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Introduction

In this essay, I examine the role that nuclear weapons have played in Northeast Asia in creating a system of inter-state relations based in part on nuclear threat. The US-led alliances that rest on extended nuclear deterrence is characterized as hegemonic in the forty years of Cold War in the Gramscian sense of hegemon, that is, allied elites accepted US leadership based on its legitimating ideology of extended nuclear deterrence, institutional integration, and unique American nuclear forces that underpinned the alliances.[2] A crucial aspect of American nuclear hegemony was the guarantee that the hegemon would ensure that no nuclear adversary could break out of the system after China, as expressed by the Non Proliferation Treaty and IAEA safeguards system. The failure of the United States to ensure that the DPRK nuclear breakout was reversed over the previous two decades threatens this hegemonic leadership.

On April 4, 2009, President Obama proposed "Nuclear Abolition" as a new strategic goal for US foreign policy and thereby, as an organizing principle under American leadership for all states. However, Nuclear Abolition has not supplanted extended nuclear deterrence in managing regional challengers to the status quo distribution of power. In relation to the DPRK, a classic upstart threat to the existing regional order and stability, the United States appears to be headed to a reassertion of strategic deterrence in the form of restated general commitments to extend nuclear deterrence to its regional allies against the DPRK, to deter the DPRK from attacking—not currently a realistic prospect, and to compel it to cooperate in non-proliferation and in negotiations over its weapons program—a strategy that is almost certain to not reassure US allies as it continues to fail to curtail North Korea's nuclear weapons program reverse the DPRK's course, have little marginal impact on an already deterred Korea given US-allied overwhelming conventional and nuclear force ratios, and ironically, may hasten, not slow DPRK proclivity to export its capabilities.

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[1] This paper is a revised version of a presentation at the 5th Jeju Peace Forum, "Shaping new regional governance in East Asia: A vision for mutual benefit and common prosperity" August 13, 2009

[2] D. Puchala, "World Hegemony and the United Nations," *International Studies Review*, 7, 4, December 2005, pp. 575-577.

In light of this prospective failure by the United States to deal with the actual as distinct from the imaginary DPRK threat that occupies many American minds, I propose that the ROK commence a serious re-examination of the relative risk-benefits of continuing to rely on extended nuclear deterrence versus adopting a strategy based fully on non-nuclear military power and declaratory posture, specifically excluding nuclear threat as a tool of deterrence or, post deterrence failure, of compellence.

In effect, I am suggesting that the junior ally take Nuclear Abolition seriously in order to reconstitute alliance strategy and to preserve the role of the hegemonic power in the region, but without recourse to the historical dependence on nuclear weapons. Relatedly, I also suggest that this is the only way for the allies ultimately to meet the DPRK's preconditions for denuclearization at this late stage—although at this late stage, even ending extended nuclear deterrence may not suffice to turn around the DPRK's commitment to becoming a *de facto*, fully-fledged, nuclear weapons state.

Extended Nuclear Deterrence in Regional Security

For nearly six decades, nuclear weapons have been a central constituent element of international affairs in East Asia. Starting with the coercive use of nuclear weapons in 1945 to exert strategic *compellence* against Japan to end the war, nuclear weapons became a cornerstone of a rigid bipolar threat system based on strategic *deterrence* and organized around the global balance of terror between the former Soviet Union and the United States.

Early usage of American nuclear threat projection against China in the Korean War (compellence) and in the 1958 Quemoy-Matsu crisis (deterrence) and other high risk efforts to deter and compel adversaries led to a set of bilateral alliances created by John Foster Dulles, based in part on the concept of *extended nuclear deterrence* (END), which generated a third category of effect that shaped the way conflict was manifested in the region, *strategic reassurance* of allied leaders and publics.

Later, reassurance was also used to stabilize the "central balance" by dampening escalation instability or the propensity of nuclear weapons states to strike first, in the form of arms control and disarmament treaties and agreements to curtail destabilizing nuclear forces and activities by nuclear weapons states. These cooperative measures between nuclear adversaries also deeply affected the region—for example, how naval forces interacted on the high seas.[3]

Korea played a special role in this system of nuclear threat projection.[4] Nuclear threats were found to be difficult to exploit against China and DPRK forces during the war; and Soviet nuclear forces affected US naval deployments in Korea, revealing the first wartime "virtual"

[3] See P. Hayes, et al, *American Lake, Nuclear Peril in the Pacific,* Viking/Penguin, 1987.

