Nuclear and Conventional Extended Deterrence in a Northeast Asian Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone

Summary Report
East Asia Nuclear Security Workshop
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is based on a workshop of senior international security experts at the International House of Japan in Tokyo on November 11, 2011. The workshop was organised by the Nautilus Institute, the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation and Nautilus Australia – RMIT Global Studies, and co-hosted by the Asia Pacific Leadership Network. The workshop was funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Samuel Rubin Foundation, and the Nuclear Threat Institute.

The workshop aimed to evaluate the robustness of proposals to establish a nuclear weapons-free zone in Northeast Asia (NEA-NWFZ) and to identify pathways leading to its creation. The challenges posed in establishing a zone in this region are unique, and differ in critical ways from NWFZs that exist elsewhere in the world.

Five critical issues were identified, each intricately connected with the others. Most crucially, participants examined the role that nuclear deterrence plays in the region, positive and negative. Second, they discussed the extent to which conventional extended deterrence has already facilitated the recession of nuclear extended deterrence in the last two decades. Third, they reviewed precedents for NWFZs and their salience to Northeast Asia. This issue was particularly important in light of two key conflicts that remain unresolved, that is, the Taiwan-China-US nexus on the one hand; and the US-South Korea-North Korea nexus on the other. Fourth, they investigated the logical sequence of steps to achieve such a zone whether the primary approach were multilateral, bilateral, or a mixture of both. Finally, attention was given to the broader strategic environment and where a NEA-NWFZ might fit.

The workshop paid special attention to the proposal made by Morton Halperin, which framed the discussion. He suggested that 1) a NEA-NWFZ should be embedded into a broader security arrangement and normalisation of relations between states; and 2) a NEA-NWFZ include a five year preliminary period wherein signatories could evaluate compliance and duly withdraw if unsatisfied with the actions of any signatory member; or choose to extend this five year period before committing forever to the NWFZ treaty. The overall regional security arrangements proposed by Halperin include a termination of the state of war on the Korean Peninsula, the creation of a permanent council on security, a mutual declaration of no hostile intent, provisions of assistance for nuclear and other energy aid for the DPRK in step with its progressive denuclearization; and a termination of sanctions against states party to the treaty and in good standing, but reserving the right to collectively impose sanctions on any state that violates its commitments under the treaty.

Participants expressed contrasting views on the retention of extended nuclear deterrence as an integral element of a NWFZ. One stated that a NWFZ couldn’t plausibly be maintained without the ultimate dismantling of the nuclear doctrines adhered to by the non-nuclear parties. Others disagreed strongly with this assessment and pointed to the South Pacific NWFZ that appears to co-exist with nuclear extended deterrence to at least one of the non-nuclear weapons state parties (Australia).

The DPRK’s nuclear weapons program figured prominently in the discussions as to how a NWFZ might work and how it might be negotiated into existence. Some participants argued that the DPRK is consumed by domestic issues and has never entered into international
negotiations in good faith, thereby becoming a 'hole in the doughnut," and implying that North Korea might be bypassed and left out of the process of creating a NEA-NWFZ. Participants disagreed strongly on this score, although everyone agreed on one principle: the DPRK must start to disarm its nuclear capability if there are to be negotiations. In terms of negotiating partners, non-partisan states such as Mongolia might be help to increase North Korean understanding of what is entailed by a NWFZ, both in terms of security guarantees obtained by non-nuclear states, and in terms of the obligations undertaken by non-nuclear states, thereby relieving some of Pyongyang’s anxiety and reducing grounds for paranoia about external threats.

One proposal suggested that Japan and the ROK might establish a bilateral NWFZ, with the North to follow later. The concept advanced in the Halperin contribution rejected the latter idea as politically unfeasible and unable to establish the requisite regional security conditions that would make a NWFZ tenable. Rather, the Halperin proposal favours a multilateral solution employing a “Six Party” approach.

Domestic politics of the various countries in the region and how these might play out in the context of establishing a NWFZ were also discussed, including the anxieties and concerns of liberal and conservative factions in South Korea and Japan.

Gridlock, it was noted in conclusion, never lasts long in international affairs. The dangers posed by nuclear weapons to cities across Northeast Asia have made the establishment of a NWFZ all the more necessary. Any opportunities that arise to press for either a comprehensive security agreement or a NWFZ solution must be seized quickly.

Having arguably survived the workshop’s “road test,” it is now time to put the concept of a NEA-NWFZ to the “acid test” by probing for the perspectives of key players in Pyongyang and Washington DC, as well as ascertaining the Russian interest in such a Zone, which was not explored at the workshop.

Additional research is needed on the actual level of Chinese nuclear forces in the region—a key uncertain variable that affects the calculus of all players; and also on the views of the American military towards the concept, especially as it relates to naval operations such as anti-submarine warfare and surface ship access to international waters.

Other ideas for follow-up included:

- Conducting study tours of Korean and Japanese security specialists and policy practitioners of the Southeast Asian, South Pacific, and Mongolian nuclear weapons-free zones, to compare and contrast their approaches with what is demanded of a NWFZ in Northeast Asian circumstances;
- Popular education about the constructive, peacemaking dimensions of a NWFZ to mobilize an undercurrent of broad-based political support for the concept;
- Further research on “technical” issues such as transit, legal-institutional mechanisms whereby the DPRK might be included in a zone, and the obligations undertaken by Nuclear Weapons States in the protocols (these vary from zone to zone and need to be developed specifically tailored to the Northeast Asian region).

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Summary Report

East Asia Nuclear Security Workshop on the establishment of a Northeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, International House of Japan, Tokyo, November 11, 2011

1. Introduction

This report is based on a workshop of senior international security experts at the International House of Japan in Tokyo on November 11, 2011. The workshop was organised by the Nautilus Institute, the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation, and Nautilus Australia – RMIT Global Studies, and co-sponsored by the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network. The workshop was funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Samuel Rubin Foundation, and the Nuclear Threat Institute.

The text captures the tenor and presents the content of the workshop. It contains eight sections that summarize the presentations and discussions of the fifty participants (see Attachments 1 and 2 for the workshop agenda and participant list).

