more generally, and these pertain, among other things, to the planned transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON) to South Korea, scheduled for 2015. The uncertain number of future US forces on the Korean Peninsula, associated with the strategic flexibility of US Forces Korea (USFK), could signal a decline in US defence support to South Korea, and in turn a weakening of ROK defence capability to the Korean people.

The 2010 US Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) re-emphasised the concept of strategic flexibility. The US Department of Defense is in the process of switching its alliance policy from a "region-based division" to a "global liaison", and the status of US Forces in South Korea is expected to change from being forward-deployed to being forward-stationed with family members. The Department of Defense added that the US troops stationed in the ROK could be deployed to other countries according to the demands of strategic flexibility. In order to strengthen deterrence through the ROK-US alliance, the Department of Defense has expressed

its will to establish a more adaptive and flexible US and combined force posture in the Korean Peninsula, by, for example, returning OPCON to the ROK and strengthening the leading role of Korean forces in its territory. In December 2009, General Walter Sharp, commander of the ROK-US Combined Forces Command, said the USFK needed to be able to be more regionally engaged and globally deployed in the future.

However, there are a number of problems related to extended deterrence which could occur when US troops stationed in Korea are transferred to other regions. First, US troops stationed in Korea could be drawn into distant regional disputes – for example, a confrontation or conflict in the Taiwan Strait or South China Sea – and this could create a gap in deterring North Korea. At a hearing of the House Armed Services Committee on 3 February 2009, US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates had already remarked that the US military's deep involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan would make it difficult for the US troops to respond rapidly to an emergency on the Korean Peninsula. Such difficulty could worsen if the US troops in Korea are finally being assigned to other regions. The Operation Plan (OPLAN) 5027, a war plan prepared by the ROK and the United States in case of an all-out war with North Korea, is understood to involve the deployment of up to 690,000 troops on the Korean Peninsula, including from the US Army and Marine Corps, as well as up to 2,500 aircraft and 160 vessels in 90 days if contingencies develop.¹⁰⁵ But 90 days is a long period of time, and this plan could face significant challenges once the US troops in Korea are being deployed to other areas.

These South Korean concerns about US extended deterrence are relevant to the current changes in the USFK's operation mode from forward-deployment to forward-station. Being forward-stationed means that USFK can work as a regional hub and be deployed for operations in other areas. The fact that US forces could be mobilised for operations in other areas means that the USFK would not be committed to the sole purpose of deterring the North Korean threat, which is another serious concern for the South Korean people.

Therefore, while preparing the transfer of wartime operational control as scheduled, the two countries should discuss how to consolidate US extended deterrence. Appropriate measures must be developed in advance to prepare for a possible military vacuum which could arise from the transfer of wartime OPCON to the ROK. South Korea and the United States have now created a new command system in an effort to prepare for a scenario in which wartime operational control is successfully transferred to the ROK in 2015 as scheduled and the ROK-US Combined Forces Command dissolves. Nonetheless, a more detailed plan is necessary at this juncture, possibly via working-level discussions, in order to strengthen US extended deterrence.

Military Alternatives to Extended Nuclear Deterrence

The 2010 NPR indicated that although a US “nuclear umbrella” is provided by a combination of the strategic forces of the US nuclear triad, non-strategic nuclear weapons forward-deployed in key regions, and other US-based nuclear weapons, the fact is that many of the forward-deployed non-strategic nuclear weapons were removed at the end of the Cold War. Instead, the United States has developed missile defence, counter-WMD capabilities, conventional power-projection capabilities and integrated command and control as its main tools for enhancing regional security. Such a plan raises the concern that the US nuclear deterrence capability could be weakened, eventually affecting overall US extended deterrence capabilities provided to South Korea.

Thus the United States and South Korea together need to develop a concrete plan for overall extended deterrence. In the 2010 NPR the US clearly stated its commitment to provide “a credible extended deterrence posture and capabilities” not only through nuclear weapons but also through conventional military forces and missile defence. A tailored deterrence capability thus needs to be established between the United States and South Korea, a process through which both sides could ascertain that the changes of extended deterrence do not imply a weakening US nuclear umbrella but rather a new strategy for more efficient deterrence.

Concerning missile defence, South Korea is currently developing Korea Air and Missile Defense (KAMD) and is not participating in the US-centred missile defence system. In February 2009, South Korea announced it would develop its own lower-tier missile defence system by 2012. KAMD, the range of which is limited to the Korean Peninsula, is designed to intercept short- and medium-range missiles coming from North Korea, such as Scud missiles and Rodong missiles. It is, in other words, South Korea's lower-tier missile defence system, consisting of Patriot Advanced Capability (PAC) interceptors. For its part, the ultimate objective of the US regional missile defence system is to provide defence not only against North Korea's Scud and Rodong missiles, but also Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) attacks, with its intended functions including lower-, middle- and upper-tier defence. South Korea has focused on an independent system rather than integrated regional defence because it considers that joining the US missile defence system would require further increases to defence spending as well as worsen South Korea's relationship with China.

In the 2010 Ballistic Missile Defense Review (BMDR), the United States expressed its strong wish to cooperate with South Korea on missile defence systems, and Korea and the United States have already agreed to strengthen cooperation between the US regional missile defence system and KAMD. The BMDR indicated that South Korea has an "interest in acquiring a missile defense capability that includes land- and sea-based systems, early warning radars, and a command and control system". Furthermore, the United States "looks forward to taking further steps to enhance operational coordination and build upon ongoing missile defense cooperation".¹⁰⁶ However, South Korea denied the BMDR's claim that "the Republic of Korea is also an important US BMD partner".¹⁰⁷ Japan, on the other hand, is partially included in the US missile defence system. Such a situation leaves open the logical possibility that the US-Japan alliance might be more effective in deterring North Korea than the US-ROK alliance.

One important part of missile defence cooperation would be to establish an integrated operations system by strengthening interoperability between KAMD and the US missile defence system. Tailored extended deterrence should be established separately for Korea and Japan, covering not only nuclear elements but also diverse military, economic, political and legal elements that would produce more comprehensive extended deterrence measures.

In addition, South Korea currently does not have a ballistic missile capability to cover the entire Korean Peninsula due to the limits imposed on the range of South Korean missiles. In 1979, South Korea and the United States signed a memorandum limiting South Korea's ballistic missile capabilities, restricting the range of its missiles to 180 kilometres. In 2001, the two countries revised the agreement and increased the restriction to 300 kilometres. In order to strengthen the non-nuclear deterrence capabilities against North Korea, there should be more collaboration between the United States and South Korea, allowing South Korea's missile range to cover all of North Korean territory.¹⁰⁸

An Agenda for the Extended Deterrence Policy Committee

The United States and South Korea need to concretise the format of extended deterrence. What type and number of nuclear weapons are needed for the defence of South Korea, and how might this be affected by a reduced role of nuclear weapons in US extended deterrence? What measures should be taken to develop non-nuclear deterrence capabilities, and which capabilities should be developed? These concrete questions should be discussed and agreed in the newly established Extended Deterrence Policy Committee (EDPC). The EDPC is designed mainly to discuss matters related to increasing the shared information of extended deterrence, and providing a nuclear umbrella and conventional strike capabilities, while periodically examining and evaluating the effectiveness of extended deterrence, including the US nuclear umbrella and conventional strike and ballistic-missile defence capabilities.

There are two major issues that need to be discussed by the Committee. The first is the measures required to supplement extended nuclear deterrence on the Korean Peninsula. It was suggested in the 2010 US NPR that conventional and ballistic missile defence capabilities needed to be strengthened while reducing nuclear capabilities. However, nuclear deterrence is still important on the Korean Peninsula. In the case of the *Cheonan* incident, for example, North Korea's nuclear capabilities played a crucial role with regard to the North's use of conventional weapons and the South's response.

North Korea, without hesitation, will continue to launch conventional attacks as long as the Kim regime maintains its nuclear monopoly vis-à-vis the South, since such attacks rely on a nuclear deterrence capability to shield it from the South's conventional retaliation. On the other hand, it would not be easy for South Korea, which does not possess its own nuclear deterrence capability, to take retaliatory measures against the North without hesitation. Therefore the credible provision of extended nuclear deterrence by the United States to compensate for the deterrent effect of the now withdrawn tactical nuclear weapons is crucial at this juncture, where South Korea needs to defend itself against the North's conventional provocations and attacks.

In this vein, there is the problem of balancing nuclear deterrence with non-nuclear deterrence. The question as to how much non-nuclear deterrence will be able to supplement existing nuclear deterrence or what would be the optimal way to mediate the relationship between nuclear deterrence and non-nuclear deterrence must be jointly answered by South Korea and the United States through their discussions within the EDPC.

The issue of developing non-nuclear deterrence capabilities must also be discussed in order to respond to a wide range of security threats, such as North Korea's asymmetric threats. The Committee is expected to discuss matters related to sharing of information on missile defence systems in order to defend South Korea from nuclear and WMD threats posed by North Korea, as well as cooperation on the operation and means of missile defence. The Korean government has been reserving its position

with regard to the participation in the US regional missile defence system out of consideration to China, cost concerns and concerns as to whether it is really necessary for South Korea's defence to participate in the US system. However, given that the US missile defence system does cover lower-tier defence and that there is room for cooperation between the two nations' missile defence systems, for example in sharing information, useful gains from cooperation might be obtained for both sides. An integrated operation system should be established as the United States and ROK improve the interoperability and cooperation between their respective lower-tier missile defence systems.

Conclusion

The recently published US Department of Defense Strategic Guidance has two implications for US extended deterrence with regard to South Korea. First, there is a concern that the aforementioned OPLAN 5027, the US-ROK war plan in the event of a war with North Korea, could not operate in its present form. Even though the US and ROK are updating this plan to make it more realistic in the post-Kim Jong-Il period, projected reductions to US ground forces from 570,000 to 490,000 and Marine Corps from 202,000 to 182,000 mean that there are questions about whether the size of future US forces would be adequate to manage a major-war contingency on the Korean Peninsula.

