



March 29, 2017

American Leadership in the Asia-Pacific, Part 1: Security Issues

Subcommittee on East Asia, The Pacific, and International Cybersecurity Policy, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, One Hundred Fifteenth Congress, First Session

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Randy Forbes
Naval War College Foundation Senior Distinguished Fellow
United States Naval War College
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Robert L. Gallucci
Distinguished Professor In The Practice Of Diplomacy, Edmund A. Walsh
School Of Foreign Service
Georgetown University
[View Testimony](#)

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Written Statement of J. Randy Forbes

Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on East Asia, the Pacific, and International Cyber Security Policy Hearing

March 29, 2017

Chairman Gardner, Ranking Member Markey, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the work your subcommittee does and for the honor of appearing before you this afternoon. I am also very happy to be here with Robert Gallucci.

The topic you have chosen for this hearing is both timely and critical. While the world's eyes seem rightly focused on the instability of North Korea's leadership and the actions of that leadership, it would be wrong to conclude that this was merely "a crisis de jour." The security issues presented with North Korea and the entire Indo-Asia-Pacific region will continue to require more attention and resources from the United States. We ignore this not just at our peril, but at the peril of the world.

To say that I admire the expertise of each member of this subcommittee is not flattery, it is simply accurate. I read much of what you write, and I listen to much of what you say. My comments this afternoon are not offered with the arrogance of believing they are not without challenge. However, they are offered with my conviction that they are right, and with my hope that they will at least open avenues of thought which could assist in some small manner in preparing us as a nation for the challenges we will face in the Asia-Pacific area for decades to come.

The current security outlook in the Asia-Pacific region is precarious at best. For decades, the peace and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region has been based upon the perception that the United States was both willing and able to intervene decisively to stop aggression by one country in that critical region against another.

Today, more than at any point I can recall, that peace and prosperity is in jeopardy. The causes of present concern are well known to this committee.

First, China is now almost two decades into an ambitious and unprovoked military buildup, with a clear goal of supplanting the United States as the dominant military power in the region. At the same time, it is using paramilitary forces to commit "gray-zone" aggressions against its neighbors and establish de facto control of disputed waters. The tangible result is that they have now reclaimed over 3,000 acres of land (features) in the South China Sea and they have militarized many of these features contrary to international law.

Second, North Korea and the regime of Kim Jong Un continue to pose an imminent and unpredictable threat to their neighbors, while steadily pursuing a larger nuclear arsenal and the capability to threaten and potentially strike the continental United States.

Yet, even these two causes for concern do not adequately reflect the sea change that has taken place regarding the security threat currently existing in the Asia-Pacific area.

For example, it is not just that China has been engaged in a significant military buildup. It is the nature of that build up that is concerning. They have developed advanced fighter aircraft and long range cruise and ballistic missiles that can threaten U. S. assets at much greater ranges. They have credible capabilities to destroy, disable or reduce the effectiveness of U. S. aircraft carriers and to threaten regional air bases so as to deny air superiority. If you combine this with their advances in electronic warfare, space operations, and cyber capabilities a very concerning tapestry begins to unfold.

Equally concerning is a new boldness and aggressiveness appearing in Chinese leadership, especially in their rising ranks. This is especially manifested in a growing willingness to disregard international laws and norms and to project their claims in ways creating more opportunity for possible confrontation.

North Korea has always posed a problem because normal principles of diplomacy and asymmetrical coercion do not work well with irrational actors and that is what we face in North Korea. The difference between the threat we face today versus the threat we faced even a decade ago is quite substantial. A decade ago, we worried about a conflict in a single domain with a single actor. Today, a conflict most likely would involve multiple actors and would almost certainly involve multiple domains. A conflict could very well present the normal threat of conventional warfare but be combined with potential nuclear, cyber, or even space challenges.

So why is this region so important?

