

Assuring South Korea and Japan as the Role and Number of U.S. Nuclear Weapons are Reduced

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Introduction

Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) are among the principal allies of the United States and perhaps its most important allies in the Asia-Pacific region. The two are key democratic, trading, diplomatic, and military partners of the United States. Both countries have defense ties with United States that are nearly six decades old. The security arrangements with each country include a nuclear guarantee by which the United States pledges its readiness to use nuclear forces to protect its ally. The nuclear guarantee to each ally serves two distinct, but related, purposes: to discourage an attack against the ally (extended deterrence) and to give the ally confidence in the U.S. commitment to its defense (assurance). Ongoing developments in Northeast Asia have caused both Tokyo and Seoul to raise questions about U.S. nuclear commitments. These developments are the growth in Chinese military power and Beijing's efforts to exert greater influence in the region, and the new nuclear capabilities of North Korea and Pyongyang's provocative behavior. In addition, the nuclear weapon policies of the United States have been a source of allied concern. The 2010 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) calls for reducing the size as well as the role of nuclear forces and sets as a long-term goal the elimination of all nuclear weapons. While the Japanese and South Korean governments have given general endorsements of the results of the NPR, they also believe that nuclear force reductions and nuclear de-emphasis potentially could have adverse implications for their security situations, particularly in light of regional developments. The need to assure allies of U.S. security commitments, including nuclear guarantees, as the United States seeks lower numbers of nuclear weapons and a smaller nuclear role, is an imperative recognized by the NPR and in subsequent statements by U.S. officials. Changes in the Northeast Asian security environment and changes in U.S. nuclear weapons policies thus present the problem of assuring Japan and South Korea as further nuclear reductions are pursued.

This problem is addressed in the sections that follow. The discussion begins by identifying the general means by which the United States assures allies of its security commitments. The means of assurance include broad bilateral ties, formal alliances, statements by U.S. officials, forward deployments of U.S. forces, and exercises and operations related to allied defense. Next, key U.S. nuclear weapons policies are outlined. These policies are summarized from the NPR and related documents. With these sections as background, the discussion moves to separate examinations of South Korea and Japan. For each country, the specific means of assurance are described, the concerns about the direction of U.S. nuclear weapons policies are reported, and recommendations for alleviating those concerns using the means of assurance are offered. The discussion concludes with a summary of the recommendations (pages 65-67) for a regional approach which might be used to assure both allies in Northeast Asia.

Means of Assurance¹

Overall Relationship

The state of the overall relationship between the United States and an ally covered by the U.S. nuclear umbrella can add to, or detract from, the credibility of that nuclear guarantee. Strong bilateral ties—historical bonds, economic trade, cultural connections, diplomatic intercourse, and military cooperation—give the United States a stake in the security of the ally and increase the perceived likelihood of U.S. military action if that country falls prey to armed aggression. Where the U.S. stake is high, and nonnuclear alternatives are insufficient, the possibility of U.S. nuclear use to defend the ally is more plausible.

Formal Alliance

A military pact reflects and underscores U.S. interests in the security of another country. By assuming the obligation to aid in the defense of that country, the United States offers assurance to the ally and warning to its adversaries. A treaty also establishes the groundwork for the combined endeavors—consultations, commands, planning, exchanges, deployments, exercises, operations, and the like—that comprise a military alliance, reinforce ties between its members, and demonstrate its strength. While defense treaties between the United States and countries under the nuclear umbrella do not state explicit conditions that would warrant a U.S. nuclear response, each agreement is the formal basis for U.S. nuclear protection.

Official Statements

U.S. restatements of a nuclear guarantee reassure the protected ally by reinforcing the U.S. commitment. The circumstances and purpose behind a statement reaffirming the guarantee will determine the way it is worded, how it is conveyed, and by whom. Statements can be designed to deter, assure, or both. They can be public or private. And they can be made by the president, a cabinet officer, or lower-ranking official. While they can be general, they are likely to have the greatest effect when made for a specific ally.

Forward Deployments

The forward presence of U.S. military forces has value for deterrence and assurance that is well recognized. Forces routinely deployed on or near the territory of an ally not only, or even primarily, augment the armed strength of that country, but also serve as a concrete and continuing reminder that the United States has a strong interest in its security and will fight in its defense. Permanently stationed ground forces in particular

¹ This categorization of means of assurance is drawn from Keith Payne (Study Director), Thomas Scheber, Kurt Guthe, and Mark Schneider, *Nuclear Guarantees, Extended Deterrence and the Assurance of Allies* (Fairfax, Va: National Institute for Public Policy, April 2009), pp. 22-26.

seem to have an assurance effect generally greater than that of temporary deployments (port calls to show the flag, for example), probably because they are unlikely to be withdrawn overnight and often are positioned where they will be directly engaged by an enemy attack, thus ensuring U.S. involvement in a conflict. The likelihood, if not certainty, that U.S. forces would be engaged in a conflict can lend credibility to an associated nuclear guarantee. If forward deployments include U.S. nuclear weapons, those arms themselves offer a tangible assurance that the ally is covered by the nuclear umbrella.

Exercises and Operations

Military exercises and operations, particularly shows of force, are venerable instruments of deterrence. But exercises and operations also contribute to the assurance of allies. Like bilateral command arrangements and forward deployments, combined exercises tie the United States more closely to the defense of its allies. Operations in which American forces deploy to defend an ally during a crisis demonstrate the U.S. commitment to that country. Repeated crisis deployments establish a track record that strengthens the credibility of that commitment. And a credible U.S. security commitment is a mainstay of an effective nuclear guarantee. If exercises with allies or crisis operations for allied defense involve U.S. nuclear-armed (or nuclear-capable) forces, the support for the nuclear guarantee will be more direct.

Recent Strategy Reviews with Implications for Assurance

In 2010, the United States released a variety of security-related policy documents that are of particular interest to Japan and the Republic of Korea. These documents included the Nuclear Posture Review and the Ballistic Missile Defense Review. Excerpts from these documents which are likely to be of special interest to allies in Northeast Asia are briefly summarized below and reactions by these allies are discussed later in this report.

Nuclear Posture Review

Perhaps the most substantive change in U.S. nuclear policy in the 2010 NPR was the top priority accorded to nuclear nonproliferation and the commitment to reducing the roles and numbers of nuclear weapons. Appropriate excerpts from the NPR include the following:

Fundamental changes in the international security environment in recent years—including the growth of unrivaled U.S. conventional military capabilities, major improvements in missile defenses, and the easing of Cold War rivalries—enable us to fulfill those [national] objectives at significantly lower nuclear force levels and with reduced reliance on nuclear weapons.

[We] must give top priority to discouraging additional countries from acquiring nuclear weapons capabilities and stopping terrorist groups. ...For the first time, the 2010 NPR places this priority atop the U.S. nuclear agenda.

By reducing the role and numbers of U.S. nuclear weapons—meeting our NPT [Non-Proliferation Treaty] Article VI obligation to make progress toward nuclear disarmament—we can put ourselves in a much stronger position to persuade our NPT partners to join with us in adopting the measures needed to reinvigorate the non-proliferation regime and secure nuclear materials worldwide.²

... Any future nuclear reductions must continue to strengthen deterrence of potential regional adversaries, strategic stability vis-à-vis Russia and China, and assure our allies and partners.³

The long-standing negative security assurance policy was restated and the context for possible nuclear use was narrowed: “The United States will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states that are party to the NPT and in compliance with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations.” If these states carry out chemical or biological attacks against the United States or its security partners, they face the prospect of a devastating conventional military response. If the biological threat

² Department of Defense (DoD), *Nuclear Posture Review Report* [hereinafter NPR] (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, April 2010), pp. v-vi.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. xi.

grows, the United States reserves the right to adjust this policy. Furthermore, the NPR stated as an ultimate goal the further narrowing of U.S. policy for nuclear use to deterrence of nuclear attack as the sole purpose of U.S. nuclear weapons. In the interim, the United States will consider use only in “extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States or its allies and partners.” Additionally, it stated that it was in the interest of all nations that the “65-year record of nuclear non-use be extended forever.”⁴

The NPR also appeared to close the door on new nuclear capabilities. Senior defense officials later clarified that, if needed in the future, new types of capabilities would be considered and would not be rejected out of hand.⁵

On extended deterrence in general:

We will continue to assure our allies and partners of our commitment to their security and to demonstrate this commitment not only through words, but also through deeds. This includes the continued forward deployment of U.S. forces in key regions, strengthening of U.S. and allied non-nuclear capabilities, and the continued provision of extended deterrence. Such security relationships are critical not only in deterring potential threats, but can also serve our non-proliferation goals—by demonstrating to neighboring states that their pursuit of nuclear weapons will only undermine their goal of achieving military or political advantages, and by reassuring non-nuclear U.S. allies and partners that their security interests can be protected without their own nuclear deterrent capabilities. Further, the United States will work with allies and partners to strengthen the global non-proliferation regime, especially the implementation of existing commitments within their regions.⁶

Security architectures in key regions will retain a nuclear dimension as long as nuclear threats to U.S. allies and partners remain. U.S. nuclear weapons have played an essential role in extending deterrence to U.S. allies and partners against nuclear attacks or nuclear-backed coercion by states in their region that possess or are seeking nuclear weapons. ... Today, there are separate choices to be made in partnership with allies in Europe and Asia about what posture best serves our shared interests in deterrence and assurance and in moving toward a world of reduced nuclear dangers.⁷

In Asia and the Middle East—where there are no multilateral alliance structures analogous to NATO—the United States has mainly extended deterrence through bilateral alliances and security relationships and through its forward military presence and security guarantees. When the Cold War ended, the United States withdrew its forward-deployed nuclear weapons

⁴ Ibid., pp. viii-ix.

⁵ Special Briefing on the Nuclear Posture Review, April 6, 2010, DoD transcript.

⁶ DoD, *NPR*, op.cit., p. 31.

⁷ Ibid. p. 32.

from the Pacific region, including removing nuclear weapons from naval surface vessels and general purpose submarines. Since then, it has relied on its central strategic forces and the capacity to redeploy non-strategic nuclear systems in East Asia, if needed, in times of crisis. The Administration is pursuing strategic dialogues with its allies and partners in East Asia and the Middle East to determine how best to cooperatively strengthen regional security architectures to enhance peace and security, and reassure them that U.S. extended deterrence is credible and effective.⁸

Enhancing regional security architectures is a key part of the U.S. strategy for strengthening regional deterrence while reducing the role and numbers of nuclear weapons. These regional security architectures include effective missile defense, counter-WMD capabilities, conventional power-projection capabilities, and integrated command and control—all underwritten by strong political commitments. ... Strengthening the non-nuclear elements of regional security architectures is vital to moving toward a world free of nuclear weapons.⁹

On the role of nuclear weapons to support commitments to key allies:

A credible U.S. “nuclear umbrella” has been provided by a combination of means—the strategic forces of the U.S. Triad, non-strategic nuclear weapons deployed forward in key regions, and U.S.-based nuclear weapons that could be deployed forward quickly to meet regional contingencies.

...The NPR concluded that the United States will: Retain the capability to forward-deploy U.S. nuclear weapons on tactical fighter-bombers and heavy bombers... Continue and, where appropriate, expand consultations with allies and partners to address how to ensure the credibility and effectiveness of the U.S. extended deterrent. No changes in U.S. extended deterrence capabilities will be made without close consultations with our allies and partners.¹⁰

The NPR said that this goal of strengthening regional deterrence while reducing nuclear forces would be accomplished by the following:

- Building enhanced regional security architectures, including non-nuclear capabilities for deterrence;
- Continuing and, where appropriate, expanding ongoing bilateral and multilateral discussions with allies and partners;
- Working with allies and partners to respond to regional threats by deploying effective missile defenses;
- Strengthening counter-WMD capabilities, including improved U.S. and allied ability to defeat chemical or biological attack;

⁸ Ibid., p. 32.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 32-33.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. xii-xiv.

- Developing non-nuclear prompt global strike capabilities;
- Developing and deploying, over the next decade, more effective capabilities for real-time intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities; and
- Expanding and deepening consultations with allies and partners on policies and combined postures to prevent proliferation and credibly deter aggression.¹¹

Ballistic Missile Defense Review

The Ballistic Missile Defense Review (BMDR) described the administration’s approach to ballistic missile defense (BMD), in general, and as a measure to assure allies. Excerpts of relevance for the general assurance mission include the following:

Ballistic missile defenses help support U.S. security commitments to allies and partners. They provide reassurance that the United States will stand by those commitments despite the growth in the military potential of regional adversaries. Missile defenses also aid the United States in maintaining military freedom of maneuver, by helping to negate the coercive potential of regional actors intent on inhibiting and disrupting U.S. military access in their regions.¹²

As the United States has stated in the past, the homeland missile defense capabilities are focused on regional actors such as Iran and North Korea. While the GMD [Ground-Based Midcourse Defense] system would be employed to defend the United States against limited missile launches from any source, it does not have the capacity to cope with large scale Russian or Chinese missile attacks, and is not intended to affect the strategic balance with those countries.¹³

[A] key objective in the Administration’s strategy and policy framework is to lead expanded international efforts and cooperation on missile defense. The United States is committed to working intensively with allies and partners in two categories: (1) developing and fielding robust, pragmatic, and cost-effective capabilities, and (2) engaging in international cooperation on a broad range of missile defense–related activities, including technological and industrial cooperation.¹⁴

Specifically regarding BMD plans for East Asia:

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 33-35.

¹² Department of Defense, *Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, February 2010), p. 12.

¹³ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 31.

In East Asia, the United States has a range of cooperative relationships. **Japan** is one of our most significant international BMD partners. The United States and Japan have made considerable strides in BMD cooperation and interoperability in support of bilateral missile defense operations. Japan has acquired a layered integrated missile defense system that includes Aegis BMD ships with Standard Missile 3 interceptors, Patriot Advanced Capability 3 (PAC-3) fire units, early warning radars, and a command and control system. The United States and Japan regularly train together, and our forces have successfully executed cooperative BMD operations. One of our most significant cooperative efforts is the co-development of a next-generation SM-3 interceptor, called the Block IIA. This co-development program represents not only an area of significant technical cooperation but also the basis for enhanced operational cooperation to strengthen regional security. The U.S.-Japan partnership is an outstanding example of the kind of cooperation the United States seeks in order to tailor a phased adaptive approach to the unique threats and capabilities in a region.¹⁵

The Republic of Korea (ROK) is also an important U.S. BMD partner. The ROK has indicated interest in acquiring a missile defense capability that includes land- and sea-based systems, early warning radars, and a command and control system. The United States and ROK are working to define possible future BMD requirements. As these requirements are determined, the United States stands ready to work with the ROK to strengthen its protection against the North Korean missile threat. The United States looks forward to taking further steps to enhance operational coordination and build upon ongoing missile defense cooperation.¹⁶

The NPR and BMDR describe aspects of the administration's policies and plans for nuclear weapons and other strategic capabilities as well as extended deterrence. Shifts in U.S. policies are likely to affect the reassurance of allies. The sections that follow, discuss reactions to these policy shifts by government officials and commentators in the ROK and Japan.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 32-33 (emphasis added).

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 33 (emphasis added).

South Korea

Means of Assurance for South Korea

Described below are the political and military instruments the United States has used to make clear its readiness to aid in the defense of the Republic of Korea. The enduring strength of the overall relationship between the two countries provides an underlying credibility to U.S. words and actions intended to assure Seoul. Their formal alliance gives South Korea the expectation, and the United States the obligation, that American military forces—including nuclear arms—will protect the ROK against external aggression. Official statements of U.S. military support bolster South Korean confidence in the alliance commitment. Forward deployment of U.S. forces in or near the ROK affords the South Koreans tangible evidence of that commitment. U.S.-ROK military exercises and crisis deployments of U.S. forces to the peninsula are demonstrations of the American pledge to preserve the security of South Korea. Alliance arrangements, official statements, forward deployments, and exercises and operations are the basic tools with which to assure South Korea if changes in the nuclear weapons policies and capabilities of the United States cause doubts about the U.S. nuclear guarantee or the U.S. security commitment as a whole.

Overall Relationship

The commitment of the United States to the defense of the Republic of Korea derives from U.S. political, military, and economic interests in South Korean security. The bilateral relationship with the ROK grew out of the Korean War. As Secretary of Defense Robert Gates remarked during an October 2010 press conference with the South Korean defense minister, “the close bonds between our two countries and our two militaries, first forged in blood and shared sacrifice six decades ago...form the foundation for an enduring, resolute and capable defense of the Republic of Korea.”¹⁷ In part because of the long-term U.S. commitment to its defense, the ROK has become a fellow liberal democracy with a strong market economy. South Korea generally aligns with U.S. positions not only in the Northeast Asian context but also in broader international affairs. Seoul has contributed to U.S. military operations in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The ROK today is the seventh largest trading partner of the United States and the 13th largest economy in the world.¹⁸ A new war on the peninsula not only would result in significant allied casualties and disruption of economic activity in South Korea, including its vital international trade, but also could threaten a wider conflict involving Japan, China, and Russia, with incalculable consequences for U.S. and international security.

¹⁷ DoD News Briefing with Secretary Gates and Republic of Korea Minister of National Defense Kim Tae-young, October 8, 2010, Department of Defense (DoD) release.

¹⁸ Foreign Trade Division, Census Bureau, “Foreign Trade Statistics: Top Trading Partners—Total Trade, Exports, Imports,” Year-to-Date, September 2010, available at <http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/statistics/highlights/top/top1009yr.html>; and Central Intelligence Agency, *World Factbook*, available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>.

The overall relationship between the United States and South Korea provides the fundamental basis for the assurance of the latter. Important U.S. interests overlap with those of South Korea and give the United States a considerable stake in the security of the ROK. This stake lends credibility to the pledge by the United States to use its military forces in defense of South Korea, despite the costs it is likely to incur by such action. The American stake is sufficiently great that U.S. nuclear use to defend the ROK in grave wartime circumstances is a plausible military option. Indeed, U.S. officials occasionally have made nuclear threats, either explicit or veiled, to deter aggression by North Korea—and to assure the South.¹⁹

Formal Alliance

The U.S.-ROK security partnership is formalized in a mutual defense treaty signed shortly after the Korean War armistice. That the treaty serves as a means of assuring Seoul is evident in its language. In the preamble the parties “declare publicly and formally their common determination to defend themselves against external armed attack so that no potential aggressor could be under the illusion that either of them stands alone in the Pacific area.” The signatories go on to pledge that “an armed attack in the Pacific area on either of the Parties... would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares it would act to meet the common danger.”²⁰ The treaty thus is an expression of *katchi kapshida* (“we go together”), a phrase frequently used by both military personnel and civilian officials to characterize the strong ties between the two countries.²¹

The treaty grants the United States “the right to dispose [its] land, air, and sea forces in and about the territory of the Republic of Korea as determined by mutual agreement.” U.S. forces deployed in or near the ROK under this provision have long played an important role in assuring the South Koreans as well as preventing North Korean aggression. While the treaty does not contain an explicit nuclear guarantee, the U.S. nuclear protection afforded South Korea is consistent with the clause specifying that “[s]eparately and jointly, by self help and mutual aid, the Parties will maintain and develop appropriate means to deter armed attack.” For over 30 years, the communiqué issued at the end of each annual Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) between the U.S. defense secretary and the ROK defense minister has made it clear that South Korea is covered by the U.S. nuclear umbrella.²² The 2010 SCM communiqué, for example,

¹⁹ See, for example, Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, quoted in Associated Press, “Schlesinger Warns N. Korea U.S. May Use Nuclear Arms,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 22, 1975; President Bill Clinton, Exchange With Reporters at the Demilitarized Zone, July 11, 1993, in National Archives and Records Administration, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: William J. Clinton, 1993, Book I* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1994), p. 1061; and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, remarks on “Face the Nation,” CBS TV broadcast, April 11, 2010, CBS transcript, p. 3.

²⁰ Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea, signed October 1, 1953, ratifications exchanged November 17, 1954, in Department of State, *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955: Basic Documents, Vol. I*, Department of State Publication 6446 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1957).

²¹ For a recent example, see Remarks by the President Honoring Veterans Day in Seoul, South Korea, November 10, 2010, White House release.

²² DoD News Briefing with Secretary [of Defense Donald] Rumsfeld and South Korean Minister of National Defense Yoon Kwang-Ung at the Pentagon, October 20, 2006, DoD release.

reads, “Secretary Gates reaffirmed the continued U.S. commitment to provide and strengthen extended deterrence for the ROK, using the full range of military capabilities, to include the U.S. nuclear umbrella, conventional strike, and missile defense capabilities.”²³ When, after a White House meeting with his South Korean counterpart, President Obama gave his own endorsement of the nuclear umbrella extended to the ROK, President Lee Myung-bak said, “this has given the South Korean people a greater sense of security.”²⁴

As part of their alliance, the United States and South Korea established a Combined Forces Command (CFC) in 1978. This unified command structure, under which South Korea has operational control (OPCON) of its forces in peacetime but the United States would exercise wartime OPCON of both U.S. and ROK forces, superseded command arrangements dating from the Korean War era. Assuring South Korea of the U.S. security commitment was a key purpose behind the creation of the CFC. Seoul had come to question the strength of that commitment as a result of events earlier in the 1970s—weak responses by the United States to several North Korean provocations, the Vietnam pullout, cuts in U.S. forces in the ROK, and criticism from Washington of the South Korean human rights record. For South Koreans, the combined command was a means of tying the United States more tightly to their security. “The formal inauguration of the CFC,” according to two South Korean analysts, “was an important turning point in the ROK-U.S. military relationship, reducing South Korea’s feeling of insecurity.”²⁵

Thirty years later, however, then-President Roh Moo-hyun gained U.S. agreement to transfer wartime operational control to the ROK in 2012. President Roh favored a policy of “cooperative self-reliant defense” that called for a more equal alliance relationship with the United States. The 2007 agreement was opposed by many South Koreans, who feared wartime OPCON transfer—and the disestablishment of the CFC—would weaken the military and broader ties with the United States and encourage risk-taking by the North.²⁶ Anxieties grew in subsequent years, with some South Korean commentators linking doubts about the change in wartime operational control with “deterioration” in the U.S. extended-deterrent commitment.²⁷ In June 2010, Lee Myung-bak, President Roh’s successor, asked that the shift be delayed until 2015, a request President Obama accepted.²⁸

²³ 42nd U.S.-ROK Security Consultative Meeting Joint Communiqué, October 8, 2010, DoD release.

²⁴ Remarks by President Obama and President Lee Myung-bak of the Republic of Korea in Joint Press Availability, June 16, 2009, White House release.

