

# Challenges of Non-Proliferation in Northeast Asia and Possible Solutions

Lu Yin

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# **Challenges of Non-Proliferation in Northeast Asia and Possible Solutions**

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## Executive Summary

When the world enters a new millennium, Northeast Asia has been witnessing the rising risk of nuclear weapons proliferation. The success or non-success of resolving this issue would not only be a defining factor in the shaping of the security architecture and order in the region, but also have a significant impact on the health of the international non-proliferation mechanism in the future.

Among all the non-proliferation challenges in Northeast Asia, the DPRK nuclear crisis has troubled the Korean Peninsula and even the whole Northeast Asia since its first eruption at the beginning of the 1990s thus becoming the key issue as far as nonproliferation in the region is concerned. In retrospect, three dynamic developments played the most important role in causing the North Korean nuclear crisis. They are the continuation of the longstanding military confrontation between North Korea and the United States and between the North and the South in the post Cold War era; the loss of balance of power in the Korean Peninsula; and the increasing domestic plight in North Korea. The nuclear crisis is thus more political than military or technical in nature. It is not only a nuclear proliferation problem, but also an issue of regional security.

Furthermore, the DPRK nuclear program is not the only proliferation issue in Northeast Asia. There are other candidates in the region that may also seek a nuclear option, particularly if the DPRK nuclear crisis is not resolved and its nuclear weapon capability is allowed to be further developed. Northeast Asia then may see a chain action that could give rise to more than one new nuclear weapon states apart from the DPRK.

In the case of Japan and South Korea, both seem deliberately to have left the door open for their future options owing to the uncertainty in the situation in Northeast Asia. Both have all the necessary material elements to manufacture a nuclear bomb in a short period of time: nuclear fissile material, critical technology and know-how, a team of skillful nuclear specialists, and adequate nuclear facilities and infrastructure. In addition, both have strong ongoing missile and satellite launching capabilities. A political decision is all that is needed for either county to choose the nuclear option. Much depends on the strategic situation in Northeast Asia.

Northeast Asia has the other aspect of nuclear proliferation, that is, the vertical proliferation, meaning the growing nuclear arms competition between the United States and Russia. China, as another nuclear weapon states in Northeast Asia, has been forced to respond, adding to the further complexity of the situation in the region. The two nuclear superpowers have not fundamentally changed their confrontational nuclear posture which had stemmed from the pattern of action and reaction legacy of the Cold War. The region may well see the intensification of the nuclear arms competition, in which nuclear weapons would still be regarded as indispensable part of the security strategies of these states. The arms competition has constituted a major obstacle in strengthening the world non-proliferation efforts if something is not done to halt this worrying trend.

It is in the above said context, Northeast Asia is in a critical crossroads for nuclear nonproliferation and nuclear disarmament.

**Top priority should first of all be placed on the continuing efforts for the solution of the DPRK nuclear crisis.** The Six-Party Talks is the only effective platform that can provide opportunity for all countries concerned to solve the issue. As a matter of fact, the Six-Party Talks has made sustentative progress in the past six years towards denuclearization in the Korean Peninsula. The current deadlock is no more than a hiatus in the process. The multilateral negotiation has proven of strong vitality that could hopefully survive all the setbacks and continue to be the only hope for the goal of denuclearization in the peninsula. All countries concerned should make concerted efforts to restart the Six-Party Talks at an earlier date.

**In the meantime, establishing peace mechanism in the Korean Peninsula and leading DPRK out of self-imposed isolation could be vital in sustaining the denuclearization in the region.** The international society needs to define a more effective way to combine the solution of denuclearization with the political reconciliation between the parties concerned. It seems to be the high time to proceed with measures for the creation of a peace mechanism in the Korean Peninsula.

**Furthermore, to exploit the possibility and feasibility of setting up a nuclear free zone in Northeast Asia would also go a long way towards making good nonproliferation of nuclear weapons in the whole Northeast Asia on an enduring track.** Looking into the future, even if the DPRK nuclear crisis reaches a satisfactory solution, the perils of nuclear proliferation will



continue to linger in Northeast Asia. To promote a more enduring means to strengthen international nonproliferation mechanism in the region, one of the most important and effective ways is to establish the internationally recognized Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (NWFZ) by relevant countries on the basis of voluntary agreement. It will not only advance nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament in the region, but also play a beneficial role to regional and world peace, stability, and security.

**The equally important task facing Northeast Asia is the efforts to push the progress of nuclear disarmament in the region.** Nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament in Northeast Asia are two sides of one coin. Progress should be equally achieved in nuclear disarmament as in non-proliferation. The world can hardly accept the perpetuation of nuclear-haves and nuclear-have-nots. The nuclear weapon states, especially the two major powers with the largest nuclear arsenals should have special responsibilities to take the lead in observing their obligation for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. There are good signs that governments of the United States and Russia have taken some positive policies in this field but serious obstacles still exist. Even the Obama administration's new policy seems to run up against powerful resistance from Pentagon and other U.S. agencies, posing a threat to one of his most important foreign policy initiatives.

China consistently pursues a nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation policy. In the past two decades and more, the Chinese Government has produced a range of decrees and regulations in line with the existing international norms. Since it joined the International Atomic Energy Agency in 1984, China has been strongly supporting and actively participating in international efforts for nuclear arms control and non-proliferation. China has played a leading role in the solution of the DPRK nuclear crisis. It is willing to undertake due responsibility in establishing a Nuclear-Weapon Free Zone and also consistently to promote nuclear disarmament in this region and the whole world.

China's nuclear policy is determined by its nuclear strategy for self-defence. China offers an unconditional pledge of not to be the first to use nuclear weapons (NFU). The NFU has extended to China's another pledge of not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear weapon states under any circumstances. China never seeks to build a huge

nuclear arsenal, and never enters into any nuclear arms race, nor resort to nuclear blackmail for political or security benefits.

It is in this context that the initiatives launched by the Western political elites for a nuclear-free world is well in line with Beijing's long-sought objective of the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. In light of this consistent position, it can be envisaged that Beijing would welcome the proposal by the four eminent politicians from the United States to renounce the reliance on nuclear deterrence and make concerted efforts for global zero.

## Introduction

Essentially, nuclear proliferation in Northeast Asia features two distinct trends: one is what is understood as horizontal proliferation, referring to the emergence of new nuclear armed states or non-state entities, who might also acquire nuclear weapons capability. The nuclear crisis in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is precisely the former case in point, which has become one of the security focuses in the region in the past two decades. The other trend, which has equal, if not more important, security implications to Northeast Asia is the rising nuclear arms competition among the nuclear weapon states. All the modernization and upgrading efforts of their nuclear arsenals by these nuclear powers, often labeled as vertical proliferation, have provided impetus to the horizontal proliferation, and thus become a sustaining sticking point in addressing the nonproliferation issues in the region.

Against such a dual-threat background, the present paper examines each of the specific risks that Northeast Asia is confronted with today as far as the nuclear nonproliferation efforts are concerned. It then attempts to define practical and effective ways to address the proliferation problems involved, that may hopefully lead to the building of a security architecture which would ensure peace, stability and security of all the nations concerned in the region. The paper also offers a perspective as to what kind of role that China is able to play in the regional efforts for nonproliferation and nuclear disarmament. Finally a few remarks are made as the concluding suggestions as how to put on right tracks for the efforts of nonproliferation in Northeast Asia in the future.

# Challenges on the Horizon

## The DPRK Nuclear Crisis

The DPRK nuclear crisis, since its first eruption at the beginning of the 1990s, has troubled the Korean Peninsula and even the whole Northeast Asia for nearly 20 years. During the period, the DPRK's nuclear program has evolved from questions of "fact or fancy" and "possible or impossible" to the reality of two nuclear tests conducted by the DPRK in 2006 and 2009. In this regard, to better appreciate how the nuclear crisis emerges and evolves, it is perhaps helpful to offer a historical review of the issue.

### *How It Emerged*

North Korea began its nuclear program in 1950s. At the previous stage (roughly from the 1950s to 1970s), North Korea received assistance chiefly from the Soviet Union in the development of its nuclear industry. No one, however, knew much about the true situation of North Korea's nuclear weapons program, and the exact dates when it had made the decision to start its own nuclear weapons program. Obviously, North Korea's nuclear weapons program has been based on the self-reliance and high secrecy from the very beginning. Some experts believe it is possible that the North Korea had started the nuclear program since the 1960s beginning with a small research reactor of 5 megawatts (5MW) at Yongbyon, capable of producing Plutonium. Other sources state that Pyongyang probably had made a decision to develop nuclear program in the late 1970s.<sup>1</sup> In the 1980s, the severe energy shortage in North Korea led to an agreement for Pyongyang to import nuclear reactors and oil from the Soviet Union, with a condition being that North Korea signs the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to which the DPRK accepted with great pressure<sup>2</sup> After many years' hesitation, Pyongyang signed the NPT in 1985 but to some extent, may have most probably

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<sup>1</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. 253.

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Friedman, "Fact Sheet: North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program," Center for Defense Information, Washington, January 23, 2003, <http://www.cdi.org/nuclear/nk-fact-sheet.cfm> (accessed January 13, 2009).

reserved its nuclear option. With the continuing decline of its economy, the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the fast subsequent change of the security environment around North Korea in particular, Pyongyang was forced to start construction of two reactors, rated at respectively 50MW and 200MW, chiefly by relying on its own technology.<sup>3</sup> And it is generally believed that North Korea had succeeded in acquiring its primitive nuclear weapon capability by early 1990s.<sup>4</sup> Still, little is known about North Korea's exact ability to make a nuclear weapon. There were different estimates about the quantity of the separated plutonium North Korea had produced before 1994 Agreed Framework. Most assessed that it may have had accumulated as much as near 10 kilograms of material, enough for manufacturing 1–2 crude nuclear warheads to be fitted to its Nodong missile.<sup>5</sup> When the 1994 Agreed Framework was eventually scrapped in 2002, North Korea evidently speeded up its production of the fissile material. As of February 2007, North Korea has a total estimated plutonium stock between 46 and 64 kilograms, of which about 28–50 kilograms are estimated to be in separated form and usable for nuclear weapons. Most of them—at least 80 percent but as much as 99 percent—was produced after the 2002 crisis. Currently, North Korea is generally believed to have possessed a stock of separated plutonium, enough for constructing between five and twelve nuclear bombs.<sup>6</sup>

The nuclear weaponization of DPRK has no doubt produced extremely negative influence on the security stability of Korean peninsula as well as

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<sup>3</sup> World Nuclear Association, "Nuclear Power in Korea," <http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/inf81.html> (accessed November 15, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Robert S. Norris and Hans M. Kristensen, "North Korea's Nuclear Program, 2005," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 61, No. 3, May/June 2005, p. 64; Daniel B. Poneman, Joel S. Wit, and Robert L. Gallucci, *Going Critical: The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), pp. 38, 128; "Rice: North Korea Well Aware of U.S. Allied Deterrent Power in Region," *GlobalSecurity.org* (accessed October 21, 2006), <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/dprk/2005/dprk-050428-237d6f90.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Larry A. Niksch, "North Korea's Nuclear Weapon Program," Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, *CRS Report for Congress*, August 1, 2006, p. 5, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/71870.pdf> (accessed November 3, 2007); David Albright, Frans Berkhout, and William Walker, *Plutonium and Highly Enriched Uranium 1996: World Inventories, Capabilities, and Policies* (Solna, Sweden: SIPRI; and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 295–306.

<sup>6</sup> This estimate is based on assuming that each weapon contains about 4–5 kilograms of plutonium. Japanese and South Korean governments use an average of 6 kilograms of plutonium per weapon. Some U.S. analysts use an average value less than 4–5 kilograms per weapon. *Ibid.*

the whole Northeast Asia. To resolve the nuclear issue, one would have to have a better understanding how the issue had emerged. In retrospect, it is the overwhelming feeling of being insecure, that had spurred North Korea to develop nuclear program based on its civilian nuclear industry. Three dynamic developments chiefly underlined North Korean nuclear crisis.

**Firstly, it is the longstanding military confrontation between North Korea and the United States and also between the North and the South in the Korean Peninsula that sets the stage for the North Korean nuclear crisis.** Since the 1950s, confronted with the military alliances of the United States, Japan and South Korea, North Korea has always a paranoid-type threat perception. During the Korean War, North Korea was subject to nuclear threats by the United States. In 1975, U.S. Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger publicly claimed that the use of tactical nuclear weapons against North Korea would be seriously considered in case of aggression.<sup>7</sup> Since 1970s, the OPLAN5027 has been upgraded nearly every two years in order to prepare the down to date military operational plan against North Korea.<sup>8</sup> Since 1976, the United States has also started the Team Spirit joint military exercises with South Korea, which envisaged the use of nuclear weapons in the peninsula. Under the circumstances, one needs little imagination to appreciate what negative impact these military exercises would have on the minds of the decision makers in Pyongyang.<sup>9</sup> The threat from U.S. military alliances in Northeast Asia was not fading away with the end of the Cold War. On the contrary, the joint conventional and nuclear capabilities of U.S.–South Korean–Japanese alliance were more and more advanced. Therefore it should not be a surprise for the world to see Pyongyang develop its own nuclear weaponization program.

