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Bringing Arms Control Back In:

Proposals for Managing the Security Dilemma in East Asia

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East Asia is a region in geopolitical turmoil. North Korea is defiantly building its nuclear capabilities. China and Japan are deadlocked in a dangerous island dispute that risks escalation into an armed conflict. Unresolved historical grievances and rising nationalism have unsettled relationships across the region. In the meantime, China's rise in power and expanding military capabilities are creating insecurities among neighbors, including Japan as well as South Korea, the Philippines, and Vietnam. The United States has announced a geopolitical "pivot" to East Asia and is engaged in redoubling and modernizing its military commitments to allies in the region.

These are worrisome developments. The basic terms of security and stability in East Asia are now more uncertain than at any time in the last half century. What, then, are the policy options for these countries that can change the direction of such developments and provide stable peace in East Asia?

In this paper, we propose that arms control – led by the United States, Japan, and China – might provide a useful tool in the management of geopolitical tensions. Arms control agreements, in the narrow sense, aim to cap and reduce various classes of armaments, and in the nuclear era these include most notably missiles and warheads. But arms control is not only about agreeing on

the number of missiles and warheads. Arms control is also a diplomatic process, whereby states exchange information, build confidence, and elaborate shared visions of order and security.

China, after all, may not want to challenge the regional *status quo*, but is merely aiming for strengthening its national defense. Even North Korea may not be as aggressive as its behavior may seem to indicate, but only hoping to prolong its autocratic rule. Nations surrounding China and North Korea, however, have every reason to assume bellicose intentions from the seemingly aggressive challenge to the regional of order, a classic case of the security dilemma.¹

The danger today in East Asia is that security dilemma-driven conflict will intensify, manifest in arms races and security competition. To avoid this fate, the leading countries in the region should devote themselves to building an ongoing arm control process, focusing on nuclear arms as well as other conventional military capabilities.

Nuclear arms control, of course, was a feature of the late-Cold War, pursued by the United States and the Soviet Union in a bipolar geopolitical setting.² Arguably, these arms control efforts – manifest in strategic arms limitation treaties and other agreements – provided a measure of stability and restraint both during the era of detente in the early 1970s and again in the years leading up to the end of the Cold War. Indeed, Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev catalyzed negotiations that ended the Cold War with their shared convictions about the need to contain and even abolish nuclear weapons.³ Nothing like the Soviet-American arms control regime that operated to stabilize Cold War hostilities exists today between the United States and China.

¹ Paul Bracken sends a strong alarm about the “second nuclear age,” arguing that the Pacific is increasingly a zone of rivalry. See Bracken, *The Second Nuclear Age: Strategy, Danger, and the New Power Politics* (New York: Times Books, 2012), pp. 189-211. See also his *Fire in the East: The Rise of Asian Military Power and the Second Nuclear Age* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999).

² On recent contributions in the arms control literature, see Avis Bohlen, “The Rise and Fall of Arms Control,” *Survival*, Vol. 45, No.3 (Autumn 2003); Kurt M. Campbell, *Reconsidering a Nuclear Future: Why Countries Might Cross Over to the Other Side* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2004); Paul Braken, “Thinking (Again) about Arms Control,” *Orbis* (Winter 2004); Michael A. Levi and Michael E. Hanlon, *The Future of Arms Control*. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2005).

³ For the importance of arms control as the centerpiece of the U.S.-Soviet settlement that ended the Cold War, based on the mutual vulnerability both sides faced from nuclear weapons, see Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, “The Unraveling of the Cold War Settlement,” *Survival* (December 2009/January 2010), pp. 39-62; and Deudney and Ikenberry, “Pushing and Pulling: The Western System, Nuclear Weapons, and Soviet Change,” *International Politics*, Vol. 48, No. 4/5 (July/September 2011).

Indeed, the challenge today is to see if these arms control frameworks – which are potentially universal in their scope – can be adapted and transferred to East Asia to help China, the United States, and other countries manage today’s emerging security dilemma-driven arms races and military competition.

The idea of an arms control regime in East Asia is neither obvious nor without complications. Some forms of arms control might invite instability instead of stability. This is especially so when there is a significant disparity of capabilities between the parties involved, which is very much the case in the relationship between the United States and China. Arms control, moreover, will challenge the credibility of alliances for states that rely for security on extended deterrence, such as Japan and South Korea. In this light, attempts at arms control will be futile at best; at worst such an endeavor will open new conflicts.