[4] See P. Hayes, *Pacific Powderkeg, American Nuclear Dilemmas in Korea*, Lexington Books, Lexington Massachusetts, 1990, at: also published by Hanul Press in Seoul, translated into Korean; English text at: http://www.nautilus.org/DPRKBriefingBook/nuclearweapons/PacificPowderkegbyPeterHayes.pdf

effect, prefiguring the emergence of the idea of Mutual Assured Destruction. American weapons were deployed first in Korea in 1958, but only as part of a global forward deployment of tactical and theater nuclear weapons under the rubric of Massive Retaliation. The deployments in Korea were also linked to the withdrawal of ground-based nuclear forces from Japan, forced by the popular revulsion against the Japanese government in 1958, as a proxy for and litmus test of the credibility of END to Japan after 1960. For most of the Cold War, nuclear deployments in Korea were primarily aimed at the Soviet-Chinese bloc, initially treated as a single set of targets in the sixties; and later, were aimed primarily at the former Soviet Union, and only secondarily against North Korea itself. Thus, countering threats to the ROK was not separable from sustaining the central balance wherein the Chinese and Soviet forces targeted US forces in Korea; and there was therefore no question of US END for the ROK until Park Chung Hee began to develop his own nuclear forces and ended the presumption that the United States chose who led the ROK.[5] By then, the United States and Russia had created the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty framework in order to contain proliferation by small and medium states, and the United States firmly quashed Park's attempt to gain an independent nuclear force. Ironically, it was about this time that the DPRK began to acquire elements of the nuclear fuel cycle needed to develop nuclear weapons, suggesting that the ROK proliferation attempt and the near-war in August 1976 over the poplar tree incident at Panmunjon had convinced Kim Il Sung to match the United States nuclear threat in kind.

In 1978, the near-withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Korea was reversed by President Carter, and Korea remained implicated in the provision of END to Japan by the United States. As part of a global reversal of the 1958 deployment in 1991, President Bush Sr. withdrew US nuclear weapons from the ROK, and US withdrawal became part of the drama that unfolded around the DPRK nuclear breakout that surfaced publicly in 1992 when the IAEA discovered that the DPRK's nuclear declaration did not add up.

Henceforth, the credibility of US END with allies in this region was tied up directly with the United States' ability to stop (not merely contain by deterrence) the DPRK's acquisition of nuclear weapons and use of nuclear threat to compel the United States and others to negotiate with it—what I term the DPRK's "stalker strategy."[6] As a result of nearly two decades of slow motion nuclear wrestling with the DPRK culminating in its successful nuclear test in 2009, the credibility of US END has fallen to an all-time low.

American Nuclear Hegemony

[5] Until the late sixties, USFK maintained a war plan to use military force to replace the South Korean government with a US appointed government should the South Korean government be threatened with overthrow from below.
[6] P. Hayes, "The Stalker State: North Korean Proliferation and the End of American Nuclear Hegemony," Nautilus Policy Forum Online 06-82A, October 4th, 2006, at: http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/0682Hayes.html

Transposing Robert Cox's theory of international political economy to the realm of inter-state security, I have previously characterized the specific combination of nuclear ideology (declaratory doctrine) that legitimates American nuclear dominance with institutional integration in various ways under the alliances (forward deployment, bases, exercises) and unique forces (nuclear weapons, delivery systems, nuclear personnel, and command-and-control systems) as being hegemonic;[7] and the peak of American nuclear hegemony as being in the nineteen seventies when the NPT-IAEA system was created to stem the proliferation of nuclear weapons that would have undermined this form of hegemonic leadership.

Today, this system is unraveling quickly due to the havoc wrought by the North Korean nuclear breakout on the NPT-IAEA system as a whole, by its rejection of the authority of the UNSC as enforcer of the NPT-IAEA system, as a spoiler state for cooperative security institution building in the region, and by its direct challenge to US hegemony in its alliance relationships.

As I noted earlier, the most important aspect of US nuclear hegemony was the guarantee that nuclear proliferation by adversaries such as North Korea or between traditional adversaries such as Korea and Japan would be halted by the United States. Thus, the flip side of unilateral nuclear deterrence and END was the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, intended to stem the proliferation of nuclear weapons. For a while, it looked like this bulwark would hold, and the United States could retain its nuclear hegemony—especially after reversing the Korean and Taiwanese nuclear proliferation efforts, and by ensuring that Japan remained dependent on the US nuclear arsenal (after Nixon and Kissinger flirted briefly with the idea of an independent nuclear armed Japan before the opening to China).