**Secondly, the loss of the balance of power plays a very important role in shaping the nuclear crisis after the Cold War.** The bi-polar power

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<sup>7</sup> Poneman, Wit, and Gallucci, *Going Critical*, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> OPLAN 5027 is the U.S.–ROK Combined Forces Command basic war plan. Under Operations Plan 5027 (CINCUNC/CFC OPLAN 5027), the United States plans to provide units to reinforce the Republic of Korea in the event of external armed attack. These units and their estimated arrival dates are listed in the Time Phased Force Deployment List (TPFDL), Appendix 6, to Annex A to CINCUNC/CFC OPLAN 5027. The TPFDL is updated biannually through agreements between the U.S. and ROK. CINCUNC/CFC OPLAN 5027 is distributed with a SECRET-U.S./ROK classification. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oplan-5027.htm> (accessed December 29, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 152–53, 257.

structure was broken with the end of the Cold War. And the world security environment has been dramatically changed. A fundamental transformation of the balance of force in Northeast Asia became inevitable. North Korea was the primary victim of these dramatic changes, facing an increasingly unfavorable strategic environment. In the early 1990s, both the Soviet Union and China realized relations normalization with South Korea, while North Korea's efforts to make rapprochement with the United States, Japan and South Korea made little progress. The situation was, as time went by, North Korea lagged behind South Korea in almost all the fields. This is what exactly North Korea cannot bear. To make things worse, the United States had seen a growing tendency to intervene in the international affairs in the world by force. Both the Gulf War and the Iraq War had undoubtedly provided new impetus to the determination of North Korea to possess a real nuclear deterrent force. The comment by the former Indian Army Chief of Staff General K. Sundarji is very typical in stressing the importance of the nuclear deterrence for weak countries. He said: "[Coalition members] could go in because the United States had nuclear weapons and Iraq didn't. The Gulf War emphasized once again that nuclear weapons are the ultimate coin of power."<sup>10</sup> Obviously, North Korean leaders were more clearly aware of the power of nuclear weapons and its deterrent effect by learning the lessons from the collapse of other weak countries similarly further labeled as "axis of evil."<sup>11</sup>

**Thirdly, the increasing domestic plight in North Korea provides further incentives for Pyongyang to seek a nuclear option.** After the Korean War, the economy of North Korea had enjoyed a period of impressive progress with an annual growth rate at 30 percent in 1954–56. In 1970s, it still maintained a 7.5 percent growth rate.<sup>12</sup> The economy of North Korea started to decline in 1980s. With the end of the Cold War, when North Korea was further isolated from the international community plus the economic sanctions led by the United States and Japan, its economy deteriorated further

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<sup>10</sup> Keith B. Payne, *Deterrence in the 2nd Nuclear Age* (Lexington, Ky: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), p. 28.

<sup>11</sup> The White House, President George W. Bush, "President Delivers State of the Union Address," January 29, 2002, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html> (accessed January 13, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Ingolf Kiesow, *Perspectives on North Korea's Nuclear and Missile Program*, FOI-R-1209-SE (Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Agency, 2004), p. 16.

and even nearly to collapse in mid-1990s. It became extremely difficult for the North Korean government to cope with its economic impoverishment. Many Western analysts argue this domestic plight had driven the DPRK regime to a life and death struggle. "The regime found itself in a terrible bind – its economy failing, its primary patron was no more [...]"<sup>13</sup> Naturally, North Korea may well find that going nuclear would not only enhance its international status particularly vis-à-vis a non-nuclear South Korea, but also to go a long way towards heightening the national morale and cohesion at home.

Thus one may well argue that the nuclear crisis in the Korean Peninsula is more political than military or technical in nature. It is not only a nuclear proliferation problem, but also an issue of regional security. One can only hope that DPRK could be persuaded into abandoning its nuclear program only if and when the security environment in Northeast Asia becomes more favorable to North Korea, and that North Korea's security concerns could be well taken.

#### *Progress of the Six-Party Talks*

Ever since the eruption of the first North Korean nuclear crisis in early 1990s, the international community has making consistent efforts to try to bring the issue to a satisfactory resolution, and has achieved considerable progress although there have been many ups and downs in the process. In 1994 an Agreed Framework was reached between the United States and DPRK. The agreement played a positive role in halting North Korea's nuclear development program in terms of its existing material and facilities. One assessment was: "If you look at the outcome of the Agreed Framework, you see that a North Korean nuclear weapons program based on plutonium was stopped. If we had not negotiated and had not otherwise stopped the program, it would have produced by now at least 100 nuclear weapons."<sup>14</sup> However, seen with hindsight, the Agreed Framework had also serious

<sup>13</sup> Marcus Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse: The Future of the Two Koreas* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 2000), p. 141.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Gallucci, "Nuclear Confrontation with North Korea: Lessons of the 1994 Crisis for Today"(transcript), Center for Strategic and International Studies and Co-sponsored by Ilmin International Relations Institute, Korea University and the Dong-A Ilbo, May 6, 2003, [http://www.nautilus.org/archives/pub/ftp/napsnet/special\\_reports/CSIS-seoul.txt](http://www.nautilus.org/archives/pub/ftp/napsnet/special_reports/CSIS-seoul.txt) (accessed January 28, 2010).



flaws. Produced as an expedient solution to an imminent nonproliferation problem rather than as a sustainable building block for long-term peace and security in the region, which was obviously too weak to reduce suspicions and resolve fundamental differences between the United States and North Korea. Hence it is not surprising that the suspicions and accusations from both sides led eventually the collapse of the agreement, and emergence of the second nuclear crisis in the first term of George W. Bush administration in 2002.

During the second nuclear crisis, China came to play a significant role in putting a curb on the tension, and bridging the gap between the two sides by finding a way out of the impasse, acceptable to both. Thanks to its unswerving and tactful effort, China succeeded in providing a multilateral setting in which the United States and DPRK were able to have direct contact and negotiation, and with the other involved parties. So far the Six-Party Talks have conducted six rounds of negotiations in the past six years. Seen in retrospect, it has become almost a consensus now that the Six-Party Talks offers the best venue for the solution of the nuclear crisis. Having so far been going through six rounds of negotiations for the past six years, the negotiations proved to be an extremely complex exercise, coming close to collapse several times. Particularly when the DPRK conducted its underground nuclear tests twice respectively in 2006 and 2009, indicating North Korea had become a de-facto nuclear armed state despite all its assurances of commitment to denuclearization, many believed that the Six-Party Talks would come to a hopeless end. But thanks to the patience, determination and political wisdom of the parties concerned, this multilateral negotiation body in Northeast Asia has so far proved to be of great vitality, surviving many previous setbacks and reversals. It has even achieved important breakthroughs towards the goal of denuclearization in the peninsula.

These breakthroughs first find their expression in the legally binding agreements by all the party states, which have not only provided guiding principles for the solution of the crisis, but have also drawn a practical roadmap for the implementation of the denuclearization process. Among these documents, the joint statement reached during the fourth round of talks on September 19, 2005 carried particular significance, as it endorsed an operational formula for the solution based on the principles of mutual respect, equality, and mutual compromise. These principles include:

1. Reaffirmation of the goal of the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner. To that end, the DPRK committed to abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and to returning, at an early date, to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. The United States affirmed that it had no nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula and had no intention to attack or invade the DPRK with nuclear or conventional weapons. The DPRK also insisted that it had the right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy, meaning light-water reactors. The other parties expressed their respect and agreed to discuss, at an appropriate time, the subject of the provision of light water reactor to the DPRK.
2. Abiding by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and recognized norms of international relations.
3. Promotion of economic cooperation in the fields of energy, trade and investment, bilaterally and/or multilaterally. The other five parties stated their willingness to provide energy assistance to the DPRK.
4. Commitment to joint efforts for lasting peace and stability in North-east Asia. The directly related parties will negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula at an appropriate separate forum.
5. Taking coordinated steps to implement the aforementioned consensus in a phased manner in line with the principle of "commitment for commitment, action for action."
6. Commitment to future talks.<sup>15</sup>

In this spirit of benign multilateralism, measurable progress has been achieved towards denuclearization in the past years.

On February 13, 2007, when the Six-Party Talks concluded their fifth round with an agreed "action plan" of initial steps to implement the September 19, 2005 joint statement on North Korea's denuclearization, the regional

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<sup>15</sup> See U.S. Department of State, "Six-Party Talks, Beijing, China," Joint statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks Beijing," September 19, 2005, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2005/53490.html> (accessed September 20, 2005).

multilateral negotiation regained the necessary momentum for continuing progress.

According to the action plan, North Korea was to halt the operation of its nuclear facilities at Yongbyon during a 60-day initial phase in return for an initial shipment of 50,000 tons of heavy-fuel oil. The action plan aimed to formulate specific plans regarding: economic and energy cooperation; denuclearization; implementation of a “Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism”; North Korean relations with the United States; and, North Korean relations with Japan. The statement also envisaged the second phase of the denuclearization process, that is, following the shutdown of North Korea’s nuclear facilities at Yongbyon, Pyongyang would provide a complete declaration of all of its nuclear programs and disable all of its existing nuclear facilities in return for an additional 950,000 tons of heavy-fuel oil or its equivalent.

The United States, in addition, was committed to provide energy aid to North Korea, to begin the process of removing Pyongyang from its list of state sponsors of terrorism and to stop the application of the Trading with the Enemy Act toward North Korea.<sup>16</sup>

The action plan of February 13, 2007 was further substantiated by another joint statement on October 3 the same year. The statement specifically set a deadline of December 31, 2007 for North Korea to provide a “complete and correct declaration of all its nuclear programs-including clarification regarding the uranium issue,” and the disablement of its Yongbyon nuclear facilities. Pyongyang was also committed to disable all other nuclear facilities and not to transfer nuclear material or technology abroad – the first time this commitment had been made. In return, North Korea would receive the remaining 900,000 tons of heavy-fuel oil or its equivalent pledged in the February 13 agreement. The United States reaffirmed its commitments to begin removing North Korea from its list of state sponsors of terrorism and “advance the process of terminating the application of the Trading with the Enemy Act” toward North Korea “in parallel with” North Korea’s denuclearization actions.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See [U.S. Department of State], Office of the Spokesman, Washington, D.C., “Initial Actions to Implement Six-Party Joint Statement,” February 13, 2007, [http://www.archive.usun.state.gov/fact\\_sheet/ps7.pdf](http://www.archive.usun.state.gov/fact_sheet/ps7.pdf) (accessed February 15, 2007).

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Joint Statement of the Second Session of the 6th round of the Six-Party Talks,” Beijing, October 3, 2007, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/pars/ps/2007/>

The above quoted three legally binding documents constituted, in principle, a solid political basis for the eventual solution of the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula.

In the meantime, the atmosphere of the Six-Party Talks was much improved, allowing better understanding and greater tolerance of differences among those involved. Individual parties intensified their efforts in consultation to seek a solution of many vital issues involved based on mutual compromise. Particularly, direct consultations and meetings between representatives of the two principal countries – the United States and DPRK – played a critical role in removing the major obstacles to the multilateral negotiation. According to press reports, during March and April, 2008, chief representatives from the United States and the DPRK were engaged in a flurry of diplomatic interactions, and the two envoys reportedly reached an agreement on the North Korean nuclear declaration, which would entail North Korea's accounting for its plutonium-based nuclear weapons program, and an acknowledgement of U.S. allegations, regarding its proliferation and uranium enrichment activities.

These past activities played an important role in ironing out the major disagreement and paving the way for progress towards denuclearization. Of the most importance, was the long-awaited nuclear declaration by North Korea on June 26, 2008. The next day, Pyongyang demolished the cooling tower at the Yongbyon nuclear reactor. The United States accordingly announced on June 26 that it may remove North Korea from its list of state sponsors of terrorism within 45 days if the country met all its obligations under the Six-Party Talks.<sup>18</sup> This meant Washington would lift its economic sanctions against Pyongyang that have been in force since 1950.

The impressive progress in the Six-Party Talks has been achieved thanks to the efforts by all the six nations. However, credit should be particularly given to the United States and the DPRK for their contribution to the eventual breakthroughs in the Six-Party Talks. The two states have both come

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oct/93217.html (accessed October 6, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> North Korea was put on the list of nations that sponsor terrorism for its alleged involvement in the 1987 bombing of a South Korean airliner that killed 115 people. The designation has effectively blocked North Korea from receiving low-interest loans from the World Bank and other international lending agencies. "Bush administration to lift North Korea sanctions," *USA Today*, June 26, 2008, [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-06-26-north-korea-nuclear\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-06-26-north-korea-nuclear_N.htm) (accessed October 3, 2008).

to relax the rigidity of their positions during the course of the negotiations, with the attitudes of pragmatism and flexibility of both countries.

*Deadlocked But Not Dead*

The past two years have seen the Six-Party Talks meet stalemate, again owing to the deep-seated mutual suspicion among various parties, and the interference of the domestic politics in those directly involved states – the United States, Japan and South Korea in particular. In response, North Korea angrily launched the satellite in April, 2009 and conducted its second nuclear test one month later. It also announced its permanent withdrawal from the Six-Party Talks after the UN Presidential Statement.<sup>19</sup> Some skeptics predicted the possible death of the Six-Party Talks, arguing that as North Korea was nearer to a more confirmed status of a nuclear armed state, the multilateral negotiation body may soon lose its capability of concluding an agreement on the denuclearization of the Peninsula. At the same time, more experts believed that the impasse caused by the new round of nuclear crisis is still, basically political rather than technical in nature and could be solved in a diplomatic way.

Two reasons account for this optimism. One is the domestic need of North Korea's internal politics. No matter whether President Kim Jong Il was seriously ill or not, the fact is that the North Korean government has been confronted with a problem of leadership succession now and in the near future. One view argued that Kim Jong Il had named his youngest son, Kim Jong Un, aged 26, as a successor. Kim Jong Un had been in fact given a low level position in the National Defense Commission.<sup>20</sup> If the young Kim

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<sup>19</sup> The North Korean news agency reported: "Now that the six-party talks have turned into a platform for infringing upon the sovereignty of the DPRK and seeking to force the DPRK to disarm itself and bring down the system in it the DPRK will never participate in the talks any longer nor it will be bound to any agreement of the six-party talks." "DPRK Foreign Ministry Vehemently Refutes UNSC's 'Presidential Statement'," KCNA, April 14, 2009, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2009/200904/news14/20090414-24ee.html> (accessed May 2, 2009). The DPRK mission in New York demanded a personal apology from U.S. ambassador to the UN, Susan Rise. "Shades of Red: China's Debate Over North Korea," International Crisis Group, *Asia Report*, No. 179 (November 2, 2009), p. 4, <http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/09086ICG.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> "N Korea leader's son to join top military body," Dow Jones International News, April 26, 2009; quoted in Larry A. Niksch, "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Development and Diplomacy," Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, *CRS Report for Congress*, May 27, 2009, p. 7, <http://italy.usembassy.gov/pdf/other/RL33590.pdf>

is to be the next paramount leader like his father, North Korea may well want to put, as the first priority, the insurance of domestic stability. Consequently, the current leadership has to show its legitimacy of the regime, and gain support from the grass roots people. This analysis makes sense and the logic is that North Korea still wants a nuclear deal for the purpose of domestic politics. The other reason has to do with the fact that North Korea has released a strong political signal to the Obama administration that it hopes to improve bilateral relations with the United States.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the DPRK's real purpose may well be to draw Obama's attention to face the urgent security concern of North Korea, quickly and pragmatically. So it is not surprising that the DPRK officially announced, in its New Year statement, that North Korea is willing to put an end to the hostile relationship with the United States, to establish a lasting peace system on the Korean Peninsula and to implement its denuclearization obligations through dialogue and negotiation.<sup>22</sup>

In fact, there is strong evidence that the Obama administration will change its policy towards Pyongyang and will start the ball rolling. From refusing to have any bilateral talks with Pyongyang outside of the mechanism of Six-Party Talks, the Obama administration has shown its interest in shifting its policy to pursue bilateral negotiations. The Department of State spokesman Philip Crowley declared on September 11 that the United States was "prepared to enter into a bilateral discussion with North Korea." He added that such talks would be "designed to convince North Korea to come back to the six-party process and to take affirmative steps towards denuclearization."<sup>23</sup> On November 19, during his visit to Seoul, President Barack Obama declared that a special envoy from the United States was expected to travel to North Korea on December 8 for face-to-face talks with

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<sup>21</sup> Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Asia Program, "Selig S. Harrison reports on his trip to Pyongyang," February 4, 2009, [http://wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic\\_id=1462&categoryid=ADE86921-0230-0D7D-7AF2ADD0E95793AF&fuseaction=topics.events\\_item\\_topics&event\\_id=503034](http://wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1462&categoryid=ADE86921-0230-0D7D-7AF2ADD0E95793AF&fuseaction=topics.events_item_topics&event_id=503034) (accessed February 20, 2009).

