

**Panel:** Nuclear Dominos in Northeast Asia (Grand Ballroom I )

**Date/Time:** Wednesday, February 20, 2013 /09:00-10:15

**Talking Points for:** Miles Pomper, Senior Research Associate, James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS)

### Signs of Concern

- a. Political developments – vocal calls to revisit non-nuclear pledges; rise of extreme nationalism
  - i. Japan: consider independent nuclear deterrent (Taro Aso, Shintaro Ishigara, Shigeru Ishiba)
  - ii. ROK: some own nukes, although more emphasis on potential return of U.S. tactical nukes to ROK (Kim Tae-young, Chung Mong-yoon)
- b. Developments in the nuclear industry
  - i. Japan: reprocessing and enrichment (the only NNWS NPT member); tied to virtual nukes (amendment to Atomic Energy Act adding “national security”)
  - ii. ROK: desire for pyroprocessing (enrichment)
- c. Both Japan & ROK have space programs, with satellite launches in 2013
- d. Sensitive materials
  - i. Japan: growing stockpile of weapons-usable plutonium (9.3 tons)
  - ii. ROK: Park Chung-hee in 1970 & IAEA investigation in 2004

### 2. Assuring Factors

- a. Both countries remain deeply invested into global non-proliferation regime
  - i. Japan: ratified CTBT in 1997; signed additional protocol in 1998
  - ii. ROK: joined PSI in 2009; hosted 2012 nuclear security summit
- b. Economic & political costs of becoming a NWS remain high
- c. ROK is measuring up against Japan, not DPRK

### 3. Is there a rationale for ROK or Japanese deterrents?

- a. Deterring who from what?
  - i. Japan- equal need for balancing Chinese and eventually DPRK nukes
    1. DPRK
      - a. US Strategic Nukes and BMD should be sufficient to deter attack with greater US-Japan coordination given range of DPRK missiles, nukes etc for some time.
      - b. Attack would represent clear attack on Japan homeland—security treaty kicks in

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- c. If DPRK gets sufficient range to hit US. usual extended deterrence dilemmas kick in (trade Honolulu for Tokyo?)
  - 2. China—the harder case
    - a. Will Japan feel it needs a nuclear deterrent to avoid being deterred by a nuclear-armed China if Senkaku disputes etc continue to ratchet up.
    - b. US position ambiguous-says island fall under treaty but takes no position on status. How much will US being willing to risk for it defense?
  - ii. ROK—China far less of a threat, real focus is DPRK
    - 1. Even a nuclear-armed DPRK is unlikely to launch full-scale attack on ROK- provoke US response (presence of US troops)—national suicide.
    - 2. Could embolden DRPK to do more incidents like Cheonan, (xx island) for both internal political consumption, external blackmail. Feel even more it could deter ROK response.
    - 3. Would a nuclear deterrent help ROK even this out? Not likely. Real problem is ROK risk tolerance, asymmetry of stakes. Even w/o DPRK nukes, ROK already deterred by DPRK artillery at Seoul etc .  
This would not change with ROK nukes or US TNW in ROK.
- 4. U.S. Challenges: Keeping allies reassured while lessening regional conventional tensions**
  - a. Tools such as missile defense, greater extended deterrence coordination, conventional deployments
  - b. U.S. leaning on ROK-Japan pillar – but tensions between Japan and ROK make it difficult
  - c. U.S. – don’t want to be made to choose between China & Japan-ROK
  - d. Lack of good U.S-China communication—from fora to language to conceptual paradigms
  - e. No internal clarity in the U.S. leads to reactive policy

**5. Regional Security Ingredients**

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- a. For ROK or Japan nuclear weapons offer little security benefit
  - i. Lack of geographical depth, population density, asymmetric incentives limits feasibility
  - ii. Would ROK really be willing to trade nukes with DPRK or Japan with China?
  - iii. China's likely to respond with serious consequences even to pursuit
- a. Optimal –
  - a. compel the “big guys” to create security for them,
  - b. diplomatic solutions to territorial issues help ring problem
- b. In absence, both ROK and Japan may have to be willing to run higher conventional risks and U.S. to allow them
  - c. Schelling: deterrent value of plausible accident vs. understanding the stakes you are betting

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