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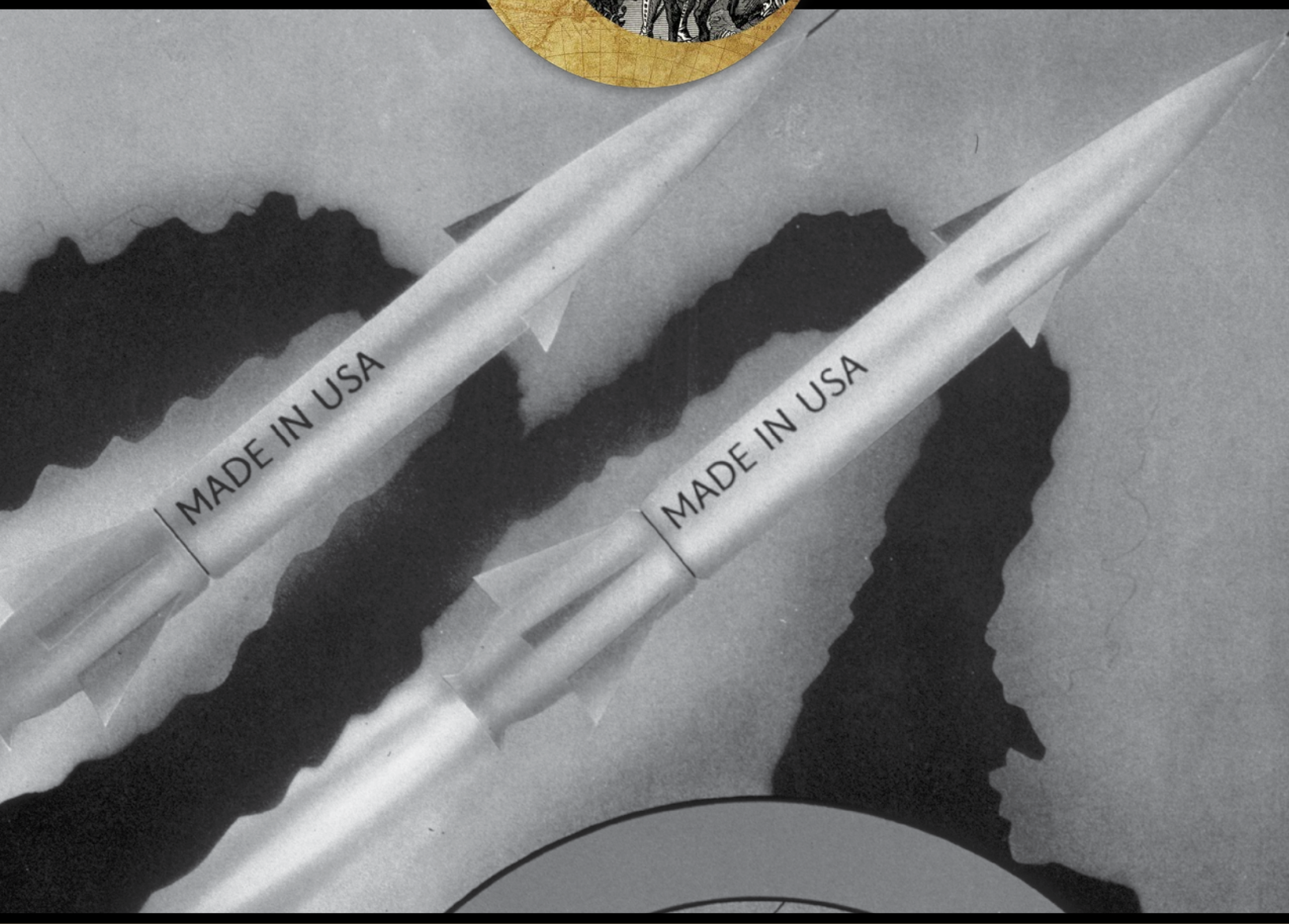
STRATEGIKA