The Guidance also stipulated that US defence strategy would move away from a "1+1" formulation under which the US would be committed to waging and winning two major wars simultaneously. The new formulation is a less ambitious "1+" strategy, which implies that the US would "deter and defeat" an adversary in one region while undertaking a "large-scale operation" elsewhere.¹⁰⁹ This change in strategy would make a full-scale US commitment to the Korean Peninsula difficult if the United States is already involved in a major war elsewhere. In the aftermath of the death of Kim Jong-Il, the Korean Peninsula still faces the risk of military contingencies. There should therefore be more concrete coordination

between two countries on how to make the US extended deterrence more solid and tailored to the current situation.

The second Korea-specific implication of the new US Strategic Guidance is as follows. Given that the Guidance reflects the current US economic situation and defence budget reductions, it can be expected that the US will pressure South Korea to increase host nation support for the US forces in Korea. Yet the United States needs to bear in mind that there will be other new costs South Korea is also likely to incur. Due to the asymmetrical threats of North Korea, South Korea needs to be equipped with more advanced weapons systems, many of which need to be purchased from the United States. This will require the US and ROK to coordinate non-nuclear weapons spending in support of shared alliance objectives.

None of this is to say that all recent US defence policy developments with regard to the Korean Peninsula are negative. Due to the US “pivot” strategy towards Asia, Washington can be expected to be more actively engaged on the North Korean issue. This in turn could make the US-South Korea alliance stronger still, with the potential for US extended deterrence to South Korea to become more robust. The Obama Administration has stated categorically that reductions in the US defence budget would not affect America’s military capabilities in Asia and the ability to deter aggression and defend treaty allies in the region.¹¹⁰ In this context, the US and South Korea will need to pursue a comprehensive, clear and ongoing dialogue about precisely where US defence spending cuts are likely to be made and what their impact will be, including in relation to all forms of extended deterrence.

Notes

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- 92 Negative security assurances (NSA) and positive security assurances (PSA) are nuclear-armed states’ policies towards non-nuclear weapon states who abide by their non-proliferation obligations. NSA means that nuclear states would not use their nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states; PSA means that nuclear states would help to protect non-nuclear states should they become victims of nuclear attacks.
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Extended Deterrence, Nuclear Threat Reduction and Great-Power Conflict in Asia: An Australian Perspective*

Stephan Frühling and Andrew O’Neil

Asia is in the throes of major strategic change. Not since the late 1940s, with the advent of a unified China, the coming of the Korean War, and the dawn of decolonisation, has the region confronted the prospect of such a radical shift in its geopolitical balance. Now, against the background of China’s continuing rise to great-power status and the underlying uncertainty about the implications of this among Asia’s secondary powers in particular, the role of the United States as a regional balancer looms large. In contrast to the George W Bush Administration, which was perceived as having been more focused on the Middle East, the Obama Administration has made a point of emphasising the United States’ staying power and long-term commitment to strategic engagement in Asia. This has been accentuated by increasing distrust of China’s strategic intentions in maritime Southeast Asia and rising concern in Northeast Asia about

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Beijing's apparent unwillingness to place any meaningful pressure on Pyongyang to exercise strategic restraint. Recent predictions of US decline in Asia relative to China's rise, while popular in a number of quarters, are likely to prove exaggerated.¹¹¹ The argument that traditional American allies, including Australia and South Korea, will bandwagon with China as their economic dependence on Beijing grows, and as perceptions of US vulnerability take hold, looks increasingly tenuous.

America's economic presence in the region in both trade and investment terms and its engagement politically, via active contributions to multilateral and bilateral diplomacy, are important in demonstrating the depth of its commitment. But it is the US military commitment that remains of most importance – symbolically and substantively – from the perspective of its allies. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has reduced its permanent military footprint in Asia and focused more on building its capacity to employ decisive force at short notice in specific contingencies. Washington has sought to compensate for its drawdown of land forces in Northeast Asia and the removal of US tactical nuclear weapons from the Western Pacific with a reinforced maritime presence, the deployment of missile defence assets and the reaffirmation of extended deterrence guarantees to regional allies.

The scope and nature of Washington's strategic commitment to Asia in the years ahead will be critical for states in the region. This chapter is concerned with US extended deterrence guarantees in Asia and the role these guarantees play in shaping the security perceptions of America's regional allies. We find that while US conventional capabilities and missile defences will supplement the nuclear dimension of extended deterrence guarantees, the notion that the nuclear element of US extended deterrence can be excised from US alliances in the region is not a credible proposition.¹¹² Advocates of worldwide nuclear disarmament – as distinct from partial disarmament through significant reductions in total warhead numbers – tend to overlook the more specific regional implications of their recommended course. In Asia, we maintain that nuclear weapons play an important (yet often underestimated) role in mitigating the security

dilemma by raising the potential costs of great-power conflict. Given the region's rapidly shifting power dynamics, this is becoming more, not less, important as we move into the second decade of the twenty-first century.

The momentum towards nuclear disarmament that was generated in the wake of President Obama's widely celebrated Prague speech in 2009¹¹³ seems to have petered out for the moment, especially after the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review release in April, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference in May and the ratification by the US Senate of the New START agreement with Russia in December 2010. All three were arguably policy achievements that advanced the broader disarmament agenda, but they neither seriously challenged the role and status of nuclear weapons in US policy, nor did they mark a fundamental departure from the established nuclear order of US-Russian parity far above the force levels of other nuclear powers.

Any injection of greater urgency into the global disarmament project in the future, however, is likely to raise delicate challenges for Australian policy-makers in the area of strategic policy, and will require much greater engagement with the geostrategic context in the Western Pacific if it is to succeed. In particular, policy-makers in many Asian countries are increasingly aware and concerned that Chinese force modernisation is changing the conventional balance of forces in the Western Pacific, which for so long has favoured the United States and its allies. In this context, de-emphasising extended nuclear deterrence is likely to be less feasible than addressing nuclear dangers more broadly.

Extended Deterrence and Alliances in Asia

Stripped to its bare essentials, deterrence is a state of mind in which a specific action is not undertaken because another party threatens unacceptable punishment, or threatens to deny the success of that action.¹¹⁴ At the heart of an effective deterrence strategy lies the credibility of threats issued by the defender. A key assumption underlying the literature on deterrence is that the recipient of these threats (the potential attacker) rationally calculates that the likely gains from a particular course of action will not

outweigh the costs, and determines their actions accordingly. From the defender's perspective, it is thus crucial to frame specific threats according to the types of incentives to which it assesses the attacker is most likely to respond. Signalling a commitment to defend certain interests with force, based on a blend of motives, including safeguarding core interests and protection of the defender's strategic reputation, is the transmission belt of a successful deterrence strategy.¹¹⁵

Integral to America's Asian strategy since the 1950s has been the extension of deterrence assurances to allies in the region. As in NATO Europe, extended deterrence assurances in Asia had a strong nuclear dimension for much of the Cold War period. The most visible sign of this was the stationing of US nuclear forces in South Korea from the late 1950s until 1991 and the frequent passage of nuclear-armed American warships through allied ports in the region.

In extended deterrence, the deterrence threats are made to avert attacks on an ally, not on the state making the threat. Extended deterrence was central to the West's alliance strategy in Europe during the Cold War and is integral to alliances that involve a pledge to come to each other's aid in case of external attack. However, the introduction of the ally as a third party in the extended deterrence calculation complicates the communication and assessment of the credibility of a deterrence threat. It also introduces new considerations into the alliance relationship, as the ally receiving extended deterrence seeks reassurance about the guaranteed support, and the ally extending deterrence tries to avoid entanglement in a dispute between the ally and another state below the threshold where the guarantor's vital interests are truly engaged.

The difficulty of reconciling these conflicting pressures has historically made for an uneasy relationship between allies where extended deterrence is a component of their alliance. The political and military dilemmas of extended deterrence postures have eclipsed the seemingly straightforward calculations of deterrence theory, especially in Cold War Europe where forward basing of US forces, integrated command structures and nuclear sharing arrangements were important means of managing this

relationship within NATO. The military efficiency and effectiveness of these arrangements in actually deterring the Soviet threat were often only a secondary consideration, after their primary value in demonstrating the political commitment of the United States to the security of the anxious allies who depended on direct US assistance and deterrence for their own survival.¹¹⁶

Hence, it is perhaps not surprising that while many analysts have identified the benefits of extended deterrence in Asia in terms of the reassurance it provides to allies, there is less agreement on how the specifics of extended deterrence operate in practice. The distinction between general and immediate deterrence is useful here. To paraphrase Patrick Morgan, general extended deterrence guarantees from the United States provide allies with a degree of existential confidence that the United States will *be highly likely* to defend them if their national security is ever seriously threatened. Immediate deterrence would occur in a situation where the United States acts to deter a specific threat against an ally's security in a particular contingency.¹¹⁷ In Asia, Morgan's general deterrence model is the norm when we think about how extended deterrence manifests itself in states' security calculations, and there is little experience with immediate deterrence against existential threats in the region.

Non-proliferation, Disarmament and US Alliance Relationships

The importance of reassurance and relationships between allies in extended deterrence has important consequences for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.¹¹⁸ While the non-proliferation regime that developed since the early 1970s has undoubtedly contributed to limiting the number of new nuclear powers, arguably more important was the provision of extended deterrence to a number of critical "threshold" states in Asia, including Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.¹¹⁹ In Japan's case, for example, Japanese sensibilities mandated that US nuclear guarantees remained "out of sight", but a recurrent theme in diplomatic interactions between Tokyo and Washington throughout the 1960s and onwards was the need for the maintenance of the US nuclear umbrella if Japan itself was to avoid

acquiring a nuclear deterrent. This reached a peak following China's successful nuclear test in 1964, but persisted well into the 1970s as Japan periodically weighed the pros and cons of developing an independent nuclear force.¹²⁰ For Tokyo, US extended deterrence under the bilateral alliance today provides a critical degree of reassurance in its strategic planning, and there has been a growing interest among Asian allies in NATO's nuclear extended deterrence practices to strengthen the practical underpinnings of regional US alliance relationships.¹²¹

This relationship between extended deterrence guarantees and non-proliferation is generally acknowledged in the global disarmament discourse. But the days when there was real concern at the possibility of countries such as Germany or Sweden acquiring nuclear weapons are long gone. And even if Iran should acquire a nuclear weapon, any prospective Iranian nuclear arsenal would be so small that reassuring US allies and partners in the region would be a question of US commitment and diplomatic adroitness, rather than of the size and composition of the US nuclear arsenal. Hence, when considering any practical steps towards the ultimate nuclear disarmament of great powers, it is important to acknowledge that Asia is the part of the world where the nexus between extended deterrence reassurance and non-proliferation is most relevant today, and most observers agree that this is unlikely to change anytime soon.¹²² Regional commitment to non-proliferation norms over several decades – North Korea notwithstanding – has been a significant achievement for nuclear disarmament. Northeast Asia is the ultimate litmus test for any policy proposals to break the nexus between nuclear extended deterrence and proliferation incentives among US allies. The general approach of any such proposal should be to “do no harm”, and the onus of demonstrating the continued viability of the non-proliferation regime in Northeast Asia should be placed on those proposing deep cuts into existing arsenals.

