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Advance Draft

North Korea's Nuclear Weapons: Implications for the Nuclear Ambitions of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan

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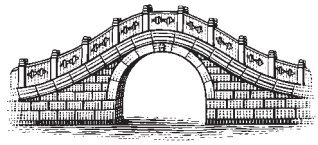

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This article evaluates the nuclear intentions of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan in the wake of North Korea's October 2006 nuclear test.

MAIN FINDINGS

Even in the event of an unstoppable North Korean nuclear program, none of the four principal drivers of nuclear proliferation are sufficient or confluent enough to shift Japan, South Korea, or Taiwan toward active nuclear weapons programs:

- *National security* ~ The national security dilemmas vis-à-vis North Korea are not yet strong enough; Japan and South Korea still see opportunities for diplomatic engagement and conventional deterrence; and—most crucially—Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan do yet fear sufficiently the alliance dilemmas of U.S. entrapment or abandonment.
- *Prestige, identity, and norms* ~ National prestige and identity create temptations for nuclear proliferation, which however are also countered by domestic pressures for conformity with norms and regimes for non-proliferation.
- *Domestic political economy* ~ Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan have only a minimal vested economic interest in nuclear weapons development, and the overall international economic costs militate against nuclear armament.
- *Technological capability* ~ All three countries may have the eventual technological capacity to develop nuclear weapons, but this capacity would be slow in coming and would constitute a poor substitute for U.S. extended nuclear deterrence.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Washington still has the capacity to prevent further proliferation by revisiting U.S. policy toward the four principal nuclear drivers.
- Of benefit would be for the U.S. to move through diplomatic efforts and the upgrading of its alliances both to control security dilemmas involving North Korea and to reaffirm its extended nuclear guarantees. The U.S. would need, however, to assert deterrence more than pre-emption so as to avoid entrapment and alliance dilemmas.
- Also beneficial would be if the U.S. would show a re-adherence both to international and regional expectations for minimizing the role of nuclear weapons in regional security and to norms and regimes of non-proliferation.
- Furthermore, of benefit as well would be for the U.S. to continue to provide technological and economic incentives and disincentives to nuclear proliferation.

North Korea's first nuclear test on October 9, 2006 has sent security shockwaves across Northeast Asia. Although the test was not wholly unexpected, and the international community led by the United States had been struggling with declining effect to contain North Korea's nuclear program for a decade and half, the test has still forced the regional powers to scrabble to find a response in the form of sanctions and attempts to restart the six-party talks. At the forefront of regional policymakers' minds is the concern that any potential window of opportunity to either roll back or at least stop further North Korean nuclear proliferation may be closing. Pyongyang's ability to flout bilateral, six-party talks and Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) agreements regarding North Korea's nuclear program can only work to reinforce the assumption that U.S.-led efforts (whether in the form of engagement, containment, or the threat of military force) to dissuade North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea or DPRK) from its nuclear program may be close to exhausted. The consequence is that the DPRK may progress, largely scot-free, toward the production of miniaturized nuclear weapons to be combined with its ongoing ballistic program, thereby providing North Korea with a full-fledged nuclear deterrent.

In turn, it is clear that also close to the forefront of regional policymakers' minds is the long-held apprehension that if North Korea is allowed the unbridled maintenance of its nuclear program then this will have a broader impact on nuclear proliferation in Northeast Asia. It is often speculated that the current non-nuclear weapon states in Northeast Asia, whether "reversal" or "threshold" states, may be provoked by North Korea to embark on their own nuclear weapons programs. This "nuclear cascade" might begin with Japan reconsidering its nuclear option, closely followed by South Korea reacting to the change of stance by both North Korea and Japan. The possible further upgrading by China (People's Republic of China or PRC) of its nuclear capabilities and doctrine, in reaction to a nuclearized Japan and Korean Peninsula, might then trigger renewed interest by Taiwan in a nuclear weapons capacity. Since October of 2006, North Korea's nuclear test has refueled this type of speculation. In mid-October, almost as if on cue, Nakagawa Shoichi, Chairman of the Policy Research Council of the governing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and Foreign Minister Aso Taro attempted to initiate a debate in Japan on the utility of nuclear weapons. Abe Shinzo, the new prime minister, moved to reaffirm Japan's non-nuclear principles, but not before Japan's purported nuclear intentions had attracted the interest of China

and South Korea.[1] The leadership of both states expressed their appreciation of the need for Japan to preserve its non-nuclear stance.[2] President George W. Bush on October 16 noted his concern that Japan's possible reconsideration of its nuclear stance would cause anxieties for China and that North Korea's nuclear weapons might produce an arms race in Northeast Asia.[3] Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice on October 10 voiced similar concerns, although expressing confidence that Japan would not go nuclear.[4] Meanwhile, in the United States there is a willingness to exploit again the so-called Japan card of encouraging talk of Japan's breaching of its non-nuclear stance as a means to punish China for its failure to pressure North Korea on its nuclear program.[5]

The objective of this essay is to consider how much foundation should be afforded to such speculation. Is such speculation the stuff of perennial scaremongering (especially with regard to the case of Japan) that fails to take into account the constraints for Northeast Asian states that act against their seeking to acquire nuclear weapons? Or does this prediction accurately reflect the fact that, now effectively out of the box, North Korea's nuclear program is exercising an even greater pernicious influence in gnawing away at nuclear constraints in the region? In addition, the essay seeks conclusions both about the wider ramifications for regional security and about how the United States might look to manage its regional security ties so as to minimize the impact of North Korea's nuclear status.

The essay is divided into five main sections:

~ pp. 79–83 examines the four main drivers or facilitators for and against nuclear proliferation

1 "Jimin Seichokai 'Kaku Hoyu no Giron Hitsuyo,' Shusho wa Sangensoku o Kyocho" [LDP PARC: Debate on Nuclear Weapons Is Necessary: Prime Minister Emphasizes Three Non-Nuclear Principles], *Asahi Shimbun*, October 15, 2006 ~ http://www.asahi.com/special/nuclear/TKY200610150124.html.

2 "Wen Lauds Abe's Non-Nuclear Stand," *Japan Times Online*, October 25, 2006 ~ http://search.japantimes.co.jp/print/nn20061025a5.html.

3 "Nihon no Kaku Busoron, Chugoku mo Kennen Busshu Daitoryo ga Hanno" [Japan's Nuclear Weapons Debate, China Concerned, President Bush's Reaction], *Asahi Shimbun*, October 17, 2006 ~ http://www.asahi.com/special/nuclear/TKY200610170272.html.

4 "No Japan Nukes: Rice," *Japan Times Online*, October 12, 2006 ~ http://search.japantimes.co.jp/print/nn20061012a2.html.

5 Jim Lobe, "U.S. Neo-Conservatives Call for Japanese Nukes, Regime Change in North Korea." *Japan Focus*, October 17, 2006 ~ http://japanfocus.org/products/details/2249. For an earlier articulation of the strategy of pushing Japan toward nuclearization to counter North Korea, see Ted Galen Carpenter, "Options for Dealing with North Korea," *Foreign Policy Briefing* 73, January 6, 2003, Cato Institute ~ http://www.cato.org/pubs/fpbriefs/fpb73.pdf. For a discussion of the Japan card strategy in general, see Kurt M. Campbell and Tsuyoshi Sunohara, "Japan: Thinking the Unthinkable," in *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear Choices*, ed. Kurt M. Campbell, Robert J. Einhorn, and Mitchell B. Reiss (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 246.

- pp. 83–93 examines the case of Japan against each of these main drivers to reveal the degree of its interest in nuclear proliferation
- pp. 93–98 likewise examines the case of South Korea
- pp. 98–101 so examines the case of Taiwan
- pp. 101–104 outlines the policy implications for the United States in seeking to slow or halt the spread of nuclear weapons in Northeast Asia

EXAMINING NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION IN NORTHEAST ASIA

In order to ascertain the potential impact (now and looking toward 2015) of North Korea's nuclear weapons acquisition upon proliferation in Northeast Asia, it is necessary to employ a combination of historical and theoretical insights. The examination of historical precedent is useful because this is not the first time that the proliferation question has been raised in Northeast Asia, and thus history may reveal the key motivations for states to seek or abstain from nuclear weapons acquisition. Likewise, general theories of nuclear proliferation, many of which are derived in part from historical experience in Northeast Asia and other regions, also provide a means of identifying the key motivations that determine a country's stance toward nuclearization: to pursue nuclear weapons, to be against the pursuit and to continue to abstain, or to continue to "hedge" their capabilities.[6] Hence, taken together, historical precedent and proliferation theories provide a set of conditions governing nuclear proliferation, the absence or prevalence of which can then be tested for in the contemporary region in order to divine likely proliferation scenarios and trajectories.

