

The Nuclear Dimension of the U.S.-Japan Alliance

Morton H. Halperin

Note: This paper was completed prior to Morton H. Halperin joined the U.S. Department of State as Director of the Policy Planning Staff.

ABSTRACT

The US-Japan military alliance is overlooked as a crucial element for either promoting or discouraging nuclear proliferation. Future developments in the alliance will be a major determining factor for whether Japan decides to pursue an independent nuclear weapons capability. This paper looks at how US nuclear policy would affect Japan's nuclear decisions, and concludes, contrary to conventional wisdom, that US sponsorship of a nuclear-free zone for Northeast Asia would be the most effective means of preventing Japan from going nuclear.

There is no guarantee that Japan would not pursue a nuclear option under the right circumstances, especially if the US either moves closer to China or withdraws from Asia altogether. Historically, the debate in Japan over whether to develop nuclear weapons has not centered around the credibility of the US nuclear deterrent, but rather around the belief that possession of a nuclear weapons arsenal would allow Japan to pursue an independent role in world affairs. Thus US policy toward its alliance with Japan will be a major determining factor in Japan's nuclear future, along with such considerations as the possible development of a Korean nuclear capability or an expansion of Chinese nuclear capability.

In addition to its bilateral relations with Japan, the United States' overall nuclear policy will be a major determining factor in Japan's nuclear choices. Current US nuclear policy exhibits a fundamental contradiction between the United States interest in building up its own nuclear policy and its support of efforts for global nonproliferation. This contradiction can be overcome by stigmatizing nuclear weapons use through moving toward a no-first use policy and relying on the UN Security Council to respond to any nuclear weapons use.

Preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons is increasingly cited as one of the most important, if not **the** most important, objective of U.S. policy in the post-cold war period. Speaking before the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council in December 1997, for example, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said, “I trust we also agree that the gravest potential threat to our security in the next century may come from beyond Europe, from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.”¹ Furthermore, both NATO and the G-8 have emphasized the centrality of the proliferation problem.²

Specifically, U.S. officials suggest that the greatest danger to U.S. national security is the acquisition and use of nuclear weapons by rogue states or terrorist groups against the United States or its allies.³ Despite policymakers’ professed beliefs, however, operational and procurement policy for nuclear forces remains focused on deterring a deliberate surprise attack on U.S. territory by the strategic nuclear forces of Russia.⁴ The strategic nuclear forces remain on alert ready to be targeted and fired at a range of military targets in Russia.

However, any realistic appraisal of nuclear dangers would suggest that **neither** rogue states/terrorist groups nor a deliberate Russian attack is the right focus if the goal of U.S. national

¹ Statement at the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council Meeting, Brussels, Belgium (17 December 1997).

² For example, see Martin Butcher, “NATO Formulating New Strategic Concept,” *BASIC Reports* 66 (23 October 1998) and “The Birmingham [G8] Summit: Final Communique,” (17 May 1998): <http://birmingham.g8summit.gov.uk>.

³ For example, see Secretary of State Madeleine Albright’s remarks at the Town Hall Meeting, Ohio State University Columbus, Ohio, (18 February 1998); remarks by the President in his Address to the 51st General Assembly of the United Nations (24 September 1996); and remarks by Samuel R. Berger, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, at The Wilson Center, Washington, D.C. (18 June 1996).

⁴ See, for example, the statement by Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research Toby T. Gati before the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (5 February 1997).

security policy is to prevent the use of nuclear weapons anywhere in the world. The most immediate danger is that India and Pakistan will stumble into a nuclear war following their nuclear tests and their apparent determination to deploy nuclear forces. A second danger will continue to be that Russian missiles will be fired on the United States by accident or as a result of unauthorized action. Over the longer run, these threats will be eclipsed by the danger that the non-proliferation regime will collapse and other states will develop nuclear weapons. A terrorist threat should, in my view, become a matter of serious concern only if there is much wider dispersal of nuclear weapons among states stemming from an open collapse of the non-proliferation regime.

Preventing nuclear proliferation depends on addressing the problem not only on a global basis, but also region by region in key areas of the world. Specifically, preventing further proliferation in Northeast Asia—and in particular, in Japan—is the subject of this paper.

If conflict is to occur among the major nuclear weapons powers, it is most likely to take place in Northeast Asia. The United States, Russia, and China all have substantial military forces in the region as well as major stakes in the area; in addition, there are many sources of potential conflict among the three and their allies within the region, including the future of both the Korean peninsula and Taiwan, and control of both natural resources and territory in local seas.

Not only do these three most active nuclear weapons states confront each other in this area, but it is also the home to four other states — Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and North Korea — that have contemplated the development of nuclear weapons and have the capacity to develop

a serious nuclear weapons capability.⁵ Thus, there is no doubt that the future of nuclear weapons in the international system will be determined in substantial part by what happens in Northeast Asia, and the future of international politics in this area will have a major impact on efforts to control nuclear proliferation.

In order to understand the non-proliferation policy options — and their interaction — in Northeast Asia, this paper will first examine the purposes for which the United States maintains nuclear weapons and explore alternative scenarios for the development of U.S. nuclear policy; it will then examine choices for the Japanese nuclear program.

After discussing these scenarios, the paper will propose U.S. policies designed to ensure that Japan remains both non-nuclear and confident that the U.S. nuclear umbrella will deter nuclear attacks on Japan, while strengthening prospects for cooperative security in Asia.

American Nuclear Options

The U.S. government continues to wrestle with what nuclear policy and nuclear force structure make sense in light of the post-cold war situation and the increased attention to the problems of nuclear proliferation. The basic, available options for U.S. policy include: maintaining the status quo with minor changes; adopting a program to stigmatize nuclear weapons

⁵ For information about Japan's nuclear capability, see Selig S. Harrison, "Japan and Nuclear Weapons," in Selig S. Harrison, editor, *Japan's Nuclear Future: The Plutonium Debate and East Asian Security* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1996): 3-44; and Taewoo Kim, "Japanese Ambitions, U.S. Constraints, and South Korea's Nuclear Future," in Harrison, *Japan's Nuclear Future*: 93; for information about Taiwan's nuclear capability, see Leonard S. Spector with Jacqueline R. Smith, *Nuclear Ambitions: The Spread of Nuclear Weapons 1989-90* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990): 60, 315-16n.

and to drastically reduce nuclear arsenals and reliance on nuclear weapons; and increasing reliance on nuclear weapons, especially to deter and respond to a range of actions by rogue states.

Before discussing these options, it is important to consider the purposes for which the United States might use nuclear weapons, as well as U.S. objectives in addressing the problems of nuclear proliferation.

The range of purposes (explained below) for which the United States might seek to use its nuclear weapons includes: deterring deliberate nuclear attacks on the United States, preventing accidental or unauthorized nuclear attacks on the United States, deterring nuclear attacks on U.S. allies, deterring conventional attacks against U.S. allies, and deterring the actions of rogue states or terrorists.