The workshop was conducted under Chatham House rules, which precludes unauthorized attribution of views expressed in the room. This report is the sole responsibility of Nautilus writers (aided by review comments from participants) and summarizes the dialogue at the workshop and, where useful, refers explicitly to solicited papers presented at the workshop, which are published on the workshop website.2

In brief, Section 1 outlines the broad framework in which such a Zone might exist. Section 2 examines the role of extended deterrence, both nuclear and conventional. Section 3 evaluates the extent to which conventional deterrence, including conventional extended deterrence, has already supplanted nuclear deterrence and its extended variant.

Section 4 surveys the broader strategic environment that creates problems of a-symmetry of interest and capacity to sustain a Zone. Section 5 introduces historical precedents from Zones in other regions that might be salient to Northeast Asia.

Section 6 describes the difficulties posed by domestic politics in the states that would be party to a Zone. Section 7 notes some of the shifts in regional security institutions that would be needed to support a Zone and that in turn, would benefit from the existence of a Zone.

Section 8 concludes by tracing out some of the pathways by which a Zone might come into existence, and details some of the tasks entailed by moving from the workshop’s “road test” of the validity and soundness of the concept of a NEA-NWFZ to an “acid test” of North Korean and American reactions towards the concept.

2. Frameworks

The workshop was convened to enable senior security and defence analysts, practitioners, and policymakers to evaluate the robustness of proposals to establish a nuclear weapons-free zone in Northeast Asia (NEA-NWFZ) and to identify pathways leading to its creation. The challenges posed in establishing a zone in this region are unique, and differ in critical ways from NWFZs that exist elsewhere in the world.
A key question at the workshop was whether a NEA-NWFZ would provide a means to restrain, reverse or remove the nuclear threat posed by the DPRK (North Korea); and to reduce the role played by nuclear weapons between the countries in the region, including the ROK (South Korea), the DPRK, Japan and Taiwan.3

Five critical issues were identified, each intricately connected with the others. Most crucially, participants examined the role that nuclear deterrence plays in the region, positive and negative. Second, they discussed the extent to which conventional extended deterrence has already facilitated the recession of nuclear extended deterrence in the last two decades. Third, they reviewed precedents for NWFZs and their salience to Northeast Asia. This issue was particularly important in light of two key conflicts that remain unresolved: the Taiwan-China-US nexus on the one hand; and the US-South Korea-North Korea nexus on the other. Fourth, they investigated the logical sequence of steps to achieve such a zone whether the primary approach is multilateral, bilateral, or a mixture of both. Finally, attention was given to the broader strategic environment and where a NEA-NWFZ might fit.4

Additionally, the workshop identified the importance of transparency with regard to nuclear forces and doctrines of nuclear weapons states that might become signatories to a NEA-NWFZ, and the need for measures to build trust and confidence amongst states in the region, especially Japan and China, to fulfil those goals. What, for example, would be the utility of a global nuclear weapons convention that included all nuclear weapons states? What verification measures would be required in such a convention, and how would it affect the security of the parties with territory covered by a NEA-NWFZ? Furthermore, would cooperation over the nuclear fuel cycle be included in a NEA-NWFZ? These are vital issues in terms of proliferation, technology, and nuclear safety. Common ground rules regulating the way nuclear energy is used to assure safety and regional security would have to be set by countries in the Northeast Asian community.5

The complexities of the issues involved do not mean that a NWFZ framework cannot be created in this region. Indeed, the history of NWFZs suggests that persistence and regional innovation are essential.6 In his opening address, Morton Halperin emphasized the need to avoid accepting the DPRK as a de facto nuclear power. To do so would damage immensely the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and legitimize the unwarranted transfer of nuclear weapons technology.7 The essence of the Halperin plan lay in convincing the DPRK of the need to eliminate its nuclear weapons. The NWFZ would become an essential feature of that move, necessitating a broader comprehensive treaty for peace and security in the region. The ROK would reaffirm its commitment to give up its right to develop nuclear weapons and or have them on its territory. Furthermore, these moves by the two Koreas must be accompanied with a pledge by the nuclear weapons states to not threaten the non-nuclear states covered by the treaty. In particular, United States must be legally bound to not threaten the DPRK with nuclear weapons.8

Halperin argued that a comprehensive security agreement for the entire region is desirable, one that incorporates Japan, the ROK and the United States in their relationship with North Korea, Russia and China. Dialogue between these six states—kicked off possibly by a six party summit meeting of heads of state—would lead to negotiations on a comprehensive treaty on peace and security, eventually signed and ratified by the members of the Six-Party Talks.9 This is not to say that the treaty obligations will be uniform; rather, clusters of articles would have different obligations for different parties. Additional protocols might be signed outside the treaty arrangement.10
The NWFZ treaty would constitute an integral part of the comprehensive security agreement that would include the termination of a state of war on the peninsula, which is a clear objective of the DPRK. A permanent council on security should be created to monitor observance of the treaty. In addition to the six essential founding signatory states, other countries can be invited to either join the council, or simply observe its proceedings. A mutual declaration of no-hostile-intent must be made between these states, and is a top priority in Pyongyang. In the treaty elements dealing directly with the DPRK nuclear issue, provisions for assistance for nuclear and other energy would be made to the North. The treaty would affirm the right of all signatories to achieve energy security, including via the nuclear fuel cycle, provided full scope safeguards and the Additional Protocol are observed.

Halperin suggested that one could move incrementally to achieve these goals. However, the ROK and Japan signing a NWFZ treaty alone would be ineffective, as it would not give China any incentive to push the DPRK to denuclearize in return for enhanced non-nuclear commitments by Japan and the ROK. Thus, the ROK and Japan might enter a NWFZ treaty on an interim basis for say five years, at which time they would reserve the right to withdraw should the DPRK not have denuclearized fully, or some other contingency in regional security had arisen. Should the DPRK adhere to a NEA NWFZ fully in this five-year period, the ROK and Japan might make their commitments permanent. Both might remove themselves from the treaty if insufficient progress was being made. Alternately, they might choose to extend the contingent period of commitment for another five years if valuable but incomplete disarmament had occurred during this period in the DPRK.1

3. Role of Extended Nuclear Deterrence

Deterrence is not a “one-size-fits-all” concept. To be effective, deterrent strategies arguably need to be revised and modified to reflect local power balances, interests, and perceptions. Some participants strongly advanced the view that a NEA-NWFZ was not incompatible with continuing US commitments to respond to nuclear threats to the ROK and Japan, including the use of nuclear extended deterrence threats. (The Taiwan Straits issue was barely mentioned in the discussions, although many of the same issues arise in that context).