National Security: Security and Alliance Dilemmas

National security is generally regarded as the primary driver of nuclear proliferation.[7] States faced with enhanced security dilemmas resulting from existential threats—whether in the form of new conventional or nuclear capabilities, or new offensive and defensive weapons systems that add

6 Ariel E. Levite, "Never Say Never Again: Nuclear Reversal Revisited," *International Security* 27, no. 3 (Winter 2002/2003): 59.

7 John Herz, "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 2, no. 2 (January 1950): 157–80; Scott D. Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb," *International Security* 21, no. 3 (Winter 1996/1997): 57; and Mitchell B. Reiss, "Prospects for Nuclear Proliferation in Asia," in *Strategic Asia 2005–06: Military Modernization in an Era of Uncertainty*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis and Michael Wills (Washington, D.C.: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2005), 335.

strategic uncertainty—will search for means to restore the balance of power.[8] Given their different levels of resource constraints, states may seek to counter conventional and nuclear threats through the acquisition of new conventional deterrent capabilities, defensive/denial deterrent capabilities such as missile defense, and, if these prove insufficient, the acquisition of nuclear weapons as the ultimate "cheap equalizer" to prevent coercion by other powers.

In turn, national security dilemmas as potential drivers of nuclear proliferation are heavily influenced by related alliance dilemmas and the concomitant presence or absence of security guarantees from more powerful states, whether conventional (e.g., forward-deployed trip-wire forces) or nuclear (e.g., extended nuclear deterrence, first-use policy, and use against non-nuclear weapon states).[9] In practice, for much of the post-war and post–Cold War periods this has meant superpower and most particularly U.S. security guarantees. States may fear the alliance dilemma of "abandonment" if an ally is perceived to waver in and "decouple" from its existing conventional and nuclear positive security guarantees, or if states cannot find either a substitute ally, or perhaps a "quasi-ally" at least prepared to extend a negative security guarantee.[10] Alternatively, states may fear the alliance dilemma of "entrapment" resulting from an overly assertive ally. The ally may become emboldened by the deployment of new forms of conventional and nuclear strategy and related offensive and defensive weaponry, which increase the ally's sense of invulnerability and confidence in the utility of military force and lead it to seek military confrontations that draw in other states as proxy targets.[11] In these instances of abandonment or entrapment, states may feel pressed to take their security destiny into their own hands either through the acquisition of nuclear weapons outright or by launching nuclear programs that enable them to attract the attention and re-extract security guarantees from an ally or quasi-ally. Moreover, these proliferation dynamics are compounded both by the perceived slippage of the NPT and other non-proliferation regimes and by the sense of a lack of collective measures to prevent or punish nuclear proliferation.

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8 Victor D. Cha, "Nuclear Weapons, Missile Defense, and Stability: A Case for Sober 'Optimism,'" in *Asian Security Order: Instrumental and Normative Features*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 464.

9 For the relationship between the security dilemma and alliance dilemmas, see Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (July 1984): 461–95.

10 Ariel E. Levite, "Never Say Never Again," 77.

11 Kurt M. Campbell, "Reconsidering a Nuclear Future: Why Countries Might Cross to the Other Side," in Campbell, Einhorn, and Reiss, *The Nuclear Tipping Point*, 23.

Conversely, any improvement in the external security environment, alliance guarantees, and non-proliferation regimes should counteract the national security proliferation dynamic relating to security and alliance dilemmas. States might conclude that security dilemmas can best be ameliorated by confidence-building and a degree of conventional military expansion to restore the balance of power, but that nuclear weapons only serve to escalate tensions and arms racing, thus exacerbating the security dilemma. Such state choices will also be affirmed by the calculation both that attempts to acquire nuclear weapons may serve to fully alienate existing allies, thus compounding alliance dilemmas of abandonment, and that a more effective strategy is to seek to strengthen alliance security guarantees and to re-adhere to non-proliferation regimes.

Prestige, Identity, and Norms

Issues of prestige, identity, and norms are often ascribed a position as secondary drivers for governing nuclear proliferation, but in certain cases approach the position of primary drivers. States may seek nuclear weapons to assert their identity—for domestic or international political consumption—as autonomous nations. They may seek to maintain or revitalize a "great power" reputation (e.g., France and the United Kingdom) or to assert their independence versus an international system, or even allies, which they see as suppressing their statehood and hypocritical in denying them their right to nuclear arms (possibly Iran).[12] On the other hand, states may find questions of prestige and norms to be powerful restraining factors in nuclear proliferation. States may submit to domestically and internationally embedded norms against the acquisition of nuclear weapons and even feel they derive greater international prestige and moral authority from a non-nuclear stance.[13] On issues of national prestige and identity most states clearly experience conflicting pulls with regard to nuclear proliferation, and their normative stance may shift in relation to their external security environment.

Domestic Political Economy

The nuclear choices that states make can be governed to a high degree by domestic economic pressures. A nuclear program can be employed as a useful bargaining chip to extract economic security guarantees from other states or

[12] Cha, "Nuclear Weapons, Missile Defense, and Stability," 468.

[13] Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?" 75.

allies. State policymakers might also see utility in nuclear programs as a means to boost domestic technologies and nuclear energy industries and to protect the rent-seeking interests of sections of the military establishment and the military-industrial complex.[14] Those states with strong constituencies in favor of domestic economic liberalization will, however, have strong incentives to exercise nuclear restraint, knowing that a nuclear program may induce international economic isolation.[15] Moreover, for many states the economic stakes of going nuclear will be dictated by the degree to which the acquisition of nuclear weapons is likely to push the United States and other states to cut off vital nuclear fuel supplies.

Technological Capabilities

Finally, nuclear proliferation is governed by practical considerations of available technological capacity to master nuclear weapons technology. States may be able to access nuclear weaponry either through their indigenous technological capacity or through plugging into international networks of technologists (the latter of which is especially prevalent in the post–Cold War period). The lack of technological capability will mean that, even if tempted to go nuclear, states simply cannot do so.

In practice, nuclear proliferation is driven by a combination of, and trade-offs between, these primary and secondary drivers. Arguably, North Korea itself illustrates how many of these variables work to push forward nuclear proliferation: perhaps Pyongyang was initially looking during the period of the Clinton administration to use North Korea's nuclear program to secure negative security guarantees from the United States and then, during the period of the Bush administration, has been looking to establish a declared nuclear deterrent as a cheap security equalizer against the United States and North Korea's neighbors and the perceived threat of regime change. The North Korean regime's nuclear program has served both to boost Pyongyang's prestige domestically and to function as a means to extract economic concessions from the United States and regional neighbors; the program's progress has been partly facilitated by North Korea's access to international nuclear technology networks. If many of the conditions hold in the case of North Korea and have driven the DPRK toward proliferation, then do these conditions now also increasingly hold for other potential proliferators in Northeast Asia?

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14 Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?" 63–64.

15 Etel Solingen, "The Political Economy of Nuclear Restraint," *International Security* 19, no. 2 (Autumn 1994): 127.

JAPAN: REMAINING A "RECESSED" NUCLEAR POWER?

There has been perennial speculation about Japanese nuclear intentions since the first North Korean nuclear crisis of 1993–94. Indeed, many would argue that the historical record since the mid-1950s demonstrates Japan's position as a threshold, virtual, recessed, or hedging nuclear power—that is, a power capable of tipping toward nuclear weapons but choosing to refrain from their possession. Japan was known to have had a nuclear weapons program in World War II, and despite the legacy of anti-nuclearism amongst the population resulting from the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (and what is sometimes called the third atomic bombing of the *Lucky Dragon 5* incident in 1954), Japanese government elites have sporadically debated the utility of nuclear armament.

Since 1958, Japan has maintained publicly that it is constitutionally entitled to possess nuclear weapons for the exclusive purpose of self-defense. In practice, though, Japan has imposed constraints on its nuclear policy. One example is the Atomic Energy Basic Law of 1953, which limits nuclear research, development, and usage to peaceful purposes. Another is Prime Minister Sato Eisaku's introduction of the Three Non-Nuclear Principles in 1967 and the Four Nuclear Policies in 1968.[16] A final example is Japan's acceptance of International Atomic Energy Agency monitoring and adherence to the NPT since 1957 and 1976 respectively.

