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No. 264

**Safety in Numbers:
Problems of a Smaller U.S. Nuclear Arsenal in Asia**

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28 November 2013

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the Asia Pacific region is not ready for further nuclear reductions by the United States. After the end of the Cold War, the United States was able to reduce its nuclear and conventional forces and take an intellectual “holiday” from the demands of END against the Soviet Union. However, that has been changing over the last few years. Nuclear weapons are becoming more central to interstate relations as the centre of global strategic gravity shifts increasingly to the Asia Pacific. With the expansion of Chinese military power and greater uncertainty over its strategic and military ambitions,¹ nuclear weapons remain a relevant instrument in helping to manage proliferation and great power strategic relations. As such, it is not at all clear that a smaller U.S. nuclear force will contribute to greater stability in the Asia Pacific. This paper provides arguments against reductions in the size of the U.S. nuclear arsenal below 1,000 warheads by examining both the effects this will have on allies, and the inherent strategic complications that will arise. In short: Will a reduction in nuclear weapons lead to a more stable Asia? The answer is probably no. To support this claim, I advance the following four claims. First, nuclear weapons are uniquely stabilising instruments of deterrence. Second, that extended nuclear deterrence has always been central to Washington’s alliances. Sometimes this phenomenon has been implicit, at other times it has been explicit. Third, given the geopolitical transformations underway in the Asia Pacific, further nuclear reductions undermine flexibility of response and the concept of escalation control across both the nuclear *and* conventional realms of warfare. Lastly, that as a consequence, Asia Pacific allies may increasingly doubt the seriousness of Washington’s assurances. If extended nuclear deterrence does not have a future, then serious options come back onto the agenda for those allies.

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¹ For a recent commentary on Chinese military projects, see for example, Michael Raska, *China’s [Secret] Civil-Military Megaprojects*. RSIS Commentary No.163. September 2013; Michael Raska, “China on the Launch Pad”, *Project Syndicate*. 6 June 2012. At: <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/china-on-the-launch-pad>

Safety in Numbers: Problems of a Smaller U.S. Nuclear Arsenal in Asia

Introduction

This paper argues that the Asia Pacific region is not ready for further nuclear reductions by the United States. America's alliances with Japan, South Korea, and Australia were formed at the dawn of the nuclear age. Historically, nuclear weapons have not been as central to these alliances the same way they mattered to U.S. allies in Europe, against deterring invasion from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). For most of the Cold War, extended nuclear deterrence (END) only applied in an indirect manner to Washington's Asia Pacific allies. That is, they have typically been instruments of strategic, rather than tactical design; they have served allies' defence insofar as they have contributed to stable regional and global orders. Additionally, after the end of the Cold War, as Soviet power waned, there was little need to devote the time and focus to extended nuclear deterrent capabilities, let alone in East Asia. Accordingly, the United States was able to reduce its nuclear and conventional forces and take an intellectual "holiday" from the demands of END against a peer competitor. Over the last few years that has been changing, however. Nuclear weapons are becoming increasingly relevant to inter-state relations as the centre of global strategic gravity shifts increasingly to the Asia Pacific. With the expansion of Chinese military power and increasing uncertainty over its strategic and military ambitions², nuclear weapons remain a relevant instrument in helping to manage great power strategic relations. As such, it is not at all clear that a smaller U.S. nuclear force will contribute to greater stability in the Asia Pacific. This paper provides arguments against reductions in the size of the U.S. nuclear arsenal below 1000 warheads by examining both the effects this will have on allies, and the inherent strategic complications that will arise.

Renewed Pushes for Lower Numbers

Since the end of the Cold War, there have been a number of efforts to revive considerations of minimum deterrence postures and, eventually, move towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. The latter objective received celebrated attention in U.S. President Barack Obama's 2009 speech in Prague which outlined hopes for an eventual world without nuclear weapons, beginning with further reductions to American and Russian arsenals. That obvious starting point raises an immediate dilemma. Existing studies of the question of lower nuclear numbers have tended to focus on the strategic relations between the United States and Russia to the neglect of other nuclear and non-nuclear states, whose defence postures significantly impact the *overall military* balance. James Acton's Carnegie-sponsored study on stability in moving to lower numbers is almost exclusively deductive in its logic, focused entirely on U.S.-Russia relations. Moreover, Acton assumes that smaller nuclear players and other regional actors do not need to be considered because of their

² For a recent commentary on Chinese military projects, see for example, Michael Raska, *China's [Secret] Civil-Military Megaprojects*. RSIS Commentary No.163. September 2013; Michael Raska, "China on the Launch Pad", *Project Syndicate*. 6 June 2012. At: <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/china-on-the-launch-pad>

smaller, latent, or non-existent arsenals.³ This ignores the much-overlooked reality that nuclear weapons are not the only regulators of stability. The conventional balance is an integral (though too often subsumed) second layer (underneath nuclear weapons) which also shapes the overall security environment. And the two layers are much more intricately connected than much of the writing on nuclear relations allows. As Ron Huiskens astutely notes with respect to a first grouping of countries that are affected by these connections:

For some of the smaller (and, mostly, newer) nuclear weapon states, such as Israel, Pakistan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and, potentially, Iran, countering superior conventional capacities constitutes the core rationale for the acquisition of nuclear weapons. And since sustainable conventional defences correlate so strongly with geography, population and economic capacity, this reality abruptly presents the eradication of nuclear weapons as a daunting challenge of geopolitical transformation.⁴

At present, the United States is estimated to have roughly 2,150 deployed nuclear warheads, in and around 5,500 in reserve. The Russian Federation has 1,800 and 6,700 in reserve, with China estimated to have a total of 250. Pakistan is estimated to have between a total of 100-200, with India wielding roughly 90 to 110.⁵ In June 2013, President Obama repeated an offer made to Russian President Vladimir Putin to reduce both countries' strategic nuclear arsenals by one third, which would leave the U.S. arsenal at just over 1000 weapons.⁶ But how might these numbers impact on how we evaluate the prospects for any notion of "strategic stability" in the region? Would allies in the region feel more, or less, secure with a U.S. posture that was becoming more "conventionalised"? How would an arsenal below 1000 (and, in the absolute, zero nuclear weapons) shape perceptions of the obvious question of "how much is enough" regarding "*conventional*" forces? And not just between the major players, but between *all states* in the Asia Pacific?⁷

The Enduring Value of Extended Nuclear Deterrence in the Asia Pacific

Despite *officially* welcoming President Obama's new initiatives to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. foreign policy, key allies remain worried about the prospect of lower nuclear numbers⁸, which is perceived by many as a step towards global nuclear disarmament. There are several geopolitical themes and trends that are at odds with President Obama's ambitions to reduce nuclear numbers. The first major one is that the Obama administration is the only government of a nuclear weapons state to be so adamant about pursuing the goal of "Global Zero". All other nuclear weapons states are not. Even a France and the United Kingdom – states that have considerably less global

³ James M. Acton, "Deterrence During Disarmament: Deep Nuclear Reductions and International Security" *Adelphi Papers* No. 417 (International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 2010).

⁴ Ron Huiskens, "A Political Strategy for Nuclear Disarmament", unpublished paper, 2012.

⁵ Sipri Yearbook 2013. At: <http://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2013/06>.

⁶ Remarks by President Obama, 19 June 2013. At: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/06/19/remarks-president-obama-brandenburg-gate-berlin-germany>.

⁷ Malcolm Chalmers et al, (Eds.) *Small Nuclear Forces: Five Perspectives* (RUSI, London, 2011).

⁸ See, for example, Andrew O'Neill, "Extended Nuclear Deterrence in East Asia: Redundant or Resurgent?", *International Affairs* Vol. 87, No. 6 (2011).

responsibilities - do not believe that getting rid of their nuclear arsenal would necessarily be a smart idea.⁹ It seems that existing attitudes in the nuclear disarmament camp have been shaped more recently by the op-ed by the 2007 op-ed of the so-called four horsemen of the anti-apocalypse – former Secretary of State George Schultz, former Secretary of Defense William Perry, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and former Senator Sam Nunn.¹⁰ As Thomas Donnelly and David Trachtenberg point out, this is a backward looking “analysis”, based on Ronald Reagan’s dream of a nuclear-free world.¹¹ It would seem that the disarmament movement believes a “one size fits all” to extended deterrence approach is best. But this ignores the fundamental issue of *why* nuclear reductions are a good idea – is this a *strategically* sensible policy?

