

Session 5: Disarmament

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Summary

Eliminating nuclear weapons will be a long and protracted process—one that poses both challenges and opportunities. Moderated by Bruce MacDonald of the United States Institute of Peace, the Disarmament panel dealt with the political and verification issues that must be resolved if states are to move to a world without nuclear weapons. The panel focused on the near-term issues that must be addressed now that the United States and Russia have concluded the New START accord as well as the long-term obstacles to denuclearization, including the eventual threat of rearmament if zero is reached.

Corey Hinderstein of the Nuclear Threat Initiative began the discussion by looking at how states might verify dismantlement and compliance. She focused on the importance of establishing a robust verification system—a long-term task which must begin immediately given the scope of what is involved. According to Hinderstein, the international community already has a strong technical basis from which it can draw. Lessons learned by U.S. and Russian negotiators as well as IAEA inspectors will be particularly valuable. She suggested that all states, nuclear and non-nuclear alike, rethink classification standards and focus on developing the ability to verify initial baseline declarations, among other things. Masood Khan, Pakistan's Ambassador to China, discussed both regional and international dynamics and the need to resolve outstanding conflicts before one can take meaningful steps in disarmament. Khan also highlighted current stalemates in Conference on Disarmament and other international forums and the need to build a new global security architecture if nuclear weapons are to be eliminated. He suggested that U.S. President Barack Obama revived the concept of Global Zero, but that it must become a multinational endeavor going forward and that all states must find the political will to deal with the challenges posed by deep nuclear reductions.

Andrew Pierre of the United States Institute of Peace discussed theater missile defense and the Phased Adaptive Approach and how missile defense cooperation between Russia and NATO might fit into the next round of arms control negotiations. Following such negotiations, Pierre suggested that the focus should shift to multilateral arms control, where Great Britain and France appear the most likely to participate. John Park, also of the United States Institute of Peace examined how deterrence changes as arsenals are reduced and what impact such reductions might have on alliance dynamics. Park focused on the situation in the Korean Peninsula and how current realities complicate the prospects for a world without nuclear weapons.

MacDonald closed by noting that the challenges are endless. States must effectively deal with tangential issues such as missile defense, tactical nuclear weapons and nondeployed nuclear weapons as well as bigger picture issues like how to maintain strategic and crisis stability as numbers become dramatically lower. All of this suggests that deep reductions and the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons will require more than a numbers-based analysis—it will necessitate a fundamental shift in international relations, which is clearly a long-term challenge.

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