

# A PROPOSAL FOR TRIPARTITE NUCLEAR WEAPON FREE ZONE IN KOREA AND JAPAN: POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE FOR TMD?

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## INTRODUCTION

In June 2000, a historic summit between North and South Korea's leaders took place, followed by exchange of visits by top senior officials between the US and North Korea. These landmark events have raised optimism about future of peace and security in the Korean Peninsular. The timing may be right to pursue possible regional security arrangements in the region including Japan.

More than a decade ago, North and South Korea issued a Joint Declaration to de-nuclearize the Peninsula. For more than three decades, Japan has adhered to its three "non-nuclear" principles and kept a fairly good record of compliance. However, North Korea's suspicious nuclear weapon development activities and Japan's stockpiling of excessive plutonium have triggered concerns of the international community about the integrity of the three countries' non-proliferation will. A failure of equipping their commitments with full legality has added weights to these concerns. In addition, recent missile launch by the North Korea has raised security concern in Japan, which contributed to Japan's decision to participate in joint research program on Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) program. This joint R&D program on BMD has been one of the most sensitive security issues between China, Japan and the U.S.

Given this background, this article proposes the tripartite nuclear-weapon-free zone (TNWFZ) as a practical measure to faithfully implement and solidify the non-nuclear commitments made by North and South Korea and Japan. The TNWFZ aims at creating a legally binding institutional mechanism where the three parties reconfirm their non-nuclear will, build mutual confidence, and create environments leading to regional peace, stability and prosperity. Although the TNWFZ is not directly linked with BMD program, this article argues that the establishment of TNWFZ can significantly weaken the rationale for BMD in the region.

## RATIONALES<sup>1</sup>

### Resolving the Limitations of Other Limited NWFZ Proposals in Northeast Asia

It is John Endicott's proposal of Limited Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in Northeast Asia (LNWFZ-NEA) that is most widely discussed and well known. Since 1992, the proposal has been formulated by a group of experts from the concerned countries. Up to now, two most promising ideas emerged. The first one is a circular area centered in the DMZ in Korea with the extent of 1,200 km covering North and South Korea, Japan, and parts of China and Russia. The second is elliptical, again centered in the DMZ, and additionally including parts of Alaska and Taiwan.<sup>2</sup> All the countries within the area should be members of the treaty. The term "limited" means that weapon systems and geography are two constraining factors. First, considering China with significantly less nuclear warheads than those of the U.S. or Russia, only tactical weapons are dealt with and strategic ones are exempt. Second, geography is defined with the aim of minimizing impacts on deployment and operation of Chinese and Russian strategic nuclear weapons.

Kumao Kaneko has proposed to make a nuclear-weapon-free zone of a full circular area with a 2,000km radius from a center point at the Panmunjom in the DMZ.<sup>3</sup> North and South Korea, Japan, Mongolia, China, the U.S., Great Britain and France belong to the treaty. Compared with Endicott's idea, Kaneko's proposal is comprehensive in terms of obligations of both non-nuclear and nuclear parties. Kaneko asks non-nuclear parties not only to give up nuclear weapon option but also to forgo ballistic missiles development for military purposes. Non-nuclear parties are also required to accept the full-scope IAEA safeguards and to increase transparency of peaceful nuclear activities. For nuclear parties, the proposal demands strict negative security assurance, no-first-use commitment, removal of all non-strategic nuclear weapons within the NWFZ in 10 years and elimination of all strategic nukes through bilateral or multilateral arrangements in 20 years.

At the moment, the two proposals seem to have been stalled, expecting no significant progress in the near future. Several factors might have affected rather slow move of them. First and the most significant is that they create a sort of obligatory asymmetry among the parties by covering nuclear haves and have-nots simultaneously in a single legal framework. Second, by including nuclear weapon states, a sensitive security issue of redeployment or dismantlement of nukes is put forward in the very beginning of what might have to be a long cooperative process. That deep-rooted mistrust and

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<sup>1</sup> This portion of this paper is largely taken from Seongwhun Cheon and Tatsujiro Suzuki, *The Tripartite Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Northeast Asia: Rationales and Research Agenda*, (draft), June 2000.