Nonetheless, arms control – implemented as an institutionalized diplomatic process – has a good prospect of building confidence, dampening emerging security dilemma-driven conflict, and opening a path to a more stable peace. In the following, we first discuss the present crisis in East Asia, and then move on to review the past record of arms control. The next section deals with the most difficult challenge, that is, how arms control can be pursued between states with great power disparities – something that might be called “asymmetrical arms control.” Finally, the paper will try to lay out a brief picture of possible initiatives in starting arms control in East Asia.

Security Dilemmas and Power Transitions

No state, including Japan, South Korea, China, and the United States, sees itself challenging the status quo, but each has reason to believe that their opponent may eventually seek to challenge the others, with the aim of seeking greater territorial control. This is a classic case of the security dilemma, a dynamic of “action and reaction” that is seen by many scholars as a source

of arms racing and security competition. When the intentions of the opponent are unknown, it is “rational” to prepare for eventual conflict. This rational response of acquiring additional arms and weaponry – done so for “defensive” reasons – is seen by the opponent, however, as offensive and threatening. The opponent, in turn, takes its own defensive steps in acquiring additional arms and weaponry, triggering insecurity on the other side. In each instance, decisions based on defensive intentions are perceived as offensive, and the ensuing action-reaction dynamic erodes stability of a relationship between the states.⁴

The problem of security dilemmas is made more complicated by the changes in the distribution of power, where the rise of China, even if it is devoid of offensive intentions, poses a more serious threat to those powers whose positions are in relative decline as compared to the rising power. This “problem” of power transition has been seen across the modern era in the rise and decline of hegemonic powers. Powerful states have risen up in the past and challenged the old order, seeking to reestablish new leadership and direction to the regional or global system. These moments of transition, when the ambition of the rising state grows and the dominance of the old hegemonic power erodes, are fraught with geopolitical danger.⁵ The iconic case, of course, was the rise of post-Bismarck Germany in the late-19th century and the security competition – including a naval arms race – that unfolded with Great Britain and the other great powers, culminating in world war.

With the case of China, no one is predicting war anytime soon. But with the power shifts underway in the region, security dilemma-driven conflict is likely to intensify. The rise of Chinese power in the region is creating worries and uncertainties among neighboring states,

⁴ For discussions of the security dilemma, see John H. Herz, “Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (January 1950); Robert Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (January 1978), pp. 167-214; and Charles L. Glaser, “The Security Dilemma Revisited,” *World Politics*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (October 1997), pp. 171-201. For past work examining security dilemmas in the East Asian region, see Thomas J. Christensen, “China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia,” *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Spring 1999); and Christensen, “The Contemporary Security Dilemma: Preventing Conflict Across the Taiwan Strait,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Autumn 2002). For a new study of rising security dilemma dynamics in East Asia, see G. John Ikenberry and Adam Liff, “The Rise of Security-Dilemma-Driven Conflict in East Asia?” unpublished paper.

⁵ See Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

creating incentives for these smaller states to redouble their security ties to the United States. At the same time, the United State finds itself seeking to reassure its alliance partners and signal its resolve to stay in the region and provide a counter-weight to rising Chinese power. China, in turn, perceives that these so-called defensive steps by the United States and its allies are actually encroachments on China's position, and it responds accordingly. This is the dynamic that is worrisome because it creates mutual insecurity, uncertainty, and incentives to acquire and modernize military capabilities.

How bad, in general, is the East Asian situation as it stands today? It is doubtful that the Chinese, or for that matter the Japanese, intend to start a war over their claims for Senkaku-Diaoyutai. That said, however, we must also be aware that a relatively low profile crisis can develop into a much larger confrontation. Even an insignificant conflict can easily escalate when it is accompanied with domestic public opinion that calls for strength and honor. We must, therefore, pay close attention to the possibility of a minor conflict over a few islands developing into a more major confrontation.