<sup>22</sup> "North Korea calls for end to hostility with US," BBC News, January 1, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8436838.stm> (accessed January 1, 2010).

<sup>23</sup> "Official: U.S. agrees to bilateral talks with DPRK within six-party context," cctv.com, Xinhua, August 12, 2009, <http://english.cctv.com/20090912/100717.shtml> (accessed November 22, 2009).

the aim of bringing the Asian state back to multilateral talks on its nuclear program.<sup>24</sup>

On the part of North Korea, it seemed also ready to respond positively to any signs of relaxation in the U.S. policy. Despite the fact that the DPRK would often resort to a strategy of brinkmanship when it felt threatened in security, it is quite clear, as recent developments are demonstrating, that the strategy of North Korea was to defend by launching offensives. For the past few months a gleam of hope has appeared since DPRK's efforts of "hostage diplomacy" and "funeral diplomacy." It is becoming even brighter when the DPRK declared that it wanted to return to the multinational disarmament talks during the time Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao paid his formal visit to DPRK in October 2009.<sup>25</sup> On December 8 the same year, the bilateral meeting between the United States and DPRK did take place in Pyongyang, which although failed to achieve any physical results, gave the impression that a prelude to a new round of Six-Party Talks has begun. In short, what Pyongyang really wanted was a deal with Washington. In other words, North Korea seemed willing to abandon its nuclear capability only if its security concerns were met. Under the circumstances, it has almost become Pyongyang's pattern of behavior that whenever the Six-Party Talks meets with seemingly insurmountable difficulties, it would threaten to take drastic measures to respond to whatever provocations it thought had come from the U.S. side. At the same time, Pyongyang also sent signals to show it was willing, sometimes even urging, to hold bilateral talks with the U.S., United States seeking to find a way out. The results of these consultations or agreements would then invariably become the major catalyst to boost the progress in the full sessions of the Six-Party Talks. Indeed, the bilateral quiet diplomacy between the United States and the DPRK has already become a most important component of the whole multilateral effort.

Although coming close to collapse on several occasions, this Six-Party Talks have survived. Current developments indicate an almost certain

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<sup>24</sup> Kris Alingod, "Obama Ends First Visit To Asia Focused On North Korean Disarmament," November 19, 2009, <http://www.allheadlinenews.com/articles/7017041382#ixzz0YFwRwyZe> (accessed November 22, 2009).

<sup>25</sup> The North Korean leader Kim Jong Il told China's premier the North was prepared to return to multinational disarmament talks but said that will depend on progress in its two-way negotiations with the US. "North Korea's Kim woos visiting China Premier," Reuters, October 4, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE59305S20091004> (accessed October 10, 2009).



resumption of the talks some time in 2010. The core problems, which mainly influence the progress of the Talks, still concern basic difficulties, such as the lack of mutual trust among major countries, the difficulty of reaching a consensus within the circle of Washington's policy-makers and the possible resistance from the domestic politics of South Korea and Japan.

### **Other Potential Candidates of Nuclear Proliferation**

As far as nuclear proliferation is concerned, the DPRK nuclear program is not the only proliferation issue in Northeast Asia. There are other candidates in the region that may also seek a nuclear option, particularly if the DPRK nuclear crisis is not resolved and its nuclear weapon capability is allowed to be further developed.

#### *Japan*

Japan has its domestic law on its nuclear activities. The "Atomic Energy Basic Law" of 1955, requests Japan's nuclear activities to be conducted only for peaceful purposes. In 1967, the "Three Non-Nuclear Principles" were announced by then Prime Minister Eisaku Sato, stressing Japan's policy of "not manufacturing, possessing, or allowing nuclear weapons onto Japanese soil."<sup>26</sup> However, they were neither a binding law nor a treaty. So the danger that Japan may abandon its Three Non-Nuclear Principles has always existed. Being the only victim of a nuclear attack historically, the Japanese society understandably has a strong aversion to nuclear weapons. But the policy of the Japanese government on nuclear matters has always incorporated some degree of ambiguity.

In fact, Japan's nuclear option has never been closed. The Japanese Army and Navy each conducted nuclear weapons research during World War II. Neither was successful in gaining enough resources for the endeavor.<sup>27</sup> After the Japanese defeat in the Second World War, and especially dur-

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<sup>26</sup> Yuri Kase, "The Costs and Benefits of Japan's Nuclearization: An Insight into the 1968/70 Internal Report," *The Nonproliferation Review*, Summer 2001, p. 55.

<sup>27</sup> Priority was placed on biological and chemical weapons programs. See Kurt M. Campbell and Tsuyoshi Sunohara, "Japan: Thinking the Unthinkable," in Kurt M. Campbell, Mitchell Reiss, Robert Einhorn, eds., *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear Choices* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004); and Federation of American Scientists website, "Nuclear Weapons Program," <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/japan/nuke/> (accessed May 2, 2009).



ing the time when the United States was engaged in the Vietnam War, Prime Minister Eisaku Sato secretly commissioned several academics to produce a study exploring the costs and benefits of Japan's possible nuclearization, the so-called "1968/70 Internal Report" despite the secure nuclear umbrella of the United States that was provided to the country.<sup>28</sup> After quietly conducting studies of the feasibility of the nuclear option, the conclusion of these studies at that time, was that choosing an overt nuclear weapons program was not in Japan's interests, but that Japan should keep the nuclear weapon option open. These studies also urged Japan should "keep the economic and technical potential for the production of nuclear weapons."<sup>29</sup> In its first national defense white paper, published in 1970, the Japanese government stressed that possession of defensive, small-size tactical nuclear weapons, was not in conflict with the constitution, although it forswore them as matter of policy.<sup>30</sup>

It is the end of the Cold War that has added to rising nationalism and the rampage of right-wing forces in Japan. Against this backdrop, it is no longer taboo for Japan to talk about the possibility of it becoming a nuclear weapons power. More and more dignitaries from the Japanese ruling circle have claimed that Japan should strengthen its military power, and even consider developing nuclear weapons. Most of these people are invariably conservatives, who also shamelessly refused to acknowledge Japan's responsibility for its atrocities, and have whitewashed its aggression towards other countries in the Second World War. So, the strange logic of many élites in Japan is that the possession of nuclear weapons by the DPRK is absolutely unacceptable, while they themselves seem entitled to pursue the nuclear option, if needs be.<sup>31</sup> Complicating Japan's nuclear weapons policy has also

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<sup>28</sup> Yuri Kase, "The Costs and Benefits of Japan's Nuclearization—A Insight into 198/70 Internal Report," <http://63.197.102.4/npr/pdfs/82kase.pdf> (accessed January 5, 2010)

<sup>29</sup> Selig S. Harrison, "Japan and Nuclear Weapons," in Selig S. Harrison, ed., *Japan's Nuclear Future: The Plutonium Debate and East Asian Security* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1996), pp. 3–13.

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/chouki/31exp.htm>

<sup>31</sup> One of the most recent typical examples of this view is the report of a talk by the scholar Tsuneo Akaha of the Monterey Institute of International Studies. He thought that more and more politicians in Japan argued that if the DPRK continues its nuclear weapon program, or if the U.S. nuclear umbrella is so weakened that it is no longer to protect Japan, Japan then should or be forced to have its own nuclear weapons. See Li Yuan, "Also Visited China with a Hint of Going Nuclear," *Washington Observer*, No. 16, 2009, April 29, 2009, [http://www.washingtonobserver.org/international\\_perspective\\_show.aspx?id=](http://www.washingtonobserver.org/international_perspective_show.aspx?id=)

been a post-World War II dependence on the U.S. “nuclear umbrella.”<sup>32</sup> That is indeed another face to the nuclear issue of Japan. While vehemently condemning the use of atom bombs on Japan’s soil as immoral and unacceptable viewed from any angle, the Japanese government strongly supports the U.S. nuclear deterrence policy, which means that it does not oppose the use of nuclear weapons on the soil of other countries under certain circumstances. While stressing that it has always adhered to the three principles of non-nuclear policy, Japan had reportedly, tacitly consented to the stationing of U.S. nuclear weapons on its territory, and had even been involved in the U.S. nuclear war planning activities in the Cold War, according to recently declassified U.S. official documents.<sup>33</sup> With regard to the above-mentioned situation, the government of Japan seems to never have reconciled itself to having a permanent non-nuclear status itself. This has in fact become an open secret.

Japan has resources sufficient for developing nuclear weapons, which has made the international community more alert. Japan has a very impressive plutonium-recycling program. As a country with scarce energy resources, one perhaps should give some credit to Japan’s rationale of seeking greater self-reliance for its energy needs, through the development of nuclear power. Today, Japan receives 35 percent of its electricity supply from nuclear power, based on light-water reactors.<sup>34</sup> While the whole of Northeast Asia intends to rely even more heavily on nuclear power in the future, the bulk of the increase will come from Japan. More importantly,

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3091 (accessed November 30, 2009).

<sup>32</sup> Under the terms of the Security Treaty Between the United States and Japan (1951) and the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between the United States and Japan (1960), Japan grants the United States military basing rights on its territory in return for a U.S. commitment to protect Japan’s security. The rejection of nuclear weapons by the Japanese public appears to be overwhelmingly driven by moral, rather than pragmatic, considerations, but Japan’s leaders have based their policy of forswearing nuclear weapons on protection by the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

<sup>33</sup> Hans Kristensen, “Japan Under the US Nuclear Umbrella,” The Nautilus Institute, April 24, 2009, <http://www.nautilus.org/archives/library/security/papers/nuclear-umbrella-1.html> (accessed December 3, 2009).

<sup>34</sup> Japan Atomic Energy Commission, “White Paper on Nuclear Energy, 2003,” pp. 11–16, <http://www.aec.go.jp/jicst/NC/about/hakusho/hakusho2003/whitepaper2003.pdf>; Japan Atomic Energy Commission, “Framework for Nuclear Energy Policy (Tentative Translation),” October 11, 2005, pp. 10–11, [http://www.aec.go.jp/jicst/NC/tyoki/taikou/kettei/eng\\_ver.pdf](http://www.aec.go.jp/jicst/NC/tyoki/taikou/kettei/eng_ver.pdf); Shinichi Ogawa and Michael Schiffer, “Japan’s Plutonium Reprocessing Dilemma,” *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 35, No. 8, October 2005, pp. 20–24.

Japan is shifting from current conventional light-water reactors to the technically more efficient fast-breeder reactors (FBR), which will inevitably lead to the accumulation of large amounts of plutonium, an indispensable substance for a nuclear bomb. Around the year 2010, according to its current plan, Japan will have three breeder reactors in operation. They will have generated 50–60 tons of plutonium domestically.<sup>35</sup> Together with roughly 30 tons that Japan expects to import from abroad, before its own breeder reactors and reprocessing plants are fully operational, it will have amassed, all in all, close to 100 tons of plutonium. This is more than the amount currently contained in all of the nuclear warheads of both the United States and the former Soviet Union. Civilian nuclear power appears quite innocuous in military terms. But when a country develops a civilian nuclear capability, it precedes much of the way toward possessing a nuclear device. Likewise, while the nuclear material is not technically weapons-grade plutonium, the separation process required to convert it into the raw material for bombs would be a relatively simple one.

Given Japan's highly developed electrical, electronic, and aerospace industries, it is one of the few countries that could be armed with superb nuclear forces and superior command and control systems.<sup>36</sup> Japan also has strongly powered rockets capable of launching satellites into orbit around the earth. They can be transformed into ballistic missiles if necessary in a short span of time. In one report it is noted that "the current rocket launch capabilities give Japan the potential to convert them into the U.S.-equivalent MX Peacekeeper and the Minuteman 3 Inter Continental Ballistic Missiles."<sup>37</sup> That is why the IAEA spends more of its resources monitoring Japan's nuclear power development than on those of any other country.

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<sup>35</sup> Masako Sawai, "Rokkasho: A Troubled Nuclear Fuel Cycle Complex," Institute for Energy and Environmental Research, August 2001, [http://www.ieer.org/sdfiles/vol\\_9/9-4/rokkasho.html](http://www.ieer.org/sdfiles/vol_9/9-4/rokkasho.html) (accessed January 20, 2010).

<sup>36</sup> Reshmi Kazi, *Japan's Nuclear Future*, Strategic Analysis, Vol. 33, Issue 6, 2009, pp. 809–14.

<sup>37</sup> Federation of American Scientists, "Japan: Missile Program," as referred to in Indian Pugwash Society, "Country Report: Japan," March 14, 2008, [http://pugwashindia.org/article\\_detail.asp?aid=18#19](http://pugwashindia.org/article_detail.asp?aid=18#19) (accessed November 11, 2009).

