

Changing Security Environment and Problems of Nuclear Proliferation in East Asia

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1. Introduction

East Asia was and still is divided into two conflicting ideological blocks. Because of the Cold War between these two blocks two international wars were fought and tensions limited interactions among these countries. Despite these political constraints, in recent years East Asia has become economically one of the most dynamic regions in the world. Now that the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union is over, the danger of global nuclear war involving the nuclear powers in the region has been practically eliminated. Nonetheless, security has become more complex and demands a whole new set of arrangements. Yet the region lacks a cohesive multilateral framework for conflict resolution, and only recently have various attempts been made to create a political forum for the countries in the region.

The danger of nuclear proliferation was vividly shown by the North Korean nuclear crisis in recent years. This issue not only halted the fragile process of normalization between the two Koreas which started in 1988 but almost led to a new military conflict on the peninsula involving the two Koreas and the US. It was defused only after the US proved willing to offer security guarantees to North Korea. This problem still needs to be resolved, and it demands radical changes in the overall political environment in the region. Needless to say, proliferation in North Korea would have entailed grave consequences for the security of the region as well as for the international non-proliferation regime.

This paper¹ reviews the issue of nuclear proliferation of the three non-nuclear states in the region and deals with the non-introduction of nuclear

1 This paper was written for the Pugwash Council and presented at the 45th Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs, Toward A Nuclear-Weapons-Free World, Hiroshima, Japan, 23-29 July 1995. The author wishes to thank fellow Pugwashites and members of the working group on East Asian security for their useful comments. This paper intentionally left out Chinese perspectives on the issue, because this aspect was

weapons in the region by the nuclear powers. It postulates the prospects of a nuclear-weapons-free zone on the Korean peninsula. Perspectives of a sustainable security environment in East Asia will be briefly discussed.

2. Problems of Nuclear Proliferation in East Asia

Due to the confrontation between the blocks, the problem of nuclear proliferation existed and still exists in the region with the three major nuclear powers. The three non-nuclear powers believe that they need the nuclear umbrella of a nuclear power. When these non-nuclear powers perceived that they could not rely on their allies for a security guarantee, they considered developing their own nuclear weapons.

South Korea

After barely surviving the Korean war, in 1954 South Korea entered into a Mutual Defence Treaty with the USA which established a number of US military bases in Korea. In addition to the deployment of nuclear weapons, the US reserved the right of first use of nuclear weapons, not only to deter but also to repel any attack on South Korea. As a small country surrounded by hostile neighbors armed with nuclear weapons, South Korea believed it needed the US nuclear umbrella to survive. Thus it has disregarded North Korea's allegations that the US nuclear weapons were a constant threat to its existence.

Shortly after a group of North Korean commandos nearly succeeded in mounting a sneak attack on the Presidential Palace on January 21, 1968, the then President Park Chung-Hee announced his determination to seek a "self-reliant national defense." Subsequently the US Navy intelligence ship *Pueblo* was seized by North Korea, and the tension on the peninsula increased. Park Chung-Hee decided to start the nuclear weapons program around 1971, after learning of the withdrawal of the 7th Infantry Division of the U.S.² He was forced by US pressure to refrain from doing so.

handled by a Chinese colleague, Prof. Pan Zhenqiang, Director, Institute for Strategic Studies, Chinese National Defense University, Beijing.

- 2 For a detailed report on this issue, see Robert Gillette, "US Squelched Apparent S. Korea A-Bomb Drive", *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 4, 1978, p. 1, 14-15; Song Young-Sun, "North Korea's Potential to Develop Nuclear Weapons", *Vantage Point*, Volume 14, No. 8, August 1991, p. 2; O Won Chol, "Nuclear Development in Korea in the 1970s", *Pacific Research*, November 1994, pp. 11-18; Mark B.M. Suh, "Nuclear Policy of the Republic of Korea: Non-Proliferation and Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula", Carin A. Wedar

The second wave of discussion about a Korean nuclear option started when President Park Chung Hee openly stated in a press interview on June 13, 1975, that South Korea might begin with the development of nuclear weapons if the US removed its nuclear umbrella from the Korean Peninsula. He indicated that South Korea was refraining from developing nuclear weapons in conformity with the NPT. Although President Park had to refrain from purchasing a reprocessing plant from France in early 1976, he did not disband his nuclear research group. After President Carter decided in 1977 to pull out the US ground forces from South Korea, President Park again threatened that if North Korea went nuclear and if the USA pulled out its troops from Korea, South Korea would reconsider its own nuclear option.³ Undoubtedly, this threat represented an attempt by the military leaders and President Park to pressure the US government to stay in South Korea as long as the tension on the Korean Peninsula existed. President Carter put pressure on South Korea to stop the program and finally cancelled the plan to withdraw US troops from Korea in mid-1979, in fact because of pressure from the US Congress and not because of the South Korean threat to go nuclear. President Chun Doo-Hwan finally disbanded the nuclear research group after taking over in 1980.