Similar concerns are true even for Australia, where pressures to consider seriously a threshold nuclear option began to build in the second half of the 1960s. While also motivated by a desire to see its own region

free of new nuclear-armed states, a large part of the reason for Australia's signing the NPT in 1970 was a perception that the US alliance might be threatened if Australia failed to come on board the new non-proliferation agreement. Even today, Australia's situation is such that the possibility of a sovereign nuclear force is still discussed as highly unlikely and beyond the pale of mainstream political discourse, but nevertheless an idea that some strategic analysts do not dismiss for all time.¹²³ The Australian Government's cryptic comment in the 2009 Defence *White Paper* that US extended deterrence “provides a stable and reliable sense of assurance and has over the years removed the need for Australia to consider more significant and expensive defence options”¹²⁴ raises the question of what these “options” that are substituted by US extended nuclear deterrence might be. In non-nuclear European countries, it would be very difficult to imagine similar discussions or government comments.

A much better understanding is thus needed among governments and populations about the role that US nuclear weapons play in the reassurance of US allies in Asia. The Extended Deterrence Policy Committee established by South Korea and the United States, and increased informal exchanges between the United States and Japan are welcome developments in this regard.¹²⁵ But there needs to be a realistic assessment of what can be achieved through such dialogues: better understanding of each other's defence policies among allies, or even among potential adversaries, can help build confidence in pledges of support and give greater political credence to threats of retaliation. But the desire of US allies for increased exchanges on extended deterrence is a sign of the increased relevance of extended deterrence, and of an increased need for reassurance in the face of profound geopolitical change – it should not be taken as a sign that regional allies are seeking to smooth the path towards experiments in conventional deterrence. Great-power war in Asia may be very unlikely, but it is sufficiently real a possibility to be a genuine and weighty argument against fundamental change in US alliance relationships in the region.

The question, then, is whether the substance of US regional alliances could remain in place were substantial steps toward nuclear disarmament

taken. Here it is important to acknowledge that it is ultimately regional allies and their confidence in the United States that are the final arbiters of this question.¹²⁶ The seemingly sophisticated models of stability developed by the policy-makers and analysts during the Cold War have had a less than perfect track record. This does not inspire confidence in the ability of the US strategic community to explain other countries' behaviours, nor do their models provide a robust basis for policy recommendations.¹²⁷ Allies will be even more sceptical about proposed changes if they are driven primarily by a global discourse on nuclear disarmament without being, at a minimum, deeply informed by the regional geostrategic balances and relationships that are the reason for both the existence of US alliances, and their continuing value to allies.

Again, such concerns do not only apply to Northeast Asia, but also to Australia, which relies on the ANZUS alliance for protection against nuclear coercion and attack. Australia was closely allied with the United States against the Soviet Union, and today remains committed to supporting the US strategic role in Asia. During the Cold War, it accepted that this made it a potential target for Soviet nuclear forces and coercion. Today, Chinese missiles also can reach the country, opening it to the possibility of nuclear intimidation in a wider Asia-Pacific conflict. The country's strategic geography is isolated enough from allied centres of power to engender a sense of insecurity about developments in regional great-power relations, but not sufficiently isolated to feel secure in the sense that, for example, New Zealand might.

Unlike their counterparts in Tokyo and Seoul, Australian decision-makers since the early 1970s have crafted their strategic policy on the assumption that Australia alone is responsible for its defence against direct threats to the country, based on a so-called doctrine of "self-reliance". While this posture was built on access to US intelligence and technology, Australia is unusual among US allies in eschewing close military cooperation with the United States in its own defence and operations in its immediate region. In general, this emphasises the US alliance as an ultimate guarantee against existential threat, one that is beyond the ability

of Australia to handle itself – a context in which hypothetical nuclear threats would loom large. Notably, Australian Governments only began to explicitly mention US extended nuclear deterrence in public *White Papers* and *Defence Reviews* from 1993, when nuclear programs in Iraq and North Korea led to a more diffuse perception of nuclear dangers than during the Cold War.

Moreover, the most recent Defence *White Paper* of 2009 paints a darker picture of Australia's future security environment than its predecessors, including the possibility of conflict with an Asian major power in Australia's approaches.¹²⁸ Against this background, maintaining nuclear weapons in the armoury of US extended deterrence is an important hedge against uncertainty, from Australia's perspective. While some observers have claimed that conventional deterrence can be just as effective against nuclear threats,¹²⁹ Australian policy-makers appear to be unconvinced.¹³⁰

A Global-Regional Disconnect?

Yet, such a stance poses policy challenges in regard to Australia's spirited advocacy of nuclear disarmament, evident in recent years in its co-sponsorship (with Japan) of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND).¹³¹ To be sure, this tension in Australian policy between support for extended nuclear deterrence and the abolition of nuclear weapons is not new. For much of the Cold War it bedevilled Labor governments in particular, as left-wing constituencies demanded high-profile advocacy of disarmament, while other important constituencies saw the preservation of robust alliance guarantees as the priority.

However, the rise of a more mainstream level of support for nuclear disarmament in the United States in recent years has underscored the fact that advocacy of nuclear abolition can no longer be dismissed by governments as peripheral to the primary strategic debate over the future of nuclear weapons. Consequently, governments worldwide are having to confront the issue of how they will continue to justify the role of nuclear weapons in their national security strategies. This applies not just to

nuclear powers, but also to non-nuclear weapons states that count on the US nuclear umbrella in their strategic policies. It is therefore becoming increasingly difficult for Australia to reconcile its support for nuclear disarmament with its desire for extended nuclear deterrence from the United States.

Opposition to the US nuclear presence in Asia typically originates from two groups. The first are those who are ambivalent about America's strategic presence in the region, including by definition its extended deterrence posture. This group's aims run counter to the overall policy direction of regional US friends and allies, including Australia, whose desire seems to be to maintain and deepen their security links with the United States in the face of China's military modernisation and increasingly assertive behaviour in regional disputes.

A second group opposed to US nuclear presence, however, supports America's strategic presence in Asia, but perceives unnecessary risks and dangers from the nuclear dimension of that presence. In their view, the way to reduce nuclear threats to security in Asia is to attenuate, with a view to eventually eliminating, the role of nuclear weapons in the region. Underlying this second group's approach is the assumption that it would be possible to selectively extricate the US nuclear capability from regional alliance relationships. And yet, this assumption is questionable on several grounds. The proposition that conventional forces can substitute for nuclear weapons – itself challenging to accept even at the technical level – is difficult to reconcile with the operational and geographic realities of prospective great-power war in Asia. In any major conflict with China, access by US conventional forces to the theatre would likely be difficult and restricted, and the credibility of threatening extensive conventional strikes for extended deterrence purposes will therefore also be limited.¹³²

In assessing the future role of nuclear weapons in US extended deterrence guarantees in Asia, commentators and policy-makers should therefore exercise care not to impose idealised global-level ambitions on the region. As Muthiah Alagappa has observed, “the role and significance of nuclear weapons in Asian national security strategies appear to be a

function of specific histories, strategic circumstances, security challenges, and national nuclear capabilities.”¹³³ Any country must weigh advances towards disarmament against the consequences for its own security and the regional correlation of forces. But this is especially so for countries in the Asia Pacific, faced with changing power relativities and China's growing ability to challenge the United States and its allies militarily in the Western Pacific. This context cannot be ignored when contemplating moves towards nuclear disarmament, because it not only complicates such moves, but also challenges the proposition that nuclear weapons, rather than great-power relations themselves, are the most pressing and dangerous challenge of today – at least in the Asia Pacific region.

It is our proposition, therefore, that the cause of nuclear disarmament is not helped by suggesting that the role of nuclear weapons in Asia's extended deterrence guarantees can be substituted with conventional capabilities, including ballistic missile defences. The trajectory of the conventional balance of power in the region is such that China's growing air, naval and ballistic missile forces are emerging as a powerful challenge to the United States and regional allies, with the regional security discourse increasingly focusing on concepts such as the AirSea Battle and the role of US allies in it.¹³⁴ In this context, the notion that conventional weapons could provide protection (through missile defence), or exercise punishment or denial in the way that nuclear weapons could, belies regional realities and makes the nuclear disarmament discourse less, rather than more, serious and credible in relation to defence policy and force posture decision-making in regional capitals. Nuclear weapons will remain the premium content of US extended deterrence guarantees in Asia and a feature of the region's security landscape for as long as Japan, South Korea and Australia do not want to acquire their own nuclear forces. Moreover, as the US enters an era of budgetary austerity in the wake of prolonged global financial crisis, cuts to conventional force programs may make the US increasingly reliant on its nuclear force as a major force multiplier in its extended deterrence commitments.