Conflicts Of The Past As Lessons For The Present

JUNE 2018



NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

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GORDON G. CHANG • THOMAS DONNELLY • THOMAS KARAKO

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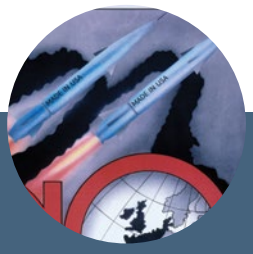
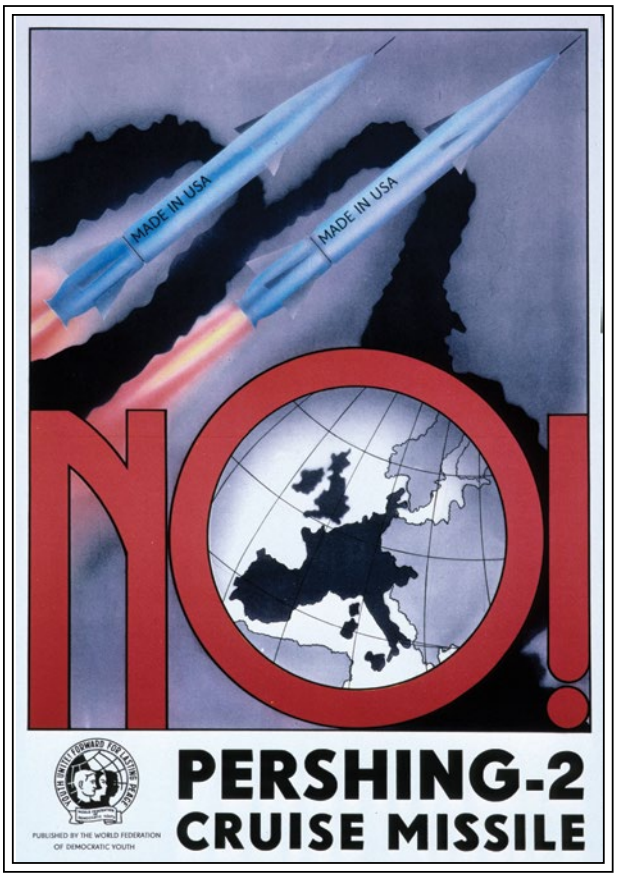


ABOUT THE POSTERS IN THIS ISSUE

Documenting the wartime viewpoints and diverse political sentiments of the twentieth century, the Hoover Institution Library & Archives Poster Collection has more than one hundred thousand posters from around the world and continues to grow. Thirty-three thousand are available online. Posters from the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Russia/Soviet Union, and France predominate, though posters from more than eighty countries are included.

Should More Nations Have Nukes?

By Gordon G. Chang



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There is only one weapon that poses an existential threat to the United States, so why should America want other nations to possess it?

The simple answer is that Washington's nonproliferation policy, which once slowed the spread of nuclear weapons, now looks to be on the verge of collapse. Two rogue states challenge America, and Washington must either stop them to save its nonproliferation policy or devise a new strategy fast.

Since the first detonation of an atomic device at Alamogordo, New Mexico in July 1945, the United States has sought to prevent other nations from building nukes.

American nonproliferation policy is now anchored in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which went into force in 1970. The NPT, as the global pact is called, created a system of "atomic apartheid." Five nations were permitted to have nukes—the United States, Britain, France, China, and Russia—and the rest were not.

India, Pakistan, and Israel were never signatories and developed nuclear weapons outside the treaty.

Almost every other nation is a party to the pact, 191 in all. That's testament to the notion that the agreement's goal, the complete elimination of the world's most destructive weapons, is one of the world's most popular causes.

And then there is the case of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Pyongyang claims it is no longer bound by the pact, but it failed to observe procedural requirements when it announced its withdrawal in January 2003. Legalities aside, North Korea is the only state to have left the NPT.

