

## [SE9-LT-1] U.S. Nuclear Posture Review

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### Full Summary

On April 6, 2010 U.S. Department of Defense released a 2010 U.S. Nuclear Posture Review. This release was delayed twice due to the complexity of the document and the ambitious nuclear agenda President Barack Obama outlined in his 2009 Prague Speech. There were several reports and documents that led to the final NPR such as Interim Document (2008) and Congressional Commission's Final Document (2009).

The key points of 2010 Obama's Nuclear Posture Review was the U.S. reduction of the role of nuclear weapons, the emphasize on the global non-proliferation regime as well as Congressional ratification of the U.S.-Russia arms control deal (which was later ratified). As Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates pointed out in regards to the 2010 U.S. NPR, "If a non-nuclear weapons state is in compliance with the non-proliferation treaty and its obligations, the US pledges not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against it. Any chemical or biological attack against the US or its allies "would face the prospect of a devastating conventional military response". Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in her remarks on NPR said that the U.S. is "recalibrating our priorities to prevent nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism, and we are reducing the role and number of weapons in our arsenal while maintaining a safe, secure, and effective deterrent to protect our nation, allies and partners."

It is important to note, that this was the first time that the document of such magnitude and sensitivity has been unclassified and opened for open public discussions both internally and on the international scope which triggered a lot of controversy. Obama's administration argued that there are two main advantages in unclassifying U.S. Nuclear Posture Review. One is to internal – to reassure Republican Party that the U.S. commitment to the role of nuclear deterrence and its allies is still strong (this should have been dealt with before the Senate's vote on START treaty with Russia where Republicans had a lot of doubts). The second advantage in unclassifying the document was the urgent international need for the non-nuclear states to agree on some limits regarding the sensitive technologies.

The 2010 NPR is divided into five "key objectives." As stated in the [official report](#), these include:

1. Preventing nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism;
2. Reducing the role of U.S. nuclear weapons is the U.S. national security strategy;
3. Maintaining strategic deterrence and stability at lower nuclear force levels;
4. Strengthening regional deterrence and reassuring U.S. allies and partners; and
5. Sustaining a safe, secure, and effective nuclear arsenal<sup>1</sup>.

The main focus of the 2010 NPR is prevention of nuclear terrorism and nuclear proliferation. It also emphasizes the fact that because the world security environment has dramatically changed since Cold War era, there is an urgent need to reconsider to security architecture. As the report states, the key difference in the U.S. nuclear policy is that it will use nuclear weapons in the "extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States or its allies and partners."

During the 2010 U.S. Nuclear Posture Review ASAN Plenum Panel, the main points of the NPR as well as how other countries view it were discussed. There were three participants on the panel: Clark Murdock, Lora Saalman and Walt Slocombe.

In Mr. Murdock's presentation the focus was given to the main points of the U.S. Nuclear Agenda which includes the 2010 NPR as well as New START Treaty, Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report, European Phased Adaptive Approach (PAA) and the U.S. Fiscal Year 2011 Budget proposal of Feb. 2010.

The U.S. Nuclear Agenda identifies the prevention of nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism as its foremost objective. It also commits to maintaining "strategic stability" with two main superpowers - Russia and China. Nuclear Posture Review is interesting in its nature as for the first time it updates the U.S. understanding of its Negative Security Assurance, specifying that the U.S. pledges to refrain from using nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states in compliance with their nonproliferation obligations. The document however goes into specifics and clarifies that while the Negative Security Assurance applies in the instance of a chemical or biological attack, the U.S. "reserves the right to make any adjustment in the assurance that may be warranted by the evolution and proliferation of the biological weapons threat and the U.S. capacities to counter that threat". In terms of U.S. -Russian relations NPR reassures Russia that the U.S. will maintain the triad during the 10-year duration of New START Treaty, but it also states that the U.S. "will not develop new nuclear warheads....and will not support new military missions or provide for the new military capabilities" for nuclear weapons. Internally, the 2010 U.S. NPR commits the U.S. to develop non-nuclear long-range strike capabilities and announces that nuclear-equipped Tomahawk missiles (TLAM-N) will no longer be in the U.S. arsenal. The document also states that the U.S. will

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<sup>1</sup> Nuclear Threat Initiative, [www.nti.org](http://www.nti.org)

continue “open-ocean targeting” of all SLBMs and ICSMs and commits the U.S. to de-MIRV its ICBMs. Finally, the document rejects the possibility of reducing alert rates for ICBMs and at-sea rates of SSBNs, arguing that de-alerting would undermine crisis stability.