These constraints have not stopped Japan's policymakers from periodically investigating the utility of an indigenous nuclear option. Sato, despite his receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1974 for introduction of the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, was the most pro-nuclear of Japanese leaders (reportedly privately describing the principles as "nonsense").[17] Sato himself breached the principles by allowing the introduction or transit through Japanese ports of nuclear weapons on U.S. vessels and, following China's successful nuclear tests in 1964, initiating secret and unofficial research in 1968 and 1970 (known as the *1968/70 Internal Report*) on the desirability and feasibility of Japan's acquiring nuclear weapons. The Japan Defense Agency (JDA) conducted a similar internal review of Japan's nuclear options in 1995,

16 The Three Non-Nuclear Principles are not to produce, possess, or introduce nuclear weapons. The Four Nuclear Policies are promotion of peaceful nuclear energy, global disarmament, reliance on U.S. extended nuclear deterrent, and support for the Three Non-Nuclear Principles where national security is guaranteed by the other three policies.

17 Campbell and Sunohara, "Japan: Thinking the Unthinkable," 223. Note that the Three Non-Nuclear Principles were in fact largely a device to mute opposition from the Left on security and to assist in the reversion of Okinawa.

entitled "A Report Considering the Problems of the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction" and set against the background of the first North Korean nuclear crisis.[18] What was striking about both the 1968/70 and 1995 reports, however, was the continuity of shared conclusions that Japan's nuclear option was not a credible or necessary one, especially as long as Japan could rely on the U.S. nuclear umbrella and because the domestic political, technological, and international diplomatic costs involved were simply too high.[19] In fact, the perceived confidence Japanese policymakers have in the U.S. extended nuclear deterrent proved key in their relatively relaxed response to China's nuclear test in 1964, to the Soviet Union's constant nuclear targeting of Japan throughout the Cold War, and to the 1993–94 North Korea nuclear crisis.[20]

Since the advent of the second North Korea nuclear crisis, however, Japan's nuclear options have once again become the subject of debate. Tokyo's initial opposition in 1993 to the indefinite extension of the NPT raised questions about Japan's nuclear stance, although in fact Japan's doubts about extension have mainly been related to the encumbering of peaceful nuclear development and the preservation of the status of the existing nuclear powers. In 1999, Nishimura Shingo, the rightist and then parliamentary vice-minister of the JDA, was famously dismissed for suggesting that Tokyo's failure to consider the acquisition of nuclear weapons left Japan vulnerable to international "rape." In April 2002, Ozawa Ichiro, then leader of the Liberal Party, reported that in a recent trip to Beijing he had told Chinese leaders that "If Japan desires, it can possess thousands of nuclear warheads. Japan has enough plutonium in use at its nuclear plants for three to four thousand… If that should happen, we wouldn't lose [to China] in terms of military strength." In May and June 2002, in response to direct questions on the issue, then Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda Yasuo and Abe restated the government's consistent position that Japan had no intention of developing nuclear weapons, but that their possession would not be unconstitutional. Prime Minister Koizumi

18 Katsuhisa Furukawa, "Nuclear Option, Arms Control, and Extended Deterrence: In Search of a New Framework for Japan's Nuclear Policy," in *Japan's Nuclear Option: Security, Politics and Policy in the 21st Century*, ed. Benjamin L. Self and Jeffrey W. Thompson (Washington, D.C.: Henry L. Stimson Center, 2003), 104–05. Note that the Japan Defense Agency is known since January 2007 as the Japan Ministry of Defense.

19 Yuri Kase, "The Costs and Benefits of Japan's Nuclearization: An Insight into the 1968/1970 Internal Report," *Non-Proliferation Review* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 55–68.

20 John Welfield, *Japan and Nuclear China: Japanese Reactions to China's Nuclear Weapons* (Canberra, Australia, Australian National University Press, 1970).

Junichiro then moved to smother debate by stating in June 2002 that "Japan was never going to change its non-nuclear policy."[21]

As noted in the introductory sections to this paper, influential policymakers have once again stimulated the nuclear debate following North Korea's test. Nakagawa kicked off the debate by stating on October 15, 2006 that "There exists a logical argument that the possession of nuclear weapons lowers the probability of being attacked, and thus it would be appropriate to debate this."[22] Aso then weighed in with his remarks in the National Diet on October 18, 19, and 25 that, while the government had no intention of breaching the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, it was important for nuclear armament to be freely debated in Japan.[23] Meanwhile, Nakagawa repeated his calls for a debate on a visit to the U.S. on October 27 and in Japan on October 30 and November 5, although he stressed that these remarks were made by him in a personal capacity and that he was not necessarily advocating the acquisition of nuclear weapons.[24] Abe on October 15 reiterated Japan's intention to preserve the Three Non-Nuclear Principles and stated that debate on the issue was finished.[25] On November 8 in the Diet, however, Abe initially refused questions to muzzle LDP intra-party discussions, although by November 21 at the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) summit he had shifted position to state that the LDP and government would not debate possessing nuclear weapons.[26] Abe was eventually forced to clamp down on debate as a result of increasing domestic criticism from within the LDP, from its New Komeito coalition partner, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) main opposition party, and from the increasingly negative international attention that Japanese comments were attracting. Nevertheless, in contrast to the Nishimura incident in 1999,

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21 Christopher W. Hughes, *Japan's Reemergence as a "Normal" Military Power, Adelphi Paper*, 368–9 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 92–94.

22 "Debate on Nuclear Weapons Is Necessary," *Asahi Shimbun*.

23 "Kaku Hoyu 'Giron wa Daiji' Aso Gaisho, Kokkai de hatsugen" [Foreign Minister Aso Comments in the Diet That a Debate on Nuclear Weapons Possession Is Important], *Asahi Shimbun*, October 18, 2006 ~ http://www.asahi.com/special/nuclear/TKY200610180447.html; "Aso Gaisho, Kaku Hoyu Giron Fusatsu Shinai" [Foreign Minister Aso: The Nuclear Weapons Debate Should Not Be Suppressed], *Asahi Shimbun*, October 19, 2006 ~ http://www.asahi.com/special/nuclear/TKY200610190297.html; and *Kokkai Shugiin Kaigiroku Gaimuiinkai, 2go* [National Diet House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee Minutes, October, 25, 2006], 112.

24 "Nakagawashi, Bei de no Jizetsu de 'Kaku Giron,' Futatabi Yoto Fukai" [Nakagawa's Gives His Personal View on Nuclear Acquisition, the Governing Party Feels Discomfort Again], *Asahi Shimbun*, October 28, 2006 ~ http://www.asahi.com/special/nuclear/TKY200610280290.html.

25 "Aso Keen to Explore Nukes, But Abe Says Debate Is 'Finished,'" *Japan Times Online*, October 19, 2006 ~ http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20061019b3.html.

26 "Abe Says 'No' to Nukes but Allows Discussion," *Japan Times Online*, November 9, 2006 ~ http://search.japantimes.co.jp/print/nn20061109a2.htm; and "Cabinet to Cease Talking about Nukes, Abe Says," *Japan Times Online*, November 21, 2006 ~ http://search.japantimes.co.jp/print/nn20061121b2.html.

Aso and Nakagawa remained secure in their posts—and not unsurprisingly given that before assuming the premiership Abe himself had mooted the need for a debate on nuclear weapons.[27] Meanwhile, the impression of Koizumi and Abe presiding over a generally declining "nuclear taboo" in Japan was reinforced by the release in early September 2006 of a report by the Institute for International Policy Studies (IIPS, a think-tank chaired by former Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro) that advocated continual and thorough studies of Japan's nuclear option in response to the international situation, even though for now the Three Non-Nuclear Principles should be preserved. This impression was also strengthened by Abe's known use of close foreign policy advisers such as Professor Nakanishi Terumasa of Kyoto University who in the past has openly advocated the possession of nuclear weapons.[28]

Japanese policymakers thus have long debated internally the nuclear option, and there are signs following the 2006 North Korean nuclear test that the public debate is beginning to intensify. The real test of these debates as indicative of a substantial shift in Japan's non-nuclear stance, however, is whether the four conditions outlined above governing nuclear proliferation are now prevalent.

National Security

North Korea's demonstration of a limited nuclear capability has undoubtedly presented for Japan a heightened existential threat; for Japanese policymakers the long-held fear remains that North Korea might combine miniaturized nuclear weapons with its ballistic missile program to produce a nuclear deterrent deliverable to Japan.[29] Moreover, Japan's concerns about North Korea are compounded by two factors: One is the knowledge that the results of Koizumi's bilateral diplomacy with North Korea have largely failed for the time being—with North Korea transgressing the spirit of the Japan-DPRK Joint Declaration of 2002 by its missile and nuclear testing and with the stagnation of relations of the cases of Japanese abductees; the other is Japan's concerns about the conventional threat of North Korean guerrilla incursions

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27 Yamaguchi Jiro, *Sengo Seiji no Hokai* [The Collapse of Post-War Politics] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2004), 51.

