

## [SE5-LT-1] Nuclear Deterrence and Conventional Deterrence

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### Full Summary

Clark Murdock spoke about the United States' nonproliferation goals and the attempt to maintain credible deterrent and assurance capabilities while still reducing. He emphasized the importance of perception and what he calls “the third audience” for deterrence and assurance credibility.

Murdock notes that official US policy is one of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament with the long-term goal of a world without any nuclear weapons. However, as Murdock quoted President Barack Obama in Prague (April 2009), “the United States would continue to provide deterrence and to extend its nuclear guarantee to its allies as long as nuclear weapons exist by maintain[ing] a safe, secure and effective [nuclear] arsenal.’ The issue is how can the United States do this **credibly** at the same time it says it wants to reduce its nuclear weapons on a path to their elimination.”

Dr. Murdock believes that one of the keys to this question might be in our recognition of the importance of perception to credibility and our acknowledgment of “the third audience for national security commitments” – namely, the American public, Congress, the military and U.S. government officials. Murdock reinforced the conclusion of the Perry-Schlesinger Commission, which noted that extended deterrence and assurance is in the eyes of beholder – others’ understanding of US capabilities and intentions. He notes that both allies and potential aggressors look to the third audience to understand our deterrence commitments. Their perception of our commitment and our actual policy might differ. For instance, Murdock notes that many Arab states such as those in the Gulf Cooperation Council feel far more assured of a United States commitment to their security “than seems warranted by US extended deterrence.” He then underscores the importance of the US maintaining a “reputation for action” as long as nuclear weapons exist so that our extended deterrence commitments are credible and so recipient states are assured.

Furthermore, Murdock notes that extended deterrence is very different by region – specifically between East Asia and Europe – as seen particularly in Secretary Gates’ speeches to each area. He paraphrases Gates’ speeches, in which the former Secretary of Defense discussed the importance of East Asia to the United States’ security goals and praised the extended deterrence relationship there. He then contrasts East Asia and Europe, where he was almost upset with the lack of commitment from the Europeans to mutual security goals. According to Murdock, Gates lambasted the Europeans for not bearing their fair share in North Atlantic Treaty Organization security commitments. According to Gates, the Europeans were demonstrating their inability to sustain even modest operations. NATO’s future will be dim if NATO Europe won't bear its fair share.

In contrast, Asian allies are carrying their weight. This relationship will be enduring, even though the potential threat (for instance, from nuclear-armed North Korea) is more intense than the waning threat posed by Russia. Murdock noted that “For both Japan and South Korea, the strength of their security relationship with the United States is more important to their security than is the possession of nuclear weapons. In recent years, the United States has stated repeatedly that its extended deterrent to non-nuclear-weapons allies and friends is a powerful non-proliferation tool.” However, he recognizes that Japan and South Korea might seek additional assurance from the US that nuclear weapons are still on the table for their protection. He notes that our East Asian allies might increasingly desire explicit nuclear extended deterrence capabilities; even if the US deterrent capability is credible in aggressors’ eyes, the US might have an assurance problem. Allies want the biggest bundle of capabilities because a greater deterrent capability is seen as more credible. Dr. Murdock then questioned how the United States might balance perceptions of its conventional and nuclear arms so that it might increase credibility in both Europe and East Asia.

Brad Glosserman began by noting that while the United States is committed to the global zero goal for nonproliferation and disarmament, the US will of course keep its nuclear weapons until its enemies disarm. In particular, the US is worried about the nuclear threat from states instead of non-state actors. Glosserman then urged the United States to use a broad array of tools, not just its military capabilities for extended deterrence and assurance. He questioned whether or not nuclear weapons are in fact still more important than conventional weapons towards these goals. As the United States moves away from simply relying on nuclear weapons for its extended deterrence commitments, the United States must integrate more and reinforce the credibility of its conventional weapons. He echoed Murdock by claiming that the United States’ allies could do more for their alliances with the US. Finally, Glosserman emphasized the lack of strategic understanding for changing global capabilities and doctrines.

The majority of the panelists' comments as well as the subsequent question and answer discussion period centered around Elaine Bunn's original presentation on the United States' Conventional Prompt Global Strike (CPGS) concept.