Halperin and others argued that a deterrence posture based on “prompt response” should be developed and deployed relying on a global conventional strike force, making use of mobile sea, air, and land-based military options to remove leaders who attempt or succeed in military attacks to achieve territorial gains via fait accomplis, rather than relying on nuclear weapons to repel or punish such aggressors—including nuclear aggressors—although Halperin would leave open the possibility that nuclear aggressors might be met in kind, leaving a residual nuclear deterrent threat in place. Others pushed for a more stringent position. They averred that a common security framework such as a NEA-NWFZ must eschew nuclear extended deterrence to non-nuclear parties covered by the treaty in a region surrounded by nuclear weapon states. This stance, in turn, would contribute to global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. Indeed, some argued that a NWFZ is not compatible in any way with the reliance by non-nuclear states party to such a treaty on a nuclear extended deterrent, that is, one cannot have one’s cake and eat it too.

One participant suggested that South Korean, Japanese, and even American leaders are already deeply ambivalent about depending on nuclear weapons in maintaining regional security. Extended deterrence, he suggested, especially of the nuclear variety, hampers trust
and impedes rather than fosters the cooperation necessary to tackle the real-world security problems afflicting the region—most urgently, for example, the impacts arising from the global financial crisis.

A NEA-NWFZ implies, therefore, that states and their leaders have come to some consensus on which types of self-defence and common security measures are legitimate and which are not. Thus, it was argued that some countries might retain defence ties with the United States, and seek a NWFZ, but the retention of extended deterrence, especially of the nuclear variety, would work against such an outcome by constantly suggesting that some states are sufficiently threatened by others as to require external alliances.

The de-emphasis of the nuclear option in the US 2010 Nuclear Posture Review was recognized as exemplifying a general trend towards recognition that such weapons are manifestly inhumane and should be delegitimized in terms of law and utility. Indeed, many participants also took note of a general shift in Washington’s approach to the much reduced use of its nuclear deterrent against, for instance, non-nuclear powers, given the “advent of US conventional military pre-eminence and continued improvements in US missile defences and capabilities to counter and mitigate the effects of CBW”. The Obama Administration’s declaratory doctrine therefore departs significantly from the approach adopted in 2002 by the Bush Administration.

Conversely, the prospect of the entire region proliferating nuclear forces is a strong incentive for China to induce the DPRK to give up its nuclear weapons. The acquisition by one state prompts other states, especially local adversaries or unfriendly states, to acquire their own countervailing forces, whether for domestic-political or military reasons. In this regard, one need only observe the current climate in the Middle East, where Saudi Arabia’s leaders have made it clear that, should Iran embrace the nuclear option, they will follow suit.

The effectiveness of deterrence is difficult to measure. Some participants argued that low-level aggression took place on the Korean peninsula in 2010, in part because of Korean belief that the nuclear threat dampens the risk of escalation of clashing conventional forces to all-out war, making covert and overt conventional provocations possible; but at the same time, escalation has been avoided due to the fear of escalation to all-out war, including nuclear war. A wide range of varying perceptions were evident on if and how nuclear deterrence works in this region. It is interesting to note that in this region, it was stated, perceptions are as important as military realities. As Japan is surrounded by nuclear weapon states, it already assumes for purposes of defence planning that the range for potential escalation is from the low end of unauthorized entry into its waters and airspace to high end levels of violence associated with renewed war in Korea or involvement in a US-China military confrontation. Some escalation scenarios go even further, including preparations for a possible main island invasion that were the hallmarks of previous Cold War scenarios involving the former Soviet Union occupying Hokkaido.

In contrast, some speakers noted that if nuclear extended deterrence is to be relied upon, then it must be more realistic than its current decaying, even recessed form. As it stands, one analyst asserted, nuclear extended deterrence is actually a fiction conveyed to Washington’s allies. Indeed, one author suggested, if allied leaders in Japan and Korea truly understood the realities of nuclear extended deterrence, then they might consider going nuclear themselves more seriously than they have for decades. Indeed, relying on nuclear weapons such as the unreliable, error-prone nuclear land-attack cruise missile were wasteful and empty symbolic
expressions of US will to defend Japan.\textsuperscript{26} It was pointed out that US tactical nuclear weapons could hardly be redeployed in Japan or Korea given the absence of shelters and facilities to house them, and the small number of such weapons actually still in existence in the US arsenal. Instead, the United States should focus on alliance “software” rather than nuclear hardware. This boils down to the imperative to continuously consult and update allies on the status and commitment of US conventional forces and missile defences—an approach that keeps pace with the declining value of nuclear weapons.

Moreover, to suggest as one participant did, that nuclear weapons might be a deterrent against all weapons of mass destruction, is akin to burning down the house to get the mosquito.\textsuperscript{27} References to chemical weapons as a rationale for nuclear deterrence is simply a way to prop up the utility of nuclear weapons and is misleading with regard to the actual, highly limited utility of nuclear weapons in any realistic military circumstances.\textsuperscript{28}

4. Conventional Deterrence: Roles, Conflicts, Utility

Alternatives to the doctrine of nuclear deterrence in the region were canvassed. These alternatives rest on the increased conventional military capability in the context of the steadily diminishing utility of nuclear weapons. Table 1 from one of the papers circulated to the workshop participants shows military missions that have been attributed in the past to nuclear forces, and for those that remain on “active duty” in the post-Cold War era, that conventional deterrence must supplant effectively if nuclear deterrence is to recede sufficiently for a NEA-NWFZ to proceed.

