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EDITOR'S NOTE

North-East Asia's highly sensitive interlocking security dilemmas are of great significance not only for the future of the region itself, but for global security, prosperity, arms control and disarmament. In the past few months alone, the widespread reactions to various announcements have illustrated North-East Asia's increasing centrality in international security. For example, on 10 February 2005, the DPRK announced a suspension of its participation in the Six-Party Talks. More worrying, although not surprising, the DPRK also declared categorically that it has manufactured nuclear weapons for the purpose of self-defence. Other changes include Japan repealing in December 2004 a 35-year ban on weapons exports, paving the way to pursue a joint missile defence programme with the United States, and China's recent anti-secession law.

Changing security perceptions and policies, unresolved conflicts and grievances, and concerns about proliferation all are elements that affect the stability of the region as a whole—and have global repercussions. Articles in this issue of *Disarmament Forum* focus on efforts to stabilize the Korean Peninsula, the issue of missile proliferation and defences, the role of external actors, and regional security policies. The future of the Korean Peninsula, a keystone to the region's security, is particularly highlighted.

The next issue of *Disarmament Forum* will explore global spending on weapons—including trends, costs and consequences. Global military expenditure has been sharply rising for several years. Where is this money going? What sort of security is it "buying" and at what cost—not only financial, but also social, opportunity and human costs? This issue will examine these questions, looking at military expenditure, procurement processes, spending breakdowns, and research and development of new systems and technologies.

With the financial assistance of the Government of Norway, UNIDIR has initiated a project entitled "Disarmament as Humanitarian Action: Making Multilateral Negotiations Work". The project aims at reframing multilateral disarmament negotiation processes in humanitarian terms with a view to developing practical proposals to help negotiators. For a more detailed project description, please see UNIDIR Focus, page 69.

Building on the diplomatic momentum for PAROS negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament, UNIDIR, in cooperation with the Governments of China and the Russian Federation and the Simons Centre for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Research, held the conference "Safeguarding Space Security: Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space" on 21–22 March 2005 in Geneva. Diplomats from the CD, representatives from UN agencies and non-governmental organizations discussed issues relating to the current threats posed to outer space, the imperative of preventing an arms race in outer space, and potential practical steps to move the discussion forward.

UNIDIR, in cooperation with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, is pleased to announce the publication of *Multilateral Diplomacy and the NPT: An Insider's Account* by former Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Jayantha Dhanapala (with Randy Rydell). Drawing on his extensive experience as both a Sri Lankan diplomat and United Nations official, Dhanapala offers a detailed and insightful account of the historic 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. The publication examines the preparations for the conference, the public theatrics as well as behind the scenes dealings of the conference itself, and what can be done today to strengthen the regime. It is a special honour for UNIDIR to co-publish this book, as the author served as UNIDIR's Director from 1987 to 1992.

The Institute has recently published two books focusing on the Middle East. The first, *Peace in the Middle East: P2P and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, is a product of our Middle Eastern Fellowship Programme. The publication examines the failure of post-Oslo "People to People" activities and suggests how these could be revamped—a particularly timely question as new possibilities for peace are unfolding in the region.

The second publication is an edited volume of papers presented at the UNIDIR–League of Arab States conference "Building a WMD Free Zone in the Middle East: Global Non-Proliferation Regimes and Regional Experiences". The publication of the same title looks at the practicalities of such a zone, drawing on experiences from other regions, as well as identifying regional security issues specific to the Middle East.

Kerstin Vignard

SPECIAL COMMENT

North-East Asia is and will remain a region of central importance for the future of international security and of international affairs more generally.

The rich diversity of the peoples and states in the region, and the dynamism and innovativeness with which they have become synonymous the world over, make North-East Asia a powerhouse of the international economy and potentially a tremendous factor for further global development and prosperity in decades to come.

On the other hand, that very same richness and diversity is also fraught with doubts and mistrust within the region, which periodically give rise to feelings of suspicion or even of threat.

The challenge of increasing confidence and cooperation within North-East Asia is of momentous significance first and foremost for the inhabitants of the region itself, but also further afield on a truly global scale. A stable and peaceful North-East Asia will be a *sine qua non* for a more stable and harmonious world. But the reverse is equally true, and global optimism would scarcely be sustainable if North-East Asian security were to take a downward turn.

Not only are the stakes very high, the issues involved are undeniably complex and sensitive. Clarifying and understanding this complexity is the first step to devising and refining much needed cooperative approaches and measures. It is to be hoped that this issue of *Disarmament Forum* can provide food for such constructive thought, and so enhance the chances that the spirit of cooperation will prevail for the benefit of all humanity.

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North-East Asia: time to rethink?

François GODEMENT

North-East Asia may be the nucleus for the Asia-Pacific's dynamic growth process in the future, but it has also been historically a region of intractable geopolitical conflicts, deep-seated animosities and dangerous strategic calculus. Evidence of the region's potential is not hard to find. Japan is the world's second economy, with a renewed lead in many global civilian technologies. China has been the world's fastest growing economy for the last quarter of a century, a process that shows no sign of abating. Wedged between these two giants, South Korea has its share of world-class multinational firms, is negotiating a free-trade pact with Japan while surpassing Japan in the scale of its human contacts with China, particularly for the number of students who study there. A successful North-East Asian integration process would quickly make the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN Regional Forum process pale by comparison.

The historical fault lines

Yet the historical and political fractures prevent this from happening. The region was the object of a colonial competition by late-comers to the game—Tsarist Russia that found itself a goal in its last fifty years by expanding to the East, where it joined the West in extracting unequal treaties from China, and collided with Japan in the Far East. China had suffered its own military defeat in 1895—the Treaty of Shimonoseki ceded in particular the island of Taiwan to Japan. The issue of Taiwan's legal status may have evolved over the last 110 years, but it is still not resolved in practice. After the defeat of the Russian fleet at Tsushima in 1905, Japan's imperial military regime crafted its own "Strike North" strategy, from the colonization of Korea and Manchuria to a proxy game utilizing Mongolia in Siberia. Its land defeat at the hands of General Zhukov's armoured corps at Nomonhan (1939) gave the advantage to advocates of the "Strike South" approach, a maritime strategy aimed at grabbing resources in South-East Asia and chasing the Western powers from Asia and the Pacific.

The Soviet Union's retribution came at the end of the Second World War, with the capture of Sakhalin and the four Northern (or Kuril) Islands of the Japan island chain, and a plan to invade Hokkaido that was prevented by Harry Truman at the Potsdam conference (July 1945). Russia and Japan have never signed a peace treaty, and the question of the four Northern Islands remains unsolved between Japan and the Soviet Union's successors.

This was by no means the only dimension of regional conflict. Relations between China and the Soviet Union, allies in the war against Japan and again over Korea (1950–1953) also went sour from

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1959 to 1989, and a complete settlement of the borders and land issue was reached only recently. Plans for a “triangle of development” in the Tumen delta region between North Korea, Russia and China in the 1990s have been thwarted by the reluctance of Russia to concede China any maritime access in that narrow coastline area, and of course by North Korea’s closed attitude.

Although North Korea has been officially allied “lips and teeth” (for many years China’s description of its close relations with North Korea as well as with Viet Nam) with China over the last sixty years, mutual suspicions involving ethnic issues in North-East China and border issues have also surfaced. And finally, maritime border issues have never been solved between China and Japan—a conflicting claim of sovereignty exists over the Western Ryukyu (Senkaku or Diaoyutai) Islands, handed back to Japan by the United States in 1972 at the same time as Okinawa. The potential natural gas resources in that area, bordering Japan’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), have resurrected tensions at a time when access to energy sources is again a basis of more general friction. Perhaps the only relationship that has superseded the grudges of past centuries is that of Japan and South Korea, cemented by official apologies to South Korean President Kim Dae-jung in 1998; the two societies have developed close ties, although antipathies also remain. Yet, even there, border issues and historical suspicions linger.

It is out of this historical background that the enduring tragedy of the Korean Peninsula was born. For centuries, Korea’s Chosun dynasty had fought over its existence with China, Japan and Russia. China’s defeat at the hands of Japan in 1895 left Korea under the influence of both the United States (the major foreign economic presence at the turn of the century) and Japan. The crucial Russian-Japanese Treaty after Russia’s naval defeat of 1905 was signed in Portsmouth, New Hampshire in August 1905, and it is therefore the United States which consented to Japanese influence: by 1910, Korea was incorporated into the Japanese empire. Like pre-war Poland in Europe, Koreans could trust none of their neighbours, and felt that they were victims of the game among the big powers. In the 1930s, however, Korea’s nationalist movement sought help against Japan in Republican China, the United States (Dr Syngman Rhee) and in Far East Russia (the fraction of the Communist Party that later became the power basis of Chairman Kim Il-sung, a new dynasty founder in the middle of the twentieth century). It was again the big powers—then allied—who decided at Potsdam that the Korean Peninsula would be divided along the line of surrender by Japanese troops on the thirty-eighth parallel, Soviet troops coming from the North and American troops from the South. Like other divided nations, reunification became a patriotic goal for Koreans on both sides of the thirty-eighth parallel, even when they would be pitted against one another as mortal enemies from 1950 to 2000. The historical June 2000 summit between the Republic of Korea’s president, Kim Dae-jung, with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) Chairman Kim Jong-il reaffirmed that goal, although they pledged to work towards reunification “independently”, and the acknowledgement of “different formulas” on each side in fact gave a new basis to a possible coexistence between the two halves of the Korean Peninsula.

The Korean War ended in an armistice in 1953—yet there has never been a peace treaty. The DPRK, in fact, withdrew in 1994 from the military armistice commission at Panmunjon in defiance of a United Nations structure deemed to be subservient to the United States; China also withdrew its delegate. In fact, although North Korea became a member of the United Nations in 1991 (along with South Korea), it has maintained a deep suspicion of international organizations, as is reflected by its poor relations with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). North Korea often thinks that multilateral processes and institutions, from the League of Nations to the United Nations, have not served its interests historically, but rather have condoned the colonization of Korea, and have been used to divide the Peninsula and to enforce the isolation of the North. Similarly, its participation in limited multilateral forums—the so-called “minilateralist” approach in track-two parlance—has generally been reluctant and without any positive outcome. Such was the fate of the Four-Party Talks initiated in the late 1990s in New York; such has also been the fate of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development

Organization (KEDO), the civilian nuclear energy scheme set up after the 1994 nuclear crisis; such seems to be the fate today of the Six-Party Talks hosted in Beijing since 2003, whose successive rounds have failed to reach an agreement and which have not met since their third round in June 2004.

The rationale for irrationality

These facts are well known, yet they are often forgotten under the order of the day—the need for the international community to roll back the acquisition of nuclear and ballistic weapons by the DPRK, and additionally for Japan to find a resolution to the kidnapping issue between the two countries. Yet neither of these issues, nor the defiant and paranoid behaviour of North Korea, can be understood outside the history of deep defiance in North-East Asia and the insecurity of a lonely North Korean state. Both an analogy and a difference can be drawn with the Middle East. A large part of that region's conflicts can be explained by the legacy of tribes, ethnicity and religious challenges pre-dating the modern states, and by the borders disputes inherited from colonization. Many of North-East Asia's insecurities have indeed been reinforced during the colonial era, but they also have to do with the deep-seated nationalism and hostility of monist states with a long historical ancestry and a strong sense of identity. Even contemporary Sino-Japanese relations, in spite of the complexity and nuance that befit two of the world's largest economies, still simmer in a limbo of historical blame, nationalist sentiment and strategic suspicion. From a North Korean perspective, the issue of "regime change" is easily cast as yet another aggression against a patriotic identity.

These uneasy relations at the regional level are mirrored by the irrational attitudes of North Korean leaders towards their partners. After the historic summit of the two Kims, the DPRK should perhaps have seized on the opportunity for a second move towards détente when Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi made a historical move by visiting Pyongyang in September 2002 with very little advance notice to the United States. Instead, inept and provocative handling of the kidnapping issue became a major obstacle in its own right, as Japanese public opinion will not resign itself to a cloudy or untruthful accounting of that past. In January 2005, it was striking to note that the DPRK coupled its announcement of a will to restart talks with the second Bush Administration with a communiqué that pronounced the kidnapping issue "closed". At a time when almost all regional neighbours had interceded, publicly or discreetly, with the United States not to pursue a military pre-emptive option, the DPRK isolated itself from those very same neighbours, shunning the talks in Beijing and closing the door on Japan's diplomacy.

Furthermore, in the weeks that followed, the DPRK managed to antagonize each and every participant in the Six-Party Talks. On 10 February 2005, the DPRK officially stated "we have already resolutely withdrawn from the NPT and manufactured nuclear weapons for self-defence", and in the same breath indefinitely suspended its participation in the Six-Party Talks. It then proclaimed it would not talk with the United States either: this latest move has been potentially rescinded as of 22 February 2005.

There have been many attempts to rationalize the behaviour and foreign strategy of the DPRK. At the heart of its decision-making is an absolute lack of trust in the outside world, which resonates with Korea's historical experience. The talent of the DPRK leaders is to have equated national survival and mistrust of the outside world with regime survival and a stubborn refusal on regime transition. The economic reforms initiated in July 2003—mainly a price reform that increases the buying power of producers of agricultural products and basic necessities—are a far cry from the process that other Asian socialist economies have launched. If

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the outside world's action—diplomatic recognition, aid, training—are premised on the goal of regime transition, the regime's aim is to slow down the pace of that change, which could be fatal to the existing power structure.

The DPRK's ballistic and nuclear efforts have existed for several decades, but in the last fifteen years have replaced conventional military development and armed provocations as a strategic tool. They have now been documented for what they are: a strategy for survival by dissuasion at several levels. As Pyongyang's Soviet vintage armoury ages without significant replacement, its quantitative edge over the ROK has disappeared. Today, what is left of Pyongyang's offensive military capacities is limited to: the capacity to inflict "a sea of fire", as North Korean propaganda likes to repeat, on Seoul (admittedly one of the largest cities of Asia); its well-trained special forces; and the potential of suicide attacks by its navy. Even these capacities may be dwindling.

The North's real dissuasion lies more in the potential for unconventional defence on its own soil, and on the sheer burden of what a post-victory occupation would represent. Ballistic and nuclear developments have taken over both as the means of dissuasion and a way to gain time for the DPRK: export of ballistic components is a rare source of profits and also has been a means of exchange of proliferation technologies. Allowing international monitoring of nuclear developments has repeatedly proven to be an even more substantial currency earner. Such was the case of the KEDO process instituted by the Agreed Framework signed in Geneva in 1994. In 2000 the United States paid

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handsomely to inspect a large cave, which turned out to be empty. In the last year of the Clinton Administration, North Korea reportedly made an offer to stop ballistic exports in exchange for a large cash handout. That pattern is reinforced by the knowledge that inter-Korean relations have also been the object of large cash deals. The Mount Kumgang tourist zone across the demilitarized zone has been a handsome cash earner with a major South Korean firm picking up part of the tab. The South Korean government has been criticized

for having helped bring about the 2000 summit with funds transmitted through a third country. Given North Korea's economic predicament, there has been strong incentive to continue a pattern of misbehaviour that translates into opportunities for revenue, rather than put an end to it.

But nuclear and ballistic developments serve another purpose, as they give the country's leaders some international leverage. Paradoxically, North Korea is not "forgotten" and its leaders can demonstrate to their subjects that they are a besieged fortress, an attitude that has produced results in the past thanks to patriotic sentiment and propaganda. Slowly, over the past fifteen years since intelligence of its nuclear development came to light internationally, Pyongyang has used its nuclear build-up as a dissuasive tool, playing brinkmanship on several occasions and coming closer to an admission of possession. This form of behaviour has hardened since October 2002, when North Korean leaders admitted to a visiting American diplomat that they possessed nuclear weapons, an admission later revised to the legitimacy and the possibility of that possession. North Korea has moved through the "threshold state" status over the past two years, not without success. For instance, the United States and other international intelligence sources are now more guarded on the issue of actual possession of nuclear weapons. It is, in fact, the IAEA's Director General himself who recently sounded the alarm that North Korea possesses the knowledge and enough plutonium to make six to eight nuclear weapons. Of all three potential nuclear states denounced as such by the Bush Administration in January 2002, North Korea is the one that is closest to success according to widely different sources, albeit at a huge political and economic cost. Actually revealing the weapons—as a nuclear test would achieve—or matching its ballistic exports (which are not illegal) by renewed nuclear exports are the last two red lines that the DPRK has yet not crossed. The combination of implied possession and denial was enough to serve as a deterrent against

a military offensive, and brought enough rewards: open-ended talks and renewed international aid during those talks.

The hawk versus dove debate, or the reward versus sanctions perspective, may therefore be inadequate today. Almost every analyst of North Korean strategic and negotiating behaviour has highlighted several key facts. The regime plays for time, requires tremendous attention at the highest levels in order to just enter talks and then lets them achieve only the slimmest of results. It may well enter protracted negotiations and finally conclude a large-scale deal without the will to go beyond the very first steps of its implementation. Nuclear weapons, if not nuclear development, are easy to hide in any country, but are especially so due to North Korea's geography and controlled society. Complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement (CVID) is a tall agenda even in a relatively open society (such as South Africa after 1991). In North Korea's totalitarian context, the issue is hardly distinguishable from that of regime change itself.

If the past is any indication, the issue of trust itself has therefore become a non-issue. The 1994 Agreed Framework had been criticized for the lack of instruments to verify it in the first five years of its application, and is now being mostly seen as a device that avoided a showdown from 1994 to 2001. But while rewards accruing to North Korea have dwindled since 2001, the review and crisis atmosphere of the four years that followed (2001–2005) have not reached any more success in rolling back North Korean development, nor have they come any closer to a verification mechanism for the future. With a combination of strategic calculus and luck, Pyongyang has correctly predicted that its declared posture and stealthy acts would not warrant a resort to force by the international community. The cost of rolling back a nuclear enterprise that is largely in defence of a strategic status quo—North Korea's capacity to avoid regime change—may be too high, compared with the benefit of demonstrating an international success in the struggle against proliferation.

To this, one might add that because of the historical context in North-East Asia, every one of the region's international actors follows a conservative instinct. North Korea's role as a buffer state still outweighs the risks of change in China's eyes. Japan has indeed improved its political relation with the ROK through a historical admission of guilt in 1998, but must remain hesitant towards the possibility of a catastrophic or forced reunification of Korea, which it would need to underwrite financially in any case, and which might trigger a backlash of Korean nationalism. The United States is reluctant to wage a military conflict without a discernible strategic goal and with a high risk of protracted struggle on the ground, if not confrontation with China. The rewards are hardly perceptible: it is predictable that a reunified Korea standing precariously between China and Japan would curtail the strategic use by the United States of its territory once the avowed goal of peace on the Korean Peninsula had been reached. And it has become clear that South Korean decision-makers and public opinion prefer a pacific coexistence and slow transition to any conflict.

The failure of deferment and containment

Several paradoxical conclusions for policy-making emerge as a result of these trends.

One, North Korea's conventional military capabilities entered long ago a phase of technological decline, with ballistic and nuclear developments—until now, apparently not wholly correlated—and other unconventional weapons becoming the only form of credible deterrence in any armed conflict. In the air and at sea, North Korean forces are vastly inferior to their counterparts in South Korea, let alone faced with American reinforcements. There is no conceivable offensive strategy for North Korea except as a last-resort move to avoid an immediate military defeat. Even the credibility of the DPRK's unconventional means of deterrence is dubious. One should recall former US Secretary of State James

Baker's comments in October 2002, when North Korean leaders admitted to pursuing a strategy of acquiring nuclear weapons: if the United States had been able to deter the Soviet Union throughout Europe for half of a century, it could well deter North Korea across the Korean Peninsula. Saying this is not the same as proclaiming that North Korea's proliferation programmes are not harmful: they are, and their continuation challenges the whole global non-proliferation effort.

Two, there is now a long track record of hesitation, equivocation or near indifference among the countries that face North Korea regarding the nuclear issue. Of chief importance is the course of events in the United States since the Agreed Framework of 1994, and across two successive administrations. The Bush team has been—in many ways, deservedly so—critical of its predecessors, which had in essence played for time rather than advance the substance of the Agreed Framework and KEDO. A policy review was indeed in order, and Washington finally suspended in all but name its participation in the KEDO process—although it has never cut food aid delivered under the auspices of the United Nations. Meanwhile, the test of will had become more intense since October 2002 on the part of North Korea. Yet the use of force, and even the enforcement of new active sanctions, has not been seriously contemplated by the relevant parties. There may be many reasons for that disturbing fact: China's key role in keeping the situation from boiling over by ensuring mid-level and irregular contacts in Beijing; Japan and South Korea's anxiety over the use of force—even a strike against identified nuclear sites entails heavy environmental risks for the region, not to mention the possibility of escalation; finally, the question of overburdening US military forces. Again, the status quo is often the least costly solution in the short term.

Third, none of the above has given the time or perhaps the incentive for North Korean leaders to embark on a domestic transition course. The human rights situation—a tragedy by all accounts from refugees filtering through to China and Russia—has not improved, to say the least. As we write, the regime is cutting down on the daily grain ration distributed to its population—from 300 to 250 grams a day—while recent free-market developments are well out of reach of a majority of the population. The international policy of isolating North Korea coincides with the need for its authorities to keep control—it reinforces arguments against change. Because North Korea is no longer a fully credible threat to its neighbours, the main victims of the status quo are the North Korean citizens themselves.