Many analysts including former U.S. Secretary of Defense Carter and the current PaCom commander, Admiral Harry Harris have called this "the most consequential region for America's future." It is easy to see why. In the coming decades, this is the region where the largest armies in the world will camp. This is the region where the most powerful navies in the world will gather. This is the region where over one half of the world's commerce will take place and two thirds will travel. This is the region where a maritime superhighway (transporting good or bad things) linking the Indian Subcontinent, Southeast Asia, Australia, Northeast Asia, and the United States begins. This is the region where five of America's seven defense treaties is located. This is the region where two superpowers will compete to determine which world order will prevail. This is the region where the seeds of conflict that could most engulf the world will probably be planted.

Recognizing the importance of this region is vital and I was one of the first to applaud the Obama administration for doing so when it first announced its "pivot" to the Asia Pacific area which was soon renamed the "rebalance." Unfortunately, confusion about this policy was not limited to its name. When there is confusion in the articulation of a policy, our competitors and allies can look to how we resource that policy in an attempt to extrapolate what it means. Otherwise, they are left to define it for themselves which often means our competitors see in it their worst fears and our allies have expectations that are never realized. That is exactly what happened with the "rebalance."

Since this hearing is focused on security issues, I have limited my analysis and comments to those issues. The scope prevents me from looking at other important issues such as human rights, trade, economic development goals, and the principles of democracy itself. Yet I know you realize the importance of all of these issues.

From a security view, the rebalance was not only grossly under resourced but the signaling was very poor. One of the primary reasons for this was the failure to develop an adequate National Defense Strategy. According to testimony before the House Armed Services Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee, the primary document used to resource the military during much of the last administration was its 2012 National Strategic Guidelines. Those Guidelines were fatally flawed with wrong assumptions. Four of those assumptions according to testimony later presented by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the full House Armed Services Committee were:

1. That Isis would not rebound and grow as it did
2. That the U.S. would be out of Iraq and Afghanistan
3. That the Chinese would not militarize as they did
4. That the Russians would not rebuild at the rate they did

The result among other shortfalls was that in 2007 the Navy could meet approximately 90 percent of our combatant commanders validated requests. Last year the Navy was able to meet less than 42 percent. A defense budget was presented that would have delayed the deployment of an aircraft carrier and remove cruisers from our fleet. There were major reductions in the army and the air force. Carrier gaps emerged and our surge capacity challenged. FONOPS were essentially prohibited between 2012 and 2015 and allowed only begrudgingly at other times.

The chinese felt they were virtually unchecked and our allies seriously questioned not just our capability but our resolve in the Asia-Pacific area. China and North Korea share responsibility for the growing instability we

see in Asia. But at the same time, the stability of the international system is also being undermined by the fact that the willingness and ability of the United States to uphold it has fallen into doubt. The Obama Administration's "rebalance" to the Asia-Pacific signaled that Washington understood the importance of this region to U.S. interests. However, failure to adequately resource this effort-both at the Department of Defense and the State Department-resulted in it falling short of hopes and expectations.

So what recommendations can we offer for moving forward? While we certainly can not do everything, there is much we can do.

I believe the most important thing this subcommittee and this congress can do is to build a new culture of strategic thinking. I am convinced that we will need to increase our defense spending. However, you can not just write a check to fix our security issues in the asia-pacific area. We need first and foremost a comprehensive National Defense Strategy with a major part of it focused on the Indo-Asia-Pacific arena.

We can argue over nomenclature, but for the purposes of my comments, "strategy" is that endeavor by which we balance our ways, means, and desired ends. It is where we make trade offs and though it is not popular to say, take risks. I also agree with Lawrence Freedman's conclusion that its purpose is "about getting more out of a situation than the starting balance of power would suggest."

"Policies" are the guidelines that help structure how decisions are made within the broader strategic architecture.

"Tactics" are how we implement our decisions through action.

Strategy should drive policy which should drive tactics. However, I fear that all too often in our country today we are reversing the order and becoming reactionary instead of strategic. There was a time when we could afford that error because we could essentially outrun our mistakes. That time has passed. There may have been a time when we could rely solely on our military strength. That time has passed. So too has the time when our strategy can be dictated by our budget.