It calls for a U.S. capability to deliver conventional strikes almost anywhere in the world in approximately an hour for scenarios in which existing conventional systems would be insufficient, but the use of nuclear weapons would be inappropriate or lack credibility. As Elaine Bunn notes, "The United States might need to strike a time-sensitive target protected by formidable air defenses or located deep inside enemy territory. Small, high-value targets might pop-up without warning in remote or sensitive areas, potentially precluding the United States from responding to the situation by employing other conventional weapons systems, deploying Special Operations Forces, or relying on the host country." Current conventional capabilities may be too slow to reach time-sensitive targets that arise in remote locations. Additionally, the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Report notes that the threat of enemy anti-access capabilities is increasing, noting that the United States must be prepared to engage against ballistic missiles, anti-ship cruise missiles, or anti-satellite weapons. Some advocates of Conventional Prompt Global Strike argue that these capabilities blunt the United States' conventional credibility and create a "credibility gap" because bombers, aircraft, and surface ships with cruise missiles might not be able to get within striking distance of an enemy, nor reach the enemy in a narrow time window. Proponents argue that CPGS would fill this credibility gap by possessing the speed, range, and penetration ability of nuclear Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles or Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles. In particular, advocates point to four scenarios that might be met most effectively by a new CPGS capability: locating terrorist leaders, where WMD transfers are suspected, when missile launches are imminent, or when high value targets are identified in larger military campaigns. Ms. Bunn argued that CPGS is worthy of debate because it has been pursued as a concept across multiple administrations, even though CPGS has taken multiple forms throughout its development. During the subsequent discussion after Ms. Bunn's presentation, one participant questioned the actual popularity of CPGS across administrations and suggested that a small number of proponents spanned both the Bush and Obama administrations, rather than broader bipartisan support. Ms. Bunn responded to this comment by noting that the CPGS concept has received support even at the presidential and Nuclear Posture Review levels. The Obama administration in particular acknowledges the importance of dealing with time-urgent regional threats and studying CPGS as one potential element of a broader portfolio of nonnuclear long-range strike assets.

The Conventional Prompt Global Strike concept recognizes the diverse threats the US has, including terrorist leaders, WMD transfers, imminent missile launches, and high value targets in the context of a larger military campaign. Such a capability might enhance deterrence and

assurance by providing an effective and usable (and thus more credible) strike option. However, concerns about future strategic stability as a result of Conventional Prompt Global Strike capabilities create a need for a discussion about the role of consultations in NATO in assurance and extended deterrence. The Russians and Chinese in particular fear that such a capability would actually give the United States conventional superiority and a first strike capability. These states fear that the United States' attempts at nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament are actually strategies for "making the world safe for US conventional superiority". CPGS wouldn't degrade Chinese or Russian capabilities, even though these states claim that this capability would undermine stability. Launch notifications would be a good starting point for future discussions of CPGS. We need mechanisms for confidence building measures and mechanisms for picking up the phone - notification mechanisms regardless of the actual capability. Confidence building measures for notification are important so that they have experience with conventional operations systems too. Some participants during the question and answer discussion echoed Russian and Chinese fears, noting that CPGS would be a huge threat to decades of stability and understanding, especially for a state such as China, which does not approve of its airspace being violated. Even if CPGS weapons might be useful in a war with a near-peer in national power, Ms. Bunn notes that this does not mean that the United States would develop such a capability specifically for this purpose. The overall health of any alliance is more important than any specific capability. Consultations with Japan and Korea will be essential as stability dialogues with china move forward. Glosserman reinforced this point during the discussion by arguing that the United States must begin with its Asian allies first from now on.

Other critics further noted that CPGS missiles would be ineffective, unnecessary, or infeasible. For instance, it is possible that "the time required to gather the information necessary to execute a CPGS strike would create alternative options for fulfilling US objectives. Alternatively, some targets might be so mobile that the United States might be unable to reposition strike assets in time to hit fast-moving targets. However, Ms. Bunn addressed these concerns by noting that "the speed of CPGS missiles should increase the deliberation time available to the President because the time between a strike order and target impact would be shorter."

While earlier forms of the concept included conventional warhead-armed ballistic missiles, these designs were scrapped because of the potential for misinterpretation during launch as a nuclear missile launch; all future research is pursued with a boost-glide launch concept in mind. Ms. Bunn notes that "concerns about CPGS ambiguity focus primarily on Russia because it possess a massive nuclear arsenal and is capable of detecting and tracking long-range missile launches." Furthermore, "neither Russian nor Chinese officials would have

strong incentives to employ nuclear force in response to a small, ambiguous US missile launch.”

Ms. Bunn repeatedly emphasized that Conventional Prompt Global Strike is currently just in research and development and is not a system that’s deployed or even in acquisition. This is an important distinction, as many current critics, both domestic and abroad, treat the concept as if it were currently owned or in acquisition by the United States. Many participants during the question and answer period echoed these fears. In fact, the delivery capability currently under discussion – the so-called “boost glide” technology – is a technological challenge that will likely be insurmountable for at least the next 5-10 years.

Scott Snyder summarized the three commentators’ opinions and offered several comments of his own. Snyder affirmed Obama’s commitment to disarmament as based on his 2009 Prague speech and then argued that the CPGS concept could enhance deterrence and be more credible than nuclear weapons because it might be used more often. He recognized that while CPGS might initially worry Russia and China, it is too premature to worry about such a concept while it is this early in development. He closed by noting the difficulty of reassuring multiple audiences, but posited that the United States must take extraordinary efforts to reassure its Asian allies specifically.

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