At the time, many were concerned that Pyongyang's departure would fundamentally undermine not only the global treaty but also the concept of arms control. The Kim regime first took the technical and scientific benefits available to NPT members, then lied to the international community about its activities, and finally bailed out of the pact.

So far, Pyongyang has gotten away with its nuclear crimes. The international community, as represented by the United Nations, has been feckless, as has the United States. While diplomats issued pronouncements and passed resolutions, North Koreans made bombs. The Kim regime detonated its first atomic device in October 2006 and five more since then. The bomb tested September 3, 2017 measured an estimated 250 kilotons and so had to be thermonuclear.

Washington's failure to disarm the regime has had unsettling consequences. Although the world's non-proliferation regime has remained in place, North Korea's neighbors have become so unsettled by the ineffectiveness of American diplomacy that they are thinking of developing fearsome weapons of their own.

Speculation focuses on Japan largely because it possesses fourty-seven tons of plutonium, with ten tons, enough for almost 1,300 warheads, stored inside the country. The so-called "nuclear taboo" has prevented Tokyo from weaponizing its huge stockpile, however.

The taboo is weak in the Republic of Korea. South Korean politicians and policy makers from the "conservative" side of the political spectrum have shown a remarkable determination to build the bomb, a rebuke of American efforts to contain North Korea. "Suppose you have a dangerous neighbor with a gun," said Chung Mong-joon in 2013, when he was a ruling party lawmaker. "You have to take measures to protect yourself. And being a gun control advocate isn't going to help you."

"Gun control" is not especially popular among the Gulf Arabs either. They do not believe Iranian officials when they claim their nuclear program is "peaceful." That program, which involves Tehran enriching uranium, is seen as cover for a weapons effort, and that perception has made the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, better known as the Iran nuclear deal, exceedingly unpopular in the Gulf.

Gulf Arab states, led by Saudi Arabia, have made it clear how they intend to deter Tehran's "atomic ayatollahs." "If Iran acquires a nuclear capability, we will do everything we can to do the same," Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir told CNN in May.

As the Saudi comments show, a collapse of the world's nuclear arms-control regime is now a distinct possibility. The only way to prevent that failure, as a practical matter, is success in disarming the regimes in Pyongyang and Tehran. President Trump, unlike his predecessors, is not just trying to "manage" their nuclear programs. America's leader, to his credit, is intent on eliminating them.

Trump, by succeeding in those ambitious rollback efforts, can repair the great damage to the world's non-proliferation architecture. So there is one last-off ramp to a world chock full with nuclear arsenals: America making sure Supreme Commander Kim Jong Un and Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei not have the proverbial button in reach.

Nonetheless, a question remains: What happens if Washington falls short?

The world did not perish "in a hail of fiery atoms"—Reagan's phrase from his 1982 address to the British parliament—when first the Soviet Union and then China learned how to make bombs, nor was there nuclear war when India and Pakistan built their own "gizmos of mass destruction." Therefore, the planet might survive intact if Iran gets the bomb and North Korea keeps its dangerous arsenal.

But maybe not.

The issue, of course, is deterrence. The United States and Soviet Union deterred each other with the prospect of mass destruction during the Cold War, and now, in what Yale's Paul Bracken calls the "second nuclear age," nuclear weapons are keeping the peace among big powers Russia, China, and the United States and the matched pair of India and Pakistan.

Yet nuclear powers are now threatening non-nuke ones. North Korea, for instance, has eight-decade-old designs on taking over South Korea. Russia is continuing to dismember Ukraine, which once possessed nuclear weapons, and is threatening to reabsorb the three Baltics. China believes it is entitled to territory of others, and it is going after Taiwan and most of its other South China Sea and East China Sea neighbors.

And if Iran gets the bomb, it could make good on its serial threats to annihilate Israel.

So should the United States encourage countries in the path of this aggression to build their own arsenals of nuclear weapons? Candidate Trump, in March 2016, famously suggested South Korea and Japan nuke up and defend themselves.