Historically, U.S. allies in the Asia Pacific have tended to be much less interested in the operational aspects of END than their European counterparts. Since 1952 Western Europe has been assured of the credibility of U.S. extended nuclear deterrence by the physical presence of U.S. sub-strategic nuclear weapons on European soil.¹² In the Asia Pacific, neither a multilateral defence alliance nor bilateral nuclear-sharing arrangements exist. In Asia, “assurance” as a critical component of the credibility of U.S. extended nuclear deterrence has not been tied to a visible presence of U.S. nuclear weapons. Such weapons were present in Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Taiwan, and the Philippines from around 1958. However, because there was no joint doctrine or nuclear sharing agreements, that presence was less “visible” than in Europe. As Brad Roberts has noted, the “traditional” extended deterrence model in East Asia has been one of “reach-back” capabilities, rather than forward-deployed systems.¹³ As the 2010 NPR Report states:

When the Cold War ended, the United States withdrew its forward-deployed nuclear weapons from the Pacific region, including removing nuclear weapons from naval surface vessels and general purpose submarines. Since then, it has relied on its central strategic forces and the capacity to redeploy non-strategic nuclear systems in East Asia, if needed, in times of crisis.¹⁴

Indeed, during the Cold War, neither Japan, South Korea, nor Australia were in the immediate firing line of a major armed conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, and so did not require a “direct” deterrent against Communist powers. Rather, nuclear deterrence worked in a more “gravitational” sense; U.S. nuclear weapons were “used” every day to lock in a pattern of strategic

⁹ See for example, Frank Klotz, “France Isn’t Aiming for Global Zero”, *The National Interest*. 8 May 2013. At: <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/france-isnt-aiming-nuclear-zero-8440>. For a sophisticated French analysis on the benefits of deterrence by nuclear weapons, see Bruno Tertrais, *In Defense of Deterrence: The Relevance, Morality and Cost-Effectiveness of Nuclear Weapons* (Institut Francais des Relations Internationales, Paris, 2011); Bruno Tertrais, “The Illogic of Zero,” *Washington Quarterly* vol. 33, No. 2 (2010).

¹⁰ George Schultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger and Sam Nunn, “A World Free of Nuclear Weapons”, *The Wall Street Journal*, 4 January 2007, p.A15.

¹¹ Thomas Donnelly and David Trachtenberg, *Toward a New “New Look”: U.S. Nuclear Strategy and Forces for the Third Atomic Age* (American Enterprise Institute, Washington, D.C., 2010) P.6.

¹² See, for example, General Lauris Norstad, USAF, Retired, testimony in *The Atlantic Alliance*, Hearings before the Subcommittee on National Security and International Operations, Committee on Government Operations, U.S. Senate, 89th Congress, 2nd Session, Part 2 (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1996), pp.69, 86.

¹³ Discussion cited by Rod Lyon, “The Challenges Confronting U.S. Extended Nuclear Deterrence in Asia”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 89, No.4, p.938.

¹⁴ United States Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) Report* (Department of Defense, Washington, D.C., 2010). p.32.

order, rather than to deter direct and immediate military threats. Nuclear weapons do not necessarily need to be used in a strictly tactical military sense in order to have strategic effect; they are also instruments of geopolitical ordering. Western Europe, which hosted various types of U.S. nuclear forces – some under a “dual-key” system¹⁵ – was a more valuable piece of real estate to both superpowers. As the front line starts to get closer to consumers of extended deterrence, the provider of that assurance is likely to face stronger pressures for more specific indications of support, i.e. closer basing of permanent facilities. U.S. assurances look a lot better if you have U.S. valuables on your territory: troops, weapons, bases and facilities. Europe, Japan, the ROK, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Thailand all realized this to varying extents during the Cold War. Agreements about operational control of U.S. nuclear weapons by allies also come into considerations about END. Under the NATO nuclear stockpile system the weapons would be transferred to the allies but SACEUR, and behind SACEUR, national authorities would have command over the weapons and their use. For example, the Federal Republic of Germany would have physical custody in wartime but would not be left to its devices. However, the fog of war always applies. During the 1960s the Japanese government allowed for U.S. nuclear-armed warships to be taken to bases in Okinawa in the case of an emergency. A secret joint communiqué dating from 1969 stated that:

It is the intention of the United States Government to remove all the nuclear weapons from Okinawa... However, in order to discharge effectively the international obligations assumed by the United States for the defence of countries in the Far East including Japan, in time of great emergency the United States Government will require the re-entry of nuclear weapons and transit rights in Okinawa with prior consultation with the Government of Japan.¹⁶

And as I detail in a forthcoming publication, such agreements existed even with Australia. In the mid-1960s, in discussing certain provisions of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and America’s willingness to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states, American officials admitted that the phrase “not engaged in armed attack assisted by a nuclear weapons state”, in operative terms, was open to interpretation. And that, “assistance” from a nuclear weapons state did not necessarily exclude the prior or previous supply of weapons.¹⁷ Indeed, this was in the context of Australian officials raising the issue of specific U.S. assurances of support in the hypothetical event of a conventional attack on Australia by a non-nuclear power. A delegation went to meet with Philip Farley, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Politico-Military affairs at the U.S. State Department. Farley stated that although the aggressor would be aware of U.S. reluctance to use nuclear weapons, that aggressor could not altogether discount the possibility that Washington would deploy its nuclear weapons in the defence of its allies.

¹⁵ For an interesting example of what that system sometimes looked like in Western Europe, see Leopoldo Nuti, *La Sfida Nucleare: La Politica Esterna Italiana e le Armi Atomiche, 1945-1991* (Il Mulino, Bologna, 2007).

¹⁶ “Secret Nuclear Deals Between Tokyo and Washington”, *AsiaNews*. 27 November 2009. At: <http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&art=16985>. See also, “Nuclear Noh Drama: Tokyo, Washington and the Case of the Missing Nuclear Agreements”, The National Security Archive, At: www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nukevault/ebb291/index.htm.

¹⁷ Inward Cablegram from Walker to the Minister, Australian Embassy in Washington D.C. 29 November 1967, in “Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons”, NAA: A1838, CS TS919/10/5 Part 1.

What the nuances of nuclear history demonstrate is that nuclear weapons have always been central pillars of America's alliances in Asia. It was just less obvious than in Western Europe. As the next section demonstrates, the importance allies attribute to the role of that capability is only increasing. It is the *nuclear* warhead that makes extended deterrence credible. There have been renewed efforts by the U.S. in the last few years to downplay the role of nuclear weapons in its national security policies. One notable example is the Conventional Prompt Global Strike (CPGS) program (although there is still strong opposition to this program within the U.S.), which would allow the United States to threaten adversaries with long-range ballistic missiles armed with conventional warheads in addition to such nuclear-armed missiles. The logic of this is to provide Washington with a wider range of conventional options where the use of nuclear weapons would otherwise be "inappropriate". This, presumably, would strengthen deterrence by giving the President a wider range of options in a given crisis.¹⁸ The U.S. Department of Defense first specified this new mission in 2003 under the Bush administration. However, allies have expressed scepticism about the argument that this capability obviates the need for nuclear weapons. Augmenting America's strategic nuclear forces are the prodigious conventional capabilities of the United States. They are the best in the world, but conventional forces cannot replace the unique deterrent and coercive roles of nuclear weapons for advancing the interests of the United States and providing for its security. Only nuclear forces provide a sufficient level of destruction with few forces in a short period of time. Even for the United States, it can take days, weeks, and even months to mobilise conventional forces—which are certain to be detected and countermeasures taken—for either deterrent or coercive purposes. The psychological impact, and scale, efficiency and rapidity of destruction made possible by nuclear weapons dwarf that of any conventional weapon (including CPGS). Moreover, the balance of resolve in likely crises with China over Taiwan, Paracels or Spratlys Islands, are more likely to favour Beijing than Washington. So nuclear weapons are essential for changing the balance in Washington's favour by a willingness to raise the stakes and risk nuclear confrontation. Precision-guided missiles are fine things, but they do not have quite the same "gravitational" effects of nuclear weapons – they do not significantly shift the policy boundaries the same way the threat of a nuclear strike does.¹⁹

¹⁸ For an overview of the debates surrounding CPGS, see Elaine Bunn and Vincent Manzo, "Conventional Prompt Global Strike: Strategic Asset or Unusable Liability?", *Strategic Forum*, Institute for National Strategic Studies, February 2011; Jonah Friedman, "The Case for Conventional Prompt Global Strike", 11 August 2011. Center for Strategic and International Studies. At: <http://csis.org/blog/case-conventional-prompt-global-strike>; Craig Whitlock, "U.S. Looks to Nonnuclear Weapons to Use as a Deterrent", *Washington Post*, 8 April 2010.