In this situation, the dominant tendency of the United States and its partners will be to enhance their alliance commitments. Indeed, strengthening alliances, if carried alone, is a poor policy to change the behavior of a potential adversary. This is true for two reasons. First, if a security dilemma dynamic is at work, alliance strengthening will trigger counter-measures by the other side, leading to an arms race but not additional security for either side. Second, enhanced security commitment may actually lead the states into unanticipated conflicts. It is worth remembering that one of the causes of World War I was a serious miscalculation of alliance commitment: before the war, none of the members of *entente tripartite* were confident that Britain, France, or Russia would actually act together in the face of German aggression, while both the Germans and the Austrians were skeptical whether they would form a joint front in face of the tripartite *entente*. As it turned out, the great powers were more committed to the two alliances

than they had anticipated, leading to a spiral of military mobilization in the fateful summer of 1914. Alliances did not keep the peace in Europe but contributed to uncertainty, miscalculation, and high-stakes risk taking, setting Europe on a path to war.

Alliances – even enhanced alliances – may well be an important part of a peaceful security order in East Asia. But they will best serve a stabilizing role if states also have tools and institutional mechanisms that allow leaders to reassure each other, signal restraint, and engage in de-escalation diplomacy.

Redefining Arms Control

What, then, would such policy tools and institutional mechanisms be? What will allow leaders to mitigate security dilemma-driven conflict and arms competition? This paper proposes that a regional agenda of arms control involving weapons of mass destruction could play such a role. To be sure, nuclear deterrence is widely understood to be a solution, not a problem, in the maintenance of the status quo in East Asia, where relative stability in nuclear deterrence has been perceived as the basis for regional stability. The point here is not unilateral disarmament of any kind, but an overall institutional framework that enhances confidence and trust among the major powers. If all the states in the region are essentially defensive in their military strategies, and if they wish to avoid escalation into major war, they have incentives to establish an institutionalized diplomatic process for arms control. The idea is to use the process of arms control to reassure each other, signal defensive intentions, and put in place mechanisms for crisis management.

Before defining what arms control is, we must discuss what aim it serves, for the very definition of objectives differs widely. Even during the height of the Cold War, when arms control became a defining feature of relations between East and West, it remained a controversial subject that attracted debates from both sides of the political spectrum. For activists in peace

movements and researchers in peace research, arms control was but one step toward the ultimate objective of eliminating nuclear weapons. For practitioners of foreign policy, arms control was not a step, but an objective in its own right, an effort to maintain the stability of mutual deterrence. It was seen as a process of managing superpower relations and building confidence to reduce the likelihood of the outbreak of hostilities.⁶

In spite of such differences regarding the objectives, the utility of arms control has been questioned from both sides of the political spectrum. For the doves, arms control restricted bolder initiatives in reducing nuclear capabilities; for the hawks, arms control merely represented appeasement to an aggressive power that cannot be trusted. Both sides agreed that the failure of SALT I/II to restrict or control Russian or American arsenals was inevitable. With the end of the Cold War, attention to arms control shifted toward reduction of nuclear warheads in the two countries.

Is arms control, then, futile? We must here return to the original definition of arms control, that is, an agreed framework for putting limitations on the development and deployment of weapons with highly destructive capabilities. Arms control does not abolish weapons, but merely puts them in an institutional framework within in which governments can exchange information and negotiate. Neither does it have capabilities to enforce that framework, because implementation of arms controls agreements rest on the voluntary compliance of participating governments. These two restrictions may seem to be severe limits on the efficacy of arms control. But it is this more modest role of arms control – as an institutionalized diplomatic process for the exchange of information, confidence building, and crisis management – that gives it a role in dampening the conflict-producing dynamics of the security dilemma.

Security dilemmas are situations where arms policies pursued by one state for defensive purposes are understood by another state as potentially offensive and hostile, triggering defensive

⁶ See Steve Weber, *Cooperation and Discord in U.S.-Soviet Arms Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

counter measures that are understood by the first state as potentially offensive – and hence the spiral of arms building and escalating hostility. But the key insight of the security dilemma notion is that both states would prefer to find ways to be secure without the spiral of arms buildup. The problem is overcoming uncertainty and mistrust. If each side could credibly signal its defensive intentions, the possibility begins to open up for restraints on weapons capabilities and competition build ups. Again, this is where arms control comes in. Arms control – when it is institutionalized as a diplomatic process – creates some minimal conditions for mutual trust and confidence to take root.

