



**James Martin Center
for Nonproliferation Studies**
Monterey Institute of International Studies

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Questioning the Nonproliferation Narrative Creative Critique Takes Top Student Prize in 2010 Nonproliferation Challenge

Monterey, California — The James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies is pleased to announce that Benoît Pelopidas, a Ph.D. candidate in political science in Sciences Po (Paris) and at the University of Geneva, has won the prestigious Outstanding Student Essay Prize in the Doreen and Jim McElvany 2010 Nonproliferation Challenge.

In addition to the \$1,000 award, Pelopidas's paper will be published in the center's journal, the *Nonproliferation Review*, and Pelopidas will be invited to present and discuss his work at a forum hosted by the center's Washington, D.C. office.

In his provocative essay, Pelopidas makes a strong case that the historical understanding of nuclear proliferation is flawed and that experts as a group perpetuate this misunderstanding. This has detrimental effects on policy, including proscribing options that policy makers might otherwise consider. Pelopidas "challenged the standard narrative" in an essay that was "elegant in its design, novel in its perspective, and very well argued," the judges decided.

"Studying the role of proliferation experts is a key way to understand the lack of policy innovation in the field," said Pelopidas, who previously won a three-year scholarship from the French Ministry of Defense. "It also helps explain how biased assumptions about nuclear history have sharply limited what policy makers believe is politically acceptable or achievable. Understanding these problems is a necessary first step to exploring new, neglected, or forgotten political pathways for both nonproliferation and disarmament."

"As a non-native English speaker educated outside the United States," he added, "I am all the more thrilled to receive this important prize. I am proud to join a distinguished set of past winners who were not afraid to tackle controversial issues and cross established disciplinary lines. Indeed, the work of several past winners of this competition has strongly influenced my own thinking on this vital subject."

The McElvany Nonproliferation Challenge, an annual international essay competition now in its third year, is sponsored by CNS and designed to encourage innovative scholarship in the nonproliferation field. Submissions were received from more than a dozen universities in eight

countries, with undergraduate and graduate students submitting the majority of the entries. The nine judges for the competition were CNS specialists drawn from the broad spectrum of nonproliferation disciplines.

“The judges were impressed with the creative ideas of many of this year’s entries,” said Stephen Schwartz, editor of the *Nonproliferation Review*. “In addition to the winner, we have approached four of the finalists about publishing revised versions of their work in a future issue of the journal.”

For additional information on the 2010 Nonproliferation Challenge and past winners, please visit cns.miis.edu/npr/contest.htm. An announcement about the 2011 Nonproliferation Challenge, including the theme and deadline, will be made in the fall.

The James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies strives to combat the spread of weapons of mass destruction by training the next generation of nonproliferation specialists and disseminating timely information and analysis. Based at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, CNS is the largest nongovernmental organization in the United States devoted exclusively to research and training on nonproliferation issues.

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