1. *Deterring Deliberate Nuclear Attacks on the United States*

Deterrence is the fundamental purpose for which the United States retains nuclear weapons.⁶ During the cold war, as the Soviet Union built up its capacity to launch a nuclear surprise first strike against the U.S. homeland, the United States devoted very substantial resources to developing a nuclear force capable of surviving a massive Soviet attack and delivering a devastating blow against a broad range of military targets in the Soviet Union. Until very recently, the U.S. goal was to “prevail” in such an encounter, but this unattainable objective

⁶ See Statement of the Honorable Walter B. Slocombe, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, before the U.S. Senate Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on International Security, Proliferation, and Federal Services (12 February 1997), in which he asserts that “for the foreseeable future, we will continue to need a reliable and flexible deterrent.” According to Slocombe, this is “entirely consistent with NATO’s Strategic Concept which.... states the fundamental purpose of NATO’s nuclear force is to preserve peace and prevent coercion and any kind of war and ‘nuclear weapons make a unique contribution in rendering the risks of aggression incalculable and unacceptable.’”

has finally been abandoned.⁷ This minor change notwithstanding, U.S. nuclear policy continues to focus on deterring a deliberate surprise attack on the United States, including by threatening, and planning, to launch forces on warning of such an attack.⁸

However, especially since the end of the cold war and the withdrawal of Russian military forces from central Europe, the possibility of a deliberate nuclear attack on the United States has been greatly reduced from its already very low levels. No Russian objective in Europe or Asia could possibly rise to the level that Russian leaders would view launching a surprise attack as a rational and justifiable act in the context of the interest at stake in any specific conflict or in overall U.S.-Russian relations. Furthermore, China lacks the capacity to launch an attack aimed at destroying the U.S. capacity to retaliate and does not appear to have any motive to fire its relatively small nuclear force at U.S. territory; France and the United Kingdom lack either the capability or the interests. Finally, U.S. arms control policy— especially the SALT and START negotiations— has been designed to reduce and to shape the Soviet and then Russian nuclear

⁷ R. Jeffrey Smith, “Clinton Directive Changes Strategy On Nuclear Arms; Centering On Deterrence, Officials Drop Terms for Long Atomic War,” *The Washington Post* (7 December 1997): A1.

⁸ See statement of Edward L. Warner III, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Threat Reduction, before the Strategic Forces Subcommittee, U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee (31 March 1998). The same strategies are reiterated in the U.S. Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen’s *Annual Report to the President and the Congress* (1998). According to chapter five of this report, a new Presidential Decision Directive, issued in November 1997, states that “The United States will not rely on a launch-on-warning nuclear retaliation strategy (although an adversary could never be sure the United States would not launch a counterattack before the adversary’s nuclear weapons arrived).”

arsenal so as to reduce the capacity for a surprise first strike, further decreasing the possibility of a deliberate nuclear attack on the United States by a nuclear weapons state.⁹

Recently, there has been much talk in the United States about the danger of a deliberate nuclear strike by a rogue nation.¹⁰ However, the policy debate centers on the desirability of deploying an ABM system to seek to shoot down missiles after they've already been fired at the United States, rather than on the means to deter the development of such capabilities or their use.

2. *Preventing Accidental or Unauthorized Nuclear Attacks on the United States*

The attempt by both Washington and Moscow to deter nuclear attacks by threatening and planning to launch a nuclear strike—on warning of attack if not in advance—has created the danger that these forces, kept on hair trigger alert, will be launched as a result of miscalculated, accidental, or unauthorized use. Leaders in both countries are regularly told that their nuclear forces may not survive a first strike with the capacity to carry out the necessary full retaliation. This gives rise to the phenomena of the reciprocal fear of surprise attack and the danger that a nuclear exchange will occur, even though the leaders of both countries would clearly have preferred not to use the weapons.

⁹ START I limits each state to 6,000 nuclear warheads; START II would further reduce capacity to 3,000-3,500 for each state. START II was signed by Presidents George Bush and Boris Yeltsin in January 1993 and ratified by the U.S. Senate in January 1996, but has not yet been ratified by the Russian Duma. Tentative goals for START III have been set by Presidents Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin at 2,000-2,500 warheads per state. David Hoffman, "Troubles Invigorate Debate on START II; Russian Crisis Saps Budget for Missiles," *The Washington Post* (19 November 1998): A42; and Jim Hoagland, "The Russia Deal," *The Washington Post* (22 November 1998): C07. For a detailed summary of START negotiations and nuclear arsenals see: William M. Arkin, Robert S. Norris and Joshua Handler, *Taking Stock: Worldwide Nuclear Deployments 1998* (Natural Resources Defense Council: March 1998).

¹⁰ This is clearly reflected in Under Secretary Slocombe's assertion, "One cannot survey the list of rogue states with potential WMD and conclude there are not any threats of a gravity requiring the option of nuclear deterrence." (12 February 1997).

Thus, despite the reduced risk of a deliberate attack and the serious danger of inadvertent use, the nuclear forces of both Russia and the United States remain focused on deterring deliberate nuclear attacks.

3. *Deterring Nuclear Attacks on U.S. Allies*

Another major objective of U.S. nuclear forces is to deter nuclear attacks on U.S. allies, especially Germany and Japan. In Europe, this issue has generally arisen in the context of the Soviet use of nuclear threats against Germany in a crisis or the initiation of nuclear weapons by the Soviet Union against NATO forces in the field during a conventional war in Europe. In Asia, it is discussed under the rubric of the U.S. nuclear umbrella over Japan and is generally understood to be designed to prevent Russia or China (or more recently the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or DPRK) from coercing Japan by threatening the use of nuclear weapons.

Less attention has been paid to the deployment requirements of successful deterrence of nuclear attacks against allies. The assumption appears to be that an active alliance relation, coupled with the presence of U.S. military forces on the ally's territory, is the key to deterrence. In Europe, it was felt (and is still felt by some) that the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons in the theater plays an important role in preventing nuclear threats or use. Furthermore, Japan leaders did not believe that they had the option of permitting nuclear weapons to be stored on their territory and had no reason to encourage debate on the issue of whether such storage was necessary to make deterrence credible.

Yet the U.S. government's explicit assurance to allies that the United States would respond to nuclear attacks against them by using nuclear weapons is, in my view, not only consistent with—but necessary to—a successful policy to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons.

If the United States suggested that its security guarantees to treaty partners did not include responding to nuclear attacks with nuclear weapons, the credibility of the guarantee as a whole would be called into question and allies would need to consider whether they needed to develop their own nuclear forces. Moreover, such guarantees are wholly consistent with the notion that the United States cannot ask other states to refrain from developing nuclear weapons unless it limits its own policy to “using” nuclear weapons only for the purpose of deterring their use by others.

4. *Deterring Conventional Attacks against Allies*

The deterrence of conventional attacks against allies is often lumped together with the deterrence of nuclear attacks on allies with the label “extended deterrence,” and the United States has reserved the right to use nuclear weapons in response to conventional attacks on its allies by states possessing nuclear weapons or allied with a nuclear weapons state.

