



**MacArthur
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**Focus Group 4
Interim Progress Report**

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**“Policy Alternatives for Integrating Bilateral and
Multilateral Regional Security Approaches in the
Asia-Pacific”**

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Arms Control and Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Focus Group 4

**Interim Meeting
(2-3 November 2010)**

**Paper 1
Asian Arms Control- Formal
Negotiations or Tacit Restraint?"
Professor Robert Ayson
(Victoria University of Wellington)**

Addressing the broader conceptual issues at play in arms control arrangements, Prof. Ayson's paper identified two distinct approaches for the future of arms control and nuclear non-proliferation in Asia. The first approach, described as management strategies, seeks to work toward a stable nuclear order by promoting and maintaining mutual deterrence relationships, with a view toward eventual disarmament after stability is attained. The second approach, described as elimination strategies, entails the abolishment of nuclear weapons toward a non-nuclear world. Prof. Ayson

Professor Robert Ayson: Asian arms control



Photo: Darren Boyd / ANU CAP

questioned whether the ultimate goals of the first approach can be reached, arguing that a stable nuclear order may in actuality reinforce claims to nuclear possession. He also considered whether these two approaches could provide an overarching framework for the rest of the papers, even whilst acknowledging the tensions and complexities of both approaches.

The paper also highlighted the geo-strategic salience of the Asia-Pacific region on nuclear issues. As the center of power increasingly shifts to Asia, the future nuclear order could be largely determined by the developments in the region. Of particular importance would be the extent to which the acquisition of nuclear weapons is perceived to be a vital component in acquiring or maintaining great power status in a region of rising and existing great powers. Conversely, if Great Powers' status were to be dependent on demonstrating leadership in nuclear disarmament, this would create a very different direction for the future. To this end, it was argued that an important issue is whether regional multilateral organizations may be able to facilitate such an outcome by revising the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and having all signatories agree to abolish their nuclear weapons. Another key issue raised was whether a non-nuclear Asia would be safer or more dangerous, which in turn raised questions of the issue of the role that then may be played by conventional weapons.

**Paper 2
The Dangers of Denial: The
China-India Strategic and Nuclear
Relationship
Ms. Fiona Cunningham**

(Lowy Institute for International Policy)
Ms. Cunningham argued that current assessments of the China-India bilateral relationship paid insufficient attention to nuclear issues and were thus overly op-

timistic about the future trajectory of that relationship. She suggested that increasing geopolitical ambitions and pressures by both countries could result in a less benign future relationship.

The question of whether China and India really deter each other was raised, and it was argued that an asymmetric relationship existed, with China as the stronger of the two powers. Yet as India would not want to lock itself into a pattern of comparative disadvantage vis-à-vis China, it may come to rely increasingly on nuclear weapons as a force equalizer. This nuclear spiral would hinder arms control and disarmament efforts in the region and result in wider implications for the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. Thus, while conflict between China and India remains unlikely, it was argued that the relationship was equally unlikely to improve significantly, and distrust between China and India may in turn hamper wider regional security. In terms of policy implications, the role of a third party to mediate between the two powers was considered to be potentially useful.

Discussion of Papers 1 and 2

The Focus Group discussion centered on a range of salient questions raised by the

papers. First, it was suggested that it was important to recognize that questions regarding nuclear weapons currently play out in a very different context to that of the Cold War. Great power status, strategic weight and deterrence were identified as some of the key current drivers and purposes of acquiring nuclear weapons. If great power status and political standing were perceived to be key drivers, the challenge for the region would be to make nuclear weapons less salient in the discourse about great power prestige, and instead turn the issue on its head to delegitimize nuclear weapons as an element of great power status.

It was also suggested that the larger the number of nuclear states in the region, the more difficult it would be to reach accommodation between them. However, a counter-argument was raised that the issue may be less about reducing the number of nuclear weapon states and more about establishing responsible and openly declared nuclear possessors in Asia. This would in turn, however, raise normative questions about what responsibility entails in such a context.

