

Bolstering Counter-proliferation Regime

- Session:** Regency Room
Date/Time: February 20, 2013 / 15:30-16:45
- Moderator:** Aruni Wijewardane, James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies
- Speakers:** Bong Youngshik, The Asan Institute for Policy Studies
Choi Kang, Korea National Diplomatic Academy
Pierce Corden, American Association for the Advancement of Science
Matthew Kroenig, Georgetown University
Jim Walsh Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Rapporteur:** Mira Rapp-Hooper, Columbia University

Session Sketch

Bong Youngshik, director of the Center for Foreign Policy at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, opened the panel by laying out some crucial distinctions between counter-proliferation and non-proliferation. Non-proliferation can be thought of as preventing the spread of nuclear materials and is often achieved through multilateral legal frameworks. Counter-proliferation may be defined as a focus on problem states and producers, and is often achieved unilaterally or through smaller groups of states. There has been a shift in recent years to placing priority on the latter.

The panel reached consensus on the fact that certain counter-proliferation tools have been sharpened in recent years, especially the Proliferation Security Initiative. There was, however, considerable dissent on how we should balance nonproliferation vs. counter-proliferation priorities going forward.

Choi Kang, dean of Planning and Assessment at the Korea National Diplomatic Academy, argued that the Proliferation Security Initiative constitutes real progress on counter-proliferation, but that the challenges going forward will be how to interdict from non-state actors and pariah state proliferators. States that are part of the PSI need to work together to

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develop the domestic capacity to bolster this capability.

Pierce Cordon, visiting scholar at the Center for Science, Technology and Security Policy at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, argued that we can look at European examples of Confidence and Security Building measures to understand how non-legally binding agreements among groups of states may be successfully brought about.

Matthew Kroenig, assistant professor and international relations field chair in the Department of Government at Georgetown University, argued that the primary constraint on the effectiveness of the counter-proliferation regime is not capabilities, but prevailing norms and interests. Like the adoption of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine that allows international intervention to prevent mass atrocity, we should adopt a Responsibility to Prevent Proliferation (R2PP) doctrine that elevates the longer-term interest of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons over the existing norm of state sovereignty and states' shorter-term interests. This may be accomplished through coercion, and the use of military force if necessary.

Jim Walsh, research associate and faculty at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Security Studies Program (SSP), argued that non-proliferation mechanisms have been extremely effective throughout history; counter-proliferation measures, on the other hand, have ranged from irrelevant to counter-productive. Non-proliferation is a resounding success story, and we should be thankful for it rather than turning to risky tools that are unlikely to accomplish our goals.

Dr. Walsh and Dr. Kroenig then engaged in an energetic debate on the prospects of success solving the North Korean and Iranian nuclear problems. Dr. Walsh argued that we would probably not see much engagement with North Korea in recent years due to a recurrent cycle of North Korean provocations and the application of new international sanctions. He said that his chief concern was that a low-level provocation in the region could escalate. No diplomatic settlement is likely to be feasible with North Korea at present, but there is still the possibility

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of achieving a settlement with Iran. Dr. Kroenig argued that while a negotiated settlement would be preferred in both cases, it was unlikely in either. Military action against Iran's nuclear program could be successful because there are a limited number of targets to strike, the United States has the capability to do so, and the regional backlash from Iran can probably be managed. In the case of North Korea, however, nuclear facilities are likely too dispersed for an attack to be effective, and backlash would probably carry unacceptable costs. In closing, panelists agreed that there need not be a trade-off between non-proliferation and counter-proliferation tools; rather, counter-proliferation is a second line of defense. Both non-proliferation and counter-proliferation measures should be applied creatively throughout the process of a state attempting to acquire nuclear weapons.

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