North Korea's Nuclear Vulnerability

The flaw in this region was North Korea. Unlike the other states in the region, the DPRK was not part of the international community (unlike Taiwan, which was highly integrated into the global market system) and did not adhere to international norms and values related to the NPT and IAEA safeguards system. Moreover, the DPRK had faced for decades direct American nuclear threat and the full array of forward deployed weapons and delivery systems, exercises, rhetorical threat, and during full-blown, near-war crises on the DMZ, the immediate prospect of nuclear annihilation. The KPA had developed a defensive doctrine that was pathetically puny in the face of nuclear attack—amounting to rolling in a ditch until the blast had passed over, and continuing to fight in the face of nuclear blast and radiation, or staying deep underground to avoid being annihilated, but thereby effectively rendering its own forces unusable.

They reduced their vulnerability to American nuclear threat by adopting a forward-deployed offensive posture wherein nuclear weapons might be used, possibly even pre-emptively by the

[7] P. Hayes, December 1988: "American Nuclear Hegemony in the Pacific," Journal of Peace Research, volume 25, no 4, p. 351.

United States, but still could not stop a North Korean conventional military sledge-hammer falling on Seoul and allied US-Korean forces. Such an attack would have been suicidal to both Koreas; but only severely damaging to US forces in-theater and would have barely affected the United States itself. But it was effective in communicating to the United States and ROK leaders that the DPRK was not going to accept nuclear threat forever and could sustain a conventional deterrent to offset American nuclear superiority while it began to acquire independent means to develop a nuclear option.

For decades, an unstable standoff and continuous confrontation took place at the DMZ where the two sides projected lethal and exterminist threat at each other in the most direct, unmistakable, and provocative way—most unmistakably in the August 1976 near-war over the poplar trees. The weaponization of North Korean fissile material and the testing of longer range (albeit still unreliable) delivery systems now makes nuclear next-use in Korea a conceivable contingency during a war, and raises the possibility of unconventional delivery of DPRK nuclear devices to the United States itself—thereby forcing the United States to pay far more attention to this otherwise puny adversary.

In my view, the DPRK decided to break out of the static game of positional political and military warfare in the late seventies, culminating in an agile DPRK nuclear weapons strategy a decade later intended to project nuclear threat right back up the American barrel aimed at Pyongyang. This was not primarily a defensive strategy, or even one aimed at strategic deterrence—that was a game in which the DPRK knew from the outset that it could not hope to ever match the United States, requiring as it would survivable retaliatory nuclear forces that it could not obtain, test and deploy for many decades, if ever. Rather, the DPRK sought to use its nuclear threat as a *compellence* strategy, as the leading edge of its political engagement of the United States aimed at forcing it to change its policies towards the DPRK. The North Koreans used nuclear threat to attempt to make the United States recognize the legitimacy and sovereignty of the North Korean state and leadership; to change its policies of containment and sanctions that kept the DPRK isolated from the world, especially economically; and to enlist the United States as a security partner. The latter is the bit that most Americans find incredible given the nature of the North Korean polity, its alien values, and the antithetical economic systems—North Korea being rather like the Borg in the popular American science fiction series Star Trek thinking that they could become security partners of The Federation. Nonetheless, I think it is exactly what the North Koreans had and have in mind.

Consequently, the DPRK and the United States have spent two decades in a slow motion confrontation over North Korea's nuclear proliferation activity, testing each other's intentions, creating confidence and then rapidly demolishing it, but always managing the risks at each stage of the DPRK breakout to preserve the possibility of reversing the latest gain of the DPRK's incremental nuclearization and weaponization. In 2004, however, the North Koreans shifted gears. At this time, they began to refer to nuclear weapons not as "nukes," an abstract noun, but

instead, to their "massive" and then explicitly "nuclear deterrent" and in 2006, linked nuclear weapons with the person of the great leader and his strategy, in an idiosyncratic form of North Korean nuclear nationalism.[8] This reduction in ambiguity as to North Korean intention was matched by increasing clarity as to their weapons capacity in the first (fizzle) and second (successful) nuclear tests, and the outright declaration of that the DPRK had achieved nuclear weapons status, at least in its own eyes. As they state now:

