



The Obama Moment

European and American perspectives

**Edited by Álvaro de Vasconcelos
and Marcin Zaborowski**



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5. Prague and the transformation of American nuclear policy

Joseph Cirincione and Alexandra Bell

Introduction

President Barack Obama has begun what could be a profound transformation of US nuclear policy. How far and how fast it will proceed is not yet known. Much depends on the evolution of external factors and the resolution of policy disputes within the United States. The change, however, has been set in motion. President Obama in his 5 April 2009 speech in Prague refocused US nuclear policy from the continuous development of a vast nuclear arsenal with multiple missions to the reduction and eventual elimination of these weapons and the risks they present. On 24 September, Obama won international support for his approach, particularly from European allies, when the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted a US-drafted resolution on enhanced disarmament and non-proliferation measures.

US and European unity on this agenda was further demonstrated on 25 September with the surprise joint disclosure by President Obama, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown of a secret Iranian uranium enrichment facility at Qom. The three nations, as permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany, are now negotiating with Iran for the transfer of 1,500 kilograms of low-enriched uranium to Russia for conversion to harmless reactor fuel and the extension of inspections to Qom and other suspect sites. This welcome progress was followed by the unexpected decision of the Norwegian Nobel Committee to award President Obama the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize. The committee noted the award was given in part due to 'Obama's vision of and work for a world without nuclear weapons.' The com-

mittee believed 'the vision of a world free from nuclear arms has powerfully stimulated disarmament and arms control negotiations.'¹

While previous US presidents, beginning with Harry S. Truman, have promised eventual nuclear disarmament, this is the first time the vision has been married to a series of practical steps at a time when international conditions favour both the steps and the ultimate goal. Negotiated agreements, cooperative threat reduction programmes and unilateral actions would be knit together under the Obama plan to prevent nuclear terrorism, stop the emergence of new nuclear states, reduce the numbers of nuclear weapons in global arsenals and simultaneously diminish their role in international security policies.

The plans represent a sharp break from the expansion of nuclear missions and rejection of arms control during the George W. Bush administration and the modest changes implemented during the Bill Clinton administration, most notably his negotiation of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. They have more in common with the bold actions of previous Republican presidents, particularly Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. Reagan sought in the Reykjavik summit of 1986 to eliminate all nuclear weapons in ten years, failed, but then negotiated deep reductions in the Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty and the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). Bush combined unilateral reductions and policy shifts that occurred in 1991 with the negotiation of the START II treaty at the end of this term. Together, these two presidents reduced the US nuclear arsenal by 70 percent.

Today's threats

Two major factors help explain why this change has occurred and why now. The first is the worsening of nuclear threats. As President Obama explained in his Prague speech:

Today, the Cold War has disappeared but thousands of those weapons have not. In a strange turn of history, the threat of global nuclear war has gone down, but the risk of a nuclear attack has gone up. More nations have acquired these weapons. Testing has continued. Black market trade in nuclear secrets and nuclear materials abound. The technology to build a bomb has spread. Terrorists are determined to buy, build or steal one. Our efforts to contain these dangers are centered on a global non-proliferation regime, but as more people and nations break the rules, we could reach the point where the center cannot hold.²

1. Norwegian Nobel Committee, 'The Nobel Peace Prize for 2009,' Oslo, 9 October 2009.

2. 'Remarks by President Barack Obama,' Hradcany Square, Prague, 5 April 2009.

The threat is real, severe and rising. There are an estimated 23,000 existing nuclear weapons held by nine nations today, with Iran on the way to becoming the world's tenth nuclear power, and enough global fissile material for hundreds of thousands more weapons. Whatever stability the deterrent role of nuclear weapons may have provided during the Cold War has now been overtaken by the catastrophic risks these weapons represent.

The threats go beyond the risks of North Korean or Iranian programmes, although these garner the most press and political attention. An accident, error or unauthorised use could result in the launch of one or more of the nearly three thousand nuclear warheads still kept on high-alert status by the US and Russia.

Nuclear terrorism represents the gravest threat to the United States, Europe and many other nations. Fortunately, terrorists cannot build a nuclear bomb from scratch. Unfortunately, if they could acquire the material and basic technical expertise, they could construct a Hiroshima-size device that could decimate a mid-size city. There are over 40 nations with weapons-usable material stored for military and civilian purposes. Pakistan, with the world's fastest growing nuclear arsenal, has growing stability problems, strong Islamic fundamentalist influences throughout its military and intelligence services and al-Qaeda safely ensconced within its territory. Jihadists could capitalise on the chaos of a crisis and seize control of fissile material for a bomb or a weapon itself.