His seemingly off-the-cuff comments mirror the thinking of the great international relations expert Kenneth Waltz, who championed the view that more was better, that the world would be more stable if there were a slow spread of nukes. The underlying logic of his seemingly counterintuitive theory is simple: countries may not even begin conventional conflicts if they think their adversaries might go all the way up the escalation chain. "Where nuclear weapons threaten to make the costs of wars immense, who will dare to start them?" he asked in his 2003 book with Scott Sagan, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed*.

There is a regrettable lack of debate on nuclear deterrence in general and proliferation in particular, but that is beginning to change as America's nonproliferation policies produce anomalous results. "I would argue that war in Asia is more rather than less likely because of our misguided antiproliferation policies, which seem to have ruled out minimal deterrence for our friends while not constraining possible adversaries," Arthur Waldron of the University of Pennsylvania told *Strategika* in May. "Arms control is a myth. If anything, it makes violence more rather than less likely."

Arms control, history demonstrates, rarely works because, among other reasons, armaments don't cause wars. "The driver of conflict, war, murder, and suicide is the expression of violence, a phenomenon that psychologists do not understand," Waldron says. Unfortunately, no agreement can quench the desire of the demon of violent acts.

Our enemies will not attack our friends if those friends can inflict devastating harm on aggressors. As Waldron points out, "Sadly, people seem to be animals who are genuinely frightened best by the blue flash, the shock wave, the vast emission of fatal radiation, the all-consuming heat, and the rest, of a nuclear explosion, crowned by a great mushroom cloud."

So what's not to like about making our allies heavily armed? Even though the NPT has become "almost meaningless" as Bloomberg Opinion columnist Eli Lake told me recently, spreading weapons is not necessarily the answer.

"Fighting nuclear fire with nuclear fire may seem exciting and promising but, judging from what history we have, it's more likely just plain stupid and way dangerous," Henry Sokolski, head of the Arlington, Virginia-based Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, told Strategika. "In the Saudi case, it could go nuclear and, then, go radical. Think Iran 1979 redux.

POLL: What does the future hold for nuclear weapons?

- ☐ It is still possible to eliminate all nuclear weapons.
- ☐ It is possible to denuclearize rogue states such as North Korea.
- ☐ Denuclearization is impossible; the goal is to stop further nuclear proliferation.
- ☐ The United States should allow endangered democratic allies to develop nuclear weapons.
- ☐ Further nuclear proliferation is inevitable; the antidote is effective missile defense.

There's also the distinct possibility that its example could egg Egypt, Turkey, and Algeria to follow suit with, God knows what consequences."

Giving out bomb plans, therefore, may not be an idea whose time has come. "Nonproliferation is still a good idea," Lake says.

Maybe. We have to remember that in this century America has restrained friends from developing their own deterrents while not preventing dangerous regimes from getting the bomb. Even though we can all hope Lake is right, the hideous result of Washington's policy—nuked up enemies and defenseless friends—suggests otherwise.

So why would America want other nations to have the only weapon that poses an existential threat to itself? If Washington cannot stop the North Koreas and Irans of the world, truly peaceful societies will need—and they will insist on having—the means to defend themselves from the worst elements in the international system.

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A Bigger Arsenal for a Lasting Peace

By Thomas Donnelly

Image credit: Poster Collection, INT 00260_10, Hoover Institution Archives.

Where is Stanley Kubrick when you need him?

With Donald Trump withdrawing from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (aka "the Iran deal"), playing summit footsie with Kim Jong Un and scoping out a vigorous modernization of the aging US nuclear force, the abyssopelagic layer of the Deep State has taken on new life with warnings of the approaching apocalypse.