Nevertheless, we would argue that there is a way for Australian policy-makers to circumvent this potential dilemma, by acknowledging that progress towards nuclear disarmament per se is not necessary to reduce nuclear threats in Asia. Instead of prioritising the “grand aim” of nuclear disarmament, Australia’s limited diplomatic resources would be put to better use in promoting greater transparency among Asia’s nuclear weapons states (particularly between Washington and Beijing) on their respective understandings of strategic stability, crisis stability and the role of doctrine more broadly.¹³⁵ As a secondary, non-nuclear state, Australia carries limited weight among the great powers, but it does have an established reputation as a norm entrepreneur in the area of arms control, which could be used to facilitate greater dialogue on these topics.¹³⁶ Placing nuclear threats in the context of broader dangers to regional security also links the disarmament discourse to an ongoing debate in Australia about policy options for managing changing geostrategic relativities in the Asia Pacific, which would further increase the policy relevance and visibility of any measures that would be beneficial to both nuclear and broader regional security.¹³⁷

From a Global to a Regional Disarmament Discourse

The analysis contained in this chapter suggests that moving from a global disarmament discourse to one that can gain traction in Asia will not be easy. Indeed, Asia’s geopolitical realities seem to challenge several notions that are often taken for granted in the global discourse. The following five main points flow from the analysis in this chapter.

First, the continuing demand for extended nuclear deterrence in Asia raises serious questions about the potential for lowering the salience of nuclear weapons in the region over the longer term. Anxiety over North Korea’s weapons program, apprehension about China’s nuclear modernisation and perennial concerns over the longevity of Washington’s regional security engagement have intersected to reinforce the significance of extended nuclear deterrence in Asia. Given the near certainty that Pyongyang will not voluntarily divest itself of nuclear weapons, and that

China will continue its nuclear and conventional modernisation program, Japan, South Korea and Australia will continue to seek nuclear guarantees as part of their broader alliance relationships with Washington for as long as US administrations are willing to extend the nuclear umbrella to them.

Second, it is not realistic to hope or expect that America’s regional allies could adopt an à la carte approach to the guarantees they want from Washington within the framework of their respective alliances. On the one hand, proposals that Australia should request that Washington exclude nuclear weapons from any extended deterrence arrangements are based on the assumption that US policy-makers would not feel compelled to respond to nuclear coercion aimed against Australia, which would in all likelihood originate from a US adversary. On the other hand, any US willingness to take the “absolute weapon” out of consideration for possible assistance to its allies, while keeping nuclear weapons for its own defence, could not but weaken the political commitment to the common defence embodied in its alliance treaties.

Third, given the importance of the nuclear dimension of American extended deterrence in Asia, the risks associated with nuclear disarmament need to be better acknowledged by policy-makers. An increased possibility of conventional conflict among states and growing proliferation pressures are just two of the possible outcomes should progress towards nuclear disarmament be accelerated without regard for wider issues of strategic stability between great powers. Psychological perceptions on these issues matter greatly, and some regional policy-makers may be concerned if the United States were to drop its overall warhead numbers below the threshold of 1,000. Questions remain about whether the United States could adequately limit the damage from a Chinese nuclear attack on Japan by successfully targeting all mobile missiles in a retaliatory strike.¹³⁸ Further cuts to US warhead levels, while likely to induce stability at a global level, could in fact have the opposite effect regionally in Asia. This raises the broader question of whether assured destruction is sufficient for the maintenance of extended deterrence, or whether it requires credible damage limitation capabilities.¹³⁹

Fourth, the fact that there is little move towards proliferation among US allies and partners in the region, despite significant geostrategic changes in Northeast Asia and nuclear weapons acquisition by North Korea, is an achievement that should be cherished, and not taken for granted. For all the concerns that animate the global campaign for nuclear disarmament, it should be appreciated that, as far as Asia is concerned, the status quo is arguably already a success story. We are not suggesting that there are no steps that could be taken to further reduce nuclear dangers, but rather that we need to be realistic about how much further the disarmament agenda can be pursued, given the regional balance of power.

Fifth, any move towards nuclear disarmament must engage with the increasingly operational focus of the discussion of US security guarantees in the region – even at the danger of questioning the assumption that nuclear weapons have little operational relevance in today's world. The question of how the United States and its allies would fight a naval and air war between major powers in the region is not a pleasant one to contemplate, and one that had largely disappeared from the agenda since the Soviet Pacific fleet ceased to exist in 1991, or even decades earlier in Australia's case. This question is, however, reappearing in countries throughout the region, including Australia.¹⁴⁰ In this context, countries are analysing how their general extended deterrence posture could be translated into immediate deterrence in a crisis situation in much greater detail than in the past. If the narrative of global disarmament fails to engage with this regional discourse, it will have great trouble gaining sufficient traction among US allies in the region for them to contemplate significant changes in their extended deterrence postures.

Policy Recommendations and Conclusions

The argument that moving towards nuclear disarmament in Asia will be particularly difficult should not be read as implying that attempts to reduce nuclear dangers are futile or unwarranted. Three broad strategies recommend themselves to address the problems that Asia's geopolitics

pose for an effective regional discourse on reducing nuclear dangers, involving the major powers and nuclear weapons states, as well as other countries in the region.

First, emphasis should be placed on those measures that are clearly aimed at a common good, and do not directly touch on the strategic and defence postures of specific countries in the region. There is significant scope for initiatives such as capacity building on safeguards, export controls and counter-proliferation, as more countries industrialise and acquire high-technology industries with nuclear applications. Implementation of UN resolutions on nuclear-related trafficking in the region is still patchy, and Australia has a role to play through the Proliferation Security Initiative and in its bilateral relations with countries in the region to increase understanding of the issues in this area, and increase the ability of countries to fulfil their obligations. Australia was also instrumental in the creation of the Asia Pacific Safeguards Network, which currently focuses on capacity building in support of IAEA safeguards, with the potential to broaden its activities into the area of nuclear security in the future. A multilateral project on cooperative threat reduction activities, which could be based on the US Nunn-Lugar Global Cooperation program, could create a valuable dialogue between the United States, China and other regional countries on their understanding of threats posed by weapons of mass destruction, while also leading to practical outcomes of demonstrable benefit to all countries. Given the paramount importance of confidence building in a broader sense between great powers in the region,¹⁴¹ nuclear safety and security cooperation should be seen as contributing to much greater aims than just the narrow technical remit of these programs. In that context, Australia should work with other countries in the region to capitalise on the 2012 Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul.

Second, tensions and disquiet about the future of the regional order reinforce the need for transparency in defence policy issues. At the same time, transparency and dialogue are also necessary for further reductions in nuclear stockpiles of the major powers. But the importance of

maintaining the non-proliferation effect of US alliance relationships and, if possible, achieving allied support for further moves toward nuclear disarmament, suggest that transparency on nuclear matters should be situated in a broader, regional exchange about strategic relationships in Asia. The Sino-US nuclear relationship is not (yet) dominating the global arms control agenda, or global security overall, in a way that the US-Soviet nuclear balance did during the Cold War. And the United States today is also not the “natural” leader that could speak for a coherent bloc of Asian allies, as it had done for Cold War NATO. Therefore, transparency and confidence building in nuclear matters should not solely be a bilateral project between the United States and China. Gaining acceptance for the participation of non-nuclear US allies in exchanges on nuclear issues will not be easy, but it may be facilitated in the long term by concentrating on transparency about defence policies and military activities more broadly in the first instance. This would also increase the scope for non-nuclear countries like Australia to contribute to slowly increasing the level and breadth of dialogue about sensitive matters.

Third, policy-makers and supporters of nuclear disarmament should prepare for a debate about US nuclear weapons that will focus much more on weapons use and operational details than has been the case since the end of the Cold War. This is because, as US and allied military strategy to overcome Chinese anti-access and area denial capabilities develops and is discussed in greater detail, the question of war termination will sooner or later come to the fore. This will test aspects of the accepted wisdom on which the current disarmament discourse is based, such as the feasibility of conventional deterrence between major powers. But ultimately it is also an opportunity to gain acceptance for those disarmament propositions that prove sufficiently robust to serve as a basis for defence policy-making, e.g. by convincing Asian allies about the operational obsolescence of weapons systems such as the now-to-be-fully-retired TLAM-N. Some of the questions that should be considered in further research include: How credible would either a (hypothetical)

US or the existing Chinese No First Use doctrine actually be in regional conflict scenarios? How are current nuclear arsenals likely to feature in escalation of major-power war, especially through the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons in the Western Pacific? Are there credible alternatives to nuclear weapons for intra-war deterrence, or non-nuclear options for escalation that may serve to stabilise conflict short of nuclear use? Does nuclear modernisation, such as the B-61 life extension program, have demonstrable value in making the nuclear arsenal more operationally relevant to conflict in the Western Pacific and, thereby, open avenues for further reduction if confidence in the robustness and useability of remaining weapons can be strengthened? And, finally, are regional relations sufficiently robust to allow open discussion of such questions, which need to be answered should further deep cuts find support in the future? If not, how can this be made possible?

The fact that Japan, South Korea, and Australia are all substantial regional military powers in their own right should tell us something about what these states want most from extended deterrence. None of these countries want their own nuclear weapons programs, but this could change if, for whatever reason, the United States began to withdraw extended nuclear deterrence guarantees from Asia – notwithstanding anti-nuclear currents in public opinion, particularly in Japan and Australia. With sustained industrial and economic development, nuclear abstinence is becoming a choice that more and more countries in the region could realistically reconsider should their geostrategic circumstances change significantly for the worse. Even in the unlikely event that North Korea surrendered its nuclear weapons and China decided to discontinue its nuclear and conventional modernisation program, all three US allies would still prefer the existential benefits they see as being associated with general nuclear deterrence until there is a marked and sustained improvement in great-power relations in the region. History suggests that even when they are no longer faced with direct or immediate threats to their security, most states remain loath to give up nuclear weapons. There is little reason to think that the strategic logic of Japan, South

Korea and Australia will be any different in respect to extended nuclear deterrence in the years to come. For Asia today, at a time of shifting power balances and wider strategic uncertainty, the existence of nuclear weapons in the region is not the most pressing problem on the horizon.

