

Abstract

The implications of US-China rivalry on nuclear nonproliferation and nuclear reversal have become evident in major strategic regions across the globe particularly the Korean Peninsula, the Indo-Pacific, and the Middle East. On the Korean Peninsula, the US interest lies in maintaining stability in Northeast Asia and shielding its allies from potential nuclear confrontation with North Korea, while China views North Korea as a buffer state against Washington because of the US's military presence and strong alliances with Beijing's neighbors South Korea and Japan. In the Middle East, the US and Iran have had a long hostile relationship shaped by sanctions and animosity. However, it is against the backdrop of hostile US-Iran relations that the strength of China-Iran relations can be understood. Beijing has positioned itself to be an alternative great power partner to the US in the Middle East. Beijing has sought out cooperation with Tehran where the US has relied on heavy sanctions. The different lens through which these great powers view North Korea and Iran shape their differing nonproliferation policy actions toward these regions. This will sometimes lead to a clash in nonproliferation policies between Washington and Beijing. The clash in policies presents major challenges for US-led nuclear reversal and nonproliferation efforts in these regions. On the other hand, in the Indo-pacific region, India presents a unique case study that illustrated Washington's willingness to rewrite the rules of the nonproliferation regime to accommodate a nuclear India that could act as a counterweight against Beijing. The US-China-India relationship can be described as a strategic triangle. The dynamics of the US, China, and India relations have spilled over into nonproliferation. The Indian-US nuclear deal is the epitome of the spillover effect of the US-China rivalry on global nonproliferation norms. Given the current climate of US-China rivalry, the US is less likely to pressure India to reverse its nuclear weapons program in the current and near future. In this era of US-China great power rivalry, suspicion of each other's intentions will challenge nonproliferation and nuclear reversal across these major strategic regions.