<sup>2</sup> *The Bordeaux Protocol of the Limited Nuclear Weapons Free Zone for Northeast Asia*, Center for International Strategy, Technology and Policy at the Georgia Institute of Technology, March 1997, pp. 61-63

<sup>3</sup> Outline of a "Northeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty" by Kumao Kaneko, October 1999; Kumao Kaneko, "Japan needs no umbrella," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, March/April 1996, pp. 46-51.

tension among the countries remain high in Northeast Asia and will negatively affect any cooperative effort. Third, in the region with no experience on multilateral security cooperation, the increased number of the parties will make negotiations less smooth and more difficult than with fewer members.

It seems that the two proposals are too ambitious to produce a meaningful result. Northeast Asia may need intermediate and more practical measures that can overcome these obstacles. The TNWFZ is an appropriate candidate by specifically focusing on three non-nuclear parties and thus limiting its membership, obligations and applied area.

### **Endowing Legally Binding Status to Non-Nuclear Commitments**

The TNWFZ provides North and South Korea and Japan with a legally binding institution helping to demonstrate their non-nuclear will to the international society. A major drawback in their non-proliferation policies has been the lack of legalities. Only North Korea ratified the Joint Declaration. Seoul was concerned that parliamentary ratification of a document signed with Pyongyang might produce a wrong impression of formally recognizing North Korea, which is against the Constitution. So the Declaration is no more than a tactical arrangement susceptible to changes in the political environments. To make matters worse, it has yet to be implemented.

Similarly, Japan's three non-nuclear principles is merely political commitment with no solid legal back-ups. It is entirely free and right for Japanese government to change or discard the principles anytime when it thinks necessary. The absence of legal follow-ups diminishes the integrity of the principles. Encroaching on credibility of Japanese government's non-proliferation commitment, has become a major source of international suspicions. Even in Japan, there is a persistent demand to change the principles into a legally binding framework.<sup>4</sup>

One of the major purposes of the TNWFZ is to provide three countries' non-nuclear commitments with internationally binding legal status. By having a more concrete institution guaranteeing internationally their living up to the commitments, the TNWFZ will be conducive to reinforce mutual confidence among the three parties as to each other's nuclear intentions and activities. It will also increase international community's confidence of the nuclear policies of the three parties all together.

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Kumao Kaneko, December 12, 1999. There exist different views as well. For example, one opinion argues that Japan should not legalize the three principles and should go for nuclear. See Joe Ogata, "Nuclear allergy: Japan's aversion to nuclear acquisition," *The International Relations Journal*, Summer 1997, pp. 109-125.

## Assisting Positive Evolution of the Korean Declaration

The Joint Declaration has failed to be put into practice, largely due to a showdown regarding mutual inspection procedures.<sup>5</sup> Instead, the Geneva Agreed Framework has played a major role in curbing the North's nuclear ambitions during the past several years.

Several points prevent us from anticipating a prompt implementation of the Declaration in the coming years. First of all, it is hardly likely for North and South Korea to resume the bilateral inspection talks in the foreseeable future. Despite South Korean government's active pro-engaging policy—"sunshine policy", DPRK elite seems not forthcoming to official dialogue with ROK even in politically less sensitive areas than the reciprocal inspection. North Koreans have opened nothing but limited channels for sucking in economic benefits from South Korean companies. Being in so fragile condition, the Pyongyang regime worries that in the aftermath of active exchanges and cooperation with fellow South Koreans, might be the end of its existence.<sup>6</sup> It is hardly expected that a full-scale and sincere dialogue can be held anytime soon. Proportionally, the prospect of implementing the Declaration becomes small.

On the other hand, the on-going Agreed Framework does not guarantee the simultaneous performance of the Declaration. Although North Korea mentioned, in principle, its intention to comply with it in the Agreed Framework, there were neither detail measures nor follow-up action plans. If parties to the Agreed Framework had been sincerely committed to successful performance of the Declaration, at least some measures, even symbolic, could have been adopted for that purpose. For example, South Korean inspectors, as part of inspection teams according to the Agreed Framework, could have been invited to verify North Korean nuclear facilities in return for similar North Korean inspections to South Korean nuclear facilities. There is not even a hint that such an idea was discussed.