The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* has reset its "Doomsday Clock" to two minutes to midnight. "To call the world nuclear situation dire is to understate the danger—and its immediacy," intones Rachel Bronson, the journal's president and CEO. Writing in *Foreign Affairs*, Adam Mount of the Federation of American Scientists argues that, by planning to refine American nuclear posture, the Trump administration is making things worse, "usher[ing] in a future in which nuclear competition is commonplace." And, in a long *New Yorker* article that includes a potted history of World War II strategic bombing and the Cold War arms race, "investigative" reporter Eric Schlosser—probably best known for his 2001 book *Fast Food Nation*—goes full *Strangelove*, minus the irony. Schlosser concludes his essay with a fawning section on the Nobel-prize-winning Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, arguing that "stigmatizing" such systems and buttressing nonproliferation agreements are the necessary responses to the dire dangers he describes.

To be fair, there is reason for alarm. There's been an uptick in nuclear proliferation over the last decade, and it's not just North Korea and Iran. Perhaps most worrying is Pakistan, which actually has the world's fastest-growing nuclear arsenal; as India has modernized its land forces and begun to theorize about blitzkrieg-style campaigns, Islamabad has responded by introducing low-yield tactical nuclear warheads atop short-range delivery systems. The Pakistani army has taken a page from Eisenhower-era US and NATO doctrine. China, too, appears to be moving from a narrow deterrence posture to a more flexible and potentially coercive one, adding nuclear versions of its truck-mounted Dongfeng-41 missiles. And, despite the overall shrinkage in Russian nuclear forces, Moscow has continued to modernize and likewise maintain its advantages in short-range systems. These are not stabilizing trends.

Yet to step back from these headline developments and consider the larger pattern of the post-Cold War period, the story of nuclear proliferation is equally one where the dog hasn't barked. The US conventional-force supremacy first displayed in Operation Desert Storm was supposed to start a scramble on the part of rogue regimes to field even a modest nuclear capability in order to deter the Americans and the "neocon" enthusiasm for "regime change." Long before National Security Adviser John Bolton's "Libya model" came the "lesson of Saddam Hussein"—if Saddam had only waited until he had a nuke, he'd still be around today.

Even the cases of North Korea and Iran, if considered closely, don't necessarily confirm the deter-America analysis. Pyongyang was willing to ditch its original plutonium program in the 1994 Agreed Framework,

while patiently developing the smaller hydrogen weapons of its current program. It would seem that the Kim regime has more in mind than simply securing its own survival, and maintains its long-term—and publicly proclaimed—goal of reunification of the peninsula on Pyongyang's terms. Similarly, in the Iran deal, the Obama administration offered Tehran a bargain it couldn't refuse: a green light—and good financing—to pursue its goal of regional supremacy. For both the North Koreans and the Iranians, nuclear weapons were means to a greater, more expansive end than deterring the United States. As American power has receded, it's not just eased the pressure on autocratic regimes, it's given them what they regard as opportunities.

Through this period, America's allies and less formal strategic partners have likewise been rather quiet canines. With China's rise and increasing military assertiveness, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan—all states with plenty of money and technological savvy—have had good reason to create deterrent nuclear forces. Likewise, Saudi Arabia has had both means and motive. Until now, they have been content to remain under an American umbrella.

