

PPNT 2006 Winter Conference Vision

This year, many of us share the sentiment that the PPNT group should use our conference time together in a constructive manner quite different from last year's event. This shared sentiment suggests that we should collectively try our hand at addressing a contemporary nuclear issue. This is a bold and massive undertaking, but an exercise that is nonetheless increasingly necessary as the complexity associated with nuclear affairs continues to outpace quality analysis.

North Korean Nuclear Crisis Focus

This year, we are turning the upcoming conference into the launching of an ambitious team project. Specifically, we believe that while many nuclear issues require much needed attention, it is timely and fitting for our group to focus our collective efforts on the North Korean nuclear crisis. The scope and complexity of this issue no doubt means that this project will be enormously challenging, but the nature of this topic will bring our unique interests and skill sets to bear in a manner conducive to the spirit of our group.

A Multi-Disciplinary Analysis of North Korea's Nuclear Crisis

The ultimate goal in focusing our collective efforts will be to produce an analytical product of publishable quality which addresses the issues surrounding North Korea through a multi-disciplinary approach. While the exact nature of this end product remains to be seen, our vision is to compile a study that will be widely received by those working on the issue in an official capacity. Many circumstances and issues have changed since the 1994 Agreed Framework that our collective product should be original and add value to the stock of knowledge available today. It is an idea which has already generated much interest within various professional circles.

Establishing a Roadmap

Since our time together is limited, the aim of this year's conference will be to devote a significant portion of the conference to working on this project. Some conference time, however, will be devoted to student presentations. The overarching goal, however, will be to construct a "roadmap" which establishes an appropriate scope for the project and narrows the issue in such a way that it is manageable. After completion of this roadmap, smaller working groups will then continue the project's momentum leading to a meeting roughly six months later (Summer 2006) to integrate our efforts towards a finished product.

Working Groups

It seems imperative leading up to the February conference that we all pledge to bring ourselves individually up to speed with the issues in play in order to make our time together as constructive as possible. Our idea in achieving this goal is to divide people into smaller working groups which focus upon a narrow slice of the overall issue.

Initial meetings with experts on North Korea have identified several issues around which working groups for this conference were organized. Each working group consists of a handful of individuals where each member is from a different discipline. The construction of groups in this manner will ensure that technical creativity does not overstep the bounds of political feasibility and vice versa.

The 2006 PPNT Winter Conference Working Groups are:

1. Nuclear Material Accountability, Proliferation Risks and Non-Cooperative Monitoring

Co-Chairs: Dane Swango, Dan Chivers

Members: Amanda Johnsen, Akhil Shah, Kai Pommerenke, Toshihiko Aono

2. Nuclear Reactor Technology and Safeguards: Current Challenges and Future Provisions

Chair: Lance Kim

Members: Jay Fahlen, Juan Escobar, Bethany Lyles, Matthew Egan, David Harrison, Patricia Hewitson

3. North Korean Negotiating Behavior, Strategy and Regime Needs

Chair: Matt Kroenig

Members: Jamus Lim, Aviva Shackell, Kyle Beardsley, Monti Datta, Jessica Weiss, David Peterson

4. North Korean Damage to the NPT Regime: Irreparable Injury?

Chair: Seth Snider

Members: Justin Hastings, Lisa Saum, Omar Clay, Tim Meyer, Elena Rodriguez-Vieitez

5. Reaction to a Nuclear Test and the Issue of Living with a Nuclear North Korea

Chair: Rob Brown

Members: Joe Bassi, Larry Rubin, David Palkki, Paul Hirsch, Peter Towbin

The nature of this project will be challenging, bring us closer together as a group around a common task, and will be widely beneficial to each and everyone of us. A major motivating factor behind the project is that it will lead to policy papers which meet program requirements. These policy papers may closely match individual efforts through the composition of the end product or may occur through spin-off research.

This is an ambitious project, but one which if given proper attention and effort is likely to be informative and well received. We hope that everyone will work to leave his/her stamp on this project and that it is only the beginning of many coordinated efforts to come from members of the PPNT group.

Seth Snider

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Winter Conference Planning Committee Chair