The main threat from the acquisition of nuclear weapon capability by new states, such as Iran, is not that they would initiate a nuclear attack but that 'it raises the prospect of a nuclear arms race in the Middle East,' as Obama noted at the Moscow Summit on 6 July 2009. The race has already begun. Since 2006, a dozen nations in the Middle East have expressed interest in nuclear energy programmes. This is not about energy; it is a nuclear hedge against Iran. Former US National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft told the *Wall Street Journal* the same month:

I believe we are at a tipping point. If we fail in Iran, we're going to have a number of countries go the same route Iran has just in self-defense. Egypt will, Saudi Arabia will, Turkey will.³

These nuclear dominoes could bring down the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. There is already a loss of confidence in the basic bargains of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Non-nuclear-weapon states are sceptical that weapons

3. Peter Spiegel, 'Obama Puts Arms Control at Core of New Strategy', *Wall Street Journal*, 15 July 2009.

states will disarm, especially since no verifiable arms reduction treaty has been ratified since 1992. Nuclear-weapon states see a system that has yet to stop North Korea and Iran's pursuit of weapons capability and more states pursuing civil nuclear programmes that could provide a 'breakout' weapons capability. Meanwhile, India, Israel and Pakistan remain outside the treaty, challenging its validity. If these trends continue, the treaty could collapse, triggering a 'cascade of proliferation,' as a high-level expert panel warned the UN Secretary General in 2004.⁴

Arms control as the new realism

The second major factor is the growing consensus on the need for significant reductions and new bilateral and multilateral negotiations, although deep differences remain over the feasibility and desirability of nuclear disarmament. There is a general, though not universal, consensus that the policies of the previous administration did not succeed in reducing the threats. Some conservatives, who a few years ago condemned treaties as 'the illusion of security,' are now embracing agreements to reduce nuclear arms. For example, former Republican Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger endorsed a new treaty with Russia as part of his recommendations in the Congressional Commission of the Strategic Posture of the United States that he co-chaired with former Democratic Secretary of Defense William Perry. The report stated that 'the moment appears ripe for a renewal of arms control with Russia, and this bodes well for a continued reductions in the nuclear arsenal.'⁵

Schlesinger once led the charge against further nuclear reductions and helped frame the Bush administration's alternative approach. In an article written in 2000, 'The Demise of Arms Control?' he wrote that 'the necessary target for arms control is to constrain those who desire to acquire nuclear weapons.'⁶ In this view, the threat comes from other states, and a large, robust US nuclear arsenal was needed to counter proliferation. Schlesinger has changed his position. As the commission reported to Congress, 'the United States must seek additional cooperative measures of a political kind, including for example arms control and non-proliferation.'

Former Republican National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, who opposed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1999,⁷ is now 'cautiously optimistic' that the

4. 'A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility,' Report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, United Nations, New York, 2004.

5. William Perry and James Schlesinger, 'America's Strategic Posture,' Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States, Washington D.C., 6 May 2009.

6. James Schlesinger, 'The Demise of Arms Control?' *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 2, p. 180.

7. See Arnold Kanter and Brent Scowcroft, 'How to Fix the CTBT,' *The Washington Times*, 27 October 1999.

administration can get it ratified.⁸ In fact, a Council on Foreign Relations Task Force he co-chaired with William Perry in the spring of 2009 recommended that the Senate ratify the nuclear test ban he once questioned. A perennial realist and a representative of a different wing of the Republican Party, Scowcroft was never ideologically opposed to negotiated reductions with the Russians. However, in 1999 he opposed the test ban. Ten years later, his report declared, in addition to support for the test ban, that the 'US-Russia relationship is ripe for a new formal arms control agreement,' one 'that would reflect current defense needs and realities and would result in deeper arms reductions.'⁹

What is behind the shift?

Thus, over the last eight years, nuclear threats grew and the policies pursued under the previous administration failed to prevent them. The strategic landscape shifted and some conservatives – to their credit – began to recalculate. Some are now moving towards a new realism, a balance of deterrence and diplomacy.

A watershed moment came when four veteran Cold War warriors, former Secretaries of Defense George Shultz and William Perry, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and former Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Sam Nunn, publicly endorsed nuclear elimination in the *Wall Street Journal* in January 2007.¹⁰

One year later, in a second oped in January 2008,¹¹ the four announced that they had gathered the support of 70 percent of the men and women who formerly served as secretaries of state, defense or national security advisors, including James Baker, Colin Powell, Madeleine Albright, Frank Carlucci, Warren Christopher and Melvin Laird.

Supported and encouraged by these moderates, President Barack Obama is aggressively promoting the change. Turning campaign promises into government policy, he stated in Prague on 5 April 2009, 'clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.' He detailed practical steps towards that goal, including his administration's intent to 'immediately and aggressively pursue US ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban

8. Charles Ferguson and Brent Scowcroft, 'Ferguson-Scowcroft Conference Call,' Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 1 May 2009.

9. William Perry and Brent Scowcroft, 'US Nuclear Weapons Policy,' Independent Task Force Report no. 62, Council on Foreign Relations, New York, April 2009.