A containment strategy is justified in front of a lethal enemy that has significant resources. The only real danger inherent to the situation is a resumption of North Korea's past proliferation practices: even if the regime were to declare cooperation in that area, rigorous international verification of such commitments would be necessary. North Korea is, to start with, entirely dependent on energy imports to survive. Its industrial and social model has been abandoned everywhere else, its ideological appeal is non-existent. While we need to keep in mind that the regime feeds on the naïveté and illusions of the international community, is there not a better way out of this than endless containment?

Fourth, the strategic uncertainties surrounding North Korea feed in turn a volatile and non-cooperative situation in North-East Asia. This may not always be evident, since the risk of a military conflict in fact brought into existence the Six-Party Talks in Beijing; former president Kim Dae-jung has talked about a North-East Asia security forum, and some influential Chinese experts suggest today that the Six-Party Talks could be the starting point of a more permanent structure of dialogue and security talks in the subregion. Again, the risk of war is more of a unifying than a divisive factor. But the insecure status of future relationships among China, Japan and Russia are increased by the uncertain future of the situation on the Peninsula. How would China deal with a military conflict at its border? What would happen to the US-ROK alliance if reunification occurs? What would be a reunified Korea's stance in regional affairs? What would be the balance of Chinese and Japanese influence? None of these questions is necessarily without a satisfactory answer. But the stalemate over the Korean Peninsula is not conducive to mutual trust among the regional powers that would need to cooperate more closely in order to allay their mutual suspicions.

The case for curtailment and engagement

The resolution of North Korea's nuclear and proliferation issues, the fate of the Korean Peninsula and the future of North-East Asian security are tied together. And the thorniest point remains North Korea's nuclear and proliferation issues. The international community has proven only that it was ready to try and slow down North Korea's efforts to become a nuclear military power, not to reverse it. But no international organization, group of nations or single nation has sought to radically prevent this from happening, apparently because the costs far outweigh the benefits of such a course—and yet one might comment that there has been no shortage of advocacy for the use of force in recent years.

While North Korea has not solved any of its predicaments, it has proven much tougher to handle than anyone had anticipated. It is in this light that calls for action, sanctions or the use of force should be reviewed today. There certainly is no "grand bargain" alternative with a regime that does not stick to its promises, defies scrutiny and may well turn down incentives when they imply domestic change endangering its monopoly on power. Future policy towards North Korea should be based less on expectations of quid pro quo moves by this regime than on a combination of measures curtailing the international consequences of North Korea's actions, and measures engaging North Korean society and even its cadres and leaders themselves. An improved international security guarantee for the future is not so costly, since no party really wants to shoulder the cost of North Korea's return to the international community. Forgiveness for past individual actions is also an essential component of a policy that would kick-start a nearly frozen history. The flow of persons, information and ideas to its society should be encouraged by every available means. These apparent concessions should be balanced by a strict and collective surveillance of North Korea's behaviour beyond its borders—particularly in the field of proliferation. The alternative policy—containment and forcible dismantlement of the nuclear and ballistic enterprise—involves human, environmental and financial costs that are unacceptable to the international community, and could have potentially worse outcomes.

Once more, the nuclear and ballistic issues of the Korean Peninsula have reached a decision point for the international community—but it is the DPRK itself that has remained, in spite of its difficulties, the major decision-maker. Change from within is hard to predict, although feuds within the regime reappear occasionally. International engagement strategies have failed, but so has a line of tough talk to the DPRK leaders. North Korea stakes the defence of its continued existence on its nuclear development and bluster. The international community may be staking the future of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty on success or failure of the North Korean case. Yet the cost of an armed conflict seems unacceptably high, and this was already so before nuclear weapons came into the picture. Evidently, simplistic options will not succeed in either case. It is perhaps time to show that self-proclaimed accession to the possession of nuclear weapons brings neither improved security nor an increased international status, and does not lessen the case for domestic change and compliance with rules in the international environment.

North Korea stakes the defence of its continued existence on its nuclear development and bluster.

In search of strategy: South Korea's struggle for a new security paradigm

Chung Min LEE

For more than half a century, maintaining the status quo, or more specifically deterring the outbreak of war, has dominated South Korea's strategic posture. Since the end of the Cold War and particularly in the aftermath of the historic June 2000 inter-Korean summit, however, the strategic calculus has shifted significantly within and outside of South Korea. Notwithstanding the primacy of deterrence, the rise to the fore of new domestic political forces, a bifurcated security perception, changing dynamics in the Korean-American alliance, and ongoing tensions as illustrated by North Korea's nuclear weapons ambitions have combined to create growing uncertainty vis-à-vis South Korea's core strategic choices and paradigms.

No single cause has contributed to South Korea's ongoing evolution in strategic thinking. Rather, a confluence of forces going back several decades but especially since democratization in the late 1980s have contributed to Seoul's own version of "New Thinking" insofar as key security paradigms are concerned. Indeed, in certain respects, it could be argued that strategic ambiguity was built-in from the onset since two seemingly contradictory impulses have framed South Korea's security discourses since the end of the Korean War in 1953: preventing another fratricidal conflict while at the same time working toward peaceful reunification with its principal adversary. The pursuit of such apparently incongruous goals is not unique to the Korean Peninsula as evinced by the history of inner-German relations, or more broadly, the US-Soviet relationship throughout much of the Cold War. That said, the consequences in the Korean context were and remain perhaps more fragile, complicated and contradictory insofar as the interests of four major powers (China, Japan, Russia and the United States) have always converged on the Peninsula.

Developments affecting South Korea's strategic thinking

The pull between security dependence, greater strategic autonomy and national reunification has always permeated South Korea's strategic culture but has been exacerbated since the late 1990s due to three key developments.

CHANGES IN SOUTH KOREAN THREAT PERCEPTIONS

Until the early 1970s, South Korea's threat perceptions were driven by four key factors: the preponderance of traditional threats such as another full-scale North Korean invasion; North Korean-

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sponsored terrorism, incursions, and probes; South Korea's increasingly costly involvement in the Vietnamese conflict; and very high military dependence on the United States including strategic intelligence in and around the Korean Peninsula.

The US-ROK alliance was parochial in its strategic focus and marked by the ROK's security and economic dependence on the United States. It is not until the late 1970s when the ROK began to perceive security in more autonomous terms (propelled, in part, by Jimmy Carter's initial moves to withdraw US ground troops from South Korea) although still within the confines of the alliance. President Park Chung Hee embarked on an ambitious defence modernization programme from the early 1970s (the Yulgok Program) in an effort to incrementally increase South Korea's indigenous weapons development capabilities, including Seoul's modest but autonomous ballistic missile programme.¹

By the late 1980s and into the mid-1990s, the alliance would undergo profound changes owing to the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, German unification, political, economic and strategic convulsions in North Korea (such as the death of Kim Il Sung in 1994, sustained economic decline from the late 1980s onwards, and the nuclear crisis of 1993). Although the threat of a major war continued to decline in the 1980s and into the 1990s, the alliance would grapple with three emerging threats: North Korea's WMD arsenal including a formidable ballistic missile inventory; the possibility of a regime, state or structural collapse with corresponding repercussions for Korean, American and Japanese security; and non-linear scenarios going into the "unification tunnel" that could be highly disruptive, volatile, violent and problematic (such as limited Chinese military intervention in support of an interim North Korean regime after the downfall or ousting of Kim Jong Il).

The prevailing threat perception vis-à-vis the North has undergone fundamental change since the end of the Cold War but especially after the 2000 summit. Perhaps the single most important aspect of the summit was not so much what was achieved, but rather the so-called tipping point affect on South Korean perceptions toward the North. In other words, post-summit assessments have focused almost exclusively on inter-Korean dynamics, South Korea's mid- to long-term policy toward Pyongyang, and prospects for wide-ranging exchange and cooperation. These issues rightly deserve high priority but so far, only limited attention has been paid to external implications. Alliance management prospects with the United States, relations with Japan and the future of trilateral policy coordination, and renewed efforts by China to exert its influence on the two Koreas, among other issues, could assume increasing prominence in the conduct of South Korean foreign policy in the months and years ahead. While all of the regional powers officially and publicly welcomed the summit, it is equally true that all of them harbour anxieties, albeit at different levels, on the consequences of improved inter-Korean relations and, more important, the strategic profile of unified Korea.

The road to unification is a long way off but if the consequences of the summit accelerate the unification process, the major powers' attention, concerns and strategies will be directed more sharply

The road to unification is a long way off but if the consequences of the summit accelerate the unification process, the major powers' attention, concerns and strategies will be directed more sharply on the two Koreas than at any other time since the Korean War.

on the two Koreas than at any other time since the Korean War. Thus, the Kim Dae Jung government (1998–2003) was instrumental in opening the Pandora's Box on the Korean Peninsula, which had remained closed for half a century. In the process, forces well beyond its control could be unleashed with key ramifications for the United States and Japan as well as China. Whether the ROK will be able to successfully cope with the challenges emerging as a consequence of the summit remains uncertain given Pyongyang's mixed motivations

in pursuing détente with the South and Kim Jong Il's domestic problems. A far more important issue is whether the summit and follow-on measures are going to shift the "correlation of forces" on the Peninsula as well as in North-East Asia.

Until the mid-1990s, it could be argued that South Korea's prevailing threat paradigm remained relatively conventional, i.e. that North Korea posed a series of military threats to the South and the

region, particularly in the aftermath of the first nuclear crisis (from March 1993 when North Korea announced its withdrawal from the NPT until October 1994 when the US-North Korea Agreed Framework was signed). Over the past decade, however, threat perceptions at the level of policy elites, the broader security community, and even the public at large have shifted significantly to the extent that even with the added complication of North Korea's nuclear weapons programmes, a clear-cut security consensus no longer exists. Such ambivalence can be traced to a number of factors but the advent of comprehensive engagement that was begun by the Kim Dae Jung government and which has survived into the Roh Moo Hyun government means that traditional threat perceptions no longer dominate the security discourse in South Korea. Recent divergent assessments of North Korea's nuclear capacity by several of South Korea's key ministries and agencies in charge of national security affairs illustrate this point.² Although contrasting assessments are part of democratic governments, the fact remains that consensus has yet to be formed within the South Korean government on the status of North Korea's nuclear weapons programme. Nor is there consensus among others in the region or external actors such as the United States.

CHANGES IN PUBLIC OPINION

The rapid pace of democratization since the late 1980s and the rise to power of two consecutive liberal governments since 1998 have resulted in a change in attitudes toward North Korea and the United States. Although the alliance has remained intact, turbulences have increased significantly since the late 1990s primarily, although not exclusively, over the best course of response toward North Korea's nuclear weapons ambitions. The strain in bilateral perceptions increased greatly with the advent of the Bush Administration in 2001, given that both governments have chosen to emphasize a more "equidistant" posture insofar as North Korean affairs are concerned.

Domestically, efforts to scrap the National Security Law have accelerated since the late 1990s and in a twist that would have been virtually unthinkable a decade ago, many voices in South Korea today blame the United States as much as North Korea for the impasse in South-North relations. Rapid democratization has also resulted in the proliferation of alternative medias, NGOs and a robust civil society that continues to challenge the basic tenets of conservative assumptions toward North Korea.

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IMPORTANCE OF STABILITY FOR ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Concomitant with South Korea's growing economic influence and stature as the eleventh largest economy in the world and the third largest in the Asia-Pacific region after Japan and China, the propensity to stave off discord and potential clashes in inter-Korean relations has taken centre stage. In other words, maintaining the status quo and alleviating any major downturn in South-North relations is a prerequisite for sustaining South Korea's economic prosperity. That said, it is also equally true that overemphasizing the possibilities of normative policy guidelines, i.e. that only sustained engagement can convince North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons, has resulted in structural constraints that have contributed to strains in trilateral policy coordination between South Korea, Japan and the United States. For example, according to local press reports, Seoul is planning to continue to assist in the development of the Kaesong Special Economic Zone in North Korea even in the aftermath of North Korea's 10 February 2005 declaration that it has acquired nuclear weapons.³

Historical legacies and strategic realities

More than a century after its forced entry into the modern international system and more than half a century after its alliance with the United States, the shifting geopolitical template in and around the Korean Peninsula coupled with newly fomenting domestic political forces may compel South Korea to review its strategic options. One of the most important factors in the current security debate concerns the future role of China in the region.

From the end of the Korean War until recently, China did not really factor into South Korea's strategic equation in the absence of official relations, limited economic exchange, the central role of the US-ROK alliance, and China's own rigid alliance with North Korea. The collapse of the Soviet Union, China's four modernizations, North Korea's accelerating structural problems, and South Korea's democratization, among other factors, have all combined to bolster the China element within the spectrum of South Korea's looming strategic choices. Historically, South Korea had little choice but to pursue a Sinocentric-continental national security strategy but to everyone's surprise, South Korea successfully adopted an essentially maritime national security strategy principally through its post-war alliance with the United States and strategic alliances with other like-minded states such as Japan and Australia.

Although the United States is likely to retain its current strategic influence in the Asia-Pacific for some time, the China factor is going to dominate the North-East Asian security discourse for the foreseeable future. Should China evolve into a "large Taiwan", China may not pose an insurmountable security dilemma, i.e. South Korea could deflect potential external pressures from China while continuing to retain its central security linkages with the United States. But even a fully democratized and free China cannot but seek to bring the Korean Peninsula once again into its strategic fold. Thus, the new challenge confronting South Korea differs profoundly from the security dilemma that unfolded a century ago. Henceforth, the primary question is how South Korea can retain relative strategic autonomy without being pulled into a new Chinese strategic orbit. Overcoming geography is impossible in Korea's case but crafting a non-exclusionary buffer zone is something that Korean strategists have to tackle with greater urgency than at any other time since the collapse of the East Asian international order a century ago.

Factors affecting the future of the ROK-US Alliance

It could be argued that South Korea's conclusion of a mutual defence treaty with the United States was made more by default than design. But President Syngman Rhee's decision to actively seek a bilateral defence pact with the United States and thereby place South Korea firmly in the "Western" security camp had significant intended and unintended consequences. For the first time in its history, the shaping of South Korea's security culture was to be determined in large part by a power other than China, Russia or Japan. Although North Korea formed alliances with the Soviet Union and China, the American equation transformed South Korea's strategic options.

The achievements made under the alliance far exceeded initial expectations. In more ways than one, South Korea's security linkage with the United States fostered during the Korean War was an unnatural one given the disparate historical trajectories of Korea and the United States and the wide-ranging disparity in capabilities. Nonetheless, the alliance enabled the United States to maintain a critical strategic footprint on the Asian continent throughout the Cold War, while at the same time South Korea was able to fully exploit the benefits arising from the US security umbrella. The alliance on the whole came to symbolize one of the outstanding success stories of the post-war era.

Although the Roh Administration has taken steps to alleviate some of the more outstanding tensions in the alliance, the Seoul-Washington relationship is perhaps more fraught with tension than at any other time since the alliance was forged in the 1950s.⁴ In the aftermath of North Korea's February 2005 statement that it has acquired nuclear weapons, intensified diplomatic manoeuvring to convince North Korea to re-enter the Six-Party Talks, and joint ROK-US talks on restructuring the US forces, events on the Korean Peninsula have again assumed centre stage. Notwithstanding the importance of the Beijing talks and the urgency associated with freezing and ultimately dismantling North Korea's nuclear weapons programme, however, four inter-related issues concerning the future of the alliance deserve equal attention.

THE RISE OF CRITICAL VOICES

While most South Koreans continue to believe in maintaining a strong alliance with the United States, alternative voices have increased sharply since the late 1990s. Of key concern is the incremental weakening of South Korea's traditional security consensus that accelerated under the Kim Dae Jung government and one which continues to persist in a different form under the current government.

One of the most interesting, if not vexing, aspects of South Korea's shifting attitude toward the United States resides in parallel shifts in how the public perceives North Korea and the related role of the United States on issues vital to the future of the Korean Peninsula. Public opinion in South Korea has a tendency to shift rapidly and is prone to reflect situation-specific phenomenon such as the unfortunate death of the two middle school students in 2002. At the same time, even in the midst of sporadic outbreaks of anti-American sentiment, the public-at-large continues to be against any abrupt withdrawal of US forces although attitudes on the desirability of maintaining US forces have gone through significant change since the 1990s.⁵ Similarly split views on South Korea's mixed attitudes toward the United States—on the one hand, continuing perceptions of inequality in the alliance, but a realistic assessment of the need for maintaining the alliance on the other—are borne out by other survey data.⁶

THE POSSIBILITY TO RESTRUCTURE THE ALLIANCE

The second key question is the extent to which the ROK-US alliance could be restructured based on Washington's overall reassessment of its longer-term strategic footprint in the Asia-Pacific region, growing anti-Americanism, and ambiguity toward the ROK-US alliance in South Korea and corresponding ambiguity toward the ROK-US alliance in the United States.⁷

By the late 1990s, the alliance was confronting a seemingly contradictory goal: providing different levels of assurance to North Korea in order to foster positive behavioural change particularly with regard to WMD and ballistic missiles, while at the same time, preparing for a range of chaotic scenarios including violent regime collapse that could have major repercussions for the ROK and the United States. The alliance was becoming increasingly alarmed at the prospects for protracted crises on the Peninsula despite an incrementally decreasing threat of major conventional war. North Korea's growing emphasis on asymmetrical forces, including WMD and ballistic missiles (even while it continued to deploy the world's fifth largest conventional armed forces) was posing new demands on the alliance.

The alliance was also being transformed from a parochial to a broader-framed alliance with an increasingly ambitious security agenda. While South Korea "does not participate extensively in global

military roles and missions, including combined operations, elsewhere in the region and beyond,"⁸ this may change. Beyond relatively light UN peacekeeping tasks in East Timor, the Western Sahara and the India/Pakistan border, South Korea may be asked by the United States to assume more direct military operations in support of the war against terrorism, particularly in the event of a second cataclysmic terrorist attack.

On 8–9 April 2003 the ROK and the United States held the first meeting of the "Future of the ROK-US Alliance Policy Initiative". Key issues such as the relocation of the Yongsan US Army Garrison, consolidation of US forces around key hubs, transfer of military missions, and overall realignment of the US Forces Korea (USFK) are likely to be negotiated at length throughout the term of the Roh government.⁹ In the early months of the Roh Administration, Seoul maintained that it was premature for the United States to begin discussions on relocating US forces from near the demilitarized zone to south of Seoul at the height of the second North Korean nuclear crisis. Nevertheless, the US Department of Defense appears to be leaning toward an early relocation of the 2nd Infantry Division based on a number of factors, including concern stemming from the spate of anti-American demonstrations and other ongoing discussions such as the Land Partnership Plan.¹⁰

Despite ongoing bilateral discussions on modernizing the alliance, including a phased reduction of some 12,000 US forces by 2008, the alliance has been rocked by differences in threat perceptions. The fierce rhetoric in the early months of the Roh government with respect to the ROK-US alliance has been toned down significantly over the past two years. Nevertheless, real gaps remain between Seoul and Washington on how best to tackle the North Korean nuclear problem. However, both the United States and South Korea continue to reaffirm the rationale for maintaining a robust ROK-US combined deterrence and defence posture.

Over time, it is virtually inevitable that the current level of American forces will be significantly reduced. Notwithstanding pledges from Washington that US force levels in South Korea will remain largely unchanged, South Korea's emphasis on a more autonomous defence posture combined with parallel moves by the United States to reconfigure its presence in South Korea may well result in sharper reduction of the US military presence than currently envisaged by either country. If so, South Korea will need to devote significantly greater resources to defence spending from a current level of 2.7% of GDP (slated to increase up to 3.2% in FY 2004 pending approval in the National Assembly). At the same time, any significant reduction of US forces in South Korea would also mean that the South Korean Ministry of National Defense will need to allocate resources to areas that have traditionally been led by the United States, such as strategic intelligence and early warning assets. Thus, if South Korea is serious about pursuing a more autonomous defence posture, it has little choice but to sharply increase defence outlays.

NON-LINEAR DEVELOPMENTS ON THE PENINSULA

Non-linear developments on the Korean Peninsula, particularly in the context of major political change in North Korea, could accelerate the unification process. If the North Korean nuclear crisis is diffused successfully through the Six-Party Talks based on significant progress in Washington-Pyongyang negotiations, inter-Korean relations and US-North Korean and Japan-North Korean ties could also be normalized. On the other hand, if the Six-Party Talks ultimately fail to persuade Pyongyang to dismantle its nuclear weapons programme, South Korea, the United States, Japan and China would be confronted with the worst security situation short of an all-out war on the Peninsula or military conflict in the Taiwan Straits: namely a North Korea that becomes a declared nuclear-weapon state with the capacity to produce a significant number of nuclear warheads in the near future.

Beyond the issue of contrasting approaches toward North Korea, the ROK-US alliance confronts other strategic challenges. First, the threat spectrum has changed significantly since the alliance was first necessary, which requires more expanded and tailored roles and missions for the alliance. Although the possibility of a major war cannot be discounted, North Korea's ability to wage a full-scale conventional conflict has ebbed considerably since the 1980s owing to a confluence of factors such as North Korea's economic decay, South Korea's force improvement plans, termination of the Russian-North Korean defence treaty, and failure on the part of North Korea to decouple South Korea from the United States. Although the spectre of a major conventional conflict has decreased, North Korea's robust weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programme, the potential for an outbreak of a range of low-intensity conflicts, and even North Korean collapse have all contributed to the rise in non-linear scenarios on the Korean Peninsula. While the ROK-US Combined Forces Command continues to train and prepare for a wide-range of conflict spectrums, even worse scenarios including variations of WMD threats concomitant with collapse scenarios could pose significant challenges to the ROK-US political and military leaderships.