Table 1: Past and Current Missions Of US Nuclear Weapons to Support “Deterrence”

- Pre-emptive attack of deployed WMD forces on high alert and about to attack US or allied forces
- Preventive war against an adversary
- WMD interdiction and/or elimination
- Wide-area destruction or disablement of armored forces
- Destruction-disablement of deep underground targets (leadership, command and control, WMD, for example)
- Destruction-disablement of hardened surface targets (HARTS or hardened artillery sites, for example)
- Destruction-disablement of dispersed WMD-armed mobile missiles
- Destruction-disablement of air and missile bases in reinforced concrete
- Destruction-disablement of large infrastructure such as bridges, ports, refineries
- Destruction-disablement of large ships at distance from anti-ship missiles such as aircraft carriers
- Use as anti-submarine warfare depth charges
- Use as surface-air ballistic missile defense
- Pivotal rather than solely deterrent role in relations between allies and adversaries in the region
- “Shaping the environment” in ways favorable to US interests (sometimes referred to as “dissuasion” of competitors in the context of nuclear strategy)
- Signalling to allies, adversaries, and third parties that US vital interests are involved in a conflict to the degree that could lead to nuclear war

Participants noted that conventional deterrence is a dynamic and relative concept. Is enhanced conventional deterrence, including conventional extended deterrence, consistent with a NEA-NWFZ? Or are there levels of capacity to inflict massive conventional retaliation approaching that of nuclear weapons that could be counter-productive due to the perception of adversaries that these are predatory or offensive capabilities?

It was noted that the creation of effective conventional capabilities already has been deemed all-important by US allies, given Washington’s stated position of restraint in using its nuclear deterrent. Conventional weapons already exert a powerful deterrent effect, irrespective of the presence of nuclear weapons or assertions of nuclear extended deterrence. This effect is due in part to the ever-increasing precision and lethality of conventional weapons, but also in part to the greater credibility of actual usage of such weapons, including demonstrated use in real wars, compared with nuclear weapons. It was also noted that nuclear deterrence has proven to be of limited use in any case. Indeed, non-nuclear weapon states have ignored putative nuclear deterrence, including extended deterrence, and initiated war against nuclear weapons and non-nuclear weapons states before, including in this region.

In Japan’s case, conventional capabilities are constrained by the “exclusively defensive-defence” limitation imposed by the country’s post-World War II Constitution. Japan therefore has limited means of projecting an offensive capability that might strike other territories. However, some conflict scenarios imply that Japan should build a greater offensive capability, especially in relation to territorial disputes. It was noted that a politically defensive posture can be combined with a militarily offensive power and strategy—and vice versa.

Some participants also found no reason, in principle, to rule out US forces remaining an essential component to Japan’s defence strategy. However, acceptance of this role by all states in the region that might be party to a NEA-NWFZ would depend on whether these forces were forward-deployed military units or less visible and potentially threatening capacities such as signals intelligence facilities. The latter would possibly constitute high priority Chinese targets. China and Russia would have be consulted on such matters as part of a comprehensive security arrangement that includes a NEA-NWFZ in order to ensure that they perceive such forces to be part of a “security community” rather than an unacceptable external threat to their own sovereignty. This, in turn, may be rejected by the United States and its allies as an unacceptable intrusion onto their sovereign rights to cooperate on security matters, which would also obstruct the establishment of a NEA-NWFZ.

Adopting a NEA-NWFZ might also require states to be more cautious in their approach to defence modernization. Theatre missile defence systems might well be consistent with a NWFZ, but only if they are undertaken at a moderate pace and not so rapidly as to cause some parties (most notably Beijing) undue anxiety about the underlying threat perception and intention embodied in such capacities when they are combined with offensive conventional force capabilities. Discussants noted that such defence modernization could block the creation of a NWFZ because regionally deployed missile defence systems might disrupt the capacity of strategic nuclear forces of nuclear weapons states such as China to project credible retaliatory capacity against other nuclear weapons states. Tacit restraint by all parties also might be needed in relation to military build-up in China, Taiwan, and by the United States in relation to the Taiwan Straits contingency for a NEA-NWFZ to be implemented.

For sustainable non-nuclear deterrence to operate in Korea, phased removal and demobilization of forward-deployed conventional forces in and around the DMZ would be
needed, especially by the DPRK. Verification of this process will pose challenges to both
Koreas, the United States, and third parties, although there is significant UN experience in
this regard, especially at the Golan Heights.36

None of these arms control measures would take place in isolation. Therefore, the region
must seriously consider creating a comprehensive regional security framework that might
resemble the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe although of itself, such
entity would fall far short of what is needed to create an environment conducive to the
creation of a NEA-NWFZ.

5. The Broader Strategic Environment

That all parties affected should support its creation was suggested by the UN expert group on
the creation of NWFZs to be a necessary precondition for a successful zone negotiation to
occur. Consistent with this approach, participants concurred that all six powers that were part
of the February 13, 2007 agreement on “Initial Actions for the Implementation of the Joint
Statement at the Six Party Talks” must be involved in the proposed security dialogue and the
creation of a NEA-NWFZ. A NWFZ and the six party talks—either a direct descendent of the
past Six Party Talks, or a new six party dialogue mechanism, could be complementary and
pursued in parallel.37 Halperin’s framework paper set the scene, accompanied by similar
proposals addressing the importance of bringing North Korea back to the negotiation table
within that framework. Restarting the Six Party Talks would be an incentive not only to bring
the DPRK back into the fold but also lay the groundwork for the broader aims of a NWFZ.

The arrangement of a three-plus-three NEA-NWFZ was also examined.38 The treaty would
include a six-party format with intra-zonal states (Japan, ROK and DPRK) and “neighbouring
nuclear weapons states” (China, Russia and the United States). Security assurances by
neighbouring nuclear weapons states are deemed essential in this plan, as they are to NWFZs
in other parts of the world.

The role that North Korea should play in terms of bringing such a zone agreement into play,
given the considerable difficulties it had posed in past negotiations, proved contentious at the
workshop.39 Could North Korea be sidestepped at the outset to get the process for a NWFZ
underway on the assumption that it will eventually unify with the ROK?40 Might Japan and
South Korea take the lead and establish a bilateral NWFZ that allows for future expansion,
perhaps including not only the DPRK, but also Mongolia?