It is important to keep these two objectives separate, since the effort to deter conventional attacks by nuclear threats has important implications for efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation. If the United States is asserting the right to initiate the use of nuclear weapons to respond to conventional attacks on its allies, it is not in a credible position to insist that other states, not protected by U.S. guarantees, give up the right to use nuclear weapons in response to conventional aggression against their territory.

Historically, the United States never seriously contemplated the use of nuclear weapons in Asia to deter or respond to conventional attacks except during a brief period at the end of the Eisenhower administration, when U.S. military policy viewed nuclear weapons as “conventional” and presidential guidance provided that the authority to use nuclear weapons would be granted

during any protracted conflict. However, since 1961, U.S. policy has emphasized the need to deter conventional threats by conventional means and planning has proceeded on that assumption. Nevertheless, the United States has insisted on maintaining the right to respond to a **conventional** attack against itself or its allies by initiating the use of nuclear weapons, if the state committing the aggression is a nuclear weapons state, is not a party in good standing of the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) or is a state allied with a nuclear power. Whether the Clinton administration now applies this exception to its no-first use policy to the DPRK is unclear. The administration does not view North Korea as in full compliance with the NPT in that it may possess some weapons-grade material, and it now believes that in certain situations, North Korea remains allied with Russia or China. This ambiguity notwithstanding, the administration appears to have made separate commitments not to threaten the use of nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula.

5. *Deterring the Actions of Rogue States or Terrorists*

Deterring the actions of rogue states or terrorists is a relatively new objective for U.S. nuclear forces, emerging most clearly in the post-cold war period. It can take a number of different forms.

It is sometimes suggested that warnings of nuclear retaliation should be used to deter rogue states from engaging in the “terrorist” use of nuclear or biological weapons against U.S. territory. Alternately, the threat is said to deter the use of any weapons of mass destruction,

including chemical weapons, against U.S. or allied forces or against the civilian population of a state cooperating with the United States in containing a rogue state.¹¹

Most recently, there are hints that nuclear threats might be used to deter conventional attacks by rogue states. Yet even during the Persian Gulf war, when some believed that threats to use nuclear weapons in response to the employment of chemical or biological weapons by Iraq were made and believed, President Bush had ruled out the use of nuclear weapons.¹²

Keeping in mind this range of purposes for which the United States might seek to use its nuclear weapons, there are three basic, available options for U.S. policy: 1) maintaining the basic current U.S. nuclear policy, 2) stigmatizing nuclear weapons and drastically reducing nuclear arsenals and reliance on nuclear weapons, and 3) reemphasizing the role of nuclear weapons, especially in dealing with rogue states.

Current U.S. Nuclear Policy

One option for the United States is to maintain its current nuclear policy with minor changes to respond to specific needs. The current policy has remained in place for more than forty years despite an inherent contradiction: on the one hand, the United States has sought to build up its own nuclear capability and to reserve the right to threaten to use—and to use—

¹¹ See, for example, remarks by Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, to the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (24 May 1996), and a press briefing by Mike McCurry and Robert Bell, at the White House (11 April 1996), in which they discuss the treaty of Pelindaba, creating an African nuclear weapons free zone.

¹² This policy is explicitly stated in James A. Baker III with Thomas M. DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995): 359; also see Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict: 1990-1991* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1993): 288-9; and Colin Powell with Joseph E. Perisco, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995): 485-6, 503-4.

nuclear weapons whenever it believed that its interests could be advanced by doing so. Yet on the other hand, the United States has sought to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and has taken steps to advance that goal, such as through the NPT, which had the potential to undermine U.S. efforts to rely on nuclear weapons for a range of security needs.¹³

Despite the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war, U.S. nuclear policy still exhibits this tension. While taking steps to strengthen the non-proliferation regime and while drastically reducing its deployment of nuclear weapons abroad and at sea, the United States continues to assert the right to use nuclear weapons first in a variety of situations, including in response to conventional attacks by a nuclear weapons state or any country allied to a nuclear power. Furthermore, nuclear weapons are still stored in Europe and the U.S. government approaches all efforts to create nuclear free zones with caution. Finally, the United States refuses to begin negotiations to eliminate nuclear weapons, proclaiming that nuclear deterrence will be an element of U.S. policy for the foreseeable future.¹⁴ It justifies continuing to rely on nuclear weapons in large part on the grounds that its policy of deterrence contributes to nuclear non-

¹³ The U.S. government does not view these methods as an inherent contradiction in U.S. nuclear posture. The policy has been to maintain overwhelming nuclear force and to try to prevent other people from getting nuclear weapons. According to Slocombe, there is a “continuing American and global interest in a deliberate process to further reduce - and ultimately eliminate - nuclear weapons,” yet the United States is “not yet at the point where we can eliminate our nuclear weapons,” and that “A key conclusion of the Administration’s National Security Strategy is that ‘the United States will retain a triad of strategic nuclear forces sufficient to deter any future hostile foreign leadership with access to strategic nuclear forces from acting against our vital interests and to convince it that seeking a nuclear advantage would be futile.’” (12 February 1997).

¹⁴ That the United States has no intention of renouncing nuclear deterrence as a viable foreign policy tool is made clear not only in the Slocombe statement cited above, but in a statement by John D. Holum, Director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, in which he details the U.S. position on the contentious issue. Holum presented his statement on December 2, 1996, at an international seminar on nuclear disarmament in Kyoto that followed the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

proliferation by helping to persuade countries such as Japan and South Korea that they have no need to develop nuclear weapons.

Current policy on the role of nuclear weapons in addressing threats of chemical or biological weapons is not clearly articulated but appears to be roughly this: as a matter of “policy,” the administration adheres to the negative security assurances associated with the NPT, which prohibit the United States from threatening to use nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear state party to the NPT unless it is engaged in aggression supported by a nuclear power. This position would have ruled out the use of nuclear weapons against Iraq in the Persian Gulf War even if Iraq used chemical or biological weapons. However, the administration has declined to incorporate this “policy” into any binding international legal obligation and intimates that states that use any weapon of mass destruction might be subject to a nuclear attack.¹⁵

The nuclear policy review concluded by the Clinton administration at the end of 1997 reaffirmed these positions, although it did eliminate the requirement to “prevail” in a nuclear

¹⁵ For example, during a U.S. Department of State Press Briefing on February 5, 1998, in addressing reports that the United States was planning to use nuclear weapons to destroy chemical and biological storage facilities in Iraq, department spokesman James P. Rubin explained that, “If any country were foolish enough to attack the United States, our allies, or our forces, with chemical or biological weapons, our response would be swift, devastating and overwhelming. We have worked hard to fashion non-nuclear responses to the threat or use of weapons of mass destruction, in order to give military commanders and the President a range of options from which to choose. As Secretary Perry said in 1996, we are able to mount a devastating response without using nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, we do not rule out in advance any capability available to us. I stress that these policies have to do with a situation in which the U.S., our allies and our forces have been attacked with chemical or biological weapons.”