²⁵ Kang Choi and Joon-Sung Park, “South Korea: Fears of Abandonment and Entrapment,” in Muthiah Alagappa, ed., *The Long Shadow: Nuclear Weapons and Security in 21st Century Asia* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008), pp. 375-378 (quote is from p. 378).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 389; and Song Dae-Sung, “Change in U.S. Forces in Korea and Korea’s Security,” *Sejong Policy Research*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2007), pp. 42-46 (in Korean), cited in Elizabeth Bakanic et al., *Preventing Nuclear Proliferation Chain Reactions: Japan, South Korea, and Egypt* (Princeton, N.J.: Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, January 2008), pp. 13-14.

²⁷ Seok-soo Lee, “The Future of Extended Deterrence: A South Korean Perspective,” in Bruno Tertrais, ed., *Perspectives on Extended Deterrence* (Paris: Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique, 2010), pp. 57-58.

²⁸ Remarks by President Obama and President Lee Myung-Bak of the Republic of Korea After Bilateral Meeting, International Downtown Hotel, Toronto, Canada, June 26, 2010, White House release.

ROK officials have cited four reasons for the delay. First, aggressive activity by North Korea, notably the May 2009 nuclear test, missile tests in April and May of the same year, and the March 2010 torpedoing of the South Korean corvette *Cheonan*. Second, instability associated with the North Korean leadership transition from Kim Jong-Il to his youngest son, Kim Jong-un. Third, uncertainties related to events scheduled for 2012, including South Korean, American and Russian presidential elections, the replacement of Hu Jintao as head of the Chinese Communist Party, and what Pyongyang claims will be the emergence of North Korea as a “strong and prosperous country.” And fourth, deficiencies in South Korean defense capabilities, particularly intelligence-gathering, command-and-control, and precision-strike systems, that will not be remedied before 2012.²⁹ Among these reasons, the first probably is the most significant. The 2009 nuclear and missile tests spurred the Lee administration to reconsider OPCON transfer and the *Cheonan* attack was a major impetus to the allied decision to delay the change.³⁰ In addition, it should be noted that officials of the Ministry of National Defense denied the claim made elsewhere in Seoul that the South Korean military would not be prepared to take over wartime OPCON in 2012.³¹

Delay in the transfer of wartime operational control is a good example of the way in which alternations in alliance arrangements can be used to assure the ROK of the U.S. defense commitment in the face of adverse changes in the South Korean security situation. “[T]he *Cheonan* incident on top of the [2009] nuclear test,” an adviser to the South Korean foreign ministry has observed, “really showed that the U.S. had to do something to beef up South Korea’s security.”³² The delay in OPCON transfer has been described by one of President Obama’s deputy national security advisers as a “key signal, particularly given the current state of play on the Korean Peninsula, about the depth of America’s commitment to the alliance and to the stability and security of the region.”³³

Official Statements

Affirmations of the U.S. nuclear guarantee are an essential part of assuring South Koreans of that protection. As an assistant secretary of state points out, “underscoring

²⁹ See news briefing by Kim Sung-hwan, senior secretary for foreign affairs and national security to the South Korean president, June 26, 2010, reported in Song Sang-ho, “Sinking Sparks War Control Transfer Delay,” *Korea Herald*, June 27, 2010; Lee Chi-dong, “S. Korea, U.S. to Delay Wartime Command Transfer, Speed Up FTA,” *Yonhap*, June 27, 2010; Yang Jung A, “OPCON Transfer Pushed Back to 2015,” *Daily NK*, June 27, 2010; “Wartime Control Transfer Delayed to Dec. 2015,” *Dong-A Ilbo*, June 28, 2010; and Seo Seung-wook and Christine Kim, “Delay in Transfer of Troop Control Angers Liberals,” *JoongAng Daily*, June 28, 2010.

³⁰ Yu Myung-hwan, South Korean foreign minister, quoted in Kang Hyun-kyung, “Korea Rethinking Transfer of Wartime Control,” *Korea Times*, June 24, 2010; and Ser Myo-ja and Seo Seung-wook, “Troop Control Talks Were Secretive,” *JoongAng Daily*, June 29, 2010.

³¹ Kwon Hyuk-chul, “High-Ranking Military Official Says, ‘No Problem Even If Operational Control Is Returned’; Simmering With Resentment Over Announcement on ‘Lack of Capabilities,’” *Hankyoreh*, July 1, 2010 (in Korean; Open Source Center translation KPP20100702032005).

³² Lee Chung-min, quoted in Evan Ramstad, “Obama Seeks to Strengthen South Korea Ties,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 28, 2010.

³³ Ben Rhodes, in Conference Call Briefing by Ben Rhodes, Mike Froman, Ambassador Jeff Bader, and Danny Russel, June 26, 2010, White House release.

the importance of...extended deterrence is a clear and enduring mission of the United States, particularly in Asia. And so you're going to find that almost every senior interlocutor, in his or her meetings with the Japanese or Korean counterparts, underscores the importance of extended deterrence in the Asian context."³⁴ In the case of South Korea, it is clear that Seoul wants authoritative, unambiguous, and repeated statements of the U.S. nuclear guarantee. Such statements, and not U.S. nuclear forces alone, are seen as necessary to deter aggression by the North.³⁵ One South Korean analysis of the nuclear aspect of the U.S.-ROK alliance finds that, "Strong reaffirmation of the U.S. extended deterrence commitment has raised South Korea's confidence in its security and strengthened the U.S. position when dealing with North Korea."³⁶

The same holds true, it is worth noting, for reiterations of the broader U.S. security commitment that undergirds the nuclear guarantee to the ROK. For example, as one of the allied responses to the *Cheonan* sinking, Secretary Gates and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in July 2010 went to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) with the South Korean defense and foreign ministers and emphasized U.S. support in light of the North Korean attack. "[W]e are here," Secretary Gates declared, "to send a strong signal to the North, to the region, and to the world that our commitment to South Korea's security is steadfast. In fact, our military alliance has never been stronger and it should deter any potential aggressor." In her remarks, Secretary Clinton said, "the United States stands firmly on behalf of the people and government of the Republic of Korea, where we provide a stalwart defense along with our allies and partners."³⁷ Similarly, in November 2010, after North Korea unleashed an artillery attack on the South Korean island of Yeonpyeong, killing or wounding a number of ROK marines and civilians, President Obama telephoned President Lee to affirm that "the United States stands shoulder to shoulder with [its] close friend and ally."³⁸ Defense Secretary Gates likewise called Defense Minister Kim Tae-young to express solidarity with Seoul and exchange views on possible responses to the attack.³⁹

The value of restatements of the U.S. security commitment to the ROK, including the nuclear guarantee, should not be underestimated. In a number of cases, these verbal assurances have played an important role in South Korean decisions regarding nuclear-

³⁴ Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell, interview remarks excerpted in Yoichi Kato, "U.S. Warms to Proposal to Reaffirm Security Pact," *Asahi Shimbun*, July 23, 2009.

³⁵ See, for example, Won Tae-jae, spokesman for the ROK defense ministry, in Sam Kim, "U.S.-S. Korea Summit Carries Mixed Messages on N. Korea," *Yonhap*, June 17, 2009; Lee Sang-hee, ROK defense minister, in "SKorea Reaffirms It Seeks No Atomic Weapons," *Agence France-Presse*, July 19, 2009; and Kim Sung-han, professor of international relations at Korea University, in Byun Duk-kun, "Lee, Obama To Discuss Denuclearizing N. Korea, Strengthening Alliance," *Yonhap*, June 16, 2009.

³⁶ Choi and Park, "South Korea: Fears of Abandonment and Entrapment," *op. cit.*, p. 393.

³⁷ Joint Statement by Secretary Gates and Secretary Clinton at the DMZ, Panmunjom, Korea, July 21, 2010, DoD release.

³⁸ Readout of the President's Call with President Lee of the Republic of Korea, November 23, 2010, White House release.

³⁹ Anne Gearan, "Obama Pledges US to Defend Its Ally South Korea," *Associated Press*, November 24, 2010; and Ser Myo-ja and Moon Gwan-lip, "Korea-U.S. Coordinate Moves," *JoongAng Daily*, November 25, 2010.

related matters. In the late 1960s, reiteration of the U.S. commitment helped persuade South Korea to set aside the option of “going nuclear” and instead accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).⁴⁰ In the 1970s, when doubts about that commitment led South Korea to start a clandestine nuclear weapons program, U.S. assurances, along with other measures, caused Seoul to halt the effort and ratify the NPT.⁴¹ In the early 1990s, South Korean President Roh Tae-woo accepted the withdrawal of U.S. nonstrategic nuclear weapons from the peninsula after President George H.W. Bush personally assured him that the ROK would remain under the nuclear umbrella despite their absence.⁴² And in recent years, each of the two North Korean nuclear tests (in 2006 and 2009) has prompted ranking U.S. officials, including the president, to underscore the nuclear guarantee to South Korea, thereby making it easier for Seoul to pursue measured responses to those provocative acts.⁴³ If the past is any guide, official statements regarding the U.S. commitment to the defense of the ROK should have similar assurance value in the future.

Forward Deployments

Deployment of U.S. forces in or near the Korean peninsula makes a critical contribution to the assurance of the ROK. Forward deployments manifest the U.S. commitment to the security of South Korea, virtually ensure U.S. involvement in any future Korean conflict, augment ROK forces in providing a direct defense against North Korean aggression, and represent a link to offshore U.S. reinforcements, all of which lend credibility to the U.S. nuclear guarantee. Given the assurance-related purposes served by forward deployments, it is not surprising that the secretary of defense at a July 2010 meeting in Seoul “reaffirm[ed] the commitment to maintain an enduring U.S. military force presence and the current troop levels in the Republic of Korea.”⁴⁴

Throughout the six decades since the end of the Korean War, the United States has kept a sizable military force in South Korea, from 85,000 troops in the early years after the conflict to the 28,500 service members stationed there today.⁴⁵ While the U.S. troop level generally has declined during this period, it sometimes has been adjusted (slower

⁴⁰ Choi and Park, “South Korea: Fears of Abandonment and Entrapment,” op. cit., p. 399.

⁴¹ Jonathan D. Pollack and Mitchell B. Reiss, “South Korea: The Tyranny of Geography and the Vexations of History,” in Kurt M. Campbell et al., *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear Choices* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2004), pp. 261-263; and Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1997), pp. 68-73.

⁴² Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, op. cit., p. 260.

⁴³ See, for example, Remarks on the Situation in North Korea, October 9, 2006, in *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (October 16, 2006), p. 1768; 38th U.S.-ROK Security Consultative Meeting Joint Communiqué, October 26, 2006, DoD release; Joint Vision for the Alliance of the United States of America and the Republic of Korea, June 16, 2009, White House release; and 41st U.S.-ROK Security Consultative Meeting Joint Communiqué, October 22, 2009, DoD release.

⁴⁴ Joint statement of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and ROK Minister of National Defense Kim Tae-young, released at Media Availability with Geoff Morrell [deputy assistant secretary of defense for public affairs], Adm. [Robert] Willard [commander, U.S. Pacific Command] and a Senior Defense Official, July 20, 2010, DoD transcript.

⁴⁵ Choi and Park, “South Korea: Fears of Abandonment and Entrapment,” op. cit., p. 397; and Jim Tice and Michael Hoffman, “Accompanied Tours to Double in South Korea,” *Army Times*, June 23, 2009.

withdrawals or slight increases) to assure Seoul of the U.S. security commitment. In the early 1990s, for example, President George H.W. Bush reduced the troop level from roughly 44,000 to 36,000, but then halted planned additional cuts because of concerns about the North Korean nuclear weapons program.⁴⁶ U.S. ground forces have been deployed near the DMZ, making them a trip wire for engaging the United States in another war. Their deployment in this manner has been viewed as both a deterrent to the North and a source of assurance for the South. Now, however, most of these forces are scheduled for relocation to areas away from the DMZ and farther down the peninsula. One reason for the move is to increase their “strategic flexibility” for use in contingencies outside Korea. The relocation has caused some South Koreans to worry that the deterrent to an attack might be weakened by the absence of a trip wire and that “strategic flexibility could mean “the denuding and decoupling of the U.S. security presence.”⁴⁷ U.S. officials respond to these worries by arguing that deterrence depends more on the sheer presence of U.S. forces in South Korea than on their specific dispositions, and that the long-standing mutual defense treaty and the strong interests of the United States in the security of its ally also create a firm basis for the continuing commitment to the defense of the ROK.⁴⁸ They further maintain that tour normalization, whereby families now are allowed to join U.S. military personnel during their assignments in South Korea, represents a significant earnest of the U.S. commitment. As the commander of U.S. Forces Korea remarked to an audience in Seoul, “Tour normalization greatly benefits the alliance by demonstrating our enduring commitment to the Republic of Korea and Northeast Asia through our intended long-term presence by changing the conditions for U.S. forces from forward deployed to forward stationed.”⁴⁹ In another forum he suggested that bringing additional American dependents to the peninsula could have “great deterrent value” as well, saying “the more presence we have in Korea of families shows the commitment of the United States and I think that in and of itself reduces the likelihood of Kim Jong-II making a mistake in doing an attack.”⁵⁰

Besides conventional capabilities, U.S. nonstrategic nuclear weapons, including artillery shells, missile warheads, air-delivered bombs, and atomic demolition munitions, were deployed in South Korea from the late 1950s until the end of the Cold War.⁵¹ As with

⁴⁶ Seongho Sheen, *A Smart Alliance in the Age of Complexity: ROK-U.S. Alliance in the 21st Century*, EAI Briefing No. MASI 2009-02 (Seoul: East Asia Institute, June 1, 2009), p. 10; and (Reuters), “Citing North Korea Atom Threat, U.S. to Delay Troop Cuts in South,” *New York Times*, November 21, 1991.

⁴⁷ Christopher W. Hughes, “North Korea’s Nuclear Weapons: Implications for the Nuclear Ambitions of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan,” *Asia Policy*, No. 3 (January 2007), p. 96.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Paul Wolfowitz, deputy secretary of defense, remarks at the Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Seoul, June 2, 2003, DoD release.

⁴⁹ Gen. Walter L. Sharp, commander, U.N. Command; commander, U.S.-ROK Combined Forces Command; and commander, U.S. Forces Korea, remarks to the Association of the ROK Army, Seoul, July 2, 2010, United States Forces Korea release. See also Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, speech to U.S. and ROK military personnel, Seoul, October 21, 2009, DoD release.

⁵⁰ Meeting with the Defense Writers Group, September 29, 2009, transcript, pp. 15-16.

⁵¹ Robert J. Watson, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Vol. IV: Into the Missile Age, 1956-1960* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1997), p. 627; United States Pacific Command, *Command History, 1991, Vol. I* (Secret/Formerly Restricted Data; declassified in part, October 10, 1997), pp. 90-92, available at www.nautilus.org; President George H.W. Bush, Address to the Nation on United States Nuclear Weapons Reductions, September 27, 1991, in National Archives and Records Administration, *Public Papers of the*

U.S. conventional forces, their presence was a sign of the American commitment to the security of the ROK. They were an anchor for the coverage of the nuclear guarantee. They contributed to the deterrence of North Korean aggression. And, in the event of war, they could have been used in the direct defense of South Korea. In 1991, the weapons were withdrawn as part of both an effort to persuade North Korea to give up its nuclear ambitions and accept inspections of its nuclear facilities, and a broader initiative by the United States to eliminate worldwide its ground-launched theater nuclear weapons and tactical nuclear weapons on surface ships and submarines.⁵² At that time, North Korea had yet to acquire nuclear weapons, U.S. officials believed the conventional strength of the alliance permitted such a move,⁵³ and, as noted above, the South Korean president accepted the withdrawal with the assurance that the nuclear guarantee would be unaffected. In the two decades since, that guarantee has been backed by U.S. strategic nuclear forces (long-range ballistic missiles and bombers) and by nonstrategic nuclear capabilities that in a crisis could be forward deployed to locations within strike range of North Korea.⁵⁴

Today some South Koreans contend that the return of U.S. nuclear weapons to the ROK is necessary to ensure the credibility of the U.S. nuclear guarantee and deter the now nuclear-armed North. Moreover, they claim, the threat of redeployment could be used to pressure North Korea to get rid of its nuclear weapons.⁵⁵ The South Korean government, however, has rejected this option on a number of occasions, saying that redeployment would be inconsistent with the aim of denuclearizing the peninsula and contrary to the 1992 joint declaration in which Seoul and Pyongyang pledged not to “test, manufacture, produce, receive, possess, store, deploy or use nuclear weapons.”⁵⁶ The South continues to adhere to this agreement despite the fact that the North obviously does not. In addition, Seoul undoubtedly recognizes that any plan to redeploy U.S. nuclear arms would arouse opposition, not only domestically, but also in the United States, Japan, and China.

Presidents of the United States: George Bush, 1991, Book II (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1992), p. 1222; South Korean President Roh Tae Woo, television address, December 18, 1991, translated in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: East Asia*, FBIS-EAS-91-243, December 18, 1991, pp. 13-14; Wolfowitz, remarks at the Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry, op. cit.; and Hans M. Kristensen, “A History of U.S. Nuclear Weapons in South Korea,” Nuclear Information Project, September 28, 2005, available at www.nukestrat.com.

⁵² Leon V. Sigal, *Disarming Strangers: Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 27-30.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 28; Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, op. cit., pp. 258-259; and Joel S. Wit, Daniel B. Poneman, and Robert L. Gallucci, *Going Critical: The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2004), p. 7.

⁵⁴ DoD, *NPR*, op.cit., p. 32.

⁵⁵ “Former Defense Ministers Condemn N. Korea’s Nuclear Test,” Yonhap, October 13, 2006; Jung Sung-ki, “US Umbrella: Double-Edged Sword for South Korea,” *Korea Times*, June 24, 2009; Lee Jong-heon, “Calls for Nuclear Weapons in South Korea,” United Press International, October 21, 2009; and Christian Oliver and Daniel Dombey, “Seoul Raises Spectre of US Nuclear Arms,” *Financial Times*, November 23, 2010.

⁵⁶ “S. Korean Defense Chief Reaffirms Denuclearization of Korean Peninsula,” Yonhap, July 19, 2009; and Jung Sung-ki, “Seoul Won’t Ask US to Redeploy Nukes,” *Korea Times*, April 21, 2010. The quote is from the Joint Declaration of South and North Korea on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, signed January 20, 1992, entered into force February 19, 1992.

The issue of redeployment arose most recently in November 2010, shortly after North Korea unveiled a uranium enrichment facility that could be used to produce weapons-grade nuclear material. In an appearance before a parliamentary committee, South Korean Defense Minister Kim Tae-young was asked whether the government would consider the return of U.S. nuclear weapons. Kim replied, “We will review [the issue of redeployment] when [South Korea and the United States] meet to consult on the matter at a committee for nuclear deterrence [the newly established Extended Deterrence Policy Committee, a group described later]. We will closely discuss that after organizing the committee. We will conscientiously prepare ourselves regarding this matter with both having serious concerns.”⁵⁷ The following day, the deputy minister of defense for policy issued a clarification of Kim’s remarks, saying that redeployment was one of many possible steps that might be taken in response to North Korean nuclear activities, but that it was not being proposed:

Redeploying U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea would cross the line of denuclearization policy on the Korean Peninsula. ...There has been no consideration about redeployment of U.S. tactical nuclear arms and there has been no consultation with the U.S. over the issue. ...Extended deterrence means the U.S. will protect its ally with its nuclear umbrella, conventional arms and missile defense on the same level at which it protects its own soil should its ally be threatened with nuclear weapons or attacked. In this sense, Kim’s comment means that we will review possible measures because the threats from uranium-based nuclear weapons as well as plutonium ones have increased.⁵⁸

In the same vein, a senior official in the office of the South Korean president told the press that, “South Korea and the U.S. have not discussed redeployment of tactical nuclear weapons. And the issue is not a subject of discussion. Our aim is to denuclearize the Korean peninsula, and that will not change.”⁵⁹ In the only public reaction to the episode by the United States, a Defense Department spokesman said, “The U.S. and our international partners are consulting on what steps to take in light of the new information. So I’d say it’s premature to talk about any specific steps.”⁶⁰ In the continued absence of U.S. nuclear weapons on the peninsula, the American military presence will depend on the forward deployment of conventional forces and the possible temporary deployment of nuclear-capable aircraft and ballistic missile submarines to locations in South Korea or

⁵⁷ Song Sang-ho, “Seoul to Consider Redeployment of U.S. Tactical Nuclear Weapons,” *Korea Herald*, November 22, 2010.

⁵⁸ Chang Kwang-il, quoted in “S. Korea Denies Seeking Redeployment of U.S. Tactical Nuclear Weapons,” *Yonhap*, November 23, 2010; and Song Sang-ho, “U.S. Has No Plans to Redeploy Nukes in S. Korea,” *Korea Herald*, November 23, 2010. See also the comments of Won Yoo-chui, chairman of the defense committee of the South Korean National Assembly, quoted in Jack Kim, “South Korea Not Seeking U.S. Nuclear Weapons,” *Reuters*, November 23, 2010.

⁵⁹ Anonymous official, quoted in “S. Korea Denies Seeking Redeployment of U.S. Tactical Nuclear Weapons,” *op. cit.*

⁶⁰ Col. Dave Lapan, quoted in Moon Gwang-lip, “Cautious Stand by U.S. Over Redeploying Nukes,” *JoongAng Daily*, November 24, 2010.

elsewhere in East Asia, an option in which some South Koreans have indicated an interest.⁶¹

Exercises and Operations

While U.S.-ROK military exercises serve to improve coordination between allied forces and increase force effectiveness, they also can help to deter Pyongyang and assure Seoul. The United States has conducted numerous exercises with South Korea over the decades of the alliance. The largest was Team Spirit, a comprehensive field maneuver exercise in which 100,000 to 200,000 allied military personnel participated each year from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s. ROK civilian and military officials considered Team Spirit “invaluable in maintaining military readiness and conducting a show of force against the North.”⁶² No Team Spirit exercise has been held since the signing of the 1994 U.S.-North Korean Agreed Framework (in which Pyongyang promised to freeze its nuclear program), although in the wake of the *Cheonan* sinking the South Korean military weighed returning to an exercise like Team Spirit.⁶³ In the years since the last Team Spirit maneuvers, a variety of smaller exercises have been conducted, including those for field training (Foil Eagle) and for testing the readiness of the alliance command structure (Key Resolve and Ulchi Freedom Guardian). “These combined exercises clearly strengthen the ROK-U.S. Alliance and improve deterrence,” a Korean Military Academy professor concluded in a review of the allied exercise program.⁶⁴

The role of military exercises in assuring South Korea can be seen in the Invincible Spirit exercise series instituted in response to the *Cheonan* attack. The multiple exercises have been carefully orchestrated to have assurance as well as deterrent effects. Their purpose, according to a senior U.S. official, is to “assure [South Korea] that the alliance is very strong and our joint resolve is strong” and to send “a message of deterrence to North Korea by demonstrating our capability and our readiness.”⁶⁵ In a press conference by the U.S. and ROK foreign and defense ministers after the plan for the exercises was announced, Secretary Clinton likewise explained that as part of the U.S. “strategy for dealing with North Korea...we engage in strengthening our alliance with South Korea and our efforts at deterrence, which will be evidenced by the military exercises in the coming weeks. The very clear message...that the United States stands to defend the security and sovereignty of South Korea is unmistakable.” In remarks at the same event, her South Korean counterpart echoed this theme, saying, “these exercises are aimed at

⁶¹ Discussion with David Yost, September 2, 2010; and Tae-Woo Kim, “ROK-U.S. Defense Cooperation against the North Korean Nuclear Threat: Strengthening Extended Deterrence,” in Jung-Ho Bae and Abraham Denmark, *The U.S.-ROK Alliance in the 21st Century* (Seoul: Korean Institute for National Unification, December 2009), p. 204.