Notes

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- 111 For discussion on this point, see Robert Art, “The United States and the Rise of China: Implications for the Long Haul,” *Political Science Quarterly* 125, no. 3 (2010): 359-391.
- 112 For example, in its 2009 report, the International Commission for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament stated that nuclear weapons should not be necessary for reassurance because “United States conventional capability, when combined with that of each of the allies in question, constitutes a deterrent to any conceivable aggressor at least as credible as that posed by its nuclear weapons”. Chinese force modernisation and burgeoning anti-access capabilities pose a significant challenge to this claim. Nor is the Commission’s remark that the value of nuclear weapons for extended deterrence is reduced by their non-use in the Korean War, the Quemoy-Matsu Taiwan Strait crisis, or the Cuban Missile crisis relevant, since none of these were situations where US and allied conventional forces were facing defeat in large-scale conventional conflict. See International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, *Eliminating Nuclear Threats: A Practical Guide for Global Policymakers*, (Canberra: Paragon, 2009), 66-67.
- 113 “Remarks by President Barack Obama,” Prague, 5 April 2010, Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-By-President-Barack-Obama-In-Prague-As-Delivered/.
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- 115 R. Harrison Wagner, “Rationality and Misperception in Deterrence Theory,” *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 4, no. 2, (1992): 115-141, 128-135.
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- 120 Kurt Campbell and Tsuyoshi Sunohara, "Japan: Thinking the Unthinkable," in *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear Choices*, eds. Kurt Campbell, Robert Einhorn, and Mitchell Reiss, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 218-253.
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- 122 See, for instance, Llewelyn Hughes, "Why Japan Will Not Go Nuclear (Yet): International and Domestic Constraints on the Nuclearization of Japan," *International Security* 31, no. 4 (2007): 67-96.
- 123 See Rod Lyon, *A Delicate Issue: Asia's Nuclear Future*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Canberra, 2009; Raoul Heinrichs, "Australia's Nuclear Dilemma: Dependence, Deterrence or Denial?" *Security Challenges* 4. no. 1 (2008): 55-67; and Stephan Frühling, 'Never Say Never: Considerations about the Possibility of Australia Acquiring Nuclear Weapons,' *Asian Security* 6, no. 2 (2010): 146-169.
- 124 Department of Defence (Australia), *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*, Canberra, 2009, para. 6.34.
- 125 "Japan, U.S. to Launch Talks on 'Nuclear Umbrella'," Global Security Newswire, 20 July 2009; 'Joint Communiqué,' The 42nd US-ROK Security Consultative Meeting, 8 October 2010, Department of Defense (US) para 6, <http://www.defense.gov/news/d20101008usrok.pdf>.
- 126 On this, see Keith Payne, "Maintaining Flexible and Resilient Capabilities for Nuclear Deterrence," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (2011): 13-29.
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- 128 Department of Defence (Australia), *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century*, 64-65.
- 129 For instance, see Dennis Gormley, "Securing Nuclear Obsolescence," *Survival* 48, no. 3 (2006): 127-148 and International Commission for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, *Eliminating Nuclear Threats*, 66-67.
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- 131 International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, *Eliminating Nuclear Threats*.
- 132 See Andrew Krepinevich, *Why AirSea Battle?* Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, Washington DC, 2010.
- 133 Muthiah Alagappa, "Introduction: Investigating Nuclear Weapons in a New Era," in *The Long Shadow: Nuclear Weapons and Security in 21st Century Asia*, 25.
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- 138 James Acton, *Deterrence during Disarmament: Deep Nuclear Reductions and International Security*, Adelphi Series No. 417, International Institute for Strategic Studies (Routledge: Oxford, 2010): 39-56.
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Conclusion: Extending Uncertainty or Disarming Doubt?

Rory Medcalf and Fiona Cunningham

Extended nuclear deterrence in Asia is far from becoming history. One of the clearest messages emerging from the various perspectives in this book is that US allies hope – and China expects – that the United States will continue to provide security assurances involving, in extremis, the threat or use of nuclear force.

But while the region's basic architecture of alliances and extended deterrence commitments persists, the strategic landscape is changing around it. This is affecting the origin and intensity of threat perceptions, the size, type and distribution of conventional capabilities, the drivers and likelihood of conflict, the role of nuclear weapons, and the prospects for confidence-building arrangements to reduce tensions. Ambitious at the best of times, maintaining extended nuclear deterrence in such a dynamic strategic system will be a major and ongoing policy challenge for the US and its allies.

Even more ambitious than extending nuclear deterrence is President Obama's stated goal of reducing the role of nuclear weapons with a view to their eventual elimination, while also maintaining a safe, secure and effective arsenal. This goal faces enormous challenges in East Asia, where differences of national interests are compounded by conflicting views on the role and utility of both nuclear and conventional force.

In this final chapter we seek to synthesise the national perspectives offered in the preceding pages, taking into account also the many views aired during the consultative workshops that were part of the wider project.

Rather than exhaustively reprising or cross-referencing the many arguments contained in the national perspectives that together spin the exceedingly complex web of Asian strategic dynamics, we focus on a few major themes:

- the role of strategic uncertainty in shaping East Asian attitudes to deterrence;
- the difficulties this poses for further efforts to remove nuclear weapons from the regional equation;
- questions about the right mix of nuclear and conventional (including missile defence) capabilities in a future US extended deterrence posture;
- the perilous interplay of conventional and nuclear threats in the region;
- how a Taiwan contingency would fit in the wider regional picture regarding extended deterrence;
- and the central challenge of US-China strategic (in)stability.

We then identify some broad recommendations for policy-makers as well as noting the scope for future policy-oriented research towards minimising nuclear dangers in the region.

Strategic Uncertainty in East Asia

All the contributors to this book have emphasised that an understanding of extended deterrence and an evaluation of the prospects for disarmament cannot be isolated from national strategic and political outlooks. But a common thread to all the studies presented here is the strategic uncertainty that pervades a changing Asia, heightening risks of confrontation and the possibility of escalation.

East Asia is at the epicentre of the global changes caused by the increasing economic and strategic weight of China. There is of course controversy over the relativities of China's rise and America's "decline" in Asia.¹⁴² In any case, the Obama Administration has changed course on its Asia strategy in the past few years towards a greater emphasis on reassuring allies and balancing against Chinese influence. Nonetheless, it is too early to discern the substance and effectiveness of Obama's so-called "pivot" away from the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts and towards the Asia-Pacific, not least because of the scale of cuts to the US defence budget forecast in the years ahead.

The fact therefore remains that allies perceive that US power in the region will be challenged by China's growing military strength and confidence. Indeed, by some accounts, the official strategic community in Australia reportedly assesses the odds of a US-China military confrontation occurring as greater than those anticipated by the US intelligence community.¹⁴³ In any case, there are real possibilities of confrontation, despite differing assessments of likelihood. The United States itself has repeatedly acknowledged it will be operating in an environment in which China seeks to deny it access to potential maritime theatres of conflict in the Western Pacific.¹⁴⁴ China's evolving conventional maritime denial capabilities thus create uncertainty about the will and capacity of the United States to protect Japanese and Taiwanese interests where those clash with China's. And the subsequent US efforts to conceptualise an "AirSea Battle" military response to China's anti-access-area denial (A2AD) capabilities have raised concerns about escalation.¹⁴⁵

In sum, perceptions of a rising China and its growing conventional military capabilities have sharpened the security concerns of US allies. The apparent increase in Chinese maritime assertiveness in 2009-2011 may have been followed by a welcome return to restraint,¹⁴⁶ but the damage to regional perceptions of Chinese intentions has yet to be repaired.¹⁴⁷ There is little sense that long-term uncertainties about the strategic impacts of China's military rise in Asia are diminishing.

To be sure, the news in US-China strategic relations and dialogue is far from all bad. Military-military dialogue was restored after its suspension in 2010 and, as Li Bin and He Yun acknowledge in their chapter, Washington now has a stated aspiration for strategic stability talks with Beijing. But as a reading of several of the chapters on this volume would suggest, improvements to the US-China relationship will not, on their own, assuage US allies' perceptions of insecurity. If more cordial great-power relations are not accompanied by better relations between US allies and their potential adversaries – such as between Japan and China – great-power tranquillity could accentuate allies' fears of abandonment. As things stand, allies are hedging against future uncertainty including through external balancing. In recent years, this has involved not only intensifying their alliances with the United States, but also building a web of looser security consultations and partnerships with one another.

For their part, some Chinese analysts appear increasingly to perceive these steps and wider US strategy in Asia through a lens of suspicion that the US is trying to contain China's rise.¹⁴⁸ There are suggestions that China is making increasingly zero-sum calculations about its relations with the United States on the Korean Peninsula, placing a premium on the preservation of relations with North Korea and the regime to keep US influence at bay,¹⁴⁹ even when this harms China's international reputation and relations with South Korea.¹⁵⁰

But by no means can all of East Asia's strategic uncertainty be attributed to the impact of a rising China. North Korea's habit of provocation and the unpredictability of domestic politics in a number of regional polities are also important factors. The 2006 and 2009 nuclear tests as well as the sinking of the *Cheonan* and the Yeonpyeong Island bombardment have underlined the destabilising and capricious nature of DPRK security behaviour, which is to a considerable degree insulated from the influence of other countries.¹⁵¹ This last point is true even with regard both to its main supporter, China, which was not able to dissuade the regime from testing a nuclear device in 2006, and more so in relation to its declared enemies the United States, Japan and South Korea. As several of the authors in

this volume note, these powers were unable to deter either of its 2010 provocations despite post-*Cheonan* military exercises, strong declaratory statements and the vast superiority of their combined conventional and nuclear forces.

There is also potential for policy discontinuities brought about by leadership changes in the region, for which 2012 is an exceptional year. So far the leadership transitions expected by many to have the greatest destabilising potential, in Taiwan and North Korea, seem to have occurred smoothly, although the implications of the death of Kim Jong-Il and succession of Kim Jong-Un are still emerging. A leadership change is taking place in China in 2012, while it is quite possible that South Koreans may this year opt for a change of government after the conservative and pro-US alliance presidency of Lee Myung-bak.¹⁵² The precise security policy implications of new leadership in any of these countries are unknown, but seamless policy continuity would be unlikely. It should be noted, of course, that leadership change can sometimes be a positive discontinuity, bringing opportunity for new thinking and initiatives, or at the least an end to the policy inertia that can mark the end of a term in office. In particular, the arrival of a new generation of leadership in Beijing might open scope for the United States and China to revisit questions of confidence-building and strategic stability dialogue in 2013.

Reprising Uncertainty and Disarmament

For many reasons, therefore, but especially the power shift flowing from the rise of China, none of the key players in East Asia is enthusiastic about rapid movement towards the elimination of nuclear deterrence from the regional strategic equation. In this regard, they need not feel greatly troubled.

President Obama's Prague agenda for disarmament appears to have slowed, indeed reached something of a plateau, in the past 18 months, despite his efforts to breathe new life into the disarmament and arms control agenda at the 2012 Seoul Nuclear Security Summit.¹⁵³ After a successful NPT Review Conference and the release of the 2010 Nuclear

Posture Review, some enduring obstacles to disarmament returned to the fore. These included: a highly partisan Congress that, through its rough treatment of the New START treaty, signalled that it would stymie US attempts to ratify and energise the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the continuing paralysis of the Six-Party Talks during and after the DPRK provocations of 2010, Pakistan's continuing to block negotiations for a fissile material cut-off treaty at the Conference on Disarmament, Russian objections to NATO missile defence plans, and Chinese unwillingness so far to engage in strategic stability talks with the United States.

Several of these roadblocks involve the interaction of Asia's complex and uncertain nuclear landscape with the global disarmament agenda. It is clear that the Asian nuclear landscape differs dramatically from that of Europe or global US-Russia relations. There is no institutional mechanism for nuclear-armed countries to exchange information about their arsenals or policies. Meanwhile, multiple and unresolved territorial and sovereignty disputes provide fuel for crisis or conflict. Military tensions are growing, not decreasing. So are military capabilities, including of the nuclear kind, at least in the cases of China and North Korea (and, in the Indo-Pacific Asian strategic system more widely, of India and Pakistan). As Jonathan Pollack notes "nuclear weapons are now a central factor in regional strategy" and global disarmament initiatives must acknowledge this, even as Asian governments pledge their support for a nuclear weapon free world.¹⁵⁴

Another critical difference between Europe and Asia is that in Asia, the United States and Russia excepted, nuclear arsenals are quite small and already tailored to meet existing threats; while NATO and Russia arguably have a surplus of weapons that they could eliminate without affecting the efficacy of deterrence. In this sense, nuclear disarmament in Asia would immediately confront what in Europe or US-Russia relations can be considered a rather remote question – the issue of deterrence and strategic stability at small arsenal numbers.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the idea of nuclear disarmament draws such a mixed reception in major Asian capitals. The Japanese and

Australian governments have been strong proponents of disarmament at the rhetorical level at least, but the Japanese and Australian perspectives in this volume point to the tensions within the Tokyo and Canberra policy establishments on the question of how further US cuts – especially below the arbitrary figure of 1,000 warheads – would affect the credibility of extended deterrence. The Australian Government's input to the United States ahead of the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review suggests how seriously this particular US ally – even under a supposedly pro-disarmament Labor administration – continues to take American nuclear weapons as a pillar of its national defence. Although heavily sanitised, the declassified version of a joint Australian defence and foreign affairs submission noted that Australia's support for the very disarmament goals it advocated "must be balanced against our strategic interest in ensuring stability through ensuring a credible US Extended Deterrence".¹⁵⁵

In South Korea, meanwhile, the typical views of security analysts about US-led nuclear disarmament are, to say the least, cautious. Some did not appear concerned with the pro-disarmament context within which the NPR was framed and do not appear concerned by reductions in strategic arsenals,¹⁵⁶ although from the present project's Seoul workshop and the chapter by Hyun-Wook Kim it is clear there would be genuine South Korean concerns about the future of extended deterrence during progress towards a nuclear-disarmed world.

The Right Mix? Tailored Deterrence Architectures

In seeking to balance its Asian alliance and deterrence commitments with the pursuit of nuclear disarmament, the Obama Administration has emphasised the idea of "tailored" deterrence. This involves America's exceptional ability to field "capabilities across all domains to deter a wide range of attacks or forms of coercion".¹⁵⁷ This includes "effective missile defense, counter-WMD capabilities, conventional power-projection and integrated command and control – all underwritten by strong political commitments". Washington has emphasised that strengthening the non-nuclear elements of its and its allies' capabilities (euphemistically

called “regional security architectures” in the NPR) will be “vital to moving to a world free of nuclear weapons”.

Presently, few would question that the United States maintains a considerable edge across most domains of military competition, although it is under serious challenge from growing Chinese asymmetric maritime forces as well as cyber capabilities in the Western Pacific.

And certainly the strengthening of non-nuclear forces could increase the range of options for the United States and allies to respond to military threats without recourse to nuclear weapons. One idea with understandable appeal to Washington is that of an integrated missile defence architecture – involving US allies in their own defence but perhaps one day also to assist the defence of one another. Another is the idea of enhanced conventional strike capabilities, both for the United States and allies. A third element, related to the first two, is ensuring superior command, control, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, to maximise the impact and accuracy of an already vast conventional firepower.

As all the contributors to this volume point out, however, there are fundamental questions about how far the United States can go in effectively tailoring new deterrence architectures for its Asian allies and partners in which non-nuclear capabilities increasingly substitute for nuclear deterrence – taking the “N” out of “END”. The most obvious reason relates simply to the different nature of nuclear weapons: their far greater destructiveness and the psychological impact this exerts to place additional restraint on decision makers in a crisis.

To be sure, the United States has so far had some success in persuading Japan and South Korea that their survival need not depend on particular types and locations of US nuclear weapons: notably the stationing of tactical nuclear arms close to or within the Northeast Asian theatre. But even this has been a difficult step, aided in part by an increased emphasis being placed on the role of strategic nuclear weapons in extended deterrence.

As Hirofumi Tosaki and Nobuyasu Abe recount, the retirement of the submarine-launched Tomahawk nuclear cruise missile (TLAM-N)

was troubling for the Japanese strategic community. In his chapter, Hyun-Wook Kim has noted the view that tactical nuclear weapons can provide a different quality of deterrence from strategic weapons by virtue of their deployment closer to the theatre of conflict and presumably also their smaller yields. Nonetheless, the United States has provided extended deterrence to East Asia essentially with strategic forces since the 1990s.¹⁵⁸ As Jeffrey Lewis points out, the practice of linking reassurance to capabilities has created unnecessary anxiety among allies when the United States decided to retire those systems.¹⁵⁹

The solution, then, would seem to be for the United States to communicate more effectively with its allies about the capabilities that protect them. An important start has been made in this direction with the recent establishment of extended deterrence policy and consultation processes with South Korea and Japan. These seem to have served to manage anxieties within those nations’ security establishments about New START Reductions and the TLAM-N retirement as well as hints of US movement in the direction of a nuclear No First Use policy. As Stephan Frühling and Andrew O’Neil suggest, such consultations may go beyond their symbolic value to provide reassurance as allies are informed of, and perhaps able to influence, the operational details of extended deterrence. That said, such consultations may bring their own risks or problems: unsettling potential adversaries, increasing the chances of a breach of information security and perhaps being limited by differing levels of expertise in allied defence establishments.¹⁶⁰

Another challenge for the tailored approach is the view that strengthened non-nuclear capabilities may have their own provocative or destabilising qualities. This has certainly been the traditional criticism of US and allied missile defence efforts, not only from China and Russia but from much of the nuclear disarmament movement internationally.¹⁶¹ The familiar argument is that a potential adversary will expand or modernise its nuclear missile force to overcome missile defences, and moreover might perceive missile defences as part of a potential first-strike strategy, leading to crisis instability. Even a greater reliance on conventional power-

projection and strike forces can be seen as threatening, as Li Bin and He Yun argue. The reality is, however, that unless the regional strategic situation changes radically, major Asian nations will continue to possess and build substantial conventional militaries. Warnings about the coercive, escalatory potential of conventional deterrence need to be weighed against the risks of worsening nuclear competition and an intensified reliance on the nuclear part of extended deterrence in the absence of robust and flexible conventional capabilities. At a time when China is rapidly increasing its military spending, it is not realistic to be calling for ever-stricter limits to US extended nuclear deterrence while also counselling against improvements to US and allied conventional deterrence.

A further problem for the tailored approach relates to the complex and disparate “hub-and-spokes” nature of the East Asia alliance system: each US alliance or partnership in the region is different, with different expectations about deterrence and a traditional aversion to coordination across the alliance “spokes”. Without a one-size-fits-all option, the United States has to tailor extended deterrence to each alliance. Differing threat perceptions and sometimes tensions among US allies have hampered inter-alliance cooperation and a more networked, efficient deterrence architecture. Japan and South Korea have had differing levels of concern about China’s military rise. South Korea has prioritised its need for protection from North Korea, and has been wary of unduly provoking China in, for example, missile defence collaboration with the United States, as Hyun-Wook Kim’s chapter notes. Historical memory has limited the depth of South Korea-Japan defence cooperation, while the Japanese Constitution limits its overall defence cooperation with any country. The threat perceptions, deterrence requirements and alliance contributions of Australia as well as US allies and partners in Southeast Asia have been different again.

To be sure, these differences may become smaller, especially if uncertainties about Chinese power and strategic behaviour endure. Already, the possibility of future missile defence coordination is on the agenda of two sets of trilateral security dialogues: Australia-Japan-

United States and South Korea-Japan-United States.¹⁶² Nonetheless, there will likely remain large political obstacles in Asia to an effective US-led multi-nation missile defence network, or indeed a single regional deterrence architecture.

Keeping the “N” in “END”

All contributors to this volume agree that the nuclear element of extended deterrence will remain in place for the foreseeable future. In the eyes of the US and its allies, there are two key reasons to preserve nuclear assurances. First, allies place considerable importance on US commitments to use all military options to defend them. Nuclear weapons provide a fundamentally different type of deterrent to conventional weapons – the “premium content” of extended deterrence, in the words of Stephan Frühling and Andrew O’Neil. As mentioned above, they are extremely high-stakes armaments, making leaders more cautious about engaging in conflict where nuclear threats could be made. Second, in an uncertain strategic environment, dismantling the nuclear guarantee aspect of US alliance commitments would be perceived by US allies as a form of abandonment and could seriously undermine their confidence in any remaining conventional assurances.