Nevertheless, mainly due to heavy pressure from the USA, South Korea was not able to develop nuclear weapons.⁴ This is a significant success of the US and international non-proliferation policy. South Korea, however, concentrates on the development of the peaceful use of nuclear energy including nuclear fuel development technology.

With the worldwide changes after the end of the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union, this alliance system is changing. South Korea managed to win the friendship of its former enemies including China and Russia by establishing mutually beneficial economic relations which further isolated the North.⁵

et. al (eds.), *Towards a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World*. Stockholm: Swedish Initiatives, 1993, pp. 215-222.

3 See Joachim Glaubitz, *Zur Frage des Abzugs der amerikanischen Landesstreitkräfte aus Südkorea: Beweggründe, Konzepte und Revision einer asienpolitischen Entscheidung*. Ebenhausen: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 1980, pp. 61-63.

4 South Korea feels unfairly treated by the US policy of non-proliferation, as Japan could acquire these technologies. See Taewoo Kim, "South Korea's Nuclear Dilemmas", *Korea and World Affairs*, Volume 16, No. 2, Summer 1992, pp. 274-280.

5 Russian President Boris Yeltsin assured South Korean President Kim Young Sam during his visit to Moscow in 1994 that the provisions of its friendship treaty with North Korea calling for Russian military intervention were no longer valid, which means that the military alliance between the two countries no longer exists.

North Korea

North Korea has maintained defense treaties with the Soviet Union and China since 1961. But it perceived, at least since the 1970s, that its allies were changing and no longer reliable, so it decided to develop its own nuclear capability. Although North Korea signed the NPT in 1985, it refused to conclude a safeguards agreement with the IAEA within the time-limit prescribed. It was rumored that from 1989 North Korea was working on an ambitious nuclear weapons program.⁶ North Korea dismissed the allegation and stated that it was working on peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Following the decision by the US to withdraw all tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea and the statement by the then President Roh Tae-Woo of South Korea, North Korea and the IAEA finally signed the safeguards agreements in 1992. When North Korea agreed to give international inspectors access to its nuclear facilities, it seemed that one of the most serious proliferation threats would soon be defused. The IAEA conducted ad hoc inspections of 7 declared sites from June 1992 to February 1993. These inspections did not clear up suspicions, however, but further hardened the allegation.

US intelligence analysts suspect that North Korea has already produced enough weapons-grade plutonium to make one or two nuclear devices.⁷ To help clarify this, the US and the IAEA demanded that North Korea permit "special" or "challenge" inspections of two suspected nuclear waste sites in addition to the seven known nuclear-related facilities. Measurements of radioactivity and other procedures at the suspected waste sites would help ascertain how much plutonium has been produced through the reprocessing of spent fuel in recent years. North Korea refused to allow the inspection, stopped further ad hoc inspections, and declared that it would with-

6 North Korea is believed to have achieved significant progress in its nuclear weapons development program and is seen as one of the key proliferating states. See for example Janne E. Nolan, "Proliferation and International Security: An Overview", in W. Thomas Wander and Eric H. Arnett (eds.), *The Proliferation of Advanced Weaponry: Technology, Motivations, and Responses*. Washington, D.C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1992, pp. 6 and 10; B. Sanders, "North Korea, South Africa ready to tell all?", *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Volume 47, No. 7, September 1991; George D. Moffett III, "Last Remaining Hot Spot of the Cold War Asked to Cool Its Desire for Nuclear Weapons", *Christian Science Monitor*, 14 February 1992, p. 3.

7 For a detailed study of the North Korean nuclear program, see Kongdan Oh, "Nuclear Proliferation in North Korea", in W. Thomas Wander and Eric H. Arnett (eds.), *The Proliferation of Advanced Weaponry: Technology, Motivations, and Responses*. Washington, D.C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1992, pp. 165-176; David Albrecht and Mark Hibbs, "North Korea's Plutonium Puzzle", *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, November 1992, pp. 36-40.

draw from the NPT. North Korea demanded bilateral and high-level direct negotiations with the US to solve this issue.

