



June 19, 2013

## **Ideology Trumps Facts at Brandenburg Gate**

President Obama asserted in a [speech](#) today at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, “so long as nuclear weapons exist, we are not truly safe.” The President then went on to announce that the United States could reduce its “deployed strategic nuclear weapons by up to one-third” while still maintaining a credible deterrent. He further said he would “seek negotiated cuts with Russia to move beyond Cold War nuclear postures” and “seek bold reductions in U.S. and Russian tactical weapons in Europe.” Unpacking this announcement demonstrates how every single element is based more on ideology than empirical evidence, past practice, or expert military advice.

### **Global Zero Is Undermined by Basic Understanding of History**

The Global Zero movement advocates the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. However, the assertion that the world is unsafe so long as nuclear weapons exist is belied by all empirical evidence concerning great power relations. The assertion is a stunning misinterpretation of history. Nuclear weapons were a critical factor in the absence of direct war between the major powers during the Cold War.

We have experience of a world without nuclear weapons: it is a world where great powers went to war with each other frequently, resulting in untold death. The estimated number of dead from World War II, for example, generally ranges from 45 to 60 million (or more).

On the other hand, as historian John Lewis Gaddis [wrote](#): “the development of nuclear weapons has had, on balance, a stabilizing effect on the postwar international system.”

President Obama’s assertion is also belied by how nuclear weapons currently contribute to peace and stability. As James Schlesinger, the former Secretary of Defense and Energy and Vice Chairman of the Strategic Posture Commission, [said](#), “nuclear weapons are used every day.” He meant, as he explained, they are used “to deter our potential foes and provide reassurance to the allies to whom we offer protection.” This reaffirmed the finding of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates in a September 2008 White [Paper](#) that “U.S. nuclear forces support the defense goals of assuring allies and friends, dissuading nations from military competition with the United States, deterring adversaries from attacking the United States and its allies, and, if necessary, defeating those who attack us.”

## “Negotiated Cuts with Russia” Must Be in Treaty Form

President Obama today asserted he plans to seek “negotiated cuts [to our nuclear arsenal] with Russia.” This should mean that such an agreement will come in treaty form, but media outlets are unfortunately reporting to the contrary.

Today the New York Times cited the President’s “aides” when it [reported](#) the Obama Administration has “no appetite” for pursuing a treaty with Russia. Instead the Administration will pursue a reciprocal, non-binding handshake agreement with Russia to cut nuclear weapons, as President George H.W. Bush did at the end of the Cold War through the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNI).

Of course, Russia is in violation of its PNI commitments, as it is for most every other major arms control commitment it has ever undertaken. The PNI precedent hardly seems worth replicating.

Moreover, this path is at odds with past Administration representations on the matter. Secretary of Defense Panetta [assured](#) Congress that arms reductions would take place in the Obama Administration only as a result of an arms control treaty process.

Ignoring the treaty process is also at odds with the vast body of past practice on arms control matters.

## Past Practice on Arms Control

<i>Without Senate Involvement</i>	<i>With Senate Involvement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNI)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ START I</li> <li>▪ START II</li> <li>▪ New START</li> <li>▪ Moscow Treaty</li> <li>▪ Limited Test Ban Treaty</li> <li>▪ ABM Treaty</li> <li>▪ INF Treaty</li> <li>▪ Threshold Test Ban Treaty</li> <li>▪ Non-Proliferation Treaty</li> <li>▪ Biological Weapons Convention</li> <li>▪ Chemical Weapons Convention</li> <li>▪ Seabed Arms Control Treaty</li> </ul>

This body of past practice was instrumental to the Congressional Research Service [conclusion](#) that arms control agreements are “concluded primarily in treaty form.” Even the State

Department in the past has acknowledged “the very strongly held view of the Senate that [the treaty process] is the only appropriate form for agreements of this importance.”

“Further arms reduction agreements obligating the United States to reduce or limit the Armed Forces or armaments of the United States in any militarily significant manner may be made only pursuant to the treaty-making power.”

-- **New START Resolution of Ratification**

Our founders would find President Obama’s planned course of action offensive to the Constitution. The framers specifically required two-thirds of the Senate to ratify treaties; in part, to make it more difficult to enter into them. President Obama turns this on its head by avoiding the Senate precisely because the New START ratification process was so arduous for him.

### **President Ignores Expert Advice on Deterrence**

In today’s speech, President Obama said he determined we could reduce our nuclear arsenal by one-third while still ensuring the security of America and our allies and maintaining a strong deterrent. To make this determination, he must have ignored the advice of military professionals and leading experts.