It may be better if the great powers agree not only on an institutional framework but also on the actual reduction of weapons. But not all situations lend themselves to agreements on the reduction of weapons – and, indeed, the current situation in East Asia might well be resistant to such steps. But if the major powers could agree to a framework that put some limits on future development and deployment of weapons, this in itself would be a major step in reducing mutual hostilities. It also could show that even unfriendly and competing great powers, nonetheless, still share some minimum level of common rules and understandings that limit or circumscribe arms competition and reduce the risks of war.

In the case of the U.S.-Soviet Cold War, the SALT negotiations provided a basis, however fragile, for arms control between the two superpowers. Recent studies have shown that the very existence of an arms control regime offered strategic stability even after the regime was seriously challenged after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. As noted earlier, even a limited arms control regime such as SALT does not exist between the United States and China.

If we cannot eliminate relatively minor inter-state conflicts, at least we can work on measure that limit the degree to which such conflicts may escalate. Arms control, in this context, can offer one venue for information sharing and conflict management. To be sure, this is not an easy task, especially when American forces far outnumber the Chinese arsenal, making requests

for strategic parity meaningless relations between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The question remains, even with disparities of power, can an arms control process be established which can stabilize and restrain arms competition and contribute to conflict management even if it does not actually reduce nuclear forces?

Arms Control and Disparities of Power

Can arms control be a useful tool to restrain arms build ups and security competition in East Asia? Here we confront a problem that was not present in the arms control efforts of the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War: China is a relatively smaller military power than the United States.

Arms control between the Soviet Union and the United States was a process that took place between two powers with roughly comparable capabilities. Although the United States almost always enjoyed a strategic advantage over the Soviets, there was still a rough parity in nuclear capabilities between the two superpowers. Indeed serious efforts at nuclear arms control did not really begin until the late-1960s when the Soviet Union reached a level of rough nuclear equality with the United States. It was under these conditions – where principles of parity and reciprocity could guide negotiations – that actual limits were agreed to. Arms control between the United States and China would proceed under very different conditions. The United States has more than 2000 deployed nuclear warheads, and many more that are not deployed, while China has approximately 300 warheads at the most. How, then, is it possible to undertake arms control between states with such disparities in nuclear capabilities?

The historical record is not entirely promising. The most prominent instances are the naval treaties that were agreed to in the inter-war period. The Washington Naval Treaty of 1922 was successful in limiting the number of battleships by the leading naval powers – Britain, the

United States, Japan, France, and Italy. At the time, Britain was the preeminent naval power with 30 battleships, while the United States had 20 and Japan had 11. Britain and the United States both had 15 battleships under construction and Japan had 4. The treaty essentially locked in these disparities for ten years, giving the United States and Britain advantages with ratios of battleship tonnage set at 5:5:3. British and American observers argued that the treaty benefitted Japan the most (the Americans and British were both forces to scrap old battleships), allowing it roughly 60 percent of British or American capabilities. The Japanese, however, saw it differently. They accepted the inferior capital ship tonnage ratio of five to three in return for maintenance of the status quo with respect to fortifications of the Pacific islands. But it was nonetheless seen as an Anglo-American agreement to severely limit Japanese power.⁷

The second naval treaty, the London Naval Treaty of 1930, followed the lines of the Washington treaty but came out with even less accord. France and Italy strongly opposed the allotted quotas. The Japanese Navy was severely divided into two camps, those who supported the treaty and those who did not. Of particular importance was the opposition of Admiral Heihachiro Togo, the most respected war hero in Japan, who led a revolt against the London Treaty, leading to a series of upheavals from the young Turks which culminated in the attempted coup of May 15, 1932, where young naval officers took over the prime minister's office and killed Prime Minister Takeshi Inugai.