Likewise, in a U.S. Department of Defense News Briefing on January 27, 1998, department spokesman Kenneth H. Bacon reaffirmed that the United States would “respond decisively with devastating force” in response to weapons of mass destruction. When asked whether nuclear penetrating bombs had been ruled out in addressing buried targets, Bacon responded, “I don’t think we’ve ruled anything in or out in this regard. Our position is that we would respond very aggressively.”

exchange with Russia,¹⁶ a change necessary to permit the United States to move to the levels in START III to which the president has already agreed. No one seemed to fear that this adjustment would undermine the credibility of the U.S. nuclear deterrent; however, no other aspects of U.S. policy were changed.¹⁷

Stigmatizing Nuclear Weapons

Under this option, the United States would remove the ambiguity in its nuclear policy by seeking to stigmatize nuclear weapons.¹⁸ While stopping short of trying to eliminate all nuclear weapons in the short term, the United States would seek a world with a drastically reduced nuclear capability in which no state—including the United States—maintained nuclear weapons on alert or tried to use them for any purpose other than deterring the use of nuclear weapons by others.

Indeed, the first steps that the United States would take if it decided to move decisively in this direction would be to commit itself to a no-first use policy, negotiate no-first use agreements with any of the other nuclear weapons states willing to enter into such agreements (including

¹⁶ Smith, “Clinton Directive Changes Strategy on Nuclear Arms.”

¹⁷ In Morton H. Halperin, *Nuclear Fallacy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1987): 23-5, I argue that an unwarranted faith of Washington bureaucrats in the effectiveness of nuclear threats “is the greatest single obstacle to the adoption of a new American nuclear policy that would substantially reduce the possibility of nuclear war.”

¹⁸ For an example of a model of nuclear forces consistent with stigmatizing the use and production of nuclear weapons, see Halperin, *Nuclear Fallacy*: 55-60; and for recent reports advocating this approach, see the Report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons (August 1996) and The National Academy of Sciences Committee on International Security and Arms Control (CISAC) report, *The Future of U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy* (June 1997).

China, which has proposed such an accord) and offer absolute assurances to all other states that it will not initiate the use of nuclear weapons.

To address the problem of chemical and biological weapons, the United States would make it clear that it would respond to any use of such weapons with overwhelming conventional force and that any military that used these weapons would be defeated on the battlefield and forced to accept an unconditional surrender. Furthermore, the government that ordered such use would be removed from power and those who gave or carried out the orders would be tried by an international tribunal and, if convicted, given an appropriate sentence. These warnings are both a more credible threat than a nuclear attack, which would kill many innocent civilians, and more consistent with a program to deter the use of nuclear weapons as well as other weapons of mass destruction.

Combined with the negative assurances would be positive assurances given through the U.N. Security Council to come to the aid of any country threatened with the use of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction. U.S. allies, including Germany, Japan, and Korea, would be given specific assurances that the United States would use whatever means were necessary to neutralize any threat of nuclear weapons use against them, including— if appropriate and necessary—by using nuclear weapons in response to a nuclear attack.

In the context of significant progress toward nuclear disarmament, one could imagine reaching a point in which the response even to a nuclear attack on any state was viewed as the responsibility of the international community as a whole, with the U.N. Security Council committed to take action and with individual nuclear weapons states no longer obliged to respond with nuclear weapons. Of course, what has been called “existential” deterrence would still exist.

That is, the mere fact that the United States had nuclear weapons and had a treaty commitment to Japan would create the possibility that the United States would use nuclear weapons in response to a **nuclear** attack on Japan, even if it was not committed to doing so. This residual threat exists now and would exist in a world in which the United States had greatly reduced its nuclear arsenal and had committed itself not to use nuclear weapons except in response to a nuclear attack on its own territory. (One could, of course, contemplate going even further and asking the nuclear weapons states to respond with conventional force even to a nuclear attack on their territory or only to use nuclear weapons when authorized to do so by the U.N. Security Council.)

Nonetheless, I would move very cautiously in this direction for fear of stimulating the very nuclear proliferation that we are trying to avoid. A statement now by the United States that it would rule out the use of nuclear weapons in response to a nuclear attack on Japan would generate very serious disquiet on the part of Japanese leaders. Many would take it as the first step in a U.S. plan to end its security commitment to Japan. The benefits of such a move are very elusive. I would prefer that the United States move in the other direction, and offer states that desire such a pledge a clear U.S. commitment to come to their aid with nuclear weapons if they are subjected to a nuclear attack.

Furthermore, under the option of stigmatizing nuclear weapons, the U.S. nuclear posture would be redesigned based on the assumption that U.S. forces would not fire on warning and would not fire quickly or massively after a nuclear attack on the United States. Most, if not all, forces would be de-alerted in a transparent way. The remaining nuclear weapons would be brought home from Europe, and the United States would commit itself to only storing nuclear weapons on its own territory. Finally, in negotiations first with Russia and then with the other

three nuclear weapons states, the United States would seek to reduce nuclear arsenals to first thousands and then hundreds of weapons, all de-alerted and subject to international inspection.

Reemphasizing the Role of Nuclear Weapons

Without abandoning such elements of the de-legitimation effort as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the United States has the option of seeking to enhance the role of nuclear weapons in its security policy.

In choosing this option, first the United States would make clear that the 2,000 to 2,500 strategic warhead limit that it has tentatively agreed to in START III is as low as it is willing to go and that it is not willing to give up its right to strike first or its capacity to quickly inflict massive damage on Russia or any other country. Second, the United States would interpret the CTBT narrowly so as to permit a vigorous stockpile stewardship program and other activities that would lead to the development of new types of nuclear weapons.

It is in addressing rogue states that there appears to be the most pressure to reverse the actions that have reduced the U.S. flexibility to threaten to initiate the use of nuclear weapons, including pledges to refrain from using nuclear weapons first and from developing new types of nuclear weapons. Just as it has declared a group of states to be outside the norms that govern international trade and therefore to be subject to various forms of embargo, the United States could declare that certain states have put themselves outside the framework of the NPT—even if they are members certified by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to be in good standing—and are therefore subject to nuclear retaliation.

Thus, under this option, the United States would assert the right to use nuclear weapons first against any state that it labels as a rogue state in response to the use of chemical or biological weapons, to conventional cross border aggression, to military action within its own borders, or to efforts to build weapons of mass destruction.

To back up these threats, the United States would develop and deploy nuclear weapons designed against the forces of these countries and would again station nuclear weapons on ships and in bases around the world to make this threat credible. Finally, under the option of reemphasizing the role of nuclear weapons, the United States would resist further expansion of the nuclear free zone concept.

Japanese Nuclear Options

If these are the basic choices facing the United States, what are the options for Japan? For the purposes of this initial discussion, I leave aside the question of political feasibility in Japan in order to focus on how U.S. policy choices on nuclear weapons and on Korean unification would affect the domestic political climate in Japan and the views of Japanese leaders on what nuclear posture it should adopt. Japanese nuclear options thus include: 1) maintaining the status quo, 2) taking a leadership role in the world to stigmatize nuclear weapons, and 3) nuclear armament.¹⁹

Status Quo

¹⁹ For a discussion of the major positions in current Japanese discourse on the country's proper role - especially with regard to nuclear weapons - in the post-cold war era, see Mike M. Mochizuki, "Japanese Security Policy," in *The U.S.-Japan Security Alliance in the 21st Century* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1997): 26-42.

