

## Session 5: Nuclear Deterrence and Conventional Deterrence

Daniel Gearin

Center for a New American Security

### Summary

This panel discussion focused on the inter-relationship between conventional deterrence and the role of nuclear weapons. The concept of deterrence includes a broad range of different elements, including the credibility of deterrence capability and its close relation to assurance. The concepts of both deterrence and assurance can differ depending on the eyes of the beholder, and policies aimed at deterring an adversary and assuring an ally at the same time do not always have equal effects. Often times, relatively little is required to deter an adversary, while significant amounts of energy must be expended to assure an ally.

Recent remarks by officials in the United States also highlight the fact that deterrence commitments can be contradictory. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates recently completed a trip to Asia and Europe, and his remarks in each respective location contrasted greatly with one another. In a move that surprised some analysts, Gates referred to the United States as the "indispensible nation" in Asia. Meanwhile, when speaking to an audience in Europe, Gates criticized developments in the U.S.-European NATO alliance and cited examples of Europe's inability to carry its weight within the alliance. He suggested that the NATO alliance faces a grim future, contrasting with the highly reassuring tone he took in Asia.

Although the conference has largely been focused on nuclear issues, this panel spent some time discussing developments in U.S. conventional deterrence capabilities. Specifically, the United States has considered developing a Conventional Prompt Global Strike (CPGS) capability. Elaine Bunn emphasized that this was still in the conceptual stage, however its consideration was worth discussion. The attraction of CPGS is largely a response to the

threats of the 21st century, which include terrorism and nuclear armed terrorist states. Although nuclear weapons currently have this ability to respond globally in a time sensitive manner, a nuclear strike is far less acceptable than a conventional strike in dealing with these newer threats. From this stand point, advocates of CPGS believe it enhances deterrence and assurance by providing a more effective and more useable response to threats. Meanwhile, opponents argue that U.S. conventional weapons would be destabilizing.

On the subject of extended deterrence, Brad recently completed a series of dialogues with his counterparts in South Korea and Japan that focused on the alliances and deterrence. Countries in Asia have a fundamentally different threat perception than that of the United States. Asian countries typically think of state actors as the primary source of security threats, rather than non-state actors which the United States is focused on. Thus, the real challenge in Asia is shaping the strategic environment. In the recent dispute over the Senkakku/Diaoyutai islands, Japan was more surprised by China's response with its rare-earth exports. This underscores the fact that military responses are not the only tools to be considered when thinking about deterrence. Economic, political instruments of power are also important.

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