Under the circumstances, the Declaration is no more than a piece of paper. It is of no use repeating rhetoric to express intentions to implement a document with no promising future. On the other hand, leaving the Declaration unimplemented indefinitely may trigger misunderstandings and suspicions that North and South Korea attempt to nullify the document by letting down its profiles. Of course, it would not be possible to scrap the document in an abrupt manner. International society has appreciated the progress made by the two Koreas signing the Declaration and has shown keen interests to that their non-proliferation will remain intact. The TNWFZ is a promising alternative that allows North and South Korea to disembark from the old wrecked ship and to board a new one with the support of their neighbor, Japan.

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<sup>5</sup> For more details on the mutual inspection negotiations, see Seongwhun Cheon, "Regional non-nuclear options from South Korea's perspective", in Young Whan Kihl and Peter Hayes, eds., *Peace and Security in Northeast Asia: the Nuclear Issue and the Korean Peninsula* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), pp. 398-401.

<sup>6</sup> For reasons why it is difficult for North Korea to accept extensive cooperative offers from western countries including South Korea and for North Korean regime's special characteristics, see Nicholas Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea* (Washington, D.C.: The AEI Press, 1999).

## Stemming North Korea's Attempts to Go Nuclear

Among the three apparatuses to prevent North Korea from developing nuclear weapons—the Agreed Framework, IAEA full-scope safeguards, the Joint Declaration, only the first one functions fully, the second cripples and the third is left moribund.

At present, suspicions over the North's nuclear weapon development are resurfacing. A recent report shows that military in North Korea favors continuing its missile development program and maintaining at least laboratory-scale nuclear weapon research.<sup>7</sup> North Korea Advisory Group of the U.S. Congress raised more serious questions.<sup>8</sup> It revealed that since 1994, North Korea has sought external assistance for its nuclear program by engaging in extensive contacts with Russian nuclear establishment and attempting to acquire nuclear and dual-use items from Europe and Japan. It also argued that there is significant evidence that nuclear weapons development is continuing in North Korea, including its efforts to obtain uranium enrichment technologies and its nuclear-related high explosive tests. Eventually, President Clinton indirectly confirmed that North Korea is continuing to secretly develop nuclear weapons.<sup>9</sup> In the presidential memorandum authorizing \$15 million for KEDO, Mr. Clinton said he will send KEDO the money even though *he cannot legally certify that Pyongyang has stopped acquiring uranium-enrichment technology* [emphasis added].

The TNWFZ can be another solid layer to forbid North Korea from going nuclear complementary to the Agreed Framework and the IAEA safeguards. Information-sharing and verification measures embodied in the TNWFZ would allow South Korea and Japan to double-check the North's nuclear activities and to reduce uncertainties.

## Ridding International Suspicions over South Korea's and Japan's Nuclear Intentions

The TNWFZ is leading to the enhancement of transparency and thus to the reduction of the international suspicions over South Korea's and Japan's nuclear policies and activities.

### *South Korea*

Despite consistent and arduous efforts to demonstrate its peaceful uses in the nuclear field, concerns are frequently raised about Seoul's true intentions. Such concerns often misrepresent Seoul's will to devote itself to peaceful uses of nuclear energy for well

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<sup>7</sup> *The DPRK Report No. 20*, The Center for Non-proliferation Studies of MIIS and the Center for Contemporary International Problems in Russia, September-October 1999, p. 2. (On-line) <http://www.nautilus.org>, NAPSNet, November 1999.

<sup>8</sup> North Korea Advisory Group, *Report to the Speaker U.S. House of Representatives*, November 1992, p. 11. (On-line) [http://www.house.gov/international\\_relations/nkag/report.htm](http://www.house.gov/international_relations/nkag/report.htm).

<sup>9</sup> Bill Gertz and Rowan Scarborough, "Inside the Ring," *Washington Times*, March 3, 2000.

being of its people and hinder its research and development programs for that purpose. South Korea's military standoff with North Korea may be a major contributor to such deflected views. For example, U.S. Department of Energy noted "In North and South Korea, they interact dangerously with painful energy vulnerabilities, storage problems, and *political-military incentives to at least seriously consider nuclear weapons* [emphasis added]. North Korea's persistence on acquiring nuclear weapons would be another important impetus.

Resolving international nuclear suspicions is vital for South Korea's national interest. Several points can be addressed in this regard. First, nuclear power is the key energy source in ROK as shown in its current reliance of more than 40% of its electricity demand on nuclear energy. This trend will continue in the foreseeable future. Dependence on nuclear energy will be growing unless alternative energy resources are found. So in terms of energy security, peaceful uses of nuclear power is a critical national policy. The problem with nuclear suspicions is that it causes visible or invisible adverse effects that stand in the way of South Korea's nuclear industry and R&D activities.

