

Session 5: Nuclear Programs: Iran and Pakistan

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Summary

This panel focused on the current status and overall approach to nuclear weapons for Iran and Pakistan. The moderator, Ellen Laipson of the Stimson Center, noted the differences in the stories and focus of the nuclear programs for Iran and Pakistan, but highlighted the potential and actual instability in these countries often puts them together in a similar conversation on nuclear issues. The panel had a unique discussion between the intent and purposes of the respective countries' nuclear weapons and the response from the international community on how to handle these programs.

Emile Hokayem of the International Institute for Strategic Studies pointed out that there is uncertainty whether Iran is slowly building a nuclear program or rapidly trying to reach nuclear status. This uncertainty also connects with the purpose of Iran pursuing nuclear weapons. Emile noted Iran had sought nuclear weapons long before recent public discussions by Israel on its need to have all options open to prevent Iran from gaining nuclear weapons. Israel is a welcome justification for Iran's nuclear program, but it was not always the initial reason for Iran developing nuclear weapons.

For Pakistan, Feroz Khan of the Naval Postgraduate School argued the calculation for Pakistan's nuclear weapons is connected to the dynamics with India. Pakistan's overall nuclear program has to balance the need for energy with the need for deterrence; however, Feroz Khan noted that Pakistan is the only country that pursued nuclear technology for the purpose of building nuclear weapons. Now, the fear of preventive strike and the fear of sabotage are the motivators for Pakistan's nuclear weapons. Yet, General Khan worryingly suggested the killing of Osama bin Laden by American forces might actually cause Pakistan

to focus more on the external threat to its nuclear weapons rather than an internal threat by terrorists stealing the weapons or information.

Jeffrey Lewis of the Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute argued the international community should not make exceptions or excuse countries for building nuclear weapons because of geopolitical concerns. Dr. Lewis believed the international community made a mistake allowing Pakistan to build nuclear weapons because of its geopolitical rivalry with India. Excusing countries allows for greater exceptions and leads to more countries developing weapons rather than eliminating them.

Iran and Pakistan do leave the international community in a tough position regarding nuclear weapons. The panelists discussed how negotiations and dialogue over Iran's nuclear weapons have been unsuccessful. Moreover, with Pakistan, the U.S.'s efforts to bring India into export control regimes and other nuclear related groups further emphasizes the exceptional nature of the U.S.-India civil nuclear deal, which make a international rules-based system for nonproliferation issues more difficult. Thus, the panel provided an interesting conversation on intention and purpose of nuclear weapons for Iran and Pakistan and the proper response from the international community to encourage more countries to give up nuclear weapons rather than pursue them.

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