28 Nakanishi Terumasa, "Nihon Kaku Buso e no Ketsudan," [Japan's Nuclear Arms Decision], *Shokun*, August 2003, 22–33; IIPS, *21Seiki no Nihon no Kokkazo ni Tsuite* [A Vision of Japan in the 21st Century], September 5, 2006 ~ http://www.iips.org/kokkazouh.pdf, 5; IIPS, *Sanko Hosoku Setsumei* [Explanation of Additional Reference Material] ~ http://www.iips.org/kokkazoua.pdf, 9; and Campbell and Sunohara, "Japan: Thinking the Unthinkable," 230.

29 Christopher W. Hughes, "The North Korean Nuclear Crisis and Japanese Security," *Survival* 38, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 80–81.

as noted in the 2004 revised National Defense Program Guidelines.[30] The new Abe administration has made clear that, while leaving open the door to bilateral talks and intending to support the six-party talks process, it intends to face down North Korea over the missile and nuclear threats and to press for a final resolution to the abductions issue.[31]

Japan's failing diplomacy and the enhanced North Korea threat are powerful motives to turn attention to the nuclear option as well as to perhaps acquire a small *force de frappe* as a cheap equalizer against North Korea. Signs exist, however, that Japanese policymakers at present do not necessarily evaluate the North Korean threat that highly or feel that they are yet at the limit of their national resources to respond with conventional military capabilities. Japanese leaders share the evaluation of the United States and international community that North Korea's nuclear test was only partially successful with a small yield, and that North Korea will require a number of years to learn to develop an effective nuclear weapon small enough to be mounted on its ballistic missiles, the performance of which is also suspect.[32] These challenges then still hold open the window of opportunity for bilateral and multilateral diplomacy.

Additionally, Japan has at its disposal other potential means to seek to deter and defend against North Korea. Japan's prime response to the North Korean missile and nuclear threats has been to accelerate its introduction of Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) systems. Japan already has plans to introduce the first Patriot Advanced Capability-3 units by the end of 2006 and now plans to speed up the introduction of the rest of the units; Japan also has speeded up the refitting of its *Kongo*-class *Aegis* destroyers so that the first will carry BMD-capable SM-3 missiles by end of 2007 (instead of March 2008), and the other three of its *Aegis* destroyers will carry SM-3 missiles (by 2010 rather than 2011).[33] Japan may also have recourse to new defensive strike options against North Korea itself. Japan has consistently reserved the right to launch defensive air strikes against foreign missile bases—a debate,

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30 Christopher W. Hughes, "Japanese Military Modernization: in Search of a 'Normal' Security Role," in Tellis and Wills, *Strategic Asia 2005–2006*, 118.

31 Christopher W. Hughes, "The Political Economy of Japanese Sanctions Towards North Korea: Domestic Coalitions and International Systemic Pressures," *Pacific Affairs* 79, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 455–48.

32 Jungmin Kang and Peter Hayes, "Technical Analysis of the DPRK Nuclear Test," *Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network*, October 20, 2006 ~ http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/0689HayesKang.html.

33 "Missairu Boei Kasokuron," [Accelerating BMD Debate] *Asahi Shimbun*, July 11, 2006, 2; and "Four U.S. Ships to Get Missile Interceptors," *Japan Times Online*, November 27, 2006 ~ http://search.japantimes.co.jp/print/nn20061127a3.html.

often misrepresented in the domestic and international media as indicating a new pre-emptive doctrine, that was reignited following North Korea's July missile tests; Japan is also coming closer to possessing the capability to launch strikes with both the Air Self Defense Force's acquisition since 2005 of in-flight refueling capabilities and the discussion of the procurement of precision guided munitions.[34] Japanese policymakers have even discussed procuring Tomahawk cruise missiles to provide a relatively cheap conventional deterrent against North Korea, although this capability might jar uncomfortably with Japan's self-imposed prohibition on offensive weaponry.[35]

In considering any of these conventional deterrent options as possible responses within their own national resource constraints, however, Japanese policymakers will also be mindful of the risks of exacerbating the security dilemma with North Korea or China. If Japan were to choose a nuclear option, then the risk of a spiraling security dilemma would be very great. Hence, it appears that Japan would be slow to tread the path of building up these capabilities independently. There is no guarantee, moreover, that BMD systems will provide a fully effective shield against North Korean nuclear-armed missile attacks or that the United States would agree to sell Japan precision guided munitions or Tomahawk missiles.

Instead, as noted above, from 1964 on the most important variable in governing Japan's consideration of and desisting from the nuclear options has not been the extent of its recourse to independent national capabilities but rather how far these have been combined with and surpassed by the provision of U.S. conventional and nuclear alliance guarantees. Japan has experienced limited alliance dilemmas of entrapment since the initiation of the second North Korean nuclear crisis. Following the advent of the Bush administration Japanese policymakers were fearful that the United States might contemplate forcefully precipitating regime change in North Korea. Koizumi's early summitry with North Korea in 2002 was an attempt in part to demonstrate to the United States the importance of exhausting diplomatic channels and to thereby alleviate the risks of Japanese entrapment in a new conflict on the Korean Peninsula.[36]

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34 For a detailed discussion of the debate on pre-emptive strikes in Japan, see Hughes, *Japan's Reemergence as a "Normal" Military Power*, 88–90.

35 "Koshi Ishiba Shigeru Mae Boeichokan" [Former JDA Director General Ishiba Shigeru as Instructor], in *Nihon no Boei Nanatsu no Ronten* [Seven Views on Japan's Defense], ed. Kuroi Buntaro (Tokyo: Takarajimasha, 2005), 51–52.

36 Tanaka Hitoshi and Tahara Soichiro, *Kokka to Gaiko* [State and Diplomacy] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2005), 27–29.

As the nuclear crisis has unfolded and North Korea has moved largely unfettered toward acquiring nuclear weapons, however, Japan's principal alliance dilemmas have shifted more toward possible abandonment. Japan has some reason to question U.S. implacability and capability to roll back North Korea's nuclear program, especially as Washington has indicated that it is highly unlikely to utilize military power to force North Korea to desist and may even have to acquiesce in regard to North Korea's existing program as long as Pyongyang does not cross the red line of proliferation to other states. In turn, Japanese policymakers might speculate that U.S. determination to defend its ally could waver, and Washington could begin to decouple its security from that of Japan. There are a number of possible symptoms of the slipping of U.S. security guarantees toward Japan. One would be Washington's scaling back of U.S. forward-deployed forces in Japan that could be held "hostage" to North Korean nuclear attack. Others would be Washington using its advanced military technology to erect a missile defense system to defend only the United States rather than Japan or diluting the U.S.-Japan alliance by re-extending security guarantees to North Korea in a final attempt to settle the nuclear issue, the last of which might then call into question U.S. willingness to retaliate against North Korea in the event of an attack on Japan.[37]

Any loss of confidence in U.S. security guarantees and fear of abandonment might force Japan to fall back on its own national conventional and (possibly) nuclear resources. At the present moment, however, there appears to be little prospect of U.S. abandonment of Japan in the face of the North Korean nuclear threat. President Bush was quick on October 9, 2006 to affirm existing U.S. security guarantees to East Asian allies, and Secretary of State Rice on October 19 offered an emphatic guarantee to Prime Minister Abe, stating that "Japan's security is the United States' security."[38] The recent bilateral efforts to restructure and strengthen the regional and global security functions of the U.S.-Japan alliance are also not suggestive of any weakening of U.S. commitments to Japan. In accordance with the conclusion of the bilateral Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI) in May 2006, the United States is relocating around 8,000 Marine Corps personnel to Guam, but around 30,000 U.S. personnel stationed in Japan (including 14,000 from the U.S. Seventh Fleet) will remain. In fact, all the indications are that Japan will become an even more important provider of bases for the United States. Note

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37 Campbell and Sunohara, "Japan: Thinking the Unthinkable," 239.

