Conference Brief Strategic Studies Institute

U.S. Army War College, and National Bureau of Asian Research, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, Central Intelligence Agency, Department of Energy, Nuclear Threat Initiative, and the Ploughshares Fund

NUCLEAR ASIA

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Key Points:

- Nuclear weapons are here to stay in China, India, Pakistan, and North Korea.
- The nuclear proliferation networks are in place. Shutting down A.Q. Khan's network in Pakistan did not necessarily eliminate the networks.
- The nuclear proliferation networks intersect with other criminal networks—in drug trafficking, human trafficking, and other organized crime networks.
- The networks that support the terrorist groups in Asia are probably intersecting with the networks that facilitate trade between suppliers and consumers in nuclear proliferation trade.
- The terrorist networks may be comprised principally of nonstate actors, but they operate in environments where the state actors may condone or at least tolerate their presence, so any policies or security regimes directed at intercepting or disrupting the terrorist networks must manage the relationship with the state actors involved.
- Many of the Asian states are further developing their bilateral relations with their Asian neighbors to address their mutual security concerns--they are not waiting for a regional, multilateral solution. China, Japan, India and Pakistan are the most notable examples.
- All of the Asian states want to ensure that regional trade and economic development can proceed at a pace that allows them to meet their economic development goals. Export controls cannot be seen as "trade inhibitors." But if adopting common standards allows export controls to become "trade enhancers"—where nations are viewed as reliable trade partners not engaged in dangerous behavior—then these countires have been open to adopting export control systems that advance their economic interests.

On March 18-19, 2004, in Seattle, Washington, the National Bureau of Asian Research, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, U.S. Army War College, Central Intelligence Agency, Department of Energy, Nuclear Threat Initiative, and the Ploughshares Fund co-sponsored a conference to explore the complex topics of nuclear proliferation, regional and global terrorism, and the state of nonproliferation regimes in Asia. The conference drew representatives from government, academe, and nonprofit research institutions from the United States and Asia. This event was an opportunity for policymakers, security analysts, nuclear scientists and engineers, regional experts, and military planners to share perspectives and identify those issues requiring new solutions as the international community prepares for the 2005 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review.

Asia's Nuclearization and Regional Instability.

As a region, Asia has the distinction of experiencing the world's most rapid rates of economic and population growth, the fastest expansion of commercial nuclear power plant construction, the entrenchment of terror networks, and the fundamental failure of any state or group of states to emerge as a force to advocate regional solutions to nuclear security risks facing the Asia-Pacific.

Twenty-nine years after the NPT sought to "freeze" the Asian nuclear powers to a community of one, Asia is now a nuclearized region. Unquestionably, the nuclear nonproliferation regime has experienced failures in Asia--now India and Pakistan possess nuclear weapons, while North Korea either already possesses them or is close to developing them. Moreover, a number of other Asian states are participating in the Asian proliferators' network, thus enabling other states to acquire nuclear technologies.

Important components of the international community's nonproliferation strategies--the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), and other dual-use technology export control regimes--have failed to stem the trade in nuclear materials and technologies in Asia. There, nuclear suppliers appear willing to satisfy the demands of persistent buyers.

The "Nexus of Terrorism and Nuclear-Armed Adversaries."

South Asia now constitutes the place where nuclear weapons, terrorist groups, state actors involved in proliferation trade, and nuclear adversaries in confrontational postures all intersect on the India-Pakistan border. The Korean Peninsula and the nations of Northeast Asia endure the most prolonged period of crisis since the Korean War, due to the nuclear machinations of North Korea.

Conference participants agreed that it is paramount that the international community make every effort to understand the reasons for the failure of the NPT and other nonproliferation regimes in Asia before new attempts are made to replace the NPT, modify the NPT, or impose new international security regimes on Asian nations. No common view exists on the nature of the threats that the region's nations face from nuclear proliferation, or from terrorism internally within their own countries, and externally within the region.

India and Pakistan openly reject the NPT as an attempt to undermine their sovereign rights to possess nuclear weapons. China has become a convert to multilateral regimes only in the past 3 years, and this remains a source of some conflict internally. China pursues multilateral relationships cautiously and with deliberation. Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan feel that regional, multilateral solutions will only weaken the special nature of their bilateral relationships with the United States. Therefore, they tread very lightly when it comes to multilateral commitments. Southeast Asia is engaged in Asian multilateral regimes, but avoids those institutions where the United States plays a dominant role.

The ultimate test of a new security regime in Asia is whether those states that have gained entry into the nuclear club will choose to give up their nuclear status. Without exception, the conference experts assessed that India will

not give up its nuclear weapons; that Pakistan believes its existence depends on its ability to threaten India with a nuclear strike; North Korea has proven to be intransigent and there seem to be few incentives--or even arguments--that China, Russia, or the United States can offer to induce North Korea to give up its nuclear capability. Furthermore, North Korea is likely prepared to sell nuclear technology for profit to state or nonstate actors.

The nations of Asia have economic growth strategies that depend on access to nuclear power. A large number of nuclear power plants operate throughout Asia, and new construction is planned for the next 2 decades; therefore substantial trade will occur with nuclear technologies flowing throughout the regional trade networks.

Proposing Regional Security Solutions.

At the conference a *de facto* acknowledgement of the following features of Asia's security environment emerged:

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- The terrorist networks may be comprised principally of nonstate actors, but they operate in environments where the state actors may condone or at least tolerate their presence, so any policies or security regimes directed at intercepting or disrupting the terrorist networks must manage the relationship with the state actors involved.
- Many of the Asian states are further developing their bilateral relations with their Asian neighbors to address their mutual security concerns--they are not waiting for a regional, multilateral solution. China, Japan, India, and Pakistan are the most notable examples.
- All of the Asian states want to ensure that regional trade and economic development can proceed at a pace that allows them to meet their economic development goals. Export controls cannot be seen as "trade inhibitors." But if adopting common standards allows export controls to become "trade enhancers"—where nations are viewed as reliable trade partners not engaged in dangerous behavior—then these countries have been open to adopting export control systems that advance their economic interests.

The lesson from these examples of behavior may be that Asia is willing to tolerate the risks associated with nuclear-armed states, as long as the nuclear powers do not destabilize the bilateral relations among Asian states, and as long as behaviors do not jeopardize the overriding goals of economic growth and development. It is not clear what might happen should the nuclear-armed states violate the states' implicit agreement to tolerate the status quo.

This is a sobering view from the Asian perspective. If Asians do not share the sense of urgency or risk associated with limiting and ultimately ending access to nuclear technologies and capabilities, then nuclear security regimes for Asia must have a different set of goals. They must promote responsible behavior among all parties—the nuclear weapons owners, the suppliers, the trade facilitators, and the customers. And they must adopt regional mechanisms and enforcement policies that demonstrate their willingness to protect their regional security interests. The security regimes that Europe and America developed during the Cold War may not be suitable for Asia's 21st century security environment.

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