> *Our strengthening of the nuclear deterrent is an irrefutable exercise of our independent right and sovereignty for the defense or our dignity, system, and the safety of the nation against the nuclear threat of the United States.*[9]

The DPRK thereby called the American bluff in the most serious challenge to American nuclear hegemony in the entire post Cold War period. The inability and unwillingness of the United States to avoid or reverse North Korean nuclear breakout to the point where the DPRK can at least partly neutralize the United States "unique" nuclear weapons capacities that undergirds nuclear hegemony is transparent and obvious to the leadership of all states in the region.[10] Recent discussions of reinforcing extended nuclear deterrence to Japan and Korea[11] and even reintroducing nuclear weapons into Korea itself reveal the lack of an American vision for regional order based on Nuclear Abolition—the new doctrinal framework introduced by President Obama for international relations without depending on nuclear threat.

The near-automatic reversion to END by Obama's appointees shows the shallowness of the Nuclear Abolition policy current, and the continuing reliance on nuclear weapons as the basis for US alliances in the region. The problem is that while this worked, albeit at the risk of real nuclear war, for the entire Cold War, it has not worked to stop North Korean breakout since the end of the Cold War. Given the a-symmetric cost of containing the DPRK nuclear threat by nuclear threat projection to the United States versus the cost to the DPRK, it has not escaped the notice of allied security leaders that a pipsqueak state has effectively stale-mated the nuclear hegemon in the domain in which it purports to wield unique power.[12]

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[8] See P. Hayes, P. Hayes, "Embrace Tiger, Retreat To Mountain, Test Nuke," Nautilus Policy Forum Online 06-60A, July 21st, 2006, at: http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/0660Hayes.html; also published in Open Democracy as "Nuclear little brother: North Korea's next test" at: http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-institutions_government/nuclear_brother_3761.jsp

[9] *Nodong Sinmun* Commentator's article, 25 June 09

[10] M. Richardson, "N-clouds over a US umbrella," August 5, 2009, at: http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/opinion/editorial/general/nclouds-over-a-us-umbrella/1587059.aspx?storypage=0

[11] I. Reynolds, "U.S. wants to boost Japan nuclear umbrella: paper," Thu Jul 16, 2009 10:55pm EDT, TOKYO (Reuters); "U.S., Japan to hold official talks on nuclear umbrella," *Kyodo News*, Washington, July 7, 2009; "U.S. may maintain tactical nuke arms for attack submarines," *Kyodo News*, Washington DC, July 30, 2009.

[12] The DPRK imposes a vastly greater cost on the United States than it incurs--on the order of 3 billion $/year or greater for the United States calculated as a roughly 10 percent increased cost of sustaining US forces in Korea and region at a state of higher readiness in response to the DPRK's nuclear threat, versus perhaps 0.3 billion $/year for

Unsurprisingly, security analysts and political leaders in South Korea and Japan have begun to explore the conceptual basis for developing independent nuclear weapons capacities. This is entirely predictable given the failure to date of the United States leadership to enunciate a vision of regional order and stability based on non-nuclear forces and built around security principles and institutions based on Nuclear Abolition rather than END, combined with the residual salience of END in the force structures, planning and joint exercises, and the continued psychological dependence of allied elites on the "nuclear umbrella" to substitute for adjusting their own security policies to a world without nuclear weapons, and to negotiating and resolving their security dilemmas without resort to the use of military force.

It is time for regional leaders to step out of this system of nuclear threat projection and build a regional order that is not based on the threat of unilateral or mutual annihilation, but on constructive, positive cooperative engagement. This can be done in two ways.

The first is the New Zealand mouse-that-roared model, whereby small and medium states simply declare that they would rather live without a nuclear umbrella because doing so is safer than living under it. In effect, they recast the nuclear umbrella to be not a source of security, but declare it to be a source of insecurity. They suggest, much to the discomfort of Americans from the Cold War era, that it is a security blanket that they can do without. Or course, there are no serious security issues in the vicinity of New Zealand, and the issue of organizing a regional order without a nuclear hegemon is not a major issue in the South Pacific. Indeed, New Zealand happily acts as a hegemonic security state in its own sphere of influence in the tiny South Pacific Islands that rely on its aid and conventional military and policing forces to keep order.