¹⁹ For an examination of this, see Robert Ayson and Christine M. Leah, "Missile Strategy in a Post-Nuclear World". Article under review, 2013.

The Shifting Strategic Context

U.S. extended nuclear deterrence was important to allies when Asia was in relative peace. With the transformations underway for the last decade, that security guarantee is only increasing in importance. In Asia today, great powers still engage in power balancing and hedging. Nationalism is still a potent force in foreign policy decision-making. States are modernising their militaries in a serious way, and the distribution of power is still in flux.²⁰ It is a place in the world where the use of armed force to resolve disputes is still considered acceptable.²¹ There are several major hotspots that have the potential to spark intense great power competition, including the Taiwan Straits, Kashmir, the South China Sea, the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands²², and the Korean Peninsula. Including the U.S. and Russian Federation, six out of the nine nuclear weapons states are located in Asia. The three major nations – Japan, China, and India, are rising *in tandem*. This is unprecedented in Asia's history, and provides fertile ground for potential conflict.

The technology wielded by the new Asian powers – ballistic and cruise missile, and their associated types of warheads, for example, have contracted military time and space. In contrast to slow-moving mass armies that might take days to reach a battlefield, the continuous expansion and improvement in air, naval and missile capabilities further contracts the strategic geography between Asian states.²³ Nuclear weapons in the region are but one element of broader transformations that have taken place in the geopolitical landscape over the last fifty or so years. These elements illustrate the fact that the dish does not run away with the spoon; hypothetically, even if you remove nuclear weapons from the equation, the problems of strategy still stay, and they might actually become *even more* complicated without the nuclear ceiling. These are addressed further on, but first this section canvasses the enduring importance of nuclear weapons to Washington's allies in the region.

However, increasing concern over perceptions of Chinese military build-up have led to a marked new interest in the perceived role that nuclear weapons can play in contributing to national security and regional stability. America's Northeast Asian allies have started to look deeply into the potential lessons to be learnt from NATO's experience. Japanese and South Korean policymakers increasingly refer to "extended deterrence" rather than the more vague idea of a "nuclear

²⁰ See for example, remarks by Dr Tim Huxley, *Naval Enhancement: How to Build Regional Confidence*. Council for Security Cooperation General Conference, Hanoi, November 2011; Richard A. Bitzinger, "East Asian Arms Acquisitions Activities, 2011-2012", *CSCAP Regional Security Outlook 2012* (Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific) (forthcoming, 2012).

²¹ See, for example, Department of Defense, *Australia's National Security: A Defense Update 2007* (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 2007); Hugh White, "Australian Defense Policy and the Possibility of War", *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (2002); Paul Dibb, *Australia's Strategic Outlook 2017-2027*. Speech given at the Australian Defense Magazine Conference, 22 February 2007.

²² See for example, Wendell Minnick, "As Bickering Continues Over Disputed Islands, Experts Plot Five Likely Scenarios", *Defense News*, 24 September 2012, p.32; Wendell Minnick, "Island Group Dispute Could Spark Conflict", *Defense News*, 24 September 2012, p.6; "Japanese, U.S. Troops Mull Drill to Take Island: Reports", *Defense News*, 14 October 2012, at: <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20121014/DEFREG03/310140004/Japanese-U-S-Troops-Mull-Drill-Take-Island-Reports?odyssey=tab|topnews|text|FRONTPAGE>.

²³ Paul Bracken, , *Fire in the East: The Rise of Asian Military Power and the Second Nuclear Age* (Harper Collins, New York, 1999).

umbrella”.²⁴ Both the U.S.-ROK Extended Deterrence Policy Committee (EDPC) and the U.S.-Japan Extended Deterrence Dialogue were established after the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review. The broad purpose of these bodies is to provide transparency and reassurance that U.S. extended deterrence is credible and enduring. Japan has become increasingly concerned about the strength of its alliance with the United States. These concerns relate to U.S. grand strategy more generally, but have also specifically centred on the ability of the superpower to overcome China’s anti-access/area-denial capabilities, and U.S. support in the event of specific contingencies involving the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea. Japanese analysts have also expressed in private discussions that the number of U.S. weapons matters to the effectiveness of END, and that reductions need to have reference to targeting choices. On that point, it is interesting to note that the report by the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments on Air-Sea Battle does not discuss how nuclear weapons could come into play.

Military bases in Guam and in other countries in Asia and the Pacific, or U.S. ships, especially aircraft carriers, are inviting targets for the Chinese military. U.S. nuclear capabilities play an important role in deterring such attacks, and will become more important as China continues to develop *sha shou jian*, or “assassin’s mace,” capabilities which target U.S. military vulnerabilities.²⁵ China is on the verge of having a credible sea-based nuclear capability, with five submarines capable of launching Julang-2 nuclear-armed missiles with a range of several thousand kilometres, by about 2015. Chinese military thought includes nuclear weapons as part of the assassin’s mace suite of weaponry which suggests that the Chinese do not see nuclear weapons as solely a small, minimal deterrent but as useable forces to be employed at the right time against the United States.

The growth of Chinese capabilities poses a challenge to the ability of the United States to maintain a credible extended deterrent as its own deployed strategic arsenal is reduced from about 10,000 deployed strategy systems in 1989 to 1,550 today. In addition, these numbers reveal a change in the relative balance of power in the region, the relative growth in the Chinese capabilities versus the United States. While the U.S. is in a superior absolute position, China has been closing the gap in capabilities. Accordingly, while Chinese nuclear capabilities are not presently a significant challenge to U.S. END, further nuclear reductions coupled with a the continuing build-up of Chinese nuclear and conventional capabilities are slowly but inexorably undermining the credibility of Washington’s security guarantees in East Asia.

Chinese nuclear and conventional forces are increasing. And Beijing does not need to defeat American forces — that is not the relevant measure of how capable Chinese military forces are. What Beijing needs to do is threaten a credible strike against U.S. forces that Washington is not likely to accept. For example, there are reports that the leadership is moving mobile land-based

²⁴ “Extended Deterrence for S. Korea Admits North Korea’s de facto Status as a Nuclear State”, *The Hankyoreh*, 18 June 2009. At: http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/361104.html.

²⁵ Mark Schneider, *The Nuclear Doctrine and Forces of the People’s Republic of China*, National Institute of Public Policy, November 2007, available at <http://www.nipp.org/National%20Institute%20Press/Current%20Publications/PDF/China%20nuclear%20final%20pub.pdf>; “Power Posturing: China’s Tactical Nuclear Stance Comes of Age”, *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, 10 August 2010.

ballistic missiles, including its DF-16, closer range to the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands with Japan.²⁶ These would be capable of hitting a variety of important U.S. military installations in the area. A second problem is short, medium and intermediate-range missiles. China is reported to have a number of cruise missiles, including the DH-10 land attack cruise missile. According to U.S. estimates, China has roughly 1,000-1,200 short-range ballistic missiles, 75-100 medium-range missiles, 5-20 intermediate-range missiles, and 50-75 ICBMs, all of which may or may not be nuclear-armed.²⁷ The assessment of the Defence Intelligence Agency is that China's nuclear arsenal consists of roughly 50-75 ICBMs, including the silo-based DF-5, the road-mobile DF-31 and DF31-A, and the DF-3.²⁸ China is also reported to be on the verge of beginning its first ever series of nuclear deterrence patrols with a new class of strategic missile submarines, the JL-2.²⁹ These forces provide Beijing with more options at lower levels of the escalation ladder, and could thus deter U.S. action or support for U.S. actions by its allies due to local conventional superiority.

An American study in 2008 noted that: "The worst-case scenario... is that increase in Chinese capabilities and decrease in U.S. capabilities may lead the United States to conclude a bilateral arms control agreement with Beijing that endorses protection of a Chinese limited nuclear strike capability against the United States, with a decoupling effect that would be devastating for Japan".³⁰ As a former Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs official has argued, "the conventional superiority advantage is critical, because it obviates the whole debate about whether or not Washington would 'sacrifice Los Angeles to save Tokyo' in a nuclear exchange".³¹ In private forums, Japanese analysts have expressed wariness about Washington declaring a "sole purpose" for America's nuclear arsenal. One of the fears behind this wariness is that a resurgent Russia that might establish a much stronger military presence in its East – the use of which might need to be deterred with a nuclear capability.³² These officials point out that adversaries can underestimate the power of conventional forces, and that nuclear weapons must have a central role in any East Asia regional deterrence architecture. There are other signs in Japan indicating a declining faith in U.S. reliability generally. The AN/FLR-9 circularly disposed antenna array (CDAA) is part of U.S. global signals intelligence system. The U.S. has one stationed near Camp Hansen, in Okinawa, and is functionally equivalent to the new Japanese CDAA at Kikai-jima. They are both primarily concerned with Chinese signals, and geographically and technically are essentially duplicative. These large CDAAs have a reception radius out to more than 5,000 km. The Camp Hansen station is supposedly shared

²⁶ See Bill Gertz, "China Reveals New Short Range Missile". *Washington Free Beacon*. At: <http://freebeacon.com/china-reveals-new-short-range-missile/>; Japanese Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2012*. Available at: http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/2012.html.