10. George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry J. Kissinger and Sam Nunn, 'A World Free of Nuclear Weapons', *The Wall Street Journal*, 4 January 2007.

11. George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry J. Kissinger and Sam Nunn, 'Toward a Nuclear-Free World', *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 January 2008.

Treaty.’ The unanimous approval of UN Security Council Resolution no. 1887 on 24 September 2009, expands the legal and diplomatic basis for enforcing tougher penalties for those that cheat on nuclear treaties. It also reaffirms specific steps for all the nuclear nations to reduce the numbers and roles of their weapons. Obama could demonstrate solid progress in the next few months.

There is little doubt that US leadership is essential for this global agenda. Former Australian Foreign and Trade Minister Gareth Evans, the co-chair of the International Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Commission, whose report is due at the end of 2009, says:

The opportunity to move things forward is intimately bound up with the new US administration and the sense of confidence and momentum that hopefully that will generate, and is already generating, around the world, combined with the really significant contribution intellectually that has been made by the Gang of Four simply by putting out a hard-hitting case for zero nuclear weapons worldwide.¹²

There are, of course, important differences on the way forward. Secretary Schlesinger is still opposed to nuclear disarmament. Scowcroft still favours a large US nuclear arsenal. But while not endorsing Obama’s ultimate goal, they support several of his preliminary steps. That may be sufficient for now. The key is to forge broad agreement on the immediate policies whose fulfillment can build confidence in the efficacy of subsequent initiatives.

There is also strong opposition from supporters of the Bush nuclear posture: i.e. those who favour retaining substantial numbers of weapons, a variety of missions including use in conventional wars, and the development of new warheads and new delivery vehicles. The opposition is organised and aggressive with Senator Jon Kyl (R-AZ) as the principal political leader. In an article co-authored with Richard Perle, former Assistant Secretary of Defense under President Reagan, Kyl described the idea of global nuclear disarmament as ‘dangerous, wishful thinking.’ The article continued:

If we were to approach zero nuclear weapons today, others would almost certainly try even harder to catapult to superpower status by acquiring a bomb or two. A robust American nuclear force is an essential discouragement to nuclear proliferators; a weak or uncertain force just the opposite.¹³

12. Miles Pomper and Peter Crail, ‘Getting to Zero: An Interview with Gareth Evans, Co-Chair of the International Nuclear Non-Proliferation Disarmament Commission,’ *Arms Control Today*, April 2009.

13. Jon Kyl and Richard Perle, ‘Our Decaying Nuclear Deterrent’, Editorial, *Wall Street Journal*, 30 June 2009.

Others state plainly that the US nuclear deterrent is essential for international security, and our dependence on nuclear weapons undermines the logic of nuclear arms reductions, let alone global disarmament. Doug Feith, former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy under George W. Bush, and Abram Shulsky have written: 'So long as the security of the US and of our allies and friends requires such dependence, a non-nuclear world will remain out of reach.'¹⁴ Kyl has promised to do whatever it takes to defeat the ratification of the nuclear test ban treaty.

These are powerful minority voices. The Obama agenda still garners substantial support, as evidenced on *The New York Times* editorial page earlier this year:

Two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Russia and the United States together still have more than 20,000 nuclear weapons. It is time to focus on the 21st-century threats: states like Iran building nuclear weapons and terrorists plotting to acquire their own. Until this country convincingly redraws its own nuclear strategy and reduces its arsenal, it will not have the credibility and political weight to confront those threats.¹⁵

If Obama holds firmly to his ultimate goal, it seems that prospects are still good for building a bipartisan consensus to move on the Prague vision. While unforeseeable challenges in current and emerging weapons states can always become obstacles to progress, there are a number of possible critical arms control and non-proliferation victories to be achieved by mid-2010. They include:

- A follow-on treaty to START with a further lowering of the number of strategic nuclear weapons allowed under the SORT treaty.
- Negotiations underway for a new treaty to limit total US and Russian forces to 1,000 or so weapons.
- A new US Nuclear Posture Review that will reduce the role of nuclear weapons in security policy and begin the transformation of the nuclear force to adapt to the twenty-first century threats.
- A successful 2010 NPT Review Conference that will increase the barriers to proliferation.
- US Senate ratification of the nuclear test ban treaty.

14. Douglas J. Feith and Abram N. Shulsky, 'Why revive the Cold War?', *Wall Street Journal*, 18 August 2009.

15. Editorial, 'Watershed Moment on Nuclear Arms,' *New York Times*, 24 March 2009.

- Negotiations well underway for a verifiable ban on the production of nuclear weapons material.
- The containment of the North Korean nuclear programme.
- Negotiations for the containment of the Iranian programme, with some tangible signs of progress.
- An accelerated programme for securing and eliminating where possible loose nuclear materials and weapons in global stockpiles, with international participation secured at the April 2010 Global Nuclear Security Summit.

