From Peace on Korean Peninsula to North East Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone

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ABSTRACT

On June 1 and 2, 2019, Joint ROK-Japan Workshop “From Peace on Korean Peninsula to North East Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone” was held in Seongnam, South Korea. In this article, an executive summary of the policy proposal made as an outcome of the workshop is given.

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Introduction

On June 1 and 2, 2019, Joint ROK-Japan Workshop “From Peace on Korean Peninsula to North East Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone” was held in Seongnam, South Korea. It was co-organized by Sejong Institute and RECNA, in cooperation with Panel on Peace and Security of Northeast Asia (PSNA). Based on these fruitful discussions of more than 30 participants of the workshop, the 50-page policy proposal titled “From Peace on the Korean Peninsula to a North east Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone” was released on December 2019. The Japanese version was released at the same time.

In this article, what follows is an executive summary of the proposal. For the proposal as a whole, see Yoshida et al. (2019). In addition, as an outcome of the workshop, Kyung Hwan Cho, Visiting Research Fellow, Department of Security Strategy Studies, Sejong Institute (ROK), and Toby Dalton, Co-Director, Nuclear Policy Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (USA) contributed a paper. The two papers are provided as separate articles in Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament.

Executive Summary of “From Peace on the Korean Peninsula to a North east Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone”

The authors of this policy proposal identified some major end goals, based on discussions at the SEJONG-RECNA workshop. For us, these major end goals are the absolute minimum outcomes if peace and long-term security are to be secured for the region. These end goals include the need for a final peace settlement of the Korean War; a Treaty of Amity and Cooperation to agree on cooperative security principles and approaches; the establishment of a permanent North-east Asian regional security forum or
organization; the establishment of a nuclear weapon free zone (NWFZ) in North-east Asia; and the implementation of a regional energy security system to promote peaceful and sustainable energy development for all countries in the region.

Even if these major end goals were shared among stakeholders regarding a peaceful and denuclearized Korean Peninsula and correlated regional sustainable peace and security, disagreement exists as to the means through which these goals might be fulfilled. Much of the policy dialogue is anchored in national interests and limited by partial perspectives.

Taking the full complexity of the situation into account, this report presents a comprehensive framework and develops a set of short and long-term policy options that aim to realize a comprehensive regional security framework and specific strategic goals such as denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula and settling peace on the Korean Peninsula. Specific pathways that may lead to these outcomes are also explored.

The resulting policy options are summarized below:

**Korean and North-east Asian Peace and Regional Security**

1. End the Korean War by:
   - Taking the first steps that set in motion a peace process that creates conditions that generate trust, peace, and thereby enable the end of war and the denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula; and
   - Taking the first measures to initiate cooperative approaches to realizing comprehensive peace and security in the North-east Asian region.

2. Conclude a peace treaty for transforming the armistice into a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula by:
   - Negotiating a peace treaty to build a lasting and stable peace regime, as stated and envisioned in the 2018 Inter-Korean Panmunjom Declaration and the U.S-DPRK Singapore joint statement.
   - Participation by South Korea (ROK), North Korea (DPRK), the United States, and China.

3. As early as possible, the US, Japan, the ROK and the DPRK should commit to negotiating a North-east Asian Treaty of Amity and Cooperation aimed at achieving reconciliation and lasting security, peace, and prosperity for the whole North-east Asian region.
   - This initiative can be strengthened by efforts to promote wider membership and commitments from China, Russia and Mongolia as well as the international community.

4. Establish a permanent North-east Asian regional security framework to:
   - Promote dialogue and negotiations on peace and denuclearization within the region; and
   - Advance and develop cooperative security approaches to deal with all sources of conflict within the region.

5. Establish an NWFZ in North-east Asia.

6. Within an NWFZ in North-east Asia, provide an assurance to all parties of access to energy resources.
Peace and Security on the Korean Peninsula

(1) Support the September 19 military-to-military cooperation measures promoted by the Pyongyang Joint Declaration of September 2018 by:
- Offering training and joint operations in modern mine removal techniques that support humanitarian retrieval of combat and civilian casualties and their forensic identification;
- Offering to engage in joint hydrographic research to map the east and west coast seabeds to facilitate acoustic detection of illicit use of fishing resources by non-Korean vessels; and
- Undertaking joint maritime search-and-rescue training exercises.

(2) Envision changes in ROK and DPRK conventional-force postures that support peaceful denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula by:
- Reconfiguring their respective military forces to reduce the threat to each other and reduce the prospective military role by the United States in an inter-Korean war so that over time, there is less and less rationale for US military forces based in Korea to retain capacities for redeployability or ranges that might entangle inter-Korean military affairs into great power military contention in the region at large, especially in naval and aerial units.
- Examining closely the military implications of reduced dependence on nuclear extended deterrence, and the adjustments in conventional forces needed by the two Koreas to facilitate a reduced role of nuclear threats that will accompany a negative nuclear security assurance to the DPRK from the United States; and from the other nuclear-weapon states to both Koreas should a NWFZ be established in the Korean Peninsula or in North-east Asia.

