



Extended Deterrence and Northeast Asia

Workshop Report

Hosted by the

Air Force Institute for National Security Studies

and the

USAF Strategic Plans and Policies Division (A5XP)

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The Workshop

The Air Force Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) and the USAF Strategic Plans and Policy Division (HQ USAF/A5XP) held a one and a half-day workshop entitled “Extended Deterrence and Northeast Asia” on Wednesday, September 21 and Thursday, September 22 at the SAIC Conference Center in McLean, Virginia. The workshop examined the current status and projected future of various issues that shape the US extended deterrence posture toward Northeast Asia and provided a forum for discussion of extended deterrence issues, setting those issues into the broader strategic context, and promoting the sharing of ideas.

The workshop was conducted under “Chatham House Rules” with the goal of encouraging and facilitating open discussion based upon solid intellectual foundation. The format of the workshop included a mix of roundtable discussions and working group breakout sessions. While one day of the event was held at a classified level; this report covers only the unclassified sessions of the workshop. Speakers and panelists discussed extended deterrence and Northeast Asia; the Northeast Asia strategic landscape; senior mentor perspectives; theater perspectives; and an overview of the A10 wargame series. Two working groups examined the implications of the preceding roundtable discussions for the Air Force. The workshop concluded with a subject matter expert synthesis.

Extended Deterrence and Northeast Asia

Extended deterrence in Northeast Asia is a complex topic which deserves the attention of today’s leaders and policy planners. When looking at the “big picture” in Northeast Asia one sees China wrestling with its future and what it will look like, China and North Korea (DPRK) facing domestic challenges, and the Republic of Korea (ROK) struggling with concerns for its security. In order to better understand the situation today, and the implications for the future, a number of issues must be addressed. Questions to be taken into consideration when thinking about extended deterrence in Northeast Asia include the following:

- Who do we seek to deter?
- What are we deterring them from doing?
- On whose behalf are we deterring?
- What are the threat perceptions of our allies and adversaries?
- What is the appropriate mix of nuclear, conventional and other capabilities that the United States can bring to bear?
- What does that mean for the Air Force’s nuclear posture?
- What does it mean at the operational level in the current environment?
- What are the dichotomies and disconnects between policy and operational realities?
- Where are the shortfalls or opportunities?

Northeast Asia Strategic Landscape

China. In order to understand China's behavior, one must first be aware of its priorities. The nuclear balance between China and the United States is nowhere near the top of the list of Chinese concerns; domestic anxieties take a much higher priority. China's top three concerns today involve sustaining economic growth, maintaining territorial integrity, and avoiding containment. Economic growth is essential to China because trade is central to the Chinese economic model. China could suffer greatly if its trade ratio (currently 60-70% of its GDP) were to decline. Territorial integrity concerns stem from the fear that if Taiwan were to declare independence, other areas within China might follow. The Chinese government does not want to face a territorial breakup similar to that which occurred in the Soviet Union. China wants to be an influential player in the region with the ability to shape the regional environment, and it seeks to avoid any constraint on its influence through encirclement by its known and potential adversaries.

Despite China's focus on domestic issues, in recent years there has been a proliferation of actors who play a role in Chinese strategic decision making. The range of players has expanded dramatically and includes individuals in areas such as foreign policy, economic policy and security policy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs plays a role in Chinese nuclear policy, as do the People's Liberation Army, the Second Artillery Corps, the General Armaments Department, and the scientific and academic communities. China is a dynamic society with a diversity of views.