Widespread revulsion against nuclear weapons in Japan in response to the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki has forced the Japanese government to announce the three non-nuclear principles that Japan “will not manufacture or possess nuclear weapons or allow their introduction into” Japan and that Japan will adhere to the NPT and the CTBT.²⁰ In its rhetoric, Japan is in the forefront of the effort to eliminate nuclear weapons. It has consistently refused to allow the United States to store nuclear weapons on its territory and successfully negotiated in 1972 the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Okinawa in 1972 prior to reversion—albeit with a secret pledge by Prime Minister Sato to President Nixon that Japan would permit their return in a dire emergency.²¹

At the same time, Japanese governments have done what was politically possible to support U.S. nuclear policy while quietly putting Japan into a position to be able to quickly develop nuclear weapons and sophisticated missile delivery systems should a consensus develop in Japan that this needed to be done.²² Specifically, Japan’s cooperation with the United States includes support for U.S. positions on nuclear issues such as the CTBT and a refusal to join informal international coalitions seeking to press for more vigorous steps toward the elimination

²⁰ Prime Minister Eisaku Sato made this pledge - known as the Three Non-Nuclear Principles - on February 5, 1968, after the deployment of a U.S. carrier from a Japanese port in retaliation against the capture of a spy ship by the North Korea. The notion was formalized by the Japanese Diet on November 24, 1971.

²¹ Agreed Minute to Joint Communique of United States President Nixon and Japanese Prime Minister Sato Issued on November 21, 1969, Top Secret, Washington, DC, two pages. See the discussion of this issue in the memoirs of Kei Wakeizumi. (English translation on file in the author's office.)

²² Prime Minister Sato secretly commissioned a study to examine whether it was possible and desirable to develop independent nuclear forces. It concluded that although there were no technical impediments to doing so, developing nuclear weapons would prove too costly. See “Nuclear Armament Possible But Unrealistic: Secret Reports,” *Asahi*, November 13, 1994, pp.1.

of nuclear weapons. Documents recently released by the U.S. government furthermore demonstrate that the Japanese government acquiesced to the U.S. practice of having U.S. ships with nuclear weapons call at Japanese ports.²³ Yet while it insists that it is determined not to develop nuclear weapons, Japan has a peaceful nuclear power program that generates weapons-grade plutonium, and it also has a space exploration program; many believe that there are Japanese officials who know exactly how to turn these activities into a program that produces nuclear weapons mated to effective delivery systems,²⁴ although there is disagreement about how quickly Japan could have a truly functional nuclear force. However, it remains true that other than the NPT, Japan, unlike Germany, has not entered into any international agreements that commit it to abstaining from developing nuclear weapons.

Stigmatizing Nuclear Weapons

Japan could clearly do much more to reinforce its own commitment to not developing nuclear weapons and to taking a lead in moving the world toward the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Under the option of stigmatizing nuclear weapons, Japan would restructure its peaceful nuclear power program so that it does not produce weapons-grade plutonium. Existing stocks of plutonium would be processed in Japan under effective international safeguards. Furthermore,

²³ According to *NSSM 5 - Japan*, Secret, U.S. National Security Council (spring 1969): 25, “Japan now acquiesces in transit by naval vessels armed with nuclear weapon. This right would extend automatically to Okinawa. (This is sensitive and closely held information).”; also see Masashi Iiyama, “U.S. Report: Japan Allowed N-Arms in Territorial Waters,” *The Daily Yomiuri* (15 May 1997): 2.

²⁴ For example, Prime Minister Tsutomu Hata admitted to reporters that “it’s certainly the case that Japan has the capability to possess nuclear weapons but has not made them.” *Kyodo News Service*, Tokyo (17 June 1974).

Japan would make its nuclear power and missile programs much more transparent and take steps to make it harder to channel them into a nuclear weapons program. Japan would also take the lead in negotiating a nuclear weapons free zone in Northeast Asia that would commit Japan to neither develop nuclear weapons nor permit them to be deployed on Japanese territory.²⁵ In addition, Japan would rely on the promise of the five nuclear weapons states to not threaten to use nuclear weapons against states in the nuclear free zone and to respond if any state made such a threat. The U.S.-Japan security treaty would remain in effect with its residual commitment by the United States to respond appropriately to any threats against Japan.

Finally, Japan would join other non-nuclear states in pressing for more substantial nuclear disarmament by the nuclear weapons states and would urge the United States to negotiate a bilateral no-first use agreement with China and with Russia, at least in East Asia.

Nuclear Armament

Japan's third option is to renounce the NPT and become a nuclear weapons state. It is now difficult to imagine the circumstances under which any Japanese government would pursue nuclear armament, but it is not inconceivable.²⁶ More important, current U.S. policy is justified in no small part by the argument that the United States is doing what is necessary to prevent

²⁵ For details on such a nuclear-free zone, see Harrison, *Japan's Nuclear Future*: 27-8, 38-9.

²⁶ To read of circumstances under which Japan could possibly go nuclear, see Harrison, *Japan's Nuclear Future*: 33-4.

Japan from going nuclear.²⁷ Moreover, Japan's development of nuclear weapons would certainly signal and accelerate the collapse of the NPT process. No one should take for granted the Japanese commitment over the long run to refrain from developing nuclear weapons.

Many Japanese concerned with international affairs have long chafed under the U.S. alliance, longing to end the treaty and reassert Japan's role as an independent great power.

They have been prevented from implementing such a policy by the recognition that barring major changes in the world situation, the Japanese people would not tolerate such action. Moreover, they recognize that the United States and other states in the region would react very negatively to such a step.

However, one major impediment to a Japanese independent nuclear posture was removed with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Japanese leaders had recognized that they could not match the very large nuclear forces of the Soviet Union; now, they believe that over time, Japan could match the nuclear forces of Russia and China—neither of which can spend significantly more than Japan on nuclear forces. In fact, most analysts expect the Russian nuclear force to be reduced far below the levels permitted by the START agreements with the next ten years.

As the cold war came to an end, some Japanese leaders appeared to give serious consideration to ending the alliance with the United States and to developing an independent Japanese role in Asia, including the development of an independent nuclear capability.²⁸ A consensus rejecting this option has now reemerged in Japan. However, Japan leaders will still

²⁷ "...in the eyes of the anti-nuclear majority [in Japan], the U.S. nuclear umbrella has a more immutable, transcendent value precisely because it provides a rationale for keeping Japan non-nuclear," Harrison, *Japan's Nuclear Future*: 25.

²⁸ Harrison, *Japan's Nuclear Future*: 15-8.

carefully assess the international situation, including China's relations with Japan and with the United States, in particular. A close Sino-American relation could lead Japan to question the continued credibility of U.S. security guarantees against China. Alternatively, a withdrawal of U.S. power from Asia, coupled with the continuing growth of Chinese military (including nuclear) capability, could have the same result.