Second, suspicions that South Korea can break the most widely agreed international norm of non-proliferation could degrade the South's national image and harm credibility of its national policies as a whole. In the tightly interwoven international society, nuclear discredit will bear much impact on isolating ROK, diminishing diplomatic capabilities, and thus bringing out much difficulties and frustrations in many key issue areas.

Third, nuclear suspicions will keep neighboring states in constant alarm. This will induce unnecessary tension and cause arms race in the region, which is obviously not the hope of South Korean government and people.

Fourth, nuclear suspicions will have adverse effects on the unification process. This is a much more serious repercussion on Korean interests in the long term than the previous three points. Believing that unified Korea will go nuclear, neighboring countries understandably will make every effort to prevent Korean unification. Unless South and North Korea make sure that they are non-nuclear and will remain so in the future, they cannot expect the external support and assistance that will be essential in the unification process. It should be remembered that West Germany's announcement that unified Germany will not pursue weapons of mass destruction facilitated German unification by allaying security concerns of neighboring states as well as the four key countries. For Koreans, nuclear weapon option is a useless "card", if it was ever thought to be so, and should be readily discarded for more sacred and desperate goal of national unification.

Unfortunately, in spite of all these rationale, it may not matter how much effort South Korea puts to resolve international suspicions unless North-South showdown does come to an end. Here is the importance of a reliable third party. If Japan joins North and South Korea to make a nuclear-weapon-free region, the TNWFZ can transform the bilateral confrontation into a more lenient and less conflicting mode at least in the nuclear field. This will bring about changes in the perspective of the international community toward being more comfortable and trustful of South Korea's nuclear policies and activities.

## *Japan*

Japan, as the only victim to nuclear bombs, has been a loyal member of global non-proliferation regime. Japan's non-nuclear policy based on the three non-nuclear principles, "not to possess, not to bring, and not to introduce", is also well known. However, there have been constant suspicions over Japan's nuclear intention despite Japan's strong commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament. Most recently, three important factors have contributed to renewed concern over Japan's nuclear intention.

First, growing Japan's technical capability, especially civilian nuclear fuel cycle capability with increasing inventory of separated plutonium.<sup>10</sup> As of the end of 1998, plutonium inventory in Japan is about 5 tons, and 25 tons or more are now stored in Europe (UK and France) as a result of commercial reprocessing contracts.<sup>11</sup> Although Japanese efforts to increase the transparency of its civilian nuclear programs, such as adoption of "no plutonium surplus" policy, have been noteworthy, the fact remains that Japan's nuclear capability is now sufficient to develop nuclear weapons in a very short time. With other advanced technical capability, such as missile and guidance technologies, political will is the only remaining barrier for Japan to develop nuclear weapons.

Second, Japan's security policy itself has been changing as it needs to adjust changing security environment in post Cold War era. The most important change is newly revised "Guidelines for US-Japan Security Cooperation," adopted by the Diet in 1999. The new Guidelines now allow Japan to cooperate with the US military operation outside Japan, in the "surrounding region". Another important policy decision made by Japan is to participate in development of Theater Missile Defense (TMD) system with the U.S. This policy was clearly influenced by the situations in North Korea, especially after the missile launch in 1998, although it is not clear how TMD system could be effective against North Korean missile attacks to Japan.

Thirdly, Japan's domestic taboo over security debate has been loosening. For example, for the first time since the end of World War II, Japanese Diet has formally set up the Investigation Committee on Constitution. Although there is no explicit pre-condition, it is generally assumed that setting up the Committee itself will open up the public debate over the revision of article 9 of the Constitution. In addition, question has been raised regarding the credibility of Japanese government's non-nuclear policy. Recently declassified information from the US government shows that Japanese government was aware of the fact that nuclear weapons were stationed within Japanese territory, or violation of one of the three non-nuclear principles (i.e. introduction).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For information about Japan's nuclear capability, see S. Harrison, "Japan and Nuclear Weapons," in S. Harrison, Editor, "Japan's Nuclear Future: The Plutonium Debate and East Asian Security," Washington, DC, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1996, pp. 3-44. For international concern over Japan's civilian plutonium programs, see E. Skolnikoff, T. Suzuki, and K. Oye, "International Responses to Japan's Plutonium Programs," Center for International Studies (CIS) Working Paper, C/95-5, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, August 1995.