The second pathway is to adopt a strategy that Patrick Morgan has called "nuclear recession,"[13] the more or less slow but continuous minimization of various elements of END including public silence, substitution of conventional for nuclear forces in allied doctrine and postures, development of regional security institutions and resolution of major security dilemmas between states, and the lessening of residual salience of nuclear weapons over time to the point where they fade away. This approach is more likely to be acceptable than the mouse-that-roars to the nuclear hegemon and to states in region. It does not attempt to reconfigure security relationships built partly around the role that nuclear weapons play in "order and stability," that is, it is a cautious approach to structural change.

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the DPRK's nuclear weapons program--a ratio of 10:1--although this cost is relatively higher for the DPRK than the United States.

[13] P. Morgan, "Considerations Bearing on a Possible Retraction of The American Nuclear Umbrella Over the ROK," communication, June 21, 2009.

This is precisely the primary concern of security intellectuals in the region about Nuclear Abolition and its implication that END may be obsolete and needs to be retired soon.[14] This strategy can be implemented via existing bilateral security alliances, but may be too little, too late for US hegemony to recover, given the rate of changes in the strategic landscape brought about by an expanded, enduring DPRK nuclear breakout or by its conceivable disappearance due to social and economic implosion. Moreover, such an incremental, even timid strategy does not substitute for pro-active leadership and vision which is the basis for hegemonic power. Regaining such a role entails articulating a regional vision of a shared future and cooperative security relations not buttressed by nuclear threat and END—that is, a pathway to Nuclear Abolition that makes sense in this region. The Obama Administration has yet to articulate such a vision although American security analysts such as George Perkovich are working hard to outline concepts of "21st century extended nuclear deterrence" that supports rather than contradicts Nuclear Abolition.[15]

After the Clinton visit to Pyongyang, the DPRK seems ready to discuss with the United States issues related to proliferation (aka Syria and beyond), missile exports, and confidence building and tension reduction. This limited agenda places the United States in a bind in that to engage in such talks on these issues before denuclearization and in the aftermath of Pyongyang's release of the journalists would effectively assert that the DPRK is a nuclear weapons state, a claim still rejected outright by the United States. Conversely, for the United States to insist on a return to denuclearization talks first will enable the North Koreans to argue to third parties such as China that they tried to deal with the Americans who proved obdurately hostile to their existence, and therefore they have to step up the pace of their nuclear program (third test before the end of 2009?). In the latest twists, the DPRK revealed on September 4, 2009 that it has successfully experimented with uranium enrichment[16]—all the while, carefully refraining from linking this move to a second nuclear weapons pathway and pointing instead towards its light water reactor aspirations as the rationale—and the United States has accepted that it will engage the DPRK on a bilateral basis, albeit in order to resume the Six Party Talks.

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[14] T. Suto and H. Tosaki, "Abolishing Nuclear Weapons: A Japanese Perspective," in G. Perkovich and J. Action, *Abolishing Nuclear Weapons, A Debate*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009, p 214, at: http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/abolishing_nuclear_weapons_debate.pdf

[15] G.Perkovich, *Extended Deterrence On The Way To A Nuclear-Free World,* International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament Research Paper, May 2009, at: http://www.icnnd.org/latest/research/Perkovich_Deterrence.pdf

[16] Choe S.H and D. Sanger, "North Korea Reveals Second Path to Nuclear Bomb," *New York Times*, September 5, 2009, at: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/05/world/asia/05korea.html?_r=1&sq=korea%20enrichment&st=cse&scp=1&pagewanted=print

Of course, these are all tactical considerations, and however these issues play out, the DPRK has made it clear that having gained nuclear weapons, they will not give them up without the United States withdrawing END from Japan and South Korea—which even then, may be only a necessary, not a sufficient condition for them to dismantle their nuclear weapons.