While the list invariably can be expanded to include extremely remote scenarios (such as a military coup in North Korea followed by immediate peace negotiations with the South and rapid dissolution of the North Korean state), the biggest challenge would arise from major political disruptions such as a renewal of the nuclear crisis based on: incontrovertible evidence that despite the Agreed Framework Pyongyang succeeds in building nuclear weapons; North Korea walks out of the agreement as its obligations become increasingly intrusive; or Pyongyang chooses to discontinue its moratorium on long-range missile tests, and fails to abide by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections. Other crises could erupt such as breakdown in the North Korean command structure in the aftermath of some form of violent political transition leading to a partial failure in the centre's control over regional military units. Moreover, sustained economic hardship could result in increased demonstrations and even sporadic armed revolt that could lead up to major challenges to the regime's authority.

Beyond North Korea-centric scenarios, other disruptions or even conflict could break out in North-East Asia with significant repercussions for South Korean security and the ROK-US alliance. For example, the rise of China and potential strategic discord with the United States could significantly increase regional tensions. If the Taiwan Straits issue turns into even limited military exchange between Beijing and Taiwan, Washington (and perhaps even Tokyo under certain circumstances) could be drawn into a highly volatile conflict in the Taiwan Straits. Moreover, as excerpts from the *Nuclear Posture Review* noted, "due to the combination of China's still developing strategic objectives and its ongoing modernization of its nuclear and non-nuclear forces, China is a country that could be involved in an immediate or potential contingency."¹¹

CONSEQUENCES OF SOUTH KOREA'S SECURITY CHOICES DURING THE TRANSFORMATION PHASE

The last consideration is the cumulative consequences of South Korea's strategic choices throughout the phase of transformation on the Korean Peninsula—including the post-unification era.¹²

It is important to define the terms and conditions of unification given the implications of a Korea that is unified under the auspices or leadership of South Korea or North Korea. Assuming that Korea is going to be unified under the leadership of the ROK, the process by which unification occurs—through a negotiated political settlement, gradual integration, collapse and absorption, or in the worst case scenario, through conflict—the political makeup of a unified government and the strategic choices that a unified Korea undertakes are likely to emerge as the principal benchmarks of a unified Korea. Although it was beyond the scope of this paper to undertake a detailed assessment of the various

unification scenarios, unification through a negotiated settlement—while most desirable—may be unlikely given the history of protracted South-North conflict. While unification through force should be avoided virtually at all cost, unification following some type of a North Korean collapse may be the most likely scenario. If so, what are some of the more likely security permutations of a unified Korea?

The strategic contours of a unified Korea are likely to be defined significantly by environmental factors (the dissolution of the North Korean threat and the potential rise in major power competition), the degree of coinciding security interests between a unified Korea and the United States (as well as other key US allies in the region), capabilities-based security and defence planning dynamics of a unified Korea, and the political aspirations of a unified Korea. Other factors will also come into play such as formidable unification costs, particularly in the advent of a North Korean collapse followed by absorption and the handling of North Korea's robust WMD assets.

While all possible permutations of a unified Korea simply cannot be tabulated at this time, six basic security alternatives can be posited in the post-unification era (see Table 1).

Assuming that a unified Korea emerges on the throes of a South Korea-led initiative and is supported by the major powers, the most likely security arrangement is a reconfigured US-ROK alliance. If unification occurs through a negotiated political settlement, it is hard to imagine the continued maintenance of the ROK-US alliance, much less any deployment of US forces. A new alliance is a theoretical possibility that could be heightened if the two Koreas are unified through a negotiated

Table 1. Alternative Korean security architectures

	Military ties with the United States	Major economic interactions	Multilateral security linkages	Indigenous WMD including nuclear deterrent
Strong alliance	Reduced military footprint but robust air presence	Sustain at current level	Mutually complimentary	None, Korea would continue to be under US nuclear umbrella
Political alliance	Withdrawal of 2 nd Infantry Division, limited air presence	Growing linkages with regional economy (esp. China)	Enhanced multilateral linkages over time	None
Minimal alliance	No United States Forces Korea	Same as above	Growing multilateral security linkages	None
Non-alignment (no alliance with any great power)	None	Same as above	Growing multilateral security linkages	Possible*
North-East Asian Security Treaty System	No foreign troops	Intensified economic linkages including a "North-East Asian Free Trade Agreement"	Very high	None
New alliance (with China)	None	Intensified economic ties with China	Limited	None
Strict neutrality	None	Sustain at current level	Limited	None

* It is difficult to imagine that a unified Korea would opt to have indigenous nuclear weapons against the wishes of the major powers. However, if a unified Korea chooses to emulate India with a more nationalistic and highly autonomous national security policy, it would entail significant economic, political and strategic consequences, not to mention international ostracism. At the very least, such a move could well result in the abrogation of the alliance with the United States and would also necessitate withdrawal from the NPT.

settlement. China probably stands out as the most likely candidate that could forge a new alliance with a unified Korea; alliances with the Russian Federation or Japan are probably unlikely. A strictly neutral Korea guaranteed by a four-power agreement could also be considered, although given the history of Korea at the core of North-East Asia's strategic interests it is difficult to imagine a unified, neutral Korea. A strategically independent, unaligned Korea remains an outside possibility given that new nationalistic sentiments following unification may result in a domestic political consensus that rejects a military or even a close political alliance with a major power. Finally, a unified Korea that remains significantly attached to a multilateral security accord or institution is another possible outcome assuming that a North-East Asian security mechanism emerges over time.

All of these possible post-unification security arrangements entail risks and costs for Korea. A strategically independent Korea may harbour offensive strategic ambitions such as an independent nuclear arsenal with matching offensive platforms such as long-range ballistic missiles, a virtual blue water navy, and robust air and space platforms. But a unified Korea that pursues the nuclear option will most likely result in the termination of the US-ROK alliance, Japan's nuclear armament, and intense Chinese and Russian suspicions against a nuclear-armed Korea. Combined with the tremendous financial constraints that are likely to confront a unified Korea, a strategically autonomous Korea with WMD ambitions is the worst possible security alternative. Seen from these perspectives, South Korea's current and emerging strategic interests would be best served by "tailoring" the US-ROK alliance to better meet a spectrum of future challenges. Enhanced autonomy, in the final analysis, should and can be attained through a concerted effort to modernize the alliance.

The ROK-US alliance is under strain today owing to a confluence of factors. While the relationship is certainly not at a breaking point by any means—indeed, some would argue that it is intrinsically healthy for the alliance to air contending views—significant challenges lie ahead in managing the alliance during a period of unprecedented fluctuations on the Korean Peninsula. The degree to which Seoul and Washington can ameliorate the relationship depends on the extent to which they can forge a new security consensus above and beyond the existing North Korean threat.

While South Korea's alliance with the United States is unlikely to be altered in the short term, it is also true that South Korea has to begin to think about longer-term foundations for the alliance, particularly if unification occurs rapidly. Contemplating post-unification paths, including possible security arrangements, must be given serious treatment within the broader security community in South Korea (including redefining the strategic *raison d'être* for maintaining the US-ROK alliance into the post-unification era and taking into consideration new geopolitical realities such as China's mid- to long-term calculus vis-à-vis the Korean Peninsula).

Forging domestic political support for sustaining the US-ROK alliance and thinking about the formation of a de facto "Pacific Alliance" in the midst of shifting domestic politics, fragile South-North relations, and reconfiguration of great power strategies toward the Korean Peninsula in the post-Cold War era portend formidable challenges for the ROK in the early years of the twenty-first century. History, however, should not be repeated since the cumulative consequences of Korea's strategic choice a hundred years ago resulted in dynastic collapse, colonization by Japan, partition and devastating conflict. Ensuring South Korea's sound strategic choice in the early part of this century is the single most important task for all Koreans—regardless of their political persuasions.

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By 2020 or so, the ROK is likely to face a very different strategic picture, especially if the Peninsula is unified under its auspices. A unified Korea would likely be confronted by significantly changed dynamics including the possibility of a more nationalistic national security paradigm with matching force modernization programmes. But the strategic dispositions of a unified Korea would also be

affected significantly by the actions and strategies of its more powerful neighbours, notably China and Japan but particularly in the context of Beijing's longer-term regional strategic ambitions.

Conclusion

How South Korea contemplates its future security options will be determined to a large extent by four main factors:

- the process by which unification occurs—through a negotiated settlement, by North Korea's collapse and unification by absorption, or variations of the status quo followed by the absorption scenario;
- the need to formulate a new strategic basis to sustain its alliance with the United States as well as its de facto alliance with Japan in an era of South-North reconciliation, a significant diminution in the North Korean threat, or in the post-unification era;
- defining Korea's longer-term strategic requirements including key power projection capabilities and desirable force structures; and
- constructing a new domestic security consensus in light of expected transformations in and around the Korean Peninsula, including generational shifts in Korean politics and the emergence of new security elites.

For the past five decades, South Korea has been able to preserve its core national security interests through a robust alliance with the United States. The task ahead is going to be more complex, politicized and perhaps even polarized given the uncertainties associated with North Korea's narrowing exit strategies. At the same time, South Korea has to conceptualize how to cope with growing economic linkages with China—already its second largest trading power after the United States or the largest if one includes Taiwan and Hong Kong as parts of a Greater China—while preserving its security ties with the United States and Japan as well as other Asian-Pacific and South-East Asian states.

In the near term, how the second North Korean nuclear crisis ultimately unfolds could have a major impact on rethinking South Korea's security options. Five inter-related forces continue to complicate resolution of the nuclear issue and, by extension, the broader contours of the South-North equation:

- changing domestic politics in South Korea and an increasingly bifurcated security analysis;
- tensions in the Korean-American relationship that are unlikely to dissipate any time in the near future;
- new challenges to effective policy coordination between the United States, South Korea and Japan;
- Pyongyang's own strategic choices pursuant to rising international pressure against North Korea's nuclear ambitions; and
- actions short of force that could be undertaken by the United States in consort with its key allies if the Six-Party Talks or parallel bilateral discussions ultimately prove unsuccessful.

Reconfiguring South Korea's longer-term strategic options is emerging as a critical national security and foreign policy task despite the current focus on re-engineering South-North relations. Although the debate on the contours of a unified Korea encompasses differing political perspectives, the net consequences are going to reverberate throughout North-East Asia. At a minimum, a unified Korea has to assume a non-nuclear posture, a robust deterrent capability but not one that threatens the

regional balance, a free-market system that maintains critical ties with the global economy, and a democratic regime that espouses, guarantees and promotes universal values.

Notes

1. For additional details, see C.M. Lee, 2001, "North Korea's Missiles: Strategic Implications and Policy Responses", *The Pacific Review*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 104–107.
2. *Chosun Ilbo*, 16 February 2005, p. A1; *Chosun Ilbo*, 13 February 2005.
3. *Chosun Ilbo*, 17 February 2005, p. A1.
4. Pursuant to the ROK-US summit that was held in Washington, DC on 14 May 2003, Presidents Roh and Bush issued a joint statement which noted, in part, that "the two leaders pledged to work closely together to modernize the ROK-US alliance, taking advantage of technology to transform both nations' forces and enhance their capabilities to meet emerging threats." See "Common Values, Principles and Strategy", Joint Statement Between President Roh Moo Hyun and President George W. Bush, 14 May 2003, at <www.mofat.go.kr>.
5. "85.7% of Respondents Say That Anti-Americanism is Not a Surprise," *Munwha Ilbo*, 12 December 2002; *Donga Ilbo*, 1 April 2003, at <www.donga.com/fbn/news>.
6. "Favorable Ratings of Korean and Americans", *Chosun Ilbo*, 3 March 2002, at <www.chosun.com/bin/printNews>.
7. Officially, Seoul continues to maintain that bilateral ties with the United States remain unchanged. Then South Korean Foreign Minister Yoon Young Kwan noted in June 2003 that despite the fact that some South Koreans have expressed their "antipathy towards the US" in the aftermath of the accidental death of two middle school students by a US armoured vehicle in June 2002, it was important to keep in mind that most South Koreans wanted to revise and improve the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), and not, as widely reported, to sever ties with the United States. Yoon emphasized the Roh government's official stance that a *mischaracterization* by the Korean and foreign presses on the level and nature of anti-Americanism in South Korea led to "rise of anti-Korean sentiments in the US, spreading an unfortunate misunderstanding between our two peoples." See "ROK-US Coordination and North Korea's Nuclear Issue", *Remarks by Foreign Minister Yoon Young-kwan at the Korean-American Association Breakfast Meeting*, 26 June 2003, Seoul, South Korea, p. 2, at <www.mofat.go.kr>.
8. D. Rumsfeld, 2001, *Report on Allied Contributions to the Common Defense*, Washington, DC, US Department of Defense, March, p. II-9.
9. "Result of the Second Meeting of the 'Future of the ROK-US Alliance Policy Initiative'", *MND News Release*, 7 June 2003, at <www.mnd.go.kr>.
10. The ROK-US Land Partnership Plan (LPP) was signed on 29 March 2002 as a cooperative bilateral effort to consolidate US bases in South Korea, improve combat readiness, enhance public safety and strengthen the alliance by "addressing some of the causes of periodic tension and discontent among South Koreans regarding the US presence in South Korea".
11. D. Rumsfeld, 2001, *Nuclear Posture Review (Excerpts)*, Submitted to the US Congress on 31 December, at <www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/policy/dod/npr.htm>.
12. The term "post-status quo" could be used to differentiate it with the more common usage of the term "post-unification" to highlight the possibility that changes and disruptions on the Peninsula may not necessarily lead automatically to unification. From the moment that the status quo begins to unravel either in the South, the North, or simultaneously in both (e.g. a potential regime or state collapse in the North or sustained turmoil in the North in the post-Kim Jong Il era), the formation of a stable, Peninsula-wide government could be handicapped severely. Thus, the period beginning from the end of the status quo and concluding with a viable political structure could be prolonged depending critically on the nature, depth and speed of political and military change in the two Koreas but particularly in the North.

The Korean Peninsula and the role of multilateral talks

Charles L. PRITCHARD

In the past decade there have been several instances of crisis, confrontation and negotiated resolution on the Korean Peninsula. So far, only bilateral negotiations between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) and either the Republic of Korea (ROK or South Korea) or the United States have resulted in a satisfactory conclusion to the objectives of the talks. This is in contrast to the unsuccessful attempts at multilateral talks. Of course, critics of bilateral engagement with the DPRK are quick to point out that ultimately Pyongyang has failed to implement or uphold its obligations under the terms of bilaterally negotiated settlements and therefore those talks should not be described as successful. This is the rationale belatedly used by the Bush Administration in refusing to negotiate directly with Pyongyang in resolving the current nuclear crisis.¹

Bilateral talks

One of the most notable bilateral negotiations between the North and South took place at the end of 1991. The result of intense talks was the "Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression and Exchanges and Cooperation between the South and the North". The accord, while never implemented, was an impressive achievement. Among other things, it called for economic, cultural and scientific exchanges, free correspondence between divided families, and the reopening of roads and railroads that had been severed at the North-South dividing line.² This agreement was followed shortly by the 20 January 1992 "Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" designed "to eliminate the danger of nuclear war through denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, and thus to create an environment and conditions favorable for peace and peaceful unification of our country and contribute to peace and security in Asia and the world."³ Likewise, this agreement was never implemented.

The one bilateral agreement that was implemented and resulted in tangible, although temporary, non-proliferation results was the 1994 US-DPRK Agreed Framework. The accord froze Pyongyang's known nuclear weapons programme and placed key facilities and dangerous spent fuel rods under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) monitoring until December 2002. Following a confrontation concerning highly enriched uranium (HEU) in October 2002 between the United States and North Korea over suspected North Korean violations of the spirit and letter of the framework agreement, Pyongyang ejected IAEA inspectors, pulled out of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and restarted

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its 5-megawatt nuclear reactor. It later announced that it had reprocessed all of the previously safeguarded spent fuel rods at Yongbyon, extracting enough plutonium to build perhaps six nuclear weapons. This confrontation, of course, is what led to the current nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula and the resultant Six-Party Talks.

The Agreed Framework negotiations, along with others such as the June 2000 Summit between ROK President Kim Dae Jung and DPRK leader Kim Jong Il, are aptly described in strategic terms. Other bilateral negotiations between North and South Korea as a result of the 2000 Summit and specific instances of US-DPRK negotiations are more limited and “tactical” in nature. However, it is important in discussing the efficacy of talks on the peninsula to mention a few of these bilateral successes.

There are three US-DPRK tactical negotiations worth reviewing. The first occurred in September 1996 as a result of a bloody North Korean submarine incursion into South Korean territory that threatened to lead to even greater military tension on the peninsula. The United States took upon itself, with ROK concurrence, talks with North Korea designed to end the potential escalation of tension and provide an opportunity to realize a joint US-ROK call for strategic-level multilateral talks with North Korea. Over a period of three months following the submarine incident, the United States and North Korea engaged in serious and prolonged talks that ultimately ended in a North Korean public apology to the ROK. Throughout the talks, Washington was in continuous consultations with Seoul to make sure that the end result of the negotiations would be satisfactory to South Korea.

Following two events in August 1998, the United States again entered into bilateral negotiations with North Korea that resulted in specific agreements that avoided the potential for more serious confrontation. The first incident was the revelation in the US press that North Korea was recreating its plutonium-based nuclear weapons programme at a secret underground facility at Kumchang-ri in violation of the terms of the 1994 Agreed Framework. The United States had been following intelligence developments regarding these concerns, but was forced by the news leak to confront Pyongyang prematurely. However, these talks ultimately produced an agreement that allowed the United States to send multiple inspection teams (referred to as “visits”) to the suspected site to satisfy its concerns. Those inspections took place in May 1999 and again in May 2000 and, to the detriment of US intelligence credibility, revealed that Pyongyang was not involved in the recreation of its plutonium programme as was feared.

During the initial round of the Kumchang-ri talks, Pyongyang, without appropriate international warning, test fired a multi-stage Taepo Dong missile that it claimed was for scientific purposes to place a small satellite into orbit. The missile crossed over Northern Japan, producing outrage from the Japanese and others. Japan was an essential partner and financier in the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) that was charged with building the light-water reactors and providing heavy fuel oil as part of the terms of the 1994 Agreed Framework. The missile launch threatened to derail implementation of the framework. Once again, the United States entered into negotiations that produced an agreement in September 1999 by North Korea to end its long-range missile tests. This moratorium is still being observed by Pyongyang.

Multilateral talks

In April 1996, US President Bill Clinton and ROK President Kim Young Sam jointly called for four-nation (the United States, the Republic of Korea, the Democratic Republic of Korea and China) peace talks designed to move beyond the Armistice Agreement that ended active hostilities on the Korean Peninsula and to establish a more permanent peace mechanism. Following the resolution of

the submarine incursion, Pyongyang agreed to “listen” to a joint US-ROK briefing of the Four-Party Peace Talks concept. That briefing occurred in April 1997 and was followed by three preliminary rounds of talks involving the four nations. While the preliminary talks did not achieve their goal of establishing a consensus for an agenda for the talks as a whole or the precise work of the two subcommittees, it did offer an opportunity for each of the parties to meet collectively and in groupings to discuss other issues of importance. The United States took the leadership role and reached an early consensus that the parties could meet bilaterally or in any combination that all agreed upon between or during full meetings of the four nations. Under this concept, at a time when North Korea would not meet bilaterally with South Korea, the United States organized a three-party meeting involving the US, ROK and DPRK. After establishing the precedent and at a time when all three were comfortable with the arrangements, the United States abruptly withdrew from one of the three-party meetings while it was in progress—leaving the North and South Korean delegations to continue meeting bilaterally for the first time in a long time.

Formal Four-Party Talks began in earnest in December 1997 in Geneva. While the four-party process eventually failed, it was intensive and far more frequent than the current six-party process, having met for three preliminary sessions at Columbia University and six formal plenary sessions in Geneva over twenty-one months in contrast to the three sessions of the Six-Party Talks over the same length of time. Two subcommittees were formed and met as part of the overarching plenary meetings. The deputies chaired the subcommittees and reported back to delegation chairmen during plenary sessions. The four parties continued the precedent established during the preliminary sessions of meeting bilaterally and in other groupings before and during the weeklong Geneva sessions. This robust bilateral element to the multilateral process led to a series of other bilateral successes such as the June 2000 ROK-DPRK Summit and the exchange of visits by DPRK Marshal Jo Myong Rok and US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in October 2000.

In the end, Pyongyang failed to see much benefit in the multilateral process and simply refused to continue to participate. From an American perspective, Pyongyang entered the four-party process reluctantly and with the primary objective of satisfying the request of and improving ties with the United States. Pyongyang maintained an open dialogue with the United States in the months that followed the demise of the four-party process, agreeing to a missile moratorium, allowing inspections of Kumchang-ri and engaging in the “Perry Process”.

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Origin of the current Six-Party Talks⁴

The current Six-Party Talks has as its origin a negative rationale. That is, in response to North Korea’s demand to resolve the emerging HEU crisis bilaterally with the United States, the United States opted to broaden the field of players while refusing to deal directly with Pyongyang. Objectively that was the right decision, but it was based more on a desire not to be seen as repeating the “failure” of the Clinton’s Administration’s Agreed Framework.

