

Policy Position Paper

Topic: Non-proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament

Name of University: Deakin University

Name of Course: Conflict, Security and Terrorism

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Issues Identified:

The in class and online discussion on this topic focused primarily on the threat of nuclear weapons and the role of Australian uranium exports in the process. There are four main threats facing Australia in regards to NACD:

- North Korea's nuclear weapons program is the most serious and pressing NACD concern. Already in advanced development of missile and bomb technology, North Korea's nuclear test will have severe destabilising consequences for the region. The real danger is that this will result in a fundamental shift in Japan's defence policy and a decision to go nuclear as well.
- Iran's nuclear program presents similar challenges for Australia. Iran's desires to obtain a nuclear deterrent capability, is principally to ensure regime survival and regional dominance. If Iran successfully develops and tests a nuclear device, it will almost certainly lead to a regional arms race in the Middle East. Any conflict between the US and Iran to stall or destroy Iran's nuclear program will most likely have severe economic ramifications around the globe.
- Small arms and light weapons getting into the hands illegitimate groups in failed states in Australia's immediate region is another issue of great concern. The recent unrest in Timor and the Solomon Islands, where Australian troops were required to provide military muscle in support of international police deployed to these states as part of multilateral nation-building operations, are examples of the threat.
- Another issue is associated with Australia producing 40% of the world's Uranium. The issues is that Australia is responsible for the Uranium that we sell, and if it falls into the wrong hands Australian can be seen as not responsibly participating in the Non Proliferation Treaty. As well as being seen as undermining the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Areas of Consensus/Disagreement:

Discussion in regards to these issues tended to coalesce around these four areas. The threat of terrorists gaining access to WMDs was also discussed but no consensus as to the level or immediacy of the threat was reached.

There was a great deal of discussion over the issue of uranium mining. General concern over recent Australian announcements regarding the sale and possible sale of uranium to China and India was expressed.

There were calls for Australia to adopt a cradle-to-grave approach to uranium mining, enrichment, reprocessing and storage of nuclear waste. Not only as a morally responsible action in regards to nuclear power generation but also as a means to monitor the use of uranium throughout the fuel cycle and to ensure that no Australian uranium is diverted for illegal use. Some opposed this on environmental protection grounds, ie the danger of accidents during transport and debate as to whether Australia as an exporter should be responsible for the storage of waste as opposed to the user state.

Calls for Canada and Australia (and possibly Russia) to form a uranium-exporting cartel were also supported but no consensus was achieved. Such a cartel could restrict the export of uranium to those states signing onto the Additional Protocols of the IAEA and also control the price.

Consensus did emerge on the need for the international community to ensure that WMD scientists are gainfully employed, either by the five official nuclear weapon states or by other developed states with nuclear power infrastructure. While no policies were developed, expectation that the host governments would pay for or facilitate this employment was expressed. Any cost associated with this was considered to be much smaller than any potential response needed should these people be employed by 'rogue' states or non-state actors.

Policy Recommendations:

Impose greater restrictions on the export of uranium

Australia needs to restrict uranium exports to states with an existing nuclear power industry. All states purchasing Australian uranium need to allow IAEA inspection and control of the uranium at all stages of the fuel cycle to monitor compliance with the NPT and the Additional Protocols.

Multilateral approaches are preferred

Australia needs to promote multilateral approaches to addressing non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament in the post-9/11 world. NACD affects more than one country and multilateral fora promote discussion, negotiation and can lead to resolutions that provide the basis for non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament. In an increasing globalised world, multilateral fora are the best mechanism to further NACD.