

Inter-Korean Initiatives and the Path to a NEANWFZ

Toby Dalton
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
June 2019



1

Evolving Deterrence as a Bridge

If Peace Regime => Disarmament (Denuclearization) => NEANWFZ...

Then: achieving disarmament should be the primary focus, since it must be implemented in a way that creates foundation for a zone.

Disarmament requires a transition from deterrence to cooperative security as the relational paradigm on the Korean Peninsula.

Qs: How can inter-Korean initiatives facilitate shift toward cooperative security? How to sequence w/ denuclearization and other steps?



2

2

After a Peace Regime

Peace regime is prerequisite, but not sufficient to end deterrence or achieve cooperative security.

Assuming nuclear weapons are principally a tool for North Korean regime survival against external regime change, shifting away from deterrence will require more from US to alter KJU's risk calculus than peace regime.

Even if/when North Korea completely disarms WMD, conventional deterrence will still play a role, perhaps up to point of confederation.

In timeline and phasing to reach a NWFZ, deterrence will be present 'til close to the end, which means it must be planned for from the outset.

3



3

Remaking Deterrence

Goal during denuclearization is to change fundamentals of deterrence: make nuclear weapons unnecessary and unattractive to KJU.

Notional List of mechanisms for changing deterrence:

- Legal and political frameworks
- Conventional military force postures and readiness
- Deterrence signaling and declaratory policy
- Measures for military incidents and accidents
- Inter-Korea and 2+2 political and military processes
- ...

Two Koreas have more elbow room and agency in conventional deterrence relative to other topics, especially nuclear ones.

4



4

Escalation Firebreak

Diminishing importance of nuclear weapons also requires closing escalation pathways from the tactical and operational levels; also diminishes coercive potential of NW for asymmetric escalation.

2018 PY summit agreement changed some military practice (No-Fly Zones); more needed to change infrastructure and facts – a physical firebreak.

“Leaps of trust” – costly steps that invest security in adversary’s hands

Options:

- Force exclusion zones
- Parallel arms reductions (symmetric or asymmetric)
- Diminished military readiness, altered exercises
- Transparency and monitoring system

5



5

Closing Window?

US-China competition looms over the future deterrence equation on the Korean Peninsula. Space constraints for inter-Korean cooperation?

How to lock in transformative steps toward cooperative security to avoid backsliding if disarmament process stalemates?

The window for progress may not be open for long...

6



6