38 "Nichibei no Renkei Kyoka o Kakunin Abe Shusho, Raisu Chokan to Kaidan" [Prime Minister Abe and Secretary of State Rice Talks: Confirmation of Strengthening of U.S.-Japan Linkages], *Asahi Shimbun*, October 19, 2006 ~ http://www.asahi.com/special/nuclear/TKY200610190232.html.

that the United States is relocating the U.S. Army I Corps headquarters to Japan, collocated with the Ground Self Defense Forces' (GSDF) new rapid reaction force headquarters at Camp Zama. Washington is also establishing joint BMD and airspace control at Yokota, deploying its first missile defense capable *Aegis* cruisers to Japan, and promoting the overall integration of U.S. and Japanese forces. The DPRI has been accompanied both by some Japanese concerns that the de facto expansion of the alliance to allow for freer global deployments of U.S. forces might denude its ally's capability to defend Japan and by concerns on the U.S. side that Japan is continuing to hedge on the extent to which Tokyo is willing to fully outline its alliance commitments to the United States in regional contingencies.[39] Nevertheless, despite the inevitable cautious inching forward of the alliance relationship, it is clear both that the United States maintains an ample trip-wire presence in Japan and that there is no effective decoupling of bilateral security. On the contrary, Tokyo's main long-term concern is surely entrapment rather than abandonment, especially given Japan's key strategic importance to the United States in relation to North Korea, China, and even over other allies such as South Korea.[40]

In this situation of relatively firm alliance guarantees, Japan is not likely to seek to overturn its non-nuclear stance even in the face of a deployed North Korean nuclear capability. Furthermore, Japanese policymakers are aware that exercising an indigenous nuclear option would exacerbate not only security dilemmas against North Korea and China but also the dilemma of abandonment by the United States. Japan's previous investigations into nuclear weapons concluded that Tokyo's possession of nuclear weapons would simply serve to alienate the United States and weaken its security guarantee because of the overall destabilizing effect that such weapons would have on regional security (although the United States in the 1970s did actually toy with the possibility of allowing a Japanese nuclear supplement to the U.S. nuclear umbrella),[41] and similar concerns are on the minds of current Japanese policymakers. As Ishiba Shigeru, the former director general of the JDA (and self-confessed "hawk") stated in 2006, "If we develop nuclear weapons, that would be tantamount to saying we don't trust the nuclear deterrence of the

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39 "Senryakuteki Buntan Nao Futomei" [Division of Strategic Burdens as Ever Unclear], *Asahi Shimbun*, May 2, 2006, 4; and Taoka Shunji, "Mamorarete Iru wa Meishin Da" [The Myth of Being Protected], *AERA*. 35, no. 5 (August 2004): 43–46.

40 Hughes, *Japan's Reemergence as a "Normal" Military Power*, 144–47.

41 Selig S. Harrison, "Japan and Nuclear Weapons," in *Japan's Nuclear Future: The Plutonium Debate and East Asian Security*, ed. Selig S. Harrison (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1996), 16.

United States…we thereby could make enemies out of both the United States and China, which is the scariest scenario."[42]

Prestige, Identity, and Norms

In Japan there have long been proponents of nuclear weapons who have viewed these weapons as key talismans of renewed great-power status and autonomy and thus worthy of investigation. Examples include such notable conservative figures as Yoshida Shigeru, Kishi Nobuske, Ishihara Shintaro, and Nakasone Yasuhiro.[43] Japan's opposition to the indefinite extension of the NPT contains some elements of resistance to the perceived hypocrisy that the existing nuclear powers are preserving their nuclear monopoly while denying nuclear technology to other states.

Japan's overwhelming identity and normative concern with regard to nuclear weapons, however, has been to gain international and domestic prestige by overtly eschewing their acquisition, practicing essentially a form of "unilateral arms control." Japanese elite policy opinion within the bulk of the LDP remains concerned with the negative effects on Japan's international status of being seen to move nuclear, while the New Komeito as well as much of the DPJ, the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), and Japan Communist Party (JCP), remain opposed to nuclear weapons on normative grounds or out of concern about the negative backlash for Japan's diplomatic standing. Japanese elite opinion reflects the deeper embedded norms of anti-nuclearism amongst the citizenry derived from the experiences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—often disparagingly referred to as a "nuclear allergy" and thus somehow requiring a cure.[44] Japanese recent opinion polls demonstrate the durability of mass anti-nuclear sentiment.[45]

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42 "National Security Debate Mushrooming since Oct. 9," *Japan Times Online*, November 25, 2006 ~ http://search.japantimes.co.jp/mail/nn20061125a2.html.

43 John Welfield, *An Empire in Eclipse: Japan in the Postwar American Alliance System* (London: Athlone Press, 1988), 259–60; and Thomas U. Berger, *Cultures of Anti-Militarism: National Security in Germany and Japan* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 96–97.

44 Peter J. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security: Police and Military in Postwar Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 128–29; and Glenn D. Hook, *Militarization and Demilitarization in Contemporary Japan* (London: Routledge, 1996), 152–55.

45 For details, see Matake Kamiya, "Nuclear Japan: Oxymoron or Coming Soon?" *Washington Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (Winter 2002/2003): 66.

Domestic Political Economy and Technical Capabilities

Due to its dependence on imported energy, Japan is determined to ensure energy security by maintaining a strong domestic nuclear industry and by achieving the complete nuclear cycle, involving the large-scale stockpiling of plutonium.[46] Japan thus has political economy reasons for developing its civilian nuclear industry, though the existence of this industry is clearly not predicated upon the need to produce nuclear weapons. Conversely, Japan would have much to lose commercially from the damage that might be inflicted on its foreign trade by any move to exercise a nuclear option. Ishiba points out that an attempt to develop nuclear weapons would actually damage Japan's economy, as the country would be cut off from supplies of nuclear materials and especially because the United States is almost certain to weigh in with restrictions on the passage of nuclear fuels.[47]

In terms of technical capacity, there can be little doubt that Japan has the prowess to produce nuclear weapons and would only need to provide sufficient resources and policy determination. Japanese plutonium stockpiles might be suitable for the creation of nuclear warheads, although such production would involve considerable technical difficulties and expense. Japan would also face the technological hurdles of having no experience of nuclear testing and having to develop suitable delivery systems. Japan possesses no long-range bombers, and its H-II civilian rocket is liquid fuelled and thus would have doubtful utility as a second-strike ballistic missile. Due to its tight geographical confines, Japan would likely have to develop a submarine-based deterrent to avoid targeting by enemy first strikes; Japan has, however, no nuclear ships technologies. Moreover, Japan must still develop the full panoply of guidance and command and control systems.[48] With its advanced technological capabilities Japan could certainly overcome these difficulties to produce a useable *force de frappe*, but this would require considerable time and subject Japan to international criticism in the intervening period. Japan would also again risk endangering its alliance with the United States, thus further exposing itself to risks of nuclear blackmail in the interim period before producing nuclear weapons, and any Japanese deterrent eventually

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46 Christopher W. Hughes, *Japan's Security Agenda: Military, Economic and Environmental Dimensions* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004), 215; and Eiichi Katahara, "Japan's Plutonium Policy: Consequences for Non-Proliferation," *Non-Proliferation Review* 5, no. 1 (1997): 57.

47 Ishiba Shigeru, *Kokubo* [National Defense] (Tokyo: Shinshosha, 2005), 144–45. The author is indebted also to Mitchell Reiss for emphasizing Japan's vulnerability to U.S. pressure on its nuclear energy supplies; author's conversation with Mitchell Reiss, Washington, D.C., December 2006.

48 Jeffrey W. Thompson and Benjamin L. Self, "Nuclear Energy, Space Launch Vehicles and Advanced Technology: Japan's Prospects for Nuclear Breakout," in *Japan's Nuclear Option*, 162–66.

produced would be slow in coming and a poor substitute for the U.S. nuclear umbrella.

In sum, therefore, Tokyo will have little interest in substantively shifting its non-nuclear stance as long as Japan has recourse to diplomatic and conventional deterrent options and, most crucially, as long as the U.S.-Japan alliance and extended nuclear deterrent remain in place.[49] In addition, Japan's anti-nuclear stance and technological position, although not absolute bars to a nuclear Japan, tend to reinforce the current status quo in its security policy. Nevertheless, even under the current situation Japan is likely at the very least to more frequently continue reviewing and debating its nuclear options. Japan's policymakers have long perceived that a recessed nuclear status—and the related threat of going nuclear as well as the subsequent implications for regional security—provide Japan with important strategic leverage.[50] The declining nuclear taboo in Japan and the shift toward a more assertive security policy in Japan under Koizumi and Abe mean that Japan is more likely to play upon this recessed nuclear option.[51] This clearly appears to be the current strategy of the Abe administration as advised by Nakanishi. Japan's intention is to use this strategy as a means to pressure China into reining in the North Korea's nuclear program.[52] This virtual nuclear strategy is a hazardous one for Japan to exercise but still far less risk-laden than moving to create an actual independent deterrent.