Nuclear weapons and strategic systems serve Chinese interests in a variety of ways. First, they are important tools for maintaining deterrence. China has been on the receiving end of nuclear threats in the past, but now feels secure due to the existence of its strategic deterrent. China has a no first-use policy and maintains that its nuclear assets exist solely to deter the use of nuclear weapons against it. From the Chinese perspective only a limited number of nuclear weapons are required to maintain deterrence. China has low quantitative demands for deterrence and feels that as long as it has the ability to retaliate with nuclear strikes against a few of its adversary's cities its deterrent will be effective. China describes its nuclear arsenal as "lean and effective" but is extremely reluctant to talk about specific numbers. China is in the process of gradually, yet methodically, modernizing its nuclear enterprise. It is moving toward obtaining road mobile systems and is developing a small fleet of submarines which eventually will be nuclear capable. The development of these new capabilities will allow China to finally have a secure, survivable, second-strike force. China also has the capacity for MIRVs, tactical nuclear weapons, and neutron warheads.

Issues of concern for China include the development of missile defense capabilities, the strength of US relationships within the region and conventional prompt global strike. The issue of missile defense is a significant problem for China because even a small number of viable interceptors would present a substantial challenge to China's minimal deterrent. Regionally, the tightening of US alliance relationships with Japan and the Republic of Korea and the US military relationship with Taiwan are of particular concern for China. Conventional prompt global strike (CPGS) capabilities may present a threat to the Chinese arsenal due to its limited size and the speed at which the United States can target global systems. The United States views CPGS as a niche capability for use against time sensitive targets in certain scenarios, but China views it as a threat. Another emerging challenge for China involves command and control issues, particularly with submarines at sea.

What can the United States do to improve relations with China? There is more room for dialogue with the Chinese, particularly communication regarding missile defense. The Chinese are interested

in learning more about US-Russian arms control negotiations. While China is not at this time ready to be involved in arms control negotiations, they do not want to be excluded from any P-5 dialogue.

One major question for US policymakers is whether China is the subject of, or a partner in, Northeast Asian security. China has done some important and constructive work in the region, particularly during the Six Party Talks between the United States, China, the Republic of Korea, the DPRK, Russia and Japan. It will be essential to have China involved with any future non-proliferation talks. On the other hand, China is the only nation among the P-5 that has an expanding nuclear arsenal.

North Korea. The presentation on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea discussed three main subjects: the values and priorities of the regime, how those concerns are expressed in terms of military strategies, and how those translate into deterrence challenges. Survival and maintaining the independence of the regime are Kim Jong-il's primary concerns. Regime survival involves keeping power in the hands of the Kim family. Ensuring state independence is also essential; Kim Jong-il does not want the DPRK to become a Chinese satellite. A two-pronged strategy exists for the survival of the regime which entails the isolation of the North Korean people and the sustainment of a "military-first" policy. Every attempt is made to shield the general population from information about the outside world, and particularly of the prosperity enjoyed by the Republic of Korea. "Military-first" is both a policy and an ideology in the DPRK. The Korean People's Army (KPA) has become the power base for the regime, and a large portion of the national resources are devoted to it. The KPA is responsible for preventing foreign invasion and sustaining Kim family rule. Everyone in the country is expected to support and participate in the "military-first" agenda.

Despite the "military-first" policy, the conventional military power of the DPRK is in a steady decline. This is due to a limited and aging weapons inventory; low production of military combat systems; deteriorating physical condition of soldiers; reduced training; corruption; low morale; obsolescent weapons; a weak logistical system and command and control problems. However, the DPRK has sought to redress the reality of its conventional weakness with nuclear capabilities. The DPRK is sincerely worried about the possibility of coming under attack by the United States. In 2003, after the fall of Baghdad, a statement by the DPRK's Foreign Ministry declared that disarming through inspection was an ineffective means of averting war and that "only the tremendous military deterrent force powerful enough to decisively beat back an attack supported by any ultra-modern weapons, can avert a war and protect the security of the country and the nation." The DPRK conducted nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009, and it conducted ballistic missile tests, including ICBMs, SRBMs and MRBMs, in 2006 and 2009, as well. Shortly before retiring in 2011, US Secretary of Defense Gates warned that the DPRK could have road-mobile ICBMs within five years.