In framing their own perspective on these issues, taking into account China’s national interests, Li Bin and He Yun acknowledge that extended deterrence in East Asia will and indeed should maintain a nuclear element. But they argue that the nuclear element should be untangled from all but the most serious conventional conflicts, and that any blurring of the boundaries between conventional and nuclear deterrence is especially dangerous. The authors’ acceptance of some of the basic realities of extended deterrence is not necessarily shared by all Chinese analysts – some consider it an outdated Cold War relic, others see it simply as part of a US strategy to contain China.¹⁶³ With more subtlety, Zhu Feng observes that it has both positive effects – discouraging proliferation among US allies, constraining a regional arms race and deterring military adventurism – and negative effects, on China’s cross-Strait objectives, territorial disputes

with Japan and nuclear targeting decisions.¹⁶⁴ Other Chinese experts also see the policy as hindering efforts to combat proliferation and undermining strategic stability, including by making it difficult for the United States to match China's declared policy of No First Use.¹⁶⁵

Notably, Li Bin and He Yun are at odds with this volume's other contributors in their explicit call for the United States and its allies to limit extended nuclear deterrence to responding only to nuclear or to "existential" conventional attacks or nuclear attacks. This on its own is not a radical position, and is mindful of certain Asian security realities – for example South Korea's sense of vulnerability to North Korea's massed artillery. Some Western security scholars and international reports have gone further in calling for the US to move towards an explicit No First Use policy, beginning with a declaration that the sole purpose of nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear attacks.¹⁶⁶ Where this book's Chinese contributors depart most markedly from much Western nuclear disarmament discourse is in arguing that expanded conventional deterrence cannot substitute for extended nuclear deterrence – not necessarily because it is too weak but because its war-fighting potential could make it indistinguishable from coercion.

In any case, economic factors alone mean that a dramatic expansion of US conventional capabilities is not in prospect. This project did not seek to explore questions regarding the economics of extended nuclear deterrence in Asia, such as whether recent US fiscal pressures will have a bearing on the nuclear and conventional mix of US forces in the years ahead or whether it would be cheaper to maintain or diminish the role of nuclear weapons in extended deterrence. But these questions are important and there is no doubt that they are being debated in Washington,¹⁶⁷ although US intentions on this front remain far from clear. The Pentagon's 2012 Strategic Guidance gave some sense of priorities for the projected 10-year US\$487 billion spending cuts, and noted it would be possible to achieve US deterrence goals "with a smaller nuclear force".¹⁶⁸ Yet further nuclear cuts are unlikely to occur unilaterally.¹⁶⁹ Maintaining and modernising the

US arsenal in the coming decade will not be cheap. Some analysts have suggested that by reducing the target list and removing the requirement that the United States be able to launch a large number of weapons in minutes, Washington could perform the virtuous double act of reducing the salience of nuclear weapons while saving money.¹⁷⁰

Still, largely or even somehow entirely eliminating nuclear weapons from extended deterrence would bring its own budgetary burdens, especially if shifting the emphasis from nuclear to conventional deterrence involved a renewed focus on such expensive and perhaps open-ended projects as missile defence and conventional prompt global strike. The 2012 Strategic Guidance suggests the United States has room further to reduce its nuclear arsenal and still achieve its deterrence objectives. But all other considerations aside, it is impossible to see how in the near or medium term it could afford to eliminate nuclear weapons from extended deterrence and substitute them with new kinds of conventional capabilities.

Conventional Conflict and Nuclear Weapons

In any case, all contributors expressed concern of some kind over the interaction of nuclear weapons with small conventional confrontations and conflicts. The common refrain was about the dangers of perceived coercion.

In the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review the United States declared that the "fundamental purpose" of its nuclear weapons was to deter nuclear attack by others.¹⁷¹ In the same document, Washington also reserved the right to use nuclear weapons in "extreme circumstances" where "vital interests" were at stake.¹⁷² This vague and flexible language, coupled with the United States' lack of No First Use doctrine, creates space for allies and adversaries alike to speculate – not always helpfully – about the role of US nuclear weapons in conventional war.

In this context, several of the contributions to this volume have underscored the difficulty the United States will continue to have in

controlling the perceptions, expectations and actions of allies. Will allies be somehow emboldened or will they doubt the credibility of the nuclear “umbrella” and fear abandonment? At what intensity of a conflict might allies factor in the potential for US nuclear threats to come to their rescue?

The ambiguity in US nuclear posture gives it flexibility to respond to crises on a case-by-case basis, but with the risks that adversaries may underestimate the US nuclear threshold, allies may overestimate the degree of protection offered, and the US might find itself under pressure to prove its credibility in circumstances not of its choosing.¹⁷³

All contributors again agree that nuclear weapons have no role to play in deterring small conflicts, whether for reasons of proportionality, the taboo against nuclear use, or the stability-instability paradox, defined as “to the extent that the military balance is stable at the level of all-out nuclear war, it will become less stable at lower levels of violence.”¹⁷⁴ But, although the Chinese and South Korean authors may differ fundamentally on the stabilising and deterrent qualities of US nuclear ambiguity, they broadly agree that the role of nuclear weapons in small conflicts is not simple. Li Bin and He Yun argue that it is destabilising for the United States to extend nuclear deterrence to its allies in the event of small and medium-scale conflicts, while Hyun-Wook Kim suggests that nuclear weapons play an important role in providing cover for such conventional provocations as the *Cheonan* incident.

The stability-instability paradox is alive and recognisable in actual small conflicts in Asia. Nuclear weapons can act as a form of escalation control for small conflicts; they are useful for the attacker but cannot deter an attack. This may help explain why US extended deterrence guarantees failed to prevent the Yeonpyeong bombardment: North Korea likely calculated that it could conduct such an attack without inviting retaliation because South Korea and the United States did not want to escalate the conflict.¹⁷⁵ But the same outcome may well have held even in the absence of a North Korean nuclear program. The real deterrent to US-South Korean retaliation may have been Pyongyang’s ability to attack Seoul with massive conventional force.

Taiwan

The present project focused on the perspectives of three US treaty allies – Japan, Australia and South Korea – as well as China. The publication thus does not offer a specifically Taiwanese perspective. Nonetheless, the cross-Strait situation is obviously important to the future of extended deterrence and, as outlined above, has been a critical driver of the US-China strategic relationship that is so central to extended deterrence in Asia.

Despite the considerable easing of tensions between Beijing and Taipei in recent years, and the likely prospect that this will continue, a military confrontation across the Strait remains one of the more plausible catalysts for armed conflict between China and the United States. After all, Washington remains committed to the defence of Taiwan against forceful change to the status quo while China remains committed to the prevention of change to the status quo in the direction of greater Taiwanese independence. Meanwhile Taiwan is not a passive actor – the time may yet come again, especially with a future change of government, when it feels politically emboldened by US security assurances.¹⁷⁶

The United States and China would naturally wish to keep a confrontation or war over Taiwan below the nuclear threshold. Nonetheless, the possibility of threatened or actual nuclear escalation in a Taiwan contingency can hardly be ruled out. After all, a Taiwan security crisis would involve very high stakes. For China, these would include the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party, tied up with an historic mission of national unification and China’s national self-respect in the face of perceived US interference in domestic affairs. For the United States, the stakes would involve credibility as a security guarantor, the defence of democracy, human rights, a rules-based order, and perhaps nothing less than the regional order it has constructed, given the potential strategic impacts of a Chinese victory on other nations, notably Japan.¹⁷⁷

Minimising or removing any US intervention in a Taiwan Strait conflict has been a key motivation for Chinese military modernisation and force planning since the US show of force in the 1995-6 crisis. Of all present and future situations in which the United States and China

could confront each other, a Taiwan scenario is the one in which China is most committed and best prepared to risk conventional war with the United States. Indeed, Taiwan is so central to China's definition of its national security interests that some Chinese analysts view all US behaviour in East Asia, including that towards the DPRK,¹⁷⁸ in terms of its implications for Taiwan.

Only five years ago, some analysts were speculating that Chinese conventional vulnerability might encourage the People's Liberation Army to break its No First Use policy and launch a nuclear strike on, say, the US base on Guam in order to neutralise US intervention.¹⁷⁹ In the future, it may be more plausible to imagine the United States – especially if it sustained major losses early in conventional maritime operations – as the party faced with unpalatable choices about whether to escalate threats. After all, the forceful seizure of Taiwan could rightly be seen as involving “extreme circumstances” and “vital interests”, and could grievously harm the credibility of other US extended deterrence commitments. Yet in such a crisis, China might well calculate that a state of mutual nuclear deterrence would hold, especially given its tradition of understanding nuclear armaments as useless for war-fighting. Likewise, the United States might misjudge the risk of nuclear escalation. The main public domain report on AirSea Battle already and rather disturbingly assumes away such a possibility, even while it acknowledges that an attack on either side's space early warning systems would have “an immediate effect on strategic nuclear and escalation issues”.¹⁸⁰ The risks of misperception and miscalculation are obvious.

The Quest for US-China Strategic Stability

The dynamics of a hypothetical US-China confrontation remain an important area of study within the wider extended deterrence debate. Taiwan is of course only one focus for possible future US-China strategic competition and tensions. The South China Sea, East China Sea and Korean Peninsula are other areas where the Asia-Pacific's two strongest strategic actors may find their interests, actions and perceptions dangerously at

odds. Amid a shifting power balance, the search for strategic stability between the United States and China is no longer solely or primarily about Taiwan.