⁶² John F. Farrell, “Team Spirit: A Case Study on the Value of Military Exercises as a Show of Force in the Aftermath of Combat Operations,” *Air & Space Power Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Fall 2009), p. 100.

⁶³ “Resumption of ‘Team Spirit’ Drill Muddled,” *Dong-A Ilbo*, May 26, 2010.

⁶⁴ Jeongwon Yoon, “Alliance Activities: Meetings, Exercises and CFC’s Roles,” in Donald W. Boose, Jr. et al., *Recalibrating the U.S.-Republic of Korea Alliance* (Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, May 2003), p. 101.

⁶⁵ Anonymous official, quoted in Hwang Doo-hyong, “U.S. Not to Send Aircraft Carrier to Yellow Sea: Official,” *Yonhap*, July 14, 2010.

detering war and maintaining peace on the peninsula” and “they unmistakably demonstrate the firmness of the ROK, U.S. alliance in the face of North Korea’s military provocation.”⁶⁶

The first in the planned series, a combined naval and air readiness exercise, was a large-scale show of force conducted in July 2010. The naval portion of the exercise took place in the Sea of Japan (East Sea), approximately 90 nautical miles (nm) south of the inter-Korean maritime border.⁶⁷ Some 20 allied ships participated, including the aircraft carrier U.S.S. *George Washington*, three U.S. destroyers, and a U.S. attack submarine, along with South Korean destroyers, submarines, and an amphibious assault ship that is the largest vessel in the ROK navy. In addition, some 200 U.S. and South Korean aircraft were involved in the exercise, including fighters, maritime patrol aircraft, antisubmarine helicopters, and early warning and control aircraft. The soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines in the exercise totaled roughly 8,000.⁶⁸

A number of aspects of the exercise had particular significance with regard to assurance. First, *George Washington* and the U.S. destroyers made port visits to Busan and Jinhae just prior to the exercise, with the South Korean defense minister and several members of the parliamentary defense committee going aboard the carrier at Busan.⁶⁹ Port visits are a venerable way of demonstrating commitment to an ally. That this was the purpose of the visits was made explicit by the commanding officer of *George Washington*: “Our presence here is a testament to the strength of our alliance and our constant readiness to defend the Republic of Korea.”⁷⁰

Second, the exercise focused on antisubmarine warfare (ASW)—which was fitting in that *Cheonan* fell victim to a submarine attack—and a decommissioned submarine was sunk by allied naval forces in the course of the activity.⁷¹ The United States thus signaled to friend and foe that it would work to prevent a repeat of the provocation. In this regard, Rear Adm. Kim Kyung-shik of the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) told reporters that

⁶⁶ Secretary Clinton and South Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Yu Myung-hwan, Joint Press Conference with Secretary Gates, Secretary Clinton, and South Korean Officials from Seoul, South Korea, July 21, 2010, DoD transcript.

⁶⁷ Evan Ramstad, “U.S.-Korea Naval Drills Begin,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 27, 2010. Chinese objections reportedly were a reason the Yellow Sea (West Sea), where *Cheonan* sank, was not used for this exercise. See Kim Deok-hyun, “Joint South Korea-U.S. Military Drills Begin as Warning to North Korea,” Yonhap, July 25, 2010; Jack Kim, “U.S., South Start Military Drills as North Protests,” Reuters, July 25, 2010; Choe Sang-hun, “As Tensions Rise, U.S. and South Korea Begin Naval Drills,” *New York Times*, July 26, 2010; and Moon Gwang-lip, “China Reacts to Joint Drill With Its Own Exercise,” *JoongAng Daily*, July 29, 2010.

⁶⁸ “S. Korea and U.S. Launch ‘Invincible Spirit’ Exercise,” *Hankyoreh*, July 26, 2010; “Part of S. Korea-U.S. Exercises Opened to the Press,” *Chosun Ilbo*, July 27, 2010; Song Sang-ho, “Allies Wrap Up Joint Military Drill,” *Korea Herald*, July 28, 2010; and Gen. Walter L. Sharp, “Security Situation on the Korean Peninsula,” prepared statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee, September 16, 2010, p. 3.

⁶⁹ Namgung Min, “Why Military Exercises Are Threat to North Korea,” *Daily NK*, July 22, 2010; and Jung Sung-ki, “S. Korea, US Conduct Live-Fire Drill,” *Korea Times*, July 27, 2010.

⁷⁰ Capt. David Lausman, quoted in “USS *George Washington* to Visit Busan,” News Release 100719-1, UNC/CFC/USFK Public Affairs Office, July 19, 2010.

⁷¹ Kim Deok-hyun, “S. Korea, U.S. Plan Live-Fire Anti-Submarine Drills,” Yonhap, July 27, 2010.

“[a]nti-submarine warfare operations [were] a key part of the joint drills to prevent further attacks like the sinking of the Ch’o’nan [Cheonan].”⁷²

Third, *George Washington* and the four F-22 multirole fighters that participated in the exercise were singled out as important symbols of the U.S. commitment to the defense of South Korea. The involvement of the carrier was referred to by a Pentagon spokesman as “an additional manifestation of our steadfast commitment to the security of the Republic of Korea.”⁷³ F-22s were in South Korea for the first time during the exercise, and the commander of the F-22 unit called the deployment “a demonstration that we will not forsake our allies,” and added that the aircraft “brings the best technology has to offer into the modern battlespace.”⁷⁴ Yonhap, the semiofficial ROK news agency, reported, “The deployment of the *George Washington*, one of the most powerful symbols of U.S. military power, highlighted strong commitment by the U.S. in the defense of South Korea.”⁷⁵ Several South Korean newspapers noted approvingly that the supersonic, stealthy F-22 was capable of striking the Yongbyon nuclear complex and other key targets in North Korea within 30 minutes after takeoff, and that its deployment in the ROK “would send a strong warning to Kim Jong Il and his top brass.”⁷⁶

In short, the initial exercise and how it was portrayed shaped perceptions in ways that apparently gave South Koreans a greater sense of security. At the end of the exercise, a senior officer with the ROK JCS declared, “We practiced well together and the [South’s] military has built up confidence that it can deter and defeat any North Korean aggression at any time, based on its alliance with the United States. . . . The exercise, in which top-of-the-line military assets were mobilized, was more meaningful than anything as it presented the allies’ strong will to resolutely deal with North Korean provocations.”⁷⁷

The second exercise in the *Cheonan*-related series was held in the Yellow Sea at the end of September and the beginning of October 2010.⁷⁸ It was smaller in scale—about half as many allied ships—and limited in scope to ASW alone. The U.S. contingent included two destroyers, an ocean surveillance ship, an attack submarine, and maritime patrol aircraft; no aircraft carrier was involved. ROK forces participating in the exercise included destroyers, frigates, a submarine, and patrol aircraft. Personnel in the exercise numbered 1,700. The two allies practiced detecting and destroying submarines and high-

⁷² Kim Deok-hyun, “Joint South Korea-U.S. Military Drills Begin as Warning to North Korea,” Yonhap, July 25, 2010.

⁷³ Geoffrey Morrell, quoted in Elisabeth Bumiller, “Major Ship In U.S. Fleet Will Visit South Korea,” *New York Times*, July 20, 2010.

⁷⁴ Lt. Col. Robert Teschner, quoted in Ed Gulick, “Invincible Spirit Strengthens ROK-U.S. Alliance,” 7th Air Force News Release, July 30, 2010.

⁷⁵ Kim Deok-hyun, “S. Korean, U.S. Forces Conclude Military Exercises,” Yonhap, July 28, 2010.

⁷⁶ Ibid.; Namgung Kim, “Why Military Exercises Are Threat to North Korea,” op. cit. (source of quote); Moon Gwang-lip, “China Reacts to Joint Drill With Its Own Exercise,” op. cit.; and “S. Korea and U.S. Launch ‘Invincible Spirit’ Exercise,” op. cit.

⁷⁷ “S. Korea, US End Naval Drills,” Agence France-Presse, July 27, 2010; and Song Sang-ho, “Allies Wrap Up Joint Military Drill,” *Korea Herald*, July 28, 2010.

⁷⁸ “Anti-Submarine Warfare Exercise,” News Release 100924-1, UNC/CFC/USFK Public Affairs Office, September 24, 2010.

speed semi-submersible craft.⁷⁹ The Defense Department said the exercise “sends a clear message to North Korea that the U.S. is committed to the defense of the Republic of Korea. Our commitment is unequivocal. These exercises are intended to deter North Korea from future destabilizing attacks such as that which occurred with Cheonan.”⁸⁰ The ROK defense ministry likewise called the exercise “an occasion to display the determination to deter North Korean provocation and ensure security on the Korean peninsula.”⁸¹

The third exercise occurred in late November and early December 2010.⁸² Its start date was moved up somewhat and its planned activities “intensified” in response to the North Korean bombardment of Yeonpyeong Island.⁸³ In a phone call the day of the attack, Presidents Obama and Lee agreed to hold the exercise “to continue the close security cooperation between the two countries and to underscore the strength of [the] Alliance and [its] commitment to peace and security in the region.”⁸⁴ President Obama offered to stage more exercises if warranted by continuation of the tense conditions on the peninsula.⁸⁵ In announcing the exercise the day after the Obama-Lee call, the headquarters of U.S. Forces Korea said, “While planned well before yesterday’s unprovoked artillery attack, it demonstrates the strength of the ROK-U.S. Alliance and our commitment to regional stability through deterrence.”⁸⁶ A U.S. “senior administration official” described the exercise as “directed at messaging North Korea and reassuring South Korea.”⁸⁷

The exercise centered on air defense and naval surface warfare, and included mock air attacks.⁸⁸ The location again was in the Yellow Sea, roughly 65 nm south of Yeonpyeong.⁸⁹ *George Washington* participated, along with 10 other U.S. and allied

⁷⁹ Ibid.; and Kim Deok-hyun, “S. Korea, U.S. to Hold Another Round of Joint Anti-Sub Drills in Yellow Sea From Sunday,” Yonhap, September 3, 2010.

⁸⁰ Bryan Whitman, principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, quoted in Hwang Doo-hyong, “U.S., Korea to Stage Anti-Submarine Drills in Yellow Sea Early Sept.: Pentagon,” Yonhap, August 18, 2010.

⁸¹ Internet homepage of the *Kukpang Ilbo*, a daily bulletin published by the ROK Ministry of National Defense, August 26, 2010, cited in “Highlights: ROK Military Websites, 14-27 Aug,” Open Source Center KPP20100829008001.

⁸² “Naval Readiness Exercise Announced,” News Release 101124-2, UNC/CFC/USFK Public Affairs Office, November 24, 2010.

⁸³ Ian Johnson and Martin Fackler, “China Addresses Rising Korean Tensions, but With a Warning to the U.S.,” *New York Times*, November 27, 2010; and Kim Deok-hyun, “S. Korea-U.S. Drills Begin in Yellow Sea, As China’s Talks Proposal Gets Cold Response,” Yonhap, November 28, 2010.

⁸⁴ Readout of the President’s Call with President Lee of the Republic of Korea, op. cit.

⁸⁵ Ser Myo-ja and Moon Gwang-lip, “Korea-U.S. Coordinate Moves,” *JoongAng Daily*, November 25, 2010.

⁸⁶ “Naval Readiness Exercise Announced,” op. cit.

⁸⁷ Helene Cooper and Martin Fackler, “U.S. Asking China to Help Rein in North Koreans,” *New York Times*, November 25, 2010.

⁸⁸ “Naval Readiness Exercise Announced,” op. cit.; and Song Sang-ho, “South Korea, U.S. Begin Sea Trials,” *Korea Herald*, November 28, 2010.

⁸⁹ Keith B. Richburg, “S. Korea to Toughen Policy Toward North,” *Washington Post*, November 29, 2010. Chinese objections to the use of the Yellow Sea were less vigorous for the third exercise. Mark Landler, “Obama Urges China to Check North Koreans,” *New York Times*, December 7, 2010.

ships, a variety of aircraft, and more than 7,000 personnel.⁹⁰ At the request of the ROK, some number of U.S. Joint STARS (Surveillance Target Attack Radar System) aircraft also were deployed to monitor the movements of North Korean ground forces.⁹¹ Shortly after the exercise ended, the U.S. and ROK JCS chairmen issued a statement in which they “reaffirmed that the Alliance is stronger than ever, and agreed to continue combined exercises designed to effectively deter North Korean aggression and strengthen the joint capabilities to respond.”⁹²

Like exercises, deployment of American forces to South Korea in times of crisis demonstrates the U.S. commitment to Seoul. Crisis deployments show the readiness of the United States not simply to practice defending its ally, but to prepare for war. While the exercises of 2010 to some extent were hybrids—assurance-related maneuvers in which forces were deployed during a period of crisis—history offers three cases of U.S. force deployments outside the exercise context that were intended to give the North pause and give the South heart when the danger of conflict loomed on the peninsula.

The first case is the U.S. military response to the 1976 tree-cutting incident in which North Korean soldiers killed or injured several members of a U.S.-ROK detail sent to trim a poplar that obstructed the view between two guard posts in the DMZ. The United States reacted to the attack with a major show of force. Among other steps, all U.S. forces on the peninsula were placed on higher alert, forces along the DMZ were reinforced, artillery and missiles—including nuclear-capable systems—were moved forward, F-111 fighter-bombers were sent from the United States to Osan Air Base, B-52 heavy bombers were flown in mock bomb runs within tens of miles of the DMZ, and a carrier task force was stationed in waters off South Korea. The tree was chopped down and Pyongyang gave something akin to an apology.⁹³ According to one account of the episode, “The immediate deployment of U.S. forces to Korea...impressed South Koreans with the sincerity of the U.S. commitment to the ROK.”⁹⁴

The second case is the augmentation of U.S. forces during the 1994 nuclear crisis, a confrontation that arose when North Korea removed spent fuel rods from its Yongbyon reactor without the required supervision by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and became acute when Pyongyang threatened Seoul with “a sea of fire.”⁹⁵

⁹⁰ “Republic of Korea-U.S. West Sea/Yellow Sea Bilateral Exercise Fact Sheet,” U.S. Forces Korea press release, November 29, 2010.

⁹¹ “S. Korea, U.S. Conduct Joint Drill Amid NK’s Threats of Rockets,” *Korea Herald*, November 28, 2010.

⁹² Adm. Mike Mullen and Gen. Han Min-koo, in “Full Text of Joint Statement from S. Korea-U.S. Military Talks,” Yonhap, December 8, 2010.

⁹³ See Col. Conrad DeLateur, *Murder at Panmunjom: The Role of the Theater Commander in Crisis Resolution*, research paper for the Department of State Foreign Service Institute Senior Seminar (Rosslyn, Va.: Foreign Service Institute, March 1987); John K. Singlaub (with Malcolm McConnell), *Hazardous Duty: An American Soldier in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Summit Books, 1991), pp. 365-380; Richard A. Mobley, “Revisiting the Korean Tree-Trimming Incident,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, Issue 35 (Autumn 2004), pp. 108-115; and Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, op. cit., pp. 74-83.

⁹⁴ DeLateur, *Murder at Panmunjom*, op. cit., p. 24.

⁹⁵ See Wit et al., *Going Critical*, op. cit.; Ashton B. Carter and William J. Perry, *Preventive Defense: A New Security Strategy for America* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1999), pp. 123-132; William

Tank-killing infantry fighting vehicles, attack helicopters, close support aircraft, air and missile defenses, and troops were deployed to bolster forces in South Korea. During a meeting in Washington just days after the “sea of fire” threat, Secretary of Defense William Perry and Secretary of State Warren Christopher “reassured [South Korean Foreign Minister Han Sung-joo] by underlining America’s commitment to South Korean security; a commitment amply demonstrated by the arrival in Pusan [Busan] of three Patriot missile batteries and eighty-four Stinger anti-aircraft missiles to defend them.”⁹⁶ After going to the ROK during the crisis, Secretary Perry declared, “there can be no doubt that the combined U.S.-Republic of Korea forces would decisively and rapidly defeat any attack from the North.”⁹⁷ The crisis ended after North Korea said it would freeze activity at the Yongbyon nuclear complex and allow an IAEA presence at the site, a pledge that, along with other obligations, was included in the U.S.-North Korean Agreed Framework signed in late 1994.

The third case is the U.S. reaction to North Korean violation of the Agreed Framework, withdrawal from the NPT, and restarting of the Yongbyon plutonium production facilities, actions that took place in 2002 and 2003.⁹⁸ In response to these moves, and to deter opportunistic aggression by Pyongyang while the United States was preoccupied with Iraq, additional forces were deployed to South Korea and locations elsewhere in the region.⁹⁹ A carrier battle group visited Busan, F-117A strike aircraft and F-15 fighters were sent to bases in the ROK, and a dozen B-52 and B-1B bombers flew to Guam, from which, with their long range, they could strike North Korea.¹⁰⁰ The North Koreans reportedly were “alarmed” by these deployments, which, along with the initial military success of the United States in the Iraq war, are said to have persuaded Kim Jong-Il that North Korea might be the next U.S. target and that it would be prudent for him to go into hiding.¹⁰¹

J. Perry, in Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *North Korea Nuclear Agreement*, 104th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1995), pp. 20-25; and Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, op. cit., pp. 281-359.

⁹⁶ Wit et al., *Going Critical*, op. cit., p. 167; see also p. 150.

⁹⁷ Remarks to the Asian Society, National Press Club, Washington, D.C., May 3, 1994, DoD release, p. 9.

⁹⁸ Yoichi Funabashi, *The Peninsula Question: A Chronicle of the Second Korean Nuclear Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2007), pp. 93-108, 114-115, 118-129.

⁹⁹ David E. Sanger and Thom Shanker, “U.S. Sending 2 Dozen Bombers In Easy Range of North Koreans,” *New York Times*, March 5, 2003; Adm. Thomas Fargo, commander, U.S. Pacific Command, in House International Relations Committee, *U.S. Security Policy in Asia and the Pacific: Restructuring America’s Forward Deployment*, 108th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2003), p. 11; and Richard Armitage, deputy secretary of state, in Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *WMD Developments on the Korean Peninsula*, 108th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2003), pp. 25-26.

¹⁰⁰ Sanger and Shanker, “U.S. Sending 2 Dozen Bombers In Easy Range of North Koreans,” op. cit.; Martin Fackler, “America’s Trump Card,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 15, 2003; Fred Kaplan, “Backing Off the DMZ,” *Slate*, June 9, 2003, available at <http://slate.msn.com/id/2084177/>; Doug Struck and Bradley Graham, “U.S., Asian Allies Face Tough Choices,” *Washington Post*, April 25, 2003; and “Carl Vinson Battle Group Visits Republic of Korea,” March 17, 2003, Navy NewsStand, available at www.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=6322.

¹⁰¹ “NK Was Afraid of Ending Up Like Iraq,” KBS [Korean Broadcasting System] World, November 10, 2009, available at http://world.kbs.co.kr/english/news/news_IK_detail.htm?No=67991; and Thom Shanker, “Lessons From Iraq Include How to Scare North Korean Leader,” *New York Times*, May 12, 2003.

Crisis deployments and exercises, then, provide visible evidence that the United States is prepared to defend South Korea. The record shows that these military activities have had the intended effect of assuring Seoul. Even when the political-military context is not a nuclear crisis and the U.S. forces involved are not nuclear-capable, an exercise or crisis deployment benefits the credibility of the U.S. nuclear guarantee by reinforcing the broader security commitment to the ROK that underpins that pledge.

In sum, the U.S. nuclear commitment to South Korea is best viewed as part of, not apart from, the multifaceted alliance between the two countries. Repeated statements by the United States of its nuclear guarantee are of critical importance to reassuring South Korea, but those statements gain their credibility from strong bilateral ties, decades of close military cooperation, a long-term force presence, and military support in times of crisis. Put simply, the United States assures South Korea by the security interests it *shares*, the mutual defense treaty it *signed*, the words it *says*, the forces it *stations*, and the military might it *shows*. To the extent that plans to reduce the role and number of U.S. nuclear weapons cause Seoul to question the strength of the nuclear guarantee, the United States should devise alliance arrangements, official statements, forward deployments, force exercises, or other measures that maintain South Korean confidence in the U.S. commitment.

South Korean Reactions to the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review

The day after the results of the Nuclear Posture Review were released, the ROK foreign ministry issued a statement saying, “The government welcomes the United States’ announcement of its policy through the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) that it will continue to maintain and strengthen its security commitment to its allies while seeking to build a nuclear-free world and supports such a policy.”¹⁰² Despite this general endorsement, South Koreans have raised questions about particular policies associated with the review. These policies include the reduced role of nuclear weapons, the negative security assurance regarding U.S. nuclear use, the planned reductions in U.S. nuclear arms, and the increased reliance on nonnuclear capabilities to deter aggression. South Korean views on each of these policies are described below. Also discussed are the expanded inter-allied consultations called for by the NPR, an initiative strongly favored by Seoul.

Reduced Role of Nuclear Weapons

A central objective of current U.S. nuclear weapons policy is to reduce the role of the weapons in the defense of the United States, its allies, and partners. In pursuit of this objective, the United States pledges that it will consider using nuclear weapons only in a “narrow range of contingencies” and under “extreme circumstances.”¹⁰³ Although for certain confrontations nuclear weapons might contribute to the deterrence of

¹⁰² Byun Duk-kun, “Seoul Welcomes New U.S. Nuclear Policy,” Yonhap, April 7, 2010.