Nuclear deterrence is not just a defensive tool for the DPRK; it is also used as an offensive enabler. The regime uses its nuclear capabilities to provide cover for its conventional provocations. The DPRK views military provocations as a way to keep the ROK on the defensive. These provocations tend to be surprise attacks which are short in duration and limited in scope. They are also seen as a way to help extract tribute through cycles of limited aggression and diplomacy. The expectation is that the ROK will not retaliate severely to DPRK provocations out of fear of escalation to the nuclear level. Ambitions for forced reunification seem to have diminished. Although there are frequent limited military provocations against the ROK, it has been a long time since the North has thought seriously about invading the South.

There are a number of potential situations involving the DPRK which the Department of Defense must be prepared to address. Preventing armed conflict between the DPRK and the ROK is a priority. The ROK's patience is growing thin and there have been calls for stronger responses after DPRK provocations. While a DPRK invasion of the ROK is an increasingly remote threat, it is likely that they will continue their provocations and may eventually push the ROK too far. The ROK has announced a doctrine of "proactive deterrence" which involves prompt and vigorous responses to military provocations. Uncontrolled North-South escalation could become dangerous very quickly. At some point the United States may need to become involved in order to manage the escalation of what begins as a "tit for tat" conflict between the two sides. Another situation that must be planned for is the collapse of the Kim regime. If the regime were to collapse there would likely be chaos within the state and significant refugee flows into China and the ROK.

Allied Perspectives

Japan. Extended deterrence is not quantifiable mathematically, but is in the eye of the beholder, and therefore the perspectives of allies protected by extended deterrence guarantees matter a great deal. Japan pays particularly close attention to US policy regarding security assurances, in fact Japan's inputs in the 2010 NPR were more prominent than any other nation's. Japan's approach to nuclear weapons is complicated and characterized by two contradicting points of view. On one hand the Japanese culture is a pacifist one with strong anti-nuclear sentiments; on the other hand ensuring that the United States continues to extend a credible nuclear umbrella to Japan is a central part of Japanese security policy. The US extended deterrence commitment to Japan is taken very seriously among the highest levels of the government, but this is not usually expressed publicly. It is not uncommon for Japanese leaders to send mixed signals by promoting disarmament while still emphasizing the need for a credible deterrent.

It is estimated that Japan could develop a nuclear weapons capability in one or two years should it decide to do so. Japan has found this "nuclear card" useful at times when seeking reassurance that the United States will uphold its extended deterrence commitment. However, it is difficult to imagine a scenario for a Japanese nuclear breakout strategy. There seems to be little to no chance for a surprise breakout by Japan, they are more likely to demand that the United States maintain a credible deterrent. At the same time, Japan would like to have some kind of role to play in regard to the US deterrent. There are many more individuals in the Japanese Defense Ministry and academia studying and thinking about extended deterrence and security studies today than there have been in many decades. This is due partly to generational change and partly as a result of the realities of today's global security environment.

South Korea. The Republic of Korea is a prosperous state today; this constitutes a dramatic shift from the situation two or three decades ago when it was considered a third world country. From the perspective of the ROK there are unresolved issues with regards to managing the alliance. In particular the ROK would like the alliance to coordinate pre-planned strategies for all potential contingencies. They are seeking support from the United States for improved early warning capabilities and they assert that the alliance must upgrade timely retaliatory capabilities. They desire the capability to "punish the punisher right way," or to retaliate rapidly to aggression from the DPRK. In reference to coordinated strategies for contingencies, the view is that currently there are many plans, but little preparation.