The experience of the Washington and London naval treaties warn of the possibility that even successful arms control treaties can stimulate resistance from the rising powers with lesser capabilities. Applied to the relationship between the United States and China, it is clear that it might also be a problem. Chinese nuclear capabilities are far smaller than that of the United States, a disparity even larger than the naval force disparities between the United States and Japan

⁷ The Washington conference was part of a larger effort by the United States, Britain, and the United States to reorient the terms of great power relations in East Asia, moving from a system of imperial order and diplomacy to one organized around sovereignty and the nation-state. See Akira Iriye, *After Imperialism: The Search for a New Order in the Far East, 1921-1931* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965).

in the 1920s and 30s. If the United States, along with its allies Japan and South Korea, request the reduction in Chinese nuclear capabilities, such a call would almost immediately be translated by the Chinese as a move to weaken China, just as many Japanese naval officers resisted the London treaty. If we consider the ominous aftermath of the coup of 1932, the harbinger of the Japanese attack on China, we must conclude that arms control between states with great disparities of power can have a destabilizing effect on international relations.

Alliance, Extended Deterrence, and Arms Control

Another critical problem in pursuing nuclear arms control in East Asia relates to the American-led alliance system and nuclear deterrence. For over half a century, the security of Japan, South Korea, and other states in the region has been maintained through a system of alliance protection based on extended nuclear deterrence. America's allies in Northeast Asia are protected by a nuclear umbrella. The United States provides security guarantees to both Tokyo and Seoul made credible by forward deployed forces and nuclear doctrine. A central element of this security protection is America's commitment to use its nuclear forces to deter attacks by adversaries on its allies. Under these conditions, Japan and South Korea have felt less compelled to acquire their own nuclear capabilities. But what happens to this system of extended security if arms control sets in motion sharp and far-reaching reductions in the American nuclear arsenal?⁸

Extended nuclear deterrence has been a core feature of the global security order since the early years of the Cold War. During the Cold War, the United States signaled that an attack on its allies constituted an attack on itself, tying the security of these states together – and the threat of a

⁸ On America's Asian alliances, see Robert D. Blackwill and Paul Dibb, *America's Asian Alliances* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000); Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye, *The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Anchoring Stability in Asia*. (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic Studies, August 2012). Whether alliances actually prevent aggression, however, is an open question without solid evidence, as discussed in Brett Ashley Leeds, "Do Alliances Deter Aggression? The Influence of Military Alliances on the Initiation of Militarized Interstate Disputes". *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 7, no. 3 (July 2003).

nuclear attack on its allies would be deterred by threatening to retaliate in kind. John Lewis Gaddis has described the logic of extended deterrence during the Cold War: it was the threat of “a nuclear-strategic response in case of a nuclear attack on the territory or troops of allies.”⁹ A logic of deterrence and assurance was at the core of this system. The Soviet Union was deterred from attacking Western Europe and other alliance partners because of the threat of American nuclear retaliation. In turn, allies were assured of the American security guarantee, and so they would refrain acquiring nuclear weapons or engaging in other destabilizing actions.

After the Cold War, the United States has continued to see its nuclear capabilities as a tool of deterrence and assurance – or, as the 2001 Nuclear Posture Statement noted, these weapons were to be used for “assurance, dissuasion, and defeat.” That is, America’s nuclear forces would continue to play a major role in providing security guarantees to allies who lacked nuclear weapons. These nuclear forces are widely understood in Washington to be integral not only for deterring aggression by potential American adversaries but deterring attacks on allies and friends across various regional settings. At the same time, this extended deterrence system is also seen as important in dissuading allies and adversaries from acquiring nuclear capabilities. The forward deployment of American troops, together with other forms of security cooperation between the United States and its allies, has conveyed credible signals of commitment and assurance, to the effect of preventing US allies to developing nuclear armaments of their own.¹⁰

American security policy toward East Asia during and after the Cold War has been built around this logic of extended deterrence and assurance. While in Europe, the nuclear guarantee is embedded in the NATO alliance and the Article V commitment, extended deterrence in East Asia is embodied in a series of bilateral alliances and agreements. In the European case, nuclear

⁹ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

¹⁰ Robert Jervis touched on the significance of arms control for extended deterrence, where crisis stability, as encouraged by arms control initiatives, can potentially undermine extended deterrence. See his “Arms Control, Stability, and Causes of War,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 108, No. 2 (1993): 239-253.

weapons are deployed within the region, while in East Asia, the American nuclear forces are not based on allied territory by are deployed at sea.

