

The U.S. Position on Nuclear Disarmament

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The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policies of the U.S. Government or Georgetown University.

Major Developments

- New START Treaty—modest reductions, essential to fill gap created by expiration of START I; opposition in U.S. disturbing, bad sign for future reductions
- Nuclear Posture Review—positive, not transformational
- Nuclear Security Summit
- NPT Revcon—modest success
- New emphasis on CTBT—return to OSI work in Vienna
- New Space Policy—opens door slightly to possible space arms control
- More flexible, respectful approach to Iran, DPRK—results disappointing so far

MAJOR PROVISIONS OF NEW START

- Aggregate limit of 700 deployed ICBMs, deployed SLBMs and deployed heavy bombers [equipped for nuclear armaments]
- Limit of 1,550 warheads on these 700 deployed systems
- Aggregate limit of 800 deployed and non-deployed ICBM launchers, SLBM launchers and heavy bombers [equipped for nuclear armaments]
- Reductions take place over 7 years from Entry into Force
- Returns to principle that constraints on nuclear weapons should be effectively verifiable and reductions irreversible

NEW TREATY DOES NOT

- Constrain ABM systems; Preamble acknowledges offense-defense interrelationship, says current strategic defensive arms do not threaten viability and effectiveness of SOA, but notes that interrelationship will become more important as SOA are reduced.

Translation: ABM can be kicked down the road—big problem for the future. U.S. will pursue high-level, bilateral dialogues with Russia and China

NEW TREATY DOES NOT

- Constrain tactical nuclear weapons
- Constrain non-deployed nuclear warheads; sides continue to have total freedom in how they store or dismantle warheads
- Reveal size or composition of nuclear stockpiles (but U.S. declared size at NPT Revcon)
- Promise further negotiations/reductions (Preamble has vague reference to “expanding this process in the future, including to a multilateral approach”)

U.S. 2010 NPR acknowledges these issues must be dealt with in the future

POLICY INPUTS

U.S. 2010 Nuclear Posture Review

- role of nuclear weapons reduced
- fundamental role is to deter nuclear attack on U.S., its Allies, partners—could be sole purpose in future
- consider use only in “extreme circumstances” to defend vital interests of U.S., allies, partners
- CW/BW attack would bring devastating conventional military response
- acknowledges connection between U.S. and Russian nuclear forces
- Negative Security Assurance strengthened: no use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against NNWS party to NPT and in compliance with non-proliferation obligations
- Strongly supports nuclear warhead Life Extension Programs and modernization of infrastructure

2010 U.S. NUCLEAR POSTURE REVIEW

- Endorses further reductions in SOA, with elimination an eventual goal—U.S. will pursue discussions with Russia on further reductions and transparency
- U.S. will “set a course for the verified elimination of all nuclear weapons”
- U.S. will pursue high-level dialogues with Russia and China to promote more stable, transparent and non-threatening strategic relationships
- U.S. will engage other states after further U.S.-Russia reductions
- Ratify CTBT

NPR-START INTERACTION

U.S. will:

- Maintain Triad
- Maintain same alert posture
- Reduce all ICBM loadings to 1 warhead—no MIRVed ICBMs
- Retire all nuclear-armed SLCMs
- Carry out major reductions in nuclear stockpile
- Pursue discussions with Russia on further reductions and transparency
- Engage other states after further U.S.-Russia reductions

POLICY INPUTS

2010 Russian Military Doctrine

- Does not appear to lower nuclear threshold
- RF reserves right to use nuclear weapons in response to use of nuclear weapons or other WMD against it or its allies, or in response to aggression using conventional weapons that “threatens the very existence of the state”
- Main threat is NATO—silent on China

PRESSURE FROM THE LEFT

- Faster, deeper reductions
- Narrow purpose of nuclear weapons—
reduce alert posture
- 4 Horsemen
- World opinion/NGOs
- Proliferation concerns—NPT Revcon
- Skepticism about more resources to
modernize U.S. nuclear weapons complex
- Verification—how much is enough?

PRESSURE FROM THE RIGHT

- Resistance to deeper reductions
- Must deal with Russian tactical nuclear weapons
- Must not constrain U.S. ABM systems
- Must not constrain U.S. conventional weapons
- Must not constrain U.S. space capabilities
- Must preserve extended deterrence
- Must “modernize” nuclear deterrent
- Verification—how much is enough?