For the ROK, a limited, bilateral NWFZ might be a useful firebreak on a regional arms race,
by deepening Japan’s good intentions not to arm with nuclear weapons and possibly
forestalling the enhancement of Chinese capabilities.41 Also, it might demand that China and
Russia forego nuclear use against them immediately upon ratification of the treaty, thereby
winning support from South Korean conservatives, some of whom now favour unilateral
nuclear armament for the ROK.42 Some suggested that the initial absence of the DPRK from
a bilateral NWFZ did not weaken such a plan; it might well choose to join later, and
meanwhile, Japan and the ROK would reap benefits, as would the nuclear weapons states
who commit to the treaty’s protocols.

However, a bilateral formula between Japan and the ROK was rejected within the framework
of Halperin’s paper, as it would leave unresolved the broader strategic concerns (for instance,
the continuation of the state of war on the peninsula).43 A bilateral ROK-Japan NWFZ from
this perspective would fall short of the strategic conditions needed before a NWFZ would be feasible and meaningful in the first place, creating a chicken-and-egg problem. A minority voice challenged this logic, arguing that a bilateral zone could establish a baseline against which North Korean nuclear behaviour could be judged, would set the future security agenda of the region rather than allowing the DPRK to exercise veto power over regional security cooperation by virtue of becoming nuclear-armed, and there was no reason to wait and much to be lost from further delay.

A third option with regard to the DPRK—whereby it would join a NEA-NWFZ at the outset as Argentina and Brazil did in the Treaty of Tlatelolco, but only complies fully over time and receives, in turn, negative security assurances from the nuclear weapons states only to the degree it is in full compliance—was described briefly and needs further research and legal analysis to ascertain its applicability to a NEA NWFZ. This option might be combined with the proposal by Halperin to establish a five year compliance “option to opt out” for the ROK and Japan.

Although North Korea took precedence in the discussions as a primary, immediate obstacle to the creation of a NEA-NWFZ, other potential strategic factors that might affect the creation of a NWFZ were touched upon. Taiwan, deemed an internal Chinese issue with international ramifications, did not feature so heavily, though it was pointed out as a potentially vital issue by a few participants. One participant noted that a NWFZ might still be created without Taiwan’s status posing a problem, in part because precedents exist for various territories within a zone being part of such an arrangement.44

However, China and the United States have only partially overlapping criteria for what constitutes an acceptable NWFZ, as was described in a circulated background paper. 45 These two nuclear weapons states would have to converge on their criteria for an acceptable NWFZ in relation to Northeast Asia, and possibly with respect to the Taiwan Straits conflict and the linkage thereof with Japan and the ROK, before any NEA-NWFZ, bilateral or otherwise, could make much headway.

6. NWFZ: Historical Precedents

What do precedents suggest as to how a NWFZ in the Northeast Asian region might emerge? The first NWFZ in a populated area, the Treaty of Tlatelolco signed in 1967 (a year prior to the NPT), provides one model. It was designed to keep Latin America free of nuclear weapons and incidents similar to the Cuban Missile Crisis.46 It involved the application of IAEA safeguards that link the signatories to the obligations of Article III of the NPT. Although the entire treaty regime has not come into effect, the treaty is in force for all Latin American states. As noted in the previous section, the “waiver” mechanism in the Tlatelolco Treaty might be used for the gradual entry into force of a NEA-NWFZ, even if the broader security assurances sought by all the signatory parties might not be met immediately as a result.47

The nuclear-free-zone concept has momentum in other regions today that are linked to Northeast Asia. The 2012 UN Middle East WMDFZ conference to be hosted by Finland suggests a vital step may be taken to halt proliferation and to avert the collapse of the NPT, at least in that region.48
It was noted that in each of the five NWFZ treaties in populated regions, a catalytic event activated the treaty process. In the case of the Tlatelolco Treaty, it was the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962; in the Rarotonga Treaty, the French policy of nuclear testing in the Pacific; for the Bangkok Treaty, the withdrawal of Russia and the US from respective bases in Vietnam and the Philippines; for the Pelindaba Treaty, the conclusion of South Africa’s apartheid regime and the abolition of its nuclear weapon facilities; and for the Central Asian Semipalatinsk Treaty, the end of the Soviet Union and its accompanying nuclear weapons program in the region.49

In all of these cases civil society played important roles in pre-negotiation and negotiation phases taking into account the specific nature of the region. Along these lines, specific models have been formulated for the Northeast Asian region, such as those stemming from the Peace Depot and the Nautilus Institute.50

7. Domestic Concerns

In addition to external geopolitical factors, it is evident that various political factions and groups exist within the relevant countries that will foster or block a NEA-NWFZ. Seoul, for instance, was noted as expressing an interest in making nuclear weapons whenever the US security guarantee was considered unreliable, be it the Nixon Doctrine of 1974 or Jimmy Carter’s suggestions to move US troops off the peninsula in 1976.51 Indeed, South Korea’s polity is divided against itself when it comes to matters nuclear, with distinct groupings of elite opinion observable over time.52 In terms of its relationship with Pyongyang, Seoul more recently has been inconsistent, critical of the Six-Party Talks, and seeks to extract a DPRK apology for its misdeeds. The United States remains rooted in a crime-and-punishment disposition towards the North Koreans, while Japan is not going to take the initiative, given its preoccupation with the DPRK’s past abductions of Japanese nationals.53

What might be required, it was suggested, is to convince nuclear conservatives in Japan that the risks of the whole region going nuclear far exceed that of a NWFZ. Indeed, it might be argued that a generalized proliferation in the region would amount to a system dedicated to “mutual probable destruction” rather than a stable, non-nuclear future. Both Koreas as well as China are suspicious of Japan’s nuclear aspirations, and the ROK wants to process spent nuclear fuel in part as a hedge against Japanese proliferation potential.54 The US security guarantee is a system that prevents both the ROK and Japan from taking that path; and historically, nuclear extended deterrence, or at least its rhetorical form, has been integral to that guarantee.