- The head of U.S. Strategic Command, General Chilton, was asked at a 2010 [hearing](#) if New START allowed the United States “to maintain a nuclear arsenal that is more than is needed to guarantee an adequate deterrent.” He replied: “I do not agree that it is more than is needed. I think the arsenal that we have is exactly what is needed today to provide the deterrent.”
- Former Secretary of Defense Schlesinger similarly testified the strategic nuclear weapons allowed under New START “are adequate, though barely so.”

It is difficult to see what beneficial geopolitical developments have taken place in the interim to go beyond this advice.

Just as he sought in his budget request to make the Department of Defense accomplish its missions with fewer resources, the President now proposes to make the Department accomplish its deterrence mission with one-third fewer nuclear weapons. As if China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia are not substantially increasing or otherwise modernizing their nuclear capabilities.

### **We’ve Cut for 40 Years, as Iran, China, North Korea, and Pakistan Grow**

President Obama said he wanted “to move beyond Cold War nuclear postures.” It is unclear what this means, since we have been reducing our nuclear stockpile for more than 40 years. President Obama has yet to explain what benefits to the nonproliferation regime can be expected to come from the particular reductions he advocated today that have not already come from the previous 40 years of U.S. nuclear reductions, including his own reductions in New START.

Completing today’s announced reductions will likely have no direct impact on the nuclear programs of Iran and North Korea. As the United States reduced its nuclear arsenal throughout

the last decades, Iran moved forward with its nuclear weaponization and uranium enrichment programs. Over the same time, North Korea made initial strides in its nuclear program, culminating in nuclear weapons tests. This is probably why the Strategic Posture Commission concluded it “does not believe that unilateral nuclear reductions by the United States would have any positive impact on countries like North Korea and Iran.”

Similarly, as the United States reduced its nuclear arsenal, China has developed new types of weapons and significantly increased its stockpile capabilities; India and Pakistan each conducted multiple nuclear tests and continue to enhance their nuclear capabilities; and Libya sought to develop nuclear weapons.

The nonproliferation focus of President Obama should be on halting Iran and North Korea’s nuclear advances, not seeking an arms control legacy with Russia that has no impact on the nuclear behavior of others.

### **Tactical Nuclear Weapons — Here We Go Again**

President Obama today said he would “seek bold reductions in U.S. and Russian tactical weapons in Europe.” This should be greeted with great skepticism.

Tom D’Agostino, the former head of the National Nuclear Security Administration, testified to Congress there is “a big difference” between the U.S. and Russian tactical nuclear arsenals, with approximately a “ten-to-one” advantage for Russia. The time to address this asymmetry was in New START. One of then-Senator Biden’s primary complaints about the Treaty of Moscow in 2003, when he was Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, was that it did not address tactical nuclear weapons. He argued at the time we needed an “arms-control agreement on tactical nuclear weapons.”

The New START Resolution of Ratification in 2010 specifically provided the President was to address the massive disparity in the tactical stockpiles prior to contemplating further reductions in the strategic arsenal, requiring him to start such negotiations within a year. This would be consistent with Senator Biden’s admonition in 2003, after ratification of the Moscow Treaty, that “getting a handle on Russian tactical nuclear weapons must be a top arms control and non-proliferation objective of the United States Government.” It is now 10 years after his advice, and more than a year past the deadline for starting negotiations on the tactical stockpile with Russia.

Cutting our strategic arsenal is affirmatively not the priority in our nuclear relationship with Russia at this time. As James Schlesinger has testified: “the significance of tactical nuclear weapons rises steadily as strategic nuclear arms are reduced.” Yet the President seems intent on ignoring this advice and seeking further cuts in our strategic arsenals without addressing the massive asymmetry in our tactical arsenals.

### **Off to a Bad Start**

The President’s actions in this matter are yet another example of his disdain for the legislative branch. Section 1282 of this year’s defense authorization bill requires the Administration to brief

relevant congressional committees “on the dialogue between the United States and the Russian Federation on issues related to limits or controls on nuclear arms.” That briefing came in the form of phone calls at 5PM last evening informing Members of the President’s intention to cut our nuclear arsenal by one-third. It is a far cry from presidential candidate Obama’s 2008 [promise](#) to meet on a monthly basis with leading members of Congress “to foster better executive-legislative relations and bipartisan unity on foreign policy.”

As North Korea and Iran both accelerated their nuclear programs over the first two years of the Obama presidency, his response was to focus attention on conferring upon Russia great power status through a protracted Cold War-style arms control negotiation. When it was completed, Secretary of State Clinton [promised](#) in congressional testimony “a ratified New START Treaty would also continue our progress toward broader U.S.-Russian cooperation.” That cooperation has taken the form of, among other things, Russia continuing to arm the Syrian regime, vetoing U.N. Security Council Resolutions pertaining to Syria, rejecting the idea of increased sanctions against Iran, and further repressing human rights at home. As announced today, President Obama’s response to that is to reward Russia with another round of nuclear arms reductions.