The issue of whether some degree of proliferation might actually be good for regional stability in Asia was also debated. Participants felt that it was important

From left: Ms. Fiona Cunningham, Professor Andrew O'Neil and Associate Professor Rajesh Basrur



Photo: David Envall

to distinguish clearly between arms control and disarmament and to not conflate what were two separate sets of issues. It was also suggested that this distinction between arms control and disarmament could be the overarching framework for the Focus Group's overall work, though it was also recognized that it would be very difficult to impose a "one size fits all" approach across all papers.

In examining the counter-question of why China and India had not yet developed a Cold War type of relationship, the Focus Group agreed that it was necessary to view the Sino-Indian relationship within the wider context of Asia's evolving strategic environment. To this end, it was important to recognize the complex interdependence existing in the region and the fact that the role of force in Asia was changing. These dynamics create a very different environment to that of the Cold War.

The point was made that most nuclear confrontations occurred between states with very little trade between them. In addition, it was doubtful whether the possession of nuclear weapons could resolve the Sino-Indian border dispute, bringing into question the actual utility of nuclear weapons.

Paper 3
The Future of Extended Nuclear Deterrence in East Asia: Relic or Redux?
Professor Andrew O'Neil
(Griffith University)

Prof. O'Neil's paper began by highlighting the fact that extended nuclear deterrence was a very different form of deterrence to conventional deterrence. As extended nuclear deterrence entailed transferring assurance in a specific alliance context, the issue of credibility was central. Extended nuclear deterrence needed to be a form of both punishment and reassurance, with the two dimensions equally credible.

While the difficulties of verifying successes or failures in deterrence were recognized, it was argued that extended nuclear deterrence has played a role in shaping

non-proliferation in Asia. In this regard, the United States had been a key player, with its extended nuclear deterrence both providing deterrence to its regional adversaries and reassured commitment to its regional allies. Key factors that were suggested to shape the future of extended nuclear deterrence in the region include: the US commitment to its regional primacy, both actual and perceived; the political and strategic behavior of America's rivals; perceptions of threat from new conventional acquisitions; and domestic politics within the US and its regional allies.

Prof. O'Neil concluded with an assessment of the future of extended nuclear deterrence in the Asian region. Linear trends would indicate an increasing role for extended nuclear deterrence as US conventional force projection capabilities come to be balanced by China, and as North Korea continues to develop its nuclear arsenal. Major discontinuities, however, should not be discounted in evaluating the future of extended nuclear deterrence in Asia, such as significant geopolitical change in the region, a US retreat to offshore balancing, accelerated progress toward nuclear disarmament, or the actual use of nuclear weapons in Asia.

Paper 4
In Search of Less but Salient Posture: Japan's View on Nuclear Disarmament
Associate Professor Ken Jimbo
Keio University

In his paper, Prof. Jimbo argued that Japan's response to Obama's nuclear agenda reflected Japan's dual identity on nuclear issues. To this end, two schools of thought in Japan can be identified. The first school, heavily influenced by Japan's historical experience with nuclear weapons, calls on Japan to assume global leadership on nuclear disarmament and can be classified as the "disarmament school." The second school, described as the "deterrence school," is cognizant of rising regional nuclear challenges from China and North Korea and recognizes a continuing role for United States extended nuclear deter-

rence in the region. Reconciling these two approaches to nuclear issues was argued to be a key policy question for the Japanese government.

Prof. Jimbo also reflected on President Barack Obama's nuclear agenda as seen from the perspective of the Japanese. While reaffirming the goal of nuclear abolition, Prof. Jimbo saw the United States as retaining a strong nuclear deterrent and not engaging in unilateral disarmament as long as nuclear weapons still existed. From the Japanese perspective, the Sino-American nuclear relationship was believed to be of fundamental importance. China possessed the tactical capability to attack Japan but lacked the capability for a credible deterrence against the US. Issues surrounding the US-Japan extended nuclear deterrence would, therefore, largely be shaped by the future of the US-China nuclear relationship.

Discussion of Papers 3 and 4

Subsequent discussions within the Focus Group centered on the issue of credibility. It was suggested that credibility had to be examined from the perspective of both allies and adversaries, and psychological dimensions were argued to be important. Similarly, distinctions and boundaries between the guarantor, guarantee and adversary in nuclear policy had to be drawn, although the question of when extended nuclear deterrence could be applied across these distinctions remains complicated.