The debate over *what* US policy should be is over; it is now a question of *how* to implement it. Key to its success will be the action of the United States' closest allies in Europe.

Implementation

The first problem to resolve in this new nuclear policy is a basic internal tension. President Obama assembled a team of rivals across his cabinet and national security team that contributes to this dynamic. Now dissensions among these officials will either help or hinder this ambitious agenda.

Most are not as personally committed to the goal of nuclear elimination as the President and others see this agenda as politically unviable. Indeed, the principal resistance to Obama's attempted transformation will come not from conservatives, but from moderates in President Obama's own administration fearful of appearing 'weak' on national defence. They will want to go slow on any change and will be eager to promote new weapons systems as proof of their toughness, possibly including new nuclear warheads. They will seek to strike early deals with conservatives and may fail to aggressively pursue changes to the nuclear posture. If the Nuclear Posture Review, due for public release in February 2010, is not supportive of President Obama's vision, the window of opportunity for nuclear policy change may close. Those in the administration who favour slow, incremental changes could doom the Obama agenda. The administration will face a struggle between these *incrementalists* and the *transformationalists* dedicated to implementing fundamental change in US nuclear policy as detailed in the Prague speech.

President Obama seemed to be talking directly to his own officials when he promised in his 23 September speech to the UN General Assembly that:

America will keep our end of the bargain. We will pursue a new agreement with Russia to substantially reduce our strategic warheads and launchers. We will move forward with ratification of the Test Ban Treaty, and work with others to bring the Treaty into force so that nuclear testing is permanently prohibited. We will complete a Nuclear Posture Review that opens the door to deeper cuts, and reduces the role of nuclear weapons. And we will call upon countries to begin negotiations in January on a treaty to end the production of fissile material for weapons.¹⁶

His comments on the nuclear posture review seemed particularly targeted at officials. As his speech indicates, Obama is aggressively dealing with several items in the nuclear inbox, the first of which is negotiating a follow-on to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). START will expire on 5 December 2009, leaving the pivotal bilateral verification and reduction regime in peril. Since the US and Russia collectively hold 96 percent of the world's nuclear weapons, it is imperative that the two nations maintain a stable arms reduction plan.

Negotiations began in earnest following the meeting of Presidents Obama and Medvedev at the G20 Summit in April 2009. The two leaders signed a Joint Understanding for the follow-on treaty on 6 July 2009, which commits their nations to 'reduce their strategic warheads to a range of 1,500-1,675, and their strategic delivery vehicles to a range of 500-1,100.' Russia and the US will refine the details over the autumn of 2009 and present the follow-on treaty for ratification by winter.

While the limit of this new understanding is just below the lowest level set by the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT), it represents a first step on the longer road to major reductions. The negotiators aimed for the numbers that would represent a clear commitment to future reductions, while still being modest enough to pass the legislatures of their respective nations. This is important, as the world will be watching to see if the US and Russia can deliver on their promises.

The cuts, which could amount to a 30 percent reduction over seven years in the stockpiles of the world's two largest nuclear arsenals, are in effect a 'down payment' on a future treaty that could move even lower. Presidents Obama and Medvedev also committed to a Joint Statement on Nuclear Security, reiterating their commitment to broaden cooperation to limit and eventually stop nuclear proliferation and terrorism.

The progress at the Moscow Summit is indicative of an emerging Obama Doctrine: promote the ultimate vision, but concentrate on securing broad agreement on the

16. Barack Obama, 'Responsibility for our Common Future,' United Nations, New York, 23 September 2009.

immediate confidence-building measures that will illustrate the realism of the overall plan.

As noted, there will be opposition in the US and abroad. Conservatives will try to use approval of START follow-on as way to block further cuts to missile defence funding and increase funding for nuclear weapons modernisation. They will certainly use it to delay consideration of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and marshal forces for its defeat.

Rejected by the Senate in 1999, the CTBT is a top priority for the Obama administration. However, the CTBT needs 67 votes for ratification in the Senate. Senators will need to be convinced that technical advances in stockpile safety and verification measures over the past decade will make the test ban treaty a more powerful international accord.

Though this is a domestic issue, the Senate may well look to European allies for their opinion of the possible linkages between the test ban and efforts to prevent proliferation. Support from European nuclear and non-nuclear states could greatly improve momentum for the test ban and the rest of the President's Prague agenda.