*South Korea*

South Korea began its nuclear weapon research program in the early 1970s. It started a secret nuclear program during the Park Chung Hee administration, aiming to acquire the technology and capability to make nuclear bombs in a few months' notice, as the Japanese could do. South Korea's nuclear weapons program is believed to be a reaction to the dramatic changes in the strategic situation, in and around the Korean Peninsula, at the time of the U.S.–China sudden reconciliation, the U.S. decision to withdraw 26,000 U.S. troops from the Korean Peninsula, and the announcement of the Nixon Doctrine, emphasizing self-defense for Asian allies in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Seoul decided to establish a Weapons Exploitation Committee to pursue a nuclear weapons program, which saw some initial progress, but was finally canceled under the pressure of the United States.<sup>38</sup> By 1975, also under heavy pressure from Washington, South Korea ratified the NPT, and announced that it would end all its nuclear weapons programs. But it was not until the 1980s that the clandestine program was believed to be finally dropped. As some unconfirmed information shows, although it had suspended the program later under pressure from the United States, South Korea's advanced level of technology could enable it to make rapid progress in its nuclear program if it decided to develop nuclear weapons again in the future.<sup>39</sup>

The international community is concerned over South Korea's nuclear activities partly because South Korea may see enough incentives to go nuclear facing the uncertain situation in Northeast Asia, and the Korean Peninsula in particular. Another reason is that the country, like Japan, has a very robust nuclear power industry, which supplies 36 percent of its total electrical consumption. And there are plans for further expansion, by which the government expects the nuclear portion would occupy 59 percent of its total power supply in the country by 2030 to keep pace with the increasing demand for electricity.<sup>40</sup> In order to reduce the suspicion of the outside world over the peaceful use of its nuclear energy, the South Korean government

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<sup>38</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 68–74.

<sup>39</sup> Taewoo Kim, "Japanese Ambitions, U.S. Constraints, and South Korea's Nuclear Future," in Harrison, ed., *Japan's Nuclear Future*, pp. 102–5.

<sup>40</sup> World Nuclear Association, "Nuclear Power in Korea," <http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/inf81.html> (accessed November 15, 2009).

has introduced a national inspection system to put all nuclear material and facilities under strict control. It has also maintained cooperation with the IAEA to respond to all international obligations and to ensure international transparency and credibility of its nuclear activities. So far, all facilities are now under IAEA safeguards.

But still, after the termination of its nuclear weapon program, South Korea seems to continue to retain interest in reprocessing spent fuel from its civilian nuclear power program, claiming that plutonium recycling would reduce dependence on imported uranium. The United States has consistently opposed South Korean reprocessing initiatives, citing weapons proliferation concerns. In addition, incidents also occasionally occurred that again drew the world's attention to South Korea's motivation. In September, 2004, for instance, the South Korean government admitted to the IAEA that a group of the country's scientists had secretly produced a small amount of near-weapons grade uranium in 2000.<sup>41</sup> The IAEA confirmed later that these experiments were done for research purposes on a laboratory scale. However, it stressed that although such experiments themselves are not illegal under the NPT, they were in violation of safeguard obligations since no declaration was made to the appropriate international agency. The South Korean government insisted that the illegal activities were carried out without its knowledge or authorization, but international public opinion was not entirely convinced that such is the case. The incident again raised suspicions that South Korea may have attempted a secret program to counter North Korea's nuclear arsenal. Thus, although there have been no signs for the dedicated efforts towards weaponization, the know-how gathered from these experiments can certainly be used if South Korea decides to press for weaponization in the event of deteriorating security environment on the Korean peninsula.

### *Taiwan*

Taiwan was believed to begin a nuclear weapons program in 1966 after the first nuclear test by the mainland of China in October 1964. But again like in the case of South Korea, Taiwan was forced to back down from the program

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<sup>41</sup> David E. Sanger and William J. Broad, "South Korea Says Secret Program Refined Uranium," *New York Times*, September 3, 2004, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html> (accessed December 1, 2009).

under the pressure from the United States. As part of China, Taiwan has never been an independent state. In 1949, the civil war in China witnessed the flight of the Kuomintang (KMT) regime to Taiwan and the founding of the PRC in the mainland. When the new republic started its campaign to liberate the island in its effort to unify the country, the Korean War erupted in 1950. Washington sent its Seventh Fleet immediately to the Taiwan Strait, making it impossible for the PLA then to achieve the final unification of the nation. The separation has been maintained still today thanks to the interference of the United States. From the beginning of the separation up until now, there have been continuous military confrontations across the Strait. The United States once deployed nuclear weapons in Taiwan, and considered using them against the mainland during several crises in the Cold War. After the end of the Cold War, when tensions increased across the Strait, after pro-secession forces took power in the mid-1990s, the then "President" Lee Denghui threatened to reactivate the program, but was forced to back down a few days later after drawing intense criticism.<sup>42</sup>

Taiwan was able to acquire nuclear technology from abroad, including a research reactor from Canada and low-grade plutonium from the United States, allegedly for a civilian energy system, but in actuality it was to develop fuel for nuclear weapons. During the 1970s, Taiwan had an active program to produce plutonium using heavy water reactors and had even constructed a nuclear facility that could produce weapons-grade plutonium. However, after the IAEA found evidence of Taiwan's efforts to produce weapons-grade plutonium, Taipei agreed in September 1976, under U.S. pressure, to dismantle its nuclear weapons program, which was actually closed in 1988 due to the same pressure from the United States. U.S. Intelligence believed Taiwan had also designed devices suitable for nuclear testing. It was reported that Taiwan had eventually planned to fit a nuclear warhead on its Skyhorse ballistic missile, which has a range of 1,000 kilometers.<sup>43</sup> In 1983, the Taiwanese authority admitted that they had the technological capability to manufacture nuclear weapons, but never had any weapons of mass destruction. Nor is there currently any evidence of its pos-

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<sup>42</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Federation of Atomic Scientists, Weapons of Mass Destruction, WMD Around the World, "Nuclear Weapons," April 4, 2000, <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/taiwan/nuke> (accessed December 20, 2009).

<sup>43</sup> David Albright and Corey Gay, "Taiwan: Nuclear Nightmare Averted," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 54 (January-February 1998), p. 60.

session of nuclear weapons. But according to a senior person who had been deeply involved in the nuclear activities in the island, and later defected to the United States in 1987, Taiwan seemed to continue to maintain a secret nuclear weapons program. Although the United States and the IAEA have created a powerful set of constraints on Taiwan's nuclear program, lessons drawn from Taiwan's nuclear activities during the 1980s and other precedents, suggest that it would be difficult for them to verify all nuclear activities in Taiwan.

With the momentum built on reconciliatory policies from both the island and the mainland after the KMT candidate Ma Yingjiu became the "president" in Taiwan in 2008, tensions across the Taiwan Strait has been substantially reduced. Relative peace and stability has become the main trend in the relations between the two sides. That may greatly reduce the incentives for Taiwan to seek the nuclear option. Moreover, although the United States continues to maintain large scale arms sales to Taiwan, Washington would not like to see the island acquire nuclear weapon capability, an important constraint on Taiwan's efforts to go nuclear. But again, all of these factors do not itself create a guarantee that the window of Taiwan's proliferation issue is forever closed.

To summarize: the history of all the nuclear proliferation candidates in Northeast Asia shows that despite their different motivations, the fundamental reason for nuclear weaponization is security concerns. If the international society is unable to halt the escalation of DPRK's nuclear program, the spill-over effect would lead to a powerful chain reaction and other possible candidates would find greater incentives to seek their nuclear potential capabilities, thus further exacerbating proliferation problems in this region. Particularly in the cases of Japan and South Korea, both seem deliberately to have left the door open for their future options owing to the uncertainty in the situation in Northeast Asia. Both have all the necessary material elements to manufacture a nuclear bomb in a short period of time: nuclear fissile material, critical technology and know-how, a team of skillful nuclear specialists, and adequate nuclear facilities and infrastructure. In addition both have strong ongoing missile and satellite launching capabilities. A political decision is all that is needed for either county to choose the nuclear option. In short, much depends on the strategic situation in Northeast Asia in the future, of which the primary elements include: the way the DPRK



nuclear crisis is solved (or not solved), the evolution of the regional security structure, the political relations of major powers, the change (or lack therein) of the role of the U.S.-led security alliances, the progress of nuclear arms control and disarmament worldwide, and changes in the domestic public view on the role of nuclear weapons in the region, etc.

### **The Rising Nuclear Arms Competition Among Nuclear Powers**

Apart from the main challenges to the regional proliferation, there is also a risk of the rising nuclear arms competition between the two former world superpowers, the United States and Russia in Northeast Asia. Fundamentally, the two nuclear superpowers have not changed their confrontational nuclear posture, which had stemmed from the pattern of action and reaction legacy of the Cold War. Nuclear weapons are still regarded as an indispensable part of their security strategies – a Cold War mindset, which continues to constitute a major obstacle to strengthening the world non-proliferation efforts.

China, as another nuclear weapon state, also has its role to play in adding to the greater complexity of the strategic situation in the region. All of the three countries are NPT nuclear weapon states. Obviously, their nuclear postures cast a very important influence on the regional nuclear non-proliferation of Northeast Asia.

#### *The United States*

The United States has been the primary driver for this new round of arms competition, particularly in the eight years of the George W. Bush administration. In the nuclear field, the administration pursued what people liked to label as unilateralism, aimed at seeking the maximum freedom of action and greatest flexibility in developing new military capabilities. In early 2002, Washington revealed part of its nuclear posture, sending a strong signal that it would dramatically readjust its nuclear strategy, with quite a few highlights, that had an enduring impact on the changing nuclear relations in Northeast Asia.

**Firstly, the United States continues to attach importance to the role of nuclear weapons in its security strategy.** Despite the claim of seeking to reduce the role of nuclear weapons, the new U.S. nuclear strategy, in fact, envisaged the use of nuclear weapons in a much wider range of



circumstances than before, with a particular emphasis on tactical uses. Such an emphasis in a declaratory policy has not been seen since the days of flexible response about forty years ago, when tactical nuclear weapons were deployed in Europe and East Asia. The assumption of the new tasks was based on a strongly held view by the Bush administration that nuclear deterrence would continue to underlie all U.S. strategic objectives. A New Weapons Employment Policy was formulated to provide guidance for the requirement of the development of a formidable nuclear force, which demanded that "U.S. nuclear forces must be capable of, and be seen to be capable of, destroying those critical war-making and war-supporting assets and capabilities that a potential enemy leadership values most and that it would rely on to achieve its own objectives in a post-war world."<sup>44</sup>

In order to achieve this nuclear supremacy, the new nuclear posture put forward the concept of a "new triad"<sup>45</sup> of military capabilities, which indicated in addition to the ultra-powerful conventional bombs and conventionally-armed cruise missiles, this new posture particularly required the United States to invest heavily in the nuclear field: not only to keep an adequate number of warheads as well as all three arms of nuclear forces, but also to shore up its nuclear weapons infrastructure for the possible development of new warheads or missiles, and even for the resumption of new nuclear explosion testing for that purpose. For the same reason, emphasis was put on the upgrading and modernization of the nuclear assets, while numbers became less important; sometimes even a burden, as too many weapons would only mean a waste of badly needed resources, and the risks of bad management. Based on this rationale, there has been an interesting development, that is, while the United States continuously reduced its surplus nuclear warheads and their carrying vehicles, the pace of upgrading of the quality of the nuclear forces has actually quickened.

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<sup>44</sup> See U.S. Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations*, Final Coordination, JP 3-12, p. 5, December 16, 2004, [http://www.nukestrat.com/us/jcs/jp3-12\\_05.html](http://www.nukestrat.com/us/jcs/jp3-12_05.html) (accessed August 3, 2006).

<sup>45</sup> To the "old triad" of intercontinental ballistic missiles, nuclear-armed bombers and ballistic missile submarines, the "new triad" would comprise non-nuclear and nuclear striking capabilities, strategic defense and responsive infrastructure. For a more detailed discussion, see Robert S. Norries and Hans M. Kristensen, "Nuclear Notebook: U.S. Nuclear Forces, 2009," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, March/April 2009, <http://www.thebulletin.org> (accessed October 20, 2009).

According to one influential study, the Obama administration is going to soon produce a new Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) with an allegedly new vision on the role of nuclear weapons. But even in that new document, continuity of the previous policy would be the main benchmark. The United States would continue to stress the importance of nuclear deterrence and the modernization of its nuclear weapons. “[T]he United States will need to sustain a deterrent for the indefinite future. After all, as this review illustrates, many deterrence challenges remain. Obviously they are not as severe as in the Cold War but there is no reason to think that these challenges will simply disappear in the next few years or that they cannot worsen.”<sup>46</sup> Accordingly, the future nuclear posture of America will consist of the following elements:

1. An arsenal of operationally deployed strategic nuclear weapons
2. An arsenal of forward-deployed tactical nuclear weapons
3. A triad of strategic nuclear delivery systems (land-based missiles, sea-based missiles, and bombers)
4. Delivery systems for forward-deployed systems (including both submarine-launched cruise missiles and aircraft equipped to carry both conventional and nuclear payloads, called dual-capable aircraft)
5. A stockpile of warheads held in operational reserve
6. A stockpile of fissile material appropriate for use in warheads
7. Associated command, control, and intelligence systems
8. The necessary infrastructure that is associated with the production of all of these capabilities, without which the force will not remain viable
9. Declaratory policy specifying the role of nuclear forces in U.S. military and national security strategies.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *America's Strategic Posture: The Final Report of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States*, Authorized Edition (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2009), p. 13.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

**Secondly, the United States new nuclear strategy has been increasingly shifting its attention to Asia-Pacific, and Northeast Asia in particular.** The United States has been noticeably strengthening their military presence in Northeast Asia, including the deployment of more strategic arms, the expansion of its military base structure, and the deepening military cooperation with its allies and security partners in the region. As a result of these efforts, the majority of the U.S. Nuclear-powered Ballistic Missile Submarines (SSBNs) have now been deployed in the Pacific Ocean. The number of patrols has increased in the Pacific, and has dropped in the Atlantic. Also, as the TRIDENT II missiles upgrade is completed in the Pacific, this trend will be more striking. The U.S. nuclear posture has become more aggressive in terms of its striking capability in Asia-Pacific. Two reasons may account for this shift of focus.

First of all, the Asia-Pacific region has become more important to U.S. strategic interests. Militarily, it provides increasingly valuable infrastructure, as well as allies and partners for the United States to exercise power projection, including the use of nuclear weapons, as far as the Indian Ocean and Pershing Gulf, in its global war planning. In the meantime, China has become the greatest potential threat to U.S. security interests in the Asia-Pacific region, according to the threat perception of Washington. Most of the enhanced redeployment in Northeast Asia, therefore, is arguably motivated by a China factor. In fact, ever since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, China has consistently been a target for U.S. nuclear strikes. On several occasions the United States had seriously contemplated the use of nuclear weapons against China – during the Korean War, as well as in a series of military confrontations in the Taiwan Strait in 1954, 1955, and 1958. Washington has never completely dropped China from its nuclear targeting list, even though the relationship between the two countries has experienced many ups and downs. Up until now, China is still named as one of the seven target countries of a potential nuclear attack in the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review (2002). One may wonder, given the fact that the U.S. central focus remains overwhelmingly on the essential equivalence and strategic stability with Russia, why there has been so much fuss and over-reaction to China's very limited nuclear capability. One explanation is that the United States needs an enemy in Northeast Asia in that "with the absence of a definitive enemy such as the Soviet Union – the United States has elevated China to

fill the void to help justify modernizing its armed forces in general, and its nuclear forces in particular."<sup>48</sup>

Whether this is true or not, it is most unfortunate that, while current developments require greater cooperation among nuclear weapon states to ensure strategic stability, nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, the U.S. moves have unnecessarily poisoned the political atmosphere, and eroded confidence and trust among these states.