The credibility of these forces – and of the nuclear guarantee – is a linchpin for the stability of the existing regional order. If the American extended deterrent commitment were not credible, allies would presumably seek alternatives, including the acquisition of their own nuclear capabilities. As Richard Bush observes: “Because Washington has been willing to threaten the use of nuclear weapons against adversaries of its allies, those allies have felt less compelled to pursue a nuclear option. Taiwan and South Korea did try during the Cold War, only to be dissuaded by the United States. Japan and Australia have occasionally considered the option, only to remain under the shelter of the U.S. nuclear umbrella.”¹¹

The challenge of nuclear arms control in East Asia is to pursue restraints and limits of weapons in ways that do not undermine the security of allies, triggering a proliferation rather than a reduction of nuclear weapons in East Asia. Of course, as the experience of nuclear arms control between Russia and the United States shows, a stable system of nuclear deterrence is possible to maintain alongside negotiated reductions in missiles and war heads. In the case of East Asia, it is possible to pursue nuclear arms control in a variety of ways without undermining extended deterrence. But in crafting an arms control agenda, the goal should be to make countries more secure and not less, and to lay the foundation for a reduction in the role of nuclear weapons rather than to their spread.

An Arms Control Agenda for East Asia

¹¹ Richard C. Bush, “The U.S. Policy of Extended Deterrence in East Asia: History, Current Views, and Implications,” *Brookings Arms Control Series*, Paper 5 (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, February 2011).

Our agenda here is to install an arms control mechanism without both triggering new uncertainty and anxiety that may further accelerate regional tension. To achieve this objective, we must work in two steps, confidence-building and dialogue, as discussed below.

(1) Confidence –building through moratorium measures

What we need here are measures directed toward confidence building. As Levite and Landau argues, confidence building measures are important to overcome “psychological and political barriers of mutual distrust and suspicion” and help parties to a zone of conflict to advance common interests.¹² The trouble here is that the formal and intentional agreements required for successful confidence building are either weak or do not exist between powers that are divided by mutual distrust and suspicions. The most difficult part of arms control negotiations lies in its beginning, as any initiative for arms control may be seen as sign of weakness that the adversary might take advantage of. How can we convince mutually suspicious powers to agree on a basic framework?

One way to deal with this dilemma is to show the goodwill of one power to its rival on a voluntary basis. This is what has been called unilateral initiative in the literature. The East Asian context, however, widely differs from the days of the Soviet-American cold war. In light of the grave disparity in nuclear capability between China and the U.S., it is highly unlikely that China will agree to any reduction of her nuclear capability. The United States, on the other hand, enjoys a strategic advantage over China that may allow room for a limited reduction of her nuclear arsenal without significantly and endangering her security. American allies, however, might perceive any reduction of American capability as a decline of American commitment to the alliance, leading to

¹² Ariel E. Levite and Emily B. Landau, “Confidence and Security Building Measures in the Middle East,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1997): 143-171. See also Johan Jorgen Host and Karen Alette Melander, “European Security and Confidence-Building Measures,” *Survival*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (1977): 146-154, for discussion on the Conference on Security and Co-Operation in Europe (CSCE).

possible bellicose actions on their own.

We can, however, focus on a moratorium, instead of actual reduction, of offensive capabilities. Moratorium here means delaying the deployment of major weapon, which would indicate a will not to escalate international tension provided that the adversary will also restrain itself from escalation. Historically speaking, moratorium in the days of the cold war took place in the voluntary restraint of nuclear tests and also the deployment of missiles armed with nuclear warheads. In the case of East Asia, a moratorium on non-nuclear capabilities such as air craft carriers can and should be included as possible candidates for voluntary restraint.

Moratorium may take place on two levels, that is, moratorium on deployment of new generations of offensive capability and a geographical limit to the area that weapons are deployed. A geographical moratorium is especially useful in the management of escalating territorial conflicts. The Japanese Government can continue her policy of not building a permanent military installation in the Senkaku-Diaoyutai islands, provided that the PLA does not send naval vessels in the nearby waters. The relative calm in the region can only be restored by reciprocating voluntary restraints in the deployment of offensive capabilities. Our proposal here is, then, a call for a strategic freeze: before future attempts are made to reduce strategic capabilities, we need to put a lid on the deployment of new generation of missiles and conventional weapons as well as deployment of military vessels in strategically contested areas.