<sup>11</sup> D. Albright and L/ Barbour, "Separated Inventories of Civil Plutonium Continue to Grow," Plutonium Watch, Institute for Science and International Security, May 1999.

<sup>12</sup> H. Krinstensen, "Japan Under the Nuclear Umbrella: U.S. Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear War Planning in Japan During the Cold War," A Working Paper by the Nautilus Institute, July

Given those changes described above, it is important for Japan to strengthen its commitment to non-nuclear policy. In fact, it is a good timing for Japan to take new security initiatives in the Northeast Asia. Dialogue between North Korea and Japan has now been resumed. There are good rationales for Japan to promote NWFZ in the region.<sup>13</sup>

## Facilitating Mutual Cooperation and Increasing Transparency in the Nuclear Field

The TNWFZ can be a concrete basis for facilitating cooperation between Japan and South Korea in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in two dimensions. In the policy dimension, Japan is a leading country to faithfully accept and practice openness and transparency in the nuclear industry. With strenuous efforts such as practicing more intrusive inspection than what the IAEA is doing, Japan has maintained high level of credibility on its non-nuclear will. Japanese government has kept active in educating its people under so-called “peace education” on the dangers and uselessness of nuclear weapons. It has effectively taken advantage of the scars of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On the other hand, Japan has been very active in non-proliferation diplomacy by organizing important international gatherings, fostering healthy policy debates and proposing constructive alternatives. This is why Japan’s credibility is kept at high level despite intermittent pro-nuclear remarks from government officials.<sup>14</sup> From South Korean perspective, the TNWFZ is expected to create auspicious environments where Seoul’s nuclear credibility can be elevated to the level of Japan. If International society comes to regard more trustful South Korea closely engaged with Japan rather than being alone, many of the international barriers to developing South Korea’s nuclear industry will be taken away.

On the other hand, in the technology dimension, the TNWFZ can foster favorable conditions where bilateral cooperation for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy is promoted. According to some scientists in ROK, Japanese have been less forthcoming in technology cooperation with South Koreans than they hoped. Commercial interest may be a significant factor that leads to Japan’s hesitation. Another important factor is believed to be Japan’s suspicions over South Korea’s non-nuclear will. The TNWFZ will effectively get rid of this obstacle and pave a way for stronger cooperation in the nuclear R&D.

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1999, and R. S. Norris, W. M. Arkin, and W. Burr, “How much did Japan know?,” *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, January/February 2000, pp.11-13, pp78-79.

<sup>13</sup> See for example, M. Halperin, “The Nuclear Dimension of the U.S.-Japan Alliance,” *The Nautilus Institute*, 1999, and *Asahi Shimbun Asia Network Report 2000*, “Cooperative Security in Northeast Asia,” *Asahi Shimbun*, Marh 2000. Both papers reexamined Japan’s security policies in the region and suggest promoting NWFZ in the region is one reasonable policy option for Japan.

<sup>14</sup> Most recently, on October 20, 1999, Shingo Nishimura, Vice Minister of Japan Defense Agency, said that Japan should acquire nuclear weapons. *Associated Press*, October 20, 1999. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kono Yohei, made an immediate refutation against his remark and said that Japan’s three non-nuclear principles will remain intact. Mr. Nishimura resigned immediately when his remark became a political contention.

## **Contributing to International Non-Proliferation Efforts**

The TNWFZ will contribute to reinforcing international non-proliferation regimes in many ways. First, the three countries and other nuclear weapon states that participate in the TNWFZ can demonstrate their commitments to the NPT. Second, incorporating North Korea—a notorious rogue state, will eliminate a major threat to the non-proliferation regime. Third, the TNWFZ will increase nuclear transparency of the three countries and reduce suspicions over non-nuclear commitments of the parties among themselves and internationally. Fourth, obtaining negative security assurance in the region where major powers' nuclear forces are postured closer at hand than any other NWFZ, nuclear weapon states' commitments can be strengthened against using or threatening to use nuclear weapons to non-nuclear states. This will encourage countries without nuclear weapons to adhere to the non-proliferation norms and rules. Fifth, by resolving the nuclear issue, three countries can be relieved and readily move on to tackle other pending issues including chemical and biological weapons of North Korea.