A Non-Nuclear Abolition-Based Strategy

Rather than reinforcing END to counter the DPRK's nuclear weapons, the United States should coordinate with regional states, including allies, to declare that conventional weapons, and only conventional weapons, will be used to deter and if necessary, to compel the DPRK should it project nuclear threat or actually use a nuclear weapon, under all circumstances. Underpinning this declaration would be the further assertion that the United States will militarily and politically terminate the DPRK regime should it use nuclear weapons, even if it uses them more than once. This strategy is militarily feasible, and would devalue the DPRK's nuclear weapons far more effectively than END. Indeed, reasserting US nuclear threat via reinforced END will simply validate the nuclear breakout in their own and third party eyes. The North Koreans themselves have pointed this out:

> *Ultimately, the stipulation of the "extended deterrence" in writing does nothing but add more legitimacy to our possession of nuclear deterrence and will only result in bringing on themselves a tragic situation that will bring the fiery shower of our nuclear retaliation over South Korea in an "emergency.*[17]

Moreover, as has been pointed out many times, if non-nuclear weapons states conclude that only by proliferating will they compel nuclear-weapons states to provide assurance that they will not be subject to nuclear attack or threats thereof, then the DPRK model of nuclear breakout embodies the lesson that the NPT regime, one of the foundation stones of American nuclear hegemony, cannot provide security without nuclear weapons to states in conflict with nuclear weapons states.

Adopting policies henceforth that downplay or abandon END prefigures the eventual strategic landscape in Korea wherein the DPRK either collapses or is absorbed into the ROK, that is, one in which there is no security threat from the DPRK against which END is counterposed. Pushing the United States to make this shift is an allied responsibility, to be undertaken in their own self interest. Instead of bandwagoning with the United States and demanding enhanced END, allies can leverage the hegemon to use its latent power to reshape the whole strategic landscape, not just respond to parts of it.

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[17] *Nodong Sinmun* Commentator's article--25 June 09

Admittedly, there are risks associated with such a dramatic break with fifty years of END as a structural underpinning of inter-state relations and the possible disruption of the expectations and perceptions of security elites in all the countries of the region. But the DPRK represents such a rupture in any case; and replacing exterminist threat with a more constructive basis for security relations seems realistic and desirable given the urgency of common problems and then need for shared solutions. It is time, therefore, for regional leaders (and Americans) to examine carefully the full risk-benefit analysis of END versus non-nuclear alternatives. In Korea, this includes:

- Deterring DPRK first-use of nuclear weapons against allies;
- Deterring attempts by the DPRK to gain psychological advantage over the allies by projecting nuclear threat in negotiations or in a political-military crisis in Korea;
- Deterring DPRK nuclear alliance with third parties such as Iran (an exchange of Iranian centrifuge technology for DPRK plutonium and nuclear test data, for example), DPRK-style nuclear extended deterrence to third parties, or DPRK export of nuclear hardware and knowledge;
- Reassuring allied leaders and publics that the United States will neither abandon the ROK to face alone the DPRK nuclear threat or first use of nuclear weapons; nor create tension that escalates to war, nuclear next-use, and to the ROK being caught in a US-DPRK cross-fire;
- Compelling the DPRK to undertake expensive defensive measures to protect itself and its population against US nuclear first-use.
- Buttressing US demands that the DPRK return to the denuclearization bargaining table, dismantle its nuclear weapons, restore its NPT and IAEA membership in good standing, rejuvenate the 1992 Joint Denuclearization Declaration with appropriate monitoring and verification procedures, and ultimately, that it accept as a negative security assurance offered by the United States to all non-nuclear weapons states party to the NPT which are not engaged in nuclear aggression in alliance with a nuclear weapons state.

The costs of the allies continuing to rely on END to gain these putative benefits in relation to the DPRK nuclear threat are also substantial, although being qualitatively different, these are not easily weighed against the benefits. Some of these costs are:

- The probability that North Korean leaders perceive US nuclear threats projected against the DPRK as offensive in nature, including the possibility of pre-emptive first strike, as sought in US declaratory doctrine, and therefore will accelerate their nuclear weapons program, conduct more provocative tests, and develop a DPRK-style nuclear operational doctrine that may not be welcome to American strategists accustomed to the "civilized" precepts of strategic nuclear warfare inherited from the Cold War;

- The risk that continuing the confrontation with the DPRK could actually induce its collapse and thereby bring about loss of control over fissile material and nuclear weapons in the midst of war or civil war in the DPRK, with potential escalation and/or export in the ensuing chaos;

- The likelihood that enhanced END will be perceived by third parties, especially China, as justifying the DPRK's nuclear weapons program as "defensive" in nature;

- The security benefits that would be gained from tension reduction between the allies and the DPRK, both within Korea, and at a regional level, should the nuclear standoff represented by END continue for the indefinite future;

- The high probability that if the United States fails to stop the DPRK from expanding its nuclear weapons capacities, then Japan, the ROK, and other regional states will review their own non-nuclear commitments and seek increased weapons-related technological capacities; and that short run dependence on the United States on END without result may increase their propensity for long run, independent nuclear proliferation;

- Contribute to a global reaffirmation of the role of nuclear weapons instead of leading to a regional security system based on Global Abolition, thereby reducing the ability of the nuclear weapons states, most importantly, the United States, to resolve the tensions between Global Abolition, the residual role of END from the Cold War arising from regional security conflicts, and post-nuclear extended deterrence; ultimately reducing the United States to an ordinary nuclear armed great power instead of a post-nuclear hegemonic state.