The initial United States proposal called for a “P5 plus 5” meeting, meaning the United Nations Security Council Permanent Five plus the Republic of Korea, Japan, Australia, the European Union and the DPRK. That proposal was transmitted through the “New York channel”⁵ on 22 January 2003 to Pyongyang. Three days later the North Koreans rejected the proposal outright, saying that they would never agree to any kind of multilateral meeting to discuss the “DPRK-US nuclear issue”.

During Secretary Powell's stop in China enroute to the inauguration of ROK President Roh Moo Hyun in February 2003, he suggested that Beijing would be well positioned to organize and host multilateral talks involving the United States, China, Japan, and North and South Korea. The Chinese did not respond directly to the Secretary, but did pursue the suggestion in early March when former Foreign Minister and Vice Premier Qian Qichen went to Pyongyang. When the North Koreans rejected the Chinese offer of five-party talks, Qian revised his suggestion on the spot and offered three-party talks instead. However, Pyongyang continued to request bilateral talks through the US-DPRK New York channel. By the second week of April, the back and forth in both the New York channel and in the Beijing-Pyongyang channel had ended with the agreement to meet trilaterally in Beijing later in April 2003.

Officially unknown to the United States at the time trilateral talks were agreed upon, but suspected by many, was the diplomatic slight-of-hand that Beijing had been engaged in to get all parties to the talks. Beijing had quietly promised Pyongyang that if it participated in the talks, Pyongyang would have an opportunity to have direct, bilateral discussions with the United States during the session. Concurrently, Beijing was assuring Washington that the talks truly would be trilateral in every sense of the word and not simply an excuse for the DPRK and the United States to meet bilaterally. Given the fact that Pyongyang and Washington were exchanging information through the New York channel, Beijing needed to take control of any conversation dealing with the trilateral talks to preserve their benign deception. Beijing requested of Washington that it be the official and only channel of communications with Pyongyang regarding the trilateral talks. This arrangement was more than satisfactory with Washington and marked the beginning of the end of the New York channel at a senior level. When Pyongyang sent comments or questions through its UN Mission in New York, Washington replied through Beijing.

This arrangement of communications concerning trilateral talks served Beijing's purposes well. It brought the DPRK and United States together in Beijing in April 2003 for an initial round of talks aimed at resolving the emerging second nuclear crisis. What Beijing did not bargain on was that the United States would continue to use Beijing as a substitute for talking directly with Pyongyang on issues not directly related to the mechanism or logistics of multilateral talks. The process that led to trilateral talks soon became an impediment to meaningful diplomacy.

In the end, what Beijing had hoped for did not occur. When the three parties met in late April 2003 in Beijing, the DPRK head of delegation asked to meet bilaterally with the United States delegation, as Pyongyang had been led to believe would occur. The United States delegation, on strict instructions, refused to meet the North Koreans. Based on that refusal, the North Koreans ended their participation and returned to Pyongyang after a hastily arranged closing trilateral meeting.

The Six-Party Talks

Almost immediately after the failure of the April session, the Chinese sought to resurrect the process, seeking to repeat the three-party formula. By this time, the United States was insisting that any future rounds include the ROK and Japan. Washington had previously received approval from Seoul and Tokyo for the first trilateral session that excluded them, but with the understanding that talks would be expanded to include the ROK and Japan as soon as possible. Upon Moscow's insistence, the United States quickly added Russia to the list of future participants in any multilateral talks. In consultations with Secretary Powell in late July 2003, Chinese Vice Minister Dai Bingguo pushed for Washington's acceptance of another round of three-party talks in view of Pyongyang's insistence that it would not attend five- or six-party talks. In a compromise and in consideration of Beijing's efforts,

the United States suggested that it could attend an initial three-party session if it were followed immediately by a full six-party round of talks.

By this time, Secretary Powell had gained the President's approval for the American delegation to have direct contact with North Korea in the context of a multilateral setting. On 1 August, the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) responded publicly to the various formulas that had been proposed to restart talks in Beijing:

Some time ago the US informed the DPRK through a third party that the DPRK-US bilateral talks may be held within the framework of multilateral talks. At the recent DPRK-US talks the DPRK put forward a new proposal to have six party talks without going through the three party talks and to have the DPRK-US bilateral talks there. The DPRK's proposal is now under discussion.⁶

During the late August 2003 first round of Six-Party Talks, the US and DPRK delegations did meet for approximately thirty minutes in a corner of the room used for plenary talks. However, the plenary talks did not go well and, unable to reach agreement on a joint statement, Chinese Vice Minister Wang Yi was forced to issue a chairman's statement:

The major result coming out of the talks is that all parties share a consensus with the following main points:

- All parties are willing to work for peaceful settlement of the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula through dialog, and to safeguard peace and stability and bring about lasting peace on the Peninsula;
- All parties maintain that while a nuclear-free Peninsula should be realized, the DPRK's security concerns and other areas should be considered and solved;
- All parties agree, in principle, to explore and decide on an overall plan for solving the nuclear issue in stages and through synchronous or parallel implementation in a just and reasonable manner;
- All parties agree that in the process of peace talks, any action and word that may escalate or intensify the situation should be avoided;
- All parties agree that dialog should continue to establish trust, reduce differences, and broaden common ground;
- All parties agree that the six-party talks should continue, and the date and venue for the next round of talks should be decided through diplomatic channels as soon as possible.⁷

A couple of days later Wang was asked by reporters in Manila what he thought the biggest obstacle to achieving a next round of Beijing talks was. He said, "The American policy towards DPRK—this is the main problem we are facing."⁸ Continuing its active shuttle diplomacy, Beijing attempted to send its number two, Wu Bangguo, to Pyongyang to convince the North Koreans to continue the multilateral process but was twice asked to postpone his visit until after 20 October 2003. Pyongyang did not want to be pressured by Beijing before it knew the results of President Bush's Asia trip associated with the Bangkok Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting.

On 19 October, President Bush said that he was willing to put in writing the things that he had been saying about not invading North Korea, or, in other words, he was willing to examine a possible

multilateral, written security guarantee. The predictable, but not authoritative response from Pyongyang came on 21 October in the form of a KCNA broadcast commentary stating, "It would be a laughing matter, which isn't worth even a glance, if the United States gives us a certain security assurance within the multilateral framework in return for an end to our nuclear weapons program."⁹

By 25 October, KCNA carried the authoritative response of the DPRK foreign ministry to a question regarding President Bush's intentions. The spokesman said, "We are ready to consider Bush's remarks on the 'written assurances of non-aggression' if they are based on the intention to co-exist with the DPRK and aimed to play a positive role in realizing the proposal for a package solution on the principle of simultaneous action."¹⁰

That North Korean statement put Pyongyang in a position to accept Wu Bangguo's request to accede to another round of Six-Party Talks in Beijing without being seen as giving in to Chinese pressure. Beijing began a new round of shuttle diplomacy in November in an attempt to create consensus for a joint statement that would be issued at the conclusion of the next round of talks. After failing to get consensus for a joint statement at the conclusion of the August talks, Beijing wanted to ensure success in advance of the next round. The process came to an abrupt halt on 12 December when Vice President Cheney is said to have intervened to insist specific language be inserted in the text of the draft joint statement. He is purported to have said, "I have been charged by the president with making sure that none of the tyrannies in the world are negotiated with. We don't negotiate with evil; we defeat it," effectively killing any chance that a statement could be agreed upon.¹¹ It took another two months before Pyongyang agreed to participate in the 25–28 February 2004 talks.

Six-Party Talks—round two

The first two days of the February round of talks appeared to take on a more positive tone, but on the third day talks again began to break down over the specifics of a new Chinese proposal for a joint statement. The plenary session on day three broke up after an hour and a half, with the remainder of Friday and Saturday devoted to trying to salvage a statement that could highlight the success of the talks. In the end, there was no agreement on a joint statement and Beijing had to, once again, issue a Chairman's Statement, which included the following elements:

3. The Parties agreed that the second round of the six-party talks had launched the discussion on substantive issues, which was beneficial and positive, and that the attitudes of all parties were serious in the discussion. While differences remained, the Parties enhanced their understanding of each other's position through the talks.
4. The Parties expressed their commitment to a nuclear-weapon-free Korean Peninsula, and to resolving the nuclear issue peacefully through dialogue in a spirit of mutual respect and consultation on an equal basis, so as to maintain peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and the region at large.
5. The Parties expressed their willingness to coexist peacefully. They agreed to take coordinated steps to address the nuclear issue and the related concerns.
6. The Parties agreed to continue the process of the talks and agreed in principle to hold the third round of the six-party talks in Beijing no later than the end of the second quarter of 2004. They agreed to set up a working group in preparation for the plenary session. The terms of reference of the working group will be established through diplomatic channels.¹²

After the conclusion of the February 2004 round of talks, the Russian head of delegation said, "If the negotiations run idly—there has been no practical movement forward so far—the situation will assume a dangerous nature," and "if the negotiating process is stalled, a number of countries could take certain measures against North Korea, for example, a blockade, which could further exacerbate the political and even military atmosphere on the Korean Peninsula."¹³

In an article in the 4 March 2004 edition of the *Washington Post*, President Bush is cited as having "instructed the US delegation to say the administration's continued support of the six-party process rested on North Korea's commitment to completely, verifiably and irreversibly dismantle its program." The article went on to highlight the implication that all options were still on the table—a not so subtle threat that military action was possible if Pyongyang did not admit to its HEU programme and commit to dismantling both its plutonium and HEU nuclear weapons programmes.

In an apparent effort to keep the prospects alive, Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi, head of the Chinese delegation, said all parties should make concerted efforts in three areas:

First, they should carefully study key standpoints of substantial issues and solutions proposed during the talks, from which they could summarize positive factors.

Second, a working group should be formed as soon as possible to prepare for the third round talks.

Third, the parties should maintain a peaceful environment for the process of talks and avoid words or actions that might intensify differences or provoke other parties.¹⁴

Six-Party Talk—round three

The third round of Six-Party Talks in late June 2004 were shaping up as a critical session. The South Koreans were making progress in their own talks with Pyongyang, Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi had made a second trip to Pyongyang and the Chinese had made public comments about the need for additional US flexibility in dealing with North Korea. Had the June round of talks followed the pattern of the previous two sessions many observers believed it could have been the end of the multilateral process. However, concerns within the US administration over continued critical world opinion, the prospect that North Korea could become an election year issue and, most importantly, the personal intervention by Prime Minister Koizumi with President Bush during the G8 meeting in early June 2004 at Sea Island, Georgia, led the United States to make its first concrete proposal to resolve the nuclear crisis during the third round of talks.

While Pyongyang eventually rejected the specifics of the US proposal, it initially declared that positive progress had been made. In testimony before the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly described the US proposal as one in which the United States envisioned a short preparatory period of three months to prepare for the dismantlement and removal of the DPRK's nuclear programmes. In this initial period, according to Kelly, the DPRK would provide a complete listing of all its nuclear activities, and cease operations of all its nuclear activities; permit the securing of all fissile material and the monitoring of all fuel rods; and permit the publicly disclosed and observable disablement of all nuclear weapons/weapon components and key centrifuge parts. Kelly emphasized that North Korea's declaration would need to include its uranium enrichment programme and existing weapons. Under this proposal, other parties would take corresponding steps as the DPRK carried out its commitments. One of the provisions of the US proposal

that Pyongyang found troubling (among many) was the exclusion of the United States from taking part in the provision of heavy fuel oil to North Korea once Pyongyang had agreed to the approach outlined by Kelly.¹⁵

For its part, Pyongyang, through its spokesman, said, “clearly expressing once again that the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is our ultimate goal, we once again made it clear that if the United States gives up its hostile policy against us through action, we will transparently renounce all our nuclear weapons-related programs. We presented a concrete plan on nuclear freeze, on the premise that if [sic] the United States withdraws the CVID [Complete, Verifiable, Irreversible Dismantlement] demand and accepts our demand for reward.”¹⁶ The third round ended with both the United States and the DPRK having made proposals, but without a serious discussion of either.

Six-Party Talks—the future

The relatively positive response from other members of the talks that the United States received for tabling a proposal, along with an uncertain outcome of the US presidential election, probably led Pyongyang to rebuff attempts by other participants to convene the fourth round of talks by the end of September 2004 as agreed upon during the third round of talks.

But according to Pyongyang the single biggest obstacle that needed to be overcome in order for Pyongyang to return to Six-Party Talks was “rectifying Washington’s broken promise coming out of the June talks”. Pyongyang believed that Washington had deliberately stopped using the term “Complete, Verifiable, Irreversible Dismantlement” during the third round in favour of a different formulation that Pyongyang interpreted as a deliberate signal which, in turn, prompted it to initially declare the talks positive. When the terminology was publicly reiterated by US officials after the third round of talks, Pyongyang claimed that the foundation for agreeing to the September round no longer existed.¹⁷

In December 2004, Pyongyang announced, “the DPRK intends to follow with patience the course of policy-shaping by the second-term of the Bush Administration. It is useless to hold talks, even a hundred times, without producing any substantial results. If the United States persist in this wrong stance, it would be hard to resume the talks. The United States should take a confidence-building attitude to making a policy switchover, which is the key to the settlement of the nuclear issue.”¹⁸ It appears that Pyongyang is wary of the multilateral process in general and is focused instead almost exclusively on the policies, actions and declarations of the United States.

It appears that Pyongyang is wary of the multilateral process in general and is focused instead almost exclusively on the policies, actions and declarations of the United States.

DPRK participation in the multilateral process seems designed to placate Beijing and prevent Washington from taking a more aggressive and unilateral approach to North Korea. As long as Pyongyang continues to pronounce its willingness to participate in the Chinese-hosted process and a willingness to reach a peacefully negotiated settlement of the nuclear crisis, it is unlikely that many, if any, of the other participants would be prepared to side with the United States in a confrontational approach toward the DPRK—regardless of the lack of actual progress in the talks. As bleak as it may seem because of the unconstrained public rhetoric and the length of time between sessions, all indications point to the convening of a fourth round of talks. Pyongyang’s clearest signal that it was ready to return to talks came 14 January when KCNA announced that North Korea was willing to resume the Six-Party Talks, explaining that Pyongyang was stressing the need to take a future-oriented approach toward improving bilateral relations with Washington, instead of repeating “the unpleasant past”.¹⁹

Things took a sharp turn for the worse on 10 February 2005 when the DPRK Foreign Ministry released a statement²⁰ saying that it had closely followed the development of President Bush’s second

term cabinet, along with the remarks by the President and Secretary of State Rice, and determined that the true intention of the administration was aimed at regime change in North Korea. The statement went on to announce that the DPRK was suspending participation in the Six-Party Talks for an indefinite period and that it had manufactured nuclear weapons.

The announcement caught most North Korea watchers off-guard. One interpretation of the move by Pyongyang to temporarily withdraw from multilateral talks suggests that the recent public disclosure that the DPRK was the source of a shipment of uranium hexafluoride to Libya and the briefing of that information to Beijing, Seoul and Tokyo by a senior White House staffer caused Pyongyang to assess that the next round of multilateral talks would be potentially embarrassing and therefore postponed. The declaration that it had manufactured nuclear weapons was seen in the context of the recent increase in strong US rhetoric towards Iran—the other member of the original axis of evil. Pyongyang had to calculate the risk of angering the Chinese against what they saw as a need to eliminate any ambiguity about their nuclear weapons programme and the benefit they believed it would bring them as a potential deterrent against US military action.

Conclusion

The lack of a permanent multilateral structure for security dialogue in North-East Asia and the lack of a successful precedent involving the DPRK in multilateral talks contribute to the likelihood that this iteration of multilateral talks may well fail. The period of time between sessions of the Six-Party Talks and the lack of progress suggest that there is insufficient common ground or commitment by the key participants (the United States and the DPRK) for resolution of the crisis in the foreseeable future.

If the talks resume, there exists the strong possibility that either the DPRK or the United States will become frustrated by 'talks for the sake of talks' without meaningful progress and the process will collapse. Either the DPRK will simply refuse to meet, thus effectively ending the process (as it did with the Four-Party Talks in 1999) or the United States will grow weary and attempt to force a deadline for progress that will have the effect of terminating the talks. The most likely US deadline at this point appears to coincide with KEDO's suspension of the light-water reactor project. The Executive Board of KEDO suspended work on the project in 2003 and extended the suspension in late 2004 until December 2005. If the Six-Party Talks have not produced a breakthrough by then, the United States most likely would seek formal termination of the project, KEDO and the Agreed Framework.

Failure of the Six-Party Talks risks the emergence of a new status quo in North-East Asia: a permanent nuclear (declared or otherwise) North Korea. The longer-term reaction by Japan, the Republic of Korea and the United States is speculative at this point, but unlikely to result in a consensus confrontational approach toward Pyongyang. The ramifications for the US–ROK alliance should Washington attempt to enlist the cooperation of Seoul for a more aggressive policy and be rebuffed is profound.

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In the face of likely failure of the multilateral process currently underway, it would seem prudent for the participants to review the substantial track record of DPRK participation and accommodation in bilateral negotiations with both the United States and the Republic of Korea and modify the Six-Party Talks accordingly.

One way to do this would be for the United States to enter into a serious and sustained bilateral dialogue with Pyongyang as a complementary component of the six-party process. All of the other six-party participants have urged the United States to do so for the past two years. In this scenario, as the United States begins to shape what may ultimately result in a resolution to the crisis in its complementary

negotiations with North Korea under the auspices of the six-party process, it would continue to consult with its close allies South Korea and Japan. Washington's coordinated policy approach to North Korea would be enhanced by Tokyo and Seoul's own bilateral meetings with Pyongyang. To ensure the multilateral nature of the end result remains viable, actual decisions reached on a tentative basis between the United States and North Korea would be fully vetted and approved in final form in a six-party setting. This arrangement would maintain the active participation by all parties and ensure an international component in the dismantlement and verification of the North's nuclear programme. It would also create international ownership in the implementation of security guarantees and economic assistance that might be agreed upon as part of the final settlement.

This two-pronged approach has the best chance of forging a near-term negotiated settlement through an extensive and mutually supportive bilateral component and the best chance to ensure its implementation through a multilateral component of guarantees and monitoring.

Given the track record of the past two years, the prognosis for successful resolution of the nuclear crisis through the current framework of multilateral talks is not very bright. However, the appointment of Ambassador Chris R. Hill to replace James A. Kelly as Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs and US chief negotiator to the Six-Party Talks offers a glimmer of hope. Hill is an experienced negotiator who brings with him a level of credibility and trust from the White House and the new US Secretary of State that will be invaluable if a peaceful negotiated resolution to the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula is possible.

Notes

1. It was US policy under the Bush Administration from June 2001 when its North Korea policy review was announced until the confrontation over highly enriched uranium in October 2002 to seek serious (bilateral) talks with the DPRK.
2. D. Oberdoerfer, 1997, *The Two Koreas: a Contemporary History*, Addison-Wesley, p. 262.
3. *Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula*, 20 January 1992, at <www.ceip.org/files/projects/npp/resources/koreadenuclearization.htm>.
4. Portions of this section have been previously published by the author in R.C. Bush, S. Yanagi and K. Scott (eds), *Brookings Northeast Asia Survey 2003–2004*, Washington, Brookings.
5. The New York channel originally referred to business-like communications between the US Department of State's Director of Korean Affairs and the DPRK's Deputy Permanent Representative at its UN Mission in New York. This channel was later upgraded and involved the passage of government communications between the DPRK's UN Ambassador and the US Special Envoy for Negotiations with the DPRK.
6. *Korean Central News Agency*, Pyongyang, 1 August 2003.
7. Press Briefing following the conclusion of the first round of Six-Party Talks, Beijing, 29 August 2003.
8. *Manila Chinese Commercial News*, 2 September 2003.
9. *Yonhap News*, 22 October 2003 report of a Korean Central News Agency broadcast of 21 October 2003.
10. *Korean Central News Agency*, Pyongyang, 25 October 2003.
11. *Knight Ridder Newspapers*, 20 December 2003.
12. *Xinhua News Agency*, Beijing, 28 February 2004.
13. *ITAR-TASS*, Moscow, 29 February 2004.
14. *Xinhua News Agency*, Beijing, 5 March 2004, at <www.china.org.cn/english/international/89318.htm>.
15. Testimony before the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States Senate's Hearing on a Report on the Latest Round of Six-Way Talks Regarding Nuclear Weapons in North Korea, 15 July 2004.
16. DPRK Spokesman's 25 June news conference at Six-Way Talks in Beijing, at <www.xignite.com/xWorldNews.aspx?count=100&category=Korean%20&criteria=5&articleid=KPP20040625000125>.
17. Conversation between the author and a senior DPRK official, 24 September 2004.
18. *Xinhuanet*, 14 December 2004, citing a *Rodong Sinmun* commentary.
19. *Korean Central News Agency*, Pyongyang, 14 January 2005.
20. *Korean Central News Agency*, Pyongyang, 10 February 2005.

Missile proliferation and missile defence in North-East Asia

Gu GUOLIANG

Missile proliferation in North-East Asia is a growing problem for regional security and stability. The situation is further complicated by missile defence plans in the region. Together these developments have caused great concern among Asian countries as well as the international community.