The US government negotiated agreements with North Korea in New York and Geneva in June and July 1993, respectively. North Korea agreed to suspend its withdrawal from the NPT. Subsequently, on February 25, 1994, the US decided to enter into high-level, comprehensive negotiations with North Korea. However, North Korea removed fuel rods from its nuclear reactor in May/June and refused to allow the IAEA to take selective samples from the rods during removal. It then withdrew from the IAEA. The crisis escalated further and a war on the peninsula seemed unavoidable. Former US President Jimmy Carter made a visit to North Korea and defused the crisis. North Korea offered to "freeze" the nuclear program, and the US agreed to begin the third round of comprehensive negotiations with North Korea on July 8, 1994, in Geneva.⁸ A summit meeting between the two Koreas was even scheduled. As the delegates of the US and North Korea began to negotiate in Geneva, North Korean President Kim Il-Sung suddenly died. The planned summit meeting was cancelled and negotiations in Geneva were postponed.

In August high-level delegations resumed negotiations in Geneva. Finally, on October 21, 1994, the US and North Korea signed an agreement in their efforts to resolve the North Korean nuclear problem, laying the groundwork for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The interim arrangements were negotiated in order to defuse the immediate nuclear crisis and to initiate a long-term process that would integrate North Korea into the international community and prevent the repetition of a potentially catastrophic confrontation. In order to induce North Korea to drop its nuclear weapons program, the US administration has not only offered to expand diplomatic and economic ties with North Korea, but also to help North Korea to come out from its long, self-imposed isolation at a critical time of transition.

The major US goals behind the negotiated solution are:

- to prevent North Korea from acquiring and using nuclear weapons,
- to deter war in Korea and work toward a peaceful reunification,
- to maintain regional stability and prevent a nuclear arms race in East Asia,

⁸ The "freeze" includes commitments by North Korea not to reload the reactor with new fuel, not to reprocess the spent fuel, and to allow inspectors continuous access to the spent fuel storage pond.

– to strengthen the global non-proliferation regime.⁹

The agreement also obliges North Korea to resume dialogue with South Korea and to implement the agreed denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, thereby keeping the peninsula nuclear-free. The US also made a far-reaching political concession to North Korea. Since North Korea can no longer rely on any allies to provide it with security assistance, the US promised not to threaten to use or to use nuclear weapons against North Korea. This ushers in a whole new political environment in the region and requires a review of the current security arrangements between the US and South Korea as well as the US and Japan.

Japan

Japan is the only country in the world against which nuclear weapons have been used. The US dropped a thermo-nuclear bomb on Nagasaki on August 9, 1945, three days after its first atomic bomb hit Hiroshima. More than 140,000 people were killed in Hiroshima and 70,000 in Nagasaki. After Japan surrendered in 1945, the Americans found out that Japanese scientists had been working to build an atomic bomb. The US army dumped Japan's five research cyclotrons into Tokyo Bay. Postwar Japan adheres to the three non-nuclear principles which prohibit the manufacture, possession, or introduction of nuclear weapons. Article 9 of the peace constitution not only renounces war as a sovereign right but also restricts possession of long-range, offensive, power-projection weapons systems needed for the delivery of nuclear weapons.¹⁰

Japan seriously considered the nuclear option in the 60s. Declassified documents show that Japanese officials, perhaps curious about the US reaction, in 1962 informed American diplomats of some support in the Tokyo cabinet for acquiring nuclear weapons. Some years later, in 1968, the Japanese cabinet's intelligence arm recruited four so-called "wise men" to consider the nuclear option in consultation with government specialists. After two years of monthly meetings, first disclosed in November 1994 by the influential daily *Asahi*, the scholars withdrew to Karuizawa to draft

9 See Richard Nelson and Kenneth Weisbrode, "Interim Arrangements for North Korea: Are They Secure?", *Bulletin of the Atlantic Council*, Vol. V, No. 12, December 30, 1994, pp. 1-4.

10 Japan's current constitution went into effect on May 3, 1947. It was written with the help of the American victors in WWII, whose aim was to introduce democracy and to ensure that Japan would never again go to war.

final recommendations. One of them, Michio Royama, revealed that "[w]e found that technically there were no impediments, but politically it would not be wise – because public opinion would oppose it, and neighboring countries would isolate Japan diplomatically."¹¹ Another obstacle noted in 1970 was that a nuclear arsenal would cost too much.