The absence of a reliable institutional mechanism to mediate between the two Korean militaries was noteworthy, although there are previous agreements between the parties that can be reactivated.55 To get anywhere the Koreas must sort out their differences and conduct frank discussions about the implementation of existing bilateral agreements, and an East Asian conflict resolution centre might be established to facilitate that process.56 As the DPRK military likely perceives itself to be militarily inferior in conventional forces, it will likely insist on retaining its nuclear option for the foreseeable future.57

Since 2008, high-level military talks between the two Koreas have been stalled. A more negative note was struck by those who portrayed the difficulties of internal politics in the DPRK as being so deeply rooted that North Korea could never be a credible negotiating partner for any external player, let alone South Korea. Others argued that North Korea’s
“inferior capability” is a misleading myth, in part because much of the DPRK’s military expenditure is concealed.58

That said, one speaker argued that it is equally misleading to overstate North Korea’s military effectiveness, though this was not to ignore the damage that capability might inflict on the ROK in a war. US and ROK military capabilities are absolutely superior to those of the DPRK in terms of effectiveness, although not in crude numbers of some weapon systems.59 Extant military data gathered from open sources and presented at the workshop suggests that Seoul is only partly exposed in the northern suburbs to the DPRK’s Koksan 170mm and 24 MM Multiple Rocket Launchers. Seoul would suffer losses but would not be turned into a “sea of fire” by a DPRK artillery and rocket assault. In an attack, North Korean deployments would also be limited, hampered by a rapid exhaustion of fuel supplies, long and interdictable supply lines, and southward invasion corridors blocked by almost impassable urban areas.

In this perspective, a NWFZ might be attractive to North Korea’s leaders because it offers a different pathway that enables Pyongyang to buy time, enabling the regime to trade in on a promise from the United States not to attack them with nuclear weapons and to shift from currently hostile relations to more accommodating stances.60 Given that North Korea’s state is not a monolith, the more dynamic, pro-engagement forces within it might be influenced by proffering of “vanilla” options.61 Others questioned whether the debate about the internal politics of North Korea had any value at all, given the long history of bad faith and promises left unfulfilled by Pyongyang.62 Although the workshop was held before Kim Jong Il’s death on December 17, 2011, his passing suggests that the resilience and ability of the DPRK regime led by his son Kim Jong Un will be revealed quickly by internal and external pressures.

8. Strategic Environments: Other Options

The question was posed as to why China was not exercising more restraining influence over North Korea by lessening their security anxiety. The response here was that Beijing, having formed a “normal relationship” with the DPRK, did not wish to abuse it by using unwarranted pressure that would simply undermine China’s ability to communicate with the regime in Pyongyang.63 For historical, reputational, and strategic regions, it was averred, China will support the DPRK if it is unduly attacked; but it will not back the North if it provokes a war. China remains a vital bridge to reviving the Six Party Talks over North Korea’s nuclear threat; or in any six party formulae that might lead to a NEA-NWFZ.

Other possibilities also emerged as avenues within the geopolitical and strategic environment. For one, Mongolia might be involved in a NEA-NWFZ, given that it is part of the region, is already a declared and internationally recognized nuclear weapons-free state surrounded by nuclear powers, and has diplomatic relations with North Korea.64 The problem here lies in the asymmetrical relationship that such an association poses, given Chinese and US involvement.65 That said, the fact that Mongolia does not pose a threat to Pyongyang might enable them to host a special session with North Korean experts along with China, Russia and non-aligned countries as to how a NWFZ might work.66

9. Future Pathways: Prospects and Possibilities

A NWFZ treaty is a flexible legal institution and has been adapted to many local and regional circumstances. No two zones are exactly alike, and innovations have occurred in terms of
what a zone may cover over time. Historically, states that were opposed to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty or have found themselves in direct security competition with a potentially nuclear-armed neighbour, have found it possible and desirable to participate in a NWFZ.67 The NPT Treaty itself calls for states to establish NWFZs, and the UN Security Council regularly calls for such zones and provides a legal and political mandate to do so.

States can also make strictly regional arrangements to restrict the presence of nuclear weapons on their home soil.68 Some participants noted that a NEA-NWFZ could be a suitable way to recognize that the US nuclear arsenal is already largely recessed and that the rhetoric and perceptions of nuclear extended deterrence is no longer aligned with the nuclear force structure.69 In the case of Japan, the notion of a NWFZ in the region was initially dismissed by conservatives as a naïve expression of leftist sentiment. Now that the DPRK can detonate nuclear devices, however, a NEA NWFZ may be more attractive precisely because it would push the DPRK to commit to disarming its nuclear arsenal, with Japan and the ROK recommitting to their NPT non-nuclear weapons state status, thereby giving up nothing in return for DPRK nuclear disarmament.70

Participants often returned to the notion that what matters most to the North Koreans is an expression of non-belligerence from the United States. Because it bears on fundamental intention, such a commitment may be even more important than the issue of nuclear threats from the United States embodied in deployments, exercises, and the like. To pursue an NWFZ requires establishing a minimal level of trust and perseverance, both qualities sorely needed in Pyongyang and Washington after two decades of oscillating cooperation and confrontation.

Participants suggested that the United States in particular must move on from trying to convince the DPRK that they violated their original agreements with Washington and Seoul, and move beyond the Cold War context of demonizing the North. A durable cooperative security system requires that countries recognize that other countries have different domestic polities. Whatever the makeup of a regional security institution, to succeed, it was argued, it must facilitate the involvement of liberal and conservative factions in all the political systems of all states party to the agreements that constitute the system. Unfortunately, no state is in a position to command leadership, and all states currently suffer from either weak or transitional leaderships. Nonetheless, if the DPRK wants to normalize its relationships in the region, the costs to the other powers in the region would be negligible and affordable.71

