

Remarks for panel discussion on

“Next Steps in Nuclear Weapons Policy and Arms Control”

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“Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Security: History, Policy, and Outlook”

The title of this panel raises important questions:

- Next steps toward what security policy objectives, under what constraints?
- Where do nuclear weapons fit into our overall national security strategy, now and in the future?
- What mix of cooperation and unilateral action offers the most reliable, effective, and efficient way to meet our security objectives?

When I think about such big picture questions, I begin with some starting presumptions when I think about such big picture questions?

- Globalization has raised complex interdependence in the security, economic, and environmental domains to a level where the United States must be concerned with international security, not just national security. But given our values, our shrinking budgets, and our intrinsic vulnerability, we will need to rely increasingly heavily on cooperative rather than purely coercive security strategies.
- Nuclear weapons remain the single biggest threat to national and international security, but they are a low-probability, high consequence type of problem. For most of the security challenges we face today, or are likely to face in the future, nuclear weapons are either irrelevant or are doing more to exacerbate the problem than they are solve it.
- Will accept that there is a residual role for nuclear deterrence under current circumstances, but in the post-Cold War world, that role is much smaller than many people believe. It needs to be pursued in ways that don't exacerbate risks of proliferation or nuclear terrorism, and don't interfere with our ability to cooperate with Russia, China, and other leading countries on more urgent security problems.

- Instead of arguing about whether or not the verified global elimination of nuclear weapons is an achievable and desirable goal, it is more productive to seek agreement on the near-term goal of eliminating nuclear risks.

What does this imply for next steps on nuclear weapons policy and arms control?

- Any real military requirements for nuclear deterrence could be satisfied with a much smaller nuclear arsenal than envisioned by the Nuclear Posture Review and the New START Treaty – reason why the primary argument for maintaining a larger force involve non-quantifiable psychological and political requirements of reassuring nervous allies and preserving alliance cohesion. Goal should be nuclear arsenals with no more than a few hundred total weapons per NWS, not the many thousands that currently remain in U.S. and Russian hands. You can argue about the details, like whether the US and Russia will still have more than the rest, and you can argue about the best process for achieving this goal, but it’s hard to argue that this level of nuclear forces would not be more appropriate for the security circumstances we are actually in than the many thousands of nuclear weapons we still have left over from the Cold War.
- More important than further numerical reductions, though, is making sure that whatever nuclear weapons and weapons-useable material exist in the world are kept under the tightest possible standards of managerial control. Priorities here include:
 1. Making sure that the United States and all other NWS have comprehensive accounting systems that let leaders know in real time where and in what condition all of their nuclear weapons, components, and weapons-usable fissile material are – something that even the United States does not have today.
 2. Leading by example in encouraging all countries to keep their nuclear weapons in operational statuses and basing modes that have the lowest probability of accident, inadvertent use, or unauthorized access, and don’t do anything that would have the opposite effect. Current U.S. policy is among the worst, rather than the best, in terms of having a large percentage of our nuclear weapons ready to be fired on short notice, engaging in exercises and other operational practices that could be misperceived, and having both capabilities and doctrine that might cause other countries to increase the readiness of their own nuclear forces, disperse them, or do other things that raise the risk of inadvertent deterrence failure.
 3. Being very careful about promoting the global expansion of nuclear power without tighter international controls on enrichment and reprocessing technologies and any weapons-grade material that results. Trying to restart multilateral negotiations on some type of fissile material treaty is one component of this, but you also need to worry about existing military stocks, reprocessed Pu in civilian programs, and tighter safeguards on fissile material production facilities.

- Gaining international agreement on significantly lower numbers of nuclear weapons, less risky operational practices, and tighter standards of managerial control will require the United States to do some things that are difficult from a domestic political standpoint:

1. Ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty – why?