But in the wealthy and technologically advanced Japan of the 90s, this has changed. There are changing attitudes among Japanese politicians. Last year, during a parliamentary debate on the NPT, the then Prime Minister, Tsutomu Hata, raised new questions by asserting that Japan "has the capability to possess nuclear weapons." And government spokesmen even pointed out that Japan's constitution does not ban Japan from having nuclear weapons for self-defense. Along with the growing external pressure to pay more for international peace-keeping activities, there have also been domestic moves to rethink Japan's role in the world and to become a "normal" country. The decision in 1990 under Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu to seek a permanent seat on the UN Security Council is an indication of a changed Japanese foreign policy. In fact, nuclear proliferation in Japan is seen as a real possibility by such Washington defense specialists as Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia, who last year described Japan's anti-bomb stance as "an interim, temporary position."¹² Undoubtedly, Japan has the ability to develop nuclear weapons and the necessary long-range delivery system, given its advanced nuclear and rocket technologies.

Nevertheless, strategic and political obstacles may not be overcome easily, because alienating other nations is risky for a people so dependent on trade. In addition, Japan, as a crowded, relatively small nation, would court annihilation by engaging in nuclear brinkmanship. Therefore it is unlikely that Japan will take the nuclear option as long as the US-Japan alliance is effectively maintained and the US nuclear umbrella remains valid despite the end of the Cold War. However, the political development in China and on the Korean peninsula will influence Japan's future strategic decision-making.

3. Nonintroduction of Nuclear Weapons by Nuclear Powers

The US has security alliances with Japan, South Korea, and other countries in Asia. Along with its security commitment, it maintains military bases in these partner states. However, the US policy of "neither confirming nor denying" the presence or absence of nuclear weapons aboard any US

11 *AP*, May 4, 95.

12 *Ibid.*

military station, ship, or aircraft, has caused uneasiness among allies. It became a major irritant in US relationships with Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. When the Prime Minister of New Zealand, David Lange, took office in 1984, his government initiated the policy of refusing nuclear-powered and nuclear-armed ships access to New Zealand waters. Since 1985 the Nuclear Free Zone Act bans visits by American and British warships. This in turn led the US to break its pledge to defend New Zealand under the terms of the Australia, New Zealand and United States Treaty (ANZUS). In fact, due to this problem, the Prime Minister of New Zealand was only recently invited to the US for the first time in ten years.¹³

The USA

It is a known secret that the US military deployed land-based tactical nuclear weapons in the Philippines, Japan, and South Korea.¹⁴ The official US policy regarding nuclear weapons in South Korea was neither denied nor confirmed, but in 1975 the US openly admitted the stationing of 698 tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea to deter another threat by North Korea or its two allies, China and the Soviet Union.¹⁵ This was perceived as a direct security threat and was often criticized by China and North Korea. Unlike some other countries in the region, South Korea thought it necessary during the Cold War era to have the US nuclear weapons for its national security.

The Soviet Union claimed that the US-deployed nuclear delivery vehicles on Japanese soil, the F-16s at Misawa, pose a direct threat. It often demanded that Japan strictly adhere to the three non-nuclear principles. It was embarrassing to the Japanese government when the former US ambassador to Japan, Prof. Erwin Reischauer, stated that many American

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- 13 After nearly ten years Prime Minister Jim Bolger received a formal invitation to visit the White House on 27 March 1995, yet the normal defense relationship between the two countries needs to be restored. See *Pacific Research*, February 1995, p. 17.
 - 14 For a very comprehensive study of nuclear infrastructure and military strategy of the five nuclear powers, see William M. Arkin and Richard W. Fieldhouse, *Nuclear Battlefields: Global Links in the Arms Race*. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Co., 1985.
 - 15 Joo-Hong Nam, *America's Commitment to South Korea: The First Decade of the Nixon Doctrine*. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp. 87-88; also see Joachim Glaubitz, *Zur Frage des Abzugs der amerikanischen Landesstreitkräfte aus Südkorea*. München: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 1980, pp. 61-62. In 1991 it was reported that around 150 tactical nuclear weapons were still in South Korea. See, *International Herald Tribune*, October 29, 1991, p. 6.

warships with nuclear weapons on board visited Japanese ports and that the Japanese governments were aware of this fact.