**Thirdly, the United States has shown an unusual enthusiasm to reenergize the development of Ballistic Missile Defense systems (BMD), adding to the complexity of the nuclear interaction in Northeast Asia.** The United States has a long history of taking interest in BMD, which can be traced back to the mid-1940s when the U.S. Army unveiled a program entitled "Thumper," aimed at exploring the possibility of defending against German V-2 ballistic missiles during the Second World War. Since then, efforts for Missile Defense systems (MD) have been continuous, affected only by technological feasibility and political constraints. President George W. Bush took a more enthusiastic position, giving his full support to the National Missile Defense systems (NMD), later renamed as Global Missile Defense (GMD), and Theater Missile Defense systems (TMD). In December 2002, he announced the abrogation of the ABM treaty, one of the center pieces for international strategic stability, thus removing the most important legally-binding constraint to the fully-fledged development and deployment of these systems, regardless of international opposition.<sup>49</sup> Since then, BMD programs have progressed with mixed success. In the near future, the United States would still most likely to attach importance to these programs, hoping they can play an additional role in the support of the basic objectives of deterrence.<sup>50</sup> But the development and deployment of BMD systems have

<sup>48</sup> "Executive Summary," in Hans M. Kristensen, Robert S. Norris, Matthew G. McKinzie, *Chinese Nuclear Forces and U.S. Nuclear War Planning* (New York: Federation of American Scientists and Natural Resources Defense Council, 2006), p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> The United Nations General Assembly, for example, adopted a resolution on preservation and compliance with the ABM Treaty in December 1999. The resolution was passed by a vote of 80 to 4 with 68 abstentions. Only the United States, Israel, Albania and Micronesia voted against, "Russia Hails UN Resolution on ABM Treaty," People's Daily Online, December 5, 1999, <http://english.people.com.cn/english/199912/05/eng19991205W113.html> (accessed November 29, 2001).

<sup>50</sup> *America's Strategic Posture: The Final Report of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States.*

become one of the most destabilizing factors in the nuclear relations among the region's three nuclear weapon powers. The United States has officially insisted that all of these BMD systems are purely defensive, aiming to cope with the threat from countries like North Korea or Iran. They are not aimed at Russia or China. But that is a cheap shot. Even the United States officials responsible for the development of the BMD acknowledged that there is a China factor in the U.S. efforts, at least in Northeast Asia.<sup>51</sup> Technically, for all the restrictions that the United States still faces, what is important is that the BMD systems are open-ended. What may not be achievable today may be so tomorrow. Thus the BMD already constitutes a serious challenge to nuclear weapon states with fewer nuclear warheads, such as China. With the passing of time, Russia could also be threatened. The BMD systems could therefore be the finishing touch to the shift in existing nuclear architecture among the three nuclear weapon states in Northeast Asia.

### *Russia*

The U.S. nuclear posture has, understandably, triggered corresponding reactions from other nuclear weapon states, Russia in particular. Given the dramatic weakening of its conventional capability vis-à-vis the United States and NATO, together with the continuing eroding by the Western countries of its traditional established interests in those countries who used to be members of the former Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact Treaty, nuclear weapons now seem the only viable instrument with which Russia can claim world power status, and contend with the United States in the souring relations between the two countries. Russia has conspicuously reemphasized the role of its nuclear force. It announced the abolition of its once promised NFU policy. It also expressed a strong opposition to the deployment of U.S. BMD systems particularly in Eastern Europe. Moscow threatened to take dramatic measures to neutralize these systems with whatever means at its hands, including the use of nuclear weapons if these systems are in place.

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<sup>51</sup> See, for example, Ann Scott Tyson, "U.S. Missile Defense Being Expanded, General Says," *The Washington Post*, July 22, 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/07/21/AR2005072102356.html>. The report quotes a comment by Air Force Lieutenant General Henry A. Obering III, Director of Missile Defense Agency: "What...we have to do is, in our development program, be able to address the Chinese capabilities, because that's prudent."

Moreover, Russia has been determined to upgrade its nuclear assets and expand its nuclear activities in the hope of maintaining the lead in the nuclear competition with the United States. According to the media reports, in its new national security concept, released in January 2000, Russia declared that its nuclear weapons would not only be used to deter a large-scale attack as a last resort, but also to win smaller-scale wars that do not necessarily threaten Russia's existence and sovereignty.<sup>52</sup> To that end, Russia stressed the necessity to maintain a large stockpile of non-strategic nuclear weapons, in addition to its formidable strategic assets for possible contingencies in areas like Northeast Asia and its adjacent seas. In 2007, Russia resumed long-range strategic nuclear bomber flights for the first time in 15 years over U.S. territory, an act described by some western countries as a sign that the Kremlin is not shy about flexing its nuclear military might to the United States<sup>53</sup> On September 26, 2008, President Dmitri Medvedev announced that although the number of its nuclear warheads would continue to go downward, Russia would strive to upgrade its nuclear weapons systems by 2020, which would include new "warships, primarily nuclear-powered submarines, carrying cruise missiles and multifunctional submarines, as well as a system of aerospace defense." He emphasized that Russia "must guarantee nuclear deterrence under various political and military conditions by 2020."<sup>54</sup> These threat judgments and policy announcements were also specified in the newly issued "Russia's National Security Strategy until 2020," in which the threat of its military security are predicted to be coming from a number of leading foreign states. The document claimed to aim at attaining dominant superiority in the military sphere by developing high-precision, information and other high-tech means of warfare, strategic armaments with non-nuclear ordnance, the unilateral formation of the global missile defense system and militarization of outer space. Accordingly, Russia stressed modernization of its strategic nuclear deterrent further in this document.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> See Neil Richard Leslie, "Russia to Upgrade Nuclear Weapons," Atlantic Council, September 26, 2008, [http://www.acus.org/atlantic\\_update/russia-upgrade-nuclear-weapons-systems](http://www.acus.org/atlantic_update/russia-upgrade-nuclear-weapons-systems) (accessed October 30, 2009).

<sup>53</sup> Andrew E. Kramer, "Russia Resumes Patrols by Nuclear Bombers," *The New York Times*, August 18, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/18/world/europe/17cnd-russia.html> (accessed August 18, 2007).

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in Leslie, "Russia to Upgrade Nuclear Weapons."

<sup>55</sup> See Joanne Irene Gabrynowicz et al., "Medvedev endorses national security strategy

## China

As a result of the changing nuclear relations in the region, China has also had to respond by modernizing, upgrading and improving its nuclear forces. This has mostly involved efforts to maintain the credibility and effectiveness of its small nuclear force for self-defense, in the face of emerging nuclear threats. As its Defense White Paper, released in January 2009, indicated, the principle behind the upgrading is to develop

a lean and effective force and going with the tide of the development of military science and technology [...] strives to raise the informationization level of its weaponry and equipment, ensure their safety and reliability, and enhance its capabilities in protection, rapid reaction, penetration, damage and precision strike.<sup>56</sup>

But on the other hand, China acted in a way quite different from both the United States and Russia. In this regard, several important points need to be observed in the current and foreseeable process of China's modernization drive:

1. For all the complexity of the new nuclear situation, China has kept its nuclear strategy and doctrine unchanged. Beijing remains convinced that its security can be better protected by reducing rather than increasing the role of nuclear weapons. Based on its vision of the role of nuclear weapons, China continues to adhere to all its previous commitments regarding nuclear weapons, including the no-first use of nuclear weapons against any nuclear weapon states, and non-use of such weapons against non-nuclear weapon states.<sup>57</sup>

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until 2020," ITAR-TASS, May 15, 2009, <http://rescommunis.wordpress.com/2009/05/15/medvedev-endorses-national-security-strategy-until-2020/> (accessed May 16, 2009).

<sup>56</sup> Information Office of the State Council of the PRC, *China's National Defense in 2008*, January 2009, [http://www.gov.cn/english/offical/2009-01/20content\\_1210227.html](http://www.gov.cn/english/offical/2009-01/20content_1210227.html) (accessed February 1, 2009).

<sup>57</sup> This guideline was confirmed in the speech of Chinese president Hu Jintao delivered at the Security Council Summit on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, New York, September 24, 2009. See Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Security Council Summit on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament Opens in New York, Hu Jintao Attends the Summit and Delivers an Important Speech," <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t616870.htm> (accessed January 3, 2010).



2. Also in line with this vision, China is careful not to be led into a nuclear arms race with any other big powers. Beijing has exercised the greatest restraint possible in its responding measures. What China has been doing is no more than a response to all the consequences to its security generated by the action of other nuclear weapon states, the United States in particular. Therefore, the upgrading of the nuclear weapons has never been the top priority in China's defense modernization drive.

3. Despite the fact that China and the US are so different in terms of their nuclear capabilities and so divergent in their perspectives with regard to the role of nuclear weapons, the two countries also find that cooperation rather than confrontation between them serves their best interests. Both expect to build up a new nuclear world order. "The two sides underlined their commitment to the eventual realization of a world free of nuclear weapons."<sup>58</sup> Both hope the two countries "should further strengthen coordination and cooperation, work together to tackle challenges, and promote world peace, security and prosperity."<sup>59</sup> It is precisely based on this belief that while upgrading its small nuclear force in a modest way, China endeavors to lead the United States in turning the bilateral relationship into a constructive strategic partnership. China hopes that this is the most effective and enduring way to promote security.

4. To that end, China hopes all the countries concerned work together to foster greater political trust in each other. For without a more propitious political basis, nothing can be achieved for security in a sustained way. Given the deep-seated mistrust among the major powers in the region, China believes that greater communication and dialogue are the best way to diminish miscalculation and mistrust.

It is hoped that China's restraints may play a healthy role in moderating the already intensified nuclear arms competition among the nuclear weapon states. But realistically, owing to its relative weak position, China's role in the nuclear architecture continues to be insignificant. Thus, for all its restraints, the nuclear weapons would still be regarded as indispensable means in the security strategies of these states in the region, and an intensi-

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<sup>58</sup> The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "U.S.-China Joint Statement," November 17, 2009, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/us-china-joint-statement> (accessed January 2, 2010).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.



arming competition would be inevitable, if something is not to be done to arrest the disquieting trend.

## **Seeking the Effective and Sustainable Way to Address Non-proliferation in Northeast Asia**

To seek an effective and sustainable way to address the proliferation issue in Northeast Asia, one must keep in mind that it has always been closely related to peace and stability of the region. Both are mutually reinforced. In focus for the discussion to follow will be the continuing efforts for a solution of the DPRK nuclear crisis, the eventual denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and the setting up of a Nuclear Free Zone in Northeast Asia.

### **Resumption of Six-Party Talks**

The Six-Party Talks has gone through ups and downs in the past six years with both success and setbacks. Its role and contribution have been widely recognized by all parties as well as the international community. The consensus reached is that there is no alternative to the platform of this multilateral negotiation body, with the participation of all the countries concerned in the region, for the solution of the DPRK nuclear issue. Under the current situation, what is needed is perhaps the exercising of greater patience, all the while making concerted efforts to reactivate the Six-Party Talks at an earlier date.

As the first step, the bilateral engagement between the DPRK and the United States should be encouraged to gain further momentum, building on the current initial progress. The good news is that Pyongyang has shown signs of interest in seeking reconciliation with Washington. This could be a good starting point for restarting the process of the Six-Party Talks. The United States should, therefore, seize the opportunity to have a better understanding of North Korea's strategic intention, its concerns and demands, through direct contact, in order to put the negotiations back on the right track. In fact, with the beginning of year 2010, it seems that Pyongyang wants to take more aggressive attitude. After its stated commitment to lasting peace and a nuclear-free Korean peninsula in the New Year's editorial, the Foreign Ministry statement declared its proposal for a formal peace treaty as a condition for resuming stalled six-party denuclearization talks

and also called for an end to international economic sanctions.<sup>60</sup> Although the official response of United States was prudential, the international community has expectations for their further engagement.

Secondly, if bilateral talks between the DPRK and United States can lead to the resumption of the Six-Party Talks, it is extremely important that all the parties respect and comply with the spirit of the 9/19 Joint Statement in 2005, and accordingly, carry out their responsibilities respectively. Whether all these parties, including the DPRK, are able to do so, could become the key to the success in the eventual solution of the nuclear dispute in the peninsula.

As the Joint Statement stresses, these obligations include, among other things: the goal of the Six-Party Talks is the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner. The DPRK is committed to abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs. The United States affirms that it has no nuclear weapons in the Korean Peninsula and has no intention of attacking or invading the DPRK with nuclear or conventional weapons. Other parties have expressed their respect and agreed to discuss, at an appropriate time, the subject of the provision of a light water reactor to the DPRK. The DPRK and the United States pledge in the statement to respect each other's sovereignty, co-exist peacefully, and take steps to normalize their relations. The DPRK and Japan also pledge to take steps to normalize their relationship in accordance with the 2002 Pyongyang Declaration. In addition, all the parties will promote cooperation in energy, trade and investment. They also agree to take coordinated steps to implement afore-mentioned consensus, in a phased manner, in the principle of "commitment for commitment, action for action." All these obligations should be implemented in a spirit of mutual respect, mutual compromise and mutual benefit, and in a phased manner.