SOUTH KOREA: STRENGTHENING TEMPTATIONS, BUT BIDING ITS TIME?

In a similar fashion to Japan, South Korea has a long history of considering the utility of acquiring nuclear weapons. In contrast to Japan, however, South Korea has moved to attempt the actual acquisition of nuclear weapons, demonstrating its ability to push toward the first tier of nuclear proliferators in Northeast Asia. South Korea's attempt at nuclearization came between 1971 and 1975 under the administration of President Park Chung-Hee, until U.S. pressure forced Seoul to a halt. South Korea subsequently shifted efforts to

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49 Brad Glosserman, "Straight Talk about Japan's Nuclear Option," *PacNet Newsletter*, October 11, 2006.

50 Harrison, "Japan and Nuclear Weapons," 9–13.

51 For one view of the need for Japan to continue to investigate the nuclear option, and to potentially follow it one day, see Kitaoka Shinichi, "Kita no Kaku o Yokushi Suru Tame no Itsutsu no Sentakushi" [Five Options to Deter North Korea's Nuclear Weapons], *Chuo Koron* (December 2006), 39–40.

52 "National Security Debate Mushrooming," *Japan Times Online*.

the development of civilian technology, viewed by some commentators as enabling Seoul to acquire the materials and technology necessary to pursue a nuclear weapons capacity in the future.[53]

South Korea's history of considering its nuclear options closely corresponds with and demonstrates well the four principal drivers governing the potential for nuclear proliferation. The national security consideration has clearly been paramount for South Korea. Its geographical situation at the intersection of the security interests of the major powers in Northeast Asia presents South Korea with a number of long-term security and related alliance dilemmas. During the Cold War, the most pressing of these security dilemmas was obviously the confrontation with North Korea, and Seoul, lacking confidence in its own national resource constraints to deter Pyongyang, turned to U.S. alliance conventional and nuclear security guarantees. Consequently, the possibility of the alliance dilemma of U.S. abandonment was what formed the prime driver for South Korea's first attempt at acquiring nuclear weapons. South Korea's perception of declining U.S. implacability in the face of North Korea provocations in the late 1960s, U.S. rapprochement with China in the early 1970s, and U.S. plans to scale back its troop deployments (under the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations) all galvanized President Park to begin to seek nuclear weapons. Park was only dissuaded from this option by U.S. threats to cease security and economic guarantees altogether. South Korea was then forced to return to the shelter of the U.S. nuclear umbrella in the absence of its own deterrent, thus enabling the reaffirmation of U.S. security guarantees.[54]

South Korea's interest in nuclear weapons in this period was further driven by considerations of national prestige. President Park viewed nuclear weapons as an important symbol of autonomy and self-reliance. Park was able to promote his personal agenda though authoritarian rule, shorn of democratic oversight—although for his administration nationalism still remained a secondary nuclear driver.[55] South Korea's attempts at nuclear proliferation were also influenced by political economy and technological variables. Elements of South Korea's nuclear research establishment viewed a military program as a means to cement their civilian nuclear program and

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53 Jonathan D. Pollack and Mitchell B. Reiss, "South Korea: the Tyranny of Geography and the Vexations of History," in Campbell, Einhorn, and Reiss, *The Nuclear Tipping Point*, 261–62.

54 Chae-Jin Lee, *A Troubled Peace: U.S. Policy and the Two Koreas* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 76–77; and Pollack and Reiss, "South Korea," 263.

55 Seung-Young Kim, "Security, Nationalism and the Pursuit of Nuclear Weapons and Missiles: The South Korean Case, 1970–82', *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 12, no. 4 (December 2001): 56–58.

status. This design was counteracted, however, by strong opposition to the acquisition of nuclear weapons from within their own ranks, with many viewing such a program both as draining national economic resources and as exposing South Korea to U.S. embargoes on civilian nuclear technology and economic assistance.[56]

In the early 1990s, South Korea took steps to cement its non-nuclear stance. The George H. Bush administration's announcement in September 1991 of the U.S. intent to withdraw tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea was followed by President Roh's declaration in November that South Korea would refrain from producing, possessing, or storing nuclear weapons; would use nuclear power only for peaceful purposes; and would allow IAEA inspections. In December, South Korea and North Korea then concluded the "Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," which pledged both sides to desist from nuclear weapons procurement and not to possess nuclear reprocessing facilities.[57] Nevertheless, the onset of the first and second nuclear crises has again raised questions of whether South Korea might seek to go nuclear in response either to North Korea or to proliferation triggered by North Korea elsewhere in the region, particularly Japan. For instance, in August and September 2004, South Korea revealed that its scientists had been involved in experiments involving enriched uranium and plutonium, raising suspicions of attempts to produce fissile material.[58] A more recent instance of renewed speculation about South Korea and nuclear weapons was the comments by Lee Hoe-Chang, former head of the opposition Grand National Party (GNP), who on October 19, 2006 called for an investigation of the utility of nuclear weapons as a means to counter North Korea and a nuclearized Japan.[59]

Indeed, South Korea might be seen to be again experiencing the key historical drivers for nuclear proliferation. Of all the states of Northeast Asia, South Korea arguably faces the most imminent existential threat from North Korea's development of nuclear weapons, and South Korea's engagement policy toward North Korea is undergoing severe domestic criticism. Ban Ki-Moon, then foreign minister of South Korea, and UN Secretary General–elect, on a visit to Japan in October 2006 expressed concern at Aso's remarks regarding

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56 Kim, "Security, Nationalism and the Pursuit of Nuclear Weapons and Missiles," 60.

57 Lee, *A Troubled Peace*, 149.

58 "South Korea's Nuclear Experiments: Damaging Disclosures," *IISS Strategic Comments* 10, no. 8 (October 2004).

59 "Fear of Nuclear Domino Effect," *Korea Times*, October 22, 2006 ~ http://search.hankooki.com/times/times_view.php?term=japan++&path+hankooki3/time.

the need for Japan to debate its nuclear options, thereby indicating anxieties that a nuclear North Korea might lead Japan to assume a more threatening posture in the region.[60]

South Korean concerns over future U.S. alliance guarantees again figure prominently as alliance dilemma drivers for proliferation. The U.S. failure to contain the North Korean nuclear program raises questions about U.S. commitment to use military force to roll back nuclear proliferation. Moreover, the recent process of U.S.-ROK force realignments, as Jonathan Pollack and Mitchell Reiss note, has had the rare distinction of generating simultaneously entrapment and abandonment dilemmas for South Korea.[61] Policymakers in Seoul are anxious that Washington's insistence on "strategic flexibility" and consolidation of its forces toward the south of the country and away from the DMZ may provide the United States with the necessary insurance against attack by North Korea. Seoul fears that such a move may embolden the United States to use military force with disastrous consequences for South Korean military forces and civilians at the front line of the conflict. Conversely, the U.S. realignment of forces perhaps signals the beginnings of the removal of the trip-wire presence that deters North Korea and prevents South Korean abandonment. Moreover, the U.S. determination to free up U.S. forces based in South Korea to function for other regional and global contingencies raises questions about the denuding and decoupling of the U.S. security presence. In this situation, South Korea might again seek to take its security destiny into its own hands. Signs of such moves in the sphere of conventional deterrence might include the Roh Moo-Hyun administration transferring to itself wartime operational control (OPCON)—thus espousing greater self-reliance in defense—and the build-up of South Korea's ballistic missile program.

South Korea's national security interests may not, however, be sufficiently convergent to push for nuclearization. The majority of South Korean policymaking and public opinion, while anxious about North Korea's intentions, does not appear to have swung decisively toward an adversarial view of North Korea—perhaps a legacy of close to a decade of "sunshine"-type policies. There is still a determination in South Korea to engage North Korea through joint industrial projects, the six-party talks process, and refraining from full participation in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI).[62] Indeed,

60 "Aso, Ban Hold Talks to Discuss N. Korea Nuke Issue," *Japan Economic News Wire*, November 5, 2006.

61 Pollack and Reiss, "South Korea," 269.

62 Son Key-Young, *South Korean Engagement Policies and North Korea: Identities, Norms and the Sunshine Policy* (London: Routledge, 2006).

much of Seoul has lived with the threat of devastation from North Korea's conventional weapons for many decades and the city's population may not see the risks of nuclear attack as a threat qualitatively different enough to warrant South Korea's own nuclear weapons. Similarly, South Korean policymakers appear reassured that Japan for now has no intention of pursuing nuclear weapons and are convinced that enhanced ROK-Japan cooperation is necessary to respond to North Korea. Similarly, even though the death of the U.S.-ROK alliance is regularly predicted, the United States has reaffirmed its security guarantees, and the recent realignments may, as in the case of Japan, work to reconsolidate alliance functions. The dispatch of 3,000 South Korean troops to Iraq and continued cooperation in the six-party talks demonstrate the relative solidity of U.S.-South Korea ties.