In terms of an overall framework, Halperin’s working paper was deemed either workable or worthy of further dialogue, with some reservations as to the realism that domestic political conditions could generate the political will needed to negotiate and to establish a NWFZ.72 A constructive aspect of the proposal lies in how it embeds the NWFZ in a broader set of treaty and security arrangements, thereby rendering plausible its underlying assumption that the DPRK would dismantle its nuclear weaponry given a way to resolve its multiple and profound insecurities. Also, the proposed mechanism to establish a time frame for compliance over a five year period, at which time any party to the treaty would withdraw, was noted as a useful innovation to the concepts previously advanced, and could be combined with the limited entry procedure for the DPRK drawn from the Latin American treaty by using the waiver mechanism. A six party process, whether it be the Six-Party Talks or some other mechanism, must be activated as a matter of urgency, and the DPRK brought out of its isolation.73 Any progress implies that substantial energy assistance will be provided to the DPRK as part of an overall quid pro quo.
Many obvious obstacles could block the establishment of a NEA-NWFZ. Nonetheless, the workshop identified a common will, albeit qualified, on which to build. A combination of converging factors are required for a zone to be established, including the creation of a regional state-based security architecture, and the generation of a civil society component encouraging the establishment of such a zone. Small, agile networks might also prove important in terms of generating support for a NEA-NWFZ. City-to-city peace networks are one such possibility. For example, in South Korea various cities have a solid anti-nuclear pedigree, and hundreds of cities in Japan have already resolved to support a NEA-NWFZ.74

Gridlock, it was noted in conclusion, never lasts long in international affairs.75 The dangers posed by nuclear weapons to cities across Northeast Asia have made the establishment of a NWFZ all the more necessary. Any opportunities that arise to press for either a comprehensive security agreement or a NWFZ solution must be seized quickly. Having arguably survived the workshop’s “road test,” it is now time to put the concept of a NEA-NWFZ to the “acid test” by probing for the perspectives of key players in Pyongyang and Washington DC, as well as ascertaining Russian interest in such a Zone— an issue that was not explored at the workshop.

Additional research is needed on the actual level of Chinese nuclear forces in the region—a key uncertain variable that affects the calculus of all players; and also on the views of the American military towards the concept, especially as it relates to naval operations such as anti-submarine warfare.

Other ideas for follow-up included:

- Conducting study tours of Korean and Japanese security specialists and policy practitioners of the Southeast Asian, South Pacific, and Mongolian nuclear weapons-free zones, to compare and contrast their approaches with what is demanded of a NWFZ in Northeast Asian circumstances;
- Popular education about the constructive, peacemaking dimensions of a NWFZ to mobilize an undercurrent of broad-based political support for the concept;
- Further research on “technical” issues such as transit, the legal-institutional mechanism whereby the DPRK might be included in a zone and the obligations undertaken by Nuclear Weapons States in the protocols (these vary from zone to zone and need to be developed specifically tailored to the Northeast Asian region).
ATTACHMENT 1: WORKSHOP AGENDA

East Asia Nuclear Security Workshop  
International House (Lecture Hall), Tokyo, Japan  
November 11, 2011

Convenors:  
Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability,  
The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation,  
Nautilus Australia – RMIT Global Studies  
Asia Pacific Leadership Network, ANU

Funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway and the Nuclear Threat Initiative

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td><strong>Workshop Registration</strong></td>
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<td>9:15</td>
<td><strong>Opening – Co-convenors Welcome</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peter Hayes, Executive Director, Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability</td>
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<td>Gordon Flake, Executive Director, The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gareth Evans, Chancellor, Australian National University, Fmr Foreign Minister, Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:30</td>
<td><strong>Opening Remarks/ Framework Paper:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Role of a NE Asia NWFZ in Eliminating Nuclear Weapons from the Korean Peninsula</td>
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<td>Senior Advisor, Open Society Foundations</td>
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<td>9:50</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
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<td>10:05</td>
<td><strong>SESSION 1: STATE OF NUCLEAR EXTENDED DETERRENCE IN EAST ASIA TODAY,</strong></td>
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<td>Chair – Colin Heseltine</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Extended Deterrence in the Japan-U.S. Alliance</td>
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<td>Jimbo Ken, Professor, Faculty of Policy Management, Keio University</td>
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<td>Extended Nuclear Deterrence in Northeast Asia</td>
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<td>Jeffrey Lewis, Adjunct Professor and Director of East Asia Non-Proliferation Program at CNS, Monterey Institute for International Studies</td>
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<td>1.3</td>
<td>Domestic Debates and Assessment of Extended Deterrence in South Korea: A South Korean Perspective</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Choi Jong Kun, Assistant Professor, Yonsei University</td>
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<td>10:25</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
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<td>11:05</td>
<td><strong>Morning Tea</strong></td>
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<td>11:20</td>
<td><strong>SESSION 2: PATHWAYS AND PITFALLS TO NEA CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE,</strong></td>
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<td>Chair – Philip Yun</td>
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<td>2.1</td>
<td>Conventional Deterrence and Japan’s Security</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ogawa Shin’ichi, Visiting Professor, Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Paper in Chinese, English Translation forthcoming</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Xu Guanyu, Member of Board, China Arms Control and Disarmament Association</td>
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</table>
2.3 The Conventional Forces of North Korea and Arms Control in Korean Peninsula: Breaking through the Stalemate………………………………………………………………………………Cha Du Hyeogn
Security Expert of Korea

2.4 How Conducive is the Military Environment to a Korea Japan Nuclear Weapon Free Zone? Observations, Derivations and Postulations…………………………………………………Roger Cavazos
Consultant on NE Asia, Roger Cavazos Consulting

12:00 Discussion

1:00 Lunch

2:00 SESSION 3: NORTHEAST ASIA NUCLEAR WEAPON FREE ZONE PROPOSALS,
Chair – Gordon Flake

3.1 A Northeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone with a Three Plus Three Arrangement
……………………………………………………………………….Umebayashi Hiromichi
Special Adviser, Peace Depot

3.2 Regions That Say No: Precedents and Precursors for Denuclearizing Northeast Asia
…………………………………………………………………………………………………..Michael Hamel-Green
Professor, Victoria University Melbourne

3.3 A Northeast Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone & the Korean Problem
……………………………………………………………………………………....................Thomas Graham Jr.
Ambassador, Executive Chairman, Lightbridge Corporation