Thirdly, each country concerned should take measures to ensure the non-interference of its domestic politics in the joint efforts of the Six-Party Talks. The United States should take a lead in that particular aspect, as the country has never had consensus at home for its DPRK policy. Lack of consensus in Washington has indeed always been a major obstacle to ensuring

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<sup>60</sup> Robert Raffaele, "North Korea Calls for Peace Treaty with US Ahead of Denuclearization Talks," VoANews.com, January 11, 2010, <http://www1.voanews.com/english/news/asia/North-Korea-Calls-for-Peace-Treaty-with-US-Ahead-of-Denuclearization-Talks---81180042.html> (accessed January 13, 2010).

a sustained solution of the nuclear issue in the region. In addition, there is also great suspicion that the Obama administration has any interest or time to concentrate on the resolution of the nuclear dispute with Pyongyang, in the face of the worldwide financial crisis, and a crowded national agenda, which evidently put many other domestic and international issues as top priorities, rather than the nuclear issue in Northeast Asia. All these would affect the U.S. ability to take a more pragmatic and flexible attitude, when the Six-Party Talks inevitably touches upon many procedural, as well as substantive issues in the future. "The art of politics is often about necessity as much as preference."<sup>61</sup> Taking the verification, for example, it is important to understand that achieving a water-proof verification mechanism is desirable but often unrealistic, and probably unnecessary as well. So the standard of verification should not be too high particularly at the initial stage; it should be conducted in a phased manner, progressing with the advancement of the different phases of the denuclearization process. In a similar spirit, Japan and South Korea should refrain from making use of the nuclear crisis in DPRK for their selfish purposes, muddling the matter with their domestic politics. The Six-Party Talks should be regarded as a troubleshooters' platform, instead of a troublemakers' stage. As long as all the concerned states take a cooperative and flexible attitude, there is real hope to get out of this nuclear crisis impasse. This is also the truly propitious political foundation needed for the progress of the Six-Party Talks.

### **Establishing the Peace Mechanism in the Korean Peninsula and Leading DPRK out of Self-imposed Isolation**

While all efforts should focus on the furthering of breakthroughs leading towards denuclearization in the Korean Peninsula, the international community needs to define a more effective way to reduce tension and realize political reconciliation between the parties concerned. To that end, it seems high time to proceed with exploratory measures for the creation of a peace mechanism in the Korean Peninsula.

Several issues, among other things, merit particular attention if a peace mechanism in the Peninsula is to be in place. The first is when and how to

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<sup>61</sup> Avery Goldstein, "The North Korean Nuclear Challenge and American Interests: Getting the Priorities Right," Nautilus Institute Policy Forum Online, November 7, 2003, [http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/0344\\_Goldstein.html](http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/0344_Goldstein.html) (accessed July 25, 2009).

translate the armistice, which has already existed over half a century into a peace treaty. The DPRK insists a peace treaty should be virtually a precondition to the abandoning of its nuclear weapons. The position looks contradictory in the spirit of the 2005 September Joint Statement, which stressed the principle of addressing the denuclearization in an action for action manner. Thus, the DPRK's demand would not be realistic. One would expect that with the further contact among the various parties for the resumption of the Six-Party Talks, Pyongyang would relax its position, and come back to respect all the obligations, as envisaged by the Joint Statement, namely, the denuclearization would go hand in hand with the negotiation for the peace treaty.

But then even if a peace treaty replaces with the armistice, a peace mechanism in the Korean Peninsula would still need the adequate political reconciliation between the DPRK and the United States and between DPRK and ROK in particular. This reconciliation would not only involve the normalization of relations among these three states, but more importantly, the defining of a new role between the U.S.–ROK security alliance, and the mission of the U.S. military presence in the region in the future. All of these are tough questions to be fixed, as they impact on the core interests of all the other countries including China. The United States and its allies argued that the alliances would continue to be the cornerstone to any security architecture in Northeast Asia. Not all the countries agree. China, for one, strongly holds that given the increasing multi-polar trend, security alliances based on ideology may become the major cause of the mutual distrust among nations in the region. They are also increasingly irreverent to most of the security issues that nations are faced with.

At the same time, North Korea should be encouraged to integrate its economy into the global context, together with its political engagement with the outside world. That should serve as another important element in the building of the peace mechanism in the Peninsula. To that end, the United States and South Korea need to reweigh the merits of the policy of engagement with North Korea. Take the “sunshine policy” as an example, which is also one of the most successful engagement policies of South Korea, despite the fact that it may also have its flaws. Both the Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun administrations formally stressed this policy based on three basic principles: no toleration of North Korean armed provocations, no South

Korean efforts to undermine or absorb the North, and active ROK attempts to promote reconciliation and cooperation between the two Koreas.<sup>62</sup> Under the guidance of these policy lines, South Korea provided Pyongyang with fertilizer, seeds, and pesticides, for example, to improve North Korean agricultural production. It had also contributed pharmaceuticals to fight potential epidemics and other infectious diseases resulting from North Korea's severe nutritional and health care deficiencies. Added to this, it had actively encouraged South Korea's private sector and other civilian organizations to provide additional food, fertilizer, and humanitarian assistance. The policy had played a positive role in its increasing assistance to the North Korean economic recovery and simultaneously improved bilateral relationships between the two Koreas, resulting in the greater ease of the regional political environment as a whole. The Norwegian Nobel Committee's decision to award the Nobel Peace Prize to President Kim Dae Jung has given further testimony that his policy had won international approval. On the other hand, Presidents Kim and Roh had both clearly recognized that economic cooperation with, and assistance to, the North represented both a potential source of South Korean leverage over, and the requirement of "buy-in" to keep Pyongyang at the table. Building trust gradually through economic and humanitarian exchanges thus came to be seen as a means for advancing both short- and long-term South Korean interests.<sup>63</sup> The additional need for more fundamental, systemic changes in North Korea, undoubtedly, gave rise to resistance by North Korea, however, and hindered major South Korean policy initiatives in this area.

Therefore against this backdrop, the implementation of the "sunshine policy" has put forward both a good example and some meaningful lessons for further economic cooperation with North Korea. The most important lesson is that one has to treat the DPRK as an independent sovereignty state in cooperation and assistance. The international society and the regional countries should no doubt attach importance to the denuclearization of the DPRK, but at the same time, they should also take into serious consideration Pyongyang's economic and security concerns, as an independent state. If

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<sup>62</sup> Ministry of Unification, Republic of Korea, *The North Korea Policy of the Kim Dae-jung Administration* (Seoul: Ministry of Unification, 1998), <http://www.unikorea.go.kr/eg/load/C31/C315.htm> (accessed August 10, 2002).

<sup>63</sup> Norman D. Levin, Yong-Sup Han, *Sunshine in Korea: The South Korean Debate over Policies Toward Korea* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2002), p. 28.

these concerns of the DPRK are respected and met adequately, the DPRK, in turn, will show its willingness to get rid of self-imposed isolation and engage itself with the economic integration in Northeast Asia. For example, economically backward as it is, the DPRK has rich natural resources including raw materials and fuel resources. If the relevant countries can pursue energy cooperation with the DPRK, on an equal footing, without any additional political preconditions, the joint efforts will not only promote the economic development of the DPRK, but also reduce the total costs of the energy consumption of other regional partners. In short, what is needed here is a package deal, which will see the greater integration of all the political, economic and security aspects for the peace and stability in Northeast Asia.

### **Exploring the Possibility and Feasibility of Setting Up a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (NWFZ) in Northeast Asia**

Looking into the future, and as said before, even if the DPRK nuclear crisis reaches a satisfactory solution, the perils of nuclear proliferation will continue to linger in Northeast Asia, particularly in the short and mid-term when nuclear disarmament is still a far away objective. To promote a more enduring means to strengthen international nonproliferation mechanism in the region, one of the arguing measures is to establish the internationally recognized Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (NWFZ) in Northeast Asia on the basis of voluntary agreement. It will be conducive not only to advancing the cause of nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament in the region, but also in strengthening regional and world peace, stability, and security.

#### *Definition*

Although there has not been much work and progress in the exploration of establishing NWFZ in Northeast Asia in the Track I (official) channel, Track II (unofficial and academic) deliberation on the subject has been quite proactive in the past and has increasingly been drawing world attention in the recent decade. According to the work of many academic institutions engaged in the study of the NWFZ, the focus of establishing such a mechanism in Northeast Asia chiefly involves the problems of the form, scope and nature of the zone. There is no consensus yet as to the best way to address these problems. Many existing definitions of the NWFZ in Northeast Asia,

seem either too narrow or too complicated for implementation. To make the complex issue simpler, it is perhaps just better to follow the common norms of the existing NWFZs, particularly when the questions of scope and obligations are involved. Therefore, a most ideal concept of nuclear-weapon-free zone in Northeast Asia should perhaps best only include the Korean Peninsula and Japan, with their territorial seas and other appropriate adjacent international maritime areas, as far as the geographical scope is concerned. This arrangement should take all the history background of Northeast Asia and the current situation into consideration. Pending the full agreement on such a formula, it may also be desirable that the three specific non-nuclear weapon states and the three specific nuclear weapon states conclude an interim 3 plus 3 arrangement for a nuclear-weapon-free zone, each undertaking different obligations. In addition, there has been a suggestion that if the effort for a region-wide NWFZ in Northeast Asia is not feasible in the short terms, it perhaps is also useful to create a limited NWFZ confined only on the Korean Peninsula. If the DPRK nuclear crisis is going to achieve further breakthrough, the idea could indeed be practical, considering there have been already quite a few legally binding agreement between the two Koreas regarding their commitment to non-nuclear status.

### *Obstacles*

While welcoming all of these suggestions of either an interim arrangement or a full international treaty, one must remain realistic that the establishment of the NWFZ in Northeast Asia would be an extremely difficult task, given the complicated situation in the region. There are a few major obstacles in particular down the road:

One of them is the United States extended nuclear deterrence policy. In general the U.S. policymakers have never been strongly interested in the idea of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in Northeast Asia. Such a proposal rarely comes up in its foreign policy literature. Up until now, Washington has seen such zones as a problem, rather than a potential solution. It has so far ratified only the protocol of the Latin American and Caribbean Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones treaty and even in that case Washington still insisted on preserving its right to employ nuclear weapons against a treaty party, under certain circumstances. Such clauses have, in effect, done nothing to enhance



U.S. security. On the contrary, they reveal a mindset that is out of touch with today's arms control and non-proliferation imperatives.

The U.S. effort for the development and deployment of its Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) could be another sticking point as they have been increasing the concerns of countries like Russia and China, adding one more problem in the efforts to promote this NWFZ agenda. With the U.S. insistence on pursuing missile defenses and the first-use policy, it would become virtually impossible to set up a NWFZ in Northeast Asia.

What adds to the further complexity is the attitude of the U.S. major allies which has so far been lukewarm towards the notion of the NWFZ in the region. Japan and South Korea have been very reluctant to see the demise of the U.S. extended deterrence policy. Even if these two countries take a certain interest in the idea of NWFZ, their focus is as much on placing greater restriction on China as on the restriction on themselves. In addition, Russia's security policy which seems to reemphasize the role of its nuclear forces could also be a handicap to the NWFZ establishment.

### *Prospect*

For all the obstacles to establishing the NWFZ in Northeast Asia, there still exists much room for the international and regional efforts for the realization of the objective however. In the final analysis, the key to the success lies in the change of the vision for security. If countries involved can consider the regional security from a new perspective – “common security” instead of the traditional “security by arms” – things would become much easier to manage.

If history can serve any guide, a sovereign state insists on a nuclear option generally because it believes the decision serves its best national interests against a hostile situation, even if it is well aware that it would have to pay a price for that decision. On the other hand, if the situation improves to the point at which that nation does not feel the need to resort to the nuclear choice, or it can find out a better alternative to developing nuclear capability, the nuclear weaponization would be regarded as an encumbrance. The non-proliferation regime would then greatly be sustained. The establishing of NWFZ would also become feasible.

To that end, in spite of the setbacks of the North Korean nuclear crisis, it is high time now to move forward the NWFZ agenda, taking advantage

of the new positive developments in Northeast Asia. The U.S. government has now showed signs of turning toward multilateralism, even before the Obama administration began to seek flexibility in its diplomacy, focusing on the less dependence on the role of nuclear weapons. The economic crisis may also put a premium to Washington on finding solutions which inhibit the massive military expenditures. Under the circumstances, one can only hope that major powers in Northeast Asia may be induced to believe that the notion of the NWFZ in the region will eventually serve their best interests, if all the parties concerned are willing to seriously honor their due obligations involved, like in the NWFZs in the other parts of the world.

Furthermore, Northeast Asia has also seen some important progress in the process of nuclear arms control and nonproliferation, which has at least provided some political basis for the further exploration of establishing the NWFZ in the region. The ROK and the DPRK have signed the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, for example, in which they agreed to “refrain from the testing, manufacture, production, acceptance, possession, stockpiling, deployment and use of nuclear weapons,” and to “use nuclear energy solely for peaceful purposes.”<sup>64</sup> True, there have been various problems with these positions since they were announced. Nevertheless, these obligations do exist on record, and can be made useful of in the future. In addition, Japan has reaffirmed its “three non-nuclear principles,” and the 1995 Atomic Energy Basic Law prohibits use of nuclear energy for military purposes,<sup>65</sup> which combined, have virtually blocked the country from becoming a nuclear weapon state if Tokyo is truly serious about these obligations.

At the same time, the existing various NWFZs ought to provide valuable experience for the future efforts to establish a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Northeast Asia. There are currently five NWFZs, namely, the Treaty for The Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco), the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga), the South East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone Treaty (Treaty of Bangkok), the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Treaty

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<sup>64</sup> “ROK-DPRK Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” January 20, 1992, <http://www.nti.org/db/china/engdocs/snkdenuc.htm> (accessed November 3, 2006).

<sup>65</sup> NTI, “Japan: Nuclear Overview,” October 21, 2009, [http://www.nti.org/e\\_research/profiles/Japan/Nuclear/index.html](http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Japan/Nuclear/index.html) (accessed November 15, 2009).

of Pelindaba) and the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty. In addition, the Antarctic Treaty demilitarizes the Antarctic Continent.<sup>66</sup> If we take a look at all these NWFZs, many common characteristics should be noted as the valuable guiding principles for the establishment of the NWFZ in Northeast Asia: (1) firm obligation of non-proliferation and non-deployment of nuclear weapons in these regions; (2) Negative Security Assurances (NSAs) by the nuclear-weapon states; (3) certain kinds of institutionalization to ensure compliance with the treaty; (4) the participation of the member states on the voluntary basis, and in the spirit of the United Nations Charter and generally recognized principles of international law; (5) respect for the sovereignty of each member state; (6) by avoiding conflict with other existing security arrangements; involving the role of the IAEA by ensuring its mandate of placing comprehensive safeguards for the compliance by all parties.

### **Pushing for Progress of Nuclear Disarmament in the Region**

Nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament in Northeast Asia are two sides of a coin. While the international community has attached great importance to nuclear nonproliferation to the new candidates in the region, one must make sure that nuclear disarmament should make equal progress.