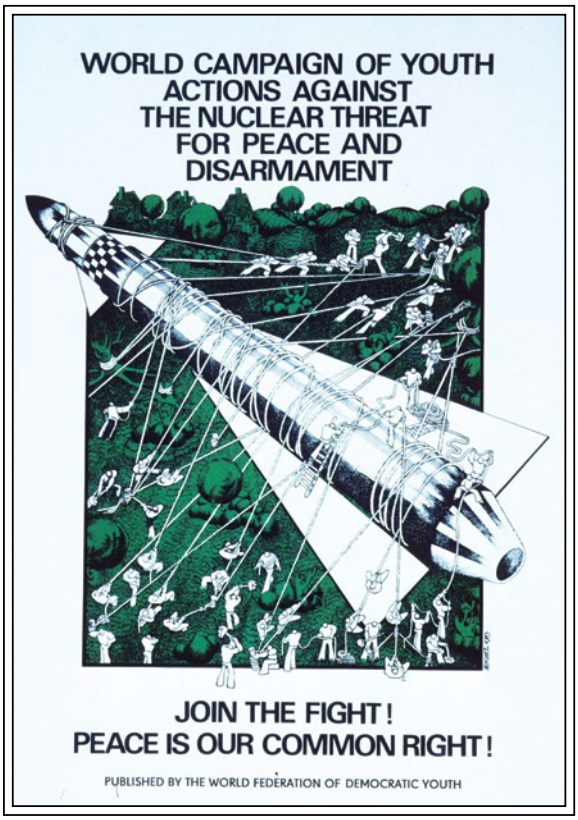
But the fabric of that shield is shabby, and therein lies the greatest danger of accelerated proliferation. The Trump administration's nuclear review is in fact a very mainstream document, an extension of the Bush-era posture plans. Many of the authors are the same; no Buck Turgidson among them. By contrast to the arms-control *illuminati*, the Defense Department begins its discussion of nuclear strategy and forces with a reminder of US national security interests and an analysis of international politics and power; it advances "tailored strategies" for China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea as well as "hedging" against other "uncertainties," and makes "assurance" of allies an equal priority with deterring adversaries. It responds to practical realities rather than abstract possibilities.

Nuclear strategy is an inherently paradoxical thing; the weapons achieve their purpose when they are not used. The irony of the current moment is that it requires more and better US nuclear systems to avoid the looming doomsday. That measures the difference between a peace prize and peace itself.

Thomas Donnelly, a defense and security policy analyst, is the codirector of the Marilyn Ware Center for Security Studies at the American Enterprise Institute. From 1995 to 1999, he was policy group director for the House Committee on Armed Services. Donnelly also served as a member of the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission. He is the author, coauthor, and editor of numerous articles, essays, and books, including *Operation Just Cause: The Storming of Panama* and *Clash of Chariots: A History of Armored Warfare*. He is currently at work on *Empire of Liberty: The Origins of American Strategic Culture*.

Beware Greeks Bearing Gifts: Strategic Competition and the North Korea Talks

By Thomas Karako



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The United States has long been committed to stemming the further proliferation of nuclear weapons among both potential adversaries and friends alike. As the recent *Nuclear Posture Review* observes, "nuclear non-proliferation today faces acute challenges." The current locus of this challenge is in northeast Asia. But enthusiasm for specifically rolling back the North Korea threat must be bridled by what the new *National Defense Strategy* calls the "central challenge" of our time: renewed strategic competition with Russia and China. Besides prudent skepticism about North Korea's good faith, a range of parallel efforts to counter and outflank Chinese ambitions in the region must accompany any path forward.

The June 2018 summit between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un raises some hopes and more questions about the future of countering nuclear proliferation. An abundance of skepticism is in order about the intentions of not merely North Korea, but also of China, which is likely helping stage-manage any such deal to favor Chinese regional hegemony while disadvantaging the US military posture and alliance architecture in the Asia-Pacific.

For as long as nuclear weapons have existed, robust diplomatic, military, economic, and intelligence efforts have been directed towards the monitoring and rollback of potential new entrants into the nuclear club. Nonproliferation or nuclear disarmament are sometimes seen as a kind of categorical imperative, a worthy goal in and of itself. In a wide range of circumstances, South Africa, Brazil, and Libya, for instance, are among those persuaded to abandon nuclear efforts in exchange for certain political and economic benefits. Current talks with North Korea must also be viewed from a similar geopolitical perspective.

There are many reasons to doubt the apparent sudden interest by North Korea in the full and verifiable dismantlement of its nuclear weapon and missile programs. The ancient advice to beware of Greeks bearing gifts has purchase here. That which seems too good to be true often is, and by definition the best ruse is one that is not perceived. All this could be little more than a gambit for recognition and legitimization, with no real intention to follow through on disarmament.