The missile programme of the DPRK

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) started to pursue a ballistic missile capability in the early 1960s.¹ In the late 1970s, the missile programme became a national priority equal to that of its nuclear programme. In April 1984, the DPRK conducted its first successful test of a Scud-B missile. Throughout the 1990s, the DPRK achieved consistent progress in its missile programme, with the successful tests of a Scud-C missile in June 1990, the Nodong-1 ballistic missile in May 1993 and the first flight test of its two-stage Taepo Dong-1 missile in 1998. As early as 1993, CIA Director James Woolsey, testifying before Congress, expressed US concern over the DPRK's missile development and export activities, and stated that the DPRK's Nodong-1, depending where deployed, could reach US bases and allied capitals in Asia and the Middle East.²

In April 1996, the United States and the DPRK met for their first round of bilateral missile talks in Berlin—no agreement was reached. The following year the United States and the DPRK held a second round of talks in New York over the DPRK's production and export of ballistic missiles—again with no significant agreement. The fact that between 1996 and 1998 the United States imposed sanctions on the DPRK for its missile and missile technology transfers did little to improve their relationship. On 16 June 1998, the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) commented that the missile issue was related to the sovereignty and existence of the DPRK, and claimed that if America wanted to prevent the DPRK's missile exports, it should lift the economic embargo as early as possible and compensate the DPRK for the losses to be incurred as a result of discontinuing the exports.³

On 31 August 1998, the DPRK conducted the first flight test of its two-stage Taepo Dong-1 missile with a range of 1,500–2,000 kilometres. This caused alarm in the United States, Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and other countries. Responding to the DPRK's missile test, the US Senate cut funding for heavy fuel oil shipments to the DPRK. Japan suspended food aid and political normalization talks with the DPRK and also suspended US\$ 1 billion in financial assistance to the Korean Peninsula Energy

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Development Organization (KEDO) for the construction of the two light-water reactors at Sinpo. On 1 October 1998, the DPRK and the United States held a third round of missile talks. The United States requested the DPRK to restrain its missile programmes and exports in exchange for relief from economic sanctions. The DPRK rejected US demands. In March 1999, during the fourth round of US–DPRK missile talks, the DPRK offered to suspend its missile exports in exchange for cash compensation from the United States, which the US found unacceptable.

Progress started to be made a few months later. On 25–28 May, US policy coordinator for the DPRK William Perry visited the DPRK and offered a possible package deal to end economic sanctions, provide economic assistance, and establish diplomatic relations with the DPRK in exchange for an end to the DPRK's missile and nuclear programmes.⁴ Perry's goal was a complete and verifiable cessation of the DPRK's testing, production and development of missiles. On 7–12 September, during the talks in Berlin, the DPRK agreed to a moratorium on testing any long-range missiles for the duration of high-level talks with the United States.

On 9–12 October 2000, Vice Marshal Jo Myong Rok, First Vice Chairman of the National Defence Commission of the DPRK and a Special Envoy of Chairman Kim Jong Il, officially visited the United States. He delivered a letter to President Clinton and held talks with the US Secretaries of State and Defense. According to the "DPRK-US Joint Communiqué" announced on 12 October, "As the first important step both sides declared that any of the two governments entertains no hostile intention toward the other and affirmed the commitment to make all efforts to establish new relations free from past antagonism in the future".⁵ The DPRK committed not to launch any long-range missile while the missile talks were ongoing.

On 23 October, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited Pyongyang for talks with Kim Jong Il, Chairman of the National Defence Commission. The two sides "made substantial progress in key areas, including the security matters".⁶ Kim Jong Il told Albright that the DPRK's 1998 Taepo Dong rocket launch "was the first satellite launch, and it would be the last".⁷

Following Albright's visit to Pyongyang, the two countries held three days of missile talks in Kuala Lumpur in November. According to the press statement by Robert J. Einhorn, Assistant Secretary of State for Nonproliferation, "the talks were detailed, constructive, and very substantive." They covered the full range of missile issues under consideration by the two countries, including the DPRK's missile-related exports and its indigenous missile programmes. The delegations also explored in depth the idea of providing satellite launch services in exchange for serious missile restraint by the DPRK.⁸

This constructive progress came to a halt when the Bush Administration came to office in 2001. It took a hard line towards the DPRK, publicly accusing it of being part of the "axis of evil". The political atmosphere for bilateral dialogue evaporated and no progress has been made in talks on missile restraint since.

Currently, the DPRK has about 600 Scud missiles with ranges of 300–500km, as well as the Nodong-1, with a range of 1,300km, capable of reaching the ROK and most parts of Japan. The US Department of Defense stated in its 2001 report *Proliferation: Threat and Response* that "North Korea is developing the Taepo Dong 2 (ICBM), which could deliver a several-hundred kilogram payload to Alaska or Hawaii, and a lighter payload to the western half of the United States."⁹ According to a recent report, the DPRK is "in the process of deploying" a new intermediate-range ballistic missile, which could fly up to three times as far as previous North Korean missiles, reaching US facilities in Asia.¹⁰ Furthermore, the United States is concerned about the DPRK's missile exports to Middle Eastern countries. Based on these concerns, the Bush Administration has threatened to use force to deal with the DPRK's nuclear and missile programmes. President Bush initiated the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) with a view to intercepting the DPRK's missile exports.

Japan's missile build-up and missile defence programmes

Japan's long-range missile quest alarms its neighbours. The Japanese newspaper *Daily Yomiuri* reported that the draft outline of the new five-year defence programme submitted by the Defense Agency on 3 December 2004 to the Liberal Democratic Party proposed the development of long-range, precision-guided surface-to-surface missiles with a maximum range of 300km, capable of striking enemy targets overseas.¹¹ The Defense Agency argued that such technology was necessary to defend Japan's remote islands.

Because of the opposition to such technology due to its offence capabilities by New Komeito, the junior partner of the Liberal Democratic Party-led ruling coalition, the proposal was removed from the fiscal 2005–2009 midterm defence build-up plan, but as Fukushima Nukaga, co-chairman of the ruling coalition's security panel stated, most LDP members on the panel supported the research.¹²

Since the DPRK tested its Taepo Dong-1 missile in 1998, there have been more statements by Japanese officials supporting Japan's pursuance of a policy of pre-emptive strike. They have explicitly stated that it is lawful for Japan to attack enemy bases that possess guided missiles before being attacked itself. The prevailing Japanese opinion is that a re-examination of current military capabilities is necessary due to changing international circumstances. Therefore, this long-range missile quest will most likely re-emerge. It is also significant that Japan's commercial rockets could be converted into ballistic missiles with ranges rivalling Washington's ICBMs.¹³

The enhanced US–Japanese joint development of missile defence has also caused great concern. In the past years, the Bush and the Junichiro Koizumi administrations have hastened cooperation on their missile defence programme. The new National Defence Program Outline and the fiscal 2005–2009 midterm defence build-up programme approved by the Japanese government on 10 December 2004 stipulate a policy to establish a missile defence system. The Japanese government added vital equipment and major units related to the missile defence system, which includes four Aegis-equipped destroyers and three groups of Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC3) surface-to-air missiles. The United States has already agreed in principle to Japan's licensed production of US-developed surface-to-air missiles, which will become the core of the joint missile defence system.¹⁴ The Japan Defense Agency plans to begin deploying a ballistic missile defence (BMD) system in 2006 and is going to spend US\$ 10 billion over the next seven years to build it.

To facilitate further cooperation between the United States and Japan in the development, production and deployment of the missile defence programme, the new defence guidelines include the relaxation of the arms export ban that Japan has maintained since 1976 in deference to its constitution.¹⁵ Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda announced on 10 December 2004 that Japan would exclude from its ban components related to missile defence when the ongoing joint research moves to the development and production stages. The active pursuance of BMD systems symbolizes a shift in Japan's defence policy in comparison with the previous administration's cautious position towards joint research and development of missile defence programme with the United States.

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These developments have made the people in the region wonder in which direction Japan is heading. The 2004 Defence White Paper calls for the Japanese Self-Defence Force (SDF) to be transformed from its current invasion defence posture to a "more functional force" able to deal with two major threats—terrorist attacks and missile attacks. Encouraged by the United States to play a bigger military role abroad, the White Paper stressed that participation in "international activities"

should be listed as a basic task of the SDF. It shows the Koizumi Administration's ambition to play a military role within and beyond the region. Under his administration, Japan has 1,000 troops in Iraq and neighbouring countries engaged in reconstruction work. In 2001, Koizumi responded to the US "war on terror" by pushing through legislation to allow the navy to provide logistical support to forces in Afghanistan. The Japanese government's decision on 9 December 2004 to extend the mission of the SDF in Iraq for an additional year is another manifestation of Japan's changed perception of its role in the world.

The new defence posture of Japan has alarmed its Asian neighbours, who suffered under Japan's expansionist policies earlier last century. After Japan's revision of its defence programme, a number of commentators from Asian and European countries expressed concern about Japan's intention and its future role in East Asia.

The mysterious missile programme of the ROK

The ROK started its missile and nuclear programme in 1970s. By 1978, the ROK's Agency for Defence Development had succeeded in converting US-supplied Nike Hercules surface-to-air missiles into ballistic missiles with ranges between 150–250km. The development of the ROK's missile programme triggered concern in Washington and brought about the 1979 memorandum, which limited Seoul's missile range to 180km.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the ROK continued to develop and refine indigenous ballistic missiles, testing the Hyon Mu NHK-A several times. Since 1995, the ROK had actively sought to rescind the 1979 memorandum and join the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). Washington agreed to formally abandon the 1979 agreement in early January 2001. In March 2001, the ROK joined the MTCR; its membership increased the allowable range for ballistic missiles to 300km with a 500kg payload. By the end of 2001, the ROK had test-fired a missile that could reach almost anywhere in the DPRK.

As for missile defence, the ROK has hundreds of US-purchased Nike Hercules surface-to-air missiles with a range of 180km, which have been deployed in the country since 1965 as a key deterrence against air attacks.¹⁶ The ROK has sought to replace the Nike missiles with PAC-3 missiles, and the United States is attempting to persuade the ROK to jointly develop a BMD programme.

The ROK's expansion of its missile range and development of satellite-launching capabilities remain somewhat mysterious. Nevertheless, the recent disclosure of the ROK's secret nuclear research activities has caused concern from its neighbouring countries about the ROK's nuclear and missile programmes.

In August 2004, under the pressure from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the ROK publicly disclosed its past secret nuclear research activities, revealing that it had conducted chemical uranium enrichment from 1979 to 1981, separated small quantities of plutonium in 1982, and experimented with uranium enrichment in 2000.¹⁷ Scientists at the Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute (KAERI) in Daejeon refined uranium to an average level of 10.2% and up to the highly enriched level 77%, which is close to weapons grade. The IAEA decided not to bring the issue to the UN Security Council, as it reckoned that the tests were experimental and small-scale and that the ROK had cooperated with the agency in investigating the matter. However, the ROK's unauthorized experiments have dealt a heavy blow to the credibility of the international non-proliferation regime and have alarmed the international community. Uncertainties remain about the ROK's nuclear and missile capabilities and their impact on the Six-Party Talks and the security situation in North-East Asia.

China's concerns about missile proliferation and missile defence

China's security concern is three-fold. First, China is concerned about the DPRK's nuclear and missiles programmes. China supports a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula. As China needs a stable environment to concentrate on its economic development, missile proliferation or an arms race in East Asia are not in China's security interest. China is concerned that the DPRK's missile programme may produce a domino effect and provide an excuse for Japan to develop missile and nuclear capabilities. China has played an important part in the Six-Party Talks and has made great efforts to persuade the DPRK to give up its nuclear and missile programmes. China has worked together with the international community to counter the proliferation of missiles in North-East Asia and has supported the general goal of PSI.

Secondly, China is concerned about the development and deployment of the American BMD programme, which may negate the credibility of the small nuclear deterrent force China possesses. China is also greatly concerned about the missile build-up of Japan and its recent enhanced cooperation with the United States on BMD. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue expressed unease about these developments, stating "We are deeply concerned with the great changes of Japan's military defence strategy and its possible impact".¹⁸ China is not convinced that the BMD system is designed only to counter a DPRK missile attack. As one analyst pointed out, "the DPRK's missile programme is in fact primitive and unlikely to pose a threat to the United States anytime soon. Washington has apparently overstated the North's capabilities in the quest for a national missile defence".¹⁹

Thirdly, China is concerned about US missile sales to Taiwan and its possible joint BMD programme with Taiwan, which may encourage Taiwan separatists move further towards independence. The Pentagon has approved the sale of US\$ 520 million worth of weapons to Taiwan, a package that includes 631 missiles for helicopters and jets. The Pentagon endorsed Taiwan's proposed purchase of the missiles and other equipment so as to maintain the so-called military balance in the region. The proposed package also includes 449 Hellfire II air-to-surface missiles for Super Cobra and OH-58D helicopters. Additionally, China does not want Japan to be dragged into a cross-strait conflict because of its joint BMD programme with the United States.

US development and deployment of BMD (including its joint development of BMD with countries in North-East Asia) have a direct impact on the pace of China's modernization of its national defence.

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China's modernization of its national defence has caused some concern in the United States and Japan. The *Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China*, released by the US Department of Defense on 28 May 2004, continues to exaggerate China's military power including its missile strength, plays up the deficiency of Taiwan's military power, and raises the alarm about the "China threat". As for Japan, Japan's 2004 White Paper on Defence and the new National Defence Program Outline for the first time explicitly identify China as the major potential threat to Japan's security, stating "China has been modernizing its nuclear and missile forces as well as its naval and air forces. Careful deliberation should go into determining whether the objective of this modernization exceeds the scope necessary for the defence of China, and future developments in this area merit special attention".²⁰

The fact is that with the changing international situation, China needs to modernize its outdated national defence capabilities solely for defensive purposes. While the United States possesses the largest nuclear arsenal in the world, takes full advantage of the revolution in military affairs, provides a nuclear umbrella to its allies in North-East Asia and strengthens BMD cooperation, China has to rely on

itself to have a credible minimum nuclear deterrent to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity. It has made efforts to raise the survivability and mobility of its missiles and develop other countermeasures to maintain the credibility of its small nuclear arsenal and meet the challenge of the BMD programme.

China has increasingly recognized the importance of international efforts to counter missile proliferation as it has been exposed to a missile proliferation-prone peripheral environment.

As it is clearly stated in China's Defence White Paper, "China maintains a small but effective nuclear counterattacking force in order to deter possible nuclear attacks by other countries."²¹ China has neither the intention nor the capability to join the missile arms race.

China has increasingly recognized the importance of international efforts to counter missile proliferation as it has been exposed to a missile proliferation-prone peripheral environment.

Since the early 1990s, China has taken major steps in working together with the international community to fight against missile proliferation and has made great efforts in integrating itself into the international non-proliferation regime including the regimes preventing missile proliferation such as the MTCR.

The Chinese government declared in February 1992 that it would act in line with the guidelines and parameters of the MTCR in its export of missiles and related technologies. In 1994, China committed itself not to export ground-to-ground missiles with capabilities equal to or beyond the range/payload threshold defined by the MTCR—i.e. inherently capable of reaching a range of at least 300km with a payload of at least 500kg. In 2000, China further declared that it had no intention to assist any country in any way in the development of ballistic missiles that could be used to deliver nuclear weapons. In August 2002, the Chinese government promulgated the *Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Export Control of Missiles and Missile-Related Items and Technologies*, and the control list.²²

Since the early 1990s, the United States has conducted a series of talks on missile issues with China. For a number of years, the United States tried to persuade China to join the MTCR, but China criticized the MTCR as an arrangement of a few countries. However, when China had a better understanding of the MTCR and decided to apply for membership in early 2004, with the aspiration to shoulder more responsibility as a major power in countering missile proliferation and to further improve China-US relations, the United States changed its mind and refused to accept China's application, as some US officials held that "there is still a problem concerning China's implementation of its regulation on missile export control."²³ This is in contrast with the position of the European Union. On 9 December 2004, China and the European Union issued a joint declaration on non-proliferation and arms control, which explicitly stated that the EU supports China's entry into the MTCR.²⁴ The US's changed position has confused China. Some analysts suggest that it is because some force in the United States does not want China to share its missile technology with other members of the MTCR.

Missile defence is not a solution to missile proliferation in North-East Asia

Missile defence can neither effectively defend a country from missile attacks nor prevent terrorist attacks. Missile defence can only result in a spiral of competition of offensive and defensive missiles in North-East Asia. The development of offensive and defensive weapons is interactive. The development of the BMD programme will inevitably stimulate the production and development of offensive ballistic missiles and countermeasures. An arms race in the region has already begun.

As offensive and defensive ballistic missiles have similar technologies, the development or deployment of BMD by the United States and its allies constitutes proliferation of ballistic missiles and their technologies. It will be difficult to effectively persuade or stop other countries such as the DPRK from exporting missiles and missile technologies while the United States is sharing it missile technologies with its allies in North-East Asia and the Middle East.

BMD deployment may damage the effectiveness of deterrence and US security commitments. The willingness of the United States to spend tens of billions of dollars to defend itself against weapons of mass destruction (WMD) threats carried on ballistic missiles reinforces the perception that WMD capabilities are an effective means of deterring US intervention and therefore increases the incentive for insecure states to seek WMD.

The joint development of BMD between the United States and Japan could destabilize the security situation in North-East Asia. As concerns mount over the DPRK's nuclear and missile programmes, Japan is developing new missile defence systems. This has caused further suspicion and concern about the intention and the future military role of Japan, not only from China, but also from other Asian countries. The US BMD programme is also a potential factor that may undermine stability across the Taiwan Strait. China fears that if the United States transfers BMD systems to Taiwan, it will encourage the separatists in Taiwan to move toward independence and make it more difficult for the mainland to strive for peaceful unification. The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman warned that the discussion of US-Taiwan anti-missile cooperation and weapons sales would send the wrong signals to Taiwan's independence forces, and urged the US to clearly recognize the damage it could cause on such a sensitive issue.

Missile defence undermines the cooperation of major powers in countering proliferation of ballistic missiles in East Asia. American plans to deploy BMD are viewed with suspicion by both Russia and China, as BMD has the potential to nullify the credibility of both China's and Russia's nuclear arsenals. The strategic goal of the United States in developing and deploying BMD is to achieve an absolute US military superiority in both offensive and defensive capabilities, further widening the existing disparity between the United States and other countries. This will certainly undermine the trust and affect cooperation among the major powers in dealing with the proliferation of ballistic missiles in East Asia.

The Bush Administration's approach to dealing with WMD threats has combined a strong emphasis on deploying BMD with conscious efforts to downgrade the role of multilateral arms control and non-proliferation treaties. Its withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, negative attitude towards the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, and rejection of the verification protocol to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention have damaged other parts of the non-proliferation regime such as the NPT and efforts to combat missile proliferation. The selective policy and attitude of the US towards non-proliferation regimes only undermines the credibility of all the existing non-proliferation regimes and makes it difficult to establish a sound, universal non-proliferation regime.

Dialogue is the right approach

Ballistic missile proliferation is a complicated issue facing the international community. The solution lies in political and diplomatic means and a comprehensive approach to address both the symptoms and root causes.

It is of vital importance to remove the incentives for acquisition of ballistic missiles by cultivating a peaceful international environment where countries feel secure and base their relations on mutual trust, mutual benefit and equality. It is essential for the concerned countries of the region to improve their respective political relations (including US–DPRK, DPRK–ROK, US–China, China–Japan, and Japan–DPRK). The United States, Japan and China should hold a strategic dialogue so that each side could have a better understanding of the others' strategic intentions. Without an improvement of political relations, it will be difficult to solve the issue of missile proliferation.

A credible security guarantee and the necessary incentives should be provided to those countries that are prepared to give up their aspirations to acquire ballistic missiles. The DPRK has expressed on

a number of occasions that it is willing to give up its missile programme and stop its missile exports if the United States agrees to offer a security guarantee by signing a non-aggression treaty and to provide economic compensation. If the Bush Administration is prepared to start bilateral missile talks with the DPRK within or outside the framework of the Six-Party Talks, positive results may be produced.

International cooperation, particularly among the major powers, is essential for handling the issue of missile proliferation effectively.

International cooperation, particularly among the major powers, is essential for handling the issue of missile proliferation effectively. Proliferation of ballistic missiles is a global problem and one of the security concerns that all nations will face in the twenty-first century. Therefore, it is not a problem that the United States can solve on its own with its BMD programme. The major countries should have a shared understanding of the common threat constituted by ballistic missile proliferation and make joint efforts in countering that proliferation. Progress in non-proliferation is inconceivable without cooperation and universal participation by the international community.

It is essential to preserve and fortify the integrity and authority of the international arms control and non-proliferation system. While it is important to strengthen the existing non-proliferation regime (including the missile export control regime), it is an urgent task to establish a legally binding, multilateral missile non-proliferation regime with agreed international norms and mechanisms covering missile production, transfer, testing and deployment under the auspices of the United Nations. On 31 October 2001, the Iranian-sponsored resolution A/C.1/56/L.6, entitled "Missiles", was adopted by the United Nations First Committee and by the General Assembly two months later. The resolution emphasized the "need for a comprehensive approach towards missiles, in a balanced and non-discriminatory manner, as a contribution to international peace and security." Following the passage of the resolution, several expert meetings were held, but no significant progress has been made due to the complex nature of the issue. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to continue this effort in the framework of the United Nations. It is also important to set up a forum to discuss how to deal with the issue of missile proliferation in North-East Asia. While the Six-Party Talks might continue to provide a platform for dialogue and play an important role, bilateral missile talks between the DPRK and the United States are key. Dialogue and diplomatic means should replace threat of pre-emptive strike or interception by force.