#### *Good Signs*

Fortunately, more and more sober-minded people have come to realize the importance of nuclear disarmament. Even with the end of the Cold War, the possibility of a major nuclear exchange between major nuclear states has become increasingly remote. All the three nuclear states in the region seem to find it in their fundamental interests to maintain strategic stability in their relations. The United States and Russia have continued to cut back their nuclear arsenals through bilateral agreements since the end of the Cold War. Both countries have reduced their nuclear stockpiles each by more than a half, compared to the number of warheads at the height of the Cold War. The two have also withdrawn about 14,000 tactical nuclear weapons

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<sup>66</sup> "Nuclear Weapons Free Zones," NuclearFiles.com, [http://www.nuclearfiles.org/menu/library/treaties/nuclear-free-zones/trty\\_nuclear-free-zone-index.htm](http://www.nuclearfiles.org/menu/library/treaties/nuclear-free-zones/trty_nuclear-free-zone-index.htm) (accessed December 7, 2009).

from forward deployment. In the meantime, the United States, Russia and China have taken confidence building measures, through various channels of bilateral security dialogues among them, to avoid misunderstanding or miscalculation. In 1994, Russia and the United States reached a bilateral de-targeting agreement as a nuclear confidence building measure. The same year saw China and Russia conclude a similar agreement.<sup>67</sup> The two countries went even further in reaching an agreement on the no-first use (NFU) of nuclear weapons against each other that year, marking a new strategic cooperative relationship being established between the two countries.<sup>68</sup> China also succeeded in reaching a non-targeting accord with the United States in 1998.<sup>69</sup> With these measures, it is evident that the three powers want to seek greater confidence and trust among them and also want to avoid inadvertent or accidental nuclear disaster.

When the human society entered into the 21st century, with the rising risk of proliferation of nuclear weapons to more non-nuclear weapon states, and even to the non-state actors like terrorist groups and organized crimes, more and more clear-minded people have come to realize the inability of the U.S. traditional nuclear deterrence policy to cope with these new threats, and the importance to push for nuclear disarmament, so as to provide a more propitious environment for strengthening the international nonproliferation regime. Against this backdrop, four U.S. senior statesmen – George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger, and Sam Nunn – wrote two articles in the *Wall Street Journal* in 2007 and 2008, calling on the United States to give up its nuclear deterrence policy and take a leading role in helping the world head toward the abolition of nuclear weapons.<sup>70</sup> The world is inspired by this new courageous and insightful thinking. Many Western governments as well as nongovernmental organizations are taking

<sup>67</sup> NTI, "Detargeting Agreements," <http://www.nti.org/db/china/dtrgorg.htm> (accessed December 8, 2009).

<sup>68</sup> NTI, "Sino-Russian Detargeting and No-First-Use Agreement," <http://www.nti.org/db/china/chrusdet.htm> (accessed December 8, 2009).

<sup>69</sup> NTI, "US-China Non-targeting Agreements," <http://www.nti.org/db/china/chusdet.htm> (accessed December 8, 2009).

<sup>70</sup> The two articles referred to are George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger and Sam Nunn "A World Free of Nuclear Weapons," *The Wall Street Journal*, January 4, 2007, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB116787515251566636.html>; and George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger and Sam Nunn, "Toward A Nuclear-Free World," *The Wall Street Journal*, January 15, 2008, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB120036422673589947.html> (accessed October 15, 2008).

steps to echo their views. Various suggestions have been made in an attempt to translate the new vision into specific actions. What is more inspiring is that the new U.S. president, Mr. Barack Obama, has openly and explicitly embraced this new idea.<sup>71</sup> He promised significant changes in U.S. nuclear policy and priorities compared with the George W. Bush administration. Obama's new position appeared to also win support from Russia and other nuclear weapon states. On April 1, the U.S. and Russian Presidents issued a joint statement, in which the two leaders pledged to work for the goal of a nuclear weapon-free world. On July 6, they issued another joint statement as a follow on to the previous agreement, reaffirming their decisions on nuclear reduction, nuclear security and also nuclear energy cooperation. The new statement has, in fact, provided a useful roadmap, which shows how they will work together to translate their commitment into practice.<sup>72</sup> The Obama administration's new policy seems to herald the coming of the spring in the field of nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation after the bitter winter coldness that occurred during the eight-year rule of George W. Bush's administration.

### *Obstacles*

However, in the history of nuclear disarmament, the U.S.–Russia bilateral nuclear disarmament has never been an easy task, let alone the multilateral efforts for the global nuclear disarmament.

In the first place, the United States and Russia would find it extremely difficult to reduce their several thousand nuclear weapons substantially. This would involve many vital issues, such as the relations between offensive nuclear weapons and missile defence, verification, the relations between warheads and the means of delivery, uploading potentiality, tactical nuclear weapons, un-deployed nuclear weapons, and the relations between nuclear

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<sup>71</sup> During his visit to Prague, President Obama formally announced its policy for the first time in his speech on April 5, 2009, see "Obama's Speech on Nuclear Proliferation," Real Clear Politics, April 5, 2009, [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2009/04/obama\\_nuclear\\_proliferation.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2009/04/obama_nuclear_proliferation.html) (accessed April 6, 2009).

<sup>72</sup> The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Joint Statement by President Barack Obama of the United States of America and President Dmitry Medvedev of the Russian Federation on Nuclear Cooperation," July 5, 2009, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Joint-Statement-by-President-Barack-Obama-of-the-United-States-of-America-and-President-Dmitry-Medvedev-of-the-Russian-Federation-on-Nuclear-Cooperation](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Joint-Statement-by-President-Barack-Obama-of-the-United-States-of-America-and-President-Dmitry-Medvedev-of-the-Russian-Federation-on-Nuclear-Cooperation)

weapons and conventional weapons, just to name a few. It is believed that the United States and Russia will not be able to solve all these problems unless they can truly change their nuclear strategy and doctrines, which currently still focus on striking military targets supported by a large amount of nuclear weapons. So far, all we have seen until now are the extravagant expressions of good intentions. Nothing has been changed in terms of their nuclear doctrines or the pace of upgrading their nuclear forces. And from all indications, President Obama will have an extremely tough uphill struggle to get the required domestic (from conservative forces and the military) as well international (from its allies like Japan) support for his commitment to the scrapping of nuclear deterrence, and excluding nuclear weapons from the U.S. security strategy. So the reality should be, as the report described, the following:

President Obama has pledged to work for the global elimination of nuclear weapons, but until that happens, to maintain a safe, secure, and reliable deterrent force. The conditions that might make possible the global elimination of nuclear weapons are not present today and their creation would require a fundamental transformation of the world political order. But this report spells out many steps that can significantly reduce nuclear dangers and that are available now.<sup>73</sup>

Even if the newly-issued measures in the joint statement between the United States and Russia were to materialize, including a deeply numerical reduction of their weapons stockpiles that is only the beginning of the nuclear disarmament on their part. For these nuclear powers, deep-cuts to their huge, redundant nuclear stockpiles are perhaps some easy thing to achieve, as both need to get rid of many of their nuclear warheads. But in the meantime, both have even accelerated their pace to upgrade and improve the quality of their nuclear assets. The catch words are leaner but better. That can hardly be called nuclear disarmament in its true sense. In addition, there are other factors that might add to the complexity of the future nuclear disarmament. Russia has emphasized that it would find it hard to conclude with the United States on a reduction agreement until it has an acceptable arrangement on the U.S. missile defense systems. As Prime Minister Putin of Russia said, "The problem is that our American partners are develop-

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<sup>73</sup> *America's Strategic Posture: The Final Report of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States.*

ing missile defenses, and we are not.”<sup>74</sup> He also stressed that Russia will build new offensive weapons to offset the U.S. missile defense system.<sup>75</sup> At the same time, President Obama’s ambitious vision of a nuclear-free world, beginning with the phasing out of nuclear weapons, has run up against powerful resistance from officials in the Pentagon and other U.S. agencies, posing a threat to one of his most important foreign policy initiatives.<sup>76</sup>

There is another complex factor in the future multilateral nuclear disarmament process, that is, the position of the lesser nuclear weapon states. It could be a controversial issue, particularly to the countries like China, to decide on the condition and time of their participation in the process. The core issue is how these countries are able to make sure that their retaliatory capability would not be compromised while they, too, take measures to reduce their weapons in the process.

Finally, apart from the five NPT nuclear weapon states, there are also three states, India, Pakistan and Israeli, which have opted to remain outside the NPT framework, but have possessed a small stock of nuclear weapons. How to get these countries into the multilateral nuclear disarmament process could be a huge challenge, as the international community is yet to define a way to determine their nuclear status before the three nuclear armed states have interest to join in the exercise.

Obviously, all of these problems would be solved through complicated and time-consuming negotiations.

### *Prospect*

As is noted, for these uncertainties ahead, one should not lose sight that the international community today is faced with a window of opportunity for a significant reduction of the nuclear arsenals of the two nuclear major powers and even for the further review of the role that nuclear weapons will play in their respective nuclear strategy. The U.S. allies in Europe seem to harbour a particular interest in the change in this respect, so that a new situation more

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<sup>74</sup> “Putin: U.S. Missile Shield Plans Holding Up Arms Deal,” National Public Radio, December 29, 2009, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=122017205&ft=1&f=1003> (accessed January 7, 2010).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Paul Richter, “Obama’s nuclear-free vision mired in debate,” *The Los Angeles Times*, January 4, 2010, <http://www.latimes.com/news/nation-and-world/la-na-obama-nuclear4-2010jan04> (accessed January 6, 2010).



conducive to the nuclear limitation and reduction would emerge. The suggestion by German foreign minister on discussing the possibility of withdrawing tactical nuclear weapons deployed by the United States in Germany, as well as in other European countries, is just a good example. In August, 2009, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced that he would list on the agenda of NPT Review Conference in 2010, the reduction of nuclear weapons leading to a world free of all nuclear weapons.<sup>77</sup>

In this regard, the nuclear weapon states, particularly the two major powers with the largest nuclear arsenals should have special responsibilities to take the lead in observing their obligation for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The world can hardly accept the perpetuation of nuclear-haves and nuclear-have-nots. As long as this discrimination persists, there will always be the danger to give rise to new nuclear weapons and new nuclear players. Indeed, this is not a new theory. It sounds almost like a cliché now, as it has been stressed time and again by world opinion. What is needed now is a new strategic vision, as well as the necessary political courage of all these nuclear weapon states to take practical actions to fulfil their due obligations, as stipulated in the NPT and other international legal documents.

Specifically, as a first step, what particularly merits attention is the necessity that the nuclear weapon states should re-evaluate the role of their nuclear weapons together with all the other non-nuclear weapon states. Ideally, a consensus should be reached to declare that nuclear weapons are not legitimate weapons and that the use of nuclear weapons constitutes a crime against humanity, and should be automatically subjected to world punitive measures, as authorized by the United Nations Security Council. Pending this declaration, as an interim measure, at least the nuclear weapon states should reduce their nuclear arsenal dramatically, without any additional conditions, and limit the role of their nuclear weapons to that of response only to a nuclear attack by other nuclear weapon states.<sup>78</sup> If indeed all of them are able to reach an agreement on the issue, an international treaty not to be the first to use nuclear weapons will be well in place. This should be

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<sup>77</sup> Ban Ki-Moon, "My plan to stop the bomb," <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/aug/03/nuclear-disarmament> (accessed August 10, 2009).

<sup>78</sup> This valuable opinion mainly comes from the presentation by Professor Pan Zhen-qiang, "On China and a Nuclear Free World," ISODARCO Conference on International Security, October 30, 2008, Qingdao, China.



a significant multilateral step to maintain strategic stability throughout the whole phases of disarmament.

All in all, although we cannot expect the global nuclear reduction to become deep and multilateral in one breath, we still can believe in progress if bilateral nuclear disarmament between the United States and Russia solves major disputed issues. If this occurs, it will greatly promote the start of the multilateral nuclear disarmament process. Pending that, all the nuclear weapon states can get together and discuss confidence building measures, which will pave the way for the process of multilateral nuclear disarmament.

## **China's Position: Honest Mediator and Constructive Participant**

China has consistently pursued a nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation policy. In the past two decades and more, the Chinese Government has worked out and updated a range of decrees and regulations in line with the existing international norms. Since it joined the IAEA in 1984, China has been strongly supporting and actively participating in international efforts for nuclear arms control and non-proliferation. China's accession to the NPT Treaty in 1992 was a milestone event. Of the five nuclear states, China was the first to have completed its domestic legal procedures, for the ratification of the Additional Protocol, to the IAEA Safeguards Agreement.<sup>79</sup> The role that China has played as an honest mediator, and a constructive participant, during the process of solving the North Korean nuclear crisis and Iranian nuclear problem has been widely recognized and affirmed by the whole international community. All these provide favorable conditions for increasing China's credibility in its constructive role for nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation.

### **A Leading Role in the Solution of the DPRK Nuclear Crisis**

China attaches great importance to Northeast Asia, as it has huge stakes in the peace, stability, and prosperity of the region. For this reason, China has been playing an ever more proactive role in the security restructuring in Northeast Asia in the post Cold War era. This is mainly due to China's longstanding strategy of peaceful development, characterized by focusing on economic construction and expanding its policy on Reform and Opening abroad. To achieve that goal, China needs a long-term peaceful, stable and friendly international environment, particularly in Northeast Asia. In this context, China is aiming at maintaining regional peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula as a top priority in Northeast Asia. This objective has become a component part of China's comprehensive efforts to build a

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<sup>79</sup> People's Republic of China, Information Office of the State Council, *White Paper on China's Endeavors for Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation*, September 2005, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/2005/Aug/140343.htm> (accessed October 15, 2006).

peaceful and stable periphery. China's current focus is on the peaceful resolution of the DPRK nuclear issue. China will continue to play its unique role as an honest mediator and an active participant. In collaboration with all the other parties, Beijing is expected to expand its efforts to bridge the differences among the various parties, regarding an agreement at the Six-Party Talks that is acceptable to all the nations involved.

For a peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear crisis, China has played a leading role in the Six-Party Talks, by providing the general goal and the guidelines for the multilateral negotiations, and has contributed to keeping the momentum of the multilateralism in resolving the nuclear dispute in Northeast Asia. On the other hand, it is worth noticing that for all China's constructive efforts, the key to resolving the Korean nuclear crisis is not in the hands of China. All China can do is to be an honest broker, bridging the gap between various contending parties, and creating a condition in which difference can be eventually ironed out, in the spirit of mutual respect, mutual compromise and mutual benefit.