South Korean national prestige may also be an important driver for nuclear proliferation but, as in the 1970s, again does not appear to assume a primary or decisive role. The rise of anti-Americanism[63] as an expression of South Korean nationalism is certainly promoting more self-reliant efforts in defense, as might rising anti-Japanese sentiment.[64] Moreover, South Korea's perception of unequal treatment—its own lack of a nuclear recycling processing capability as compared to Japan's enjoying extensive plutonium stockpiling—may create incentives for pushing forward basic nuclear weapons capabilities.

Nevertheless, anti-Americanism may decline with U.S. force realignment and strong anti-Japanese sentiment counteracted by increasing political and cultural ties. Furthermore, South Korea's democratization means that the government must now take into account pluralistic pressures that argue for caution regarding military developments that may damage the state's international reputation. Indeed, there appears to be no political consensus on South Korea's future strategic orientation: the left and elements of the old right may favor greater autonomy that might spell the acquisition of nuclear weapons, but much of the right also advocates maintaining close alliance ties with the United States. There is also the possibility that presidential elections to take place in South Korea in 2007 may install a more pro-U.S. administration. Therefore, in the absence of a consensus on strategic change, South Korea's default position may remain the maintenance of close alliance ties with the United States and a non-nuclear stance.

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63 The rise of anti-Americanism in South Korea revolves around past claims of the U.S. obstruction of democracy and perpetuation of the division of the Korean Peninsula as well as current tensions over the status of U.S. forces in South Korea, bilateral economic ties, and U.S.-imposed obstacles to relations with North Korea and China.

64 Myongsob Kim, Suzanne L. Parker, and Jun Young Choi, "Increasing Distrust of the USA in South Korea," *International Political Science Review* 27, no. 4 (October 2006): 428–32.

Finally, despite having made impressive advances in nuclear technology and probable long-term ability to produce nuclear weapons, South Korea still lacks plutonium reprocessing and uranium enriching technology and is thus missing the basic materials for a nuclear option over the short term. Therefore, just as for Japan, South Korea would face exposure to nuclear blackmail if it were to shift away from the U.S. nuclear umbrella before producing its own deterrent. Moreover, South Korea might face serious economic disincentives in trade and investment from its neighbors if it were to seek nuclear weapons.

Overall, based on short- and medium-term conditions, South Korea's active pursuit of nuclear weapons appears unlikely. South Korea undoubtedly has deeper anxieties over abandonment by the United States and this generates greater temptations to consider nuclear weapons than in the case of Japan. Nonetheless, the national security imperative is not yet overwhelming—especially as long as South Korea sees benefits in engaging North Korea, the diplomatic window remains open, and the United States remains engaged in Korean Peninsula security affairs. South Korea looks set to concentrate instead on conventional deterrence against North Korea through the build-up of its capabilities in command and control, strike and maneuver, maritime and amphibious, and air defense.[65] Questions of national prestige also appear insufficient to fully drive proliferation. South Korea may then remain in the second tier of nuclear proliferators; although Seoul's reaction if the ROK were to become the inheritor of nuclear weapons following the possible collapse of North Korea—and whether it might maintain these weapons—would become a major wildcard for regional security.

TAIWAN: NOWHERE TO TURN TO BUT THE UNITED STATES?

Taiwan is the third possible candidate that could go nuclear in response to North Korea's nuclearization. Although facing no direct threat from North Korea, the speculation is that Taiwan might be forced to nuclearize in response to an upgrading of China's nuclear capabilities that could result in response to a more heavily conventionally or even nuclear-armed Japan, which in turn would be a response to North Korean provocations. In another scenario, Taiwan might be encouraged to acquire nuclear weapons due to the

[65] Jonathan D. Pollack, "The Strategic Futures and Military Capabilities of the Two Koreas," in Tellis and Wills, *Strategic Asia 2005–2006*, 165.

concomitant general weakening of international non-proliferation regimes brought about by North Korea's actions.[66]

Similar to South Korea, Taiwan in the past has certainly demonstrated the policy will to initiate a nuclear weapons program and to move to the front rank of potential proliferators. Between 1964 and 1988, Taiwan twice initiated covert nuclear weapons programs before the United States finally derailed both efforts. In these two instances the principal driver was national security and Taiwan's singular and ever-present security dilemma versus China. Taiwan launched its nuclear weapons program in response to China's 1964 nuclear tests. In turn, Taiwan's nuclear weapons program was driven later on by the related alliance dilemma of U.S. abandonment, as manifested in the U.S. normalization of relations with China in 1972 and then the cutting of U.S.-Taiwan diplomatic ties in 1979, including the termination of the U.S.-Taiwan Mutual Defense Treaty. Taiwan finally gave up its nuclear program only after intense U.S. pressure, the relative security reassurances offered by the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) of 1979, and subsequent U.S. administration pledges to prevent the military coercion of Taiwan.[67]

National prestige also played an important role in Taiwan's nuclear calculations. The Republic of China's (ROC) initial desire prior to U.S. diplomatic recognition was to exert its "great-power" status befitting its membership of UN Security Council; the desire of Taiwan post-derecognition was to assert continued autonomy against the People's Republic of China (PRC).[68] Taiwan's nuclear ambitions were further governed by political economy and technological factors—U.S. threats to curtail economic and technological assistance were eventually sufficient to kill off Taiwan's program.

The official position since 1998 has been that Taiwan will not use its nuclear technology to acquire nuclear weapons. All the same, Taiwanese politicians have periodically referred to considering the capability to produce nuclear weapons as a means to counter China. President Lee Teng-hui first responded to China's 1995 missile tests with the remark that Taiwan might want to reconsider its earlier nuclear program. Lee later rescinded the remark. Despite running on an anti-nuclear stance in 2000, President Chen Shui-bian and Vice President Annette Lu have since made comments about the need for

66 Derek J. Mitchell, "Taiwan's Hsin Chu Program: Deterrence, Abandonment and Honor," in *The Nuclear Tipping Point*, 305.

67 Mitchell, "Taiwan's Hsin Chu Program," 302.

68 Monte Bullard, "Taiwan and Nonproliferation," Nuclear Threat Initiative, *Issue Brief*, May 2005 ~ http://www.nti.org/e_research/e3_61a.html, 3.

Taiwan to develop a retaliatory capability against China, possibly meaning nuclear weapons.[69] The Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs asserted that Taiwan feared the test might lead to an arms race in Northeast Asia but added that the crisis should be resolved through dialogue. In addition, Premier Su Tseng-chang and Defense Minister Lee Jye asserted that Taiwan will "definitely not" develop nuclear weapons in response to the North Korean test.[70]

At present Taiwan appears, to lack sufficient drivers for it to reconsider the nuclear option. The island's leaders clearly fear the build-up of China's military capabilities, and nuclear weapons might provide a cheap "equalizer" in the balance of power. Yet such a strategy carries the danger of exacerbating the security dilemma. China could be provoked either to launch pre-emptive conventional attacks to prevent Taiwan from acquiring the security assurance of nuclear weapons or to switch to a nuclear first-use doctrine.[71] Taiwan might also fear the alliance dilemma of abandonment by the United States, especially given the growing strategic importance of China for overall U.S. regional and global strategy. Additionally, Taiwan could possibly interpret Bush administration statements on Taiwan as showing an inconsistent U.S. determination to defend the island. Taiwanese calculations of the risk of U.S. abandonment, though, will surely be tempered by the fear that striking out on an independent nuclear path would only serve to alienate the United States entirely. Such a nuclearization would have destabilizing effects on Sino-U.S. relations and thus make abandonment a "self-fulfilling prophecy."[72] In fact, Taiwan's military strategy is predicated on building up autonomous military capabilities, while at the same time enticing the United States into closer military ties.[73] A renewed and serious Taiwanese attempt to acquire nuclear weapons would appear to largely undercut such a strategy.

Taiwan's development of nuclear weapons might be driven by considerations of national prestige, identity, and norms, especially as a means to assert Taiwanese autonomy and eventually even independence. This impulse is countered, however, by the fact that the Democratic People's Party (DPP), which is most likely to advocate independence, has assumed a non-nuclear

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69 Bullard, "Taiwan and Nonproliferation," 4.