It was also noted that the existing discourse always refers to the US as the key power extending nuclear deterrence, which raised the question of whether it would be possible to begin considering whether an Asian power might provide extended nuclear deterrence in the future.

There was a general consensus that the relationship between the processes of arms control and nuclear disarmament remained an important one. With regard to Japan, three questions are particularly relevant. First, how important is "first use" as an aspect of credible extended deter-

rence and how then does America's shift to a "no first use" policy factor in Japanese perceptions about US credibility? Second, what would happen if the US nuclear umbrella was removed? And third, what role would Russia play, if any, when Japan contemplates extended nuclear deterrence?

The issue of Sino-Japanese dynamics was also discussed by the Group. In light of China's rising defense expenditure, it was suggested that Japan's unilateral capacity to deal with China was in fact decreasing. This could, in turn, result in an increased Japanese reliance on the US. In addition, Japan's domestic politics play an important role in determining its international nuclear outlook and approach.

Paper 5

A Less Nuclear World and Region: A View from China

**Professor Zhu Feng
(Peking University)**

Prof. Zhu's paper considered the implications for China of US extended nuclear deterrence in Asia. In particular, he identified the credibility of US extended nuclear deterrence as a key concern for China. Chinese nuclear pragmatism would continue, with Beijing seeking a credible

Professor Zhu Feng: The view from China



Photo: David Envall

and workable nuclear capability without being overly ambitious. This trajectory, however, could be complicated by several factors. If India develops greater credible nuclear capability, for instance, how would China respond?

On the issue of Iran, Prof. Zhu noted that China's policy toward Iran was ambivalent. While there are strong economic and investment relations between the two countries, China does not want to become a diplomatic and political shield behind which Iran might try to hide. In addition, there exists a current debate within China concerning the "reality" of Tehran's intentions.

Prof. Zhu also discussed China's conventional military build-up, noting that it was strengthening in recent years but arguing that China's conventional capabilities still lagged behind other powers, which in turn made it difficult for China to feel secure. Prof. Zhu also suggested that China's build-up of aircraft carriers could be seen as largely symbolic rather than substantial.

Paper 6
Nuclear Expectations and Perceptions:
China and the US
Dr. Bates Gill
(Stockholm International Peace
Research Institute)

Dr. Gill's paper examined the roles of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament in the US-China relationship. He characterized this relationship as a mixture of competition and cooperation. Whilst the relationship over the past 20 years has largely been cooperative, some divergences are beginning to show. An emerging troubled bilateral relationship and the lack of a regional mechanism on nuclear issues have paved the way for greater challenges ahead.

With regard to non-proliferation, Dr. Gill noted that there was currently less concern in the United States over China as a nuclear proliferator. Rather, the concerns were over China's relationship with

would-be proliferators such as Iran, North Korea and Myanmar.

Dr. Gill acknowledged, however, that there was less common ground between US and China on arms control. The US would not admit that it is more vulnerable to China, and China would not openly declare that it has achieved a viable deterrence capability against the US. Furthermore, both China and the US do not appear to have a great interest in disarmament. Although China may seem supportive of disarmament in rhetoric, its self-perceived weakness in conventional weapons would mean that nuclear weapons would come to have increasing salience in China.

For these reasons, Dr. Gill argued there should be a modest expectation of progress on Sino-US cooperation on arms control and disarmament. Addressing the ways forward, he suggested that Track-2 dialogues on arms control and disarmament could be useful as confidence building measures, making investment in such mechanisms worthwhile. In addition, the international community should encourage China to be a more proactive actor on non-proliferation outside the Non-Proliferation Treaty regime.

Dr. Bates Gill: The US, China, and
nuclear expectations



Photo: Darren Boyd / ANU CAP

Paper 7

China, India and Pakistan: Models for the Intermediate Stage to Disarmament? **Associate Professor Rajesh Basrur** **(RSIS, Nanyang Technological University)**

Prof. Basrur's paper was framed around a conceptual debate between Albert Wohlstetter and Patrick Blackett over forms of nuclear deterrence. From Wohlstetter's perspective, deterrence requires the capability to inflict maximum damage and a balance of forces is deemed as important, so that the possession of secure second-strike capability is seen as the key to effective deterrence. According to Blackett's perspective, however, deterrence could occur without the need for large-scale damage. Thus, a balance of forces and second-strike capability would be less important in achieving nuclear deterrence.