Effect on the 2010 NPT

Obama believes that US leadership on arms control over the next year will provide the critical support needed to increase barriers to proliferation at the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. President Obama outlined his goals in the Prague Speech:

The basic bargain is sound: Countries with nuclear weapons will move towards disarmament, countries without nuclear weapons will not acquire them, and all countries can access peaceful nuclear energy. To strengthen the treaty, we should embrace several principles. We need more resources and authority to strengthen international inspections. We need real and immediate consequences for countries caught breaking the rules or trying to leave the treaty without cause.¹⁷

He then noted the critical importance of supporting and adhering to the NPT during a speech in Cairo on 4 June 2009:

17. President Barack Obama, op. cit. in note 2.

I understand those who protest that some countries have weapons that others do not. No single nation should pick and choose which nations hold nuclear weapons. That is why I strongly reaffirmed America's commitment to seek a world in which no nations hold nuclear weapons. And any nation – including Iran – should have the right to access peaceful nuclear power if it complies with its responsibilities under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. That commitment is at the core of the Treaty, and it must be kept for all who fully abide by it.¹⁸

Without the passage of a START follow-on and the ratification of the CTBT, it will be hard for the US and its allies to gain support for additional non-proliferation efforts.

European cooperation

The paradigm shift in the US has already taken hold in some European nations. UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown has noted that 'there is growing momentum across the globe to tackle these strategic challenges.'¹⁹ Indeed, the new US approach closely mirrors some European policies. With new leaders at the helm of many Western nations, a progressive nuclear non-proliferation agenda has gained widespread support in France, Germany, Italy and the UK, in addition to other European Union members.

The United Kingdom

The UK is a key validator of President Obama's foreign policy and the Prague agenda in particular. Before the 2008 US Presidential campaign began, Margaret Beckett, former Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, spoke at the 2007 Carnegie International Non-Proliferation Conference. She declared that the time had come to take seriously the idea of a world free of nuclear weapons and that 'the need for such vision and action is all too apparent'²⁰ given the nature of current security threats. Six months later, Prime Minister Gordon Brown laid out the strategic vision for the UK:

Britain is prepared to use our expertise to help determine the requirements for the verifiable elimination of nuclear warheads. And I pledge that in the run-up to the Non-Proliferation Treaty review conference in 2010, we will be at the forefront of the

18. Barack Obama, 'Remarks by the President on a New Beginning,' Cairo University, Cairo, 4 June 2009.

19. 'World at "critical moment" on nuclear arms: Brown', *Agence France Presse*, 16 July 2009.

20. Margaret Beckett, 'Keynote Address: A World Free of Nuclear Weapons?', Carnegie International Non-Proliferation Conference, 25 June 2007.

international campaign to accelerate disarmament amongst possessor states, to prevent proliferation to new states, and to ultimately achieve a world that is free from nuclear weapons.²¹

In the light of this new direction, ministers in the British government began to implement the plan. Defence Secretary Desmond Browne, addressing the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva on 5 February 2008, articulated the UK's commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation as a matter of critical import for international security. At the same time, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs David Miliband outlined a specific six-step plan in a policy paper titled 'Lifting the Nuclear Shadow: Creating the Conditions for Abolishing Nuclear Weapons'.²² In the paper, Miliband called for an 'assertive and co-operative strategy' to move towards nuclear elimination. Prime Minister Brown echoed this sentiment in July 2009 saying that the 'the UK remains committed to the reduction and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons, and to ensuring that nations have access to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes'.²³

However, the British leader remains cautious about prospects for disarmament. Earlier in the month at the G8 Summit in L'Aquila, the Prime Minister noted that, like the US, Britain had no intention of disarming unilaterally. The British arsenal could, however, be reduced as part of a multilateral effort. Prime Minister Brown also noted that the British military would not be abandoning the replacement plans for the Trident programme, despite budgetary delays. But in New York in September, Brown announced that he would cut British nuclear forces by 25 percent, building only three new Trident nuclear submarines to replace the four currently in service.

In July 2009 the British government issued 'The Road to 2010 – Addressing the nuclear question in the twenty-first century', setting out the official UK strategy to prepare for the 2010 Review Conference. In it, officials outline policy priorities for the next year, stating that the conference was a 'major opportunity, and so between now and then the Government will help lead international efforts to secure the necessary consensus for reform'.²⁴ While positive, the road map lacks specifics on some major issues like nuclear doctrine. While the current British government supports policies

21. Gordon Brown, Speech at the Chamber of Commerce in Delhi, 21 January 2008.

22. Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'Lifting the Nuclear Shadow: Creating the Conditions for Abolishing Nuclear Weapons', 4 February 2008.

23. Gordon Brown, 'Statement on Nuclear Non-proliferation', 16 July 2009.

24. Cabinet Office, 'The Road to 2010 – Addressing the nuclear question in the twenty-first century', Cmd 7675, July 2009. Available at: <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/224864/roadto2010.pdf>.

in line with the Obama agenda, there may be political changes in 2010, when a general election is due to be held. No matter who gains control of the Parliament, the US will need its primary ally to make any serious progress on the Prague agenda in the lead-up to the 2010 Review Conference.

