

Ideal is Real: Vision of a Nuclear Weapon-Free Northeast Asia

Hiromichi UMEBAYASHI, Peace Depot, Inc. Japan

Basel, Switzerland, Sep. 17, 2017

Initial Period

I want to start with the story how I started to tackle with the vision of a NEA-NWFZ in 1996.

In 1995 to 1996, Japanese civil society, including mass media, paid close attention to the movement of global nuclear disarmament due to the ongoing critical international events such as the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, final stage conferences to negotiate CTBT, and successive conclusion of two Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (NWFZ) Treaties, namely Rarotonga Treaty for the South Pacific and Pelindaba Treaty for Africa. Grassroots peace movements were also very active, opposing French and Chinese underground nuclear tests which were taking place with a rush as the conclusion of the CTBT was approaching.

Under such social circumstances, on June 13th 1995, a large article appeared on a major newspaper in Japan, Asahi Shimbun, which reported on the efforts made by an expert group led by Professor John Endicott of the Georgia Institute of Technology to develop a feasible scheme for a Northeast Asia NWFZ (NEA-NWFZ). A picture of a circular zone depicted on the article impressed me to a great extent, because it was the first demonstration of the specific arrangement regarding a NEA-NWFZ. Although there had been frequent verbal references to, or strategic arguments on, the NEA-NWFZ, there was no practical proposal on the scheme for such zone.

The scheme proposed by Endicott's group and depicted on the newspaper was a circular zone with 2000 km radius centered on Panmunjom, which embraces the whole land area of the Republic of Korea (ROK), the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Japan and Taiwan, and part of China, Russia and Mongolia. The U.S. is also included in the arrangement because it has military bases in the ROK and Japan. However, the group's study of such a circular scheme led to a proposal of a Limited NWFZ in which only non-strategic nuclear weapons are prohibited within the zone. The members of

the expert group were from China, ROK, Japan, Russia and the U.S and were mostly former military officials. They concluded that any conceivable geographic arrangements, including an elliptical expansion of the circular zone, would not allow them to agree to any scheme that made the zone genuinely nuclear weapon-free.

Thanks to their pioneering work and stimulated by their proposal, I started my own deliberation, because the author's instinctive response at that time was that the strategic relationship among the U.S., Russia and China is determined largely from global perspective, but that a regional NWFZ should be considered primarily from the perspective of the regional non-nuclear states.

The present author discussed the issue at an international conference organized by the International Network of Engineers and Scientists against Proliferation (INESAP) in Goteborg, Sweden in May 1996. At that time, I was involved in the research on the activities of the U.S. Forces Japan. Evidently, in the 2000 km circular zones, there were ICBM and SLBM related military bases which were indispensable for China and Russia as I illustrated in a map in my presentation at the Goteborg Conference. There were also U.S. strategic military bases in the ROK and Japan. Under these circumstances, it was well predictable that any scheme that would have substantial impact upon the strategic calculation of nuclear weapon states at that time was difficult to be accepted by the expert group members.

Evolvement of a “Three plus Three Arrangement”

The author's alternative proposal presented at the Goteborg Conference was a very simple “three-plus-three” trilateral treaty, in which the three key regional non-nuclear states Japan, the ROK and the DPRK form a NWFZ and three surrounding nuclear weapon states provide negative security assurances to those three states. At that time, there was no six-party-talks, which China initiated later in 2003, but the same six countries are involved in the three-plus-three arrangement.

The Peace Depot developed a model treaty of a NEA-NWFZ in cooperation with Peace Network, an NGO in ROK, in April 2004. It was based upon the

same three-plus-three arrangement, but was a six-party treaty, rather than a trilateral treaty, because the security assurance provided by nuclear weapon states was considered to be of critical importance in this arrangement and to be provided in the main body of the treaty rather than in a protocol as in the case of other existing NWFZ treaties.

In November 2011, there was a major development in the framework to advance the idea of a NEA-NWFZ. A renowned international political scientist Morton H. Halperin, former Special Advisor to the U.S. President, was commissioned by the Nautilus Institute to explore geostrategic conditions that would realistically achieve a NEA-NWFZ. Halperin proposed a comprehensive approach in which a NEA-NWFZ is pursued as one of the elements to solve all the outstanding regional issues affecting relations with the DPRK. He proposed a comprehensive security agreement which includes following six elements: 1) Termination of the State of War, 2) Creation of a Permanent Council on Security, 3) Mutual Declaration of No Hostile Intent, 4) Provisions of Assistance for Nuclear and Other Energy, 5) Termination of Sanctions, and 6) NEA-NWFZ.

The Research Center for Nuclear Weapons Abolition, Nagasaki University (RECNA), which I directed for three years in 2012 to 2015, continued the research to further develop the Halperin's proposal, and proposed a "Comprehensive Framework Agreement for the Denuclearization of Northeast Asia" (CFA) in March 2015, which consists of four Chapters. They are two declaratory chapters and two actionable chapters: 1) a declaratory chapter to terminate the Korean War and to provide for mutual non-aggression, friendship, and equal sovereignty, 2) a declaratory chapter to assure equal rights to access all forms of energy, including nuclear energy, and to establish a NEA Energy Cooperation, 3) an actionable chapter to agree on a treaty to establish a NEA-NWFZ that includes all the necessary provisions for a NWFZ, and 4) an actionable chapter to establish a permanent Northeast Asia Security Council, which will ensure the implementation of the CFA and to be open to discuss the region's other security issues.

