

By Conn Carroll

In Monday's Washington Post, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger wrote about North Korea's nuclear program: "More emphasis would need to be given to missile defense. It would be essential to redesign the American deterrent strategy in a world of multiple nuclear powers—a challenge unprecedented in our experience."

The eventual existence of "multiple nuclear powers" has long been a driving force of Heritage Foundation analysis of missile defense. Last March, Heritage fellow Baker Spring summed up the findings of nuclear war games conducted by policy experts in 2004 and 2005:

The reasoning behind using games and game theory is based on the fact that they are, and have been, an important tool used to analyze the dynamics of war and peace. The security environment in Asia was used as a model to conduct this Nuclear Game.

The outcomes of our exercises suggest that the presence of defenses in a multi-player setting not only does not feed instability, but also may contribute to stability.

First, the outcome of the games generally showed that the more widespread the presence of defenses, the lower was the propensity to ready offensive (nuclear) arms and fire shots with these arms. It also showed a greater propensity to abandon offensive arms (disarm) as defenses became more widespread.

Second, the more widespread the presence of defenses, the lower the propensity to adopt hostile attitudes toward one another or move to threaten each other. Third, the more widespread the defenses, the less likely an aggressive actor's conclusions favored aggressive actions.

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