To be effective, a National Defense Strategy must be birthed in a marriage between Congress and the Administration. It must also be a holistic approach uniting every element of government power. You should no longer accept the ruse that you are not entitled to a strategy because it is like some secret football play that can not be disclosed until you have to use it. For a National Defense Strategy to work you must be able to articulate it so that policy makers feel comfortable resourcing it, so our allies know how to embrace it, and so our competitors know the lines not to cross. To do that, I would suggest the following:

- A. Require the Department of Defense to develop and present to Congress a National Defense Strategy along with the basic assumptions used to develop it. If the assumptions are wrong, the Strategy will be flawed.
- B. Require the Department of Defense to show how its budget resources that Strategy and the risks assumed if it is not so resourced.
- C. Ask for a plan from both the Department of Defense and the Department of State as to how it plans to improve strategic thinking. If it is not a priority to agency leadership, it will not happen. If you are not seeing it in personnel decisions, it will probably not happen.
- D. Require a cross agency review of Asia-Pacific policies with a task force designed to develop policy guidelines and to ensure those guidelines are compatible with the National Defense Strategy.

Our U.S. security alliances are very durable but they need reinforcement. They need to know that the United States still knows how "to make the trains run on time," especially when it comes to national defense. Articulating a well-reasoned National Defense Strategy they can embrace and resourcing it to show an increased presence in the area will do much to strengthen these alliances. In addition, I would suggest the following:

1. Continue to strengthen bilateral alliances with Japan and South Korea, while also encouraging and enabling those two key allies to cooperate more closely with one another on many issues of mutual concern.
2. Make clear our commitment to the security of Taiwan. Our allies read our resolutions, so language can be important.
3. Work with Prime Minister Duterte to sustain recent progress in US-Philippines defense cooperation and, importantly, ensure that American forces can continue to deploy to the Philippines in support of both Philippine security and our broader security objectives in the region. Despite recent bumps in the road, it is still mutually beneficial to both countries to improve this relationship.
4. Continue to work with our ANZUS allies, Australia and New Zealand, and in particular explore additional options for forward deploying or forward staging American forces and conducting combined training in the region. This includes integrated maintenance and ground support operations as well as greater integration of 5th generation fighter deployments.
5. Seek to develop closer ties with countries like India, Vietnam, and others that share many of our security concerns and could be enabled to play a bigger role in maintaining regional stability.
6. For too long, the Asia-Pacific has not been prioritized within the State Department security assistance budget in a way that is commensurate with its level of importance to U.S. interests. Indeed, in recent years, the entire region has received only 1 percent of U.S. Foreign Military Financing. If we conclude that this may be the "most consequential region for America's future" we should strongly consider proposals for an Asia-Pacific Stability Initiative as a budget mechanism similar to the European Reassurance Initiative with the goal of devoting additional resources to our interests in the Pacific.
7. We certainly must send additional funding to DOD to invest in munitions, resiliency, sustainment, and capabilities that Pacific Command needs. However, I would also advocate for increasing targeted Foreign Military Financing and International Education and Training funding to help

enhance the militaries of partners like the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

8. Routinize Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPS).

9. Reconsider the efficacy of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. Since 1987, the United States has complied with the bilateral Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty with Russia, which prohibits either party from fielding certain types of surface-to-surface missiles. At the same time, China has deployed over 1000 of these missiles, according to DoD reports to Congress, and uses them to menace our allies and partners and our own forward deployed forces in the region. In light of this fact, and the recent testimony by Gen. Paul Selva, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that Russia is actively violating the INF Treaty, I believe this committee should begin reassessing whether continued adherence to the INF Treaty is in the interest of our country. As a member of the House Armed Services Committee's Strategic Forces Subcommittee, I tasked the DoD with reassessing the military implications, but I believe it is incumbent upon this committee to further explore the diplomatic and broader foreign policy considerations.