Prof. Basrur noted that China, India and Pakistan generally demonstrated minimalist nuclear thinking and practice, and as such were more in line with the Blackett school. He also argued that these countries' nuclear deterrence approaches could also potentially act as models for the wider world.

Nonetheless, the paper also raised several caveats and acknowledged the inherent contradictions within Chinese, Indian and Pakistani thought. To this end, the three countries also needed to learn from others and from their own historical experiences. Prof. Basrur concluded by arguing for the need to shake up the intellectual foundations of deterrence thinking.

Discussion of Papers 5, 6 and 7

Discussions initially focused on whether China would be attracted to a less nuclear Asia, rather than a nuclear-free Asia, with the point being made that China believes that a less nuclear Asia is both desirable and achievable. The Chinese leadership recognizes the importance of Sino-US military-to-military exchanges, and a lack of such exchanges would only result in

increased mistrust between the two powers.

The Focus Group members then turned to the issue of whether China would prefer bilateral or multilateral mechanisms in dealing with stabilization measures and whether China would prefer precise detailed agreements or more informal confidence building measures. It was suggested that a key goal of the Chinese leadership was to make China's rise less worrisome to other countries. As such, multilateral confidence building measures play an important part in Beijing's strategy.

It was noted, however, that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) continued to engage in parochial realism. The idea that China is weak and vulnerable, in particular, remains embedded in the ideology of the PLA. To this end, whilst Beijing would

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like to talk and engage with others, doubt remains as to whether it will actually take concrete actions in this regard.

A key topic of debate concerned the discourse on conventional and nuclear weapons. It was argued that, rather than debating conventional deterrence or nuclear deterrence, it is necessary to examine conventional deterrence and nuclear deterrence and to understand the inter-relationships between these two areas. Of particular salience, but a topic still overlooked, is the role of cyber capability in both conventional and nuclear weapons. Could a state deter a conventional attack with cyber capability? There was a general acknowledgement that cyber and space-based conventional capability was now a big issue in China and the US.

The question “what does it take to deter?” also received sustained attention. Focus Group members agreed that this was a different question in the contemporary context when compared to how the topic has been historically understood. Indeed, the question of what counts as minimum deterrence is complex, given the difficulties in quantifying what counts as a minimum requirement. The point was made that nuclear weapons produce both stability and instability in every nuclear relationship.

With regard to Sino-Indian relations and the implications of nuclear weapons

Associate Professor Rajesh Basrur



Photo: Darren Boyd / ANU CAP

within the context of that relationship, it was noted that China has begun to recognize India as a nuclear power with a legitimate nuclear capability. There is, however, a disparity between the two countries' threat perceptions in terms of nuclear weapons, which leads to different strategies. From an Indian perspective, China is a significant concern to security; yet from a Chinese perspective, the US presents a bigger concern than India.

Finally, the complex international environment in which nuclear issues are currently situated was seen by Focus Group

members as significant. In such a context, it is important to ask whether a state that has minimal deterrence as well as fewer arms would find it more difficult to abolish its weapons than a country with extended nuclear deterrence and more arms.

Way Ahead: Publication Strategy

In terms of Focus Group leaders pursuing a publishing strategy, there was general agreement within the Focus Group that a “special issue” in a journal publication, as opposed to an edited book volume, was the best option. Journals, it was felt, tended to reach a wider audience and thus produced a superior fit for the wider Project's aims of providing policy advice.

The *Australian Journal of International Affairs* (AJIA) was recommended as a potential avenue for publication, and so it was suggested that Focus Group members aim for an early 2012 publication in order to maximize the “impact” factor. Authors could submit their papers to the AJIA for review just before the 2011 MacArthur workshop in Beijing, revise their papers based on the journal and workshop reviews, and submit their final manuscript to the AJIA by the last quarter of 2011.

It was suggested that the overarching theme for the Special Issue could be “Nuclear dynamics and great powers in Asia.” ■