The obvious question raised by the discussion of U.S. and Japanese nuclear policy options is their impact on each other. Is Japan more likely to go nuclear if the United States chooses to stigmatize nuclear weapons or if the United States increases its reliance on nuclear weapons? There is substantial disagreement on this question, rooted in a general difference about the relation of U.S. nuclear policy and efforts to slow nuclear proliferation around the world.

U.S. Nuclear Policy and Japanese Nuclear Weapons

The debate within the U.S. government about how to address the problem of nuclear proliferation remains unresolved thirty years after the United States agreed with the Soviet Union to sponsor a non-proliferation treaty.

Originally, supporters of the non-proliferation treaty within the U.S. government argued that the only way to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons was to establish an international norm that states should not develop nuclear weapons. In order to secure wide acceptance of such an agreement, the United States and the other nuclear powers needed to agree to certain conditions, including a commitment not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against states that had renounced the right to make nuclear weapons; in turn, such states had to be assured of cooperation in developing nuclear power and receive at least minimal security guarantees against

nuclear threats. Finally, the United States had to agree to move toward reducing its reliance on nuclear weapons and its own nuclear arsenal and to accept limits—to be embodied in the non-proliferation treaty—on its ability to share information about nuclear weapons with its allies.

It was this last provision that provoked the most controversy within the U.S. government. Skeptics stressed the importance of sharing nuclear information and the operational planning and control of nuclear weapons with U.S. allies. From this perspective, the way to prevent key U.S. non-nuclear allies, Germany and Japan, from developing nuclear weapons was to maintain a robust nuclear capability and to seek a way in which to draw those two nations into participating in the decisions regarding those nuclear forces. In Europe, this led to proposals for a Multinational Force (MLF) in which a group of nations, including Germany, would provide military personnel for a ship equipped with U.S. nuclear armed missiles; others believed that the option of France sharing its nuclear force with Germany needed to be maintained. Furthermore, in what was then known as the Far East, the focus during the 1950s and 1960s was on “educating the Japanese about nuclear weapons” so that Japan would permit the stationing of nuclear weapons on its territory and participate in the planning for their use along with South Korea, which by 1958 had agreed to allow the United States to store nuclear weapons in its territory.

Not surprisingly, this conflict within the U.S. government resulted in a compromise. The United States negotiated the NPT but did not, at least in the first years of the Nixon administration, press other nations to sign. It negotiated a treaty with no negative or positive security assurances and gave only the most minimal assurances through the U.N. Security Council. Restrictions on sharing nuclear information were left loose enough to permit both the NATO Nuclear Planning Group to continue and the United States to train willing allies in the use

of nuclear weapons. Finally, commitments to reduce nuclear forces in that treaty were consigned to a hortatory preamble.

Today, the school of thought that had opposed the NPT as an effective means by which to prevent nuclear proliferation still argues that U.S. enemies must be deterred with threats and allies assured by a robust U.S. nuclear arsenal backed by a clear willingness to employ nuclear weapons. They view the commitment in the NPT to move toward nuclear disarmament as mere rhetoric and, in any case, well-satisfied by the steps the United States has taken—and continues to take—to reduce its nuclear arsenal both unilaterally and by international agreement.

I believe that this approach is profoundly misguided as it applies broadly, but here I want to focus only on Northeast Asia in general and on Japan in particular.

Throughout the postwar period, Japanese leaders have quietly debated the question of whether Japan should develop an independent nuclear capability.²⁹ This debate was **not** centered around the credibility of the U.S. deterrent. Given the lack of any clear threat to Japan and the importance of the United States to Japan, few Japanese leaders have argued that more needed to be done to prevent nuclear threats to Japan. Given the conventional balance in Asia, the question of whether nuclear weapons should be used in response to conventional attacks has never been in the forefront of the debate. Neither the Russians nor the Chinese could have any doubt that an attack on Japan would be viewed as an attack on the United States, and so the U.S. nuclear threat was seen as a sufficient deterrent.

²⁹ Harrison, *Japan's Nuclear Future*: 12-3.

In fact, while some Japanese have doubted the credibility of the U.S. nuclear deterrent,³⁰ most Japanese who leaned toward advocating a Japanese nuclear capability took this position because they believed such a capability would permit Japan to end the security relation with the United States and to assert an independent role in the world. Yet despite the deep desire of many Japanese leaders to regain Japanese independence, there were three major obstacles to moving in this direction. First, the Japanese people would not tolerate the massive increase in defense spending, the assertion of an independent military role, or, most of all, the development of nuclear weapons. Second, the reaction in the rest of Asia would pose a very serious threat to Japanese economic goals as well as to its security. Finally, Japanese leaders recognized that it would be very difficult to develop a secure second strike capability against the Soviet Union.

Even if Japan had developed nuclear weapons, it still might have needed the U.S. nuclear deterrent to ensure that the Kremlin was not tempted to launch a surprise attack. Thus, developing nuclear weapons would still have left two problems. First, since the very purpose of developing a nuclear capability was to assert independence from the United States, it made no sense to simultaneously seek to rely on the U.S. deterrent. Second, given the U.S. anti-proliferation posture, Japan risked losing the protection of the U.S. deterrent if it set out on this path. Therefore, Japan saw no choice but to sign onto the NPT and later to accept making it permanent, while quietly maintaining its options so that it could respond if the international and domestic situation made it possible for Japan to acquire a nuclear capability.

³⁰ Kumao Kaneko, former director of the Nuclear Energy Division of the Foreign Ministry, argues in “Japan needs no Nuclear Umbrella,” *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (March/April, 1996): 46-51, that the “United States would be highly unlikely to use its nuclear arms to defend Japan unless American forces in Japan were exposed to extreme danger.”

The end of the cold war changed this situation in only one way. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the drastic decline in the Russian economy— and hence the resources available for defense—meant that it became possible for Japan to develop its own nuclear deterrent sufficient to deter both Russia and China. However, the other impediments to moving forward remain.

We come then to the fundamental question: which U.S. nuclear posture is most likely to solidify the Japanese non-nuclear posture?

U.S. policy continues to be premised on the assumption that further reductions in the U.S. nuclear arsenal, accompanied by no-first use guarantees, would increase the chances that Japan would develop nuclear weapons. It is true that the official Japanese establishment would be momentarily disconcerted if the United States moved in this direction, but that concern would soon vanish and would not, in any case, create a situation in which Japan could and would move to develop nuclear weapons.

Likewise, efforts by the United States to expand the role of nuclear weapons would not in and of itself create pressure in Japan to develop nuclear weapons. However, if it led to the collapse of the non-proliferation regime and the development of nuclear weapons by a number of other states in the area, especially a unified Korea, a consensus might well develop in Japan that it needed to exercise its option. Such a consensus might also develop if there was no further progress in reducing nuclear weapons and if China continued to improve and expand its nuclear forces.

Thus the conditions that might lead Japan to develop nuclear weapons would be:

1. a consensus in Japan that the United States could no longer be counted on to defend Japan; **or**
2. the development of a Korean nuclear capability; **or**
3. a lack of progress in nuclear disarmament, coupled with an expansion of the Chinese nuclear capability.

