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Panel: Second Nuclear Age? (RR)

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In the development history of the Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD), the nuclear weapon is a new comer. The end of the Cold War actually did not bring too many changes to the global nuclear landscape. The so-called Second Nuclear Age, advocated by Paul Bracken in 2000, is misleading for a number of reasons:

- The very nature of nuclear weapon has not changed, it is still one of the Mass Destruction Weapon, which produces enormous destructive force and thus render it a unique role in international relations.
- Even though nuclear weapon technologies have been steadily improved, including its delivery system, the end of the Cold War did not represent a watershed in such a technological development simply because I do not see any significant rupture in the development.
- The monopoly of the nuclear weapons by the US, Russia, China and Britain remained unchanged even though the number of new member states of the nuclear club has increased. The old nuclear powers are still modernizing their nuclear weapons.
- The proliferation of nuclear weapon is not a new phenomenon in the post-Cold War period. The number of newly added nuclear powers is still limited, including India, Pakistan and North Korea.
- Like their predecessors, the new members of the nuclear club resorted to nuclear weapons in an attempt to address their severe security concerns.
- In the post-Cold War, going nuclear became increasingly difficult due to heightened awareness of nuclear proliferation. India, Pakistan and North Korea all faced international denouncement and sanctions, even though North Korea’s suffering is much dire and grave.

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Even though President Obama’s 2009 call for a world without nuclear weapons and the 2010 US-Russia new START Treaty encourage the world to enter the second nuclear age. Only under certain conditions, the second nuclear age could really come.

- The old major nuclear powers should take the lead to significantly reduce and eliminate their nuclear weapons, including freezing nuclear test.
- Reinforcing variety of international regimes that regulate nuclear and ballistic missile technologies to a point that it could deter any country from going nuclear.
- As major powers take the lead to aggressively pursue the no-nuclear world, they should form a cohesive coalition based to prevent any other countries from going nuclear, including taking concerted actions against any perpetrator of NPT or Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR).
- To use nuclear power in a peaceful way should be an inalienable right for all the nations. Thus corresponding international mechanisms should be set up in order to guarantee the exercise of such right, including securing managing nuclear fuel in a fair and transparent way.
- Pursuing denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula should be a critical step to move the world into the second nuclear age.

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