In conclusion, missile proliferation is a serious and complex problem destabilizing the situation in North-East Asia. Missile defence cannot solve the problem of missile proliferation. However, it *can* stimulate an arms race in the region and undermine strategic stability and non-proliferation endeavours. Missile proliferation can only be effectively handled by peaceful means and through cooperation among all the concerned countries in the region via an international non-proliferation regime under the auspice of the United Nations.

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North-East Asia's regional security secrets: re-envisaging the Korean crisis

Hazel SMITH

The conventional picture of North-East Asian security is of stark national security threats caused by the alleged menacing behaviour of a highly militarized, nuclear-armed Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea). Not only does this picture obscure the profound human security crisis facing many North Koreans, mis-analysing of regional security problems also contributes to the prevalence and circulation of a fundamentally flawed "conventional wisdom" about what constitutes the security crisis for North-East Asia and consequently what can be done about it. It therefore precludes fruitful policy choices that could help to resolve the multidimensional Korean security crisis that is at the heart of short-, medium- and long-term regional stability.

One reason for the prevailing truncated picture of North-East Asian security is that to consider the more complex, real regional security crisis makes for uncomfortable reading for many of the elites in the region or indeed for extra-regional elites with regional concerns. It would mean making visible what have become almost taboo subjects in terms of their lack of coverage in the international media. These include the absence of a military threat to the region from North Korea, the real risks to regional stability from transborder spill-overs of unregulated capitalism in the DPRK, and the regionally held fear of unilateral US military intervention in North Korea.

Security discourses

Security debates these days are often categorized in mutually exclusive terms as either concerning national security or human security. National security analysts and policy makers worry about territorial integrity and military defence of state borders. They regard "security" as the domain of sovereign states. The international is inherently conflictual and in the end states must rely on their own resources to defend themselves and protect their citizens.

Human security analysts, on the other hand, argue that for most states, security no longer means only the protection of borders against invasion. It also implies protection against social and economic instability caused by disruption from outside the territorial borders. Human security analysts feel that in this globalizing world of porous borders and easy travel we should be more concerned about transborder threats to individual well-being. These may come, for example, from economic downturns, humanitarian and environmental disasters, or transnational crime. Human security concerns normally also imply a sense that one state can no longer—if it ever could—resolve such problems on its own.

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Asian bird flu, for instance, is not just a problem for Thailand or Viet Nam or even just for Asia. Human security analysts prefer therefore to respond to human security threats by way of regional and/or global institutions. These institutions offer multilateral solutions designed, in the main, to be implemented through cooperation, not coercion.

National security and human security analysts have not been very good at incorporating each other's perspectives such as to offer multisectoral analysis.

National security and human security analysts have not been very good at incorporating each other's perspectives such as to offer multisectoral analysis. There is nothing in logic or in practice, however, to prevent a national/human security nexus as the basis for analysis and plenty to recommend it in terms of an increased ability to appreciate the complexity of contemporary security crises. National security concerns in terms of the potential use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or terrorism against civilians should in fact remain the most basic of human security concerns. By contrast, there are few who would argue that simple territorial stability accompanied by the abrogation of basic political and economic rights offers any kind of meaningful national security to citizens, the regime that rules over them or neighbouring countries that must deal with legal and illegal migration and all manner of negative, unpredictable cross-border spill-over effects.

National and human security discourses can also be reconciled through policy choices that push for multinational solutions to global problems. After all, even in the hardest of security cases when military intervention is mooted, most states (including those often conceived of as diehard unilateralists) value multilateral solutions—whether this be through NATO, or the UN and regional peace-keeping forces. This is why the United States has sought to achieve multilateral backing for every international intervention it has made since the Second World War and why China has insisted that only multilateral, preferably UN-sanctioned, interventions are legal.

The prevalence and influence of the conventional security discourse

The dominant international security debate about North-East Asia focuses on North Korea as the source of most of the region's troubles. The discourse is on WMD including ballistic missiles and nuclear armaments, and of military threats by North Korea against its neighbours. It is commonly believed that there remains the ever-present threat of war caused by an irrational state and government in the DPRK. If human security concerns are mentioned in the context of North-East Asia they are invariably discussed in regard to North Korea's human rights violations. Humanitarian concerns are discussed in the context of the food crisis in North Korea and the consequent inability of the government to feed its people. Transnational crime and trafficking in women also come on to the agenda of the region's media through the prism of alleged North Korean misdemeanours.

Conventional security discourse on and in North-East Asia is of North Korea as the major source of a military security dilemma. Seen in this way, human insecurity is a direct consequence of the militarization of the DPRK and that government's political intransigence and antiquated economic policies. The implication is that once the DPRK military problem is resolved such that the DPRK no longer poses a security threat to the region, then human security problems for North Koreans and neighbouring populations will be solved as an automatic consequence. Human security threats are not, within this conventional security picture, understood as a common problem for all of North-East Asia—transcending borders and requiring common and cooperative solutions.

Conventional security talk is also pessimistic about the possibilities of achieving multilateral or cooperative solutions to the perceived security dilemma of North-East Asia. North-East Asia is known for its comparative absence of regional organizations. Recent years have seen some promotion of the

idea of a North-East Asian community but there remains no appetite for a European Union-type integration venture in East Asia—even in the distant future. The conventional wisdom is that it is difficult to perceive common interests and culture such as to place regional integration on the agenda for any North-East Asian state. Nor is North-East Asia home to even a loose association of states analogous to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which operates by putting aside ideological and economic disparity in order to formulate common approaches to shared concerns.

The dominant or conventional security discourse is influential globally, informing the foreign policies of major states—including the United States, Japan and all Western states from the European Union members to Australia and New Zealand. Its analysis permeates ASEAN members even if these states do not share the policy options of isolation and containment that have sometimes flowed from the dominant analysis. ASEAN prefers its own distinct method of conflict resolution and negotiation to achieve elite consensus and cooperative solutions.

The dominant approach is by no means universal, however, and obscures more complex intra-regional security dynamics. In China, for instance, the major North-East Asian security debate is not about North Korea, but about the perceived threat to the region from Taiwanese independence claims. Other concerns highlighted throughout the region although barely mentioned in the western media are the still extant territorial conflicts, regional rivalries and ideological differences between North-East Asia's major states—China, Russia, Japan and both Koreas. The bitterness engendered by the Japanese colonial period of the first half of twentieth century is still prevalent and a significant factor in domestic politics in China and both Koreas. Ideological differences between communist China and capitalist Japan still play a part in fear, suspicion and mistrust between the two peoples. Nationalist sentiments also motivate Chinese, Japanese, Korean and to a lesser extent Russian irredentist claims in the region.

The conventional approach tells part of the truth but it does so in such a way as to obscure other important truths for those concerned with North-East Asia. Conventional approaches reduce knowledge about complex security problems to a “one cause fits all” diagnosis that demonizes the DPRK and makes it almost impossible to conceive of negotiating, let alone reaching any agreement, with such an irrational state. Conventional knowledge about the DPRK also presents worst-case scenarios as factual accounts. The conventional wisdom does anything but provide wise guidance for policy makers. Instead it exaggerates and skews data in such a way as to aggravate—rather than merely analyse—security tensions.

Some “taboos”

Articulating some of the taboos—the issues that are known by all regional policy makers but rarely mentioned—is a first step to reconstituting security analysis in and about the region. A reconstitution of the conventional wisdom should be the aim—to try to force a belated recognition that the current security policies of major states are based on or informed in important ways by a dangerously deficient understanding of North Korean realities and therefore build policy on deeply problematic foundations.

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THE DPRK IS A MILITARILY WEAK POWER

It may seem obvious, even logical, that the DPRK, which has suffered well-recorded economic devastation for over fifteen years and as a consequence almost total industrial infrastructural collapse,

would have little in the way of functioning military hardware or a very fearsome army. Nevertheless, the conventional wisdom is that the DPRK has a fearsome arsenal, ready to be released on all comers from Tokyo to Alaska with South Korea in-between. Table 1 starkly reveals the actual capacity of the DPRK military.

Table 1. Comparative military spending of North Korea, South Korea and Japan, 2000 (data in parentheses from 1999)

	Population (m)	Military expenditure (US\$m) 2000	Per capita military expenditure (US\$)	Percentage of GDP
North Korea	24.5	2 049 (2 100)	95 (87)	13.9 (14.3)
South Korea	47	12 496 (12 088)	263 (257)	2.8 (3)
Japan	127	44 417 (40 383)	351 (319)	1 (0.9)

Source: IISS, London.

The DPRK's annual military spending is dwarfed by its neighbours, at 2 billion US dollars, compared to Japan's 44 billion and South Korea's 12 billion. In addition, the US\$ 95 per capita it spends on its huge armed forces has to cover food, clothing, housing, health supplies, as well as every aspect of what would normally come from a civilian infrastructure in a developed state—telecommunications, transport, food supplies and agricultural production, and industrial production for everything from weapons to clothing. This is because the social infrastructure barely functions and the civilian industrial fabric has all but disappeared since the economic meltdown of the 1990s. Additionally the data in Table 1 assume a formal exchange rate that in practice has been replaced by market rates since at least the mid-1990s. In 2000 the market rate for the won was conservatively 25 won per dollar—as compared to the 2.2 official rate. Taking this conservative market rate as the actual rate, DPRK per capita expenditure on its soldiers in 2000 was actually around US\$ 8 a year. This expenditure is not enough to make for a powerful army.

The incapacity of the North Korean army provides an important reason as to why the DPRK is seeking to build or declare a nuclear deterrent. If successful, relatively cheap investment in nuclear fission would mean the DPRK would not have to find billions of dollars to support its hungry and economically unproductive army. The strategy does not even require the actual production of a nuclear weapon. The February 2005 announcement by the DPRK that it had “manufactured nukes for self-defence” may or may not be true. The DPRK has not, however, completed any nuclear-weapons testing, and the backward state of every aspect of its economy would indicate that the DPRK's claims are both aspirational and designed to bring the US into substantive negotiations to exchange its nuclear-weapons programmes for economic assistance.

No serious military analyst anywhere in the world views the DPRK as an offensive military threat to its neighbours or any other state. This is partly because of the weak military capacity of the DPRK and partly because of the lack of a military strategy that argues for either offensive attack against its neighbours or pre-emptive defence.

THE DPRK HAS NO LINKS WITH GLOBAL TERRORISM

Despite its involvement historically in terrorist attacks against South Koreans such as the Rangoon bombing of South Korean politicians in 1983 and its alleged blowing up of a South Korean airline in 1987 as well as its abduction of thirteen Japanese civilians in the 1970s and early 1980s, the DPRK does not have any recent or current connections with global terrorism. Its dramatically improved relationship with South Korea since the June 2000 Summit in Pyongyang (when North and South Korean leaders met for the first time since the end of the Korean War in 1953) and its dependence on

the South for economic and humanitarian assistance are also likely to preclude such activities against the South. Similarly Kim Jong Il, the DPRK's head of state, has made an intensive effort to improve relations with Japan—resulting in two visits by Prime Minister Koizumi to the DPRK, an agreement to return Japanese hijackers residing in Pyongyang since the 1970s along with their families, and the return of the Japanese abductees and their families. The DPRK's non-involvement in terrorist activities was acknowledged by the Clinton Administration, which was in the process of taking the DPRK off its list of states that sponsor terrorism before it went out of office in 2001.

The real military threat from and to the DPRK

The military threat from the DPRK is that if attacked, even in the form of a “surgical strike” or “limited” bombing campaign against its nuclear or other facilities, it would retaliate militarily. If attacked, weak military capacity would not prevent retaliatory military action by the DPRK against South Korea—where some 30,000 US troops are stationed. Seoul with its population of around 25 million is only about 50km from the Korean border.

The DPRK has the capacity to mobilize millions of its military and population if it is attacked. It is the DPRK's mobilization capacity—not its military hardware—that could potentially cause devastation if war broke out on the Peninsula. A determined march south by a mobilized North Korean population, even in the face of undoubtedly punishing bombing from US and South Korean forces, would result in human and economic catastrophe for South Korea. As the Rwandan genocide demonstrated, it is not necessary to possess sophisticated weapons to kill half a million people in two or three weeks.

On the other hand, even the DPRK government does not know if a mobilized people and army would continue to fight if war broke out. The population of North Korea is for the most part hungry and poor, and it blames the party and government officials, not the United States, for the country's economic crisis. Nor does it view South Korea as the enemy. Large sections of the population also now know that, contrary to what they were told by their education system and their media, South Korea is a rich country and life chances are better in the South than the North. The North Korean population could decide that the nationalist Korean project that is the essential foundation of the “Juche” philosophy could easily be satisfied by integration with South Korea. Therefore war is not a policy option for the DPRK government. Rather than mobilizing the people, North Korean policy makers know that military conflict may provide the catalyst to undermine fatally the current DPRK regime.

Real threats to regional security

MARKETS, INEQUALITY AND THE SPILL-OVER EFFECTS

The real threats to regional security can best be understood as a result of a causal relationship between the economic devastation faced by the North Korean population since the early 1990s and the subsequent actual and potential threats to stability in neighbouring states from spill-over effects of the rapid growth of unregulated primitive capitalism in the DPRK. Human (in)security analysis thus illuminates the cause of the potential regional security crisis and by doing so challenges conventional analysis of what constitutes the causes of concern in the Korean case.

The economic crisis that hit the DPRK with the loss of concessionary markets, cheap oil and technology transfers from the ex-communist states with the end of the Cold War is well-known. What

is less reported is the consequent marketization— without political liberalization—that has taken place in the DPRK since the early 1990s. The state could no longer deliver food and all other economic and social goods after the food crisis of the 1990s, when nearly a million people died of starvation and malnutrition. The remaining 21 million survived through recourse to the primitive market that filled the economic allocation and distribution vacuum.

The DPRK is now a nation of small and large business people. The state no longer provides enough for any member of the population to survive without individual entrepreneurship. Yet, at the same time, the state has not moved to create a regulatory framework to shape the workings of this mass of private economic activity. Thus there is little distinction between what is legal and what is illegal, what is legitimate and what is illegitimate. Corruption in this climate is simply a judgment made in terms of personal ethics. Everything is permissible as the legal system does not recognize—except in the very broad and basic legislation provided by the July 2002 “economic reforms”—that the foundations of the economic structure have been transformed.

CROSS-BORDER ILLEGALITY AND PETTY CRIMINALITY

One consequence of the DPRK’s human security crisis is, as one North Korean residing in China told me in March this year, “the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer”. The social safety net cherished under the Kim Il Sung development project has all but disappeared. Inequality and absolute poverty such as to keep the threat of starvation acute for probably the majority of North Koreans propel various kinds of cross-border illegality: economic migration to China, trafficking in women, armed robbery and night-time theft, and smuggling.

The 30,000 or so North Koreans residing illegally in China are generally pushed into illegal migration by economic motives. Their actions are criminalized by both China and the DPRK, however, and they risk severe punishment on their return to the DPRK if they are considered to have been colluding with South Koreans and/or Christians in Yanbian, the border region that is home to China’s Korean minority. Both groups are viewed by the North Korean authorities not as humanitarians, but as provocateurs whose major aim is to overturn the North Korean regime.

Economic entrepreneurs make money out of trafficking girls and women as brides and prostitutes in north-east China—where single women are in short supply and where Chinese women are increasingly reluctant to enter into the hardships involved in rural living. So far, mainly small-scale cross-border operators have been responsible for the trafficking. Family, friends and local connections arrange the traffic—sometimes with connivance of the women. One North Korean woman who had introduced another to a Chinese man said that “of course this is an insult to the woman and to the country [North Korea]. But it is better than living without food to eat.”

Another consequence of the country’s continuing inability to feed its people and provide meaningful economic opportunities for its population is the general rise in crime in the country and, particularly important for regional stability, in the border area with China and Russia. Crime ranges from the nightly forays into China of North Koreans living near the border to steal food and supplies to the more sinister development of armed robberies on the Chinese side of the border. North Korean soldiers, for instance, robbed a bank in the border town of Tumen in north-east China last year and were caught by the Chinese police after they used the proceeds to buy and consume alcohol in China instead of immediately returning to the DPRK. Violent crime and property theft are carried out by small-scale operators and have not yet been linked to organized crime. Their prevalence is causing concern among local Chinese authorities, however, as they have caused a sharp increase in personal insecurity for local Chinese and Chinese Koreans.

Finally, the DPRK's human security crisis and lack of internal regulation has generated widespread smuggling across the Chinese-North Korean border. Lumber is sold into China along with herbs and mushrooms. Smuggling is almost institutionalized with North Korean local authorities, businesses as well as individuals routinely carrying out cross-border trade in ways that aim to avoid Chinese and North Korean taxation.

PEOPLE-SMUGGLING

Transnational organized criminal gangs have taken advantage of the DPRK's human security crisis in that it is Chinese "snake-heads" or people smugglers who transport North Koreans from China to Seoul. This is a market-generated activity where the snake-heads, who have the resources and contacts to make transnational operations between two and more countries possible, exchange their services with North Koreans who agree to pay a large part of the resettlement allowance they receive from the South Korean government once they are successfully located in Seoul.

Incidentally there are clear gender dimensions to this transnational criminal market. The snake-heads prefer women clients as they consider that women are more likely to pay back the debt accrued. This may be the reason disproportionate numbers of women are turning up in Seoul among the latest waves of North Koreans who have actually reached South Korea.

THE REGIONAL EFFECTS OF TECHNICAL MELTDOWN

The lack of internal regulatory capacity in the DPRK is not confined to economic legislation. The DPRK has no systematic technical arrangements for what is known in engineering parlance as "quality assurance" in any of its industrial or energy sectors. The major train crash in the DPRK in February 2004 that killed dozens of schoolchildren was as much due to the DPRK's inability to implement regularized safety procedures as it was to individual human error. This lack of capacity permeates all sectors. Its prevalence means that a nuclear accident is more likely than not given the recent resuscitation of the DPRK's nuclear reactors. The effects of a nuclear accident could not be confined to the DPRK: South Korea, China, Russia and Japan would suffer the consequences. A nuclear accident is a much more likely cause of a regional nuclear crisis than the launch of a nuclear weapon.

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THE FEAR OF US UNILATERALISM

A major unspoken worry of all governments in the region is the reluctance of the United States to commit itself to achieving a diplomatic solution to the regional security crisis and the consequent fear of unilateral US military intervention in the DPRK. The governments of the region have not been encouraged by the American decision at the Six-Party Talks to read prepared statements and its failure to use the opportunities for informal discussions with the North Koreans on the margins of the formal meetings. In other words, they have been dismayed by the unwillingness of the United States to use the normal mechanisms of diplomacy whose very aim is to achieve agreement between conflicting parties that by definition do not share interests and values by way of compromise and trade-offs.

All the region's states fear military intervention by the United States on the Peninsula. South Korea fears the annihilation of Seoul and the crippling of its economy not to speak of the killing, maiming and devastation that would be suffered by millions of Koreans. China does not want a war on its borders—especially when it is making such profound efforts to develop its north-east. Neither does it or Russia relish being drawn into a hot conflict with the United States. Public opinion in both countries would be outraged if the United States even attempted a limited “surgical strike” against the North Koreans—and both countries have friendship treaties with the DPRK, with China still formally committed to some form of active support of the DPRK in times of war. Even Japan, whose alliance with the United States forms the foundation of its foreign policy and its existence as a democratic state, has given strong signals to the United States that it prefers conflict resolution through negotiation, not confrontation.

The regional response

Most of the DPRK's neighbours have been so concerned with the high-profile nuclear crisis and the consequent fear of American unilateralism that they have not analysed human insecurities as a cause of potential threats to regional stability in themselves. Only China has taken these new security threats in any way seriously. Its approach has been to punish those caught engaged in criminality as well as to step up its internal security surveillance procedures such as to try to identify North Koreans residing in China without papers. Once identified, they are sent back to the DPRK. Publicly, China has refused to cooperate with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in setting up screening mechanisms to distinguish refugees from economic migrants. Instead it has insisted on a bilateral approach with North Korea and has reiterated its official position that all North Koreans in China are economic migrants.

Concurrent with the official harsh approach, China has also taken a more flexible approach to North Koreans seeking support in China. Despite the fact that it has deployed some 100,000 troops to the border area, it has not militarized the still porous and open 1,000 mile border. There are still no fences, barbed wire, military emplacements or demarcation lines except for the river that separates the two countries. This means that in practice it tolerates North Koreans coming over the border at night to obtain food from relatives or other sources. It has facilitated the transport of North Koreans who invaded foreign embassies and consulates in Beijing and Shenyang to Seoul. It is also currently considering recognizing the estimated 5,000 children born to mixed marriages of illegally resident North Koreans and Chinese citizens.

Regional actors on the whole, however, have not taken seriously the potential threats to regional stability derived from the continuing structural impetus to growth in cross-border illegality and criminality arising from the DPRK human security crisis. No regional actor has addressed the potential consolidation of transnational criminal networks in the border areas of China, Russia and the DPRK.

These subjects remain off the security agenda because of the very fact that they contradict established discourse.

These subjects remain off the security agenda because of the very fact that they contradict established discourse. The “common knowledge” security paradigms that argue for the fearsome nature of the North Korean military are so strong and strengthened by every kind of cultural and ideological reinforcement that it becomes impossible to “see” data that does not fit the pre-existing perceptions. One contributing factor is simply lack of information reaching the public through the media or educational institutions.

