

China's Perspective on a Nuclear-Free World

A new wave of interest in the complete elimination of nuclear weapons is washing over international security institutions. Although the goal of a nuclear-weapons-free world is as old as the nuclear age, it seems more serious and urgent now, especially after President Barack Obama's remarks in Prague, where he renewed the U.S. commitment to a nuclear-free world and laid out a road map to achieve this goal.¹ In a UN resolution in September 2009, the original five nuclear-weapons states further committed to:

... create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons, in accordance with the goals of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in a way that promotes international stability, and based on the principle of undiminished security for all.²

China has maintained a long-standing position in support of complete nuclear disarmament ever since the day it conducted its first nuclear test on October 16, 1964. On that same day, Beijing proposed that a global summit be held to discuss the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons:

... and that as the first step, the summit conference conclude an agreement to the effect that the nuclear powers and those countries which may soon become nuclear powers undertake not to use nuclear weapons either against nonnuclear countries and nuclear-free zones or against each other.³

China's position has not changed. What kind of implications does Beijing's stance have on the nuclear-free world campaign?

Hui Zhang is leading a research initiative on China's nuclear policies for Harvard University's Project on Managing the Atom in the Kennedy School of Government. He is a physicist and a specialist in nuclear arms control and Chinese nuclear policy issues, and can be reached at hui_zhang@harvard.edu.

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China's Nuclear Strategy

Beijing believes that one key step toward a nuclear-free world is to reduce the role of nuclear weapons. To constrain their role, China has maintained a purely self-defensive nuclear strategy with a no-first-use doctrine and the pursuit of a reliable minimum deterrence nuclear force.

Historically, China's stated purpose for developing nuclear weapons was to guard itself against nuclear coercion and blackmail. As its 2006 White Paper on Defense states, the fundamental goal of China's nuclear strategy is:

... to deter other countries from using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against China... China exercises great restraint in developing its nuclear force. It has never entered into and will never enter into a nuclear arms race with any other country.⁴

In recent years, comments from high-level Chinese military officials have stimulated debate within and outside China on China's no-first-use policy. Meeting with foreign journalists in Hong Kong in July 2005, Major General Zhu Chenghu of China's National Defense University reportedly expressed the view

that China would have no choice but to respond with nuclear weapons if the United States attacked Chinese territory with conventional forces during a conflict over the Taiwan Strait, a view that contradicts China's long-standing nuclear doctrine of no-first-use.⁵ Zhu's comments stirred criticism at home and drew strong reactions abroad, in

China has long maintained support for complete nuclear disarmament.

particular in the United States. Many Chinese security experts, however, argue that China would never use nuclear weapons to deter another country's conventional intervention, highlighting Chinese leaders' confidence in their own conventional forces.⁶

There have also been discussions about defining nuclear first use. For instance, some experts have analyzed a situation in which an adversary uses highly precise conventional forces to target China's nuclear installations, including nuclear power reactors and nuclear forces, and have asked whether China should then consider the attack as a first nuclear strike and consequently initiate a retaliatory strike.⁷ Despite analyzing these kinds of scenarios, there is no evidence that China will change its long-standing policy of no-first-use. Instead, Chinese officials reiterated at a recent UN meeting that "China always abides by" its policy of no-first-use of nuclear weapons.⁸

Many experts and scholars find China's no-first-use pledge suspect, claiming it is just a declaratory policy. On the other hand, if a country really pledges a meaningful no-first-use policy, in practice, experts argue that its force posture,

including size, configuration, and readiness, would be significantly different from that with a first-use option. For instance, a force posture dominated by a meaningful no-first-use doctrine should have a much smaller and simpler arsenal with a much lower alert status.⁹ Indeed, China's nuclear force has all the features compatible with a meaningful no-first-use policy.

To observe a policy of no-first-use of nuclear weapons, Beijing "has always exercised utmost restraint towards developing nuclear weapons, [and] kept its nuclear arsenal at the minimum level only for self-defense."¹⁰ China's minimum deterrence policy is that, after absorbing a first nuclear strike, at least some nuclear warheads should survive that can retaliate against the enemy's soft targets, such as cities. The specific number of warheads required for minimum deterrence is dynamic and changeable, relying on a number of factors including survivability after the first strike and the penetration rate through an enemy's missile defense system (if deployed). The minimum deterrence policy itself, however, is constant and does not need to change.