If the United States chose to instead further stigmatize nuclear weapons, Japan would have great difficulty resisting such efforts, as it has been thus far unable to stay outside the non-proliferation regime, whatever the private misgivings of its bureaucracy and political leadership.

Thus, if the United States took the lead in suggesting a Northeast Asian nuclear free zone,³¹ Japan would not find it possible to resist. (A number of different suggestions have been made for the scope of such a nuclear free zone. I have in mind the traditional notion of a zone covering only a region of states that are not nuclear weapons states. Thus the area covered by the treaty would include North and South Korea and Japan, and possibly Taiwan and Mongolia, but not any part of the territory of China, Russia, or the United States. The nuclear weapons states would be asked to sign a protocol promising to respect the region and abstain from threatening to use nuclear weapons against any state party to the treaty.)

Moreover, the concern of Japanese leaders about the future direction of a unified Korean government creates an opportunity for the United States to involve Japan in an effort to resolve

the situation in a way that would both strengthen the non-nuclear status of Japan and Korea and ensure that the bilateral alliances between those two countries and the United States survive the unification of Korea.

In order to seize this opportunity, the United States should seek to involve all countries with interests in Northeast Asia in a cooperative security process that would result in advancing a range of U.S. objectives, including strengthening the worldwide non-proliferation regime. The first step is to define U.S. objectives in Northeast Asia now and after Korean unification.

Options for the Korean Peninsula

The turmoil in the South Korean economic system and the election of Kim Dae Jung, and North Korea's missile tests and mysterious tunnels—all amid efforts to improve bilateral relations—have produced an extraordinarily fluid and uncertain situation. South Korea is no longer a confident economic giant facing a North in a state of economic collapse. Furthermore, the South now has a leader who is much more open to direct talks with the North in an effort to implement the far-reaching North-South accord negotiated in 1991 and has explicitly disavowed any effort to destabilize the North Korean regime.

The four power talks provide a framework in which China and the United States can consider their overall security interests in the region.

There remains a number of different scenarios for the Korean peninsula. Three are laid out here to help to illuminate key security issues, including the question of the continuing role of

³¹ For details of the effort being made to establish such a zone, refer to the report sponsored by the Center for International Strategy, Technology, and Policy, University of Georgia, Atlanta "Toward a Limited Nuclear Free Zone in

nuclear weapons in the region: 1) “muddling through,” 2) a Chinese-ROK agreement, and 3) a cooperative security agreement.

Muddling Through

The debate in the United States and South Korea about whether a quick collapse in the North is possible and desirable is largely over, although there remain those who hope for a “managed” collapse in a brief period.³² The economic crisis has heightened concern about the impact of unification on South Korea. Moreover, the dangers of a sudden collapse are now better understood.

It now appears that the most likely scenario for Korea is one of “muddling through.” Under this formula, no effort would be made to destabilize the North and the two Koreas would slowly implement the agreement between them, leading to increased exchanges and recognition. In parallel, the United States would remove its restrictions on trade and gradually normalize relations with the North.

In this scenario, despite this approach, the North could still quickly collapse. If it did not, North and South would gradually adopt the slogan of “one country—two systems” and move very slowly toward unification.

Northeast Asia: Senior Panel’s Deliberation on a Draft Initial Agreement” (1995).

³² For an enumeration of possible scenarios for the precipitation of Korean unification, see “Search for a Framework for ROK-US Relations,” Report of a Conference sponsored by The Seoul Forum for International Affairs and the Council on Foreign Relations, Seoul (1997) 16-7.

China-ROK Alliance

Because South Korean leaders fear that China might feel compelled to go beyond the aid it is now providing to the North and to militarily intervene to prevent a collapse that would lead to a unified government allied with the United States and hostile to China, they have begun to consider another option in which unification would come about as a result of a bilateral understanding between the ROK and the PRC.

With this approach, the ROK and the PRC would improve their relations in order to forestall a clash between the two countries. South Koreans wish to avoid Chinese intervention, which would again divide Korea, and the Chinese goal of preventing a unified Korea from being part of an anti-Chinese alliance could lead to an agreement between the two countries. In this scenario, China would agree not to intervene to prevent unification of the entire peninsula and Korea would agree to end the alliance with the United States and to expel U.S. troops once Korea was unified.

Cooperative Security Arrangement

Under the cooperative security scenario, the United States would discuss with all major powers that have interests focused on the Korea peninsula what their security concerns are and seek to define a process and an outcome that were consistent with the interests of each state. It would then initiate the agreed process in a transparent manner to bring about the agreed outcome, which would be consistent with the interests of each state, including the desire of South Korea to see a process of gradual unification unfold.

The first step in that process would be for the United States to define its own interests in Northeast Asia both now and after the unification of Korea. Obviously, one key objective would be to prevent further nuclear proliferation and to ensure that if there were any nuclear weapons or weapons-grade fissionable material in North Korea, they were destroyed.

I believe this approach is the one that the United States should follow, not only to address the problem of security on the Korean peninsula, but to minimize the danger that Japan will seek to develop nuclear weapons.

Cooperative Security in Northeast Asia before and after Korean Unification

What are the key elements of the security situation that the United States should seek to put in place in Northeast Asia to improve the security situation, including permitting the peaceful unification of Korea? One way to approach this question is to ask what situation the United States would like to see following Korean unification. I would suggest the following as a point of departure:

- a unified, democratic Korea in all of the territory now controlled by North and South Korea;
- the 1954 U.S.-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty continued and applied to the entire country;
- U.S. troops in Korea maintained at current or reduced levels and in a location that avoids unnecessary conflict with civilian needs;
- a Korea that is de-nuclearized and committed by international treaty to remain non-nuclear; and

- satisfaction on the part of China, Japan and Russia that the outcome and the manner in which it was reached are consistent with each country's security interests as it defines them.

The objective of a unified democratic Korea in all of the territory now controlled by North and South Korea goes without saying. It is worth noting that this outcome is by no means assured. It depends at the least in creating a situation in which if the North collapses, China does not feel obliged to intervene in order to ensure a security zone under the control of a friendly government not allied to the United States. Even if China can be persuaded not to intervene to prevent the unification of Korea, a collapse in the north is by no means guaranteed, and unification may be the result of a very slow process of reconciliation between the North and South. Such a process may even include a period in which there is "one country but two systems" or even two governments.

The continuation of the security treaty between Korea and the United States is critical to ensuring that a unified Korea does not feel the need to develop nuclear weapons and does not come under the control of any one of its more powerful neighbors. The presence of some U.S. troops in Korea will make the U.S. deterrent more credible, including the commitment to respond to any nuclear threats against Korea.