¹⁰³ DoD, *NPR*, op.cit., pp. xviii-ix, 16, 17.

conventional, chemical, or biological attack, the United States is “work[ing] to establish conditions” under which the “sole purpose” of U.S. nuclear weapons will be to deter nuclear attack.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, the United States is pursuing arms agreements to reduce significantly the number of nuclear weapons, with the ultimate aim of liquidating the nuclear arsenals of all countries.¹⁰⁵

The policy of reducing the role and number of nuclear weapons is, according to the NPR, made possible by two important developments: the low probability of major nuclear war between the United States and another nuclear power (in contrast to the greater likelihood of a nuclear attack by terrorists), and the military advantages enjoyed by the United States and its allies because of their superior conventional forces, improving missile defenses, and “counter-WMD [weapons of mass destruction] capabilities,” including defenses against advanced chemical and biological weapons.¹⁰⁶ The overall effect of U.S. words and actions is a de-emphasis on the part nuclear weapons play in the deterrence of aggression.

Some South Koreans see the policy of a reduced nuclear role as likely to benefit efforts aimed at ending the North Korean nuclear weapons program, a view consistent with statements by U.S. officials. A professor at the Korean National Defense University, for example, argues that with the agenda outlined in the NPR,

The U.S. has now gained moral leverage to lead the six-party talks on denuclearizing North Korea through its public pledge to reduce its dependence on the nuclear option. The campaign to reduce nuclear capacity and promote [non]proliferation worldwide will likely hamper North Korea’s nuclear program.

The global efforts to secure nuclear material will also set the tone for the next six-party talks by drawing attention to dismantlement rather than nonproliferation.¹⁰⁷

Other South Koreans, however, express concerns about the nuclear de-emphasis by the United States. They worry Washington will devote more attention to nuclear disarmament than to extended deterrence, which in their view demands priority given present conditions on the Korean peninsula.¹⁰⁸ For them, North Korea represents a proximate and increasing military threat. This is particularly true of the North’s nascent nuclear capabilities. “North Korea’s nuclear program, as well as its weapons of mass

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 16, 17.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. iii, vi-vii, 9-13.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 15, 34, 45.

¹⁰⁷ Lee Suk-soo, “Paving a Road for Nuclear Deterrence,” *JoongAng Daily*, April 13, 2010.

¹⁰⁸ Tae-Woo Kim, “ROK-U.S. Defense Cooperation against the North Korean Nuclear Threat: Strengthening Extended Deterrence,” in Jung-Ho Bae and Abraham Denmark, *The U.S.-ROK Alliance in the 21st Century* (Seoul: Korean Institute for National Unification, December 2009), pp. 206-208.; and discussion with David Yost, September 2, 2010. During a visit to Seoul in June 2010, Dr. Yost, professor at the Naval Postgraduate School, interviewed South Korean defense and foreign ministry officials, scholars in universities, and experts at research institutes regarding their views of the NPR.

destruction, is the biggest threat” to the ROK and the rest of the Asia-Pacific region, according to the chairman of the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff.¹⁰⁹ The danger is compounded by Pyongyang’s provocative behavior—notably the *Cheonan* and Yeonpyeong attacks—and the potential trouble that could arise during the leadership transition in the North.¹¹⁰ (A prominent theory is that the provocations are part of the succession process.)¹¹¹ In addition, negotiations, sanctions, and inducements so far have failed to persuade the Kim regime to abandon its nuclear ambitions. The possibility that the United States, despite strong statements to the contrary, at some point might accept a nuclear-armed North Korea and instead focus on preventing further proliferation is another source of anxiety for South Koreans.¹¹² Thus the timing of the initiative to reduce the nuclear role may seem less opportune to officials in Seoul than it does to their counterparts in Washington.

Revised Negative Security Assurance

As part of the policy of reducing the role of nuclear weapons, the United States has revised its “long-standing ‘negative security assurance’ by declaring that [it] will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states that are party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations.” This assurance limits the circumstances in which the United States would use nuclear weapons. If the United States, its allies, or partners were to suffer a chemical or biological attack carried out by a nonnuclear weapons state in good standing under the NPT, that state would be subject to “devastating” conventional, rather than nuclear, retaliation, and those responsible for the attack would be held to account. Against nuclear weapons states and noncompliant states, there remains that “narrow range of contingencies in which U.S. nuclear weapons may still play a role in deterring a conventional or [chemical or biological] attack.” The intent of the strengthened negative security assurance is to create an incentive for NPT compliance and to encourage nonnuclear weapons states to work with the United States in its nonproliferation efforts.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Gen. Han Min-koo, quoted in Kim Deok-hyun, “N. Korea’s Nuclear Program ‘Biggest’ Threat to Region: Seoul’s Military Chief,” *Yonhap*, October 18, 2010.

¹¹⁰ Pacific Forum CSIS, “The *Cheonan*’s Long Shadow: The Second US-ROK Strategic Dialogue,” *Issues and Insights*, Vol. 10, No. 22 (August 2010), pp. 1, 2, 7. ROK participants in the dialogue included academics and representatives from the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses, the Ministry of National Defense, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

¹¹¹ See, for example, Kim Tae-young, ROK Minister of National Defense, quoted in “Seoul Announces Halt of Aid to N. Korea, Firepower Buildup, Military Drills,” *Yonhap*, November 24, 2010; and David E. Sanger, “Americans Conclude North Korean Leader Authorized Attack on South,” *New York Times*, May 23, 2010.

¹¹² Steven Pifer et al., *U.S. Nuclear and Extended Deterrence: Considerations and Challenges*, Arms Control Series Paper 3 (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, May 2010), p. 32.

¹¹³ DoD, *NPR*, pp. 15-16. Under previous versions of the negative security assurance, the United States retained the option of nuclear retaliation against NPT-compliant nonnuclear weapons states that used chemical or biological weapons. See Kurt Guthe, *Ten Continuities in U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy, Strategy, Plans, and Forces* (Fairfax, VA.: National Institute for Public Policy, September 2008), pp. 22-25.

The U.S. assurance explicitly does not apply to North Korea. North Korea is not in compliance with the NPT; indeed, it is the only state to have withdrawn from the treaty. It has tested nuclear devices, claims to be nuclear-armed, and is widely considered to have a small number of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, it poses a threat to the security of South Korea, Japan, the United States, and, through its proliferation activities, other countries as well. For these reasons, the negative security assurance “was deliberately crafted to exclude countries like North Korea and Iran which threaten our allies—or countries that depend on us—with a range of potential nuclear, biological, chemical, and conventional threats.”¹¹⁴ With regard to possible U.S. military responses to North Korean aggression, Secretary of Defense Gates has warned that “all bets are off. All options are on the table.”¹¹⁵ Nuclear weapons continue to play a role in deterring use of weapons of mass destruction or conventional attack by Pyongyang.¹¹⁶

At the same time, “part of the rationale for the negative security assurance and its change was, in fact, to encourage North Korea to go the opposite direction and desire to be one of those states that are compliant with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations.”¹¹⁷ This hope has yet to be realized. Soon after the results of the NPR were unveiled, Pyongyang rejected the carrot out of hand, saying that, by excluding North Korea, the assurance “proves that the present U.S. policy towards the DPRK [Democratic People’s Republic of Korea] is nothing different from the hostile policy pursued by the Bush administration [which] was hell-bent on posing a nuclear threat to the DPRK after designating it as a ‘target of preemptive nuclear strike.’” It dismissed the NPT as “not a treaty to last long because it is a transitional step to prevent nuclear proliferation till the world is denuclearized,” and added, “[t]he DPRK pulled out of the treaty after going through legitimate and legal procedures as the U.S. more undisguisedly used the NPT as a lever for isolating and stifling it.” Finally, it promised that “[a]s long as the U.S. nuclear threat persists, the DPRK will increase and update various type nuclear weapons as its deterrent in such a manner as it deems necessary.”¹¹⁸

If the revised negative security assurance has failed to have its intended effect on the North, what has been the reaction in the South? Mixed is an apt description. South Koreans see U.S. nuclear weapons as a deterrent to North Korean attack, including chemical or biological use. Deterring a North Korean chemical attack is important to Seoul because, according to South Korean sources, Pyongyang stockpiles several thousand tons of various chemical agents that could be delivered by artillery, rockets,

¹¹⁴ Gary Samore, coordinator for arms control and weapons of mass destruction, proliferation, and terrorism, National Security Council staff, remarks at a conference on “International Perspectives on the Nuclear Posture Review,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 22, 2010, Federal News Service transcript. See also “U.S. Considered Korean Peninsula Risks in Nuclear Posture Review,” Kyodo, May 9, 2010.

¹¹⁵ Remarks on “Face the Nation,” CBS TV broadcast, April 11, 2010, CBS transcript, p. 3. See also Gates, DoD News Briefing with Secretary Gates, Adm. Mullen, Secretary Clinton and Secretary Chu from the Pentagon, April 6, 2010, DoD release.

¹¹⁶ James N. Miller, principal under secretary of defense for policy, testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, April 22, 2010, committee transcript, pp. 5-6.

¹¹⁷ James N. Miller, Foreign Press Center briefing, April 7, 2010, DoD transcript, p. 14.

¹¹⁸ “Foreign Ministry Dismisses US Nuclear Plan,” Korean Central News Agency, April 9, 2010.

ballistic missiles, and aircraft in strikes likely to cause large military and civilian casualties. While the ROK government judges that North Korea has yet to weaponize biological agents, it recognizes that Pyongyang has the biotechnology infrastructure for weapons production and that deterring biological attack by the North could be a challenge in the future.¹¹⁹ Government officials in Seoul thus endorse the “carve out” of North Korea from the negative security assurance because it preserves the option of a U.S. nuclear response to a North Korean chemical or biological attack.¹²⁰ Although some South Koreans believe the revised assurance “won’t weaken any deterrence against North Korea,”¹²¹ others are less sure. For example, at a meeting of South Korean and American security specialists shortly after the Nuclear Posture Review report was made public, one of the Korean participants “insisted that the NPR limited the US commitment to protecting allies, arguing that the specific reference to responding to chemical or biological attacks had been weakened from previous versions of the NPR.”¹²² This criticism would seem to imply that the United States should go beyond the wording of the NPR and related statements and put North Korea on notice that nuclear retaliation would not only be an option, but a likely, if not certain, response to the use of chemical or biological weapons.¹²³

Some South Koreans see a pitfall in the carrot-and-stick aspect of the negative security assurance. That is, if North Korea were to give up its nuclear capabilities and return to the NPT fold, it could threaten or carry out a chemical or biological attack against the ROK without fear of nuclear retaliation by the United States. This would make such an attack less risky for Pyongyang and therefore less likely to be deterred. The alternative of a “devastating” conventional response is, in their view, an inferior deterrent to the use of weapons of mass destruction. There also is concern that, in light of the sad history of the last decade and a half, North Korea might feign compliance with the NPT, retain nuclear capabilities, and nevertheless gain the protection of the negative security assurance.¹²⁴

It should be noted that the negative security assurance has been criticized in certain quarters as an impediment rather than an inducement for North Korea to denuclearize. This argument is made, for example, by a professor at the South Korean Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security:

...outlier countries such as North Korea and Iran...have been excluded from the negative security assurance. Therefore, there is a high possibility that North Korea might refer to such provisions found in the NPR to justify its position of possessing nuclear weapons, while continuing to argue that the

¹¹⁹ International Crisis Group, *North Korea’s Chemical and Biological Weapons Programs*, Asia Report No. 167 (Brussels: International Crisis Group, June 18, 2009), pp. 7, 11.

¹²⁰ Discussion with David Yost, op. cit.

¹²¹ Lee Suk-soo, “Paving a Road for Nuclear Deterrence,” op. cit.

¹²² Pacific Forum CSIS, “The *Cheonan*’s Long Shadow,” op. cit., p. 11. See also discussion with David Yost, op. cit.

¹²³ See Tae-Woo Kim, “ROK-U.S. Defense Cooperation against the North Korean Nuclear Threat,” op. cit., pp. 204, 209.

¹²⁴ Discussion with David Yost, op. cit; and Pacific Forum CSIS, “The *Cheonan*’s Long Shadow,” op. cit., p. 12.

United States must abandon its hostile policy toward Pyongyang. ... Thus, the 2010 NPR could have the effect of further holding back North Korea from returning to the six-party process.¹²⁵

The revised negative security assurance, then, has raised some concerns in Seoul about the deterrence of North Korean chemical or biological use without having any discernible effect in encouraging Pyongyang to give up its nuclear capabilities.

Nuclear Arms Reductions

Consistent with the vision President Obama outlined in his April 2009 speech in Prague, the NPR sets a long-term goal of reducing the nuclear arsenals of the United States and other countries to zero.¹²⁶ Under the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), the United States and Russia each will be limited to 1,550 deployed strategic warheads and 800 deployed and nondeployed ballistic missile launchers and heavy bombers. Additional reductions in strategic arms, as well as in nonstrategic nuclear weapons, are contemplated. Any further reductions must, in the words of the NPR, “strengthen deterrence of potential regional adversaries, strategic stability vis-à-vis Russia and China, and assurance of our allies and partners.” This will require, among other things, “close consultations with allies and partners.”¹²⁷

The planned New START reductions have generated little controversy in South Korea. The treaty-mandated cuts by themselves are not viewed as having adverse consequences for the security of South Korea. One South Korean observer maintains that

the U.S.-Russia nuclear disarmament agreements and substantial arms reductions will not encroach on the validity of extended deterrence.... Further cuts in the nuclear arsenal at this point where both the U.S. and Russia have more than 20,000 weapons stockpiled signifies a reduction in overkill capacity, which means that a situation wherein the U.S. will not be able to retaliate against North Korea due to an inadequate number of nuclear weapons or methods...will not transpire.¹²⁸

Another analyst, however, expresses vague unease with the current direction of U.S. arms control policy: “President Obama proposed a world without nuclear weapons. His new

¹²⁵ Hyun-Wook Kim, “Nuclear Posture Review and Its Implications on the Korean Peninsula,” *Center for U.S.-Korea Policy Newsletter*, Vol. 2, No. 5 (May 2010), p. 1. (The Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security is affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.) See also “Nuclear-Free World” (editorial), *Korea Times*, April 8, 2010; and Pifer et al., *U.S. Nuclear and Extended Deterrence*, op. cit., p. 33.

¹²⁶ DoD, *NPR*, pp. 48-49 and passim.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 29-30.

¹²⁸ Tae-Woo Kim, “ROK-U.S. Defense Cooperation against the North Korean Nuclear Threat,” op. cit., p. 210. See also Pacific Forum CSIS, “A Question of Confidence: The First U.S.-ROK Strategic Dialogue,” *Issues and Insights*, Vol. 9, No. 18 (September 2009), p. 2. South Korean participants in this dialogue included officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Ministry of National Defense, the Korean Institute for Defense Analyses, and scholars from academic institutions.

nuclear policy is characterized by nuclear arms control and disarmament, non-proliferation, and nuclear cooperation and security. In this vein, it is unavoidable for the United States to be involved in nuclear arms reductions. This could diminish extended deterrent.”¹²⁹ The concern here may arise from apprehension about the scope and pace of future U.S. nuclear cuts or perhaps skepticism regarding the availability and effectiveness of offsetting nonnuclear capabilities. Whatever the cause, South Koreans will need to be assured by the United States that their security will not be compromised by further steps down the path of nuclear disarmament.

One specific cut in U.S. nuclear forces, unrelated to New START, has come in for criticism in South Korea. This is the retirement of the nuclear-armed Tomahawk land-attack missile (TLAM-N) in the next two to three years.¹³⁰ The vice chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff has characterized the submarine-launched cruise missile as “a weapon that’s been in the arsenal for a long time” and “on the sidelines and not deployed for several years.”¹³¹ The NPR determined that the TLAM-N is “redundant” and that its “deterrence and assurance roles...can be adequately substituted by” nuclear-capable heavy bombers and shorter-range strike aircraft forward deployed in a crisis, as well as by intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) carrying nuclear warheads.¹³² According to a ranking Defense Department official, the United States had “extensive consultations” with Seoul during the work on the Nuclear Posture Review and the two sides “reached a point of...mutual confidence that the TLAM-N was a redundant system not necessary for effective extended deterrence for Northeast Asia.”¹³³

There are, though, South Koreans dissatisfied with the retirement decision. Some say the decision was the one NPR-related matter on which Seoul was insufficiently consulted. Others question why the TLAM-N is considered “outdated” when the United States has no plans to retire conventional variants of the Tomahawk. A number argue that forward-deployed nuclear-capable aircraft are not as survivable as submarines armed with TLAM-Ns. In addition, some fear the United States might be less willing to use ICBMs or SLBMs in a Korean conflict, not least because launches of these missiles might be misperceived by the Chinese or Russians as directed against their respective countries. Those who criticize the TLAM-N decision, as well as those who accept it, look to U.S. officials to explain in greater detail how they propose to compensate for the elimination of the missile.¹³⁴

Increased Reliance on Nonnuclear Capabilities for Deterrence

As noted, the Nuclear Posture Review found that the number of U.S. nuclear weapons can be decreased (through New START, among other ways) and their role diminished

¹²⁹ Seok-soo Lee, “The Future of Extended Deterrence: A South Korean Perspective,” op. cit., p. 57.

¹³⁰ Miller, Foreign Press Center briefing, op. cit., p. 7.

¹³¹ Gen. James Cartwright, special briefing on the Nuclear Posture Review, April 6, 2010, DoD transcript.

¹³² DoD, NPR, p. 28.

¹³³ Miller, Foreign Press Center briefing, op. cit., p. 7.

¹³⁴ Discussion with David Yost, op. cit.

(with the revised negative security assurance) because the United States and its allies hold important advantages in nonnuclear capabilities. These include a general U.S. “preeminence” in conventional arms, U.S. forward deployments in or near allied countries, heavy bombers and other long-range strike systems that can augment allied and forward-deployed U.S. forces, and theater and homeland ballistic missile defenses of increasing effectiveness.¹³⁵ As the United States “continue[s] to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in deterring non-nuclear attack” and works further to “limit, reduce, and eventually eliminate all nuclear weapons worldwide,” additional “improvements in U.S., allied, and partner non-nuclear capabilities” will be required “to increase reliance on non-nuclear means to accomplish [the] objectives of deterring [adversaries] and reassuring...allies and partners.”¹³⁶

The call for improved nonnuclear capabilities is consistent with the ROK Defense Reform Plan 2020. Under the plan, South Korea is restructuring and modernizing its military to deal more effectively with current and future security threats, particularly the dangers posed by North Korean nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. Military manpower is being reduced in favor of a more technologically advanced force with increased firepower, better precision strike capability, longer range, and greater mobility. This entails acquisition of new or additional weapons and ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) systems, including upgraded strike aircraft, precision-guided munitions, cruise and ballistic missiles, multiple launch rocket systems, self-propelled artillery, surveillance drones, and enhanced command and control. Deployment of these capabilities has been slowed, however, by budget shortfalls.¹³⁷

With regard to missile defense, the ROK is in the process of fielding the Korean Air and Missile Defense (KAMD) system, which is intended to intercept North Korean short- and medium-range ballistic missiles and cruise missiles. The system will comprise a command-and-control center, early warning radars, Patriot (PAC-2) fire units, and Aegis-equipped destroyers that could be outfitted with Standard Missile (SM-2 or SM-6) interceptors.¹³⁸ To date, Seoul has said that it will not join the U.S. missile defense system in Northeast Asia.¹³⁹ One reason for its position is to avoid antagonizing China or Russia,¹⁴⁰ neighboring powers which claim U.S. defenses are directed against their

¹³⁵ DoD, *NPR*, pp. v, viii, 15, 28, 32-34, 46.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. viii, 28, 47.

¹³⁷ Jung Sung-ki, “Defense Reform 2020 to Be Revised for NK Threat,” *Korea Times*, May 25, 2010; Gen. Walter L. Sharp, prepared statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee, March 24, 2010, p. 4; Hwang Jang-jin, “Seoul to Enhance Defense Against Nuclear Attacks,” *Korea Herald*, July 4, 2009; Sam Kim, “S. Korea to Bolster Capabilities to Head Off N.K. Nuclear, Missile Attacks,” *Yonhap*, June 26, 2009; Jung Sung-ki, “South to Boost Surgical Strike Capability Against North,” *Korea Times*, June 26, 2009; and Park Ju-hyun, “The ROK Defense Budget and Defense Reform,” *ROK Angle*, Issue 15 (Seoul: Korea Institute for Defense Analyses, October 16, 2009).

¹³⁸ Seok-soo Lee, “The Future of Extended Deterrence: A South Korean Perspective,” *op. cit.*, pp. 56-57; and Jung Sung-ki, “S. Korea May Join U.S. Missile Shield,” *Defense News* (online), February 17, 2010.

¹³⁹ Missile defenses deployed by the United States in and around South Korea currently consist of Patriot (PAC-3) batteries and Aegis ships; protection by the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system could be added at some future point.

¹⁴⁰ Discussion with David Yost, *op. cit.*; and “South Korea Favors Short-Range Missiles,” *United Press International*, October 28, 2010.

respective ballistic missile forces, and which potentially could be helpful to the ROK in its dealings with the North. Although South Korea is reluctant to be part of the U.S. missile defense system, its Ministry of National Defense has expressed a willingness to “strengthen cooperation with the U.S. Forces Korea in the sharing of intelligence and the operation of available assets to effectively respond to threats from North Korean ballistic missiles.”¹⁴¹

A number of the aforementioned improvements in ROK nonnuclear forces are necessary to support the December 2015 change of wartime operational control from the U.S.-led Combined Forces Command to the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff. These include intelligence-gathering, battle-management, and precision-strike capabilities.¹⁴² Pending deployment of the necessary improvements, the United States will provide “specific bridging capabilities” to South Korea, as well as “contribute enduring capabilities for the life of the Alliance.”¹⁴³ The latter include U.S. nuclear forces for deterring a major North Korean attack.¹⁴⁴

While South Koreans recognize the importance of bolstering their conventional forces and building defenses against missile attack, it is not clear that they see improvements in nonnuclear capabilities as reducing their need for U.S. nuclear protection. Not readily apparent to them is the way in which conventional forces and missile defenses can make up for a more limited U.S. nuclear role. For South Koreans, “the idea of a nuclear umbrella is easier to understand than extended deterrence [based on conventional strike capabilities and missile defenses, as well as nuclear forces], which requires more operational discussions on how it will work in particular circumstances, and how it will impact US planning.”¹⁴⁵ Many have yet to embrace the NPR position that nonnuclear capabilities to a large extent can substitute for nuclear weapons as a deterrent to North Korean aggression.¹⁴⁶ Some worry that as “the United States seeks to strengthen its regional deterrence capability through [missile defense] or conventional long-range missiles,” the “U.S. deterrence capability achieved with nuclear weapons could be weakened, including U.S. extended deterrence capabilities provided to South Korea.”¹⁴⁷ Seoul may consider a significant U.S. military presence on the peninsula, increases in its own conventional strength, additional missile defense deployments, *and* an unchanged, not reduced, role for U.S. nuclear forces to be the best combination for preventing war.

