

The Implications of Expanded Nuclear Energy in Asia

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This chapter assesses likely trends in nuclear energy and nonproliferation within Asia in the next two decades and examines the implications for the U.S.

MAIN ARGUMENT:

Asia's rapid growth in nuclear power use will significantly influence safe and secure operation of nuclear facilities, the global nuclear supply chain, and the potential for further nuclear weapons proliferation. Although further growth may occur in nuclear power entrant states in Southeast Asia, the spread of nuclear technologies will not necessarily lead to more proliferation as long as the U.S. and other powers can ensure security alliances and can integrate pariah states such as North Korea and Burma into the international system. Similarly, Asian powers play a major role in supporting international efforts to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

- Ensuring safe and secure operations of nuclear power plants in Asia is clearly in U.S. interests because a major accident or an attack on such a facility would likely harm the prospects for further expansion of nuclear power worldwide.
- To remain economically competitive, U.S. nuclear companies must leverage corporate partnerships and demonstrate that they can build plants on time and within budget.
- Stopping further enrichment and reprocessing plants is unlikely to occur, but the U.S. should lead efforts to require more effective means of monitoring and safeguarding these facilities and to limit such plants to allies and currently nuclear-armed states.
- Shoring up security alliances will serve as an effective means of nonproliferation. In particular, redoubling coordinated efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons in North Korea will help quell the desire for such weapons in Japan and South Korea.