## **Increasing Confidence for the New Peace Building Process in Korea**

The TNWFZ can be an important confidence building measure (CBM) in the process of searching for a new peace mechanism on the Korean peninsula. Political and diplomatic movements in the region have never been as active as at the current moment. South Korean President Kim Dae Jung unleashed Japan and the U.S. from a demand of “harmonization and parallel” linking two countries' relations with North Korea to inter-Korean relations. In response to this, active dialogues are undergoing between Pyongyang and Washington. Issues such as missile development and export, return of remains of American soldiers died during the Korean War, and nuclear development are dealt with separately, and high-level political meetings are held often. Tokyo also started resuming political talks with Pyongyang last December since its abrupt stop in November 1992 when a suspicion was raised that North Korea kidnapped a Japanese woman. The TNWFZ can become a complementary measure to the ongoing dialogue, giving a momentum for the completion of the cross recognition and the creation of a stable peace mechanism on the Korean peninsula.

In addition, the TNWFZ is a significant military CBM for enhancing regional security. By reinforcing their will not to possess nuclear weapons, the three parties will be able to increase mutual confidence in the military area. In turn, the TNWFZ will also provide other countries with more confidence and less worries of the security policies of North and South Korea and Japan.

## Promoting Multilateral Security Cooperation in Northeast Asia

Since the end of Cold War, “cooperative security” has been highlighted as a new security concept. Rather than arms race and conflict, establishing international norms and rules are emphasized to curb arms build-up, reduce tension and pursue peaceful coexistence. Multilateral security cooperation is mainstream in security dialogue. For instance, in Europe, Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) plays an important role for stability and peace in the region. The treaty regulating conventional forces in Europe (CFE) has been successfully implemented. In Asia-Pacific, multilateral frameworks such as Asian Regional Forum (ARF) and Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) are performing vivid activities. There are numerous proposals to organize smaller security frameworks in Northeast Asia.<sup>15</sup>

The TNWFZ is a timely measure fitting into the current trend of strengthening multilateral cooperative security. Creating a NWFZ by the three countries is a very measure of achieving cooperative security and enhancing regional peace through rules and institutions. If successfully implemented, the TNWFZ would make it possible to enlarge the area of cooperation by incorporating other countries and would help to facilitate broader security cooperation in the region.

## POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR TMD (BMD) PROGRAM

### Rationales of TMD program in the region (especially for Japan)

The August 1999 agreement between Japan and the US to cooperate on research and development of a sea-based TMD system, i.e. Navy Theater Wide (NTW) system, has become one of the major sensitive security issues between Japan, China and the U.S. What are the basic rationales for the NTW development programs?

Missile development in North Korea and China: Although US and Japan had been discussing the possible cooperation in BMD program, there was no clear commitment from Japan. But in 1996 when a North Korean missile was launched as well as report of demonstrated use of missile force by China in Taiwan Straits, Japan paid more serious attention to the Program. After the consultations with the US, Japanese government decided that the most logical program for Japan was to participate in is the NTW program.<sup>16</sup> Although official announcement made by Japanese government does not mention any specific military threat by any country,<sup>17</sup> circumstances suggest

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<sup>15</sup> For example, former Japanese Prime Minister Yashiro Nakasone argued for the necessities of an Asian security system. *JoongAng Ilbo*, September 22, 1992. President Kim Dae Jung has proposed, in several occasions, to establish a multilateral security mechanism in Northeast Asia.

<sup>16</sup> Patrick M. O'Donogue, “Theater Missile Defense in Japan: Implications for The U.S.-China-Japan Strategic Relationship,” September 2000.

<sup>17</sup> Japan's Self Defense Agency, “Regarding Research on Ballistic Missile Defense,” 1999.(in Japanese) (<http://www.jda.go.jp>)

that Japan's motivation may largely come from recent missile development in North Korea and Japan.

**Strengthening US-Japan Security Alliance:** While Japan's decision to participate in the NTW development program is based on Japan's own interest, it is also equally important for Japan to strengthen bi-lateral alliance with the U.S. It is also possible that by participating in the program Japan can strengthen its position in the Alliance.

**Minimizing value of nuclear weapons:** Basic rationale to develop BMD system argued by the proponents is to minimize the value of nuclear weapons. Japan's SDF also argues that the rationale is consistent with Japan's basic security policy of "non-nuclear principle" and "defense only."

**Contributing to Strengthening Japan's Technical Capability:** It seems likely that participation in the joint program will benefit Japan significantly, by enhancing Japan's own high-tech areas as well as transferring various technologies from the U.S.

## Criticisms and Issues of TMD programs

Since the official announcement of Japan's participation in the Joint NTW development program, there has been already criticism from abroad, especially from China. In addition, some argue that there are possible negative impacts on security relationship in the region.

**Chinese opposition and criticism to the Program:** China has been expressing its opposition the overall BMD system concept and now is concerned about Japan's participation in the TMD program. Main concerns are: (1) Possible Taiwanese involvement in TMD, (2) Undermining China's deterrence capability, (3) Threat of Japan's remilitarization, (4) Strengthening of Japan-US security alliance.<sup>18</sup>

**Facilitating military competition in the region:** Although technical feasibility of BMD system is still uncertain (in fact, this technical uncertainty itself is one of the major reason for opposing it), the perception that the system would undermine the current missile capability could ignite a technological race among the concerned parties.

**Destabilizing the Korean Peninsular:** Currently, S. Korea has not expressed any opinion on NMD system, but has already decided not to join the TMD program. Since TMD is implicitly targeting N. Korea and China, there is a concern among Korean security experts that NMD and Japan's participation in TMD could destabilize the regional security relationship.<sup>19</sup>

## TNWFZ: A possible alternative?

Given the uncertain technical feasibility, it could be costly to pursue TMD program in the region without serious alternative options to meet various objectives of TMD. In fact, negative impact of TMD program is already emerging.

<sup>18</sup> Kori Urayama, "Chinese Perspectives on Theater Missile Defence: Policy Implications for Japan," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XL, NO. 4, July/August 2000, pp. 599-621.

<sup>19</sup> Yu Ming Ho, "Difficult issue for North-South reunification is not US military presence, rather the NMD program," *Foresight*, July 2000, pp. 15-17 (in Japanese).

Pursuing the concept of TNWFZ could eliminate several key objectives of the TMD program in the region. First, value of nuclear weapons in the region would be clearly minimized by the TNFWZ and/or expansion of such zone in the region. Second, missile threat reduction could be included in the more comprehensive regional security dialogue, and thus minimize the need for TMD in the region. The only possible rationale (for Japan) not fulfilled by the TNWFZ is enhancement of technological development.

TNWFZ can also reduce some of the concern expressed by the critique of TMD program. In particular, TNWFZ could minimize the concern over Japanese (as well as Korean ) military build up, especially concerning nuclear weapon capability.

While Japan's participation in the NTW program thus far is only a technical study, its political implication is already becoming large. It is not desirable to increase unnecessary tension in the region. By proposing the TNWFZ, Japan can minimize such concern over TMD and reduce need for development of TMD.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The TNWFZ is an issue of condensation and comprehensiveness. Various issues and diverse positions of concerned countries are interlaced. Broad issue areas of politics, diplomacy, military and economy are covered. Indeed, the TNWFZ is a representative model of entanglement of keen national interests in Northeast Asia. This shows that creating the TNWFZ would not be an easy task at all. Such difficulty, however, should not be an excuse for giving up our efforts to establish the TNWFZ. Quite the reverse, it should give a motivation to move on to the TNWFZ bearing much significance on regional security, prosperity and stability.

As a technical development program, Japan's participation in the TMD program may have some value. However, the negative political impact of TMD program could outweigh such benefits. By promoting the TNWFZ concept in the region, Japan could minimize such negative impact and could reduce the need for development of TMD system in the region.

Of course, it should be noted that the TNWFZ is not the end of a long journey for perpetual peace in the region. If successfully implemented, it is essential to broaden membership and region, for example, by involving Mongolia that announced nuclear-weapon-free status unilaterally and some parts of Russian and Chinese territories. In the long run, the TNWFZ is hoped to become a basis of Pan-Pacific Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (PPNWFZ) connecting Southeast Asia, South Pacific and Latin America covered by Bangkok Treaty, Rarotonga Treaty and Tlatelolco Treaty.