¹⁴¹ Ministry of National Defense statement, October 23, 2010, quoted in Song Sang-ho, “Seoul Says Won’t Join U.S. Missile Defense,” *Korea Herald*, October 24, 2010. For its part, the United States “looks forward to taking further steps to enhance operational coordination and build upon ongoing missile cooperation” with South Korea. DoD, *Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report*, op. cit., p. 33.

¹⁴² Jung Sung-ki, “Allies Reassess NK Military Threat,” *Korea Times*, June 27, 2010.

¹⁴³ 42nd U.S.-ROK Security Consultative Meeting Joint Communiqué, op. cit., p. 5. See also Gen. Sharp, “Security Situation on the Korean Peninsula,” op. cit., p. 5.

¹⁴⁴ Gen. Walter L. Sharp, cited in Evan Ramstad, “U.S. Commander Defends South Korea Military Shift,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 26, 2010.

¹⁴⁵ Pacific Forum CSIS, “The *Cheonan*’s Long Shadow,” op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁴⁶ Discussion with David Yost, op. cit.

¹⁴⁷ Hyun-wook Kim, “Nuclear Posture Review and Its Implications on the Korean Peninsula,” op. cit., p. 2.

Inter-Allied Consultations

Assuring allies of the dependability of U.S. security commitments is identified in the Nuclear Posture Review as a principal objective for U.S. nuclear weapons policies and forces.¹⁴⁸ The NPR says that one way to do this is through “consultations with allies and partners to address how to ensure the credibility and effectiveness of the U.S. extended deterrent,” adding that, “[n]o changes in U.S. extended deterrence capabilities will be made without close consultations with our allies and partners.”¹⁴⁹ As noted, U.S. officials had discussions with their ROK counterparts while the review was under way; these have been characterized as “close consultation” by the South Korean foreign ministry.¹⁵⁰ In the days just before the release of the NPR report, President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton phoned their opposite numbers in Seoul to underscore that the review left South Korea covered by the U.S. nuclear umbrella.¹⁵¹

Changes in the South Korean security outlook over the last few years have made officials in Seoul anxious to discuss with Washington the nature of the U.S. extended-deterrent pledge. These developments include the nuclear tests by Pyongyang, the recent North Korean provocations (the attacks on *Cheonan* and Yeonpyeong), the leadership transition in the North, the planned OPCON transfer, the repositioning of U.S. forces away from the DMZ to bases farther south, the availability of those forces for non-Korean contingencies, and the U.S. intention to reduce the role of nuclear weapons.¹⁵² The first three developments have heightened the perceived danger from the North, while the others have raised doubts about the U.S. security commitment. Within this context, South Koreans have indicated interest in exchanges with the United States on a number of topics, such as the military implications of the North Korean nuclear threat, scenarios in which nuclear weapons might play a part, the relationships among the capabilities for extended deterrence (nuclear forces, conventional strike capabilities, and missile defenses), the forces (dual-capable strike aircraft and strategic nuclear arms) that back the U.S. nuclear guarantee, the ways in which nuclear weapons might be used, and the extent to which South Korea might participate in nuclear-related decision-making.¹⁵³

Soon after the 2006 North Korean nuclear test, the chief of the strategic planning department for the ROK JCS said that the “South Korean and U.S. militaries agreed to work out measures for a concrete nuclear umbrella extension.”¹⁵⁴ In June 2009, after

¹⁴⁸ DoD, *NPR*, p. 2.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. xiii-xiv.

¹⁵⁰ Press release by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, cited in “U.S. Reaffirms Nuclear Deterrent for S. Korea,” *Yonhap*, April 6, 2010.

¹⁵¹ Yoo Jee-ho and Kang Chan-ho, “Obama Restricts Nuclear Posture Except for North,” *JoongAng Daily*, April 7, 2010.

¹⁵² Cheon Seong Whun, “The Significance of Forming a ROK-US Extended Deterrence Policy Committee,” *Online Series*, CO 10-39 (Korean Institute for National Unification), November 3, 2010, pp. 5, 6.

¹⁵³ Pacific Forum CSIS, “A Question of Confidence,” *op. cit.*, p. 1; discussion with David Yost, *op. cit.*; Pacific Forum CSIS, “The *Cheonan*’s Long Shadow,” *op. cit.*, pp. 2, 13, 14; and Tae-Woo Kim, “ROK-U.S. Defense Cooperation against the North Korean Nuclear Threat,” *op. cit.*, pp. 205-206, 210.

¹⁵⁴ “S. Korea’s Military Embarks on Studies of Extended U.S. Nuclear Deterrence,” *Yonhap*, October 24, 2006. The agreement reportedly was reached in a meeting of the U.S.-South Korean Military Committee, a

Presidents Obama and Lee issued their “joint vision” for the alliance, part of which is a reaffirmation of the “continuing commitment to extended deterrence, including the nuclear umbrella,”¹⁵⁵ a spokesman for the South Korean defense ministry announced that officials of the two countries would discuss “ways to embody” the commitment to extended deterrence.¹⁵⁶ This subject reportedly was taken up in subsequent talks under the U.S.-South Korean Security Policy Initiative, a Department of Defense-Ministry of National Defense consultative mechanism at the deputy assistant secretary/deputy minister level.¹⁵⁷ During their October 2010 Security Consultative Meeting, Secretary of Defense Gates and South Korean Minister of Defense Kim agreed to establish an Extended Deterrence Policy Committee, “which will serve as a cooperation mechanism to enhance the effectiveness of extended deterrence.”¹⁵⁸

According to South Korean sources, the work of the Extended Deterrence Policy Committee will involve sharing information regarding extended deterrence, evaluating the security situation, examining the effectiveness of extended deterrence, and developing alternatives for better “deterring North Korean provocations and preparing for the possible threat of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction.”¹⁵⁹ Seoul reportedly would like the committee initially to consider the intelligence on the North Korean nuclear weapons program, the possibility Pyongyang might sell nuclear weapons or material, and “how to respond to specific types of attacks.”¹⁶⁰ Despite its fledgling nature, the committee already appears to have had some assurance value. The ROK deputy defense minister for policy, Chang Kwang-il, has compared the committee to the NATO Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) and noted that South Korea is the only country outside NATO benefiting from such an organizational arrangement with the United States. He argues that the committee will “not only send a deterrence message to North Korea, but also help ease security fears over North Korea’s nuclear programs among our people.”¹⁶¹

The Extended Deterrence Policy Committee is likely to prove a useful forum for dealing with South Korean concerns regarding the mechanics of the nuclear guarantee and the broader U.S. security commitment. This is not to say, however, that the committee will easily resolve all issues. South Koreans may, for example, want their American ally to

group consisting of the U.S. and ROK JCS chairmen, the commander of the Combined Forces Command, and two other military representatives designated by each of the chairmen.

¹⁵⁵ Joint Vision for the Alliance of the United States of America and the Republic of Korea, op. cit.

¹⁵⁶ Won Tae-jae, cited in an item at the Internet homepage of the *Kukpang Ilbo*, June 18, 2009.

¹⁵⁷ Sam Kim, “S. Korea, U.S. Discuss Stronger Deterrence Against N. Korea,” *Yonhap*, July 23, 2009; Kim Se-jeong, “Details of Extended Deterrence Against N. Korea Due by 2012,” *Korea Times*, July 26, 2009; and Seok-soo Lee, “The Future of Extended Deterrence: A South Korean Perspective,” op. cit., p. 56.

¹⁵⁸ 42nd U.S.-ROK Security Consultative Meeting Joint Communiqué, op. cit., p. 3. See also Moon Gwang-lip, “Seoul, Washington Sign TOF on Joint Security Plan,” *JoongAng Daily*, December 14, 2010; and remarks by Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col. Mark Ballesteros, quoted in Bill Gertz, “Inside the Ring,” *Washington Times*, December 16, 2010.

¹⁵⁹ An anonymous defense ministry official, cited in Kwon Hyuk-chul, “S. Korea-U.S. to Organize a Joint Committee for Extending Nuclear Deterrence,” *Hankyoreh*, October 9, 2010.

¹⁶⁰ Yoshihiro Makino, “S. Korea, U.S. to Talk About ‘Nuclear Umbrella,’” *Asahi Shimbun*, November 12, 2010.

¹⁶¹ Kim Deok-hyun, “S. Korea, U.S. Prepared for ‘Instability’ in N. Korea,” *Yonhap*, October 9, 2010.

specify how it would respond to a North Korean WMD attack, but U.S. officials reportedly have been reluctant to offer a detailed pledge because it could lock the United States into certain retaliatory options, limit the flexibility of U.S. military plans, and arouse criticism from other countries in the region.¹⁶² Officials in Seoul likewise may be interested in the specifics of nuclear targeting, but could find drawbacks in discussing this matter with their U.S. counterparts, a possibility made evident in a recent unofficial U.S.-ROK “strategic dialogue” in which the South Korean representatives

were doubtful that anyone in their government would want to be known to be taking part in discussions about using nuclear weapons against other Koreans. As one ROK participant explained, “the use of nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula is not acceptable; threatening their use is.” Another added that nuclear retaliation by the U.S. in response to a North Korean nuclear attack against the South would be acceptable, but he wasn’t sure that the ROK public would agree to such a response to a nuclear attack against Japan. As one U.S. participant concluded, alliance discussions of this sort would be a “political bombshell,” and he wasn’t sure that Korean society is prepared for them.¹⁶³

Nonetheless, the establishment of the Extended Deterrence Policy Committee is a constructive step, just as the creation of the Nuclear Planning Group greatly benefited NATO, even though the NPG has hardly prevented recurring controversies within the Atlantic Alliance over nuclear strategy, plans, and forces.

To summarize, the Seoul government officially has expressed support for the dual NPR objectives of maintaining extended deterrence while pursuing nuclear elimination, but South Koreans worry that the second may come at the expense of the first. Reducing the role of nuclear weapons through the revised negative security assurance could, in the view of some, weaken the deterrence of chemical or biological use by Pyongyang, even though U.S. officials have said the assurance currently does not apply to North Korea. According to a number of South Koreans, reductions in U.S. nuclear arms, including the retirement of TLAM-N missiles, likewise could lower the barrier to North Korean aggression. Improvements in conventional forces and missile defenses are seen more as augmenting the deterrent effect of U.S. nuclear capabilities than as enabling deeper nuclear cuts. As with the conduct of the Nuclear Posture Review, consultations with Seoul will be necessary to take South Korean concerns into account as the directives of the NPR are implemented.

¹⁶² “S. Korea’s Military Embarks on Studies of Extended U.S. Nuclear Deterrence,” *op. cit.*; Choi and Park, “South Korea: Fears of Abandonment and Entrapment,” *op. cit.*, p. 394; “Extended Deterrence for S. Korea Admits North Korea’s De Facto Status as a Nuclear State,” *Hankyoreh*, June 18, 2009; and Makino, “S. Korea, U.S. to Talk About ‘Nuclear Umbrella,’” *op. cit.*

¹⁶³ Pacific Forum CSIS, “A Question of Confidence,” *op. cit.*, p. 19.

Options for Assuring South Korea as the U.S. Nuclear Role and Force are Reduced

The discussion below offers four options for mitigating negative reactions by South Korea to reductions in the role and number of U.S. nuclear weapons. The options are: 1) conduct a dialogue in the Extended Deterrence Policy Committee to address South Korean concerns; 2) make explicit the threat to retaliate with nuclear weapons if North Korea uses weapons of mass destruction against the South; 3) underscore the nuclear guarantee to the ROK through future force deployments and exercises; and 4) improve conventional capabilities to offset adverse effects of nuclear reductions. In terms of the time-tested means for assuring Seoul that were described earlier, the first option involves a new consultative body—the extended deterrence group—that is now part of the formal arrangements of the alliance. The second uses official statements for the purpose of assurance. And the third and fourth are intended to provide greater assurance through forward presence, shows of force, and activities that entail close cooperation with South Korea.

Conduct a dialogue in the Extended Deterrence Policy Committee to address South Korean concerns

The Extended Deterrence Policy Committee should be used to address and assuage South Korean anxieties about extended deterrence that arise from the North Korean danger and some aspects of U.S. nuclear weapons policy. The committee carries the imprimatur of both the secretary of defense and the (previous) ROK defense minister. It is seen by Seoul as an important consultative group not unlike the NATO NPG. Although the specifics of its charter and agenda have yet to be made known, the committee could serve three broad purposes that would be useful for the assurance of South Korea.

First, U.S. officials could provide in the committee substantive, candid, and ongoing explanations of policies related to the NPR and plans regarding future nuclear reductions. The topics covered could include: the deterrent effectiveness of smaller nuclear forces; the way in which dual-capable strike aircraft can contribute to deterrence, particularly after the retirement of TLAM-N; the ability of nonnuclear strike capabilities and missile defenses to shoulder some of the deterrence burden as nuclear forces are reduced; and the readiness of the United States to threaten nuclear retaliation to deter a North Korean WMD attack, despite the revised negative security assurance issued with the release of the NPR.

Second, U.S. participants in the committee meetings could seek an in-depth understanding of what the South Koreans find worrisome. The committee should not be considered simply a tutorial in which ROK representatives receive instruction on the finer points of U.S. extended deterrence-related measures and then are expected to go away assured. At least some discussions in the committee instead should be similar to focus group sessions, where South Korean concerns about the North Korean threat are explored and their views on how to deal with that danger are solicited. In this regard, it should always be kept in mind that, just as the enemy ultimately decides what deters, an ally

determines what promises, policies, plans, capabilities, or actions give confidence in U.S. security commitments.

Third, the dialogue within the Extended Deterrence Policy Committee should enable U.S. officials both to vet and tailor options for maintaining the assurance of South Korea as the role and size of U.S. nuclear forces are reduced. For assurance problems that occur, remedial initiatives can be proposed, jointly examined, and, if necessary, modified in light of South Korean reactions; some potential options are discussed below. By the same token, U.S. officials can discuss with their South Korean counterparts the limits of assurance, that is, measures that might be reassuring to the ROK, but in some way would be at odds with the broader security requirements of the United States; an example might be reluctance by the United States to allocate a portion of its nuclear force, however small, solely for the defense of South Korea. It should be noted that the discussions of the committee alone are likely, in the net, to help assure Seoul with regard to the U.S. extended-deterrent pledge.

Make explicit the threat to retaliate with nuclear weapons if North Korea uses weapons of mass destruction against the South

Statements such as the following, taken from the NPR report, are insufficiently clear that Pyongyang would invite U.S. nuclear retaliation for WMD use against South Korea:

The U.S. nuclear posture has a vital role to play in regional security architectures. Proliferating states must understand that any attack on the United States, or our allies and partners, will be defeated, and any use of nuclear weapons will be met by a response that would be effective and overwhelming. The President, as Commander-in-Chief, will determine the precise nature of any U.S. response. But by pursuing nuclear weapons, such states must understand that they have significantly raised the stakes of any conflict.¹⁶⁴

Rhetorically stronger are warnings that “all bets are off” and “all options are on the table” if North Korea attacks, but they still leave ambiguous the nature of the U.S. response. This ambiguity may give the United States greater flexibility in the event of conflict, and limit the loss in U.S. credibility if a declared retaliatory threat is not carried out when deterrence fails and an attack occurs, but both assurance and deterrence may suffer as a result. Given concern that the North Korean leadership would find the prospect of conventional retaliation less daunting than the threat of a nuclear reply, South Koreans may prefer a more explicit formulation, such as, “The United States stands fully prepared to use nuclear weapons in response to a North Korean nuclear, biological, or chemical attack against the Republic of Korea.” To the extent that this starker warning was seen as a stronger deterrent to WMD use by Pyongyang, Seoul would be better assured of the protection offered by the U.S. nuclear umbrella.

¹⁶⁴ DoD, *NPR*, p. 33.

An explicit threat of nuclear retaliation would not be inconsistent with the revised negative security assurance, which does not apply, and is unlikely ever to apply, to North Korea. Though posing an unambiguous nuclear retaliatory threat to deter a North Korean WMD attack would not further the general aim of reducing the role of nuclear weapons, this disadvantage could be outweighed by the greater sense of security afforded South Koreans.

Sharper statements of the U.S. nuclear deterrent threat should be discussed with Seoul before being made public. The appropriate circumstances, events, and spokesmen for the statements should be given careful thought. To assure the South without seeming to provoke the North, the statements should be strong in tone, but not belligerent. One possibility would be for the secretary of defense to give a speech or press conference in Seoul in which, with the ROK defense minister present, he emphasized the role of the U.S. nuclear guarantee in deterring WMD attack by North Korea. The message should be repeated and reinforced in subsequent public statements, as well as discussions between U.S. and South Korean officials. The next SCM communiqué, for example, might include wording that highlights the importance of the nuclear umbrella as a deterrent to North Korean WMD use.

Underscore the nuclear guarantee to the ROK through future force deployments and exercises

Through force deployments and exercises, the United States can provide further evidence of its nuclear commitment to South Korea. For more than 30 years, the U.S. nuclear weapons in the ROK planted the flag of that commitment on South Korean soil. Those weapons have been gone for two decades and the Seoul government has not asked for their return. At some point, however, redeployment could become of greater interest to the ROK. Further buildup in North Korean nuclear capabilities, continuing provocations by the North, and the steady drumbeat of nuclear threats by Pyongyang could erode opposition to redeployment. Diminished faith in the U.S. security commitment also could lead South Korea to weigh, and perhaps favor, the option as a sign of U.S. support and an added deterrent to North Korean aggression. The United States should not advocate the return of U.S. nuclear weapons to the peninsula, but should be prepared if its ally makes such a request. Defense planners should examine carefully the capability of the United States to carry out redeployment in order to identify potential problems and develop possible solutions. And policymakers should consider the trade-off that redeployment would present: assuring South Korea and reducing the incentives for Seoul to acquire nuclear weapons of its own versus slowing the advance toward the nuclear-free world envisioned by President Obama.

An alternative would be the temporary deployment of nuclear-capable aircraft or nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) to South Korea. Shorter-range strike aircraft (F-15Es and F-16s) and intercontinental-range bombers (B-2s and B-52Hs) that are capable of delivering nuclear weapons could be sent to bases in South Korea and used in exercises with allied forces. The bombers probably would attract more notice, given that F-15E and F-16 aircraft (without nuclear weapons) already are based in South Korea,

although bombers on previous occasions have flown to the ROK and participated in joint exercises.¹⁶⁵ The aircraft would not need to be nuclear-armed to demonstrate the link between U.S. nuclear forces and the defense of South Korea; identifying them as nuclear-capable likely would be enough. With regard to South Korean concerns about the wartime vulnerability of the bases used by strike aircraft, U.S. officials might point to the variety of measures to ensure that the aircraft could take off from bases in the ROK, as well as point out that the longer-range bombers could operate from Guam or bases in the United States.

In addition, SSBNs might make port calls in South Korea to indicate the coverage of the nuclear umbrella and their role in supporting the nuclear guarantee. Nuclear-powered guided missile submarines (SSGNs)—SSBNs converted to carry conventional cruise missiles—already have been used as instruments to demonstrate U.S. presence. For example, on its initial deployment in the Pacific in early 2008, the newly converted U.S.S. *Ohio* visited Busan. Upon arriving in South Korea, where the SSGN participated in a joint exercise, its commanding officer said, “The Korean-American relationship is very important, and visiting Busan gives us the opportunity to strengthen that relationship” and to emphasize “our shared dedication to supporting regional stability.”¹⁶⁶ In June 2010, another SSGN, U.S.S. *Michigan*, arrived at Busan, although press reports suggest that the visit was intended more to get the attention of the Chinese than to assure the South Koreans.¹⁶⁷

While use of SSBNs in this manner would be unorthodox and would require special security measures, it would not be unprecedented. In April 1963, U.S.S. *Sam Houston* visited the Turkish port of Izmir, the first time a ballistic missile submarine had been to a foreign port other than the U.S. SSBN base then at Holy Loch, Scotland. The call by *Sam Houston* was part of a package of measures to reassure Ankara of the U.S. nuclear guarantee after the Kennedy administration decided to withdraw nuclear-armed Jupiter missiles stationed in Turkey. (The Jupiter withdrawal was tied to the resolution of the Cuban missile crisis.)¹⁶⁸ In December 1976, *Sam Houston* again appeared in a foreign port, this time Jinhae. Over the next five years, that submarine and eight other SSBNs

¹⁶⁵ See Lt. Gen. Stephen B. Croker, vice commander, Air Combat Command, speech to the annual meeting of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, May 4, 1993, Air Force release; Gen. Ronald R. Fogleman, chief of staff, U.S. Air Force, “The Contributions of Long-Range Bombers to America’s Deep Strike Capability,” presentation to the Alexis de Tocqueville Institution Deep Strike Conference, September 13, 1996; and Donovan Brooks, “Idaho Bomber Unit Makes a Triple Play,” *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, November 5, 1998.

¹⁶⁶ Capt. Andy Hale, quoted in, “USS Ohio Arrives in Busan, Republic of Korea,” Commander, Submarine Group 7 Public Affairs, February 20, 2008, available at <http://www.c7f.navy.mil>.

¹⁶⁷ “U.S. Posts Pictures of Nuclear Sub in ‘Show of Force,’” *Chosun Ilbo*, July 8, 2010; and Greg Torode, “U.S. Submarines Emerge in Show of Military Might,” *South China Morning Post*, July 4, 2010.

¹⁶⁸ Philip Nash, *The Other Missiles of October: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the Jupiters, 1957-1963* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), pp. 163-166. See also Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Vol. XVI: Eastern Europe; Cyprus; Greece; Turkey* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1994), Documents 380, 382-387, 389-394.

made a total of 35 visits to the South Korean port.¹⁶⁹ (The primary purpose of these visits, however, does not appear to have been to show U.S. presence.)

There is, of course, an inherent tension between, on the one hand, using SSBNs for presence purposes and, on the other, not impairing their operational effectiveness. Presence requires visibility to shape the perceptions of friends or foes, yet SSBNs depend on stealth to avoid detection by the enemy. Messages for assurance or deterrence must be transmitted to be received, yet SSBNs are part of the “silent service.” If SSBNs make port calls to make their extended-deterrent role more conspicuous, care will need to be exercised, as it has been in the past, to provide security for the submarines during port visits and to ensure that the clandestine nature of their patrols is not comprised.