Although the US agreed in 1983 to inform the Filipinos if any nuclear weapons were brought onto US bases then existing in the Philippines, it was widely believed that the US stored nuclear weapons on its bases during the Cold War without informing them. The post-Marcos constitution, however, prohibits nuclear weapons on its territory. Nevertheless, the US and the Philippines agreed in 1989 that the consent of the Philippine government is required for the storage or installation of nuclear weapons on the territory. However, the territorial passage, including both airspace and waters, by American aircraft or naval vessels, would not be interpreted as storage or installation, and passage must be in accord with existing procedures. Thus the US maintained the right neither to deny nor confirm the presence of nuclear weapons on its ships. However, with the closing of Subic Bay and Clark Field bases in the Philippines in 1992, the US no longer maintains military installations in that country, and this problem has disappeared.

President Bush's announcement on September 27, 1991, that all US land- and sea-based tactical nuclear weapons would be withdrawn, removed the problem worldwide. Under current US government policy, the US will maintain the present level of military forces in the region at least until the end of the decade. At present, the problem related to the introduction of nuclear weapons by the nuclear powers in East Asia has been solved with the changes in military strategy of the major nuclear powers. However, the future development depends on the global and regional political environment. With the growing anti-nuclear consciousness of the population and the increasing democratization of the countries in the region, it would be difficult to re-introduce nuclear weapons.

The Former Soviet Union and Russia

During the Cold War the former Soviet Union stockpiled its nuclear arsenal in its vast Far East including islands close to Japan and along its border to China. In 1988 at Krasnoyarsk Gorbachev pledged that the Soviet Union would not increase or strengthen its nuclear weapons in the region. In the following years more than 200 000 troops were withdrawn from the Soviet Far East. The collapse of the Soviet Union further weakened its military strength. However, there is a considerable military presence of Russian

nuclear forces in the disputed area with Japan.¹⁶ As in the US, the then Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev announced in October 1991 the withdrawal of all tactical nuclear weapons from its ships and submarines; the Russian President Boris Yeltsin reaffirmed Gorbachev's commitment. The Russian Ministry of Defense announced in February 1993 that all tactical nuclear weapons had been withdrawn from its ships and submarines.

The Soviet Union also had military bases outside its territory, especially in Vietnam. In 1979 it gained access to and maintained the air base in Da Nang as well as air and naval bases in Cam Ranh Bay. It is not known how many nuclear weapons were stationed in these military installations, but the Soviet Union began to reduce its presence in Vietnam in 1990. It had maintained large arsenals of MiG jet fighters, Tu 16 Badger bombers, submarines and large warships. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia reduced its military activities outside its territory, and in 1992 finally closed down all bases in Vietnam.

4. A Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone in East Asia?

The concept of nuclear-weapons-free zones implies the unilateral renunciation of nuclear arms by the non-nuclear-weapons states within the region concerned, the aim being to prevent the emergence of new nuclear-weapons states as well as to prohibit the presence of these weapons in the area. Paradoxically, proposals of nuclear-weapons-free-zones for Asia came from a nuclear power, the former Soviet Union. In May 1985, only two months after taking office, President Gorbachev proposed an All-Asian Forum to deal with security matters, conceived on lines similar to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).¹⁷ He not only advocated a total ban on the use of nuclear weapons in Asia but also called for a pledge by the nuclear powers not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states. In his speech at Vladivostok in July 1986 he specifically mentioned three nuclear-weapons-free zones in Asia: the Korean peninsula, Southeast Asia, and the South-Pacific.¹⁸ Gorbachev's

16 Chinamani Mahapatra, "The US and Major Asian Powers", Jasjit Singh (ed.), *Asian Strategic Review, 1993-94*. New Dehli: Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis, 1994, p. 88.

17 For a detailed analysis of the Soviet proposal, see Edward A. Olsen & David Winterford, "Multilateral Arms Control Regimes in Asia", *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 18, No. 1, Spring-Summer 1994, pp. 5-37.

18 The Soviet Union became the first nuclear power to sign the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty in December 1986.

proposals were generally ignored by the countries in the region as a renewed attempt to reduce the US engagement in these countries.

The member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) considered creating a nuclear-weapons-free Southeast Asia as early as 1971.¹⁹ The Declaration of Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) was the first step toward a Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ). However, due to the political circumstances in the region, it was not implemented. At the Third ASEAN Summit in Manila in December 1987, realization of SEANWFZ was seriously considered. At the subsequent meeting of the Fourth ASEAN Summit in Singapore in January 1992, the leaders of ASEAN, especially Malaysia, repeated their desire to realize ZOPFAN and SEANWFZ in consultation with other countries, taking into account changing circumstances. In the absence of foreign military bases and with Vietnam now joining ASEAN, this could be a possibility in the foreseeable future. Here, the support of nuclear powers is necessary; and the US in particular could play a crucial role.