New START Treaty, signed on April 2010 and ratified by the U.S. Congress in February, 2011, includes a non-binding preamble that states: "Recognizing the existence of the interrelationship between strategic offensive arms and strategic defensive arms, that this interrelationship will become more important as strategic nuclear arms are reduced, and that current strategic defensive arms do not undermine the viability and effectiveness of the strategic offensive arms of the Parties...". It is important to state that although this preamble places no meaningful constraint on the U.S. missile defense plans in Eastern Europe, it reintroduces a link between offense and defense. Opponents of the treaty, particular U.S. Republican Party, have argued that this could limit the U.S. freedom of action to pursue future capabilities. It might also ease Russia’s ability to withdraw from the START Treaty under the supreme national interest clause. In terms of numbers, the treaty limits the number of deployed strategic warheads to 1550, reducing Moscow Treaty limits by 30%. It also reduces the combined number of deployed and non-deployed delivery vehicles to 800, with a separate limit of 700 for deployed delivery vehicles. Needless to say, although New START Treaty faced a heavy domestic opposition, it was barely overcome due to the robust funding commitments from President B. Obama to maintain and modernize the nuclear complex.

Another significant development in the U.S. nuclear agenda is a January, 2010 Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report that expresses the U.S. commitment to the Phased Adaptive Approach (PAA) for European missile defense as well as to the improved defense integration throughout East Asia and the Middle East. The report links missile defense to reductions in the role of nuclear weapons, by stating that “the role of U.S. nuclear weapons in these regional deterrence architectures can be reduced by increasing the role of missile defenses and other capabilities”. 2010 Ballistic Missile Defense Review Report emphasizes the expansion of the strategic U.S.-China dialogue and the strengthening of technical and operational cooperation with Russia to improve shared early warning of missile launches. The report also calls for the increased investment in technology devoted to defeating missile defense countermeasures.

European Phased Adaptive Approach (PAA), agreed in September 2009, also responds to new threat assessments regarding the proliferation of ballistic missile. Based on PAA, sea-and land- based missile interceptors and sensors will be deployed to defend against incoming shortland medium-range ballistic missiles. The document was endorsed by NATO’s Strategic Concept as a “core element of our collective defense, which contributes to the indivisible security of the Alliance”. In terms of U.S.-Russia and Russia-NATO relations, the 2009 PAA

expresses a commitment to explore the potential for NATO-Russia cooperation on missile defense as they reached consensus during the NATO-Russia Council Summit (NRC).

The last significant development in the U.S. nuclear agenda is a proposed 2011 Fiscal Year Budget (proposed in February, 2010). According to the budget plan, President Barack Obama committed \$85 billion to sustain and modernize the nuclear weapons complex over the next decade. As part of such commitment, the 2011 Fiscal Year Budget proposal includes funding for a new Uranium Processing Facility and a new Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Facility. It also includes funding B-61 and W-76 life extension programs and a study on W-78 life extension options. Obama also committed \$100 billion to sustain and modernize nuclear delivery systems over the next decade. This commitment includes funding for research and development for a nuclear-capable next generation bomber and a next generation ballistic missile submarine. Significantly, the 2011 FY Budget proposal allocated \$10,2 billion for the development of missile defense capabilities and \$240 million for research and development of a Conventional Prompt Global Strike program and projects – a total of \$1,6 billion in funding from FY 2011 to FY 2015<sup>2</sup>.