One other way to draw more tightly the connection between the protection of the ROK and the nuclear forces of the United States, specifically the SSBN fleet, would be through visits by South Korean dignitaries to facilities associated with the submarines. The South Korean defense minister, for example, could be taken on a tour of the SSBN base at Bangor, Washington or to a plant involved in the production of SLBM components. The event could be publicized to generate coverage by the press in Seoul. Both assurance and deterrence likely would be served. The minister obviously would know the purpose of the tour and the North Korean regime probably would have little difficulty discerning the intent.

To the assertion of some South Koreans that the United States would be reluctant to use SLBMs or ICBMs against North Korea for fear the launches would be misperceived in Beijing or Moscow, U.S. officials might offer at least two responses. First, the all-azimuth flexibility and 4,000-nm range of SLBMs,¹⁷⁰ coupled with the mobility of SSBNs, would allow missile launches that avoided overflight of Russia or China. And second, the Russian warning system would enable Moscow to determine that it was not the target of the attack, and Beijing probably would not know that an attack was under way. According to a National Research Council panel,

Currently, there is no reason to believe that any foreign country other than Russia has a warning system that could detect such a launch. Assuming that Russia would detect the launch, the warning system would also likely have sufficient tracking to conclude in a few minutes that the target was not in Russian territory. ...Because of flight tests and space launches, Russia, like the United States, is accustomed to detecting and monitoring missiles and rockets after launch to establish their trajectories and confirm that whatever they are, they are not attacks directed at their own country. Even if the Russians were unsure of the trajectories, they would certainly discern the...limited scale...of [the] attack and would be unlikely to conclude that the

¹⁶⁹ Hans M. Kristensen, Robert S. Norris, and Matthew G. McKinzie, *Chinese Nuclear Forces and U.S. Nuclear War Planning* (Washington, D.C.: Federation of American Scientists and Natural Resources Defense Council, November 2006), pp. 146-147.

¹⁷⁰ The range of the Trident D5 SLBM is roughly 4,000 nm. See U.S. Navy, “Trident Fleet Ballistic Missile,” fact sheet, Navy Fact File, January 17, 2009.

United States was starting a nuclear war with Russia in a “bolt-from-the-blue” attack with so few missiles.

Today other nuclear-weapons states (including China) appear to have very little capacity to detect a ballistic missile launch (and therefore very little potential for misinterpreting what they do not know). When China develops early-warning capabilities, as it presumably will in time, the observations above about the Russian capacity to analyze a ballistic missile attack correctly—and to refrain from a nuclear response until it has—would apply.¹⁷¹

Improve conventional capabilities to offset adverse effects of nuclear reductions

For South Koreans, the U.S. troop level on the peninsula is an index of American commitment to their defense. The specific level appears less important than whether the number of U.S. military personnel is going up or down and what the state of the security situation is when the change occurs. Not surprisingly, troop reductions create apprehension, particularly when relations with North Korea are tense. Present plans to maintain the current troop level therefore are wise. Avoiding withdrawals signals the continuing U.S. commitment during a time of heightened tension between the alliance and the North. Reducing conventional forces at the same time the role and number of nuclear weapons are being reduced not only would send the wrong signal, but would be inconsistent with the NPR conclusion that de-emphasis on nuclear weapons necessitates improvements in conventional capabilities. If anything, conventional force upgrades would seem warranted, both to strengthen U.S.-ROK defenses and to bolster the credibility of the U.S. security pledge. Future deployments of advanced capabilities—like the F-22—would be helpful for this purpose.

Another option would be to acquire conventional prompt global strike (CPGS) capabilities that could be used in a Korean conflict. These capabilities might include the intercontinental-range Conventional Strike Missile and the shorter-range Advanced Hypersonic Weapon, both of which are now in technology development.¹⁷² CGPS capabilities could support the “active deterrence” strategy that has been discussed in South Korea. (Active deterrence is related to the Defense Reform Plan 2020 mentioned earlier.) The strategy recognizes that deterrence of WMD use can fail, despite the strength of alliance defenses, the U.S. nuclear guarantee, and the broader U.S. security commitment. Were that to happen, the ROK military expects to detect indications of any imminent North Korean WMD attack and carry out preemptive air and missile strikes

¹⁷¹ Committee on Conventional Prompt Global Strike Capability, National Research Council, *U.S. Conventional Prompt Global Strike: Issues for 2008 and Beyond* (Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2008), pp. 74-75. While the cited passage is from a discussion of the danger that the launch of a conventionally armed ballistic missile might be misinterpreted, the facts and logic also apply to the issue of whether the same might be true for a limited ICBM or SLBM attack against North Korea.

¹⁷² See Amy F. Woolf, *Conventional Prompt Global Strike and Long-Range Ballistic Missiles: Background and Issues*, Report R41464 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, October 25, 2010).

against WMD-related sites in the North.¹⁷³ One proponent of the active deterrence strategy is Lee Sang-woo, the head of the Presidential Commission for National Security Review, a group established after the *Cheonan* attack to recommend reforms of the South Korean military. In a September 2010 speech, Lee made the following points in favor of the strategy:

As long as North Korea refuses to give up its WMD, South Korea, which decided not to obtain WMD of its own accord, cannot help facing a military inferiority.

Only when it possesses the ability to attack targets precisely with non-nuclear weapons and incapacitate North Korea's WMD ability before it is used will South Korea...be able to head off North Korea's military edge.

If South Korea shows the decisive will to crush North Korea's means and intention to attack before its command and control systems and means of attack can start operating, it will refrain from provocations.¹⁷⁴

The active deterrence strategy is tied to remarks President Lee made in a May 2010 televised address in which he outlined South Korean responses to the *Cheonan* sinking.¹⁷⁵ In the speech, Lee warned, "From now on, the Republic of Korea will not tolerate any provocative act by the North and will maintain the principle of proactive deterrence. If our territorial waters, airspace or territory are violated, we will immediately exercise our right to self-defense."¹⁷⁶ A presidential spokesman subsequently explained that "proactive deterrence" envisaged the capability "to preempt further provocations and threats from the North against the South, as well as simply exercising the right of self-defense."¹⁷⁷

As these statements suggest, active deterrence is a matter of self-reliance as well as self-defense. Those behind the strategy anticipate that it would be South Korea that delivered the preemptive blows against North Korean WMD facilities and forces. For this reason, the ROK is improving its own capabilities for finding WMD targets, acquiring warning of an impending WMD attack, and conducting precision strikes to preempt it. Cruise missiles with ranges of up to 800 nm reportedly are being built to cover WMD sites in the

¹⁷³ "S. Korea Knows Potential Locations of NK Nuke Weapons," *Dong-A Ilbo*, September 19, 2009; Gen. Lee Sang-eui, then-ROK Joint Chiefs chairman-designate, quoted in Sam Kim, "N. Korean Nuclear Bases Pose Greatest Threat: S. Korean Commander," *Yonhap*, September 24, 2009; Kim Tae-young, quoted in "Seoul Suspects 100 Sites Over NK Nuke Program," *Korea Times*, October 5, 2009; and Kim Tae-young, quoted in "S. Korea Will Launch Preemptive Strike in Case of Imminent Nuclear Attack: Minister," *Yonhap*, January 20, 2010.

¹⁷⁴ Kim Tae Hong, "South Korea Needs Precision Strike Capacity," *Daily NK*, September 15, 2010. See also Song Sang-ho, "Weapons Needed to Neutralize N.K. WMDs," *Korea Herald*, September 15, 2010.

¹⁷⁵ "Committee to Urge President Lee to Switch to 'Active Deterrence,'" *Yonhap*, August 15, 2010; and Yu Son'ng-un, "Seeks to Include 'Preemptive-Strike-Upon-Indication-of-Attack' in the Operations Plan," *Dong-A Ilbo*, August 16, 2010 (in Korean; Open Source Center translation KPP20100817106001).

¹⁷⁶ "Full Text of President Lee's National Address," *Yonhap*, May 24, 2010.

¹⁷⁷ Lee Dong-kwan, quoted in "Seoul Halts All Trade with N. Korea," *Chosun Ilbo*, May 25, 2010.

North.¹⁷⁸ Nonetheless, CPGS weapons of the United States might play a role in the active deterrence strategy. From an operational perspective, their hypersonic speed might give them an edge over South Korean strike aircraft and cruise missiles in attacking time-sensitive targets. If armed with earth-penetrating munitions, they might be better able to neutralize underground targets. In terms of assurance, joint planning to use CPGS weapons in conjunction with ROK attacks would be way of demonstrating “we go together” against a threat of great concern to South Koreans. Moreover, the CPGS option could serve as an escalation link to U.S. strategic nuclear forces. Strikes by long-range nonnuclear ballistic missiles might raise the prospect that strikes by nuclear-armed ICBMs or SLBMs could follow if aggression by North Korea continued. This linkage could make the nuclear guarantee more credible to the ROK.

As U.S. nuclear forces are downsized and downplayed, missile defenses will remain important in assuring South Korea. Future integration of South Korean air and missile defenses into the U.S. missile defense system in Northeast Asia could further strengthen security ties between the United States and the ROK. If Pyongyang deploys nuclear-armed ICBMs, missile defenses that can provide the United States with a high degree of protection against North Korean nuclear attack would be essential to the credibility of the U.S. nuclear commitment to Seoul. Were the United States vulnerable to North Korean missiles, the South Koreans might fear that its ally would be reluctant to aid in its defense because of the danger that Pyongyang could react by attacking one or more U.S. cities, causing the loss of hundreds of thousands or millions of American lives. Neither Washington nor Seoul could be confident that the North Korean leadership would be deterred from such an action by the threat of U.S. nuclear retaliation. The totalitarian regime, with its reputation for brutality, recklessness, and unpredictability, would have an advantage in any game of nuclear brinkmanship with the United States. South Koreans would have to ask whether the United States would trade Seattle for Seoul, a question reflecting one of the fundamental problems in extended deterrence. Any attempt to answer the question almost certainly would have a corrosive effect on assurance. Effective missile defenses would make the question less likely to arise.

¹⁷⁸ “Seoul Deploys Home-Grown Cruise Missiles,” *Chosun Ilbo*, July 19, 2010; and Kwon Hyuk-chul, “Seoul Develops Long-Range Cruise Missile,” *Hankyoreh*, July 19, 2010.

Japan

Means of Assurance for Japan

Overall Relationship

The United States and Japan have had a formal mutual security pact for 50 years, Japan hosts a large U.S. military presence, and the two countries cooperate in a range of military exercises, weapon development efforts, and high-level consultations.

In keeping with Japan's constitutional identity and reliance on the United States for regional security, formal discussions, in the past, focused primarily on non-military matters. Nuclear weapon-related issues were not discussed until recently. The neither-confirm-nor-deny (NCND) policy on nuclear weapon deployments was observed by both sides and the issue of whether or not nuclear weapons were carried by U.S. ships within Japan's territorial waters was not discussed publicly. In recent years, joint cooperation on ballistic missile defense has been growing in importance and activity. Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee (2+2) meetings typically included discussion of cooperative measures for ballistic missile defense. In November 2007, the defense ministers from both countries met and agreed to advance joint efforts to cooperate on operational aspects of BMD.¹⁷⁹ Senior Japanese officials are becoming more interested in understanding U.S. plans that underpin extended deterrence. The nuclear ambitions of North Korea are usually used as a pretext for these inquiries, but it is often apparent that Tokyo is also nervously watching China modernize and expand its nuclear arsenal.

The Japan-U.S. relationship has evolved as contextual factors and policies have shifted over the past few decades. Important factors affecting the relationship include: the regional threat environment, the broader global context, the economy, and improvements in defense technology. The relative importance of each factor is viewed in Japan through the cultural lens of a nation that publicly states its embrace of pacifism, but understands the changing nature of the threat environment and the potential challenges to stability in Northeast Asia. Tokyo remains compelled to endorse the goal of nuclear disarmament, but takes seriously the need to deter regional threats—which are growing in number and lethality. While the immediate threat is from a North Korea, armed with ballistic missiles and nuclear and chemical warheads, the longer-term concern is China.

Formal Alliance

In 1952, a Mutual Security Assistance Pact between the United States and Japan set the stage for further security arrangements between the two countries. The pact was succeeded by the 1960 Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security which declares that both nations will maintain and develop their capacities to resist armed attack in common and that each recognizes that an armed attack on either one in territories administered by

¹⁷⁹ Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan—2008*, White Paper (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense, 2008), p. 172.

Japan will be considered dangerous to the safety of the other. While the wording reflects mutual cooperation for security matters, the implementation was anything but mutual. The United States provided the military capabilities; Japan provided the bases on which U.S. forces could be forward deployed. Also, Japan's constitutional prohibition of participating in external military operations relieved it from any obligation to defend the United States or its forces if attacks occurred outside of Japanese territories.

The 1960 U.S.-Japan Security Treaty provided for a Japan that limited its military to self-defense capabilities. However, over the succeeding decades, self-defense has been periodically reinterpreted more broadly and now allows Japanese military capabilities to be used to help maintain peace and security in the Far East. This also enabled Tokyo to permit the United States to use its bases in Japan for other military contingencies, such as Vietnam-related operations in the 1960s and 1970s¹⁸⁰ and to provide logistical support for U.S. operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Both sides interpreted the standing agreements as allowing Japan to support the United States in a potential contingency on the Korean peninsula.¹⁸¹ At times this required formal agreement on modifications to the division of responsibilities in the 1960 Treaty. For example, a 1997 agreement provided political authority for Japan to take responsibilities for preventing the emergence of threats from the area surrounding Japan and clarified the roles expected of each party during a crisis.¹⁸²

Article IV of the mutual security treaty calls for consultations, as needed. At times, those consultations have included the topic of extended deterrence. For example, after the United States announced significant reductions in nuclear forces following the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review in 2001, Japanese officials sought clarifications from the United States that U.S. nuclear guarantees were still valid and began to ask detailed questions on U.S. plans for the nuclear arsenal. In testimony before the Strategic Posture Commission, Japanese officials stated that they would welcome official dialogue on extended deterrence. In response to testimony by Japan and other allies, the report of the commission recommended "steps to increase allied consultations [on extended deterrence]"¹⁸³ In July 2009, Japan and the United States agreed to establish an official framework to engage in periodic talks on the nuclear umbrella.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ This interpretation allowing the U.S. use of bases for regional contingencies was invoked following the 1991 Persian Gulf War to deploy to the Persian Gulf U.S. minesweepers homeported in Japan.

¹⁸¹ Charles M. Perry and Toshi Yoshihara, *The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Preparing for Korean Reconciliation and Beyond* (Everett, Mass.: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 2003), pp. 41-46.

¹⁸² Kurt Campbell, deputy assistant director of defense for Asia and the Pacific. DoD News Briefing on Japan-US Defense Guidelines, September 19, 1997, DoD release.

¹⁸³ William J. Perry, chairman, and James R. Schlesinger, vice-chairman, *America's Strategic Posture: The Final Report of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2009), pp. 16-17.

¹⁸⁴ "Japan, U.S. Agree on Periodic Talks Over U.S. Nuclear Umbrella," available at <http://www.japantoday.com>, *Japan Today*, July 18, 2009.

Official Statements

Over the years, periodic public statements have been issued jointly to reaffirm aspects of the U.S.-Japan security agreement or to stress specific aspects of the relationship. Joint statements typically stated that the United States would defend Japan with all available means, including, if necessary, the use of nuclear weapons. In 2005, growing concerns over security in the region motivated both countries to develop a detailed list of common strategic objectives. The common objectives included military modernization of Japanese forces and a U.S. commitment to maintaining deterrence and military capabilities forward-deployed to Japan.¹⁸⁵

The North Korean nuclear test in 2006 sent shock waves through national security circles in Japan. Tokyo sought and received high-level U.S. reassurances that the “nuclear” remained in the U.S. “nuclear umbrella.” Some in the Japanese media called on Japan to get over its “nuclear allergy.”¹⁸⁶ In May 2007, a joint statement by U.S. and Japanese foreign and defense ministers stated that, “United States extended deterrence underpins the defense of Japan” and that, “the full range of U.S. military capabilities—both nuclear and nonnuclear strike force and defensive capabilities—form the core of extended deterrence.”¹⁸⁷

The November 2008 election of Barak Obama as President of the United States was watched with some anxiety in Japan. The newly-elected president voiced a commitment to his personal view that nuclear weapons should be abolished. Soon thereafter, Japan’s 2009 national election brought to power the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). The DPJ had been the opposition party for over four decades and campaigned on bringing new ideas to Japan and achieving greater independence from the United States. President Obama’s nuclear elimination statements found a sympathetic ear among some of the Japanese population. In November 2009, President Obama and then-Prime Minister Yukio Hatayama met at the White House. After that meeting, the White House released the following United States-Japan Joint Statement on the goal of a world without nuclear weapons:

Recognizing the challenge to achieve total elimination of nuclear weapons, the Government of the United States and the Government of Japan plan to work actively to create conditions for achieving this objective. They express their determination to take the following practical steps on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, in a way that promotes international stability and security

¹⁸⁵ U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee Joint Statement, February 19, 2005, released by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

¹⁸⁶ “Nakasone Proposes Japan Consider Nuclear Weapons,” *Japan Times*, September 6, 2006; and “North Korea’s Nuclear Threat: Is U.S. Nuclear Umbrella Effective?” *Daily Yomiuri*, March 20, 2007, Open Source Center translation.

¹⁸⁷ “Full Text of Japan-U.S. Joint Security Statement,” Kyodo, May 7, 2007, Open Source Center, JPP20070502969013.

while ensuring that those steps do not in any way diminish the national security of Japan or the United States of America and its allies.¹⁸⁸

The May 2010 Joint Statement of the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee did not mention “extended deterrence” or U.S. nuclear weapon capabilities. Instead, the joint statement contained the following:

... the United States reiterated its unwavering commitment to Japan’s security. Japan reconfirmed its commitment to playing a positive role in contributing to the peace and stability of the region. Furthermore, the SCC members recognized that a robust forward presence of U.S. military forces in Japan, including in Okinawa, provides the deterrence and capabilities necessary for the defense of Japan and for the maintenance of regional stability.¹⁸⁹

Forward Deployments

Since the end of World War II, large numbers of military personnel and forces (air, land, and sea) have been based in Japan and the surrounding region. During much of the Cold War, over 50,000 military personnel were based in Japan. Currently, 36,000 military personnel—many with their families—are deployed to Japan. The United States forward-based both fighter aircraft and naval forces, including an aircraft carrier and its air wing, in Japan. Japanese officials and public were aware that the United States possessed a large nuclear arsenal, that nuclear weapons were probably deployed in South Korea, and possibly elsewhere in the Pacific, but not in Japan. The status of U.S. sea-based nuclear forces was often opaque. The U.S. policy to “neither confirm nor deny” the presence of nuclear weapons aboard any specific base or ship, and the recognition of U.S. naval vessels as under U.S. jurisdiction, allowed both parties to circumvent the issue of meeting joint security needs and observing Japan’s “Three No’s.”¹⁹⁰ In March 2010, Japan’s foreign minister acknowledged that Japan in the past had agreed to permit the United States the option of forward-deploying nuclear weapons in Japanese territory during a time of crisis.¹⁹¹ Recently declassified documents indicate that some U.S. nuclear weapons and components were stored for a short time on islands then administered by the United States. These islands have subsequently been returned to the sovereignty of Japan.

More recently, SSGNs have been used to visibly demonstrate U.S. presence. In 2008, the U.S.S. *Ohio* SSGN visited the port of Yokosuka, Japan. Upon arrival, its commanding officer said, “The Japanese-American alliance is very important, and visiting Yokosuka

¹⁸⁸ United States-Japan Joint Statement toward a World without Nuclear Weapons, November 13, 2009, White House release.

¹⁸⁹ Joint Statement of the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee, May 27, 2010, Department of State release.

¹⁹⁰ In 1971, then-Prime Minister Eisaku Sato enshrined in a Diet resolution what became known as “Japan’s Three No’s”: Japan will not 1) possess, 2) manufacture, or 3) allow nuclear weapons to be introduced to Japanese territory. For this, and his signing of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Sato became the first Japanese awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace.

¹⁹¹ “Japan Acknowledges Nuke Agreement with U.S.,” *Global Security Newswire*, March 9, 2010.

gives us the opportunity to outwardly demonstrate the U.S. commitment to Japan and the East Asian region.”¹⁹²

Currently, Japan hosts the second largest contingent of deployed U.S. forces and provides a home port for the only U.S. aircraft carrier (the nuclear-powered USS *George Washington*) based outside the United States. Ongoing changes include the proposed relocation of a Marine Corps Air Station on Okinawa to a more remote location on the island, transferring about 8,000 Marines from Okinawa to Guam, moving an Army headquarters for I Corps from the United States to Japan, and integrating U.S. and Japanese air defense functions in a joint center on Yokota Air Base.¹⁹³ Japan hosts an X-band radar which is an integral part of the U.S. Ballistic Missile Defense System. Japanese and U.S. forces cooperate in missile defense exercises and are continuing to improve interoperability between elements of each other’s defensive systems.

Exercises and Operations

Japan’s Self-Defense Forces participate routinely in multilateral military operations such as the annual RIMPAC (“Rim of the Pacific”) exercise. With the commitment to ballistic missile defense by both the United States and Japan, several joint exercises have been dedicated to this mission. In December 2007, a joint BMD test used an SM-3 interceptor fired from a Japanese destroyer, *Kongo*. This successful joint live-fire test marked a major milestone in missile defense cooperation with the United States. In November 2008, a subsequent BMD test involving an interceptor fired by a ship in the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force was partially successful. In October 2009, a Japanese destroyer, JS *Myoko*, fired an SM-3 interceptor missile which successfully impacted its target, a medium-range ballistic missile, about 100 miles above the Pacific Ocean.¹⁹⁴ In October 2010, the Japanese destroyer, JS *Kirishima*, successfully fired an SM-3 missile that destroyed a medium-range ballistic target missile fired from the U.S. Pacific Missile Range Facility.¹⁹⁵ To date, Japan has installed Aegis ballistic missile defense on four Kongo-class destroyers. The United States and Japan are continuing to work together to increase the range and lethality of the SM-3 Block IIA interceptor.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² “USS Ohio Arrives in Yokosuka,” Commander, Task Force 74 Public Affairs, October 17, 2008, available at <http://www.c7f.navy.mil>.

¹⁹³ Bruce Klinger, “How to Save the U.S.-Japan Alliance,” *Backgrounder* (Heritage Foundation), August 26, 2009, pp. 2-3.

¹⁹⁴ Audrey McAvoy, “Japan Intercepts Ballistic Missile in Hawaii Test,” Associated Press, October 28, 2009.

