

**The North East Asia Nuclear
Weapon Free Zone Proposal: new
windows of opportunity for
regional denuclearization**

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**Regional denuclearization: the new
context**

- 2018 diplomatic breakthroughs have opened new opportunities for regional denuclearization
- April 2018 Panmunjon Summit and Declaration between Kim Jong-un and Moon Jae-in, with further two bilateral summits, and a fourth planned for later this year
- Kim-Trump summits in Singapore (June 2018) and Hanoi (Feb 2019), with US openness to a third summit

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- Relative continued restraint on both sides: DPRK halting further nuclear and long-range missile tests; US/ROK suspending large-scale joint exercises close to the border.
- However, backwards moves appear to be the recent resumption of DPRK short-range missile tests (condemned by John Bolton, downplayed by Trump); and US/ROK THAAD-related exercises + US impounding of North Korean ship.
- Continued meetings of US/ROK working group on denuclearization and peacebuilding on Korean Peninsula
- Japan's Abe seeking a summit with Kim Jong-un without previous preconditions.

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Critical juncture

- North East Asia stands at a critical juncture, both in the short and longer term.
- The thaw in North-South relations plus new willingness of US and DPRK to enter into direct negotiations may lead to possible agreements on Korean War peace settlement and on freezing and eventual dismantling of DPRK nuclear weapon capabilities.
- However, previous bilateral agreements, such as the 1992 Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the 1994 Agreed Framework, and the 2007-8 Six Party talks proved short-lived.
- What is needed is a permanent regional security framework involving the three regional states and guaranteed by the US, China and Russia, and the negotiation of a regional NWFZ.
- As in the case of the five other NWFZs in populated regions, the aim should be the negotiation of a legally binding and internationally and regionally-verified NEANWFZ, encompassing not only the Korean Peninsula but also Japan, and allowing for other neighbours to join (such as Mongolia).

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Need for a wider NEANWFZ in Northeast Asia

- Failure to include the wider region will inevitably lead to concerns from both Koreas about future Japanese nuclear intentions, given Japan's stockpiling of plutonium
- Japan is also concerned about China, so a wider regional denuclearization arrangement in the form of a regional NWFZ would enable binding security guarantees to be given by all three neighbouring nuclear weapon states, China, Russia and the US.
- Reneging on denuclearization obligations under a NEANWFZ treaty would invoke the threat of both UN sanctions and potentially invoke reliance on either extended conventional deterrence or resumption of extended nuclear deterrence on the part of allied states.

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Steps towards establishing a NEANWFZ

- Need for one or more regional leaders to play a pivotal advocacy role.
- President Moon Jae-in already appears to playing such a role in relation to Korean Peninsula denuclearization.
- Other regional and global leaders may also have the potential for playing such a role, given the support for the NWFZ concept within the NPT and through groupings such as the New Agenda Coalition.

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Other Initiatives that might foster regional governmental agreement on a NEANWFZ declaration and agreement

- Convening of a regional intergovernmental conference on the humanitarian impacts of a nuclear war in the Northeast Asian region.
- Such conferences were an important prior step that led to the 2017 negotiation of the UN TPNW (Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons)
- A regional conference might include member states of adjoining NWFZs, including ASEAN and South Pacific NWFZs, and the Mongolian NWFZ.

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Lobbying of political representatives

- Coordinated campaign on lobbying of political representatives in and beyond the region.
- Such lobbying could make use of: PSNA policy and advocacy papers; modelling of a NEANWFZ treaty, and audio-visual materials.
- Such lobbying might also be coordinated with civil society groups like IPPNW and ICAN who are lobbying for support for the TPNW

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Track 2 initiatives

- Encouragement of both government experts and associated advisory panels (such as Japan's Eminent Persons Group) to prepare working papers on the feasibility and desirability of establishing a NEANWFZ for circulation at the 2020 NPT Review Conference
- Also with the aim of including the possibility of NEANWFZ zone negotiation in the next NPT Action Plan.

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Mainstream and social media advocacy

- NEANWFZ advocacy in the mainstream media is an equally important step that will be needed to:
- explain the safeguards and benefits of such a zone;
- counter the predictable opposition from adherents to traditional Cold War or nuclear deterrent mindsets.
- Some of the recent RECNA and Nautilus discussion papers could be further republished in op-ed form to contribute to public debate on the NEANWFZ concept.

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Technical studies

At a more technical level, PSNA could continue to foster further detailed research work on such aspects as:

- (1) the modelling of a NEANWFZ that is tailored to the special conditions of North East Asia;
- (2) verification systems, both central and regional, that would ensure confidence in such a zone;
- (3) the legal and diplomatic steps for implementing the zone regionally and internationally;
- (4) the modalities of treaty negotiation.
- (5) impact on traditional security arrangements, including reliance on extended nuclear deterrence.

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Working group

- Assuming that the present negotiations continue, and the possibility of creating a more ongoing regional NEA security forum, an initial step might consist of establishing an intergovernmental working group on the NEANWFZ concept.
- This might be under the auspice of a new regional security body or be an ad hoc negotiating forum.
- The setting up of such an intergovernmental working group would need to be preceded by a declaration from the three regional leaders and their allies on agreement in principle on the concept of a NEANWFZ and support for the establishment of a working group.

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In conclusion

- We are now at a watershed moment when North East Asia must decide whether to continue, or turn away from, its current nuclear-weapon-dependent path
- This path poses an ever present threat of pre-emptive, accidental, or miscalculated nuclear war that would be catastrophic for the region and the whole world.
- Reliance on so-called missile defence systems will only aggravate the risk by increasing adversaries' resort to deploying ever greater numbers of nuclear-armed warheads to overwhelm such 'defences'.
- A NEANWFZ offers a cooperative diplomatic solution (based on successful precedents in other regions) that addresses both the immediate and long-term threats to regional and global security posed by continued reliance on nuclear weapons within the North East Asia region.