Chinese political and military leaders have traditionally seen the role of nuclear weapons as limited to deterring nuclear attack or countering nuclear coercion only, and not for fighting wars. This helps account for the remarkable longevity of China's restrained nuclear posture.¹⁸¹ To be sure, China's nuclear program is modernising, with an emphasis on survivability and mobility, even if the number of warheads is not dramatically increasing. Speculation about possible Chinese abandonment of its nuclear No First Use policy has so far proven false,¹⁸² although questions remain as to what exactly constitutes nuclear “first use” and would therefore provoke a nuclear response from China.¹⁸³ In their chapter, Li Bin and He Yun emphasise the nuclear taboo or norm of nuclear non-use, arguing that this norm makes the use of nuclear weapons credible only where a state faces nuclear attack or the threat of annihilation. They acknowledge that the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review reflects some US movement towards No First Use.

Nonetheless, it appears that a gulf remains between the way Chinese security thinkers envisage the role of nuclear weapons and the more flexible, ambiguous posture favoured by the Pentagon and some US allies. This may help explain China's apparent reluctance to take up President Obama's offer of strategic stability talks – the two countries see their weapons as serving different purposes. As a result, China may see the offer of strategic stability talks as a euphemism for an asymmetrical disarmament process or transparency exercise that would compromise its retaliatory capability,¹⁸⁴ which relies upon doctrinal clarity but ambiguity regarding its exact size and deployments.

Recommendations: An Agenda for Reducing Asia's Nuclear Dangers

The Obama Administration's moves to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in its defence and alliance postures have been closely watched

by Asia-Pacific allies and partners. Two years from the 2010 NPR, their strategic anxieties and uncertainties about China and North Korea have endured and even deepened. This will have major implications for any further US-led efforts towards disarmament and arms control in the region and globally.

At the same time, it is hardly realistic to assume that the shape of extended deterrence can remain static in a changing Asia – or in light of a changing United States. And the truth is that extended deterrence postures are always a kind of compromise, because, as Richard C Bush points out, the policy requires a leader to balance “the survival of his ally, the security of his homeland and the preservation of peace”.¹⁸⁵

The national perspectives in this volume, and the wider views gathered through the associated project’s regional consultations, have underlined the “wicked” nature of Asian nuclear and strategic dynamics: it is difficult to allay security concerns involving one key partner, ally or potential adversary without worsening the fears of another. For example, moves to an integrated missile defence shield with Japan, South Korea and others could compound China’s perceptions that the United States is determined to lock in nuclear superiority and first-strike options. Major progress in arms control and strategic stability between the United States and China – of a kind involving an explicit acceptance of mutual vulnerability – could leave Japan and Taiwan feeling insecure. Picking a starting-point from which to begin untangling this web is excruciatingly difficult.

An agenda to reduce Asia’s nuclear-weapons dangers therefore will have many moving parts. Developing and implementing them will require a complex choreography of confidence-building. In some instances, progressing one element in isolation could actually produce net negative regional security consequences. Instead, some elements will need to be pursued simultaneously, others sequentially.

There are at least seven essential elements in such an agenda.¹⁸⁶ These would involve:

1. *The refinement of extended nuclear deterrence towards countering existential threats only:* The United States has already made important progress in this direction including through the 2010 NPR. This needs to be affirmed and built upon. Rapid further movement towards a US No First Use or sole purpose policy cannot be expected in an uncertain strategic environment. But the United States and its allies have nothing to lose by clarifying publicly and to one another an understanding that nuclear deterrence is neither proportionate nor credible against most kinds of non-nuclear threats.

2. *Regular consultations between the United States and its allies about the purpose and nature of all forms of extended deterrence:* The US-Japan and US-ROK consultation and policy processes are a valuable start. These consultations need to be maintained, formalised and deepened. The views captured in this volume suggest that the United States cannot afford to relax its efforts to consult and communicate with allies in tailoring effective deterrence architectures in a time of strategic flux. Such conversations will need to involve common understanding about which threats cannot be expected to be deterred and which ones must be deterred. Given the exceptional security sensitivities involved, complete transparency about the content of such dialogues would not be realistic. Nonetheless, every effort should be made to reinforce messages about their stabilising nature, both to domestic populations and in the course of Washington’s and allies’ own dialogues with China.

3. *The maintenance of an effective and robust US strategic presence and role in East Asia, even as Washington makes large defence cuts globally:* The jury is out on whether President Obama can or will fulfil the promise of the pivot and the 2012 Strategic Guidance, to somehow quarantine the quality of the US security role in Asia-Pacific from the effects of defence spending cuts. A changing US force posture in Asia may involve quantitative reductions in some capabilities or locations, and allies will need early reassurance about the impact of this. But any return

to deepened reliance on nuclear weapons as a substitute for thinned-out conventional forces is not the solution.

4. *The need for allies and partners to carry more of the burden of providing for their own conventional defence and contributing to regional stability:* This is a reasonable and consistent expectation to place on allies, particularly those who are concerned about security challenges involving China and North Korea while also advocating movement towards a world without nuclear weapons. Burden-sharing is about more than allies being willing to pay for their own advanced conventional forces. It also involves consultations with the United States – and perhaps even among allies – about how those forces might be able to contribute in critical contingencies. It may also involve fresh thinking about other ways of materially supporting a changing US force posture in the region. To produce a net stabilising effect, it is imperative that such balancing and alliance-deepening steps be accompanied by fresh efforts at engagement and confidence-building, especially with China. This might occur both bilaterally and in multilateral settings like the ASEAN Regional Forum and the East Asia Summit.

5. *Movement by the United States and China towards a more substantial set of security dialogues and confidence-building measures, including the commencement of a strategic stability dialogue:* A previous Lowy Institute report has addressed the need for a renewed focus on confidence-building and communication arrangements to reduce the risks of maritime crisis or conflict in the region.¹⁸⁷ The United States and China need to deepen security engagement across the board, despite – in fact because of – the heightened strategic mistrust of recent years. Ever since the 2010 NPR, Washington has sought to encourage Beijing to begin a dialogue about how to maintain a stable strategic relationship, notably at the nuclear level. One cited reason for Chinese reluctance to accept this is a lack of clarity about what issues such a dialogue might encompass. Given the huge nuclear asymmetry involved, a US-China dialogue that is

confined exclusively to the subject of nuclear weapons would seem a non-starter, especially if it was aimed at persuading China to cap or reduce its smaller arsenal in the absence of wider changes in US-China relations. This need not, however, be a critical problem for Washington: a US-China strategic stability dialogue can and should involve wider aspects, perhaps conducted as parallel or sub-dialogues, including escalation control, space, anti-satellite weapons and missile defences. In the context of such wider engagement, China would not be able to defer questions about nuclear transparency and limiting its nuclear arsenal and ambitions. It would need to involve US acknowledgement of Chinese strategic concerns as well as Chinese acknowledgement of the defensive motivation of US extended deterrence relationships. It would not be realistic to include third parties directly in this dialogue, but Washington would need to make strenuous use of consultation mechanisms with allies to reassure them as it unfolded.

6. *The need for China to accept that US alliances can be a stabilising force and that the allies see them as defensively motivated and essential for security:* For at least the past decade, Chinese perceptions of the direction of US alliances have become increasingly critical and negative. Most notably, Chinese observers have become much less inclined to see a “silver lining” to the US-Japan alliance – the strategic restraint this arrangement has imposed on Tokyo.¹⁸⁸ These perceptions were patently clear in the regional consultative workshops held during this book’s associated project. Yet in the past decade, the rise of Chinese power and instances of assertive Chinese behaviour and North Korean belligerence have prompted the tightening and intensification of US alliance relationships in the region. Clearly America’s Asian alliances are enduring; some, notably between Washington and Manila, have been revitalised. The success of wider efforts to reduce nuclear-related tensions and misperceptions across the region will depend in part on Chinese recognition of the defensive character of US security ties, including with the three allies studied in this book.

7. *The wide regional security benefits that would flow from China's reconsidering its policies regarding North Korea's nuclear and missile programs and destabilising behaviour:* North Korea's nuclear defiance and acts of provocation have fed into the internal debate within China about relations with the regime in Pyongyang. China's tacit acceptance of North Korea's dangerous actions in 2010 – the *Cheonan* and Yeonpyeong attacks – added to the strengthening of the US-Japan and US-South Korea alliances and the reaffirmation of extended deterrence. China's calculations may well continue to be that there are strict limits to the pressure it will place on North Korea, especially in order to forestall risks of regime collapse or other strategic discontinuity on the Korean Peninsula. Nonetheless, the near-certainty that Pyongyang will continue its provocation-concession cycle means that Beijing's policy will continue to be tested, and a Chinese policy shift remains possible – without which there can be no sustained improvement to the security situation on the Korean Peninsula. Further provocations from Pyongyang will increase the pressures for a fresh review of North Korea policy by the next Chinese leadership.

Elements 1 through to 5 would need to be pursued essentially simultaneously. Ideally, some of these elements, namely 1 and 5, could then help set the scene for fresh thinking in China on elements 6 and 7. Only, however, with most or all of the seven elements in play would an East Asian agenda for further progress on nuclear arms control and disarmament stand a good prospect of success.

The foregoing conclusions take the form of broad and cautious guidance for policymakers. A breakthrough on East Asia's nuclear tangle will not come easily or in one step. Our recommendations also help to identify areas where more in-depth research is needed, to better understand the details of possible ways out of the maze. The present volume, and its associated project of regional workshop consultations, has sought to chart the contours of the problem and identify some broad parameters for possible ways forward. Each of the seven policy agenda items warrants detailed further study, especially into the mechanics of implementation and

the interactions of and among specific strategic sensitivities and weapons. The precise ideal outcomes and any preferred trade-offs will also differ from country to country. And much will depend on changes currently still in train in the Asian strategic environment and the force modernisation of key countries. For example, one especially critical area in need of clearer understanding is the nexus of regional maritime security tensions and the quest for strategic stability – taking into account for instance China's growing nuclear-armed submarine fleet and the sharpening clash of interests over US surveillance in China's maritime periphery.

Extended deterrence occupies a critical position between the trends towards disarmament and deepening strategic tensions and anxieties in Asia. The future of that policy will be an important factor in determining which of these two trends takes hold in the future of East Asia. But the United States, its allies and China all bear responsibility for creating the conditions necessary to steer extended deterrence, and Asia in general, towards a stable and peaceful future where the use or threat of nuclear weapons genuinely becomes unimaginable.

Notes

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