

**Panel:** Second Nuclear Age?  
**Date/Time:** Tuesday, April 22, 2014 / 14:30-15:45  
**Speakers:** Paul-Anton Krueger, Sueddeutsche Zeitung (Moderator)  
 Cheng Xiaohe, Center for China’s International Strategic Studies at Renmin University,  
 Chun Yungwoo, the Asan Institute for Policy Studies  
 Robert Einhorn, the Brookings Institution,  
 William Tobey, the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University

Moderator Paul-Anton Krueger, Managing Editor of the foreign desk section of the Sueddeutsche Zeitung, framed the topic within a series of recent events. North Korea’s purported consideration of a fourth nuclear test, President Obama’s visit to South Korea and Japan, Iran’s negotiations with the P5 +1, and Russia’s recent actions in Ukraine necessitate the discussion of a second nuclear age.

Cheng Xiaohe, Deputy Director, Center for China’s International Strategic Studies at Renmin University, stated that the concept of a second nuclear age is misleading, as there are more continuities than discontinuities between the Cold War and today. For example, the strategic role that nuclear weapons play is unchanged. Moreover, Russia and the United States still maintain the vast majority of nuclear weapons. While there are several relatively new states with nuclear weapons, this set of states is small. Because of the international community’s intensified efforts, becoming a nuclear weapon state has become difficult in a post-Cold War world.

Chun Yungwoo, Senior Advisor at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, argued that there are two key variables affecting a potential second nuclear age. First a final deal between Iran and the P5+1 will be set a precedent for the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). Additionally, a potential military clash between China and Japan, which will be influenced by increased nationalism and the return of great power politics, could be a defining factor for a second nuclear age.

Robert Einhorn, a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, remarked that there are multiple warning signs for a second nuclear age, such as North Korea’s missile and nuclear weapons programs, China’s opaque nuclear policy and Iran’s nuclear program. Despite these worrisome trends, a second nuclear age is not inevitable, but dependent on serious action from the international community. Certain steps, including pressure on North Korea, strategic dialogue between China and the United States, and a successful final agreement with Iran could ease concerns about a second nuclear age.

William Tobey, a Senior Fellow at Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at

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

---

Harvard University, stated that historically there have been unfounded predictions about the nonproliferation regime. During the Cold War, President Kennedy predicted that there would be 15-20 nuclear weapon states; however today there are only nine. There are many important factors limiting a state’s decision to develop nuclear weapons. The NPT has a successful track record and US extended deterrence agreements have limited nuclear proliferation. While there are concerns, including Iran and North Korea, it is possible for the NPT regime to continue to succeed.

During the question and answer section, Mr. Krueger asked Mr. Einhorn about the affect of threshold states on the nonproliferation regime. Mr. Einhorn remarked that a world with many states on the threshold would be dangerous and it is important to limit access to sensitive parts of the nuclear fuel cycle. Mr. Tobey added that while states are entitled the enrichment capabilities under the NPT, this might not necessarily be in the collective best interest of the nonproliferation regime.