10. Support efforts to restore US military readiness and better prepare it for threats. While I realize the importance of focusing on matters of foreign policy that fall clearly within the purview of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I would be remiss if I did not remind members of the committee that deterrence, which I believe is the primary contributor to peace and prosperity, is predicated upon the belief that our country is both willing and able to stand up to aggression. To deter aggression in the Asia-Pacific, we must make it clear to would-be aggressors that we not only remain committed to the region, but also will be able to effectively project power into the region, deny aggressors their objectives, and impose costs and punishments upon them. Current shortfalls in U.S. military readiness-such as insufficient stockpiles of precision-guided munitions, and forgone training and maintenance- are seriously undermining our ability to respond to and defeat aggression. This, in turn, undermines our ability to deter it.

11. Finally, no discussion of Asia-Pacific security issues would be complete without at least discussing the rise of Islamic extremism. If one thing is

increasingly clear there is no single magical response now available to eradicate this dangerous evil. We must continue to foster partnerships not just with our allies but also with other actors within the region who suffer from its effects. In the cross agency review I addressed earlier, I would specifically laser in on joint efforts to cut off the funding streams for these organizations. Removing the financing is like removing the oxygen from a room, it makes it almost impossible for the organization to survive or grow.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and thank you for what you do for our country.

Testimony Before the East Asia Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, March 29, 2017

Robert L. Gallucci

I want to thank the Chairman of the Subcommittee for this opportunity to share my views on some of the issues that impact US national security in the Asia-Pacific region. I plan to limit my comments to the security dimensions of the US-China relationship writ large, the threat posed by North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs, and the implications for nuclear terrorism of significant plutonium stocks accumulating in the civilian nuclear power programs of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea.

US-China Relations

For the last two decades or so, successive US administrations have sought to characterize the preferred relationship between China and the US in a way that recognized China as a great power with legitimate political, economic and security interests in the Asia-Pacific region. We would expect competition in each of those spheres, but also cooperation to the benefit of both countries, while avoiding military confrontation. Successive administrations have placed the emphasis on different aspects of our relations with China, and used different catch phrases to capture the preferred image of the relationship, but all recognized an inevitable tension between the desired peaceful, constructive competition and cooperation they sought, and the potential for relations to deteriorate to armed conflict.

Just beneath this imagery lie the interests of nations and perceptions of leaders in both countries. The US has always had a vital interest in preserving political and economic access to the countries of Asia, and thus it has opposed any attempt at hegemony in the region. It is this concern, that China will try to establish a sphere of influence which would exclude the US, that is the backdrop to American interpretations of contemporary moves by China in the Asia-Pacific. China's militarization of its claims in the South China sea, and in its contest with Japan over the islands both claim in the East China Sea, give substance to that concern.

From China's perspective, US moves fit a narrative of attempted containment of China, one where the US looks for opportunities to prevent China from protecting its legitimate interests, interests that are proximate to the Chinese mainland and a Pacific ocean away from the continental US. Evidence of the perceived US security strategy is seen in our alliances with Japan, the ROK, Australia and the Philippines, our continued support for Taiwan's independence, and specific military programs which seem to be aimed at undercutting China's nuclear deterrent, particularly our

ballistic missile defense and the imagined strategic implications of plans for a conventional prompt global strike capability.

The truth, of course, is that the US does seek to limit Chinese influence, and we are not at all certain that China is the status quo power it claims to be. Both countries have reason to be wary. The alliance structure on which we and our allies depend for our security is based on extended deterrence, our ability to credibly defend our allies from aggression, to include the use of nuclear weapons...first...if necessary. The Chinese, for their part, have evolved over decades from accepting America's ability to dominate in any critical confrontation by resort to the threat of a disarming first strike with nuclear weapons, to asserting their ability to deter the US from nuclear intimidation by finally achieving a survivable retaliatory capability.