- Vital for overall efforts to strengthen nonproliferation regime -- #1 thing that NNWS use to judge whether NWS are living up to their half of the NPT bargain.
- Equally important for U.S. efforts to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in its own and other countries' security strategies. If the United States, the country with the most advanced conventional military in the world still isn't confident that it can meet its security needs without testing nuclear weapons, what are other countries going to think?
- Most important reason is to show the rest of the world that if they negotiate an agreement with us, and make a number of major concessions in the process, they can be reasonably confident that the United States will follow through by ratifying the agreement. If the United States stands for the rule of law, not just the rule of force, internationally as well as domestically, and if it wants more effective international institutions to help us deal with a wide array of security challenges, then we need to ratify this treaty that the rest of the world uses as a test of our intention.

2. Recognize that convincing Russia and China to work with the United States on its nuclear risk reduction agenda will require a corresponding willingness from the United States to address their strategic security concerns – in particular, the relationship between nuclear offense, missile defense, and space-enabled precision conventional offense.

- US currently wants to reduce and maybe eliminate nuclear weapons while continuing to improve its already vastly superior conventional capabilities, including non-nuclear ways to perform nuclear missions, and having an active, open-ended commitment to evolve its way towards a global missile defense system. Doesn't look like a good deal to either Russia or China.
- U.S. wants to bring Russian TNW into the next negotiations, but unlikely to get a deal by focusing only on nuclear weapons, since the only reason why it might make sense for Russia to keep large number of TNW involves its concerns about NATO expansion and NATO conventional military superiority.

3. On missile defense, both Russia and China want some reliable reassurance that U.S. missile defense won't undermine their nuclear deterrent so long as nuclear deterrence remains an important component of their security policy:

- U.S. says its missile defense ambitions are limited, but it won't renounce any options, even a space-based layer that would not be remotely cost-effective, and can't be

- justified except as part of a system designed to deal with missiles from the interior of very large countries.
- So far, U.S. has shown no inclination to engage in the types of missile defense cooperation that Russia has proposed as alternative ways of showing that Russia is now genuinely regarded as a strategic partner rather than a major threat. U.S. willing to give verbal reassurances, but not to give written reassurances or share any kind of operation responsibility for European regional missile defense. Not even clear whether U.S. will be willing to finally get the Joint Data Exchange Center operational and share even the most basic types of early warning information (House version of National Defense Authorization Act for FY2012 would prohibit transfer of any early warning, detection, or tracking data to Russia, while Senate version would allow it).
4. On space, both Russia and China want to engage with the United States to elaborate rules for military uses of outer space.
- One Reason for their concern: space-based missile defense interceptors and other ways in which space-based assets could potentially be used for missile defense.
 - Also because of Bush administration plans to gain comprehensive U.S. military space dominance as a way to ensure perpetual U.S. terrestrial military dominance. Here, the most realistic concern is probably that in a crisis situation, the United States might either be tempted to disable or destroy whatever space-based communication, imagery, or navigation systems the opposing side had in the region, so that it would have vastly superior space-enabled information systems, or that in a crisis, the United States might think that it's own satellites had been, or were about to be attacked, and take pre-emptive action.
 - Obama administration's National Space Policy has a more cooperative tone, but repeats the same vague language used by previous administrations regarding what type of military missions it intends to undertake in space.
 - U.S. has shown some interest in voluntary transparency and confidence building measures, such as the European Union draft Code of Conduct, and has begun providing Russia and China with frequent warnings that their satellites might be in danger of colliding with other satellites or space debris, but still doesn't acknowledge that their might be some military space security issues not adequately addressed by the 1967 Outer Space Treaty.
 - Has said it will consider arms control proposals that are equitable, verifiable, and in the national security interests of the US and its allies; but has made it clear that the Russian/Chinese draft PPW treaty doesn't meet these criteria.
 - Current budget language prohibits NASA and OSTP from even talking with anyone from China about civilian space cooperation or other types of scientific

cooperation, which isn't conducive to identifying ways to cooperate with China on space security outside of formal arms control.

- **Concluding observations:** Making significant changes on U.S. policy on any of these nuclear or non-nuclear issues would be difficult for domestic political reasons that Janne Nolan will talk about, but if you agree with my starting presumptions and the top policy priorities that flow from them, then hopefully you will also agree that the stakes are high enough that it is worth giving careful thought to the development of strategies to overcome political resistance, especially when it comes from intense minorities whose views are not broadly representative of either expert or popular opinion on security policy.