²⁷ United States Department of Defense Annual Report to Congress, 2011. The latest report omits developments for the year 2013. <<http://blogs.fas.org/security/2013/05/china2013/>>.

²⁸ See the Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on future worldwide threats to the United States. 18 April 2013. At: <<http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/hearings/event.cfm?eventid=052851746b505e3d7e344bb7d2a69fb3>>.

²⁹ Bill Gertz, "Red Tide: China Deploys New Class of Strategic Missile Submarines Next Year", *The Washington Times*, 23 July 2013. At: <<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/jul/23/china-deploy-new-strategic-missile-class-submarine/?page=all>>.

³⁰ Michael J. Green and Katsuhisa Furukawa, "Japan: New Nuclear Realism", in Muthiah Alagappa (Ed.), *The Long Shadow: Nuclear Weapons and Security in 21st Century Asia* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2008), pp.354-355.

³¹ See James L. Schoff, interview with former Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs official, 30 July 2007. James L. Schoff, *Realigning Priorities*, p.31.

³² Private discussion with analysts from the Japanese Institute of International Affairs, September 2010.

with the Japan Self Defense Forces/Japan Ministry of Defense, in any case. There is simply no need for two of them so near each other, except for an evident Japanese need to have its own independent capability.³³

South Korea is increasingly vocal about the desirability of a nuclear weapons option. According to two recent polls (taken by the Asan Institute for Policy Studies and Gallup Korea), nearly two thirds of South Koreans support nuclear weapons, preferably under South Korean control.³⁴ South Koreans have expressed additional concern over the increasing “conventionalisation” of America’s military presence, as the foundation of its primacy in the region. Some analysts argue that greater reliance on conventional missiles and missile defence would weaken U.S. deterrence, and consequently, U.S. extended deterrence.³⁵ More recently, the *JoongAng Daily*, a major South Korean newspaper, provided an op-ed which expressed deep concern about the credibility of END.³⁶ According to another report, a prominent member of the Japanese parliament, Shintaro Ishihara, has openly stated that Japan should have nuclear weapons to counter China, North Korea, and even Russia.³⁷ Speaking at the 2013 Carnegie Nuclear Policy Conference, senior South Korean politician Chung Mong-joon said that South Korea may exercise the right to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as stipulated in article 10 of the Treaty.³⁸ He is also on the record saying: “[In 2011] I proposed the re-introduction of tactical nuclear weapons because the threat of a counter-nuclear force is the only thing that will discourage North Korea from developing its own nuclear arsenal... some say the only way to solve the North Korean nuclear problem is for the nation to follow the India-Pakistan example, or the case of Israel”.³⁹ Some South Koreans have expressed interest in the option of deploying U.S. tactical nuclear weapons on South Korean soil, arguing that it would prevent the North from “miscalculating” the benefits of future missile testing. For example, Jeon Seong-hoon has argued that: “As North Korea’s nuclear capability increases, the effectiveness of the U.S. nuclear umbrella could decrease. In that context, I believe, the redeployment of USFK’s tactical nuclear weapons, at least on a temporary basis, could be the best option”.⁴⁰ A South Korean military official responded that: “Redeployment of air-launched tactical nuclear weapons does not violate the 1991 agreement.... If there were 10 tactical nuclear weapons in the South, North Korea’s nuclear threat could easily be neutralised.”⁴¹ But U.S. policymakers have so far dismissed that option. For example, a U.S. State Department official stated in 2011 that: “We have no plan, we have no intention to deploy U.S. tactical or other nuclear weapons in South

³³ Correspondence with Professor Desmond Ball, 18 August 2013.

³⁴ “More South Koreans Support Developing Nuclear Weapons”, *The Los Angeles Times*, 18 May 2013. At: <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/may/18/world/la-fg-south-korea-nuclear-20130519>.

³⁵ See for example, Hyun-Wook Kim, *Nuclear Posture Review and its implications on the Korean Peninsula*, Center for U.S.-Korea Policy, Vol.2, No.5 (2010).

³⁶ “Re-examining Our Nuclear Defense”, *The JoongAng Daily*, 13 February 2013. At: <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2967105>.

³⁷ “Rising Voices in S. Korea, Japan Advocate Nuclear Weapons”, *Voice of America News*, 15 February 2013. At: <http://www.voanews.com/content/rising-voices-in-south-korea-japan-advocate-nuclear-weapons/1604309.html>.

³⁸ “S. Korea Should Weigh Departure from NPT, Lawmaker Says”, *Yonhap News*, 10 April 2014. At: <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2013/04/10/91/0401000000AEN20130410000700315F.HTML>.

³⁹ “U.S. Nuke Umbrella Not Enough”, *Korea Times*, 19 February 2013. At: http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2013/02/120_130747.html.

⁴⁰ Jeon Seong-hoon, “Extended Deterrence for S. Korea Admits North Korea’s de facto Status as a Nuclear State,” *The Hankyoreh*, 18 June 2009. At: http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/361104.html.

⁴¹ “U.S. Nuclear Umbrella: Double-Edged Sword for S. Korea,” *The Korea Times*, 24 June 2009. http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2009/06/120_47427.html.

Korea. Moreover, we don't believe there is any military need to do so."⁴² However, the White House coordinator for arms control and weapons of mass destruction, Gary Samore, stated in 2011 that the U.S. government would comply if Seoul made a formal request for such reassurance. He emphasised that it was natural for the U.S. to accept a request made by a key ally.⁴³ But some within the American defence establishment express reservations about a more physical nuclear presence in East Asia. Speaking about the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea, an Army commanding general stated: "Realistically, it's impossible and not feasible. Politically, such a move would face severe opposition from China".⁴⁴ The possibility remains, however, that the United States would be ready to redeploy tactical nuclear weapons to the Asia Pacific and ask regional allies to host such weapons. This request from the House Armed Services Committee was added to the 2013 *National Defense Authorisation Act* in June 2012.

Even Australia, which is not *directly* in the firing line of a potential conflict between major Asian powers⁴⁵, has historically had a keen interest in a credible U.S. END posture, even if that security guarantee has sometimes been a vague, distant and multi-layered phenomenon.⁴⁶ Some senior officials in Canberra find it difficult to see how CPGS could replace the unique role that nuclear weapons play in deterrence. For them, there is not much substance to a purely conventional deterrent posture, and there are concerns about a U.S. arsenal that numbers below 1,000 readily-deployable warheads.⁴⁷ For Australia, Japan, and South Korea, one of the essential pillars of any credible American guarantee is maintaining nuclear "superiority" (that definition is still under debate). Some South Koreans have expressed additional concern over the increasing "conventionalisation" of America's military presence, as the foundation of its primacy in the region. Some analysts argue that greater reliance on conventional missiles and missile defence would weaken U.S. deterrence, and consequently, U.S. extended deterrence.⁴⁸ But conventional superiority goes hand in hand with that nuclear edge. A certain level of conventional capabilities and regional deployment of tactical nuclear capabilities are needed in order to prevent a faster escalation to the nuclear level.⁴⁹ This is a well-known tenet of nuclear doctrine, rather than

⁴² Remarks by U.S. State Department's special adviser for non-proliferation and arms control Robert Einhorn. Discussion with Wi Sung-Lac, South Korean chief envoy to six party talks. See "U.S. Seeks U.N. Statement on N. Korea Nuclear Programme," *AFP Newswires*, 2 March 2011.

⁴³ Remarks made by White House coordinator for arms control and weapons of mass destruction, proliferation, and terrorism Gary Samore, *Korea JoongAng Daily*, 1 March 2011.
<http://joongangdaily.joins.com/article/view.asp?aid=2932857>.

⁴⁴ "U.S. Nuclear Umbrella: Double-Edged Sword for S. Korea," *The Korea Times*, 24 June 2009.
http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2009/06/120_47427.html.

⁴⁵ For a more recent debate on this, see Cameron Hawker, "Stuck in the Middle With You: Pine Gap and Australia's Strategic Choices". Australian Strategic Policy Institute Blog. 23 October 2012. At:
<http://www.aspistrategist.org.au/stuck-in-the-middle-with-you-pine-gap-and-australias-strategic-choices/>

⁴⁶ Christine M. Leah, *Australia and Nuclear Strategy*. Unpublished PhD thesis (Australian National University, Canberra, 2012); Christine M. Leah; U.S. Extended Nuclear Deterrence and Nuclear Order: An Australian Perspective", *Asian Security* Vol. 8, No.2 (2012).