France

French President Nicolas Sarkozy has championed disarmament initiatives, despite France's reputation as the most conservative of the Western nuclear powers. While celebrating the addition of *Le Terrible*, a nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine, to the French fleet at Cherbourg, Sarkozy noted:

France has an exemplary record, unique in the world, with respect to nuclear disarmament. [*France was*] the first state to shut down and dismantle its fissile material production facilities ... the only state to have dismantled its nuclear testing facility in the Pacific; the only state to have dismantled its ground-to-ground nuclear missiles; the only state to have voluntarily reduced the number of its nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines by a third.²⁵

President Sarkozy also wrote a letter on behalf of the Council of the European Union to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon outlining the EU's ambition and plan of action for working towards general nuclear elimination. The letter also contended that while Europe has already made strides, it is 'prepared to do more' since it is 'keenly aware of the fact that its own security encourages the pursuit of global disarmament efforts'.²⁶

While these statements indicate interest in a serious reduction agenda, France is wary of total nuclear disarmament. Addressing the 45th Munich Security Conference, President Sarkozy stated that his country's nuclear arsenal currently contributed to the security of Europe and thus France would remain a nuclear power. This is Sarkozy's reiteration of the longstanding French principle on disarmament that, as summarised by one commentator, 'if French, European, and international security are improved by a specific objective, then it is worth pursuing. If the security benefits are doubtful, caution should prevail'.²⁷ Some critics argue that Sarkozy's support for the modernisation of the French nuclear submarine force indicates French doubts about the security benefits of nuclear disarmament.

25. Nicolas Sarkozy, 'Presentation of SSBM "Le Terrible"', 21 March 2008.

26. Nicolas Sarkozy, 'Letter to Mr. Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General', 5 December 2008.

27. Camille Grand, 'France, Nuclear Weapons, and Non-Proliferation,' in *US-European Non-Proliferation Perspectives*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 2009. p. 16.

On the other hand, proponents of nuclear elimination argue that the disarmament measures Sarkozy has taken – reducing French land-based nuclear weapons by one-third and increased transparency of French nuclear holdings and de-targeting practices – reveal cautious progress to a more secure, minimum deterrent force.

Cautious progress fits well with the long-term agenda of global nuclear disarmament. Ambassador Jean-François Dobelle, French Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament, contended that France's 'commitment to nuclear disarmament is expressed in action and concrete proposals', but that progress was only possible with a truly global movement.²⁸ This complements Sarkozy's position that there must be 'reciprocity' when assessing French arms reductions. In perspective, it is prudent for France to take cautious disarmament measures that improve its own security while it waits for the US and Russia to reduce their arsenals to a level – approximately 500 weapons each – where multilateral arrangement can facilitate reciprocal disarmament. A plan along these lines has been detailed by the international security organization, Global Zero, in early 2009.²⁹

Non-weapons states

Germany and Italy will also play a pivotal role in new non-proliferation agendas. While Chancellor Angela Merkel has given her support to the non-proliferation efforts, it has been reserved. At the 2009 Munich Security Conference, she argued that 'it goes without saying that we want to work towards a world without nuclear weapons,' but that the first steps should focus on short-term objectives like reducing arsenals and preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.³⁰ That month, writing in the German publication *Sueddeutsche*, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier was more vocal in his support for nuclear elimination, saying that it is his goal to help support the vision of a nuclear-free world, despite the hard work involved in making it a reality.³¹

While holding the Presidency of the G8 in 2009, the Italians have also voiced broad support of nuclear disarmament. Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi put non-proliferation on the top of the agenda at the July G8 conference and pushed for concrete agreements on the issue. Italian Secretary of State Enzo Scotti had al-

28. Jean-François Dobelle, Statement, Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference, 28 April 2008.

29. The Global Zero plan is available at: http://www.globalzero.org/files/pdf/gzap_3.0.pdf.

30. Angela Merkel, 'Speech by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel at the 45th Munich Security Conference,' Munich, 7 February 2009.

31. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, 'A Fresh Start for Disarmament Policy,' *Sueddeutsche*, 4 February 2009.

ready stated his country's commitment to non-proliferation at the International Conference on Disarmament in March 2009. He noted Italy's efforts to support disarmament and applauded US-Russian progress on joint arms control agreements, saying that the two nations should keep working in order 'to set forth an example for others to follow.'³² The Italians have also hosted various conferences and events at home and abroad in support of the non-proliferation movement. For example, on 16-17 April 2009, the Italian government co-sponsored a conference called 'Overcoming Nuclear Dangers' with the Nuclear Threat Initiative and the World Political Forum.

Another positive example of cooperation was the L'Aquila Statement on Non-Proliferation made at the G8 conference on 8 July 2009. The broad-reaching statement reconfirmed the goal of a nuclear-weapons free world set out in Obama's Prague speech and in speeches made by leaders across Europe. The leaders agreed to work together to make the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference (NPT RevCon) a success by setting realistic and achievable goals, confirmed their support for the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and pushed for the universal acceptance of the Additional Protocol verification standard. The leaders also promised to enhance efforts in gain universal ratification of the CTBT and usher its entry into force. While affirming the right to peaceful nuclear energy, the leaders also called for the creation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material.