Supposing that there is a sincere intent to denuclearize, however, North Korea and its friends could present the United States with an offer that will seem too good to pass up. Perhaps complete and verifiable dismantlement is a real option. North Korea will not, however, give up for free the stockpile in which it has invested much of its national effort over past decades. The question is not if disarming North Korea is a good thing, but what the price will be. There may well be some things that are not worth trading for an apparent

solution to the current North Korea problem. As President Trump was wont to say of the Iran deal, a bad deal is worse than no deal at all.

In his 1967 book *How Nations Negotiate*, the late Fred Iklé observed that diplomatic talks are all too frequently aimed not at their ostensible subject, but rather at "negotiating for side effects." North Korea and company may be floating disarmament to buy time, acquire legitimacy, defuse a military strike, decrease American military readiness, effect the withdrawal of US forces from the peninsula, relax sanctions, or some combination of those. Such concessions could of course profoundly benefit China and adversely affect the US relationship with other allies.

While pursuing the apparent North Korean interest in disarmament, the United States must be especially careful to scrutinize their side effects. Nuclear proliferation could well be an instrument of policy, as it seemingly was when China aided and abetted the Pakistani program to counterbalance India. When Kim arrived in Singapore, he stepped off an aircraft conspicuously marked "Air China," and it is impossible not to suspect a heavy Chinese hand in the current talks.

North Korea has already achieved some measure of success from the pomp and legitimacy accompanying President Trump's visit. It was only a few months ago that the White House was contemplating giving North Korea "a bloody nose" in the form of a strike. Is "maximum pressure" still being retained? One must ask how plausible a repeat of such a threat would be now that President Trump has declared we should all sleep well now that the North Korea nuclear problem has been solved.

In the face of such uncertainty, potential nuclear proliferation among allies such as Japan must also be considered. During the campaign, then candidate Trump openly floated the prospect of independent nuclear deterrents for both Japan and South Korea. Nuclear weapons provide a unique quality of deterrence, but unless and until the United States adopts a policy of encouraging nuclear proliferation to its allies, a posture of proliferating more advanced conventional arms to our allies will support American extended deterrence and assurance goals.

One path that can both help thwart regional domination by China and stem nuclear proliferation among our allies would be to more aggressively embrace a sort of conventional proliferation of sorts, most notably for Japan, Australia, South Korea, and potentially other regional partners. But such a policy would be of conventional rather than nuclear means. Such a path would solidify the US alliance system, hedge against North Korean duplicity, and help stiffen allied governments and publics in the face of rising military and economic challenges from China.

The United States has recently already taken some important steps down this path, both in the Asia-Pacific and elsewhere. Recently announced weapon sales to Saudi Arabia is one high-profile example to counter Iran. So, too, countries like Poland and Romania are acquiring counterbattery fire and Patriot air defenses to deter Russia. The US State Department's new April 2018 directive on conventional arms transfers and unmanned aerial vehicles sales will bolster this effort further.

But the yet-unrealized potential here could be more profound. Military and political officials in places like Australia and Japan are quietly discussing long-range land attack cruise missiles to supplement their deterrence and defense postures. But these conversations should perhaps be a bit more explicit. Both Japanese and Australia's Aegis ships are equipped with the same Mark 41 launchers the US Navy uses for the Tomahawk land attack cruise missile. The Obama administration green-lighted the foreign military sales of the Standard Missile-6 for air and missile defense. While no sales have yet been made, Australia, Japan, and South Korea are reportedly exploring such interceptors for their country's respective Aegis ships.

Such efforts would face significant opposition. Russia and China have already objected vigorously to Japan's Aegis Ashore deployments and to a THAAD missile defense battery in South Korea. Arms sales to countries like Taiwan have all too often been restrained on the basis of likely objections by the various states

such arms would be designed to deter, as in the case with Chinese objections to fighter aircraft and missile defense sales to Taiwan. But if we are serious about the strategic competition affirmed by the *National Defense Strategy*, then we should act like it, and unabashedly impose costs on our competitors.