Continuing the discussion with the ROK regarding the role of extended deterrence is essential. In the aftermath of the recent DPRK provocations, many South Koreans have come to the conclusion that deterrence has failed. They think that if deterrence had been effective the DPRK would not continue with its aggressive provocations. Recent events such as the sinking of a South Korean ship (the *Cheonan*) and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island in particular have reinforced these sentiments. Some question if it is possible to deter the DPRK, since they already seem to be able to do whatever they want to. The DPRK decides the time, place and method of its attacks and it seems that the ROK can do nothing but wait for an attack to take place and then respond. Concerns of conflict escalation are very high in the ROK. It is, of course, always essential to define who and what exactly is to be deterred. In regard to the Korean peninsula, the US nuclear umbrella is primarily intended to deter nuclear use by the DPRK. It can be said that extended deterrence has been successful in that the DPRK has not yet used a nuclear weapon. However, the danger remains that a future provocation could escalate to the nuclear level.

There is some support within the ROK for the return of US nuclear weapons to ROK territory. Others think that such a return would merely be a political gesture and would not provide any additional protection. Further, there are many South Koreans who doubt the credibility of US extended deterrence guarantees and do not believe that the United States would ever use a nuclear weapon. They point out that the United States has not used a nuclear weapon in over 66 years and claim that it is unlikely that any would be used in defense of the ROK. It seems that there are two distinct groups in the ROK, one that supports the United States and trusts in the credibility of the US extended deterrence commitment; and another that views the United States as a paper tiger which does not really pay much attention to ROK concerns and is not a reliable partner in facing the DPRK.

Summary

The Region. There are evolving relationships and changing threat perceptions within the Northeast Asian region. Japan and South Korea have different outlooks on US extended deterrence guarantees. Japan is relatively comfortable with the current environment, while South Korea feels vulnerable and requires increased assurance that the United States will uphold its extended deterrence commitments. Similarly, China and North Korea present unique deterrence challenges. China will almost certainly respond to any US initiatives to bolster American deterrence capabilities. One challenge for the United States is to anticipate and ameliorate negative Chinese reactions. Transparency between the two countries will become increasingly important and must be initiated before a peer-to-peer relationship is reached. There are uncertainties regarding the current state of dialogue with China, and whether that involves discussions of deterrence, partnership, engagement and management. With regards to the allies, it is unclear if a trilateral defense relationship between the United States, Japan and South Korea is a viable prospect. Questions were also raised as to whether Japan could be counted on to support US efforts in a Korean conflict if faced with North Korean attempts at nuclear coercion.

Deterrence in Northeast Asia. The scenarios that the United States seeks to deter in Northeast Asia include nuclear use by North Korea, nuclear use by China, major conventional aggression by North Korea, and WMD proliferation. Communication and messaging are essential to maintaining deterrence. There is some disagreement over the meaning of deterrence; some argue that for purposes of credibility, US and ROK forces must seek to deter even minor military provocations, and respond rapidly to such provocations when they occur. Another perspective is that nuclear

deterrence applies only to the upper end of the conflict spectrum, and is not meant to be applied at the level of small provocations. In either case, deterrence depends on the credibility of the US commitment and confidence on the part of both allies and adversaries that the United States will actually follow through on that commitment. It is imperative to articulate the integration of multiple initiatives by the allies for deterrence purposes.

Air Force Issues. The Air Force has taken on more responsibility in the region since the retirement of the TLAM-N. Yet there is very little nuclear infrastructure in the theater, making it difficult to forward deploy or disperse assets. Currently deterrence relies on CONUS-based heavy bombers. There are differences of opinion within the Department of Defense as to whether or not the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and the B-61 nuclear bomb have global responsibilities which may one day require them to be deployed to the Pacific region. This would raise additional questions over the viability of US strategy and force structure in the face of nuclear modernization by potential adversaries within the region. According to participants at the workshop, US forces are not currently postured for the execution of a nuclear mission in the Pacific.

Terminology. Extended deterrence does not just involve nuclear weapons, but the whole range of US capabilities. There is a need to educate both allies and adversaries about the meaning and implications of deterrence, and particularly as to what constitutes nuclear deterrence. Nuclear deterrence applies only at the upper end of the spectrum of violence. There is a range of other capabilities that the United States can bring to bear in order to maintain deterrence. In order for all parties to communicate effectively it is essential to have consistent terminology. Each party must be clear about what is meant when they talk about subjects such as deterrence, compellence, containment, and the like.

