

Panel: Future of the ROK-US Nuclear Cooperation Agreement (Regency Room)

Date/Time: Wednesday, February 20, 2013 / 09:00-10:15

Talking Points for: Sheen Seongho, Associate Professor, Graduate School of International Studies, Seoul National University

South Korea's interest in revising the agreement is mainly driven by its growing energy demand and business interests. South Korea feels it has a legitimate right for advanced nuclear technology considering its commitment to non-proliferation efforts and its growing nuclear power generation capacity. Meanwhile, the Obama administration, in particular, undertook non-proliferation as one of its main foreign policy agendas with its focus on nuclear terrorism and its "nuclear free world" initiative. South Korea's demand for advanced fuel cycle capacity would put the United States in a dilemma between managing its alliance partnership and its global efforts for nuclear security. The most important challenge for Washington and Seoul is to prevent the issue from becoming a test-case for the alliance. The two allies need to make a compromise in a way that Washington acknowledges South Korea's desire for full nuclear energy capacity at least in a symbolic way while Seoul needs to reassure Washington concern of nuclear proliferation in the region as well as in the world.

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