A prospective North Korea deal may not turn out to be a Trojan horse, but there can be no doubt that it would have profound effects on the larger strategic dynamic in the Asia-Pacific. In the meantime, building up partner capacity in the face of growing challenges will serve numerous deterrence and defense goals. Any North Korean nuclear proposal must likewise be judged not only on its own terms, but in light of the larger challenge of strategic competition with China and Russia.

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Discussion Questions

1. Is there a new era of nuclear proliferation, in which prior United Nations' nonproliferation protocols are becoming obsolete?
2. Which nations, if any, are most likely to become nuclear powers in the next few decades?
3. Will likely new members of the nuclear club be pro- or anti-American?
4. Could China live with a nuclear Taiwan or Japan?
5. Which countries in the Middle East are the most likely to go nuclear should Iran test a nuclear weapon?

Suggestions for Further Reading

Books:

- Bruce E. Bechtol, Jr., *North Korean Military Proliferation in the Middle East and Africa: Enabling Violence and Instability* (University Press of Kentucky, 2018). http://kentuckypress.com/live/title_detail.php?titleid=5445#.Wxru5FMvxhE
- Paul Bracken, *The Second Nuclear Age: Strategy, Danger, and the New Power Politics* (St. Martin's Griffin, 2013). https://us.macmillan.com/books/9781250037350
- Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: An Enduring Debate* [3rd ed.] (W. W. Norton & Co., 2012). http://books.wwnorton.com/books/webad.aspx?id=4294971047

Websites:

- Arms Control Association: *https://www.armscontrol.org*
- *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*: *https://thebulletin.org*
- Nonproliferation Policy Education Center: *http://www.npolicy.org*
- Ploughshares Fund: *https://www.ploughshares.org*



IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Turkey and the West

Military History in Contemporary Conflict

As the very name of Hoover Institution attests, military history lies at the very core of our dedication to the study of "War, Revolution, and Peace." Indeed, the precise mission statement of the Hoover Institution includes the following promise: "The overall mission of this Institution is, from its records, to recall the voice of experience against the making of war, and by the study of these records and their publication, to recall man's endeavors to make and preserve peace, and to sustain for America the safeguards of the American way of life." From its origins as a library and archive, the Hoover Institution has evolved into one of the foremost research centers in the world for policy formation and pragmatic analysis. It is with this tradition in mind, that the "Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict" has set its agenda—reaffirming the Hoover Institution's dedication to historical research in light of contemporary challenges, and in particular, reinvigorating the national study of military history as an asset to foster and enhance our national security. By bringing together a diverse group of distinguished military historians, security analysts, and military veterans and practitioners, the working group seeks to examine the conflicts of the past as critical lessons for the present.

Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict

The Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict examines how knowledge of past military operations can influence contemporary public policy decisions concerning current conflicts. The careful study of military history offers a way of analyzing modern war and peace that is often underappreciated in this age of technological determinism. Yet the result leads to a more in-depth and dispassionate understanding of contemporary wars, one that explains how particular military successes and failures of the past can be often germane, sometimes misunderstood, or occasionally irrelevant in the context of the present.

Strategika

Strategika is a journal that analyzes ongoing issues of national security in light of conflicts of the past—the efforts of the Military History Working Group of historians, analysts, and military personnel focusing on military history and contemporary conflict. Our board of scholars shares no ideological consensus other than a general acknowledgment that human nature is largely unchanging. Consequently, the study of past wars can offer us tragic guidance about present conflicts—a preferable approach to the more popular therapeutic assumption that contemporary efforts to ensure the perfectibility of mankind eventually will lead to eternal peace. New technologies, methodologies, and protocols come and go; the larger tactical and strategic assumptions that guide them remain mostly the same—a fact discernable only through the study of history.

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