3.4 Forthcoming …………………………………………………………………………………….Yi Kiho
Director, Nautilus ARI-Korea

2:40 Discussion

3:25 Break

3:40 SESSION 4: SUSTAINABLE SECURITY IN EAST ASIA BEYOND NUCLEAR EXTENDED DETERRENCE, Chair – Gareth Evans

4.1 The Six Party Talks and Implications for Northeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone……………………………………………………………………………..….Moon Chung-in
Professor, Yonsei University

4.2 Reducing Military Tension; Building an Atmosphere of Peace………………….Abe Nobuyasu
Fmr UN Under-Secretary for Disarmament Affairs

4.3 The Politics of A Korea-Japan NWFZ……………………………………………………...Leon Sigal
Director, Northeast Asia Security Project, Social Science Research Council

4:10 Discussion

4:40 Break-Afternoon refreshment

5:10 SESSION 5: GEO-STRATEGIC ADJUSTMENTS FOR A NON-NUCLEAR SECURITY FRAMEWORK FOR EAST ASIA, Chair – Deborah Gordon

5.1 Forthcoming …………………………………………………………………………………….Pan Zhenqiang
Senior Adviser, China Reform Forum
5.2 Forthcoming ................................................................. Baek Jong-Chun
Fmr Chief of the Presidential Security Policy Office, ROK

5.3 Commentary ................................................................. Jayantha Dhanapala
Fmr UN Under-Secretary General for Disarmament

5:40 Discussion

6:40 Closing Remarks
Gareth Evans, Chancellor, Australian National University, Fmr Foreign Minister, Australia
Gordon Flake, Executive Director, The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation
Peter Hayes, Executive Director, Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability

7:00 Workshop Adjourns

7:30 Reception (Lecture Hall)

The full photo gallery from the workshop can be found at:
### ATTACHMENT 2: WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT LIST

<table>
<thead>
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Abe, N., *Reducing Military Tension; Building an Atmosphere of Peace*, East Asia Nuclear Security Workshop, Tokyo, Japan (November 2011)


Choi, J. K., *Domestic Debates and Assessment of Extended Deterrence in South Korea: A South Korean Perspective*, East Asia Nuclear Security Workshop, Tokyo, Japan (November 2011)


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Baruah, J., Japan Pushes for Progress in U.S. Nuclear Review, nuclearabolition.net


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Hamel-Green, M., "Implementing a Korea–Japan Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone: Precedents, Legal Forms, Governance, Scope, Domain, Verification, Compliance and Regional Benefits", Pacific Focus, 26:1, April 2011,


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Tanter, R., and Hayes, P., Beyond the Nuclear Umbrella: Re-Thinking the Theory and Practice of Nuclear Extended Deterrence in East Asia and the Pacific, Pacific Focus, 26:1, April 2011, pp. 5–21

Twenty Key Questions on Nuclear Abolition in East Asia, 6th Jeju Forum Panel, May 28, 2011

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ATTACHMENT 6: ENDNOTES

4 Hayes, Opening Remarks.
6 Hayes, Opening Remarks.
9 China, U.S., North and South Korea, Japan and Russia, commenced in August 2003.
13 Halperin, “Opening Remarks”; comments from participants in Session 5.
15 The point was strongly made in Sessions 1 and 5.

21 For resources on the NPR from 2002, see http://www.wslfweb.org/nukes/npr.htm


23 The sinking of the South Korean naval vessel the Cheonan in March 26, 2010, killing 46 sailors; the Battle of Daecheong on November 10, 2009 off Daecheong Island; the first Battle of Yeonpyeong on June 15, 1999, that saw the loss of between 17 to 30 North Koreans; the Second Battle of Yeonpyeong on June 29, 2002, which saw 13 North Korean sailors and four South Korean sailors killed in action.

24 Observation made in Session 1.

25 Ken Jimbo, “Extended Deterrence in the Japan-U.S. Alliance.”

26 Lewis, “Extended Nuclear Deterrence in Northeast Asia.”

27 The metaphor being used in Session 1.

28 Discussion in Session 1: State of Nuclear Deterrence in East Asia.

29 Observations in Session 1.


31 Ogawa, “Conventional Deterrence and Japan’s Security,” 11.

32 Ogawa, “Conventional Deterrence and Japan’s Security,” 11.

33 Ogawa, “Conventional Deterrence and Japan’s Security,” 2-3.

34 Comments made in Session 2: Pathways and Pitfalls to NEA Conventional Deterrence.


36 Abe, Paper for Session 4.


39 The Agreed Framework of October 21, 1994 was signed by the U.S. and North Korea obligating Pyongyang to freeze the operation and construction of nuclear reactors in exchange for two proliferation-resistant nuclear power reactors: http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/agreedframework . A few also noted that other parties, the US included, had not done the process any favours: see Sigal, “The Politics of a Korea-Japan NWFZ,” Session 4, and comments during that session.

40 Suggestion made in Session 3: Northeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Proposals.

43 Comments made in Session 5.
44 Comment in open remarks, questions for clarification session.
49 Hamel-Green, “Regions that Say No,” 18-19.
51 Peter Hayes and Moon Chung-in, “Park Chung-hee, the CIA and the Bomb,” Hankyore/Global Asia, September 26, 2011; Sigal, “The Politics of a Korea-Japan NWFZ,” 12.
53 Moon, “The Six Party Talks and Implications for Northeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone.”
54 Sigal, “The Politics of a Korea-Japan NWFZ.”
57 Observation in Session 2.
59 Observations in Session 2.
60 Observation in Session 2.
61 Cavazos, “How Conducive is the Military Environment to a Korea Japan Nuclear Weapon Free Zone?”
62 Discussion in Session 4.
63 Exchange in Session 2.
64 Suggestions made in Session 3.
65 Suggestions made in Session 3.
66 Suggestions made in Session 3.
67 Observations in Session 3; and see discussion in Thomas Graham, Jr., “A Northeast Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone and the Korean Problem,” Session 3.
70 Abe, Paper for Session 4: Sustainable security in East Asia beyond Nuclear Extended Deterrence,” 3.
71 Observations by various participants made in Session 5.
72 Comments in Session 5.
73 Comments made in Sessions 4 and 5 respectively.
74 Suggestions made in Session 3: Northeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Proposals.