Lora Saalman focused her speech on the Chinese debated over the NPR, particularly how Chinese as well as Russia and U.S. define strategic stability in the context of the NPR. Ms. Saalman's research was very interesting and factual as it was based on more than 124 sources including interviews and authentic Chinese articles. For her research she used CACDA, CASS, CPAPD, SIIS, PLAN as well as China Defense Journal, Contemporary Asia-Pacific, Modern International Relations, International Political Science, Pacific Academic Journal among many others.

In more than 124 articles on NPR, there were 36 mentions of China; 19 times it was paired with Russia. 2001, 2007 and 2010 were the years, when the concept of strategic stability was mentioned the most in the open source information.

Chinese experts see both positives and negatives in 2010 U.S. NPR. They emphasize the U.S. disarmament process as well as its continues fight against the risk of nuclear terrorism. Also, NPR seems to finally put an end to the nuclear arms race. On the negative side though, NPR is starting a new conventional arms race in the world.

In terms of the U.S. –China and China-Russia relations, Chinese emphasize the fact that China is not a little Russia. Chinese-U.S. strategic goal is to maintain imbalance and mutual vulnerability. On the contrary, U.S. Russia strategic goal is maintaining military balance and

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<sup>2</sup> This abstract is written from Mr. Murdock's keynotes, submitted to the ASAN Plenum website ( June, 2011 ), [http://www.asanplenum.org/programme\\_detail/sessionSketches.asp](http://www.asanplenum.org/programme_detail/sessionSketches.asp)

strategic stability. Russia is also concerned about restoring moral high ground and leadership position in the world. For Russia, trust follows transparency. To China, on the other hand, transparency follows trust.

In sum, while China seeks mutual vulnerability, U.S. seeks strategic stability. U.S. has no established goalposts and China changes goalposts, conflicted on disarmament. Chinese emphasize the fact that actions in the nuclear arena do matter and appreciate the ratification of NEW START, CTBT and FMCT. There is also a very productive U.S.-China lab-to-lab and scientist-to-scientist nuclear cooperation that helps to avoid political discourse.

As we can see, China does not define “strategic stability” in the terms that Russia and U.S. define it in their Cold War terms. Instead of clearly defining “strategic stability”, China concentrates on specific achievable measures such as engagement on nuclear security and safety and cooperation framework on BMD.

Walt Slocombe was analyzing Russia’s reaction to 2010 U.S. Nuclear Posture Review and how it will affect countries’ bilateral relations. Overall, the policies set by the U.S. during the review process directly affect how Russia views its security environment as well as define a domestic debate on U.S. –Russia bilateral relations as well as Russia’s status in the world.

As Mr. Slocombe pointed out, Russia views nuclear weapons as its essential toll in international affairs. Russia’s Military Doctrine clearly states that Russia heavily relies on nuclear weapons as a deterrence tool, particularly when the existence of the state is threatened. Therefore it is clear that nuclear weapons are the centerpiece for the U.S.-Russian bilateral relations.

New START agreement as well as U.S. strong commitments towards further disarmament, as stated in the U.S. NPR was strongly supported by most Russia’s officials as Russia’s nuclear arsenal has been aged and needed was becoming a financial burden.

In terms of arguably the biggest controversy in the U.S.-Russia relations, the temporary cancellation of U.S. plans in putting Missile Defense System in Eastern Europe was welcomed by Russia. Russia has clearly stated numerous times that it strongly opposes U.S. plans in building radars in Czech Republic and Poland as they put Russia’s national security at risk.

Mr. Slocombe pointed out that Russia still has a Cold War era mentality and its concerns over missile defense controversy have no legitimate ground. U.S. does not see Russia as a threat and is forced to constantly “explain” its actions to Russia.

## Session Sketches II

The ASAN Plenum panel on the 2010 U.S. NPR was very information, well-balanced and to-the-point. It covered not only U.S. internal views on the report but also the views of 2 superpowers: China and Russia.

\* The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies.

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