Statesmen

European nations have also seen their own incarnations of America's 'Four Statesmen'. Three former British foreign secretaries, Douglas Hurd, Malcolm Rifkind and David Owen, joined with the British former NATO secretary general, George Robertson, to endorse a world free of nuclear weapons in the London *Times*, urging the world to 'begin by supporting the campaign in America for a non-nuclear weapons world.'³³

Italian statesmen soon added their support. Former Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema, former Foreign Minister Gianfranco Fini, former Minister for European Affairs Giorgio La Malfa, former Defence Minister Arturo Parisi, and former Secretary General of Pugwash and physicist Francesco Calogero gave their endorsement

32. Enzo Scotti, 'Speech by Secretary of State Scotti,' UN Conference on Disarmament, Geneva, 3 March 2009.

33. Douglas Hurd, Malcolm Rifkind, David Owen, and George Robertson, 'Start Worrying and Learn to Ditch the Bomb,' *The Times*, 30 June 2008.

to a nuclear-free world. Though they believed that the US and Russia must take the lead, they acknowledged that a key part of the process would be ‘the spread of a new way of thinking – of a new “shared wisdom”’ and recognised that ‘Italy too must contribute.’³⁴

In Germany, former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, former President Richard von Weizsaecker, former German Federal Minister Egon Bahr, and former Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher followed with their own statement in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. They claimed to ‘unreservedly support’ the vision of the Perry, Kissinger, Nunn and Shultz quartet and also called for the removal of US nuclear warheads from German territory.³⁵

France is the latest country to field a team of anti-nuclear statesmen. Former Prime Ministers Alain Juppé and Michel Rocard, former Defence Minister Alain Richard, and retired General Bernard Norlain joined the fight against nuclear proliferation in *Le Monde*. They called for the abandonment of new nuclear weapons development and noted that, ‘the message of peace and justice that France wishes to impart to the world imposes a duty to be a dynamic and creative actor in a process of effective, balanced disarmament which could be getting underway, and which is the wish of the vast majority of the peoples of the world, and all our European partners.’³⁶

Public opinion in Europe

A World Public Opinion Poll conducted on 9 December 2008 concluded that 76 percent of those surveyed favoured the elimination of nuclear weapons by a certain date. Among the Western nuclear weapons states, there was an overwhelming majority in favour of elimination, France with the highest percentage of 86 percent, Great Britain with 81 percent, the United States with 77 percent.³⁷

One could argue that while many people support the vague idea of a nuclear-free world, they begin to change their minds when confronted with specifics. Polling conducted in the UK in July 2009 challenges this argument. Results showed that 54% of the British public are sufficiently comfortable with the idea of disarmament

34. Massimo D’Alema et al., ‘For a World Free of Nuclear Weapons,’ *Corriere Della Sera*, 24 June 2008.

35. Richard von Weizsaecker, Egon Bahr, and Hans-Dietrich Genscher, ‘Toward a Nuclear-Free World: A German View,’ *International Herald Tribune*, 9 January 2009.

36. Alain Juppé, Michel Rocard, Alain Richard and Bernard Norlain, ‘Pour un désarmement nucléaire mondial, seule réponse à la prolifération anarchique’ (‘For Global Nuclear Disarmament, the Only Means to Prevent Anarchic Proliferation’), *Le Monde*, 14 October 2009.

37. World Public Opinion, ‘Publics around the World Favor International Agreement To Eliminate All Nuclear Weapons’, 9 December 2008.

to the extent that they would rather disarm than pay to replace the Trident submarine fleet, as the British government is currently planning.

Sources of discord

Though there is persistent European scepticism, President Obama's nuclear security agenda has significant support across the European political landscape and in the public sphere. Indeed, European leaders had been promoting a progressive non-proliferation agenda long before President Obama made his speech in Prague. They supported arms control initiatives, even while the US was moving in the complete opposite direction. Now that the Europeans have what they seem to want in terms of US policy, what will they do with it?

One of the major political and strategic obstacles to reducing nuclear arsenals will be the issue of extended deterrence. The US, as part of its NATO obligations, has guaranteed the security of European nations against nuclear and other attack. During the Cold War the alliance used a US nuclear guarantee to deter a Soviet attack on Western Europe. While the full US strategic arsenal backed this guarantee, the US also deployed non-strategic nuclear weapons – 'tactical nuclear weapons' – as a way to balance against similar Soviet deployments and bolster political ties with NATO Member States.