During the Cold War, North Korea repeatedly proposed a nuclear-weapons-free zone on the Korean peninsula. This was usually rebuffed by the US and South Korea, mainly because it was directed against the military strategy of nuclear deterrence. Following the decision of the US to withdraw all tactical nuclear weapons deployed outside its borders, and the statement by South Korean President Roh Tae Woo that there were no nuclear weapons in his country, the government of North Korea accepted NPT safeguards. The two Koreas signed a Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in January 1992, committing themselves not to test, manufacture, produce, receive, possess, store, deploy or use nuclear weapons nor to possess the sensitive enrichment and reprocessing facilities, and to restrict themselves to peaceful uses of nuclear energy only. The stated aim of this declaration is to eliminate the danger of nuclear war and to create an environment and conditions favorable for peace and peaceful unification of the divided country. The declaration came into force in February 1992, after the exchange of instruments signed by the two presidents. To implement the declaration, a South-North Joint Nuclear Control Commission was established and began to negotiate compliances. It was also agreed that each side may conduct inspection of the objects mutually agreed upon.

19 For a comprehensive study of ZOPFAN, see Heiner Hänggi, *Neutralität in Südostasien: Das Projekt einer Zone des Friedens, der Freiheit und der Neutralität*. Basel: Hochschule St. Gallen, 1993.

However, the decision of March 12, 1993, by North Korea to withdraw from the NPT delayed the realization of the denuclearization agreement. Direct dialogue between the two Koreas ceased to include the negotiations of the South-North Joint Nuclear Control Commission. During the period of crisis over North Korea's nuclear program, both Koreas stopped short of nullifying the declaration. Since the problem was resolved in the Geneva Accord of October 1994, the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula has a good chance of realization. If fully implemented, the Korean agreement would significantly complement the global non-proliferation regime as well as contribute much to reducing the risk of proliferation in East Asia.

Unlike the previously established nuclear-weapons-free zones, all the major nuclear powers in the region have indicated their support for a denuclearized Korean peninsula. So, pending the full implementation of the Geneva Accord and improved relations between the two Koreas, a nuclear-weapons-free Korean peninsula will be maintained. This current non-nuclear status should be made more permanent by creating a nuclear-weapons-free zone on the peninsula. The two Koreas could sign a treaty after implementing the Joint Declaration on Denuclearization, and the three nuclear powers could guarantee their support and respect for this zone by signing the treaty. In the long run, the whole region could become a nuclear-weapons-free zone, since the two Koreas are already committed to denuclearization and Japan adheres to the three non-nuclear principles. China has also indicated its support for a denuclearization of the region. All countries in the region should work together to reduce the risk of proliferation and at the same time benefit from the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

5. The Changing Security Environment in East Asia

East Asia is not only economically dynamic, but is also undergoing rapid political transformation. South Korea and Taiwan are democratizing after successful industrialization. Ideological blocks are loosening up as economic interchanges increase. These new developments are challenging the security-related framework of the Cold War period.

The partitioning of the Korean peninsula into two occupation zones in 1945 by the US and the Soviet Union resulted in two Koreas with contradicting systems. The division was deeply affected by the ideological conflict between the US and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The North Korean attempt to reunite the country by military means made the division almost permanent and brought about prolonged confrontation between the

two states. Each sought alliances with outside powers to keep the balance of power.

China entered the 1950-53 Korean War to support North Korea against a US-led United Nations force of 16 other nations, including South Korea. When an armistice was concluded the Military Armistice Commission (MAC) was established to monitor the peace on the Korean peninsula. It was composed of military officers from the United Nations on the one side, and from North Korea and China on the other. No peace treaty ending the war has ever been signed. While the MAC was an important avenue for dialogue between the two sides during the Cold War, it has not met since March 1991 when North Korea objected to the appointment of a South Korean general. The head of the MAC had always been an American officer.²⁰ Since then the MAC has for all practical purposes lost its function.

Besides refusing to take part in the MAC meetings, North Korea started to try and break up the present armistice mechanism. Following the division of Czechoslovakia into the Czech Republic and Slovakia²¹ in 1993, North Korea forced the Czech delegation to withdraw from the NNSC (Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission), which had been charged with policing the truce system since 1953. In 1994 North Korea unilaterally withdrew its component of the MAC and set up its "delegation of the Korean People's Army" at Panmunjom. China followed suit in a similar announcement. In February 1995 the Polish delegation left the NNSC under North Korean pressure. North Korea has thus done all it could unilaterally to neutralize the two instruments of the Korean armistice system - MAC and NNSC. This new situation demands a new security arrangement on the Korean peninsula as well as in the region as a whole. This could be achieved through dialogues involving all countries in the region, including the US, Russia, China, Japan, and the two Koreas.