⁴⁷ Discussion with former Senior official A in the Australian Department of Defence, Canberra, 9 August 2012; Discussions with senior official B in the Australian Department of Defence, Canberra, 21 September 2012.

⁴⁸ See for example, Bradley A. Thayer, "Nuclear Weapons Cuts Diminish U.S. Power", *Defense News*, 18 March 2012. At: <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20120318/DEFEEAT05/303180005/Nuclear-Weapons-Cuts-Diminish-U-S-Power>; Hyun-Wook Kim, *Nuclear Posture Review and its implications on the Korean Peninsula*, Center for U.S.-Korea Policy, Vol.2, No.5 (2010).

⁴⁹ For a discussion of this in the Asia-Pacific maritime context, see Bradley A. Thayer and Christine M. Leah, "The Return of Nuclear Strategy in the Asia-Pacific", unpublished paper, 2013.

something that is nice to have. END in Europe – with NATO conventionally weaker – was more of a struggle.

In a recent piece, Wade Huntley writes that allied sensitivity to U.S. regional defence spending and force presence may be independent of the numerical level of the U.S. arsenal.⁵⁰ This, however, misses the critical point addressed earlier – allies including Japan were not obvious targets during the Soviet-U.S. rivalry. Historically, the main threat/potential threat was the Soviet Union, not China. In addition, today the United States has to contend with a more multi-polar nuclear world that is much less “organised” according to East-West blocs. All these elements demonstrate how the perceived role of nuclear weapons in Asian great power strategic relations, and indeed extended *nuclear* deterrence itself, are actually growing. This, of course, raises the question of what U.S. extended deterrence should actually look like.

As I discuss further on, it is probably true that Washington will not need the same nuclear capabilities in East Asia to deter a potential adversary as it did during the Cold War. However, since END remains an important concept to U.S. allies, it needs to be adapted and defined according to unique regional circumstances. It thus seems worthwhile to remember the scholarship of Albert Wohlstetter – a deterrent needs to be more or less specified if it is to be credible. In 1958 he identified six hurdles for successful deterrence.⁵¹ These were:

1. Achieving a stable peace time operation. This means having a robust system of controls over the dispersal and movement of the arsenal.
2. Surviving an enemy offense.
3. The ability to make a decision to retaliate and the ability to communicate that decision.
4. The ability to reach enemy territory with enough logistical support (e.g. having sufficient fuel).
5. Overcoming an enemy's long-range interceptors and missile defences.
6. The ability to actually destroy the target(s).

His argument was that deterrence was far from being “automatic”. His work paved the way for much more refined thinking about organising U.S. nuclear posture back in the late 1950s.⁵² This thinking, in turn, would lead to concepts designed to make *extended* deterrence much more credible and minimise the incentives for states such as West Germany⁵³ to acquire their own nuclear weapons.

⁵⁰ Wade L. Huntley, “Speed Bump on the Road to Global Zero: U.S. Nuclear Reductions and Extended Deterrence in East Asia”, *Nonproliferation Review*, Vol.20, No.2, p.314. For a much more detailed historical analysis of Japan's relationship with U.S. troop deployments and Japanese perceptions of extended deterrence, see Alexander Lanoszka, *Protection States Trust?: Major Power Patronage, Nuclear Behavior, and Alliance Dynamics* (PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2013).

⁵¹ Albert Wohlstetter, *The Delicate Balance of Terror*, RAND Document P-1472, 6 November 1958.

⁵² Desmond Ball, *Politics and Force Levels: The Strategic Missile Program of the Kennedy Administration* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1980), pp.38-40, 182-186.

⁵³ For some excellent new work on the dynamics and operational aspects of U.S. extended nuclear deterrence, see for example Leopoldo Nuti, *La Sfida Nucleare: La Politica Esterna Italiana e le Armi Atomiche, 1945-1991* (Il Mulino, Bologna, 2007); Alexander Lanoszka, *Protection States Trust?: Major Power Patronage, Nuclear Behavior, and Alliance Dynamics* (PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2013); Andreas Lutsch, *The Federal Republic of Germany's Nuclear Security Policy Between the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the NATO Dual Track Decision* (PhD Dissertation, University of Mainz, 2013); Andreas Lutsch, *Inevitable But Highly Controversial? The*

And that is what is needed today – an extended nuclear deterrent based on articulated concepts and forces designated for various tasks.⁵⁴ Articulating a relatively more explicit END posture assumes, of course, the existence of a direct adversary. And that is harder to discuss publicly in the present circumstances, although some analysts are more vocal on the issue. As Elbridge Colby astutely summarises:

The likely size and sophistication of China's future military is such that it will very likely be able to overcome and ultimately overwhelm the defensive capabilities of our allies in the region—that's a big part of the reason why our allies are so insistent that we stick around. [According to other analysts], then, these allies would be exposed to Chinese air, naval, and missile attack, and perhaps more, without the chance of destroying or suppressing those sources of attack and without hope of real U.S. military intervention on their behalf. It's not at all clear why U.S. allies and partners would regard this as credible or sufficient—with serious implications for how they would decide to behave in terms of their dealings with China and their own military-strategic courses of action. Kowtowing or, at the other extreme, pursuing independent nuclear-weapons programs, might make more sense than a military posture of waiting for the Americans à la Britain 1940.⁵⁵

Problems Generated by a Smaller U.S. Nuclear Arsenal

A varied U.S. arsenal provides Washington with options.⁵⁶ A *credible* END posture also reassures allies that would otherwise be substantially more tempted to acquire their own nuclear deterrent. In the 1950s, the unwillingness of the Eisenhower administration to use nuclear weapons to support French interests in Indochina encouraged France to start a nuclear weapons program.⁵⁷ The same concerns in Canberra about Washington's unwillingness to support Australia's ambitions in Southeast Asia and even to defend the antipodean continent itself was one factor that encouraged Australia to pursue a nuclear capability from the 1950s until the early 1970s.⁵⁸ There is a long and complex history there, but even today Australia "relies" on U.S. END for its ultimate security. The 2000 Australian Defence White Paper, for example, stated that:

We believe that, if Australia were attacked, the United States would provide substantial help, including with armed force. We would seek and welcome such help. But we will not depend

Accession of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) to the NPT (1967-1975). Paper presented to the 2013 SHAFR annual conference. April 2013.

⁵⁴ For an evaluation of current U.S. END posture in the Asia Pacific, see Christine M. Leah and Bradley A. Thayer, "The Return of Nuclear Strategy in the Asia-Pacific". Unpublished paper, 2013.

⁵⁵ Elbridge Colby, "Don't Sweat AirSea Battle" *The National Interest* 31 July 2013. At: <http://nationalinterest.org/print/commentary/dont-sweat-airsea-battle-8804>.

⁵⁶ Keir A Lieber and Daryl G Press, "The Nukes We Need: Preserving the American Deterrent", *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2009); William Kaufmann, "The Requirements of Deterrence". In William Kaufmann, *Military Policy and National Security* (Ed.) (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1956).

⁵⁷ For an overview of this, see Avery Goldstein, *Deterrence and Security in the 21st Century: China, Britain, France, and the Enduring Legacy of the Nuclear Proliferation* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2000).