And in many cases, keeping taboo subjects off the public agenda serves domestic political interests. For example, it is far easier to persuade the Japanese public to support changes in that country's constitution to allow a more active role for Japanese military forces if the enemy can be shown as

demented, irrational, nearby and of imminent threat. It would be much harder to justify such changes as part of a conformity to the reformulated Japanese-US strategic alliance that requires more proactive participation from Japan in regional and global military activities.

Regional cooperation as policy solution

The conventional approach to regional security analysis argues that there is little commonality between the five major North-East Asian states such as to build a regional coordination mechanism. In fact, there are a number of ways in which North-East Asians are economically and politically more institutionally bound together than ever before. Rapid Chinese economic growth provides the meshing factor—with Japan, South Korea and Russia looking for and obtaining trade, markets and investment relationships with China so as to boost their own economic fortunes. The “ASEAN plus 3” formula has brought Japan, China and South Korea together in a multilateral forum and all participants in the Six-Party Talks are members of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Five of the six—not including North Korea—are members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum. In addition, the talks themselves provide potential avenues of cooperation between the six parties and the possibility of building more institutionalized cooperation mechanisms in the future.

By misconceiving nascent regional cooperation, the conventional wisdom rules out consideration of what could be innovative but pragmatic solutions to the region's security crisis. Multisectoral security problems require fine-tuned analysis. These solutions also provide the possibility for trade-offs and bargaining across sectors and countries, such as to provide multilateral solutions to the multifaceted security dilemma of North-East Asia today. The Six-Party Talks decision to convene working groups could, for instance, provide an acceptable forum to all parties to discuss the controversial issues of not just nuclear weapons and missiles, but human rights and humanitarian issues as well as economic and development matters.

It would not be very difficult to envisage a process akin to the Helsinki “basket” diplomacy where security, economics and human rights issues were negotiated by the Cold War adversaries but progress in each was not directly linked to simultaneous progress in all. Thus incremental negotiations provided confidence-building exercises in themselves as well as substantive positive outcomes at the end of the process. An analogous approach is feasible for North-East Asia by way of an extension of the Six-Party Talks. It will, however, require a rejection of uncausal analysis and the conventional wisdom and an adoption of security analysis that accepts the multidimensional nature of security threats in North-East Asia and the subsequent possibilities of multilateral and multisectoral solutions.

Old and new security analyses

Facing the myths and realities of North-East Asia's security dilemmas would bring advantages to policy makers. The insecurity facing the North Korean government and its consequent decision to advertise possession of a nuclear deterrent (whether based on a real or aspired for weapons capacity is almost irrelevant in this context) provide part of the security puzzle of North-East Asia. Elite discourse also, however, needs to recognize that focusing on the alleged military threat from North Korea to the exclusion of all other factors defers the resolution of real security threats to regional stability, and downplays other potentially dangerous conflicts between states and peoples in the region. Historical antagonisms are not disappearing and, because they have little purchase in inter-elite political discussion and are not the focus of any official attempts at conflict resolution, they are in many ways worsening.

Old security analysis masks the serious but multidimensional nature of North Korea's national security problems. Real security threats come not from the DPRK as a military threat but derive from generalized human insecurities generated by the breakdown of economic structures within the DPRK and the resulting transborder spill-over effects. Innovative security analysis should identify these new features of the regional socio-economic and political landscape such as to help policy makers build common, more cooperative futures.

Arms control in the Middle East: is it time to renew ACRS?

The apparent progress (at the time of writing) in reviving the Israeli-Palestinian peace process has raised the prospect that the overall Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) may be renewed. This article asks whether the Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group (ACRS) of the peace process might be restarted and offers suggestions as to how a revised dialogue over regional security and arms control might work.

ACRS—a brief history

The MEPP featured an inter-locking framework of bilateral and multilateral talks. The bilaterals involved Israel and its neighbours (Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinians and Syria) and were meant to find resolution to the specific bilateral disputes between them. These bilateral talks were complemented by a set of multilateral talks involving a broad membership from the Middle East and certain countries external to the region. The objective of these multilateral talks was to tackle wider issues of regional stability and development; in effect, to establish a “vision” for the region at peace and work towards its realization. There were five multilateral groups, of which ACRS was one. Each had an extra-regional chair (or “Gavel”) and met in both plenary and various working groups.¹ The multilaterals went into limbo in 1995 as the bilateral process faltered. In many cases, informal activities continued, sometimes on a “Track Two” basis.²

Between May 1992 and December 1994, six ACRS plenary sessions were held.³ The last two of these (May and December 1994) were held in the region—in Qatar and Tunisia, respectively. Between these plenaries a number of inter-sessional activities took place, both in the region and outside it. ACRS inter-sessional activities were largely organized into two “baskets”: operational and conceptual. By and large, the operational basket concentrated on the negotiation of specific confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs). These were often based on measures that had been adopted in other regional contexts, although considerable effort was expended on adapting them to the realities of the Middle East. The conceptual basket dealt with longer-term questions, including threat perceptions, visions of a future regional security order and how to deal with the region’s weapons of mass destruction (WMD) problem.

There are many reasons why it was decided to create this structure, not the least of which were logistical. But it was also true that this structure tended to separate the nuclear issue from those specific

measures being developed for immediate implementation. Though ACRS never officially stated that the nuclear question was a long-term one, in effect this structure meant that the nuclear issue was seen as a question that would be addressed at a point in the future when the broader regional security dynamic had considerably changed. This was the view held by Israel. Egypt took an opposite view, supported in varying degrees by the other Arab delegations. Cairo argued that the nuclear issue must be addressed early on in the process. It proposed that, at the least, Israel should accept some sort of specific date or set of conditions at which time it would renounce its nuclear ambiguity and join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Egypt proposed that these conditions be set in such a way as to make Israeli acceptance of participation in the NPT a fairly near-term proposition.

This difference of view would become the key element in the demise of ACRS. As the process unfolded, some Arab states became increasingly convinced that ACRS was unfairly biased toward the Israeli view of how the nuclear question should be addressed. Accordingly, key Arab delegations began to block action on other issues. By 1995 it was impossible to hold another plenary and official inter-sessional activities ceased, though some informal activities continued. In addition to this pressure, ACRS would eventually suffer from the general slow-down of the multilateral process: as the bilaterals ground to a halt all of the multilaterals suffered accordingly.

ACRS was a considerable success in many ways. It accomplished a great deal, particularly in the elaboration of several far-reaching CSBMs. But the fact must be faced that none of the ACRS texts were ever formally adopted (though some have been informally implemented by some regional states) and the group stalled in 1995. Why?

The structural and political problems of ACRS—an analysis

The answer to this question lies, in part, in the political realities of the Middle East as the peace process was faltering. This was a dynamic beyond the control of the ACRS process; if all of the multilaterals failed, it is difficult to see how ACRS could have kept going. But there are also lessons to be learned from the way ACRS itself was structured. Indeed, ACRS stalled before the other four multilateral groups, largely due to differences over the nuclear issue. In analysing where ACRS went wrong, the objective is not to point fingers or lay blame but rather to identify and learn lessons for the future.

The first key problem of ACRS lay in its membership. As ACRS was a part of the peace process, Iran, Iraq and Libya were not invited by the ACRS Gavels to participate. It may also have been the case that the United States was not prepared to ask these countries due to its own differences with them. However, it is unlikely they would have agreed to participate had they been invited, as they did not support the peace process. Meanwhile, neither Syria nor Lebanon would agree to participate in any of

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the multilateral groups, including ACRS, until their bilateral negotiations with Israel had been resolved. These “no shows” had a critical impact on the ability of the process to seriously address regional security issues. It is very difficult to imagine how a discussion of a regional WMD-free zone could have succeeded in the absence of five regional countries (Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya and Syria).

The second problem in ACRS was its treatment of the Middle East as a whole for security purposes. By making the discussion of regional security a subset of the peace process, which had a distinct Israel-Arab focus, ACRS conceived of the Middle East in those terms as well. Many Arab delegates (for example, from the Persian Gulf) would privately note that they were not especially concerned over Israel’s military capabilities and could have adopted CSBMs with that country—if the political situation had permitted. For these countries, the key security concerns were their immediate subregional

neighbours, but there were no such discussions within ACRS.⁴ Moreover, with Iran not participating in ACRS it is difficult to see how there could have been serious discussions of Persian Gulf issues, even if the ACRS structure had allowed it. Thus, although there are arms control and security issues that span the entire Middle East, there are also issues that are primarily subregional and this needs to be recognized and catered to.

Finally, ACRS suffered from a structural problem: the question of its internal trade-offs. There were at least two distinct, but inter-related, trade-offs that affected ACRS. The first was the MEPP-wide trade-off between the bilaterals and the multilaterals. This dynamic held that the multilateral talks should not get too far "ahead" of the bilaterals. A fear was constantly expressed by many Arab delegations that going "too far" in the multilaterals would "reward" Israel with normalized relations before it had made the necessary concessions in its dealings with the Palestinians and, to a lesser extent, the Syrians. Thus the adoption of many ACRS texts and accomplishments was deferred for reasons that had little if anything to do with the subjects under discussion in ACRS itself.

The second trade-off, and in many ways the most serious, was over the nuclear issue. Towards the end of the process's active period virtually all discussions were framed around a perceived sense that the nuclear issue was being, depending on one's perspective, "deferred" or "ignored". Delegations which believed that ACRS had to capture Israel's nuclear capability eventually refused to permit progress on a number of texts until, in their view, Israel had agreed to "deal with" its nuclear ambiguity.

Trade-offs are a normal part of any negotiation and it is naïve to believe that they can be avoided. But what made ACRS so difficult was that its structure and dynamic tended to accentuate the scope for trade-offs and made at least some of those trade-offs pertain to issues that had little to do with regional security and arms control. This was especially true in the case of the trade-off related to the bilateral and multilateral talks of the peace process. Even the nuclear question, the trade-off that was directly about arms control, had a somewhat unreal quality in that no one realistically expected Israel to take the actions asked of it in the timeframe proposed. Instead, the topic was pursued in a way that seemed to indicate that the objective was more the isolation of Israel within a regional discussion than the achievement of a successful approach to the issue of why certain countries in the Middle East have felt it necessary to acquire a WMD capability.

This observation leads to the final problem with ACRS: that it did not begin with serious discussions on the development of a concept of an indigenous Middle East cooperation and security system. There was some discussion of this general issue at the very beginning of the ACRS process, but it was largely a series of lectures on the experience of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), rather than a discussion of how a truly Middle Eastern system might be created. Indeed, the underlying assumption, at least on the part of many of the delegations, was that the success of the peace process would itself provide a vision of the Middle East around which to frame a regional cooperation and security structure. Once again, the vision of regional security that this produced was one in which regional security was primarily a function of the resolution of the Arab-Israeli dispute. This is not a true picture of the state of the region; even if the Arab-Israeli dispute is resolved tomorrow, there will be many other serious security issues to be dealt with in the Middle East.

ACRS renewed? Some ideas and suggestions

If ACRS is to be renewed, or some form of regional arms control and security dialogue is created to take its place, the international community should reflect on this experience and learn some lessons. The following six points are not meant to be an exhaustive list of the possible changes that need to be considered, but they provide a starting point.

DON'T MAKE THE NEW ACRS FORMALLY A PART OF THE PEACE PROCESS

The Middle East needs to have a dialogue on the subject of regional security for its own sake, not as an offshoot of the peace process. Obviously, there will be a relationship between the willingness of Middle Eastern states to consider new approaches to regional cooperation and security and the success of the peace process. But that relationship should not be institutionalized and should not form the foundation of any new arms control and regional security process. Above all, a dynamic needs to be found—admittedly easier said than done—in which it is more difficult to use the Arab-Israeli dispute as an excuse not to begin serious consideration of a new regional security architecture. There are many security issues between, and within, states in the Middle East that involve the Arab-Israeli dispute only peripherally, if at all. An avoidance of too great a relationship between a new regional cooperation and security dialogue and the peace process could permit these wider questions to begin to be addressed.

Also, by removing the new ACRS from the peace process, countries like Iran may be able to reconsider their participation. This may require a creative approach at first. For example, contacts involving representatives of certain states acting in their official capacities may not be possible, but a “Track 1.5” approach may allow at least preliminary discussions between responsible people to go forward. There may be some experiences developed in the Asian context that could be relevant here.

PROCESS HAS VALUE IN ITSELF

ACRS became very results focused, particularly once the two baskets got going. Each plenary had to have a success to announce in the form of a text or document. Failure to have something to announce was seen as evidence that the process was stalled. This, in turn, created a built-in opportunity for those who wanted to exploit trade-offs in order to stall the process. In reality, the creation of a new regional security dynamic is a lengthy, and by no means linear, process. Indeed, in reflecting back on regional processes that have greatly changed the perceptions and dynamics of various regions of the world, it was long-term regular interaction and dialogue that were at least as important as any of the specific agreements achieved.

Thus, an informal understanding should be adopted that no specific arms control or confidence-building texts will be sought for the first two years of a new process. Instead, the effort should focus on a sustained and frequent dialogue over what the regional countries want to get out of the process; in effect, an exploration of the “first principles” of a future regional security system. This dialogue should feature discussions on threat perceptions, examinations of how other regions have approached regional security (not with the intent of copying their experiences, but as a stimulant to Middle Eastern thinking about how a unique and indigenous process may be created) and a discussion of the definition of “security” in the Middle East.⁵

This final topic is particularly important as there are many issues that need to be discussed which are only peripherally related to “security” as it is traditionally defined. Instead, it may be necessary for regional states to have a quiet dialogue over how they will manage change in their countries in such a way as to avoid confrontation. Above all, the region itself must take the lead in developing a conception of its future and its needs—extra-regional players have an important facilitative role to play but cannot, ultimately, lead. This is easy to say, but hard to do. Indeed, many regional countries have specifically avoided such discussions in the past, as they did not want to confront the difficult issues such a discussion would raise. The willingness of at least some regional countries to step forward and lead, perhaps not right away but at some point after a new process begins, will be a key indicator of how successful a new regional security process is likely to be.

EXPLORE NEW STRUCTURES AND APPROACHES

It is only out of an in-depth discussion on the “first principles” of a new regional cooperation and security dialogue that the structure of such a process will emerge. It is too soon to say what this might be, but it probably will not resemble ACRS as we knew it. One could imagine that, instead of the conceptual and operational baskets, the new process may develop into an interlocking set of region-wide and subregional dialogues. The key is to avoid a “one size fits all” approach. Some of the issues in such a process must be dealt with at a pan-regional level, while others are best dealt with subregionally (or even bilaterally). In this context, the region should be defined inclusively and there should be a seat at the table for all who wish to participate. One study defines the region as consisting of the states of the Arab League, Israel, Iran and with some form of close association for Turkey.⁶

THE GOAL IS NOT A PARTICULAR AGREEMENT, BUT A NEW APPROACH TO THE REGION’S SECURITY

In the detailed discussions of specific texts that often marked ACRS meetings, it was sometimes forgotten that no particular agreement, no matter how ambitious, could itself serve as the foundation of a new approach to regional security in the Middle East. The successor to ACRS may well be structured to recognize a very different relationship between arms control and security questions. Instead of being called the Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group, it may well be the Regional Security and Arms Control Process. Perhaps a slight change, and a less catchy acronym, but a crucial signal that the process understands that the development of a new conception of regional security must precede (or at least closely accompany) the development of regional arms control measures.

Simply put, it is the creation of a new approach or system for regional dialogue and cooperation on security issues, broadly defined, that will set the stage for successful arms control. Research and writing on this idea has explored the concept of some sort of Middle East cooperation and security structure. Much of this research has drawn on the experiences of Asia, Europe and elsewhere, though making clear that the Middle East is unique and will have to develop its own regional security system.⁷

BE REALISTIC AS TO EXPECTATIONS, ESPECIALLY AT FIRST

This will be a long-term, “multi-generational” process. Placing too great a set of expectations on a new process at its outset will only frustrate the process. Moreover, it is naive to believe that all issues of Middle Eastern security can be addressed by any new process, particularly at the beginning. As noted, some issues will continue to play out in other fora, or even bilaterally, and demands that one side or the other renounce long-standing policies as a *prelude* to beginning a process turn the issue on its head. Long-standing security policies are only renounced as a *result* of a process of changing regional security realities.

This is particularly true of the WMD issue, and specifically its nuclear dimension. It is tempting to believe that the complete renunciation of all nuclear capabilities by some regional countries will take place near the beginning of a new regional arms control and security discussion. But it is highly unlikely. Indeed, there is a case to be made that the renunciation of such capabilities is itself more a process that unfolds over a period of time than something that happens at a specific moment. Research into cases of nuclear renunciation or reversal suggests that this process is a complex one, with several factors in

play.⁸ Thus, even if a state commits to rid itself of its WMD capability, it is likely that it will “hedge” until such time as it is certain that the regional security situation has evolved to the point whereby a rapid worsening is no longer possible.⁹

A new regional security and arms control dialogue will have to consider how this dynamic might play out for several countries in the Middle East. Given the very difficult history of the Middle East and its many interlocking rivalries, it is likely that a Middle Eastern WMD-free zone will have to be able to deal with hedging by several potential members for a time. Thus, the new regional security dialogue will, at least initially, seek to: place some rules on hedging behaviour; offer rewards for those who go beyond hedging and completely renounce the WMD option, including security guarantees; and promote the eventual renunciation of hedging itself—though that will take some years and only be achieved in the context of a fundamental set of changes in the regional security paradigm.¹⁰

THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF A NEW PROCESS AND THE QUESTION OF EXTRA-REGIONAL INVOLVEMENT

ACRS was chaired by the United States and Russia.¹¹ Other extra-regional countries played a role in terms of facilitating work on specific CSBMs. Looking to the future, it remains clear that some involvement of key extra-regional countries in whatever regional system is developed is necessary in such areas as financial support for change and the security guarantees likely to be associated with eventual disarmament regimes.

But some consideration must be given to what role the extra-regional players should have in any successor to ACRS. It may be, for example, that several regional countries will have some difficulty with US chairmanship of such a process. Chairmanship from a country (or countries) perceived to be more “neutral” in terms of its regional policies may be required, at least at first. This is not, in any way, to diminish the critical importance of active US participation in the process, however.

As to the other extra-regional actors, care must be given to invite those who have a helpful role to play, without overwhelming the process. The extra-regional participants in ACRS outnumbered the regional participants three to one.¹² Beyond that, as noted above, the countries of the region must begin to take a more active leadership role in determining how this new body should work. It was the constant hope of the active extra-regional participants in ACRS that this would be so. Many regional countries, however, preferred a more passive role, perhaps in keeping with their sense that serious discussion of regional security should await the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. If a new process is to be launched, perhaps the most critical indicator of whether it will succeed will be the attitude of the regional countries towards driving it themselves.

Conclusion

If the apparent progress in the peace process is such that a resurrection of some form of regional security and arms control dialogue is possible, that dialogue should be very different to the ACRS process. Most importantly, any new regional security dialogue should not be explicitly linked to the peace process, even if there will be an informal linkage of some kind in practice. Beyond that point, and in reviewing the path that other regions have taken to the development of their regional cooperation and arms control systems, a few key points emerge.

First, this is a long and winding road. Those who believe that regional arms control agreements, and an underlying security system, can be created with a few declarations are wrong. A lengthy and

difficult process of dialogue and small steps towards big goals lies in store. Expectations must be kept realistic, even as a vision that some might consider idealistic is pursued. Above all, the creation of such a system ultimately involves the states of the region accepting significant changes to their most fundamental policies and this does not usually happen quickly.

Second, process really does matter. The temptation to seek agreements too quickly should be avoided. In every other case where a region has successfully established a regional security and arms control order, the agreements came out of a process of discussion. During this period the regional players educated each other as to their needs and perceptions, and built confidence. It was from this investment in time that the outlines of subsequent arms control treaties emerged. There is no reason to expect that the Middle East will be any different.

Third, arms control is not achieved in a vacuum. Without an effort to establish a new regional political and security order it is highly unlikely that the most serious matters of arms control can be addressed. Emphasis should thus be placed on creating a regional cooperation and security system first, and on arms control second. Of course, this is not to say that discussions over arms control issues should wait for the day when a regional system is fully established; the two sets of discussions go hand-in-hand.

Fourth, the new process must be more inclusive than ACRS was. Key states (such as Iran and Iraq) must be included or at least offered a seat at the table. Separating the new process from the prior one would be an important step towards achieving this goal. But it will also be necessary to find creative ways to facilitate dialogue between states that do not yet recognize each other. These could well include greater use of various forms of structured "Track Two" and "Track 1.5" diplomacy to permit such discussions. The issue of who might chair such a dialogue may also play a role here.

Finally, it is important to be realistic. The kind of process that is being suggested here will not work miracles. States that refuse to recognize each other's very existence are unlikely to magically reverse these policies because they have embarked on "Track 1.5" discussions with each other over the possibility of establishing a regional cooperation and security system in the future. In other regional cases, fundamental changes in long-held positions were often due to internal changes within states. In the Middle East, it is likely that real change in the region's security dynamic will evolve with the implementation of reforms and changes within some states, or between them as a result of bilateral processes. But the experience of other regions is that the establishment of a regional system provided a framework within which such changes could be managed peacefully, and this framework was crucially important. There is no reason to believe that things will be different in the Middle East.

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Notes

1. For more on the multilaterals see: D.D. Kaye, 2001, *Beyond the Handshake: Multilateral Cooperation in the Arab-Israeli Peace Process, 1991–1996*, New York, Columbia University Press; J. Peters, 1996, *Pathways to Peace: The Arab-Israeli Multilateral Talks*, London, The Royal Institute of International Affairs.