PRESSURE FROM THE RUSSIANS

- Skeptical about deeper reductions
- Greater emphasis than U.S. on nuclear weapons
- Reluctance to dealing with tactical nuclear weapons
- Must constrain U.S. ABM programs
- Strong opposition to NATO expansion
- Concern about U.S. superiority in conventional weapons
- Resistance to more intrusive verification

REDUCING TOWARD ZERO

- NPT Article VI: part of the grand bargain was “negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control”
- “unequivocal undertaking” by NWS to nuclear disarmament at the 1995 and 2000 NPT Revcons—reaffirmed at 2010 Revcon

REDUCING TOWARD ZERO

- Pressure to get serious about deep reductions in nuclear weapons is increasing: Canberra Commission, Blix Commission, Evans/Kawaguchi Commission
- Major push by the 4 senior statesmen: Shultz, Perry, Kissinger, Nunn
- Major studies by Stanford, Carnegie, Nuclear Threat Initiative, Stimson Center, IISS, others
- Strong support from UK; UK/Norway project on verifying nuclear warhead dismantlement

REDUCING TOWARD ZERO

- President Obama speech in Prague (April 5, 2009): “I state clearly and with conviction America’s commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. . .the United States will take concrete steps toward a world without nuclear weapons.” [Regarding the NPT] “The basic bargain is sound. Countries with nuclear weapons will move toward disarmament. Countries without nuclear weapons will not acquire them.”
- Speech to the UNGA (September 23, 2009): “I have outlined a comprehensive agenda to seek the goal of a world without nuclear weapons.”
- UNSC Resolution 1887 (September 24, 2009)—basically reiterates NPT Art. VI obligations

STAGE 1

- EIF for New START Treaty
- EIF for CTBT
- U.S., UK declare nuclear stockpiles

STAGE 2

- U.S.-Russia reduce to about 1,000 deployed nuclear warheads; further reductions in launchers and missiles
- Constrain/reduce tactical nuclear weapons
- Russia and all other NWS declare nuclear stockpiles
- Negotiate FMCT
- Vigorous research on controlling/monitoring non-deployed nuclear WH and their fissile material
- Resolve offense/defense issues, at least temporarily
- No first use?
- De-alerting?
- Discuss verification issues with all NWS

STAGE 3

- Reduce to 200-500(?) total WH (minimum deterrence) for U.S. and Russia—proportional reductions for all others
- Negotiate Middle East WMD-free zone
- Implement strong verification/compliance regime over all nuclear weapons
- Involve all interested states in discussions of security/verification/compliance

STAGE 4

- Endgame
- Nuclear Weapons Convention
- Reduction to zero or near zero, probably in incremental stages
- Negotiate virtual deterrence and safeguards programs; verification of these?

Important Problem

- Compliance problems, or even the perception of compliance problems, could quickly bring the reductions process to a halt at any stage

5 Major Questions About Deep Reductions

1. Can we establish a verification regime that will be effective?
2. Can we establish a compliance and enforcement regime that will be effective and fair?
3. How will deterrence, including extended deterrence, work at low levels?
4. What is the proper role of strategic defenses at low levels of offense?
5. What residual capability to produce NW will remain? Should this be constrained?

READINGS

- *“Beyond Nuclear Deterrence,”* Arbatov and Dvorkin, 2006
- *“What are Nuclear Weapons For?”* Drell and Goodby, Arms Control Association, 2007
- *“Reykjavik Revisited: Steps Toward a World Free of Nuclear Weapons,”* ed. Shultz, Drell and Goodby, Hoover Institution and Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2008
- *“Abolishing Nuclear Weapons,”* Perkovich and Acton, Carnegie Endowment, 2008
- *“Eliminating Nuclear Threats,”* ed. Evans and Kawaguchi, International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, 2009

MORE READINGS

- *“Elements of a Nuclear Disarmament Treaty,”* ed. Blechman and Bollfrass, Stimson Center, 2010
- *“Apocalypse Never,”* Daly, 2010
- *“Towards Nuclear Zero,”* Cortright and Vayrynan, International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2010
- *“Cultivating Confidence: Verification, Monitoring and Enforcement for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons,”* ed. Hinderstein, Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2010