### **Willing to Undertake Due Responsibility in the Suggested Nuclear Free Zone**

China has a respectable record in endorsing the establishment of various NWFZs in the world. The creation of a nuclear free zone in Northeast Asia fits into China's vision for the region free of nuclear weapons. Thus it can be expected that China will proactively join in the efforts to explore the possibility of such a move. China will continue to hold a responsible attitude and take due responsibility when it is needed. In a similar manner, China is of the view that double standards must be abandoned during the process of establishing a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Northeast Asia,. Especially, if the United States keeps its nuclear umbrella covering Japan and South Korea, which means to keep the right to use nuclear weapons in any possible scenario or in a military conflict with the DPRK, it is unfair to ask only North Korea to give up all of its nuclear programs, without taking up its security concerns. That is why, China consistently emphasizes in the Six-Party Talks a two-way exercise when working for denuclearization in the Korean peninsula. Similarly, concerning the establishment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Northeast Asia, all the concerned parties should undertake their due responsibilities. The relations between non-proliferation and the

peaceful use of science and technology should also be properly addressed, with the aim of preserving the right of peaceful use of each state while effectively preventing WMD proliferation.

### **Promoting Nuclear Disarmament**

China was forced to develop nuclear weapons against its specific historical background. Its nuclear disarmament policy is determined by its nuclear strategy for self-defence. The guiding principles of its nuclear strategy were laid down by the first generation of China's leadership. They mainly include: nuclear force does only function as a strategic deterrent against nuclear attacks with minimum retaliatory nuclear strike capability. China does not need to develop a nuclear war-fighting ability, nor the need to use nuclear weapons as a military instrument in the battlefield. Its consistent objective is to achieve the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons and the establishment of a nuclear weapon-free world. China never seeks to build a huge nuclear arsenal, and never enters into any nuclear arms race, nor resorts to nuclear blackmail for political or security benefits. China keeps a very limited nuclear force in a low nuclear profile. Its nuclear strategy is sustainable and stable. This has been a wise strategy, and will not become the obstacle to global nuclear disarmament. China has consistently supported the efforts to enhance international cooperation in the hope of building up a world order conducive to world peace, security, and stability. These efforts include maintaining nuclear stability among nuclear weapon states, strengthening the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, and creating conditions to reactivate progress in multilateral negotiations for nuclear arms control and disarmament.

It is in this context that the initiatives launched by the Western political elites for a nuclear-free world is well in line with Beijing's long-sought objective of the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. One might recall that on October 16, 1964, the very day that China exploded its first atomic bomb, the Chinese government proposed to the governments of the world

that a summit conference of all the countries of the world be convened to discuss the question of the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons, and that as the

first step, the summit conference conclude an agreement to the effect that the nuclear powers and those countries which may soon become nuclear powers undertake not to use nuclear weapons either against non-nuclear countries and nuclear-free zones or against each other.<sup>80</sup>

This was indeed the first-ever proposal from a nuclear weapon state not only calling for a nuclear-free world, but also offering a practical and effective approach to that end. China has put forward similar views and proposals on this issue on numerous occasions, and has never given up the objective of a nuclear-free world. By the end of last century, the Chinese Government solemnly declared that “mankind will be able to eliminate nuclear weapons and to get rid of the threat of nuclear war in the 21st century, since it was able to manufacture such weapons in the 20th century.”<sup>81</sup> The Chinese people and government shall join hands with all other governments and peoples to strive for this lofty goal. This continues to be China’s fundamental guideline. In light of this consistent position, it can be envisaged that Beijing would welcome the proposal by the four eminent politicians from the United States to renounce the reliance on nuclear deterrence and make concerted efforts for nuclear-weapon-free world. China would most probably be proactive in joining in international efforts to explore what steps should be taken that might lead to this lofty goal.

Of course, China should study how to further promote the global nuclear disarmament process. In this regard, China faces some challenges. The primary challenge is that it has to make a decision as to when and how it would be ready to join in the process of nuclear disarmament in the future. It is a weak nuclear power. As such, facing realistic nuclear threats, China would have to make sure that its core interests would not be jeopardized in the

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<sup>80</sup> Statement of the Government of the People’s Republic of China, October 16, 1964, *People’s Daily*, October 17, 1964; as quoted in Pan Zhenqiang, “Nuclear Weapons in a Changing Environment in North East Asia,” paper commissioned by the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, May 12, 2009, <http://www.icnnd.org/research/PanNuclearweaponsinNortheastAsia.pdf>.

<sup>81</sup> “A Chinese Perspective,” speech by Ambassador Sha Zukang, Director-General, Department of Arms Control and Disarmament Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People’s Republic of China, at the International Seminar on Disarmament, “Disarmament and Security: A New Latin America and Caribbean Agenda for the Next Millennium,” Lima, Peru, December 1-3, 1999, [http://www.opanal.org/Articles/Seminar-Lima/sha\\_lima.htm](http://www.opanal.org/Articles/Seminar-Lima/sha_lima.htm) (accessed November 18, 2009).

process of nuclear disarmament. In the current situation, China is evidently not in a position to join the United States and Russia right now in the process of disarmament. But would there be a point of time in the future when the two major nuclear powers reduce their nuclear stockpiles to a certain level, such that China should have the obligation to participate in the further disarmament process, as many Western specialists argued? To answer this question, there is perhaps a more fundamental question that needs to be addressed first, that is, what is the definition of nuclear disarmament? Does the whole nuclear disarmament process only mean a simple game of bean counting? In the view of the present author, although numerical reductions are certainly one essential part of nuclear disarmament, they alone cannot reduce the nuclear threat that China is faced with today or in the future. What matters more to China, as an essential condition for its participation, is the reduction of nuclear weapon capability or nuclear threat, rather than the reduction in the number of nuclear weapons alone.

In this connection, it might be in order to recall the "Proposal on Essential Measures for an Immediate Halt to the Arms Race and for Disarmament" put forward by the Chinese Delegation at the Second Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Disarmament (SSOD II) in 1982, which highlighted what was from China's perspective a set of basic guidelines for truly meaningful nuclear disarmament. In the speech by the then-Foreign Minister Huang Hua introducing this proposal at the session, he pledged that China would be a constructive participant and be ready to undertake its due share of responsibility in the process of nuclear disarmament. He solemnly announced that

if the two superpowers take the lead in halting the testing, improving or manufacturing of nuclear weapons and in reducing their nuclear weapons by 50 percent, the Chinese Government is ready to join all other nuclear states in undertaking to stop the development and production of nuclear weapons and to further reduce and ultimately destroy them altogether.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Speech by Huang Hua at the Second Special Session of the UN General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament, New York, June 11, 1982; quoted in Chi Wang, "China's nuclear programs and policies," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, March 1983, p. 18, <http://www.nti.org/db/china/engdocs/ch0682.html> (accessed October 2002).

Over 27 years have passed since China's proposal, yet the two major nuclear powers are yet to completely meet the demands contained in the proposal. Of course, much has changed in the strategic situation since then, and China's proposal may have become obsolete somewhat in content. But the guiding principles for nuclear disarmament in the proposal remain valid, and would still provide inspiration for the conditions in which China would be ready to participate in the process of nuclear disarmament, and the realization of a nuclear-free world.

This does not suggest that China is indifferent to the efforts of Western countries in their aims to achieve a nuclear weapon-free world until all of its security concerns are met. After all, complete prohibition and thorough destruction of all nuclear weapons has been China's consistent position. As President Hu Jintao declared in the UN Security Council Summit on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament on September 24, 2009:

First, maintain global strategic balance and stability and actively advance nuclear disarmament. All the nuclear-weapon states should faithfully fulfill the obligations under Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and publicly pledge not to seek permanent possession of nuclear weapons. Countries with the largest nuclear arsenals should continue to take the lead in reducing nuclear weapons drastically and substantively. The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty should be brought into force at an early date and negotiations on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty should start as soon as possible. Other nuclear-weapon states should also join the multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament when conditions are ripe.

Second, abandon the nuclear deterrence policy based on first use of nuclear weapons and take tangible steps to reduce the threat of nuclear weapons. All nuclear-weapon states should make clear commitments to unconditionally not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states or nuclear-weapon-free zones, and conclude a legally-binding international instrument in this regard. At the same time, nuclear-weapon states should enter into a treaty on no-first-use of nuclear weapons against one another through negotiations.

Third, consolidate the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. All countries in the world should join the NPT and take credible steps to maintain and strengthen the authority and effectiveness of the NPT. The safeguard function of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) should be reinforced. All countries should fulfill the non-proliferation obligation strictly, refrain from double standards and intensify and improve the export control for non-proliferation purposes.

Fourth, fully respect the right of countries to peacefully use nuclear energy and promote vigorous international cooperation. Developed countries should actively help developing ones in developing and using nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The IAEA should increase input to promote technical cooperation and assistance in nuclear power, nuclear security and nuclear technology application.

Fifth, tighten nuclear security and reduce nuclear risk substantively. Countries should rigorously abide by the international legal instruments on nuclear security and take tangible measures to ensure security of their nuclear facilities and materials and effectively prevent the diversion of nuclear materials. The international community should strengthen cooperation when fighting against nuclear terrorism.<sup>83</sup>

At the current stage, what is most essential, is better communication, as repeatedly stressed in the present paper. To that end, while urging the United States and Russia to take their share of responsibility, China would welcome various explorations of an effective approach at different levels and channels. Beijing would also support enhanced communication and contact among nuclear-weapon states, including suggestions to set up a panel of specialists for further consultation, and to strengthen the bilateral and even trilateral strategic dialogues among China, the United States and Russia on appropriate procedures, and a timeframe to achieve nuclear disarmament.

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<sup>83</sup> Hu Jintao, "Work Together to Build a World with Universal Security," August 24, 2009. See Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Security Council Summit on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament Opens in New York Hu Jintao Attends the Summit and Delivers an Important Speech," September 25, 2009, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t616870.htm> (accessed January 3, 2010).



# Conclusion

## Bilateral and Multilateral Approach

A peaceful solution of the DPRK nuclear crisis, acceptable to all parties, continues to be the top priority on the security and non-proliferation agenda in Northeast Asia. To that end, there is no alternative to the Six-Party Talks as the venue for the multilateral negotiation. In the meantime, direct contacts between various parties, particularly between the United States and the DPRK are of significance, as these bilateral interactions provide additional channels to remove specific obstacles in the way of the multilateral negotiations. What is more important, however, is all the parties concerned should respect the guiding principles as contained in the 2005 joint statement, so that a win-win result will be finally achieved, without a loser during this time-consuming diplomatic babble. In fact it is only in this spirit of mutual respect, mutual compromise and mutual benefit, that the Six-Party Talks could reach its goal of denuclearization in the Korean Peninsula.

## Change of the Vision for Security

Nuclear non-proliferation is an indispensable part of the global strategic stability. The issue is essentially of a political nature. Thus, addressing nuclear challenges would most probably be futile if countries only focus on the technical aspect of the nuclear matters. To put in another way, all countries in the region should first strive to work together to provide a more favorable political basis to pave the way for the solution of the nuclear issues. In this regard, a new vision for security is eagerly needed, free from the Cold War mindset. In keeping with the change of time, this new security concept should feature mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination, highlight multilateralism and address the security challenges through collective cooperation. "Only by pursuing a new security concept [...] can we eliminate factors that trigger the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the region."<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Statement by Mr. Li Song, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Arms Control and Disarmament,

## Confidence and Trust Building

In Northeast Asia, the perils of incipient nuclear arms competition and the spread of nuclear weapons are both bedded in deep-rooted suspicion, mistrust and even hostility among the major players. Pending nuclear disarmament, the most daunting challenge, therefore, is how all the nuclear weapon states work together to accumulate adequate confidence and trust among each other, so that each step towards nuclear disarmament would remove potential and probable insecurities. To that end, all the nuclear weapon states conclude the agreement on the no-first-use is perhaps the most important and most feasible confidence measure. They should also undertake the commitment not to use, or threaten to use, nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear weapon states. The commitments should serve as the first practical step towards nuclear disarmament. It should also become a litmus test to the sincerity of nuclear weapon states in nuclear disarmament. These initial obligations by all the nuclear weapon states will also pave the way for genuine nuclear disarmament in the future. One can easily imagine that if all the nuclear weapon states are committed to no-first-use, requirements for the modernization of major nuclear systems will become far more modest than has been assumed, thus making the real, irreversible deep cuts of the nuclear weapons possible and feasible. Furthermore, this meaningful obligation of no-first-use by the nuclear weapon states will have great positive impact on the strengthening of non-proliferation regime in the world, since the role of nuclear weapons is fundamentally reduced and restrained.<sup>85</sup>

## Be Prepared For A Long and Complex Process

Nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament will both take long term efforts to reach their goals. Former U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry once compared the vision of nuclear elimination to the efforts of

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MFA, China at the Annual NATO Conference on Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-proliferation, Warsaw, December 10, 2009, <http://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjbj/zjjg/jks/kjfywj/t646782.htm> (accessed December 30, 2009).

<sup>85</sup> For a detailed discussion of no-first-use policy, see, for example, Pan Zhenqiang, "On China's No First Use of Nuclear Weapons," paper presented at Pugwash Meeting no. 279, London, November 15–17, 2001, <http://www.pugwash.org/reports/nw/zhenqiang.htm> (accessed June 15, 2007).

climbing a mountain, the top of which cannot be seen at this time. But he urged the international community should act to head up to a “base camp,” that would be safer than where we are today. This is indeed the most commendable attitude towards the nuclear issues, as all of them involve many other vital security concerns that bear on the core interests of nations concerned, nuclear or non-nuclear. Resolutions of all of these problems are not only time-consuming, but are also bound to witness numerous setbacks and even reversals. It is nevertheless argued by some that nuclear disarmament and nuclear nonproliferation can be achievable within the timeframe of, say, one generation (30 years). They have in fact been pushing the realization of a world free of nuclear weapons by the year of 2035. That sounds too sweet to be true. On the other hand, opposition to nuclear disarmament argues that nuclear weapons have become part of life today, and they just do not see how the mankind could get rid of them. Further, they have gone as far as stressing that nuclear disarmament may make the world a more dangerous place to live in. These people seem to be still living in the Cold War years, completely out of touch with the present world. The correct way is, as Perry has pointed, to be both ambitious and pragmatic: with dreams of a world free of nuclear weapons in mind, just keep going, and reach the “base camp” first, and then start to climb. There will be many setbacks and even reversals ahead. But as long as we persist, the elimination of nuclear weapons will become reality. We will reach the top of the mountain because we cannot afford to lose the battle.

## **About the Author**

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