Since the US has not acknowledged that China, like Russia, has an assured destruction capability vis a vis the US, there is then the possibility of a catastrophic miscalculation in a crisis involving the vital interests of both parties. That crisis is most likely to occur not over the Korean peninsula, but Taiwan. Taiwan's status is a core interest of China, and that it not be changed by China's use of force is critical to the credibility of American assurances to Taiwan – and to our alliance credibility everywhere. Scenarios leading to a confrontation over Taiwan can begin in Beijing if, for example, the Chinese leadership felt the need to stoke nationalistic fervor to distract attention from poor economic performance, or in Taipei, if the leadership there saw an opportunity to get out from under the “one China” policy of Beijing and Washington. The message here is to be very careful in a Taiwan contingency, and for the US to keep the nuclear threshold with China as high as possible by maintaining robust conventional force capabilities to counter Chinese military and naval modernization aimed specifically at overcoming a US defense of Taiwan.

So the effort at a balanced policy with China should continue, one where we respect its global economic and political importance, and recognize its growing military capability, but avoid even the appearance of retreat in its face.

North Korea

North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs directly threaten our allies, the Republic of Korea and Japan, and in a few years we expect they will pose the same threat to the United States. Preventing the latter ought to be a policy objective of the US, both for the security of the American people and the credibility of the deterrent we extend to our allies. That said, we should also recognize that we have lived with the threat of nuclear armed ICBMs pointed at us from the Soviet Union, now Russia, and China for many decades without any effective ballistic missile defense (BMD), including years in which we were not entirely comfortable with the rationality of the leadership we hoped to deter with our own strategic nuclear forces. In short, relying on deterrence to deal with the North Korean threat

is less desirable than an effective BMD, but plausibly more attractive than a major war to remove that threat in the absence of such BMD.

In terms of scenarios about which we should be concerned, a strike out of the blue from the North seems most unlikely, but the escalation of an incident between North and South at sea or near the DMZ seems quite plausible, particularly since we really have no idea what North Korea thinks nuclear weapons are good for. If they imagine that their ability to strike with nuclear weapons will deter the South and the US from a conventional engagement following a provocation from the North, they would be mistaken, and tragically so. We need to remember that we and other states have lived with our own nuclear weapons for a long time, and at least some of them have come to appreciate the delicacy and nuance of deterrent calculations. We should not assume that the leadership in Pyongyang could be so described.

Among developments we need to be most concerned about in terms of probability of occurrence and magnitude of impact, is the transfer by North Korea of nuclear weapons materials or technology to another state or terrorist group. This occurred a decade ago when the North built a plutonium production reactor in Syria. Fissile material was denied to the Syrians, and others who might have gotten their hands on it, by an Israeli air strike that flattened the facility before the reactor went critical. But it is this type of activity, selling fissile material, the equipment or technology to produce it, nuclear weapons components or designs, or even the weapons themselves, that would create the nightmare scenario of nuclear terrorism we most fear. Taking an early opportunity to underline for Pyongyang that such transfers will be met with a swift retaliatory response would be a good idea.

Policy prescriptions generally fall into three options: containment, military force and negotiation. The dilemma has been that containment has been seen as too passive, allowing the threat to grow, military force to costly, particularly now that the North has nuclear weapons, and negotiation ineffective, as many judge the North to have cheated on past deals. But these options should not be regarded as mutually exclusive, and perhaps a strategy built from each of them has some chance of success.

Containment has been our default posture, involving sanctions, pressure on China to allow them to work, and even to apply the kind of additional pressure on Pyongyang that only China can. Military exercises and planning with our allies, the ROK and Japan, are an essential element of this posture in order to keep our alliances strong. Also included here are “non-kinetic” moves, such as cyber attacks, from which we should expect retaliation in kind. But so far, we have no reason to believe that this approach will either block the accumulation of fissile material and nuclear weapons, or the testing of nuclear weapons and extended range ballistic missiles, much less cause the regime to collapse.