Although moratorium measures can be useful in reducing international tensions, there are inherent limits as well. For one thing, moratorium measures would inevitably be both unilateral and conditional, for a voluntary restraint can only be sustainable when the other power agrees to reciprocate. If successful, moratorium may build mutual confidence; if not, a failure of moratorium policies may produce even greater tension than before, as a lack of reciprocal restraint will be perceived as an evidence of bellicose intention of the adversary. Successful moratorium can lead to mutual confidence, but will fall short of sustainable peace, as it lacks credible

agreements and institutions. To reach that stage, we need dialogue that may lead to more formal agreements and institutions as basis for stable and sustainable peace.

(2) Dialogue

The goal is to establish a region-wide arms control dialogue in East Asia. The idea is not to immediately initiate a nuclear arms reduction negotiation between the United States and China, but rather to build a foundation for future arms reductions talks. This foundation will have several components, with both region-wide meetings and a specific U.S.-China agenda.

1- Annual bilateral dialogue.

This meeting would be instituted for the exchange of information between the two major states. The United States and China would focus their discussions on the full spectrum of military forces and planning: nuclear and conventional forces, nuclear doctrine, security assistance, crisis management, and so forth. Some of these discussions currently take place under the auspices of the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue.

The goal is to put in place an institutionalized diplomatic process that fosters greater transparency and confidence regarding security policies and problems. Beyond this, the goal is to allow both parties to begin to elaborate understandings and norms to guide a stable and restrained security order in East Asia. If there are security dilemma-driven security dynamics at work in U.S.-Chinese relations, these annual meetings should identify them and allow the parties to exchange ideas on how to mitigate or dampen their impact.

2- Region-wide security dialogue.

The states within the wider region should form an East Asian association for security and cooperation. This would be a non-binding grouping in which all the states within the region –

either the states of Northeast Asia or the wider ASEAN-plus six states – would meet to discuss security cooperation and arms control.

The agenda for this regional association would be similar to the U.S.-China agenda. It would entail the exchange of information aimed at beginning a diplomatic dialogue about arms control. Three baskets of issues might be most important. First, there is the exchange of information on arms policies and security problems, including territorial disputes. Second, there is the discussion of understandings and norms that would facilitate stability and restraint in arms building and modernization. Third, there is the issue of crisis management and the development of mechanisms to manage disputes that verge on armed violence.

3- The nuclear arms control agenda.

The U.S.-China dialogue will allow these two states to begin to develop understandings about how to adapt and upgrade nuclear weapons regime that dates from the Cold War. There are various aspects to this regime – the SALT negotiations, the Comprehensive Test Ban, the ABM treaty, the NPT, and the ban on weapons in space. The goal is to bring this “family” of nuclear weapons agreements together as the centerpiece of U.S. and Chinese strategic relations. The United States and China would use these treaties and agreements as the foundation for managing their wider ties.

As it turns out, China is already a signatory to many of these agreements. China became a member of the NPT in 1992, and in 1995 it supported the indefinite extension of the NPT. In 1996, it signed the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). It has also reached bilateral agreements with the United States on the control of nuclear and missile-related exports to specific countries. China has also joined the Nuclear Suppliers Group. It has co-sponsored a draft treaty at the Conference on Disarmament to prevent the placement of weapons in outer space. And it has voted for resolutions before the UN Security Council on strengthening the global arms control

and disarmament agenda.¹³ The United States has also committed itself to many of these same treaties and resolutions, particularly in the area of nuclear non-proliferation. The two countries should review their participation in these treaties and agreements and chart an agenda for the next phase of nuclear arms control.

Conclusion

Unlike the days of the Soviet-American Cold War, East Asia today enjoys a peace that is relatively immune from the specter of total war. That peace, however, has lacked an internationally agreed framework or formal institution, leaving the alarming possibility of escalating conflicts that became only too apparent in the recent series of geopolitical crisis between Japan and China.

The basis of stability came from alliance structure and extended deterrence. Although we do not propose an alternative to the alliance structure in East Asia, we do believe that alliance alone will be insufficient to provide more durable stability in the region. If we wish to change the unstable peace in East Asia into stable peace, we must start working on an arms control mechanism that will reduce the possibilities of escalation and unnecessary conflicts.

¹³ See Bates Gill, “China and Nuclear Arms Control: Current Positions and Future Politics,” *SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security*, No. 201/4 (April 2010).