70 "President Chen Makes Protest against Pyongyang's Nuke Test," *China Post*, October 10, 2006; "Taiwan FM Spokesman Fears DPRK Nuclear Test May Trigger Arms Race," *Agence France Presse*, October 9, 2006; and S.C. Chang, "Taiwan Will 'Definitely Not' Develop Nuclear Weapons: Premier," *Central News Agency*, November 10, 2006.

71 Ting Wai, "The Potential Flashpoint: Taiwan," in *China's Nuclear Future*, ed. Paul J. Bolt and Albert S. Willner (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2006), 151–52.

72 Mitchell, "Taiwan's Hsin Chu Program," 309.

73 Michael D. Swaine and Roy D. Kamphausen, "Military Modernization in Taiwan," in Tellis and Wills, *Strategic Asia 2005–2006*, 389.

stance and that the Kuomintang (KMT) remains opposed to any policy that would force a conflict with China. Meanwhile, there is strong sentiment in Taiwan against both civilian nuclear energy and nuclear weapons.[74]

Finally, Taiwan faces considerable economic and technological hurdles to nuclearization. The democratization of Taiwan has ensured that there is declining budgetary freedom for the pursuit of a clandestine nuclear program. As such, any move by Taiwan to produce nuclear weapons might precipitate both U.S. and Japanese economic sanctions as well as the cut-off by the United States of nuclear fuels upon which Taiwan is entirely dependent and which provide 20% of its total energy.[75] Though possibly having the eventual technological capacity to produce nuclear weapons, Taiwan would first have to acquire reprocessing and enrichment facilities. The island's tight geographical confines also mean that Taiwan would need to face the technological challenges of developing a submarine-based deterrent to have a meaningful *force de frappe* against China.

Taiwan's strategic situation would thus appear to dictate that Taipei will have little incentive to reconsider its nuclear options at present. Only the most drastic of circumstances—a total U.S. withdrawal of its security guarantees—might induce Taiwan to make a desperate bid for nuclear weapons. In the meantime, Taipei is more likely to continue to attempt to deter Beijing with conventional military modernization and by maintaining security ties with the United States. Nevertheless, Taiwan is likely not to be above continuing to speculate openly about its nuclear options. This is clearly a useful bargaining chip not only against China but also against the United States to ensure that Washington maintains a form of security guarantee for Taiwan in order to prevent the wider destabilization of both the Sino-U.S. relationship and the entire region.

CONCLUSION: THE NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION BALL BACK IN THE U.S COURT?

The above has analyzed how Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan are likely to respond to North Korea's nuclear test and march toward a more full-fledged nuclear deterrent by 2015. The analysis suggests that based on current trends there is no likely nuclear cascade in Northeast Asia. The

74 Mitchell, "Taiwan's Hsin Chu Program," 304–05.

75 Ibid., 305.

principal drivers of nuclear proliferation observed from general theory and from historical experience in the region suggest there is not yet a sufficient confluence of interests to tip Japan, South Korea, or Taiwan toward nuclear weapons. Certainly, all of these states face interconnected conventional and nuclear security dilemmas with North Korea, China, or even each other. These dilemmas are compounded by U.S. alliance dilemmas of entrapment and abandonment. None of these actors as yet fears each other sufficiently, however, to make a bid for nuclear weapons and to thereby risk exacerbating security dilemmas. Neither does any of them as yet anticipate the total withdrawal of U.S. security guarantees nor can they contemplate the risks of dashing to acquire nuclear weapons and in the interim period entirely losing U.S. security guarantees. Likewise, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan might be motivated both to pursue nuclear weapons for reasons of national prestige and to assert their autonomy vis-à-vis the United States; at the same time, however, there are equally powerful domestic interests pushing for the observation of international norms and anti-nuclear commitments. Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan might also see economic advantages in developing economic weapons, but such benefits are presently outweighed by the domestic and international costs likely to be imposed on proliferators by the United States and the wider international community. All three actors can probably master the technology for the production and utilization of nuclear weapons, but the upfront economic investments are costly and require considerable time—time that may not be available in the event of the United States withdrawing its extended deterrent from such potential proliferators.

The prospect, then, is not of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan actively looking to exercise their nuclear options in the wake of North Korea. Instead, Japan and South Korea are likely to use the remaining diplomatic windows of opportunity, even if beginning to close rapidly, to seek to dissuade North Korea from the nuclear path. At the same time, their policymakers are likely to strengthen conventional hedges and push forward military modernization to deter North Korea. All three actors, though, are also likely to maintain their nuclear hedges and the necessary latent technological capabilities in order to exert leverage both on North Korea to moderate its security behavior and on the United States to ensure it re-adheres to its security commitments.

From all of the above, the further obvious conclusion is that the common factor influencing and restraining all of the potential drivers for nuclear proliferation is the stance of the United States. Therefore, in large part, it is the U.S. approach to each of the four key drivers that may determine the future

prospects both for nuclear proliferation in Northeast Asia and for containing the chain-reaction effects of North Korea's weapons program.

In terms of policy responses, the United States would thus benefit from continuing efforts both to moderate security dilemmas amongst North Korea and its neighbors and to consider Washington's own role in propagating and exacerbating these dilemmas. U.S. efforts must surely involve a continued commitment to a diplomatic resolution to the North Korean nuclear crisis through the six-party talks process, bilateral negotiations with North Korea whether inside or outside the six-party talks coordinated with other involved powers, and a genuine willingness to construct a sequenced package deal of diplomatic and economic concessions.[76] The signs as of early 2007 are that the United States is showing some renewed commitment and flexibility to the six-party talks and negotiations with North Korea. Ultimately, North Korea may not respond, but the United States must at least be seen as exhausting this process—and there may still be negotiating opportunities. At the same time, the United States must continue with cautious efforts to support allies in upgrading their conventional capabilities to respond to North Korea, rather than leaving these allies to feel that they must search for a nuclear equalizer. Just as importantly, the United States must continue to alleviate alliance dilemmas of entrapment and especially abandonment. Integral to this approach will be both the reinforcement of the perception that the United States is employing balanced policies of pressure and dialogue toward North Korea and the reaffirmation of existing alliance security guarantees. This is likely to include not only continued restructuring of U.S. forces to achieve greater strategic flexibility but also explanations of the U.S. determination to maintain sizeable troop presences that are politically symbolic manifestations of security commitments. The United States must further reaffirm both its existing extended nuclear deterrent guarantees to allies and, above all, its priority for deterrence over pre-emption. These steps should serve simultaneously to alleviate ally concerns over abandonment and entrapment.

The United States would need to address questions of national prestige, identity, and norms involved in countering temptations to nuclear proliferation. In order to promote non-proliferation, Washington might focus more on the need to address perceptions of international inequality generated not only by U.S. determination to maintain nuclear superiority but also by the enhancement of the salience and capabilities of the U.S. nuclear arsenal

[76] Mitchell B. Reiss, "A Nuclear Armed North Korea: Accepting the Unacceptable?" *Survival* 48, no. 4 (Winter 2006/2007): 103.

and promotion of new nuclear doctrines. Likewise, the United States needs to demonstrate a normative commitment to both non-proliferation regimes and multilateral cooperation and to counter impressions of unilateral action that place the United States outside the rules of the international society that the United States itself first constructed. Like it or not, unless the United States is seen by other states to assume a less threatening nuclear posture and to conform to international expectations in minimizing the role of nuclear weapons, then other states will simply feel they also they have no other choice but to join the nuclear club.

The technological and economic drivers of nuclear proliferation similarly require U.S. attention. Effective would be for the United States to continue seeking to raise the hurdles to nuclear weapons acquisition by further shutting down the networks for the spread of nuclear technology. This task may involve not only PSI-type initiatives but also efforts to create alternative networks for the diversion of nuclear materials and technologists away from proliferators states. The United States may also consider providing either nuclear technologies that can substitute for those technologies capable of producing material suitable for nuclear weapons or economic incentives and disincentives to dissuade states from the nuclear path.

Hence, the United States faces a major challenge in attempting to roll back the North Korean nuclear program and may already have failed in this endeavour. Failure of the United States and the region to halt North Korea's nuclear program need not yet dissolve, however, into a process of wider nuclear proliferation in the region. Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan look set to continue to hedge their nuclear bets as long as the United States remains implacable and engaged in its security commitments. Certainly neo-conservative prescriptions—such as a nuclear Japan as a means to pressure China—would only serve to exacerbate existing security dilemmas and alliance dilemmas, analogous to administering strong medicine that cures the initial ailment but then threatens the life of the entire patient.