



TALKING POINTS

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Talking Points for: Toby Dalton, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

North Korea’s burgeoning nuclear weapons and missile programs, compounded by recent threats to wage nuclear war, pose the greatest near-term challenge to peace and stability in Northeast Asia. But Pyongyang’s behavior is neither a direct threat to nor a good test case of the viability of the international nonproliferation regime. A perennial outlier state, North Korea never fully adhered to international nuclear rules and norms; its noncompliance therefore does not constitute a grave transgression of those rules. The more serious question about the future of the nonproliferation regime is whether the Non-Proliferation Treaty bargain continues to serve the interests of states integral to the international economy and which actively promote strengthened nonproliferation measures, states like South Korea and Japan. Will North Korea’s threats and nuclear capabilities tip dominos in the region? The answers turns mostly on an assessment of whether nuclear weapons, as opposed to their current military and economic alignments and adherence to nonproliferation norms, would make Japan and the ROK more secure. In both, the answer is still clearly no, but there are more questions now, particularly about Seoul, than there were prior to North Korea’s third nuclear test in February 2013.

* The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies.