Dealing with nuclear proliferation has been an element of U.S. foreign policy for the past 65 years. Yet, its standing within the ranks of national security policy issues has not always been at the top, especially during the Cold War. This has led at times to unfortunate outcomes that have reduced U.S. security. President Barack Obama has declared nuclear proliferation by countries or by terrorists to be the most serious national security issue facing the United States.

Leonard Weiss, an affiliated scholar at the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University, will discuss the history of the efforts to prevent or slow nuclear weapon proliferation and will then comment on the specific proliferation issues currently faced by the world community.

International regimes have a mixed record for dealing with proliferation problems. However, it is generally agreed that international cooperation is a necessary condition for achieving long term success in blocking the further spread of nuclear weapons and producing the conditions for substantial nuclear disarmament. Current problems in this area involve the nuclear programs of a number of countries, including—but not limited to—Iran, Pakistan, India, North Korea, and Israel.

Leonard Weiss has had two distinguished careers and is currently working on a third. After working for a decade and a half as a professor of applied mathematics at Brown and the University of Maryland, he changed careers and became a U.S. Senate staff director for a large standing committee, working directly for Senator John Glenn. During his two decades with the Senate, he launched and led investigations of the nuclear activities of Pakistan, and authored a number of legislative bills that became law, including the Nuclear Nonproliferation Act of 1978 that governs all nuclear agreements entered into by the United States with other countries. It is the principle nonproliferation tool in U.S. domestic law. Other legislative accomplishments of his include the creation of the Defense Facilities Nuclear Safety Board, the creation of more than thirty offices of Inspector General to investigate fraud waste and abuse in government programs, and the expansion of the auditing and financial accounting functions of the Government Accountability Office. He is currently working as an independent researcher and writer affiliated with the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University, and is a member of the National Advisory Board of the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation in Washington, DC.