Key Strategic Level Questions Identified in the Working Groups

- Is extended deterrence at risk in the Northeast Asia region?
- What is the viability of the US force structure in the face of modernization?
- Have US capabilities and credibility eroded since the end of the Cold War? Do our allies care?
- Should we maintain strategic ambiguity, or publicize our red lines?
- What are the red lines for Chinese and North Korean nuclear use?
- How can we convince the Kim family that they need not worry about regime change during a conflict?
- Do allies require more visible signals of assurance?

Key Questions for Senior Air Force Leaders

- In what way might the Air Force seek improved relations with the Chinese military?
- Is there a role for the F-35 in providing extended deterrence guarantees to US allies in Northeast Asia?

- Does the Air Force require additional bases in the Pacific Ocean region?
- Has the Air Force studied how it might best conduct a nuclear strike in the Pacific region were it called upon to do so?



**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
USAF INSTITUTE FOR NATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES
USAF ACADEMY, COLORADO**



**Extended Deterrence and Northeast Asia
SAIC Enterprise Building, McLean, VA
21-22 September 2011**

Wednesday, 21 September 2011

- 1200-1215 Introduction and Overview
Dr James Smith, INSS
Mr Thomas Devine, SAIC**
- 1215-1345 Extended Deterrence and Northeast Asia Policy Perspective
Mr Drew Walsh**
- 1345-1500 Northeast Asia Strategic Landscape (Moderator: Dr James Smith)
Dr Christopher Twomey, Naval Postgraduate School
Mr Joshua Pollack, SAIC**
- 1500-1530 Break**
- 1530-1700 Senior Mentor Perspectives (Moderator: Lt Col Tara O)
Dr Katy Oh, Institute for Defense Analyses
Dr Michael Green, Center for Strategic and International Studies**
- 1730 No-Host Social (McCormick and Schmick's, Westpark Drive, McLean, VA)**

Thursday, 22 September 2011

- 0800-0930 Theater Perspectives (Moderator: Mr Drew Walsh)
Maj Russell Davis, PACAF
Dr Kevin Shepard, USFK/CJ5
Col James McGovern, 7th AF
Lt Col Ryan Hall, 5th AF**
- 0930-1015 A10 Wargame Results (Moderator: Dr James Smith)
Mr Darphaus Mitchell, AF/A10**
- 1015-1030 Break**
- 1030-1200 Working Groups: Implications for USAF
Moderators: Dr Jeffrey Larsen, SAIC/INSS; Mr Drew Walsh, SAIC**
- 1200-1300 Lunch**
- 1300-1415 Working Group Reports
Dr Jeffrey Larsen, SAIC/INSS
Mr Drew Walsh, SAIC**
- 1415-1430 Outbrief
Mr Forrest Waller, NDU Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction
Dr James Smith, INSS**

Workshop Participants

1. Mr Justin Anderson, SAIC
2. Mr Mark Barnett, USSTRATCOM
3. Mr Richard Benson, AF/A5XP
4. Ms Darci Bloyer, SAIC
5. Mr Mark Curley, SAIC
6. Maj Russell Davis, PACAF
7. Col Melvin Deaile, SAASS
8. Mr Tom Devine, SAIC
9. Col Todd Dierlam, AF/GSC
10. Lt Col Frederick Frostic, ACC/A10
11. Ms Julie George, SAF/PAX
12. Ms Rebecca Gibbons, SAIC
13. Mr Steve Gransback, HAF/A5XK
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24. Col James McGovern, 7th AF
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35. Dr Shane Smith, NDU
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37. Lt Col John Sweeney, AF/A10
38. Mr Bob Tilson, AF/A10
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