Today the Soviet threat does not exist, the alliance has new missions, and yet the Cold War deployments of US tactical nuclear weapons in Europe remain. The NATO Strategic Concept – last updated in 1999 – notes that 'NATO will maintain, at the minimum level consistent with the prevailing security environment, adequate sub-strategic forces based in Europe which will provide an essential link with strategic nuclear forces, reinforcing the transatlantic link.' The US has an estimated 200 airdropped nuclear bombs deployed in Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Turkey.³⁸

These deployed tactical nuclear weapons have less strategic than political importance. In Germany, public opinion overwhelmingly favours the removal of US tactical nuclear weapons, yet Chancellor Merkel defended the deployments as a way to secure 'Germany's influence in [a] sensitive area of alliance politics.' Foreign Minister Steinmeier, Merkel's political rival, has called for the withdrawal of the

38. Robert S. Norris and Hans M. Kristensen, 'Nuclear Notebook: US Nuclear Forces, 2009', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, March/April, 2009.

weapons, labelling the weapons as ‘militarily obsolete’.³⁹ Eastern NATO Member States tend to defend the deployments, viewing them as a US political symbol for commitment to protecting the alliance should a resurgent Russia behave aggressively. In Turkey, some view US tactical nuclear weapons deployment as politically important for a counterproliferation role against Iran, although the presence of the weapons is not officially acknowledged there. However, unlike other NATO allies who are assigned nuclear strike missions, Turkey does not contribute forces to NATO’s nuclear missions. Turkey did not give the US permission to move major ground forces through Turkey during the 2003 invasion of Iraq, in addition to opposing any US military action against Iran. Without a direct role in nuclear missions and given the uncertainty over Turkish permission for even conducting such missions, any deterrent effects of that deployment may have lost their credibility. Removing tactical nuclear weapons from Turkish soil is more a matter of politics than security.

The issue of extended deterrence, especially as it relates to tactical nuclear weapons, will be a source of contention. Solving the issue will require much effort on the part of European leaders who do not want security decisions hampered by politics. Tactical weapons are likely targets for terrorists groups looking to acquire a nuclear bomb. They have become a liability to the states that hold them. Still, if these weapons are removed, there will certainly have to be a reconfiguration of NATO security arrangements and the negotiation of conventional alternatives. If US strategic forces are reduced, that will require an even greater change to conventional postures.

Conclusion

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton noted in a July 2009 speech at the Council on Foreign Relations:

Our approach to foreign policy must reflect the world as it is, not as it used to be. It does not make sense to adapt a 19th century concert of powers, or a 20th century balance of power strategy. We cannot go back to Cold War containment or to unilateralism.⁴⁰

39. ‘Yankee Bombs Go Home,’ *Der Spiegel*, 10 April 2009.

40. Hillary Clinton, ‘Foreign Policy Address at the Council on Foreign Relations,’ Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 15 July 2009.

This is also true of twentieth-century notions of nuclear deterrence. At the core of President Obama's Prague agenda is the view that nuclear weapons are a liability, not a security asset. The only certain way to prevent nuclear catastrophe is to eliminate the weapons. Though no clear path to elimination yet exists, each step towards that goal makes nations safer and can help build that path.

Over the next year, the Obama administration, legislators and arms control experts will work to transform the nuclear policy of the US. It will be a difficult fight and one that will remain largely out of the view of everyday Americans. If European leaders support the new nuclear realism embodied in the Prague agenda, now is the time for them to demonstrate that support.

The election of Barack Obama has raised major expectations in Europe and opened up new opportunities for dealing with global challenges – a task made more daunting by the current economic crisis. Authored by leading experts from both sides of the Atlantic, this book provides an authoritative analysis of the most topical issues facing the European Union and the United States’ agendas of today. The volume addresses some global questions – multilateralism, engaging with China and India, the economy, disarmament and climate change – as well as key regional issues, including Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Russia, Africa and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The book concludes that it is imperative that Europeans and Americans seize ‘the Obama moment’ in order to capitalise on the urgency of acting now. They will also need to move to a new paradigm of the EU-US relationship and NATO’s role within it – one that takes account of the fact that the West needs ‘the Rest’ to deal with the most pressing issues of our time.

‘This book is an important contribution to the debate on how we can renew our Transatlantic Partnership for a new age. As we grapple with pressing global problems ... it is vital that Europeans and Americans continue to pull in the same direction. This book lays out the challenges and choices we face. It deserves to be widely read.’

Javier Solana, High Representative for the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy

‘A timely contribution to the much-needed dialogue regarding transatlantic relations. Both sides need to understand each other better and this volume helps its readers understand the causes of discord and the key issues to be addressed.’

Zbigniew Brzezinski, Former National Security Advisor to President Carter

‘The EUISS Transatlantic Book 2009 is a valuable contribution on a crucially important and most timely subject. Altogether, it does much to facilitate US-European cooperative efforts in very constructive ways.’

David A. Hamburg, President Emeritus, Carnegie Corporation of New York.

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