¹⁹⁵ “Japanese Ship Intercepts Ballistic Missile in Test,” Associated Press, October 29, 2010.

¹⁹⁶ Lt. Gen. Patrick J. O’Reilly, director, Missile Defense Agency, prepared statement before the House Armed Services Committee, May 21, 2009.

Japanese Reactions to the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review

Context Affecting Japanese Views of New U.S. Policies

Japan, which has routinely expressed its security goals through the context of “regional stability,” has witnessed several recent incidents which serve as reminders that stability should not be taken for granted. These incidents include the attack on *Cheonan*, tension between the United States and China surrounding the Invincible Spirit exercises, and Tokyo’s verbal clash with Beijing over its September 2010 seizure of a Chinese fishing vessel and crew in waters near the disputed Senkaku Islands.

Tokyo has also witnessed China’s increasing display of hostility toward Japan’s key ally, the United States. During a U.S.-China meeting in Beijing, for example, Chinese Rear Admiral Guan Youfei startled Secretary of State Clinton and over 60 other American officials with a three-minute tirade against the United States. Guan accused the U.S. of being a “hegemon” and said that everything that is going wrong with U.S.-China relations is the fault of the United States. While some on the U.S. delegation tried to downplay the incident as an anomaly, an unidentified Chinese official who reportedly deals with the United States on a regular basis, commented to the press, “Admiral Guan was representing what all of us think about the United States in our hearts.”¹⁹⁷

Tensions associated with these incidents are reflected in recent statements from Japanese officials who had previously been reluctant to express publicly their growing concerns over China and its military expansion. In an interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, Japanese Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada said, “we will need to watch very carefully the nuclear arsenal and naval capabilities of China” and “because of this ... all the more, the Japan-U.S. alliance would be important.”¹⁹⁸

General Views of Japanese Officials and Commentators

Current challenges to stability in Northeast Asia, coupled with the relative inexperience of Japanese officials in the DPJ-led administration, have contributed to some anxiety among Japanese elites. In this uncertain environment, during the U.S.-Japan Strategic Dialogue in April 2010 Japanese participants commented that high-level U.S. attention by the president, secretary of state, and secretary of defense underscoring “the centrality of the US-Japan alliance” has helped to decrease Japanese anxiety over the actions of a new administration that is still trying to resolve idealistic policy goals with realities of a dangerous security environment.

Following release of the September 2010 Japanese White Paper on Defense, Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan and President Obama met during a meeting of the UN General Assembly and reaffirmed the importance of the Japan-U.S. security alliance. Kan said

¹⁹⁷ John Pomfret, “In Chinese Admiral’s Outburst, a Lingering Distrust of U.S.,” *Washington Post*, June 8, 2010.

¹⁹⁸ Yuka Hayashi and Jacob M. Schlesinger, “Tokyo Grows Wary of China Military,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 14, 2010.

the alliance not only stabilizes the Asia-Pacific region but also serves as a cornerstone for global peace and prosperity.¹⁹⁹

One “strategic disconnect” between the two countries, reported during the 2010 U.S.-Japan Strategic Dialogue, was a difference in the priority of threat perceptions. Japanese participants stated that their greatest threat is manifest in nuclear-armed neighboring states in their region. They noted an absence of their concerns in the NPR and other policy documents in the United States which give priority to nonproliferation issues and terrorist threats from non-state actors and often portray China in a relatively benign manner.²⁰⁰

The official view of the regional dangers facing Japan can be found in the “National Defense Program Guidelines [NDPG], FY 2011,” released in December 2011. The NDPG is issued periodically to provide official national defense objectives over the coming decade for Japan in a manner consistent with its constitution and laws. The most recent NDPG cited more explicitly than any time in the past the potential threat from “military modernization by China and its insufficient transparency.” Also listed as potential security issues are “North Korea’s nuclear and missile issues,” “disputes in so-called ‘gray zones’ (confrontations over territory over territory, sovereignty and economic interests...),” and a “shift in the balance of power...brought about by the rise of emerging powers and relative change of U.S. influence.”²⁰¹

The NDPG listed cooperation with the United States as “indispensable in ensuring for Japan’s peace and security.” However, this security plan, for the first time, called for Japan to build a “Dynamic Defense Force,” which it described as “a concept that aims to secure deterrence by the ‘existence’ per-se of defense capability.” The Dynamic Defense Force is to “increase the credibility of Japan’s deterrent capability by promoting timely and active ‘operations.’”²⁰² The new NDPG makes clear that Tokyo has decided to take a more active role for its own defense while, at the same time, continuing to rely on U.S. extended deterrence. In this regard, the NDGP calls for a strategic dialogue with the United States to further enhance and develop the alliance and refers to the “U.S. nuclear deterrent as a vital element.” News reports in Japan touted the new concept of Dynamic Defense as a roadmap for improving mobility and readiness of Japan’s military capabilities in response to concerns about the Chinese Navy’s rising presence in waters around Japan.²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ “Kan, Obama Reaffirm Importance of Japan-U.S. Security Alliance,” *Kyodo*, September 23, 2010.

²⁰⁰ Pacific Forum CSIS, *Third U.S.-Japan Strategic Dialogue, Maui, April 26-27, 2010*, Draft report for the Advanced Systems and Concepts Office, Defense Threat Reduction Agency (Honolulu: Pacific Forum CSIS, June 2, 2010), Key Findings, p. 1. Participating in the dialogue were a small, select group of Japanese and American security specialists.

²⁰¹ “Summary of National Defense Program Guidelines, FY 2011,” approved by Japan’s Security Council and Cabinet on December 17, 2010, p. 2, available at <http://www.mod.go.jp/e/index.html>.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁰³ Kentaro Kawaguchi, “Defense Policy Shifting Focus to China’s Military,” *Asahi Shimbun*, December 11, 2010.

Officially, Japan welcomed the 2010 NPR. Japan's foreign minister issued a two-page statement the day after the NPR was released. The statement endorsed the U.S. policy goals of: 1) reducing the role and number of nuclear weapons; 2) enhancing the security of the U.S. and its partners; 3) strengthening the U.S. negative security assurance; and, at the same time; 4) reassuring "its commitment to its allies, including Japan and partners to provide deterrence, including that by nuclear weapons." The statement also noted that the U.S. has committed to "closely consult with allies and partners to ensure this commitment."²⁰⁴ Japanese responses to new U.S. policies for strategic capabilities and nuclear forces illustrate the complexity of Tokyo's view on these issues. Several examples are described below.

Reduced Role of Nuclear Weapons

Japanese reactions to U.S. policy initiatives designed to reduce the role and number of nuclear weapons, while at the same time reassuring Tokyo of the U.S. security commitment, have been largely consistent with two, seemingly contradictory, positions long held by the Japanese. On one hand, President Obama's embrace of nuclear disarmament and the NPR's highest priority goal of moving "toward a world free of nuclear weapons" was welcomed by many and appears to have motivated action by a vocal nuclear disarmament community in Japan. On the other hand, other Japanese were reassured by U.S. statements that as long as others have nuclear weapons the United States will "sustain safe, secure, and effective nuclear forces."²⁰⁵ In this seemingly contradictory policy context, Japanese security experts appear eager to understand the dynamics and limits of extended deterrence.

This duality of Japanese views is sometimes evident in statements by its leaders. Following the June 2010 resignation of DPJ Prime Minister Hatayama, who was often characterized in the Japanese press as idealistic and naïve, Japan's next prime minister, Naoto Kan, also of the DPJ, appeared to take a more pragmatic approach. At the annual commemoration of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Prime Minister Kan stressed that nuclear deterrence is still needed. He was criticized for this statement in the Japanese press and, three days later in Nagasaki, he stated, "Japan will make every effort for the world to eliminate nuclear weapons so that there will be no third atomic-bombed place."²⁰⁶

During the same meeting of the UN General Assembly at which Prime Minister Kan met with President Obama to reaffirm the Japan-U.S. security alliance, Kan also vowed that "Japan would take leadership in the international community's efforts to realize a world without nuclear weapons as the only country to have suffered nuclear bombing."²⁰⁷ In addition, Kan met with leaders from nine other states and all ten committed their

²⁰⁴ "On the Release of the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review (NPR)," Statement by Mr. Katsuya Okada, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, April 7, 2010.

²⁰⁵ DoD, *NPR*, p. v.

²⁰⁶ "Nagasaki A-Bomb Survivors Rap Kan for Nuclear Deterrence Remark," *Jiji Press*, August 9, 2010.

²⁰⁷ "Kan Vows Japan Will Lead Push for Global Denuclearization in Speech to U.N.," *Mainichi Daily News*, September 25, 2010.

countries to the goal of nuclear disarmament. No mention was made of the contribution of nuclear forces for deterrence. One Japanese newspaper observed wryly, “Seven of the 10 members [advocating nuclear disarmament] ... are protected by the U.S. nuclear umbrella.”²⁰⁸

Revised Negative Security Assurance

Most in Japan were pleased with the new U.S. declaratory policy, although some in the Japanese disarmament community predictably were disappointed that the NPR did not go further and endorse “sole purpose.” For example, Seiji Maehara, appointed foreign minister in September 2010, promptly promoted “banning the use of nuclear weapons against nonnuclear states, or retaining nuclear weapons solely for the purpose of deterring others from using such weapons.”²⁰⁹ This formulation would be a step beyond the new U.S. negative security assurance statement. Of course, all of Japan’s potential foes are nuclear-armed, so such a policy would appear to pose little additional risk for Japan.

Not all Japanese officials seem eager to embrace a sole-purpose nuclear policy by the United States and some security officials, such as Kazuyoshi Umemoto, Director General of North American Affairs in the Japanese Foreign Ministry, were generally relieved that the NPR did not include a “no first use” or sole-purpose declaration. As a government official he recognizes the attraction in some Japanese circles to the sole-purpose proposal. At an August 2010 deterrence conference hosted by U.S. Strategic Command, Umemoto stated,

As long as we can maintain a conventional balance so that we don’t have to think about using nuclear weapons...to compensate for conventional inferiority, then whether the [extended deterrence] will be done by strategic weapons or nonstrategic weapons [makes little difference]. ... There’s a strong voice in Japan which favors the idea of nuclear deterrence being only applied for nuclear attack, conventional attack should be dealt with conventional attack.

However, Umemoto believes that nuclear weapons can serve roles in deterring other types of attack, including conventional attack by Japan’s regional neighbors—North Korea and China. Furthermore, he said, “So long as the deterrence is concerned, the government policy remains that we do not favor that kind of [sole-purpose] approach.”²¹⁰

Japanese participants at the 2010 U.S.-Japan Strategic Dialogue seemed to agree with Umemoto. A report of the proceedings indicated that they were pleased that the United States did not adopt a no-first-use policy or a sole-purpose nuclear deterrence policy. Furthermore, a U.S. defense analyst conducted extensive

²⁰⁸ Junko Takahashi, “Group to Seek Nuke-Free World,” *Asahi Shimbun*, September 25, 2010.

²⁰⁹ “Japan, Australia, 8 Others Form Group to Promote Nuke Disarmament, Kyodo, September 23, 2010.

²¹⁰ Elaine M. Grossman, “Nations Look Increasingly to U.S. Conventional Forces for Deterrence,” *Global Security Newswire*, August 17, 2010.

interviews in Japan during the summer of 2010 and reported concerns within the Japanese Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the new declaratory policy (i.e., negative security assurances) weakens U.S. protection against chemical and biological attacks on Japan by North Korea.²¹¹ The new Defense White Paper notes that chemical and biological agents, as well as nuclear warheads, could be carried on North Korea's ballistic missiles.²¹²

In summary, the new declaratory policy—the revised negative security assurance guarantee—is viewed as a positive step overall, although one which poses some additional risks for Japan. Some anxiety exists over whether the new declaratory policy will undermine the credibility of nuclear deterrence over the long term. Japanese security analysts are generally in support of not placing further restrictions on nuclear-use declaratory policy at this time.

Nuclear Arms Reductions

For over six decades, Japanese leaders have resolutely promoted nuclear disarmament and have done so from the unique perspective of the only country to have experienced nuclear strikes on its soil. Annual commemorations of those atomic strikes have become part of the postwar culture in Japan. This year, U.S. Ambassador John Roos visited Hiroshima on August 6 and Nagasaki on August 9, where he placed a wreath at the atomic bomb monument. Roos's visit to Hiroshima and Nagasaki was the fourth ever by a senior U.S. official and the first since 1994.²¹³ His attendance received broad coverage in the Japanese press.

During the Cold War, there was little prospect of the abandonment of nuclear arsenals. This provided a safe environment in which disarmament advocates could make their case. However, the current U.S. administration's policy of openly embracing nuclear disarmament has provided encouragement for these disarmament advocates while, at the same time, raising anxiety among security officials that steps toward this goal may weaken deterrence.

U.S. nuclear elimination goals have also been a catalyst for a variety of nuclear disarmament activities. A joint Japanese-Australian initiative, the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, has published a proposal calling for a reduction of nuclear arsenals to a worldwide total of 2,000 or less by 2025. As noted earlier, in September 2010, in his address to the General Assembly Prime Minister Kan vowed that "Japan would take leadership in the international community's efforts to realize a world without nuclear weapons."²¹⁴

One Japanese participant at the 2010 Strategic Dialogue questioned the premise that U.S. nuclear reductions would encourage others to reduce their nuclear forces. During the

²¹¹ Discussion with David Yost, September 2, 2010.

²¹² Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan—2010*, White Paper (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense, 2010).

²¹³ "Roos in Nagasaki Sign of U.S. Resolve," *Asahi Shimbun*, September 28, 2010.

²¹⁴ "Kan Vows Japan Will Lead Push for Global Denuclearization in Speech to U.N.," op. cit.

dialogue, this participant noted that “Russia is increasing its reliance on nuclear forces as its conventional forces erode and China is building up and modernizing its strategic arsenal very much independent of US policy.” One participant suggested that increased U.S. reliance on conventional capabilities and diminished reliance on nuclear forces “might drive opponents to rely *even more* on their nuclear arsenals.”²¹⁵

Specific concerns in this regard include uncertainty over “next steps” in U.S. efforts to negotiate nuclear reductions with Russia, general statements citing the goal of “stability,” and explicit statements limiting U.S. ballistic missile defenses vis-à-vis China; for example, “Maintaining strategic stability in the U.S.-China relationship is as important to the Administration as maintaining strategic stability with other major powers.”²¹⁶

U.S. nuclear reductions are being evaluated carefully and contrasted with Japan’s neighbor, China, which continues to increase its nuclear arsenal. The United States has negotiated a strategic nuclear reduction treaty with Russia, outlined plans to cut nuclear force structure, and imposed policy constraints on nuclear warhead development and announced the retirement without replacement of the TLAM-N sea-launched cruise missile. With regard to the latter, the NPR referred to TLAM-N as “redundant.” In the past, Japanese officials noted that the TLAM-N possesses unique characteristics that are compatible with Japan’s unique approach to deterrence. During a not-for-attribution seminar on deterrence, a Japanese official stated that the ability of TLAM-N to deploy and remain on-station, out of sight, and have its presence either announced or clandestine, provided a unique combination of attributes that were of value for Japan. A U.S. analyst reports that some Japanese continue to believe that TLAM-N’s characteristics could prove more useful for escalation control than strategic weapons such as Minuteman III ICBMs or Trident D5 SLBMs.²¹⁷

The elimination of TLAM-N from the U.S. arsenal appears to be of specific interest in Japan. Over the previous few years, Japanese officials have hinted that they might revise Japan’s “Three No’s” to “two and a half no’s,” presumably to accommodate potential U.S. deployment of TLAM-N. As recently as March 2010, Foreign Minister Okada stated that Japan could host nuclear weapons during a time of crisis. Okada said that the current government would stick to Japan’s three non-nuclear principles. However, before a parliamentary committee, he qualified that with the statement, “In a case in which Japan’s security cannot be protected unless we accept temporary port calls by U.S. ships carrying nuclear weapons, the government at the time would make a decision even if it may affect its political fortunes.”²¹⁸

Japanese concerns over the retirement of TLAM-N with no planned replacement appear to have been calmed somewhat by extensive consultations by U.S. defense officials prior

²¹⁵ Pacific Forum CSIS, *Third U.S.-Japan Strategic Dialogue*, op. cit., Chairman’s Report, p. 12 (emphasis in original).

²¹⁶ DoD, *NPR*, p. xi.

²¹⁷ Discussion with David Yost, op. cit.

²¹⁸ “Okada Does Not Rule out Introduction of Nuclear Weapons in Emergency, *Associated Press*, March 17, 2010. Also see, “Japan Could Host U.S. Nukes in Crisis, Foreign Minister Says, *Global Services Newswire*, March 17, 2010.

to the official U.S. announcement. However, several months after release of the NPR, a conversation with Japanese officials indicated that their concerns over the elimination of this weapon during a time of increasing instability had not been fully addressed.²¹⁹

In sum, proposed nuclear reductions in general meet with favorable responses in Japan. However, when the specifics appear to pose increased risks for Japan, or when U.S. policies appear to accommodate an increasingly assertive China, Japanese security officials and analysts display anxiety.

Increased Reliance on Nonnuclear Capabilities for Deterrence

Statements in the NPR stress increased U.S. reliance on conventional weapons as one reason for the United States to reduce its number of nuclear weapons. According to Japanese participants at the 2010 Strategic Dialogue, this policy goal could weaken assurance for Japan for several reasons. First, potential adversaries in their region are viewed as unlikely to share a vision of a nuclear-free world dominated by the United States with conventional capabilities. Second, increased reliance on conventional weapons raises concerns about whether the threat of a U.S. conventional response would be sufficient to deter potential adversaries. Third, Japan could provide its own conventional response.²²⁰

U.S. policy statements that explicitly reject defense of the United States against a Chinese ballistic missile attack affect the credibility of the U.S. nuclear umbrella. The U.S. acceptance of vulnerability to Chinese nuclear strikes was referred to by a Japanese official as being “notorious in Japanese security circles.”²²¹ For the United States to willingly accept such a posture appears troubling. The Japanese do not want the guarantor of their security to be vulnerable to the country which is the source of the greatest security concerns to them.

Japanese officials and the public have been very supportive of developing ballistic missile defenses. Defenses provide one possible solution to the question of, “What happens if deterrence fails?” However, in general, there appears to be substantial uncertainty over the implementation of U.S. proposals to increase reliance on nonnuclear offensive and defensive capabilities as the role and numbers of nuclear weapons are reduced.

The ability of the United States to provide security guarantees that reassure Japan while reducing its reliance on nuclear weapons depends in large part on how regional threats are perceived by the Japanese. Tokyo’s views on the most immediate threats—North Korea and China—are discussed briefly in the following paragraphs.

²¹⁹ Not-for-attribution remarks during conversations by NIPP staff with Japanese officials on April 21 and July 26, 2010.

²²⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

²²¹ Not-for-attribution remarks during conversations by NIPP staff with Japanese officials on April 21 and July 26, 2010.

Threat from North Korea

Japan is concerned about a North Korea, armed with weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles, which is currently in the process of a leadership transition and continues to exhibit erratic behavior. North Korean nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009 and launches of ballistic missiles into the Sea of Japan and over Japan into the Pacific have prompted a sense of urgency for dealing with threats from North Korea.

Japan's 2010 defense white paper refers to North Korea's nuclear programs and missile activities as an "extremely destabilizing factor" for Northeast Asia and that pose "grave dangers to the security of Japan."²²² In addition, Japanese hold China partly responsible for North Korean actions and believe that Beijing could exercise more pressure on Pyongyang.

Japan's worries over North Korea as a threat appear to be growing as efforts to roll back Pyongyang's nuclear program drag on without success. Earlier Japanese concerns that the United States was being "too soft" on North Korea have subsided. But, actions by the United States are also being watched closely to see whether U.S. energies to combat nuclear proliferation will be devoted primarily to Iran, while paying less attention for Northeast Asia and, thereby, accepting a nuclear-armed North Korea. Japanese participants at the 2010 Strategic Dialogue reported that the U.S.-ROK relationship was also being monitored to see how well Washington supports or constrains the ROK in dealing with the *Cheonan* incident.²²³

One Japanese participant at the dialogue noted that Japan's strategic calculus in deciding to remain a nonnuclear-weapons state was with the condition that there would be no additional nuclear-weapons states in the region. He noted that a nuclear-armed North Korea invalidates that assumption.²²⁴ The 2010 NDPG states that "North Korea's nuclear and missile issues are immediate and grave destabilizing factors to the regional security."²²⁵

Threat from China

Japanese concerns about the threat from North Korea are overshadowed only by worries over the growing military capabilities and aggressive behavior of China. As noted earlier, U.S. policy changes are being examined in the context of China's behavior, which is increasingly assertive, and its military capabilities, which are benefiting from annual double-digit budget increases. In addition, China is continuing to increase and improve its nuclear arsenal.

²²² "China's Military Buildup Worries Intl Community," *The Daily Yomiuri*, September 13, 2010, Open Source Center, JPP20100913969119.

²²³ Pacific Forum CSIS, *Third U.S.-Japan Strategic Dialogue*, op. cit., Key Findings, p. 2.

²²⁴ Pacific Forum CSIS, *Third U.S.-Japan Strategic Dialogue*, op. cit., Chairman's Report, p. 14.

²²⁵ "Survey of National Defense Guidelines, FY 2011," p. 2.

U.S. nuclear reductions and nonproliferation and disarmament policies also contribute to Japanese interests in highlighting “the real threat”—China. A year before the 2010 NPR was released, Japanese officials confided that the reason they wanted the United States to commit to further nuclear reductions and nuclear disarmament was so that the world would see who is the only country *increasing* its nuclear arsenal.²²⁶ This view was expressed officially on May 16, 2010 during a trilateral meeting of foreign ministers from South Korea, Japan, and China. Press reports state that Japanese Foreign Minister Okada and his Chinese counterpart, Yang Jiechi, engaged in a shouting match. Okada reportedly criticized China for not fulfilling its commitment on nuclear disarmament, saying that Beijing should “at least make efforts not to increase “the number of its nuclear weapons” and “show its commitment” to nuclear disarmament.²²⁷ At the meeting Okada told Yang, “Amongst the P5 [the permanent members of the UN Security Council], it is only China which is increasing its nuclear arsenal.”²²⁸

The 2010 defense white paper explicitly says that the opaqueness of China’s defense policy and military power is a matter of concern to Japan and other countries in the region. As evidence of China’s unwillingness to cooperate with others in the region, the report cited the lack of concrete results from meetings between Japanese and Chinese officials that were intended to find ways to prevent maritime accidents and to conduct joint training for search and rescue missions.²²⁹

In an interview following the release of the white paper, Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa called for strengthening of U.S. deterrence “in view of China’s increasing military power and China’s actions on the seas.”²³⁰ The white paper appears to mirror statements by the U.S. administration in emphasizing the deterrent value provided by U.S. military forces stationed in Japan and avoids any mention of nuclear weapons for deterrence.