In the long run, retracting END from Korea would terminate the historical linkage between US nuclear commitments to Korea with the credibility of its commitment to defend Japan with nuclear weapons. Whether this rupture would be a cost or a benefit depends on the state of Sino-Japanese relations, and in turn on whether the Japanese felt directly threatened by Chinese nuclear weapons. At the very least, it would force the United States to no longer feed the neurotic dependency of Japan's security elite on END, and reject their demand that nuclear weapons be used to deter every significant threat faced by Japan. It would also expose the metaphysical basis of recent Japanese claims that "invisible" but forward-deployed nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missiles on US nuclear attack submarines are somehow more "credible" nuclear forces than ballistic or airborne nuclear missiles from US territories in the region, and must be retained to sustain Japanese confidence in END.[18] These are matters that are amenable to leadership and pro-active policies. The United States is still sufficiently powerful to shape the strategic environment in this region, but only if it exercises its power.

[18] B. Blechman, "Extended Deterrence: Cutting Edge of the Debate on Nuclear Policy," May 28, 2009, at: http://www.stimson.org/pub.cfm?id=811

Who in the region might commence a serious dialogue on these issues? South Korea is the obvious candidate. To this end, it might reiterate that it forever renounces nuclear weapons, promote the concept of a strong Korean Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (building on the 1992 Korean Denuclearization Declaration but including protocols for nuclear weapons states to commit to not firing nuclear weapons in or out of the zone, etc.); and work to strengthen the 1995 and subsequent declarations by nuclear weapon states that they will not use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states and might (based on the earlier, 1968 UNSC resolution) even come to the aid of a non-nuclear state facing nuclear aggression.[19]

Just as President Bush's removal of tactical and theater nuclear weapons in 1991-92 from Korea and the region made it possible to negotiate seriously with the DPRK, this approach would pave the way for the Obama Administration to meet the DPRK's demand for the US nuclear umbrella to be removed from Korea, with possible follow-on leverage on the DPRK's nuclear weapons program.

Conclusion

Practically speaking, what would it mean, such a squaring of the circle? The following is a list of possible steps entailed by a faster retraction of END than a simple fading away:

- Immediately, US policymakers would stop public declarations that reassert , reinforce, or even upgrade the salience of END to ROK, substituting for this public and official dialogue…silence. Concurrently, the United States would no longer refer to nuclear deterrence in relation to North Korea, nor repeat the alliance mantras about extended nuclear deterrence.
- The United States would unilaterally issue a statement to the effect that nuclear weapons will not be used in Korea, period, even in response to DPRK first or subsequent use; and that should the DPRK use nuclear weapons, the United States will use all necessary non-nuclear means to remove the DPRK government from power.
- The ROK would launch a regional study group of eminent security specialists to examine the future of END in regional security affairs (this could feed into discussions with China and the DPRK in the context of denuclearization negotiations, and push the US security establishment to start connecting the dots between the President's Nuclear Abolition policy, the DPRK issue, and regional alliance "management").

[19] A good summary of these pledges is found in J. du Preez, "Security Assurances Against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons: Is Progress Possible at the NPT Prepcom?" Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey, April 24, 2003, at: http://cns.miis.edu/treaty_npt/nptsec.htm