⁵⁸ See, for example, Jim Walsh, "Surprise Down Under: The Secret History of Australia's Nuclear Ambitions", *The Nonproliferation Review* (Fall 1997), Christine M. Leah, *Australia and Nuclear Strategy*. Unpublished PhD thesis (Australian National University, Canberra, 2012).

on it to the extent of assuming that U.S. combat forces would be provided to make up for any deficiencies in our capabilities to defend our territory... For that reason, self-reliance will remain an inherent part of our alliance policy. There is one important exception to this principle of self-reliance. Australia relies on the extended deterrence provided by U.S. nuclear forces to deter the remote possibility of any nuclear attack on Australia.⁵⁹

It is worth noting here that the document specifically refers to U.S. nuclear *forces*, not U.S. *policy*.⁶⁰

A U.S. arsenal smaller than 1,000 warheads would generate significant unease about END credibility. As I argue in another piece with Bradley Thayer, escalation control remains a critical component of that security guarantee.⁶¹ And the ability and willingness to “fight” a nuclear war, both limited and full-scale, falls into that logic. Escalation is the ability to take moves to raise the stakes of a conflict; to expand a conflict in scope and intensity. As a RAND study in 2008 described:

It is a fundamental dynamic in which adversaries engaged in a contest for limited objectives increase the force or breadth of their attacks to gain advantage or avoid defeat. Escalation can be unilateral, but actions perceived as escalatory often provoke other combatants to increase their own efforts, either to punish the earlier escalation or to counter its advantages. Left unchecked, cycles of provocation and counter-provocation can intensify until the cost each combatant incurs exceeds the value of its original stakes in the conflict.⁶²

In the nuclear era, this includes the possibility of a conflict crossing the nuclear threshold; there comes a point where one state believes it is necessary to use nuclear weapons, presumably because it has run out of options in the conventional sphere. As Raymond Aron wrote:

Every nuclear power must be capable of raising the atomic threshold – that is, it must acquire a certain defensive capability – because lacking one, it may eventually find itself confronted by a choice between suicide and surrender, a choice that constitutes the inexorable result of blind reliance on a threat whose credibility is constantly declining.⁶³

In private discussions, Japanese and Australian analysts are uncomfortable with an inflexible posture that does not allow for options. Although perhaps in a world where there are much fewer nuclear weapons and neither “side” is no longer to threaten complete destruction of the other (on the scale imagined during the Cold War, at least), then a nuclear exchange would be relatively less devastating and thus not as inconceivable. Still, the United States always had the burden of proof in demonstrating its commitment to allies by forward deploying various forms of military contingents

⁵⁹ Australian Department of Defence, *Defence 2000: Our Future Defence Force*, (Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 2000), pp.35-36.

⁶⁰ The author is grateful to Hugh White for pointing this out.

⁶¹ “The Return of Nuclear Strategy in the Asia-Pacific”, unpublished paper, 2013.

⁶² Forrest Morgan, Karl Mueller, Evan Medeiros, Kevin Pollpeter and Roger Cliff, *Dangerous Thresholds: Managing Escalation in the 21st Century* (RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, 2008), p.1.

⁶³ Raymond Aron, *The Great Debate: Theories of Nuclear Strategy* (Doubleday Anchor, New York, 1965), p.90.

around the world, including shorter-range nuclear weapons when its ability to win a potential conflict by conventional means came into question.

Another problem is the number of extended deterrence commitments. Simple mathematics shows that maintaining security guarantees becomes more problematic as the number of actors within a deterrence matrix grows.⁶⁴ The U.S. has over thirty extended (nuclear) deterrent commitments around the world.⁶⁵ As Rod Lyon has recently pointed out, if Washington ever gets to what some have proposed⁶⁶ as an arsenal of merely 300 warheads, that only leaves about eight warheads per extended nuclear assurance.⁶⁷ This is a very good point, but misses the broader problem: arguably you need many more warheads for some theatres more than others – END is not something one “distributes” equally. There would be different escalation ladders in each region. As Rebecca Heinrichs and Baker Spring recently note, a smaller U.S. arsenal would place additional stress on the more specific deterrence tasks the arsenal is supposed to accomplish, and push it to a more counter-value based arsenal.⁶⁸ The need to also protect allies would exacerbate that problem and undermine the credibility of extended deterrence. Indeed, a nuclear strategy that threatens cities, rather than military targets, is less credible because it undermines the whole idea of damage limitation, and therefore escalation control. A strategy with a focus on destroying cities means a state will have fewer nuclear weapons left over to destroy enemy missiles. As a result, the smaller the number of nuclear missiles the state has left for the enemy to target, the more civilian targets the adversary is likely to focus on, themselves.⁶⁹ While we no longer have to deal with the issue of targeting the thousands of warheads wielded by the Soviet Union, the principle itself remains relevant. As Matthew Kroenig has also recently commented:

Even if Russia agrees to match the president's proposed cuts, the nuclear reductions would attenuate our advantages vis-à-vis Russia and eat into our margin of superiority against other nuclear-armed states, such as China, possibly increasing the likelihood that the United States

⁶⁴ Aaron Karp, “The New Indeterminacy of Deterrence and Missile Defence”, *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 25, No.1, (2004). According to David Gompert, “a global network of deterrence relationships, stable in theory, would be fraught with ambiguities and doubts in practice”. David Gompert, “On the Choice of a Nuclear Future”, in David Gompert (Ed.), *Nuclear Weapons and World Politics: Alternatives for the Future* (McGraw Hill, New York, 1977). See also Arthur Lee Burns, “From Balance to Deterrence: A Theoretical Analysis”, *World Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (July 1957), pp. 494-529.

⁶⁵ James R. Schlesinger et al. *Report of the Secretary of Defense Task Force on DoD Nuclear Weapons Management, Phase II: Review of the DoD Nuclear Mission* (Washington, D.C., 2008) At: <http://www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/PhaseIIReportFinal.pdf>. P. iv.

⁶⁶ “Obama to Consider Deep Reductions to Launch-Ready Nuclear Force”, *Nuclear Threat Initiative Global Security Newswire*, 15 February 2012. At: <http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/obama-consider-deep-reductions-launch-ready-nuclear-force/>

⁶⁷ Rod Lyon, “The Challenges Confronting U.S. Extended Nuclear Deterrence in Asia”, p.939.

⁶⁸ Rebecca Heinrichs and Baker Spring, *Deterrence and Nuclear Targeting in the 21st Century*. Heritage Foundation, 30 November 2012. At: <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/11/deterrence-and-nuclear-targeting-in-the-21st-century>.

⁶⁹ For a more comprehensive overview of this argument presented by Desmond Ball and others, see Desmond Ball, “PD-59: A Strategic Critique”, *Public Interest Report, Journal of the Federation of American Scientists*, Vol. 33, No.8 (October 1980), pp.4-5; Desmond Ball, “U.S. Strategic Concepts and Programs: The Historical Context”, in Samuel F. Wells, Jr. and Robert S. Litwak (Eds.), *Strategic Defenses and Soviet-American Relations* (Ballinger Publishing Company, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1987 pp.6-8.

will be challenged militarily and reducing the probability that we achieve our goals in future crises.⁷⁰

There is a bigger point here - the strategic “effects” of nuclear weapons are neither easily discernible nor quantifiable. Nor should they necessarily be. In the 1960s, when asked about numbers decided by the Kennedy administration, McNamara cited the need to retain a “surplus” (without giving specific numbers) to defend Western allies.⁷¹

Even with a smaller nuclear arsenal, the United States still has to demonstrate its commitment to defending its allies, and that means a strong build-up of conventional forces in the Pacific which is in fact no less provocative. And there is actually little evidence to show that moves towards nuclear reductions by the United States and Russia is making the Asia Pacific any more peaceful. If anything, the region is becoming *less* peaceful. That is not necessarily a “direct” consequence of U.S. nuclear reductions, but doubts about American resolve are certainly pushing allies to think more seriously about how to achieve defence self-reliance. Another example of this is growing concerns in both China and the U.S. about Japan’s ambitions for its military forces.⁷²

It is unlikely that the U.S. would have been so willing or able to enter into its global alliances without possessing the bomb. Nuclear weapons contract time and space; they “connect” allies (especially those in far-away lands such as Australia) in a way that was not possible before without forward deploying substantial conventional forces to the ally’s territory – a costly exercise. Part of the reason the British extended deterrent to Poland failed in 1939 was because Britain did not have sufficient forward-deployed offensive capabilities to deter the Third Reich from moving westwards. In a more “conventional” world, commitments need to be much more explicit and “tangible” in order to appear credible. That becomes more difficult and costly for the protector state according to the geography between it and its protégé. Relatively less effort is needed when nuclear weapons are involved. The real source of deterrence and by virtue, geopolitical ordering, then, is not long-range precision strike weaponry, but the speed of delivery and destructiveness of nuclear weapons themselves.

There are also significant challenges to sustaining a substantial military force in the Pacific. According to a recent assessment, approximately 325,000 U.S. military and civilian personnel are currently

⁷⁰ Matthew Kroenig, “The Case for Overkill”, *Foreign Policy*, 19 June 2013. At: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/06/19/the_case_for_overkill?utm_source=IGCC+Nuclear+Newswire+June+21%2C+2013&utm_campaign=Nuclear+Newswire&utm_medium=email. See also comments by Keith B. Payne, “How Much is Enough?: A Goal-Driven Approach to Defining Key Principles”. National Institute for Public Policy. 2009. P.5 At: http://www.lanl.gov/conferences/sw/2009/docs/payne_livermore-2.pdf.

⁷¹ Comments by Robert McNamara, in Desmond Ball, *Politics and Force Levels: The Strategic Missile Program of the Kennedy Administration* (University of California Press, California, 1980), p.184.