With the end of the Cold War the danger of proliferation in East Asia should have been greatly reduced. Unfortunately, due to the fateful experience with Iraq, the North Korean issue became a test case for the effectiveness of the newly consolidated and expanded global non-proliferation verification system. North Korea's unexpected response almost ruined the

20 The MAC met 459 times between 1953 and 1991. On May 29, 1992, the United Nations Command called for a 460th meeting, but North Korea did not comply. For a South Korean perspective on the issue, for example, see Seong Ho Jhe, "Replacing the Military Armistice Agreement on the Korean Peninsula?", *Korea and World Affairs*, Vol. XIX, No. 1, Spring 1995, pp. 67-86.

21 In accordance with the armistice agreement, the NNSC was established in 1953 by four nations - Sweden and Switzerland nominated by the UN, and Czechoslovakia, and Poland nominated jointly by China and North Korea.

NPT regime, and therefore the danger of proliferation in the region has increased. The main cause of these setbacks was and still is the delicate political situation of a divided nation. The legacy of the Cold War is still too great in the South and there is a lack of contacts with the outside world in the North. The problem of proliferation on the peninsula must be dealt with in this Korean context. North and South Korea both aspire to unification as the highest national goal and employ self-deterrence to prevent the use of weapons of mass destruction against the population and territory they claim to be their own.

North and South Korea signed the Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression and Exchanges and Cooperation between the South and the North in December 1991. In particular, Article 5 of the agreement stipulates that the present North-South "state of armistice" be converted into a "solid state of peace". Both sides were supposed to work together to reach a peace agreement, while observing the armistice agreement in the interim. There should be incentives for sustaining a nuclear-weapons-free Korean peninsula which will contribute to peace in the whole region. In addition, due to the delicate political relations among the countries in the region, any non-proliferation regime on the Korean peninsula should be reinforced by regional arrangements. To this end, the international community should help both Koreas to adjust peacefully to the new global environment resulting from the end of ideological confrontation and to create a new security system not based on weapons of mass destruction.

Needless to say, the Japan-US alliance which evolved during the Cold War as part of the global effort to contain communism has served the vital security interests of the two countries, but it is also crucial to East Asian security. The end of the Cold War has brought about a change in the security environment, but it has not reduced the importance of the bilateral relationship. One key element of the security relationship is the US nuclear umbrella, which averted Japan's need to develop its own nuclear capability. The US is especially interested in strengthening its security ties with Japan and intends to continue its security role in East Asia. It is important for Japan because, should the US no longer play its traditional security role in Asia, the resulting adjustment in Japanese policies could pose a threat to the region's security. Therefore, most countries in the area, including non-US allies, favor the continued presence of US troops in the region. The US is reassuring its traditional allies that although the Cold War has ended, it will continue to maintain its security commitments in the region.

Multilateral activities have been on the increase in recent years. The US supports these activities, which are no substitute for the present bilat-

eral relations but are meant to supplement them. The ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum), established in 1994 on the first-track (official) level, encompasses all major countries in the region, including China, South Korea, Japan, US, and Russia, but not North Korea. Senior ministers from 18 countries meet regularly to discuss regional security issues and to work out confidence- and security-building measures.

Another significant multilateral activity at the second-track (non-official) level is the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), which has linked major regional security-oriented institutes since 1993.²² Through various committees, security specialists as well as officials from the member countries work closely in issue-oriented groups and supplement the activity of the ARF. North Korea is already a member of CSCAP and will be participating in some working groups.²³ CSCAP not only offers an unusual forum for direct dialogue between the two Koreas, but can potentially contribute toward overcoming the lingering apprehensions about future intentions of neighboring countries. In addition to CSCAP there are a number of regional mechanisms which enhance security dialogue as a complement to ever-increasing bilateral contacts. These will help promote and facilitate direct dialogues which can build confidence among the countries in the region.