Furthermore, China’s claim of sovereignty over the South China Sea, including waters far from its coastline which, under international law, are international waters, is one indication of growing Chinese assertiveness in the region. In July 2010, Secretary of State Clinton raised this issue at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum. At the time, her Chinese counterpart was reported to have been surprised at being confronted on the issue and did not respond. However, a week later

²²⁶ Not-for-attribution remarks during conversations by NIPP staff with Japanese officials on April 21 and July 26, 2010. This Japanese view is limited to the East Asian region. Other countries, such as India and Pakistan, continue to increase the size and sophistication of their nuclear arsenals.

²²⁷ “Beijing Counterpart Nearly Storms out of Three-Way Parley Amid Disarmament Requests,” Kyodo, May 18, 2010. Also see “PRC Spokesman Says Yang Jiechi Refutes Japan FM Okada ‘Irresponsible Remarks’,” *China Daily*, May 16, 2010.

²²⁸ “Japan, China in Spat Over Nuclear Arsenal,” AFP, May 17, 2010.

²²⁹ “China’s Military Buildup Worries Intl Community,” *op. cit.*

²³⁰ “Japan Defense Paper Stresses US Military Deterrence, Concern Over China,” Kyodo, September 10, 2010.

the official spokesman for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) declared "China had indisputable sovereignty over the South China Sea."²³¹

Later in 2010, Secretary of Defense Gates sought to provide assurances to allies while again putting China on notice. At a meeting of ASEAN defense ministers, Gates stated, "The United States has always exercised our rights and supported the rights of others to transit through, and operate in, international waters. This will not change, nor will our commitment to engage in activities and exercises with our allies and partners."²³²

The 2010 National Defense Program Guidelines lists military modernization by China, insufficient transparency into Chinese intentions, and "gray zone" disputes over territory and economic interests as important elements of Japan's security environment. News reports in Japan describing the new defense guidelines cite potential threats from China as the primary reason for Japan's decision to build a Dynamic Defense Force.²³³

The U.S. policy goal of "stability" between the United States and China has been of particular concern for some in Japan. This policy goal appears to have heightened concerns expressed by Japanese security analysts in 2008—well before the 2010 NPR.

National security officials in Tokyo have expressed particular concern that China may decide to step beyond its current nuclear posture of minimum deterrence and decide to develop a robust second-strike capability, perhaps with Japan as a primary target. Simultaneously, some Japanese experts worry that U.S. absolute supremacy in nuclear forces may erode in the future. The worst-case scenario for these strategic thinkers is that an increase in Chinese capabilities and decrease in U.S. capabilities may lead the United States to conclude a bilateral arms control agreement with Beijing that endorses protection of a Chinese limited nuclear strike capability against the United States, with a decoupling effect that would be devastating for Japan.²³⁴

Japanese participants at the 2010 Strategic Dialogue confirmed that China's quest to achieve a mutual vulnerability relationship with the United States has been worrisome. Statements in the NPR and other U.S. policy documents appear to concede U.S. vulnerability to Chinese nuclear threats. Japanese security analysts worry that this could spark a "decoupling." They would prefer "enduring U.S. dominance over China in the region."²³⁵

²³¹ Melvin C. Ott, "China's Ambitions in the South China Sea (Now Clarified)," *The Nelson Report*, September 29, 2010.

²³² Anne Gearan, "China Tries to Calm Nerves Over Asia Sea Activity," *Washington Post*, October 12, 2010.

²³³ Kawaguchi, "Defense Policy Shifting Focus to China's Military," op. cit.

²³⁴ Michael J. Green and Katsuhisa Furukawa, "Japan: New Nuclear Realism," in Muthiah Alagappa, ed., *The Long Shadow: Nuclear Weapons and Security in 21st Century Asia* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008), pp. 354-355.

²³⁵ Pacific Forum CSIS, *Third U.S.-Japan Strategic Dialogue*, op. cit., Chairman's Reports, p. 13.

If the conclusion stated above accurately characterizes Japanese security concerns, then the new U.S. nuclear policies are likely to exacerbate those concerns.

Broadening Regional Security Ties

In the past several years Tokyo has expanded its regional relationships to include bilateral ties with Australia and India. In 2007, Japan and Australia conducted their first 2+2 meetings which brought together the ministers of defense and foreign affairs for each country. Previously, Japan's only 2+2 partner meetings had been with the United States. Also in 2007, Japan and India conducted the inaugural Defense Policy Dialogue. Japan has also been active in multilateral fora, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum.

Inter-Allied Consultations

Obama administration officials appear to have consulted extensively with their Japanese counterparts as they developed the 2010 NPR and before announcing new nuclear policies. This consultation has been described by some as "unprecedented." In addition, a decade of close collaboration on ballistic missile defense and the 2009 announcement of joint consultations on extended deterrence should help dispel misunderstandings and enable the U.S.-Japan security relationship to move forward in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and responsibility.

Japanese officials have been examining consultation mechanisms of NATO and considering how NATO-like consultations might be tailored for a Japan-U.S. forum. Although high-level consultations on extended deterrence have been initiated, officials in Tokyo are interested in understanding more about operational concepts, strategic stability, and plans for prompt global strike.²³⁶

Tokyo also has expressed a desire to be involved in discussions on future nuclear reductions, especially if China is involved. In February 2010, then-Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada told a press conference, "But when the discussion goes to the next step, Japan should become more involved in nuclear disarmament or nuclear policies."²³⁷

Several important issues are likely to be raised by our Japanese allies regarding new U.S. nuclear policies. The issues identified from this analysis are outlined below. Suggestions for dealing with each then are summarized.

²³⁶ Discussion with David Yost, op. cit.

²³⁷ "Okada Wants More Talks with U.S. as Nuke Disarmament Proceeds," Kyodo, February 23, 2010.

Options for Assuring Japan as the U.S. Nuclear Role and Force are Reduced

Issues that Require Further Attention by the United States

The consistent high-level attention devoted to Japanese-U.S. relations has had a constructive influence on the leadership transition in Japan, including within the DPJ, which campaigned on the need to chart a new course for Japan, one more independent from the United States. Continuing to devote significant attention to Japanese-U.S. relations and addressing priority security matters for each country will be a key aspect of assurance.

As U.S. leaders engage their Japanese counterparts, they will need to be prepared to address several aspects of new U.S. nuclear weapon policies which appear to be vexing to Japanese security officials. Below are four areas associated with assurance and extended deterrence which will almost certainly need to be addressed to reassure Japanese allies.

Enhancing Deterrence. U.S. officials have been consistent in their statements which call for “enhancing deterrence” and creating a sustainable military presence in Northeast Asia while reducing nuclear roles and numbers.²³⁸ However, short of stating that U.S. forces deployed to the region provide deterrence, specifics on how deterrence will be enhanced remain unspecified and, apparently unclear to Japanese security officials and analysts.

The current debate within the NATO alliance on nuclear issues will be watched closely in Tokyo as it is of direct relevance to Japan. The issues being debated in NATO include the future role of tactical U.S. nuclear weapons and consultative mechanisms with Washington. A common concern of NATO countries and Japan is whether the United States requires specific weapon systems (nuclear and nonnuclear) to maintain the confidence of allies. In both NATO and the U.S.-Japan alliance, expanding consultations to include nonnuclear elements such as missile defense would strengthen existing relations. Additionally, by sharing views of nuclear issues with one another, experts in the United States and its allied countries could help create a basis on which responsibility for and the credibility of extended deterrence can be maintained.

Stability, Mutual Vulnerability, and BMD. Japanese are vexed and far from reassured by the U.S. policy goal of strategic stability vis-à-vis China. The Defense Department’s Ballistic Missile Defense Review stated explicitly that the United States “does not have the capacity to cope with large scale Russian or Chinese missile attacks, and is not intended to affect the strategic balance with those countries.”²³⁹ This policy was confirmed by Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, James Miller, in open testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee.²⁴⁰ The concern is that a mutual deterrence relationship between the United States and China will embolden Chinese

²³⁸ For example, see Kurt M. Campbell, assistant secretary of state, for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, prepared statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee, September 16, 2010, p. 1.

²³⁹ DoD, *Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report*, op. cit. p. 13.

²⁴⁰ Hearing on April 20, 2010, committee transcript, p. 6.

leaders to use their growing economic and military power to strong-arm Japan and others in the region.

In addition, Chinese comments on the new U.S. policy of strategic stability confirm Tokyo's fears. In a Chinese review of the NPR, a PLA Colonel concluded:

Of the 37 [times China is mentioned in the NPR], China is mentioned 18 times together with Russia, in the context of "strategic stability." The emphasis on strategic stability implies that the United States accepts mutual deterrence with China as a reality and will design its nuclear relationship with China based on that reality. This has implications for the U.S.-China nuclear relationship. First, it suggests that the United States will not try to develop offensive and defensive capabilities aimed to negate China's nuclear deterrent.²⁴¹

Forward Deployment of Nuclear Weapons. As noted, the current debate within the NATO alliance on nuclear issues will be of direct relevance to Japan. Issues being debated in NATO include the future role of tactical U.S. nuclear weapons and consultative mechanisms with Washington. The common concern between NATO and Japan is whether the United States requires specific nuclear weapon systems to maintain the confidence of allies.

In Japan, some security analysts have been examining the NATO model and looking at deterrence dynamics of the past and current mechanisms for consultation. One glaring asymmetry between the two regions may need to be addressed in the U.S.-Japan security dialogue. The asymmetry is as follows:

- In NATO, when Soviet nuclear developments progressed to a point where "mutual vulnerability" to nuclear attack was a reality, the United States took action to reestablish the credibility of extended deterrence. The Schlesinger Doctrine, announced in January 1974, called for a range of nuclear strike options that could be launched against Soviet military capabilities, especially options using nuclear forces forward-deployed in Europe.
 - To implement this doctrine, the United States developed and NATO deployed numerous offensive nuclear weapon systems to Europe.
 - U.S. nuclear weapons, B61 nuclear gravity bombs, capable of being carried on tactical aircraft, remain deployed to NATO-Europe in support of the extended deterrence mission.
- In contrast, in the Pacific, just as China appears to be within range of its goal of a mutual nuclear vulnerability relationship with the United States—a relationship that has been accepted as policy by U.S. leaders—the United States has retired the TLAM-N, a nuclear weapon valued by some in Japan for its ability to be deployed in support of extended deterrence. Should the deterrence posture need

²⁴¹ Yunzhu Yao, "A Chinese Perspective on the Nuclear Posture Review," *Proliferation Analysis*, May 6, 2010, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, available at <http://carnegieendowment.org>.

to be strengthened by deploying nuclear weapons during a time of crisis in Northeast Asia, two often mentioned options are the deployment of B-52s with air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) to Guam or dual-capable aircraft (F-15 or F-16) with B61 gravity bombs to the ROK.

Therefore, U.S. officials should be prepared to explain:

- *How* under the new U.S. policies extended deterrence would function in Northeast Asia with its growing nuclear threats; and
- *Why* U.S. nuclear weapons need to be forward deployed to NATO-Europe for assurance and extended deterrence, but not to the Northeast Asia.

U.S. Long-Term Commitment to Maintaining Its Nuclear Arsenal. Japanese participants at the 2010 Strategic Dialogue appear to be skeptical about the U.S. ability over multiple future administrations to maintain a modern, effective nuclear arsenal. Public debates in the United States over nuclear modernization during the past decade have ended with no action on proposed initiatives (e.g., the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator, the Reliable Replacement Warhead). Some Japanese security experts lament that few politicians in Japan are conversant on nuclear weapon and deterrence issues.²⁴² This observation could apply equally well to the United States.

In addition, Japanese views are supportive of U.S. goals to sustain a safe, secure, effective nuclear arsenal but skeptical of some measures to accomplish that goal. For example, an editorial in *Ashai Shimbun* on October 21, 2010, criticized the Obama administration for conducting a subcritical nuclear test. The editorial stated,

...expressions of regret and dismay at the news have poured in from Japan.
...We fear the test may be viewed as selfishness on the part of a major power, giving countries aspiring for nuclear development a pretense to push ahead.

Regarding subcritical testing, there is also deep-rooted criticism that the real purpose is to collect data for developing new types of nuclear warheads.
...Obama has stressed that no new warheads will be developed.²⁴³

This editorial is one example which indicates that many in Japan do not understand U.S. efforts to sustain and modernize nuclear forces and do not appreciate the difficult decisions which must be made to provide security for both countries as next steps are explored for further nuclear reductions. It is also a symptom of the difficulties that are likely to be encountered as the United States progresses further in pursuing separate but related goals—nuclear elimination and nuclear deterrence.

²⁴² Pacific Forum CSIS, *Third U.S.-Japan Security Dialogue*, op. cit., Chairman's Report, pp. 2, 6.

²⁴³ "U.S. Subcritical Nuke Test" (editorial), *Ashai Shimbun*, October 21, 2010.

Recommendations for Assuring Japan

Consultations. For Japan, implementation of the 1960 Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security has evolved over the past half century. The 1997 Defense Guidelines agreement shifted increasing security responsibilities to Tokyo. Current attitudes in Japan favor continuing development of Japanese military capabilities that provide more independence from the United States. If this sentiment persists, Tokyo may be willing to assume even greater responsibility for security in its region and may be willing to break with its self-imposed policy of limiting its defense budget to not exceed one percent of gross domestic product. Any initiative to revise the 1997 agreement or to forge a detailed list of common strategic objectives, as was done in 2005, should be delayed until a time of greater stability of policies in Tokyo.

Within the Japan-U.S. alliance framework, the solicitation of Japanese perspectives during the deliberations of the Strategic Posture Commission and extensive consultation conducted during the Nuclear Posture Review have established a precedent that Tokyo likely expects to continue.

Tokyo has asked for a deeper level of dialogue on these issues and more detailed discussions on concepts of deterrence and extended deterrence and the combined roles of nuclear weapons, conventional weapons, and defenses for deterrence seem unavoidable. In future dialogues with Japanese officials on extended deterrence, DoD officials will need to be prepared to address the following specific issues associated with new U.S. policies for nuclear weapons and other strategic capabilities:

- enhancing deterrence while reducing nuclear roles and numbers;
- U.S. vulnerability to Chinese nuclear strikes in the name of strategic stability;
- a continued ability to forward-deploy U.S. nuclear-capable forces to the region; and
- the ability of the United States to meet its commitment to maintain a safe, secure, effective nuclear arsenal.

Official Statements. Currently, the most immediate threat to Japan is from North Korea which is armed with weapons of mass destruction. Should Pyongyang give up its nuclear weapon capabilities and comply with IAEA oversight of its nuclear facilities, the new U.S. negative security assurance statement would appear to offer a guarantee against a nuclear response to other hostile actions. The Japanese, along with the South Koreans, have already expressed some degree of angst at this recent change to declaratory policy.

Further modifications to the U.S. declaratory policy as expressed in the negative security guarantee would probably be disconcerting to both Seoul and Tokyo. Unless the security environment changes significantly for the better, moving beyond this recently modified policy and adopting a sole-purpose declaratory policy for nuclear weapons would damage assurance of both allies.

Forward Deployments. At least for the near-term, an ability to deploy U.S. nuclear weapons, if needed, appears to be an important component of assurance and extended deterrence for both allies, and especially for Tokyo. Therefore, as the United States considers further changes to the nuclear force structure and overall strategic posture, the ability to forward deploy nuclear weapons to the Pacific should be retained.

Tokyo is likely to expect the United States to follow through on its NPR-announced actions to enhance regional deterrence as nuclear forces are reduced. Those actions included improvements in strategic forces such as working with allies to deploy effective missile defenses and developing nonnuclear prompt global strike capabilities. However, ballistic missile development with Japan was underway well before the 2010 nuclear reductions and new policies were announced and the U.S. policy to not call into question the strategic deterrents of Russia and China are likely to limit U.S. missile defenses that could be effective against Japan's most worrisome threat—China. Timely development and deployment of conventional prompt global strike capabilities, therefore, would provide a tangible strategic force posture improvement consistent with administration pledges to enhance regional deterrence.

Continued periodic port calls by Ohio-class submarines modified as SSGNs would provide a visible reminder of U.S. technical prowess, military presence in the region, and that unseen and on patrol in the Pacific are other Ohio-class submarines which carry nuclear-armed ballistic missiles.

Exercises and Operations. Joint exercises have been an important dimension of U.S. assurance measures during peacetime and in response to provocations. The recent U.S.-ROK military exercise (with Japanese observers) in response to the *Chenoen* attack has been reported positively in the ROK and Japan. U.S.-Japanese operations in support of the ballistic missile defense mission are a unique aspect of the U.S. alliance with Japan that is not mirrored in any other alliance. Continuing to jointly develop BMD capabilities and supporting Japan's legislative efforts to allow Tokyo to provide support to defend against attacks on the United States should be encouraged.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Some conclusions and recommendations can be drawn from this investigation into means of providing assurance and extended deterrence to the ROK and Japan in light of their views on new U.S. policies regarding deterrence and nuclear weapons. In the absence of significant new developments—positive or negative—in the regional security environment, the following recommendations should help reassure U.S. allies in Northeast Asia as the United States considers possible next steps on reducing the role and number of nuclear weapons.

Overall Relationship

For both the ROK and Japan, economic and cultural ties with the United States are strong and well established. The United States and its two key allies in the region share common values and cultural ties that are well ingrained. However, assuming the Chinese economy continues to expand, U.S. leaders may have to find innovative ways to ensure that this dimension of the relationship with Northeast Asian allies remains strong. Allies typically find common economic interests to be a tangible expression of a healthy bilateral relationship and, therefore, reassuring.

Allies in Northeast Asia are sure to watch closely any new developments in the NATO alliance and draw comparisons and contrasts. Therefore, as U.S. officials implement the new Strategic Concept in NATO and its implications for extended deterrence, it will be important to bear in mind how statements and actions will be perceived in Seoul and Tokyo.

Consultations

For the ROK, the Extended Deterrence Policy Committee should be used to address and assuage South Korean anxieties about extended deterrence that arise from the North Korean danger and some aspects of U.S. nuclear weapons policy.

- During discussions of the committee, U.S. officials could provide substantive and candid, explanations of policies related to the NPR and plans regarding future nuclear reductions.
- U.S. participants in the committee meetings could seek an in-depth understanding of what the South Koreans find worrisome. South Korean concerns about the North Korean threat should be explored and their views on how to deal with that danger solicited.
- Discussion within the Extended Deterrence Policy Committee would enable U.S. officials both to vet and tailor options for maintaining the assurance of South Korea as the role and size of U.S. nuclear forces are reduced.

Within the Japan-U.S. alliance framework, the Japanese perspectives solicited during the deliberations of the Strategic Posture Commission and extensive consultation conducted

during the Nuclear Posture Review have established a precedent that Tokyo likely expects to continue.

Tokyo has asked for a deeper level of dialogue on these issues and more detailed discussions on concepts of deterrence and extended deterrence and the combined roles of nuclear weapons, conventional weapons, and defenses for deterrence seems unavoidable. In future dialogues with Japanese officials on extended deterrence, DoD officials will need to be prepared to address the following specific issues associated with new U.S. policies for nuclear weapons and other strategic capabilities:

- enhancing deterrence while reducing nuclear roles and numbers;
- U.S. vulnerability to Chinese nuclear strikes in the name of strategic stability;
- a continued ability to forward-deploy U.S. nuclear-capable forces to the region; and
- the ability of the United States to meet its commitment to maintain a safe, secure, effective nuclear arsenal.

Official Statements

Currently, the most immediate threat to both allies is from North Korea which is armed with weapons of mass destruction. Should Pyongyang give up its nuclear weapon capabilities and comply with IAEA oversight of its nuclear facilities, the new U.S. negative security assurance statement would appear to offer a guarantee against a nuclear response to other hostile actions. Both allies have already expressed some degree of angst at this recent change to declaratory policy.

Further modifications to the U.S. declaratory policy as expressed in the negative security guarantee would probably be disconcerting to both Seoul and Tokyo. Unless the security environment changes significantly for the better, moving beyond this recently modified policy and adopting a sole-purpose declaratory policy for nuclear weapons would damage assurance of both allies.

Forward Deployments

Large military contingents are deployed to both countries and provide a highly visible symbol of U.S. commitment to security in the region. Reducing conventional forces at the same time the role and number of nuclear weapons are being reduced not only would send the wrong signal, but would be inconsistent with the NPR conclusion that de-emphasis on nuclear weapons necessitates improvements in conventional capabilities. If anything, conventional force upgrades would seem warranted, both to strengthen allied defenses and to bolster the credibility of the U.S. security pledge.

At least for the near-term, an ability to deploy U.S. nuclear weapons, if needed, appears to be an important component of assurance and extended deterrence for both allies, and especially for Tokyo. Therefore, as the United States considers further changes to the nuclear force structure and overall strategic posture, the ability to forward deploy nuclear

weapons to the Pacific should be retained. In addition, timely development and deployment of conventional prompt global strike capabilities would provide a tangible strategic force posture improvement consistent with administration pledges to enhance regional deterrence. In the case of the ROK, conventional prompt global strike capabilities would fit with the South Korean notion of “active deterrence.”

At a minimum, continued periodic port calls by Ohio-class submarines modified as SSGNs would provide a visible reminder of U.S. technical prowess, U.S. military presence in the region, and that unseen and on patrol in the Pacific are other Ohio-class submarines which carry nuclear-armed ballistic missiles. For South Korea, where the United States once deployed nuclear weapons and its ballistic missile submarines made three dozen visits in the late 1970s and early 1980s, SSBNs might periodically make port calls—with the necessary security precautions—to demonstrate the U.S. nuclear guarantee. As discussed earlier, additional options exist for providing tangible evidence of the U.S. commitment of strategic forces.

Exercises and Operations

Joint exercises have been an important dimension of U.S. assurance measures during peacetime and in response to provocations. The recent U.S.-ROK military exercise (with Japanese observers) in response to the *Chenoen* incident has been reported positively in the ROK and Japan. Intercontinental-range bombers and shorter-range, dual-capable strike aircraft temporarily deployed to bases in Japan and South Korea could be used in exercises with allied forces. U.S.-Japanese operations in support of the ballistic missile defense mission are a unique aspect of our alliance with Japan that is not mirrored in any other alliance. Continuing to jointly develop BMD capabilities and supporting Japan’s legislative efforts to allow Tokyo to provide support to defend against attacks on the United States should be encouraged.