Military force to prevent the emergence of a nuclear weapons capability was seriously contemplated and prepared for in 1994 during the Clinton administration

and the negotiations that led to the Agreed Framework. It was not pursued because the North eventually accepted a halt to its plutonium program that lasted a decade. Now that the North has had five nuclear tests and manufactured perhaps a dozen weapons, along with ballistic missiles that could plausibly deliver them to South Korea and Japan, the stakes are quite a bit higher. As the North moves to solid fueled, mobile missiles for its ICBM capability, the "left of launch" option becomes more challenging, and our ballistic missile defense capability regionally, and for the US homeland, is leaky at best. While this should not discourage any genuine pre-emptive strike on the North, that is, to prevent an imminent launch against the US or its allies, it should cause us to think hard before attempting regime change or even choosing a preventive strike aimed at delaying the emergence of an ICBM capability.

Negotiations are seen by many observers as a failed policy, unlikely to succeed with a regime that cannot be trusted. Interestingly, the North appears to feel the same way. In fact, there is no question that the North cheated on the 1994 deal by buying uranium enrichment equipment and technology from Pakistan, thus allowing it to produce one kind of fissile material as it stopped producing another. But there is also no question that the deal stopped a plutonium production program which, each year, we estimated would have been producing enough fissile material, by the year 2000, for forty nuclear weapons. As it turned out, because of the deal, by 2000, the North had no nuclear weapons. For its part, the North plausibly thought that the Agreed Framework would result in normal relations with the US, and thus remove the need to acquire nuclear weapons as a way to deter us from attempting regime change. It may as plausibly be argued that they hedged that bet with the uranium enrichment deal with Pakistan and concluded early in the Bush Administration that a hostile relationship with the US still existed and so nuclear weapons were still required.

Of course, these propositions may not be accurate and the North may now, if not decades ago, have less benign reasons for wanting nuclear weapons. The question is whether or not it would be prudent to find out by engaging in negotiations. If we decide to explore that route, we should be careful to keep the object a nuclear weapons free North Korea. This would not mean shunning interim steps involving freezes of various types, but it would mean rejecting the North's position that it will never give up its nuclear weapons. Were we to accept that position and enter protracted negotiations, we would legitimize the North Korean nuclear weapons program and create domestic political pressure in the South and in Japan to follow suit.

We should also recognize that if there is a route to a non-nuclear North Korea via some sort of settlement, the deal will have to address the North's concern about a US led effort to change the regime in Pyongyang. It will have to give the North what it believes it gets from nuclear weapons. The outcome would have to be the establishment of normal relations between the US and the DPRK, to include a peace treaty to replace the armistice, but also establishment of diplomatic, political and economic ties. And this is only plausible if the North adopts human rights standards

in its treatment of its own people that are acceptable to the international community. None of this will be easy.

How these three approaches can be integrated, or deciding if tougher sanctions need to proceed serious negotiations, or whether robust military exercises and maintaining the threat of military action are useful or destructive of engagement are tactical questions worthy of discussion. It is worth noting, though, that our unwillingness to move to the negotiating table on the heels of a North Korean nuclear or ballistic missile test reflects a concern that we not be perceived at home or abroad as rushing to talk after being threatened. And the leadership in the North may well take a similar position.

Nuclear Terrorism

It has been said that nuclear terrorism is a very high consequence, but very low probability event. The first part of the proposition is certainly true. The technology of seventy years ago produced an event that instantaneously killed thirty thousand people in one city, and many times more than that died in the following weeks. Nothing else that we know of, natural or man made, except perhaps a meteor strike, can do that: that much death in an instant.

The second part of the proposition is arguably true because, to begin with, we have not seen a nuclear weapon detonated by a terrorist over those seventy years. And the reason we have not is certainly not because there have not been, and are not now, terrorist organizations that have sought to acquire a nuclear weapon. We know that they have, and have reason to believe that they will continue to try. The obstacle to their success has been the difficulty of acquiring a nuclear weapon or the fissile material to make one – an improvised nuclear device (IND). This situation, what makes nuclear terrorism a low probability event, may be about to change because of decisions made in Northeast Asia about how to pursue electrical power production from nuclear energy.