6. Prospects of Sustainable Security in East Asia

The fundamental transformation in US-Russian relations since the end of the Cold War, the withdrawal of US and Soviet land- and sea-based tactical nuclear weapons from Asia, the formal closure of the US bases in the Philippines in 1992, and the ending of the Soviet/Russian military presence in Vietnam have contributed much to the denuclearization of East Asia. The division and tension in the Korean peninsula may be the last

22 For a detailed analysis of CSCAP and other regional dialogue mechanisms, see Paul M. Evans, "The Dialogue Process on Asia Pacific Security Issues: Inventory and Analysis", Paul M. Evans (ed.), *Studying Asia Pacific Security*, North York: Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies, 1994, pp. 297-316; Robert A. Scalapino, "A Framework for Regional Security Cooperation in Asia", *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. V, No. 2, Winter 1993; Michael Haas, *The Future of Regional Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific*, Unpublished Paper presented at the IPSA Congress in Berlin, 1994, 65 pp.

23 The North Korean Institute for Disarmament and Peace in Pyongyang joined CSCAP in December 1994, but stopped participating as the nuclear crisis heightened. It is expected that North Korea will take part again now that the crisis is over. See Ralph A. Cossa, "Multilateral Dialogue in Asia: Benefits and Limitations", *Korea and World Affairs*, Vol. XIX, No. 1, Spring 1995, pp. 106-120.

remnant of the Cold War, but the situation on the peninsula is also changing radically. Korea's role is crucial in East Asia. Therefore smooth implementation of the Agreed Framework between North Korea and the USA is essential to sustainable security and non-proliferation in East Asia.

During the Cold War a NATO-type alliance aimed at containing common threats was impossible in East Asia, nor will it be viable in the near future mainly due to the past experiences of the countries involved. However, bilateral, subregional and regional multilateral security-ensuring dialogue mechanisms should be gradually established to facilitate timely consultations on sensitive issues, increase mutual confidence, and take preventive measures to avoid crisis or aggression.

The goal of the security policy of all East Asian countries should be to extend the unprecedented period of security, peace and prosperity. To this end relations should be strengthened through the development of far-reaching dialogues and by cooperation between all East Asian countries. The US government reaffirmed recently that despite the demise of the former Soviet Union it intends to faithfully uphold its defense treaties with South Korea, Japan, and Australia. The US is interested in improving the security environment by increasing dialogues between these countries.

The countries in the region are facing new problems which need concerted action, such as growing environmental deterioration due to rapid and uncontrolled industrialization and urbanization. Nuclear wastes from numerous nuclear power stations in the region are already causing serious problems. New ideas for disposal of the growing pile of highly radioactive waste at civilian nuclear power plants should be sought and a regional organization, such as EURATOM needs to be created in East Asia to deal with these problems. Such a regional institution, to be called EATOM or ASIATOM, could deal with sensitive issues such as plutonium control, nuclear waste disposal and supplement safeguards activities of the IAEA.²⁴ The creation of a regional verification system to ensure compliance with a nuclear-weapons-free zone would not only bring greater transparency to the nuclear activities, but also set a precedent for other defense- and security-related measures.

Japan's policy of stockpiling large quantities of plutonium for peaceful use poses political and security problems. Fast-breeder reactors produce more recyclable plutonium than they burn. Japan regards fast-breeder reactors as a pillar of its energy policy in the 21st century, despite doubts about their economy and criticism of the shipping of nuclear waste and recycled plutonium from reprocessing plants in Europe. Some argue that

24 For the safeguards system of EURATOM, see Darryl A. Howlett, *EURATOM and Nuclear Safeguards*. London: Macmillan, 1990.

reprocessing spent fuel for weapons-grade plutonium increases the danger of nuclear proliferation. Leaders in the region should unite to adopt a common approach to such threats and to counter the obsession of chauvinistic nationalism and the status quo mentality. Only a genuine community of interests between the countries can guarantee sustainable security and minimize conflicts that arise. In the final analysis, any effective non-proliferation depends on linking existing regional and global measures with the ultimate goal of global disarmament.

Although there are still many problems and uncertainties in the region, the development of the following factors will shape the future security environment in East Asia:

- US military presence in the region and its security relations with its traditional allies;
- future relations between the US and North Korea, and between North and South Korea;
- future relations between China and Taiwan, and developments in Hongkong after 1997;
- rivalry between Japan and China in seeking regional hegemony;
- effectiveness of the ongoing regional dialogue mechanisms;
- political and economic development of the countries.

Further democratization and sustained economic development of the countries in the region will also contribute positively to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. New thinking and vision will be necessary. After all, foes can not become friends overnight, and distrust and hatred will not disappear automatically. This will require a great deal of preparation and effort. It is high time to start preparing for a future based on the realisation that the balance-of-power logic needs to be changed and that security in the region can be better guaranteed by non-military means.