2. For example, in the case of regional arms control and security, several Track Two processes have been underway. See D.D. Kaye, 2001, "Track Two Diplomacy and Regional Security in the Middle East", *Negotiation Journal*, vol. 6, and M. Yaffe, 2001, "Promoting Arms Control and Regional Security in the Middle East", *Disarmament Forum*, UNIDIR, no. 2, pp. 9–25.
3. For more on ACRS see: United States, 2001, "Middle East Peace Process Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group", *Fact Sheet*, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, 1 July, at <www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/fs/2001/4271.htm>; N. Fahmy, 2001, "Special Comment", *Disarmament Forum*, UNIDIR, no. 2, pp. 3–5; S. Feldman, 1997, *Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control in the Middle East*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, especially pp. 7–16; D. Griffiths, 2000, *Maritime Aspects of Arms Control and Security Improvement in the Middle East*, IGCC Policy Paper no. 56, San Diego, CA, Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation; B. Jentleson, 1996, *The Middle East Arms Control and Security Talks: Progress, Problems and Prospects*, IGCC Policy Paper no. 2, Los Angeles, CA, University of California; P. Jones, 2003, "Negotiating Regional Security in the Middle East: The ACRS Experience and Beyond", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3; P. Jones, 1997, "Arms Control in the Middle East: Some Reflections on ACRS", *Security Dialogue*, vol. 28, no. 1; P. Jones, 1996, "Maritime Confidence-Building Measures in the Middle East", in J. Junnola (ed.), *Maritime Confidence-building in Regions of Tension*, Washington, DC, Stimson Center; E. Landau, forthcoming, *Arms Control in the Middle East: Cooperative Security Dialogue and Regional Constraints*, Brighton, Sussex Academic Press; E. Landau, 2001, *Egypt and Israel in ACRS: Bilateral Concerns in a Regional Arms Control Process*, Memorandum no. 59, Tel Aviv, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies; and M. Yaffe, 1994, "An Overview of the Middle East Peace Process Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security", in F. Tanner (ed.), *Confidence-building and Security Co-operation in the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Middle East*, Malta, University of Malta.
4. There was informal discussion by some ACRS participants of the idea of creating a subregional process within ACRS, but it was never seriously acted upon before the group stalled. Personal recollection of the author.
5. As previously mentioned, there were some discussions on these issues at the very beginning of the ACRS process (before the two baskets were formed). However, they tended to be more a set of lectures to the Middle Eastern participants about how the OSCE worked, than an attempt to engage them in the development of their own regional model. In fairness, there seemed little interest on the part of most regional delegations in such a discussion. Instead, the view that once the peace process had dealt with the Arab-Israeli dispute all other regional issues would fade to insignificance was held by many regional delegations.
6. P. Jones, 1998, *Towards a Regional Security Regime for the Middle East: Issues and Options*, Stockholm, SIPRI, pp. 17–19. Also available at <projects.sipri.se/mideast/MEreport.pdf>.
7. The principal texts are Jones, 1998, *op. cit.*; S. Feldman and A. Toukan, 1997, *Bridging the Gap: A Future Security Architecture for the Middle East*, Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield; and the collection of essays in the 2003 special issue on "Building Regional Security in the Middle East: International, Regional and Domestic Influences", *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3. See also S.L. Spiegel, 2005, "Arab-Israeli Futures: Next Steps for the United States", working paper presented at Pathways to Peace: The United States and the Middle East Peace Process, a research symposium directed by Scott Lasensky, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC.
8. The key texts are T.V. Paul, 2000, *Power versus Prudence: Why Nations Forgo Nuclear Weapons*, Montreal, McGill-Queens Press; M. Reiss, 1995, *Bridled Ambitions: Why States Constrain Their Nuclear Capability*, Washington, DC, Woodrow Wilson Center Press; E. Solingen, 1994, "The Political Economy of Nuclear Restraint", *International Security*, vol. 19, no. 2 (Fall); and W.C. Potter, 1995, *The Politics of Nuclear Renunciation: The Cases of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine*, Occasional Paper no. 22, Washington, DC, Henry L. Stimson Center.
9. The idea of hedging was advanced by A. Levite in his "Never Say Never Again: Nuclear Reversal Revisited", *International Security*, vol. 27, no. 3 (Winter, 2002/03), pp. 59–88.
10. These ideas are further developed in P. Jones, forthcoming, "A Gulf WMD Free Zone Within A Broader Gulf and Middle East Security Architecture", *Gulf Research Center Policy Paper*, Dubai, Gulf Research Center.
11. In practice, it was the United States that was the chair of the process.
12. A list of participants in ACRS may be found in United States, *op. cit.*, at <www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/fs/2001/4271.htm>.

***The fight against nuclear weapons proliferation:
a critique of the Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change***

*"... even if they seem to have sunk together, international law and the United Nations must be rescued."*¹

The confrontation that played out in the United Nations Security Council in 2003 between a number of states on the "Iraqi threat" clearly reflected divergences within the international community and the Council itself regarding how to address proliferation crises.

Thus, on 23 September 2003, in his opening speech of the 58th session of the General Assembly, Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan expressed concern that the consensus on global solidarity and collective security articulated at the 2000 Millennium Summit had been jeopardized.² The necessity to consider new orientations and structural changes prompted the Secretary-General to establish a high-level panel³ to:

recommend clear and practical measures for ensuring effective collective action, based upon a rigorous analysis of future threats to peace and security, an appraisal of the contribution collective action can make, and a thorough assessment of existing approaches, instruments and mechanisms, including the principal organs of the United Nations The Panel ... is being asked to provide a new assessment of the challenges ahead, and to recommend the changes which will be required if these challenges are to be met effectively through collective action.⁴

On 2 December 2004, the Chair of the panel officially transmitted its report⁵ to the Secretary-General, who qualified the document as a "unique opportunity to renew international institutions to confront current challenges to collective security".⁶ The report considers inter alia the threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and promotes a comprehensive approach to address the threat to international peace and security that their proliferation represents.

Assessing the threat

According to the report, the threat posed by nuclear weapons arises in two ways: the first and most immediate concern is that some states parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) covertly and illegally develop weapons programmes. The second concern is the possible collapse of the whole nuclear non-proliferation regime. Recalling the pessimistic predictions made by President Kennedy in 1963, the report underlines that even though the NPT has hindered proliferation, it has now lost its efficiency.

Today's proliferation crisis is characterized by numerous concerns, including: the situation in Iran and North Korea, Pyongyang's withdrawal from the NPT in 2003, growing criticism concerning the NPT's legitimacy and failure to obtain universality, the fear that regional proliferation could expand to countries such as Saudi Arabia,⁷ the existence of private proliferation networks, as well as whether the international arms control regime is equipped to confront WMD terrorism. According to the report, at least 40 states possess the industrial and scientific infrastructure to build, at relatively short notice, nuclear weapons if the legal constraints of the treaty regime were no longer to apply. However, this estimation should not be over-emphasized. Many circumstances restrain proliferation, such as the risk of being isolated within the international community and the economic and commercial risks inherent

in proliferation activities. The regime is clearly contested, but it seems exaggerated to say that “We are approaching a point at which the erosion of the non-proliferation regime could become irreversible and result in a cascade of proliferation”.⁸

Because of the difficult period it is going through, the regime should make efforts to adapt to the new environment. It must therefore preserve its achievements, and multiply its means of action to be able to respond effectively to each situation. This is the reason why one should say that classic arms control is *evolving* rather than “in crisis”. The international community has long relied on a monolithic approach, having a blind faith in the normative legacy of the Cold War. The reality of the international context has swept away these illusions and underlines the need, in the short and medium term, to fight non-compliance before considering the goal of general and complete disarmament. What matters is to focus on defining realistic and concrete norms to build confidence. Disarmament can only be, in the end, the result of efficient non-proliferation endeavours.

Promoting a comprehensive strategy

Considering the situation with asymmetric threats, there is a need for a spectrum of diversified responses. The interest of multiple options is greater efficiency. The Report of the High-level Panel considers four levels of action to better meet the “challenge of prevention”.⁹ Key elements of three of these levels are described below (the fourth level, that of better public health defences, is not touched upon in this article).

REDUCING THE DEMAND

While it is important that the nuclear-weapon states reduce their arsenals, it is inaccurate of the panel to say that “[i]acklustre disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States weakens the diplomatic force of the non-proliferation regime and thus its ability to constrain proliferation”.¹⁰ Without ignoring the actions of the United States, Russia¹¹ and the United Kingdom, we can say that France has been able to preserve its defence and comply with its commitments under the NPT, especially Article VI.¹²

The report also mentions the problem of states that are not parties, underlining the necessity for these countries to comply with non-proliferation norms. In fact, the short-lived and weak condemnations of states not party to the NPT that have gone nuclear have only endangered international security and jeopardized the regime. Convincing threshold states to join the NPT, or at least finding a way to associate them with the process, is imperative to promote equal security for all.¹³

REDUCING THE SUPPLY

Reducing the supply is difficult in the sense that a compromise has to be found between non-proliferation norms and the right to peaceful uses of nuclear technologies. The rights stipulated in NPT Article IV must be preserved and respected, and the IAEA should be given the necessary means to apply its mandate and promote adherence to the Additional Protocol.

The Panel recommends that the Security Council be able to act in cases of serious concern of non-compliance. However, the report also recognizes the benefit of the Proliferation Security Initiative and stresses that all states should be encouraged to join this initiative.

The panel suggests that states withdrawing from the NPT should be held responsible for violations committed while they were parties to the treaty. Conditions of withdrawal from multilateral treaties deposited with the United Nations should be strengthened. A state should not be able to withdraw unilaterally without having first explained—for example, to the Security Council¹⁴—its motives for doing so. If a country withdraws from the NPT, it should remain subject to international monitoring in order to prevent any future proliferation and its facilities should remain under full-scope safeguards. The report adds that “The IAEA Board of Governors should resolve that, in the event of violations, all assistance provided by IAEA should be withdrawn”.¹⁵ Such a case would present a seemingly insurmountable diplomatic obstacle, as seen in Iraq throughout the 1990s: How to impose inspections on a state that has withdrawn from the regime? Considering the nature of international law, strengthening the system seems tricky without the consent of the state unless the latter accepts, considering the risk of sanctions or in view of actual sanctions, to comply with the requirements of the Security Council.

The report prompts the Conference on Disarmament (CD) to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty. Considering the consensus rule of the CD and the diplomatic hurdles that hinder the Conference’s work, some think that it would be better to opt for ad hoc negotiations between the eight or nine nuclear-capable states. Such an approach could facilitate a preliminary understanding. This smaller group could then present to the CD a compromise text, upon which it might be easier to reach consensus.

BETTER ENFORCEMENT CAPABILITY

Considering the difficulties of the Security Council to enforce non-proliferation agreements, the report suggests stronger collaboration between the Security Council and the IAEA.¹⁶ The Director General of IAEA “should be invited by the Security Council to report to it twice-yearly on the status of safeguards and verification processes, as well as on any serious concerns ... which might fall short of an actual breach” of the NPT.¹⁷ Thanks to better access to information, the Security Council should be able to determine independently the existence of any threat to the peace or breach of the peace (Article 39 of the United Nations Charter) that would increase the legitimacy of its actions against proliferation.

The report also insists on the necessity for the Security Council to be prepared to deploy inspectors to investigate suspected violations. Perhaps it is time to reconsider the French initiative concerning the creation of a permanent, international inspectorate, which could be readily mobilized if the need arises.¹⁸ Increasing the ability of the Security Council to react promptly is a major element to fight proliferation. As Kofi Annan recently stated, “some threats that are not imminent could arise almost from one day to the next. If the necessary measures are not taken, they could turn into worst-case scenarios. The Security Council, which is fully empowered by the United Nations Charter to confront such threats, has to be ready to undertake this mission”.¹⁹ Once a decision is taken by the Security Council, such an inspectorate would represent an efficient means of action to hinder concealment and development of suspicious programmes.

Conclusion

The Report of the High-level Panel reflects the impact that the evolution of the international context has had on the non-proliferation regime and the inevitable need to adapt. Those legal instruments negotiated at a time when the security perception was different cannot be the only

references today in the fight against nuclear proliferation. The regime should not, however, be contested in any way on the grounds that it is inadequate. This *corpus juris* is the foundation of the fight against proliferation. Strengthening its authority should be one of our priorities while diversifying our means of action.

The Secretary-General recently stated his support for the idea of a peace-building commission that would be mandated to “come up with a strategy, define orientations, gather funds and coordinate action”. This is probably the next step in realizing the security ambitions of the international community. In the meantime, two events are expected with great interest: the 2005 NPT Review Conference and the September High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, which will review the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. Hopes for change and improvement of the non-proliferation regime lie with these forthcoming events.

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Notes

1. “Et pourtant, l’ambassadeur chevronné, qui en a vu d’autres, n’en démord pas : même s’ils ont paru sombrer ensemble, le droit international et l’Onusie doivent être sauvés.” H. Védrine, 2003, Préface, in A. Dejammet, *Supplément au Voyage en Onusie*, Paris, Fayard, p. 11.
2. See “Le Secrétaire général plaide pour de profondes réformes institutionnelles afin de renforcer l’ONU”, press release, United Nations, 23 September 2003, UN document SG/SM/8891.
3. The 16-member Panel was nominated on 4 November 2003 and chaired by Mr. Anand Panyarachun, former Prime Minister of Thailand. See “Secretary-General names high-level panel to study global security threats, and recommend necessary changes”, press release, United Nations, 4 November 2003, UN document SG/A/857. See also the letter dated 3 November 2003 that Kofi Annan addressed to the President of the United Nations General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Julian Robert Hunte (Saint Lucia), at <www.un.org/News/dh/hlpanel/sg-letter-to-ga-president-re-hl-panel.pdf>.
4. UN document SG/A/857, *ibid*.
5. UN document A/59/565, *A more secure world: our shared responsibility*, Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, 2 December 2004, at <www.un.org/secureworld/>.
6. United Nations Radio, 2 December 2004, available in French at <www.un.org/french/audiovis/radio/2004/dec/04120200.htm>.
7. On the nuclear issue in Saudi Arabia, see Bruno Tertrais, 2004, “Riyad : la tentation nucléaire”, *Politique internationale*, no. 103 (Spring), pp. 71–81.
8. UN document A/59/565, *op. cit.*, para. 111, p. 41.
9. *Ibid.*, para. 117–144, pp. 40–44
10. *Ibid.*, para. 118, p. 40.
11. Vladimir Putin announced, on 17 November 2004, that Russia was embarking on a huge modernization of its nuclear capacities in order to possess systems it currently doesn’t have and that no other nuclear power will possess in coming years. See N. Nougayrède, 2004, “M. Poutine promet à son armée de nouvelles armes nucléaires”, *Le Monde*, 19 November, p. 2.
12. Since it adhered to the NPT on 2 August 1992, France has stopped producing plutonium for nuclear weapons (November 1992), ceased nuclear testing (January 1996), and has announced the definitive closure of the sites of Pierrelatte and Marcoule that were producing fissile material and that of the Pacific experimentation centre. It also announced the reduction of nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBN) from five to four, the end of the nuclear mission of its Mirage IV aircrafts and elimination of its ground-based nuclear component. France stopped

- producing highly enriched uranium (June 1996), signed and ratified the CTBT (September 1996 and April 1998 respectively), announced the detargeting of its nuclear weapons (September 1997), and ratified the Protocol Additional to Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA (April 2003).
13. See A. Cohen and T. Graham Jr., 2004, "An NPT for non-members", *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, vol. 60, no. 3 (May/June), pp. 40–44 ; G. Perkovich, 2004, "Strengthening non-proliferation rules and norms—the three-state problem", *Disarmament Forum*, UNIDIR, no. 4, pp. 21–32; S. Lodgaard, 2004, "Making the Non-Proliferation Regime Universal", The Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, Report no. 7, 13 p.
 14. This is, however, very complex: according to Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, the Security Council has to qualify the situation as one provided for by Article 39 (a threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or an act of aggression).
 15. UN document A/59/565, *op. cit.*, para. 134, p. 46.
 16. And also with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.
 17. UN document A/59/565, *op. cit.*, para. 140, p. 47
 18. See inter alia the speech by Ambassador François Rivasseau, Permanent Representative of France to the Conference on Disarmament, New York, 23 October 2003, available in French at <www.delegfrance-cd-geneve.org/declarations/declafrancaises/rpdsmt/20031023fr.pdf>.
 19. See "À Munich, Kofi Annan dévoile son programme de réforme du système de sécurité internationale", Centre des nouvelles des Nations Unies, 14 February 2005, <www.un.org/apps/newsFr/storyF.asp?NewsID=9946&Cr=Annan&Cr1=Munich>.

Response to "Reversible or irreversible?"

Jozef Goldblat's excellent note about withdrawal clauses in disarmament treaties (*Disarmament Forum*, no. 1, 2004) suggests a number of modifications that treaty negotiators should consider in future negotiations with a view to curbing the regrettable effect of such clauses. Allow me to suggest two additional modifications.

There could be a clause in disarmament treaties stipulating that no state party may exercise its right to withdraw while it is in violation of the treaty. Had there been such a clause in the NPT, North Korea's withdrawal in January 2004 would have been illegal, which might have made it think twice before taking this step.

One could go further and say that any state party having previously violated the treaty, but currently in good standing, would be disentitled to exercise its right to withdraw until it had disabled itself from benefiting from any advantage it might have obtained through its previous violation. Had such a clause been part of the NPT when Iran ratified in 1970, it would be available for use in today's context to prevent Iran from exercising its right to withdraw unless it destroys all the nuclear equipment and material it has obtained surreptitiously and clandestinely in recent years. In the meantime, Iran should be asked to voluntarily and unconditionally renounce its right to withdraw as a demonstration of its peaceful intention.

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UNIDIR FOCUS

CURRENT ACTIVITY

Disarmament as Humanitarian Action: Making Multilateral Negotiations Work

In October 2000, UNIDIR hosted a meeting in New York entitled “Disarmament as Humanitarian Action” to mark the Institute’s twentieth anniversary. At that meeting, various actors within the disarmament and arms control community expressed the need for human security to be a greater driving force in multilateral efforts. Two years later a second conference in Geneva on “Disarmament, Health and Humanitarian Action: Putting People First” highlighted the potentially devastating effects of the misuse of weapons on people, and discussed creative and practical ways to move the disarmament agenda forward utilizing people-centred approaches.

Success in the multilateral disarmament field in recent years has been patchy. While some processes have encountered deadlock, others, such as the 1997 Mine Ban Convention prohibiting anti-personnel mines and negotiations on a protocol on explosive remnants of war, have been quite successful. This indicates that obstacles to progress are not solely issues of absence of political will. Answers need to be found to underlying questions about how successful momentum can be injected into disarmament and arms control processes.

Key to both successes mentioned above were humanitarian perspectives—originating from international organizations, field-based practitioners and trans-national civil society as well as from governments—brought to bear on the negotiation process. In particular, the implementation of the Mine Ban Convention has proved itself amenable to new methods of working that make porous the previously rigid partitions between “hard” security issues and humanitarianism.

If disarmament and arms control are to be effective or considered still relevant to addressing current problems—such as the proliferation of small arms, potentially dangerous new “dual-use” technologies, and the spread of nuclear materials, know-how and weapons—innovative approaches of this kind in multilateral disarmament and arms control negotiation are needed.

Reminders to technical disarmament experts of the dire consequences for humanity of the failure to disarm are important but insufficient to overcome these types of challenges. It is also apparent that

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multilateral diplomats seek better tools to tackle the increasingly complex and, in some cases, seemingly intractable challenges they face.

In response, UNIDIR has initiated a project entitled "Disarmament as Humanitarian Action: Making Multilateral Negotiations Work", with the financial assistance of the Government of Norway. The project aims at reframing multilateral disarmament negotiation processes in humanitarian terms with a view to developing practical proposals to apply humanitarian concepts in ways that could help negotiators. The project adopts a problem-solving approach involving disarmament and humanitarian practitioners and other experts, and emphasizes practical means grounded in the humanitarian dimensions of disarmament.

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NEW PUBLICATION

***Building a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East:
Global Non-Proliferation Regimes and Regional Experiences***

The Middle East, for over half a century, has been confronted with an insoluble dilemma: the threat posed by the existence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in this volatile region. Proposals to create a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMD in the Middle East were important attempts at tackling these concerns on a regional basis. Egypt and Iran first proposed a Middle Eastern Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in 1974 at the First Committee of the UN General Assembly. In April 1990 Egypt took the idea a step further, proposing the creation of a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone (WMDFZ) in the Middle East to include nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

Efforts to create a WMDFZ, such as the relevant aspects of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) and the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference decision to pursue a nuclear-free zone in the region, have not been sustained. The result? The Middle East seems no closer to realizing the aims of a WMDFZ than it was thirty years ago nor is the region any safer. It is evident that Arab and Israeli security requirements and threat perceptions remain far apart. Deep mistrust has only lent itself to the self-perpetuating cycle of WMD proliferation, hence creating even more insecurity.

In response to the need for regional arms control and disarmament, the League of Arab States and UNIDIR held a conference in Cairo on "Building a WMD Free Zone in the Middle East: Global Non-Proliferation Regimes and Regional Experiences" on 24–25 February 2003. This volume is an edited collection of the papers presented at the conference.

***Building a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East:
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