⁷² See for example, “Japan Unveils Largest Warship Since World War II”, *Associated Press*, 6 August 2013. At: <http://news.yahoo.com/japan-unveils-largest-warship-since-130234811.html>; “Japan and China Step Up Drone Race as Tension Builds over Disputed Islands”, *The Guardian* 9 January 2013. At: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jan/08/china-japan-drone-race>; “There’s an Arms Race Going on in Asia Unlike Anything Since the Cold War”, *Business Insider*, 9 January 2013. At: <http://www.businessinsider.com/arms-race-in-asia-2013-1>; See for example, remarks by Dr Tim Huxley, *Naval Enhancement: How to Build Regional Confidence*. Council for Security Cooperation General Conference, Hanoi, November 2011; Richard A. Bitzinger, “East Asian Arms Acquisitions Activities, 2011-2012”, *CSCAP Regional Security Outlook 2012* (Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific, 2012).

assigned to Pacific Command (PACOM). About 40,000 are based in Japan, 28,500 in South Korea, 40,000 in Hawaii, and 5,000 in Guam. PACOM's current forces include: U.S. Pacific Fleet, which hosts a forward-deployed aircraft carrier strike group in Japan, and includes 180 ships and approximately 2,000 aircraft, and the Air Force component command with more than 300 aircraft (the command is also supported by the 5th, 7th, 11th, and 13th Air Forces).⁷³ As of July 2013, the U.S. has 14 strategic missile submarines, 54 attack submarines, 4 cruise missile submarines, 10 aircraft carriers, 30 amphibious assault ships, 22 cruisers, 62 destroyers, 17 frigates, and 13 mine warfare vessels.⁷⁴ The U.S. rebalance to the Asia Pacific will lead to sixty per cent of these vessels to be home-ported in the Pacific, compared to fifty per cent today. This has included Littoral Combat Ships being deployed to Singapore waters in April 2013, with four announced to arrive by 2017. An additional nuclear attack submarine will also be deployed to Guam, bringing the total to four. Today, roughly 330,000 U.S. civilian and military personnel serve under United States Pacific Command (PACOM). This combatant command includes a force of roughly 180 ships (including five aircraft carrier strike groups) and nearly 2,000 aircraft.⁷⁵ Still, these forces face significant strategic and logistical challenges in overcoming the tyranny of maritime geography, in the event of a conflict with one or more major players in the region.⁷⁶

At the same time that strategic geography between potential players in a conflict contracts, the distance between the U.S. and its allies only grows. Europe was, and remains, one single geostrategic entity connected by land. In the Asia Pacific, Japan, South Korea, Australia and Taiwan are more dispersed and further away from each other, with neutral and non-aligned states dotted here and there in between. In a major power confrontation, issues of navigation rights and use of airspace would become the subject of much heated debate. Unless the U.S. establishes permanent bases on allied territory, it is not clear that the American military would be able to adequately deploy replacement capabilities on short notice if some of its ships/aircraft carriers were destroyed by an adversary's forces. The importance of permanent bases *à l'Européenne* becomes more apparent when one considers the geographic setting, which has several important consequences. First, the inability to concentrate large numbers of strike aircraft other than on aircraft carriers (which are limited in number anyway), substantially reduces sortie rates. Second, a lack of bases, as noted earlier, greatly increases the demands and stress on an aerial fleet and the logistics involved in keeping U.S. forces adequately supplied. It also makes for significantly longer ship and submarine transit times to and from more distant resupply points.⁷⁷ All these factors significantly increase the vulnerability of

⁷³ For a more detailed assessment of PACOM forces, see *U.S. Force Posture Strategy in the Asia-Pacific Region: An Independent Assessment* (Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C., 2010).

⁷⁴ "United States", *Jane's World Navies*, 24 July 2013.

⁷⁵ For a detailed breakdown of PACOM forces, see David J. Berteau and Michael J. Green (Eds.) *U.S. Force Posture Strategy in the Asia Pacific Region: An Independent Assessment* (Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C., 2012).

⁷⁶ For an overview of these, see Paul McLeary, "U.S. Pacific Shift Has Logistics Price Tag", *DefenseNews*, 17 July 2013. At: <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130717/DEFREG02/307170022/Special-Report-Military-Logistics>; "MEUs Offer Insight Into Pacific Supply Challenges", *Marine Corps Times*, 22 June 2013. At: <http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/article/20130622/NEWS/306220009/MEUs-offer-insight-into-Pacific-supply-challenges>

⁷⁷ Jan Van Tol, Mark Gunzinger, Andrew Krepinevich, and Jim Thomas, *AirSea Battle: A Point-of-Departure Operational Concept* (Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments) pp. 25-27.

U.S. forces and further undermine the overall U.S. extended deterrent. An example is maritime logistics and Taiwan. As the same report notes:

The defence of Taiwan against Chinese attack is already problematic today, given the large ballistic missile force that can strike Taiwan, the quantity and quality of PLA air and naval forces that can strike approaching U.S. naval forces, and the potent IADS that could make U.S. air operations over Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait very costly. Moreover, the large Chinese fighter force, composed increasingly of fourth-generation aircraft, vastly outnumbers what U.S. forces could sustain in terms of aircraft numbers, sortie rates, and mission duration... the workhouses of traditional U.S. power-projection operations.⁷⁸

The broader issue related to this is that conventional imbalances become more exposed/obvious as the overall number of nuclear weapons (by one or two or more states) comes down. And it is upon conventional imbalances that any remaining system of deterrence would increasingly rely. The 2009 report of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament acknowledged this tension:

The issue of conventional arms imbalances, both quantitative and qualitative, between the nuclear-armed states, and in particular the relative scale of U.S. capability, needs to be seriously addressed if it is not to become a significant impediment to future bilateral and multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.⁷⁹

The Commission was thinking in particular about a second group of countries, notably Russia and China, whose participation in negotiations would be considerably more crucial than that of the minor nuclear-armed countries. But many proponents of smaller numbers ignore their responsibility of ensuring a degree of conventional stability as nuclear numbers come down. Little consideration anywhere appears to have been given to the questions of how global and regional conventional (and overall) military balances might work and be managed in a “post-nuclear” world. Even less attention has been devoted to what this means for a third group of countries: those allies of the United States who have relied extensively on America’s extended *nuclear* deterrent. A system of conventional deterrence which was less unequal in the eyes of China or Russia (because America’s conventional advantages had somehow been narrowed) would almost by necessity be far less reassuring for Japan the Republic of Korea, and a number of Washington’s allies in Europe. They would almost certainly have to do more for their own security.

These last points raise the obvious criticism: that extended deterrence is not credible anyway: why would Washington be prepared to sacrifice (or at least, risk sacrificing) Los Angeles for Tokyo or Seoul? This question is not new, even in Australian politics. Hugh White is one of the more recent and controversial commentators on this issue. “This is the core question for the future of END: what is so

⁷⁸ Ibid, p.30

⁷⁹ *Eliminating Nuclear Threats: Report of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament*, Canberra: ICNNPD, 2009, p. 199.

important to Americans today that they are willing to suffer nuclear attack to defend it? ... Against any power capable of delivering nuclear weapons onto American soil, END is an anachronism. Neither America nor its allies yet accept this. The sooner they do the better for everyone".⁸⁰ Indeed, the transformations in Asia are likely to challenge the dictum held since the mid-1970s that any nuclear attack against Australia would probably not occur outside the context of an armed attack against America. Extended nuclear deterrence has never really been tested for Australia, but there are indications to show that policymakers want this to be strengthened, if not more explicit. Australia seems to be moving from a complexly minimal recipient of extended deterrence (implicit declaratory assurances of extended nuclear deterrence) to the middle of the spectrum, where the United States deploys conventional forces on the recipient's territory. In November 2011, U.S. President Barack Obama announced the deployment of up to 2,500 Marines in Darwin from 2012 to 2017. This includes increased access by the U.S. Air Force to Australian bombing ranges and training facilities in the Northern Territory. He said: "As President, I have therefore made a deliberate and strategic decision. As a Pacific nation, the United States will play a larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future, by upholding core principles and in close partnership with our allies and friends".⁸¹ He also said: "We are two Pacific nations and with my visit to the region I am making it clear that the United States is stepping up its commitment to the entire Asia Pacific".⁸² Part of Washington's efforts to demonstrate its commitment to allied defence includes Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) cooperation. Japan already has a layered missile defence system that includes *Aegis* BMD ships with SM-3 interceptors and land-based PAC-3 fire units, and U.S. and Japanese forces regularly train together. Australia participates in the Trilateral Missile Defence Forum with Japan, and partakes in *Nimble Titan* missile defence exercises. Canberra is also acquiring ships that would be compatible with the U.S. *Aegis* BMD systems. The U.S. maintains heavy bombers and fighter bombers with nuclear capability that could be forward deployed, in addition to regularly deploying B-2 and B-52 strategic bombers to Guam. Washington needs to show that its alliances are indivisible; that any major confrontation between a great power and Japan, South Korea, and Australia would not occur outside the context of a general confrontation also involving the United States. And that might mean re-deploying U.S. nuclear weapons on allied soil, for example, medium-range missiles and the Tomahawk Land Attack Missile.