In order to gain Chinese assent to this U.S. role in Korea, it will be necessary to provide assurances, particularly about the location of U.S. forces. The Chinese are unlikely to be willing to agree to any arrangement that permits U.S. forces to be stationed at the Chinese border, but might be willing to acquiesce to their presence in the lower part of the peninsula. The agreement on the location of U.S. forces should be accompanied by other confidence building measures

(CBMs), including limits on the forces stationed by China and Russia in the border areas close to the Korean peninsula, notification of military exercises by any state in the vicinity of the Korean peninsula, and restrictions on Japanese naval and troop deployments;

Although North Korea regularly threatens to resume its nuclear program if the framework agreement collapses, both Korean governments are now committed to not developing nuclear weapons. This understanding should be codified in an international treaty creating a nuclear free zone in Northeast Asia, which would furthermore would transform the unilateral commitment by the Japanese government to its own people into a binding treaty obligation for Japan. It would also convert a commitment between the two Koreas—which will lapse at the time of unification—into a binding international commitment that would apply to a unified Korean state as well as any intermediate arrangement on the Korean peninsula. Specifically, the proposed treaty would obligate Korea and Japan to not develop nuclear weapons or permit them to be stationed on their territory, and provision might be made for international inspection of the obligations of the signatory states. The three nuclear powers would furthermore agree not to threaten to use—or to use—nuclear weapons against Korea or Japan or to station nuclear weapons in the territory covered by the treaty.

The value of the agreement could be enhanced by including a pledge by the three nuclear weapons states not to use nuclear weapons first against each other in the region. As with other nuclear free zones, the nuclear weapons states would remain free to have ships, including submarines, armed with nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles operate in the zone. Taiwan could also be covered by the treaty by having both the PRC and the ROC on Taiwan agree that nuclear weapons will not be stored on the island, that the government of Taiwan will not develop nuclear

weapons and that no state will attack Taiwan with nuclear weapons—all without prejudice to existing positions on the political status of Taiwan.

The objective of satisfying China, Russia and Japan with both the process and the outcome is the most novel and the most important suggestion made here.

The 1994 “Agreed Framework” between the United States and North Korea—which was aimed at resolving the nuclear proliferation threat from the North and thus at contributing to stability on the peninsula—came about only because the United States, South Korea and Japan were willing to seriously consider North Korea’s security interests as its leaders defined them and then enlist the support of China and Russia.³³ A similar but more explicit and transparent process is necessary to insure that Korean is eventually unified peacefully and that the result is to strengthen, rather than weaken, the sense of trust among the great powers in the region.

If the United States is truly interested in “engaging” China, it should work hard to draw it into a serious dialogue on cooperative security in Northeast Asia and to establish a security framework in which all key countries with interests in the region could seek to find solutions reflecting a cooperative security approach.

The first step would be to discuss bilaterally with each country U.S. long-term security interests, particularly as they relate to Korea. If agreement can be reached on the desired end points, then discussion can begin on what steps should be taken in the short term to ensure a peaceful transition on the peninsula.

³³ A comprehensive treatment of the 1994 “Agreed Framework” can be found in Leon V. Sigal, *Disarming Strangers: Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998): 195-204.

The concerned outside parties should agree to not militarily intervene in North Korea and to consult urgently about appropriate steps in the case of a collapse of order in the North. At the same time, they should agree not to seek to isolate the North economically or politically but to provide it with humanitarian assistance based on needs determined by the appropriate international institutions. They should also agree to lift remaining economic sanctions and to provide assistance for economic development if the North institutes necessary reforms in its economic system.

One should not minimize the difficulties of moving in this direction. North Korea might easily see these steps as an effort to create a broader coalition aimed at thwarting its objectives in the region. China continues to be wary of any proposals for multilateral security cooperation in Asia. South Korea and Japan remain suspicious of each other and reluctant to cooperate on security issues. There is little sense of urgency of the kind usually needed to create new institutions or new ways of looking at issues. However, I believe that all of these impediments can be overcome if the United States is clear on what it is trying to accomplish and exercises sustained leadership.

A Regional Security Structure

Out of the discussions on Korea as well as nuclear issues and other security issues in Northeast Asia might grow a consensus on the need to create—first informally and then more formally—a new international forum for discussing the security problems of Northeast Asia.³⁴

³⁴ For a discussion on the role of regional structures in Northeast Asia as a mechanism for peace, see Kyung-Won Kim, “Maintaining Asia’s Current Peace,” *Survival* (Winter 1997-1998): 53-4.

Such a forum might be patterned after the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), a pan-European security organization that was established as a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in Europe. Like the OSCE, a Northeast Asia Cooperative Security Organization (NACSO) could be designed to promote cooperative solutions to security problems through decisions achieved by consensus, contributing toward the prevention of conflict among powers with interests in Northeast Asia, as well as toward providing the means to address threats to international peace and regional security. Structurally, it might have a small, informal secretariat that helps set the agenda for meetings of heads of government as well as of foreign and defense ministers and chiefs of staffs.

This organization would provide a venue to discuss arms control and confidence-building measures for the region, including those related to nuclear weapons. Its agenda in this regard would include the measures directly relating to the Korean peninsula as well as more general security issues, including the proposed nuclear free zone, playing an important role even if agreement could not be reached on issues related to the Korean peninsula. The PRC would almost certainly resist formal membership for the ROC on Taiwan or any explicit discussion of what it views as a domestic issue. Still, discussions of security issues related to Taiwan might occur at the margins of these meetings.

The proposed Northeast Asia Cooperative Security Organization would not seek to supplant existing collective security treaties, including the bilateral treaties between the United States and Korea and Japan. Rather, these treaties would be viewed as a second line of defense to

be activated only if these cooperative security measures failed. That is, the United States, Japan and the ROK would undertake to consult with the NACSO first in the event of a security threat in the region and only resort to consultation within the framework of these treaties if this effort failed. Military cooperation, joint planning and military exercises would be permitted after notification and other measures to avoid misunderstandings.

The bilateral security treaties would be accepted by all the states in the region as not directed at any other states. For Japan and South Korea, they would provide assurances against military threats from China or Russia. The other states would accept the treaty as a necessary means to limit the armament of Japan, Korea and Taiwan, including their continue adherence to the NPT and acceptance of a nuclear free zone.

To summarize in more concrete terms, the security landscape that the United States should strive for in the unified Korea would include:

- a united, democratic Korea allied to the United States and committed to not developing nuclear weapons;
- U.S. forces stationed in Korea pursuant to the bilateral security treaty;
- an international agreement on security on the Korean peninsula that limits the deployment of U.S. troops to below the 40th parallel and provides for confidence-building measures, including notification of military exercises by any state in the vicinity of the Korean peninsula and restrictions on Chinese and Russian troops in the area bordering Korea, and on Japanese naval and troop deployments;
- a treaty that creates a nuclear free zone in Northeast Asia that covers Korea, Taiwan and Japan and prohibits the nuclear weapons states from storing nuclear weapons in the area or using them against the non-nuclear states or each other in the zone covered by the treaty; and

- a Northeast Asia Cooperative Security Organization that brings the key players together to discuss these issues.

Success in negotiating this set of arrangements would not only increase the chances for the peaceful unification of the two Korean states and for cooperative security in Asia, but it would make a major contribution toward preventing nuclear proliferation in Northeast Asia and throughout the world.