

Implications of Iran's Nuclear (Weapons) Program

Panel: Session 2 (Grand Ballroom)

Date/Time: April 25, 2012 17:15-18:30

Organizing Institution: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Speakers: Mark Hibbs (Moderator), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Adnan Vatansever, Endowment for International Peace
Han Hua, Peking University
Mark Fitzpatrick, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS)
Cheon Seongwhun, Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU)

Panel Short Summary

Moira Alice Kelley, Seoul National University, GSIS
Hanna You, Yonsei University, GSIS

Iran's enriched uranium resources have sparked great concern and conversation across the globe. Iran continues to develop the capabilities of nuclear development and processing, and the last generation has bred an excellent group of nuclear-savvy technicians and physicists. As a result, the international community is rushing to engage Iran.

Representing the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Mark Fitzpatrick illustrated the pivotal issue deterring solutions to Iran's nuclear program - Iran's desire to break out as a nuclear nation and the resistance from the international community, particularly the nuclear states. Ideally, the United States and their allies request Iran stop its uranium enrichment program, remove all remaining uranium from within its borders, and suspend operations at the enrichment facility in Fordo. However, the likelihood for compliance to these requests is quite low, as substantial concessions would need to be given.

Following Mr. Fitzpatrick, Cheon Seong Whun, professor from Korea Institute for Strategic Studies (KINU), touched on the South Korean perspective on the Iranian nuclear weapons program. Even though there may be no direct security ties between South Korea and the Middle East, he pointed out that the path followed by Iran has been a déjà vu of the North Korean case. North Korea originally launched the nuclear programs for peaceful purposes until their refusal to sign the nuclear non proliferation treaty and declared its usage for deterrence and military purposes. Since the bombing in Israel, the correlation between these two countries has become troublesome to South Korea. Many questions are raised through

rounds of negotiations and bilateral talks; however, there has been fluctuation between optimism and pessimism.

Professor Han Hua from Peking University opened her speech on China's optimism towards Iran. China is confident that Iran is willing to respond through diplomatic means. Moreover, Iran's nuclear history seems to indicate the program may still be underdeveloped. Even though Iran has declared itself to be a nuclear state, Chinese leaders do not have consensus on whether Iran will cross the threshold to a full nuke state. Lastly, Chinese leaders undermine the Iranian nuclear capability, doubting it is as devout as some reports claim. China insists that Iran has the right to nuclear capability, but there is a tipping point.

Dr. Adnan Vatansever, senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment, reiterated the importance of sanctions as the only non-military means for solutions. The hope is that oil sanctions will cut revenue so substantially that Iran will need to reevaluate their commitment to the nuclear program. The sanctions aim to drastically cut oil exports from Iran, enough to adversely affect revenues. Despite the infancy of sanctions, challenges have arisen. Iran's dependence on oil revenues may hinder its commitment to sanctions. This dependence leads to oil trading between Iran and other nations at discounted prices. Finally, the United States and the European Union need to facilitate an improved coalition within a better timeframe to garner solutions. While states would like to reduce or eliminate oil imports from Iran, the truth is the world has an oil addiction.

The panelists reached a general consensus on the importance of diplomatic means or sanctions as the only way to redirect Iran to a non-nuclear path.

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