⁸⁰ Hugh White, "Extended Deterrence: A Game of Bluff," in Rory Medcalf (Ed.), *Rory Medcalf (Ed.), Weathering Change: The Future of Extended Nuclear Deterrence* (Lowy Institute for International Policy, Sydney, 2011), p.12.

⁸¹ Speech given by President Barack Obama, 17 November 2011. At: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-11-17/brack-obama27s-speech-to-parliament/3678058>.

⁸² "Gillard, Obama Detail U.S. Troop Deployment," *ABC News*, 16 November 2011. At: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-11-16/gillard2c-obama-announce-darwin-troop-deployment/3675596>.

Conclusion

The elimination of a particular weapon type will not automatically and in itself lead to peace. Instead, we should be thinking about nuclear reductions in the context of how nuclear weapons contribute to international *order*.⁸³ So with respect to these issues, the ambition of going down to lower numbers would need to be strongly tied to common conceptions and agreements about arms control at the conventional level. At the end of the Cold War the United States and Russia managed to conclude the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which establishes limits on key categories of conventional military equipment (such as tanks, combat aircraft, and attack helicopters) in the region. The United States and the Russian Federation also have a history of arms control agreements, including negotiating Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) I and SALT II, the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT), the treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START), and the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-range and Shorter-range Missiles (INF Treaty). No such agreements exist between China and the United States, one of the most obvious set of candidates for a conflict that could escalate. In addition, as of 2011, neither India, China, South Korea, Pakistan, Vietnam, Indonesia, nor Malaysia were party to the Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (Japan has signed).⁸⁴ None of these countries (except the Republic of Korea) has yet signed the recent Arms Trade Treaty,⁸⁵ which sets standards for cross-border transfers of conventional weapons such as tanks, combat aircraft, and missiles.

The Asia Pacific is not a peaceful region in the same way that Europe now is. Until such agreements can be made between the two major players – the United States and China (and the states that “rely” on END in a more obvious manner than other players – South Korea and Japan) – and they can agree on their relative spheres of influence and the prospect of major conflict diminishes significantly, then nuclear weapons will continue to play a role in regulating the use of armed force in the region – provided, of course, that Beijing has an idea of how America’s arsenal might be used. Aside from the military aspect, nuclear weapons generate many of their effects from *not* being used. This is what we might refer to as the “gravitational” use of force. The mere fact that state A possesses nuclear weapons already influences state B’s strategic calculations. As Robert Art has written:

The peaceful use of military power is akin to a gravitational field among large objects in space: it affects all motion that takes place ... The use of military power should not be equated simply with its physical use.⁸⁶

In this respect, nuclear weapons remain crucial tools of diplomacy and deterrence in a region where the distribution of power is still in flux.

⁸³ Michael Howard, “Problems of a Disarmed World”, in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (Eds.), *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (Unwin University Books, London, 1966), pp. 206-214.

⁸⁴ U.S. Department of State. At: <http://www.state.gov/t/isn/trty/101466.htm>

⁸⁵ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. At: <https://www.un.org/disarmament/ATT/>

⁸⁶ Robert J. Art, “The Fungibility of Force”, in Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz (Eds.), *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics* (Rowman and Littleman, Maryland, 5th edition, 1999).

It is not immediately obvious that eliminating nuclear weapons from the Asian strategic landscape is necessarily a smart idea. Not everyone is happy that nuclear weapons exist, but history suggests that they do tend to have a stabilising effect. Eliminating them will not resolve the region's major rivalries. In fact, it might actually make things worse. Even if the United States and Russia made a landmark commitment and eliminated their entire nuclear arsenal, it is far from obvious that this would lead other states to follow suit.

As newly emerging nuclear history shows, proliferation programs have had little to do with Cold War and U.S. nuclear arsenal. In fact, these had more to do with prestige, wanting to contribute to the strength of alliances, and the desire to redress conventional imbalances.⁸⁷ And that is also the case today. As Donnelly and Trachtenberg astutely note, "Long-time antagonists India and Pakistan acquired nuclear weapons to deter each other, not because the United States failed to ratify the second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty or has not yet totally disarmed as called for in Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty".⁸⁸ And indeed these arguments assume that it is only *nuclear* proliferation that begets proliferation. Indeed, the conventional balance is an integral (though too often subsumed) second layer under nuclear weapons, shaping perceptions of the overall security environment.

Those that promote reductions as a step towards nuclear disarmament argue that because the Cold War is over, nuclear weapons are passé. However, the relevance of a weapon type (or indeed an alliance⁸⁹) is not governed by ideological or political contexts, but by its strategic utility. Nuclear weapons are a more fungible strategic asset than most other types of military hardware. As Brodie noted, "Weapons that do not have to fight their like do not become useless because of the advent of newer and superior types".⁹⁰

Deterrence is not something that can be quantified in a precise manner. As U.S. Air Force Major General Harencak "tweeted" at the recent Carnegie Nuclear Policy Conference, "We use nuclear weapons every day in our bases as deterrence. So, not a good idea to limit any options". Strategic goals, not numbers, should be driving U.S. nuclear posture. For example, back in 1962, General Glenn A. Kent of the U.S. Air Force was tasked by U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to undertake a review of U.S. nuclear weapons employment policy. The study resulted in a report entitled *Damage Limitation: A Rationale for the Allocation of Resources by the U.S. and USSR*, published in 1964. This formed the basis of a statement made by Robert McNamara that:

⁸⁷ One organization doing fantastic work to declassify documents on nuclear statecraft from around the world is the Nuclear Proliferation International History Project. Two other notable organisations are the Parallel History Project at ETH Zurich, and the George Washington University National Security Archive. Two recent international conferences give a small indication of the type of work being done – the 2013 Annual Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAHR) conference, and the annual conference of the Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA). Each hosted nuclear scholars using new archival documents to analyze the origins, evolution, and consequences of different countries' nuclear programs.

⁸⁸ Thomas Donnelly and David Trachtenberg, *Toward a New "New Look": U.S. Nuclear Strategy and Forces for the Third Atomic Age*, p.11.

⁸⁹ This is something Stephen Walt points out about the existing literature on alliances. Stephen M. Walt, "Alliances in a Unipolar World", *World Politics*, Vol. 61, No.1 (2009), pp. 86-120.

⁹⁰ Bernard Brodie, *War and Politics* (Macmillan, New York, 1973), p.321.

...While there are still some differences of judgment on just how large such a force should be, there is general agreement that it should be large enough to insure the destruction, singly or in combination of the Soviet Union, Communist China, and the Communist satellites as national societies, under the worst possible circumstances of war outbreak that can reasonably be postulated, and, in addition, to destroy their war-making capability so as to limit, to the extent practicable, damage to this country and to our allies.⁹¹

Obviously, Washington does not face the same challenges as during the Cold War, when thousands of nuclear warheads with different target allocations were deemed necessary for deterring the Soviet Union from invading Western Europe. Still, the approximate number should be at least as many as the two next largest nuclear weapons states, plus the forces needed for Washington to maintain credible extended deterrence commitments around the world. These were the reasons behind the concept of “superiority” espoused by McNamara back in the early 1960s.⁹²

U.S. allies need to be reassured that an attack on Japanese, South Korean, and Australian soil and forces would be unlikely to occur outside the context of a confrontation between the United States and the aggressor. And as discussed earlier that probably means deploying vital U.S. assets to the region that can deter attacks across a wider spectrum of the escalation ladder. Given the challenges that END faces today – geopolitical, geographic, and regarding numbers, if END does not have a future then serious options come back onto the agenda of U.S. allies.

⁹¹ Robert McNamara, cited in *Politics and Force Levels*, p.203. See also his remarks in “Toward Damage Limitation”, in Desmond Ball, “U.S. Strategic Concepts and Programs: The Historical Context”, in Samuel F. Wells, Jr. and Robert S. Litwak (Eds.), *Strategic Defenses and Soviet-American Relations*, pp.179-181.

⁹² Cited in Desmond Ball, *Politics and Force Levels: The Strategic Missile Program of the Kennedy Administration* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1980), p.184.

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