Civil Society Efforts to Promote a NEA-NWFZ

International civil society cooperation took place from the early days of the

efforts to promote a NEA-NWFZ. The following are just a few of many examples. The present author had constant opportunities in Japan to speak on the “three-plus-three” idea, including annual Hiroshima and Nagasaki days’ international conferences sponsored by Japan Congress against A- and H-Bombs (Gensuikin) since 1996. INESAP organized a symposium in Shanghai in 1997, where Chinese participants expressed support for the three-plus-three arrangement. The Peace Boat, a Japanese NGO, and INESAP independently held workshops on the issue at the major international conference Hague Appeal for Peace in May 1999. Trans-National Institute (TNI), Doug Hammarskjold Foundation, Gensuikin, Peace Depot, and INESAP organized a major international conference on NWFZs in Uppsala, Sweden in September 2000. The conference set up a new stage of cooperation between Japanese and ROK civil organizations. They organized joint workshops as NGO side events at every NPT related conferences in New York, Geneva or Vienna since 2003. The Peace Depot and Peace Network published a twin booklet entitled “A Northeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone” in each mother language for the purpose of public education.

In Japan, systematic efforts were made to raise awareness among local governments because their unified voices are effective to influence the central government of Japan. National Council of Japan Nuclear Free Local Authorities, headed by Mayor of Nagasaki and embracing about 300 active local governments, officially started a campaign to support the establishment of a NEA-NWFZ in 2009. In addition, the Peace Depot drove a Mayors’ signature campaign to endorse a statement to support a NEA-NWFZ in 2011, and 546 mayors became signatories by August 2017. The statement with those signatures was presented to Foreign Minister of Japan and to Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the U.N. As a result of such efforts, Peace Declarations issued by mayors Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6th and 9th every year have often recommended the Government of Japan to consider the establishment of a NEA-NWFZ. Especially, Mayor of Nagasaki continues to emphasize its importance for recent several years. In the declaration of this year, he said, “As a specific policy representing a step forward towards a world free of nuclear weapons, it (Government of Japan) should act now by examining the concept of a NEA-NWFZ.”

Religious Leaders also started to raise voices. Four cross-religion conveners,

two from Christianity and two from Buddhism, issued a statement entitled “People of Faith in Japan Call for Japan to Stop Relying on the U.S. Nuclear Umbrella and to Move toward the Establishment of a Northeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone” in February 2016. As of August 2017, as many as 128 people of faith supported the statement.

Political Achievement So Far, and Future Prospects

Since 2002, Foreign Ministry of Japan publishes a kind of White Paper “Japan’s Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Policy” once in two or three years. Although it didn’t spend even one word on the issue of a NEA-NWFZ before, it started to refer to the issue in its fifth edition in 2011, giving a brief negative description; “With regard to the plan to create a Northeast Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone that includes Japan, the Government of Japan holds the view that efforts to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue must first be undertaken in order to ensure Japan’s security and improve the security environment of Northeast Asia.” In the sixth edition in 2013, the White Paper provided more substantial account on a NEA-NWFZ, including the acknowledgement that “Especially in recent years, the idea of three-plus-three arrangement, in which Japan, the ROK and DPRK form a NWFZ and the U.S., China and Russia provides security assurances, attract a certain degree of attention.” However, there was no change in its position that the denuclearization of the DPRK has to be achieved first before any efforts for a NEA-NWFZ start. The latest seventh edition in 2016 maintains almost similar argument.

A considerable amount of support has been obtained from parliamentarians of the region. Japanese and the ROK joint parliamentarian’s statement to support the establishment of a NEA-NWFZ was endorsed by 86 Japanese and 7 ROK members of national assembly as of 2011, including two former and one current foreign ministers. In Japan, a major parliamentary group of Democratic Party, chaired by former Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada, drafted and publicly announced a NEA-NWFZ Treaty, based upon the three-plus-three scheme in August 2008. Also Mr. Okada, then Vice Prime Minister, said in a Diet debate, “A NEA-NWFZ could be negotiated as a means to dissuade DPRK from nuclear arms program” in April 2012. It was the first Diet statement in Japan that went beyond the customary “denuclearize

North Korea-first” argument.

There has been a significant achievement in the United Nations as well. The U.N. Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters focused its deliberations during its sessions in 2013 on the relations between NWFZs in advancing regional and global security as one of the key agenda. As the result of the deliberation, it issued a recommendation on the NEA-NWFZ as follows; “The Secretary-General should also consider appropriate action for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in North-East Asia. In particular, the Secretary-General could promote a more active role for the regional forums in encouraging transparency and confidence-building among the countries of the region” (A/68/206, 26 July 2013). The Ulaanbaatar dialogue initiated by the government of Mongolia are very responsive in this regards.

Recent developments around Korean Peninsula will not be easy to be solved in a short term. However, there have been calls from the DPRK for diplomatic talks several times. On January 9, 2015, DPRK Government proposed to the US Government a step to ease tension, in which the US will temporarily suspends joint military exercises in South Korea and its vicinity this year and the DPRK takes responsive step to temporarily suspend the nuclear test. On January 15, 2016, the DPRK repeats essentially the same proposal, saying “Still valid are all proposals for preserving peace and stability on the peninsula and in Northeast Asia including ones for ceasing our nuclear test and the conclusion of peace treaty in return for US halt to joint military exercises.” On July 6, 2016, the DPRK presented following five demands as conditions for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

- 1) to open all the US nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula to the public
- 2) to dismantle all the nukes and related bases, and verify in the public
- 3) not to bring again nuclear strike means to ROK
- 4) never to intimidate DPRK with nukes nor to use against DPRK
- 5) to declare the withdrawal of the US troops holding rights to use nukes from ROK

There are openings for a diplomatic solution and we have to continue to pursue it. The vision of a t of NEA-NWFZ is a viable and sustainable goal for peace and security in this region. Also, we will need to adopt a phased approach to accommodate the realities of the present time and to move forward toward the comprehensive solution of the inter-related pending

issues.