Japan now owns forty-four tonnes of separated plutonium, of which about twenty percent (nine tonnes) is stored in Japan. The rest, eighty percent (35 tonnes), is stored in France and the United Kingdom, where it was separated from Japanese spent fuel. The plutonium stored in Europe is supposed to be shipped back to Japan by the end of the decade. All this plutonium – easily more than enough for seven thousand nuclear weapons – was separated from spent fuel produced in Japanese nuclear power reactors so that it might be used in Japan's fast breeder reactor development program or recycled for use in some of Japan's current generation of thermal nuclear reactors. But Japan has abandoned its operation and development of fast breeder reactors and, post-Fukushima, it will likely only operate a few reactors with a mix of plutonium and uranium in their fuel. There is, then, no clear plan about what to do with thousands of nuclear weapons worth of plutonium that will be stockpiled in Japan.

If this were not bad enough, Japan is currently planning to start up a new reprocessing plant at Rokkasho that will produce even more separated plutonium. Since there is already a plutonium “overhang,” the Japanese are considering running the new plant at 20% capacity, which would still produce one and one-half tonnes of plutonium each year, enough for at least an additional two hundred and fifty nuclear weapons.

There are at least two concerns here. First, Japan’s neighbors, China and South Korea, worry that Japan is accumulating all this plutonium as part of a hedging strategy, aimed at greatly shortening the time it would take to build a credible nuclear weapons arsenal should the decision be made in Tokyo to abandon the country’s non-nuclear weapons status and leave the NPT.

Whatever may be thought of that, it is the second concern that relates to nuclear terrorism. To the extent that Japan seeks to fuel its nuclear power reactors with a mixture of plutonium and uranium – as opposed to simply using low enriched uranium – it will be planning on the regular circulation of nuclear weapons material in civilian facilities, with civilian security, for an indefinite period. Depending on how many reactors it eventually so fuels, plutonium will become vulnerable to theft in multiple locations and in transit around the countryside. This cannot be a good idea.

The US could choose to try and influence Japanese thinking since the US-Japan agreement for nuclear cooperation is up for renewal next year. If neither country objects, it will automatically renew. But against the backdrop of renewal of the agreement, the US could engage Tokyo in discussion about the wisdom of a new reprocessing facility opening in the next few years, and generally about recycle as compared to other methods of dealing with its growing plutonium stockpile.

At the same time the civil plutonium issue is playing out in Japan, China has negotiated with France for the purchase of a reprocessing plant to handle spent fuel from its civilian nuclear energy sector. The plant would be the same size as Rokkasho, separating enough plutonium each year to make more than a thousand nuclear weapons. Again, if all went according to plan, some portion of that plutonium would be mixed with uranium and be moving about China to fuel China’s growing nuclear power program. This would be another challenge to physical security; another opportunity for the nuclear terrorist.

Finally, there is the Republic Korea, which has a substantial nuclear power program and the desire to do what its neighbors plan to do, separate plutonium from spent commercial nuclear fuel. However, since the ROK’s agreement for nuclear cooperation with the US requires US approval before reprocessing, the decision to do so has been put off a bit as both sides consider the “proliferation resistance” of the technology that the South proposes to use in reprocessing. But if the outcome is yet another reprocessing plant in Northeast Asia separating plutonium from spent

fuel, it is difficult not to see this facility as presenting yet another opportunity for the acquisition of fissile material by terrorist groups seeking to manufacture one or more nuclear weapons.

Interestingly, when the US Blue Ribbon Commission Report of 2012 considered the economics of reprocessing, it found no good argument for separating plutonium from spent fuel. Not even waste management concerns would justify reprocessing, especially if dry, cement storage were adopted until a politically acceptable long term storage site could be found. This all suggests that perhaps if the three countries involved here, Japan, China and South Korea, all of whom are watching the decisions taken in the other capitols, were to agree on a moratorium on reprocessing of spent fuel for civilian purposes, it would make the region and the world a safer place.