- In the context of denuclearization negotiations, the ROK would redefine the 1992 Joint Denuclearization Declaration and outline its commitment to promoting a post-Armistice Korean Peninsula NWFZ, with protocols for the NWS to sign about non-targeting, not firing NWs into or out of the zone, etc.
- In this context, the two Koreas would establish an inspection system on the Peninsula aimed at establishing a) first and foremost, US confidence that the DPRK is not proliferating; b) DPRK confidence that there are no nuclear weapons in Korea; and c), establishing the two Korea's confidence that neither is proliferating; d) IAEA and regional confidence in the robustness of this monitoring and inspection regime (many configurations are possible, and need careful study).
- The regional non-NWS would conduct an expert and inter-governmental dialogue on reiterating and expanding the NWS' negative and positive security assurances made in 1968 and 1995 to not use nuclear weapons against non-NWS that are state parties to the NPT, to come to the aid of non-NWS state parties to the NPT subject to nuclear aggression; and the ROK would launch a regional initiative to this effect at the NPT review conference in concert with other regional non-NWS such as Australia and Korea.
- When and if the DPRK denuclearizes, the DPRK and the United States would define and create a security partnership with the DPRK starting inside the DPRK with the KPA (military forces and bases conversion, MIA-recovery, improving energy efficiency of buildings on DPRK military bases using DOD expertise, tension reduction and redeployments related to the DMZ, etc), and outside the DPRK on security issues (DPRK contributions to anti-terror efforts, peacekeeping forces, anti-piracy operations, joint coast guard operations on environmental or vessel traffic control or search and rescue operations, etc). Of particular interest would be post-Armistice roles for USFK in the Korean Peninsula consistent with security partnerships with both Koreas.
- A regional, multi-issue security institution would be established (possibly as an outgrowth of the Six Party Talks) to develop systematic habits of dialogue and institutionalized ways to resolve long-standing security dilemmas in the region.
- A regional inter-governmental study groups would examine at the global, regional, and national strategic implications of Nuclear Abolition over time, either parallel to or supplanting the existing institutional apparatus devoted to reinforcing allied acceptance of and belief in END. Understanding the role of China in Nuclear Abolition is particularly important.

My unspoken premise is that Obama's Nuclear Abolition policy is not just a political-symbolic stunt. Rather, I assume he intends it to become the new framework for reconstituting American hegemonic power that will rapidly devalue nuclear weapons and eventually remove them altogether from the US arsenal as well as from that of other NWS. I believe that it is inevitable that END will be found to be fundamentally inconsistent with Nuclear Abolition and will be discarded, one region and relationship at a time. Also, I have suggested that reasserting END as

a basis for global and regional American leadership is especially counterproductive to American hegemony at this specific juncture in dealing with the DPRK, especially in the East Asia region.

This is not how many American policy makers view the situation. They see themselves as firmly anchored via bases, forward deployments, and alliance relationships. They feel comfortable relying upon nuclear threat to contain North Korea for the foreseeable future. They believe that they have firmly under control the allies' propensity to proliferate. In reality, US leadership is much more tenuous than Americans like to believe and END is hastening the demise of American hegemony.

Ironically, American forces today are primarily non-nuclear rather than "dual-capable" as was almost universally the cost during the Cold War. Although the United States maintains strategic nuclear forces at home, these have little to do directly with realistic military planning or force postures in the alliances, and even less to do with the expanding scope of military operations by US allies working alongside the US military including peacemaking, peacekeeping, disaster relief, nation building, humanitarian intervention, anti-terrorism operations, and rarely, prosecuting conventional war.

Unfortunately, Nuclear Abolition as a framework for a new hegemonic leadership is far from displacing the old habits and instruments of nuclear coercive diplomacy, and is barely represented in the core alliance institutions. It has barely begun to take root as a substitute for failed nuclear hegemonic policy, as is most obvious in the case of the DPRK. Policy currents committed to maintaining alliances and comfortable with Cold War habits and ways of thinking are entrenched in alliance institutions and have paid little or no regard to Nuclear Abolition. It is not just up to Obama and the proponents of Nuclear Abolition to counter END and expanded reliance on nuclear threat in the current period.

It is a central task of regional states to engage the United States and to recast their alliance relationships to make END less relevant and to either hasten its demise altogether, or simply facilitate its fading away. In turn, this requires regional diplomacy to create authentically local security institutions that overcome antagonisms from the past and by which future conflicts can be resolved, without resort to weapons of mass destruction, whether directly or indirectly. It includes not only dealing with the DPRK and its nuclear threat; but also establishing a regional nuclear fuel cycle, and ways to cooperate on interrelated global problems that affect the salience of nuclear weapons to regional conflicts and cooperation. I have not dwelled upon this regional agenda here, but there is no lack of good ideas on how to proceed along these lines. The task that faces us is how to give up the nuclear security blanket, fold up the nuclear umbrella, and resolve the security issues that lead to such exterminist impulses in the first place.