(3) Demonstrate both Koreas’ commitment to reducing hostility to each other.

(4) Assist the DPRK in setting up an export control system that meets international standards and would cover items such as small arms and/or dual use equipment.

Dual-Track Approach to Establish Both a Comprehensive Security Framework and Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in North-east Asia

Comprehensive Security Framework

(1) Aim to moderate and reverse the nuclear arms buildup in the region under a North-east Asian comprehensive security framework.

(2) Enhance the role of civil society in creating a regional comprehensive security zone by promoting crossborder cooperation and shared “trans governmental” coordination and harmonization of standards in market and other institutional governance of shared social life.

(3) Increase regional energy security by convening a regional energy planning and infrastructure task force of senior officials and private energy investors and utility managers to develop common strategies and collaborative projects that exploit or create regional energy interdependence in ways that increase comprehensive energy security.
**NWFZ in North-east Asia**

1. Design and then establish a North-east Asia NWFZ to address the specific nature of existing and potential nuclear threats within the region through the following provisions and measures:
   - A requirement that all signatories in this NWFZ complete the verified dismantlement of any nuclear weapons and related facilities within a specified time in advance;
   - Prohibition of conventional or other attacks on civilian nuclear facilities;
   - Prohibition of nuclear-capable ballistic missiles;
   - Establishment of regional verification agency similar to the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC);
   - Multilateral control of enrichment facilities and fissile materials and stockpiles;
   - A possible ban on the reprocessing of irradiated uranium or thorium; and
   - Full transparency of all past and present nuclear-weapon facilities and programs.

2. Undertake confidence- and trust-building approaches to maximize the prospects for successful negotiation of regional denuclearization and the conclusion of a legally binding NWFZ treaty, including:
   - Adoption of a reciprocal step-by-step approach rather than an all-or-nothing approach, including the training of DPRK officials and technical officers on obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 1540 obligations in relation to nonstate actors;
   - Separation and separate treatment of the issue of chemical and biological weapons from the issue of nuclear weapons;
   - Study tours of other regions where NWFZ treaties are in force, including Latin America, Southeast Asia and the South Pacific; Track 1.5 and Track 2 regional consultations on NWFZ options; and
   - Negotiation of secure regional real-time military communication systems to support crisis avoidance, management and resolution.

**Developing Regional and International Support for a North-east Asia NWFZ in the Context of a Comprehensive Security Framework**

This end-state should be realized by undertaking the following measures:

1. The three neighbouring nuclear-weapon states – the United States, China, and Russia – should support a regional Korean/North east Asia nuclear weapon free zone through legal provisions within the main body of the treaty requiring them to enter into binding commitments not to
   - Use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against the parties;
   - Station or deploy nuclear weapons within the zone; and
   - Assist treaty parties in development, research or acquisition of nuclear weapons.

2. Building wide support for a North east Asia NWFZ proposal by incorporating it into a larger vision of peace, denuclearization, and human security for this region including:
– The development of a comprehensive security framework to be presented in ways that can be readily understood and appreciated at governmental, media, and civil society levels; and
– Greater coordination and communication among actors such as NGOs, experts, political representatives, and the media about issues associated with comprehensive security framework.

**Possible Concerned Actions to Be Taken by Japan and the ROK**

(1) Japan should initiate direct dialogue with the DPRK based on the spirit built in the 2020 DPRK-Japan Pyongyang Declaration, which includes normalization of relationships between the two countries;
– Japan and the DPRK should discuss abduction issues in the context of normalization of diplomatic relations between the two countries; and
– Deferred Japanese economic cooperation with the DPRK should be discussed in the context of a multilateral settlement that realizes the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

(2) Japan and the ROK should reexamine security policy dependent on nuclear deterrence and explore an alternative security policy built on the new regional security regime proposed here:
– Japan, as the only nation that has experienced an attack with nuclear weapons, should start to reexamine its security posture, which is highly dependent on the US “nuclear umbrella,” that is, nuclear extended deterrence based on the US-Japan Security Treaty.
– This effort should consider emerging technologies that could undermine effectiveness of nuclear deterrence.
– The ROK too should reexamine its dependence on US nuclear extended deterrence to help facilitate the denuclearization and peace settlement of the Korean Peninsula.

(3) Japan and the ROK should be prepared to multilateralize the peace and denuclearization process in North-east Asia after a critical give-and-take deal is concluded in the US-DPRK negotiations and this deal is implemented in a parallel, simultaneous-action manner by the United States and the DPRK.

(4) Japan and the ROK should consider joint collaborative projects to reduce nuclear threats during the denuclearization process such as “cooperative threat reduction” initiatives, addressing also the safety and security risks of civilian nuclear fuel cycle programs in the region.

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Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on Contributor

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