

Panel: How Viable Are Nuclear Weapons Free Zones? (Grand Ballroom I)

Date/Time: Wednesday, February 20, 2013 / 14:00-15:15

Talking Points for: Peter Hayes, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Nautilus Institute, RMIT University

How Viable are Nuclear Weapons Free Zones?

As a great power, the US has long-term interests in the region that mostly don't revolve around the DPRK. The US should therefore strive to establish a framework that addresses primarily the nuclear insecurities of the five parties, not the DPRK, as the first step.

When I look at the need to reduce the risk of Taiwan Strait-induced US-PRC nuclear use, the need to moderate the Sino-Japanese conflict axis and the potential for Japanese nuclear weapons, and the need to set the ROK up so that it remains non-nuclear in the long-run, there is only one framework that can manage the cross-cutting interests of the NPT Nuclear Weapons States and Non-Nuclear Weapons States, and that's a NWFZ. To get there, you need a comprehensive security settlement that includes:

- Termination of the state of war;
- Creation of a permanent council on security to monitor the agreement
- Mutual declaration of no hostile intent;
- Provisions of assistance for nuclear and other energy;
- Termination of sanctions;
- Creation of a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone

Then there's the DPRK. We don't know how valuable a legally binding guarantee, a multilateral one at that, that they won't be attacked with nuclear weapons is to the North Koreans. We haven't listened to them on this score on the past, but they have been consistent on saying it's one of the most important issues for them. That may have shifted now that they declared themselves "forever nuclear-armed." There's only one way to find out. That's to engage them. If they say no, we ignore them and proceed, as a regional NWFZ is in our interests anyway. We do not give veto power to the DPRK. If they say yes, then we make room in the NWFZ for them to enter, either out the outset, or over time. Yes, it can be verified, even in the DPRK.

It's perfectly feasible for the US to make a guarantee to NNWS [non-nuclear weapons states] in the region in a NWFZ, including the DPRK, that it won't use nuclear weapons against the DPRK. Ditto for the other NWSs [nuclear weapons states].

Residual nuclear extended deterrence will still exist for the ROK and Japan, only rhetoric and legal form will realign (at last) with the restructured forces that no longer include any form of forward-deployed theater or tactical NWs on the part of the US. That's good—it's the essence of credibility that this alignment exist, and it's currently badly out of whack, which affects

*** The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies.**

the perceptions (negatively) of our adversaries, allies, and third parties. Meanwhile, nuclear deterrence will continue to flow “around” the NWFZ between the NWSs.

Should a NWS or a nuclear-armed state (DPRK) use or threaten to use NWs against a NNWS party to the NWFZ, then a) it faces residual nuclear extended deterrence; and b) it renders moot the US and other NWS’ guarantees to not use NWs in or against the Zone parties.

How Viable are Nuclear Weapons Free Zones?

The US has vital interests in the region that mostly don’t revolve around the DPRK. The US should establish a framework that addresses primarily the nuclear insecurities of the five parties, not the DPRK, as the first step.

These are:

- reducing the risk of Taiwan Strait-induced US-PRC nuclear use
- moderating the Sino-Japanese conflict axis
- keeping Japan and ROK non-nuclear

The only framework that can manage these potential nuclear risks and the cross-cutting interests of the NWSs [Nuclear Weapons States] and NNWSs [Non-Nuclear Weapons States] is a regional NWFZ. To get there, a comprehensive security settlement must include:

Termination of the state of war;
Creation of a permanent council on security to monitor the agreement
Mutual declaration of no hostile intent;
Provisions of assistance for nuclear and other energy;
Termination of sanctions;
Creation of a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone

In a NWFZ, the NWSs [nuclear weapons states] guarantee that they won’t use nuclear weapons against NNWS [non-nuclear weapons states], including the DPRK. How valuable is this legally binding guarantee to the DPRK? Engaging it is the only way to find out.

If the NKs say yes, then we make room for them to enter, either out the outset, or over time. If they say no, we ignore them and proceed, as a regional NWFZ is in our interests anyway.

Yes, a NWFZ can be verified, even in the DPRK.

Meanwhile, recessed nuclear deterrence will flow “around” the NWFZ between the NWSs.

* The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies.