

Attachment C: Responses from MG Pan Zhenqiang

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China Reform Forum

Prepared remarks for

Is a Nuclear-free East Asia Possible? Opportunities and Constraints,

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Since Southeast Asia has already become a zone free of nuclear weapons, the question that really should be asked is whether Northeast Asia could follow suit and also become a nuclear free zone in order to make East Asia entirely nuclear weapons free. Geographically, a most ideal nuclear free zone in Northeast Asia should include the Korean Peninsula and Japan with their territorial seas and the adjacent international maritime areas. All the nuclear weapon states should undertake due responsibility to respect the arrangement just as they do towards other nuclear free zones. But the issue in Northeast Asia has proved to be extremely complex and difficult despite efforts by the research community to explore the approach to that end over years.

The reasons are many-fold. First, the ongoing nuclear crisis of North Korea has made the prospect of denuclearization in the Korean Peninsula very dim, let alone a nuclear free Northeast Asia.

Secondly, the intensifying arms competition between major players in the region has reinforced the belief of these nations that nuclear weapons would continue to play a vital role in their security strategy. None of them have shown real interest in the idea of a nuclear free zone in Northeast Asia.

Thirdly, the US extended deterrence in Northeast Asia has constituted another obstacle to the creation of such a zone since Washington continues to rule out the possible use of its nuclear weapons in the region. Last but not the least, lack of mutual trust among these major players indicates the lack of an adequate political basis for the building of a nuclear free Northeast Asia under current situation.

All the above inhibiting factors are more strategic and political than technical or military in nature. To remove these obstacles, therefore, goes beyond the nuclear issue as per se. It requires properly addressing the current major security problems in the region as well as the change of the security concept of all the various nations concerned. The former involves a peaceful solution of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, measures leading to the end of the hostility between North and South, incentives that may induce Pyongyang out of its self-imposed isolation, and dramatic improvement of the major power's relations in the region. The latter involves the readjustment of the threat perceptions as well security strategies of all the nations concerned.

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