



The Project on Advanced Systems and Concepts for Countering WMD (PASCC) is run at the Center on Contemporary Studies (CCC) and sponsored by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). PASCC awards and supports strategic studies and dialogues that anticipate and try to reduce the threat of WMD capabilities.



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Research in Progress describes ongoing PASCC research. For more information, please contact pascc@nps.edu.

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Assessing the Benefits and Burdens of Nuclear Latency

Performer: National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI), University of Nebraska—Lincoln

Project Lead: Rupal Mehta

Project Cost: \$95,682

FY16–17

Objective:

This project seeks to understand the international causes and consequences of nuclear latency, defined as a state's possession of technical capabilities that enable—but fall short of—acquisition of nuclear weapons. A range of technological assets are needed to construct nuclear weapons, but two requirements stand out as having particular importance: (1) the materials and technical expertise required to fabricate an explosive device and (2) the capacity to produce fissile material (i.e., plutonium or enriched uranium). This project will also attempt to assess how nuclear latency affects both a state's security and bargaining power.

Approach:

To achieve the project objectives, the investigation will utilize a mixed-methods research design employing statistical analysis and historical process-tracing on a series of case studies. The project will identify the conditions under which latency benefits or burdens states in international interactions. In addition, this project will illuminate the determinants of nuclear latency by examining what factors influence a state's decision to pursue fuel-cycle technology. It will also create an expanded dataset of latency measures.