If a country really intends to observe its no-first-use policy, there is no need for a larger nuclear force with high-alert status. In effect, a meaningful no-first-use pledge would entail the aggressive pursuit of deep de-alerting.¹¹ Consistent with its no-first-use doctrine, Chinese warheads are reportedly separated from their launchers and its weapons are "de-targeted." As one of its 2008 white paper states:

In peacetime the nuclear missile weapons of the Second Artillery Force are not aimed at any country. But if China comes under a nuclear threat, the nuclear missile force of the Second Artillery Force will go into a state of alert, and get ready for a nuclear counterattack to deter the enemy from using nuclear weapons against China. If China comes under a nuclear attack, the nuclear missile force of the Second Artillery Force will use nuclear missiles to launch a resolute counterattack against the enemy either independently or together with the nuclear forces of other services.¹²

China's operational posture and war planning, exercises, and training are also consistent with a meaningful no-first-use doctrine. The Second Artillery, which is responsible for China's strategic nuclear force, reportedly conducts war planning and training under the assumption that China will absorb a first nuclear blow.¹³

Before complete nuclear disarmament, China will continue to maintain a very limited but reliable retaliatory force. As stated in its 2006 White Paper on Defense:

China upholds the principles of counterattack in self-defense and limited development of nuclear weapons, and aims at building a lean and effective nuclear force capable of meeting national security needs. It endeavors to ensure the security and reliability of its nuclear weapons and maintains a credible nuclear deterrent force.¹⁴

There is no evidence that China will change its long-standing policy of no-first-use.

China continues to modernize its nuclear force in order to maintain, and only to maintain, a reliable second-strike retaliatory capability. Its actions are driven mainly by U.S. advances in precision-strike weaponry and missile defenses. China's nuclear modernization has aimed more at improving quality than quantity. The current effort focuses

mainly on enhancing the survivability of its strategic nuclear force through greater mobility, including deploying solid-fuel and road-mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and a new generation of ballistic missile submarines. By contrast, the size of the force has grown quite modestly. China's plans could change significantly, however, were the United States to deploy a more comprehensive or more operationally successful missile defense.¹⁵

China's force posture is dominated mainly by its nuclear strategy, not financial or technological constraints. China has, after all, made great progress in its economic development and technological base since the 1980s. Yet, China still has a very limited nuclear force, and there is no evidence that China plans on changing it in the near future. In practice, China's pledge of no-first-use of nuclear weapons, while constraining its nuclear force at a minimum level, maintaining its deeply de-alerted status, and upholding its long-standing position to support complete nuclear disarmament, has set a good example for other nuclear nations, in particular the two nuclear superpowers.

Chinese Views of the Prague Agenda

On numerous occasions, China has expressed its views on the agenda set by Obama in his April 2009 speech in Prague. For example, at the third Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference, China called on the international community to seize the opportunity offered by the review conference "to promote, in a comprehensive and balanced way, the NPT's three major objectives—nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy."¹⁶ In its latest white paper, Beijing calls on all nuclear weapons states to make an unequivocal commitment to the thorough destruction of nuclear weapons, stop research and development of new types of nuclear weapons, and reduce the role of nuclear weapons in their national security policy.¹⁷ Beijing has urged since the 1960s to conclude an international legal instrument on the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons and to achieve a nuclear-free world at an early date.¹⁸ In August 2009, Beijing officially stated that "China is ready to work with other

countries and make unremitting efforts to further promote the nuclear disarmament process and realize the goal of a nuclear-weapons-free world at an early date.”¹⁹ China's commitment was reemphasized by President Hu Jintao at the UN General Assembly summit in September 2009, where he stated that:

China has consistently stood for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons and a world without nuclear weapons. We call on the international community to take credible steps to push forward the nuclear disarmament process, eradicate the risks of nuclear weapons proliferation and promote peaceful use of nuclear energy and related international cooperation.²⁰

Given the huge qualitative and quantitative gap between the Chinese arsenal and those of the United States and Russia, however, Beijing cannot be expected to involve itself directly in the reduction of its nuclear weapons until the United States and Russia have made deeper cuts in their arsenals. Beijing does not yet appear to have worked out a detailed set of preconditions, including a specific number that the United States and Russia must cut, before it joins the process. Before it is involved in direct reductions, however, Beijing has made clear that it will take measures to promote nuclear disarmament,²¹ including holding to its own unconditional nuclear no-first-use policy and to negative security assurances, which means that it will not use nuclear weapons against nonnuclear weapons states and nuclear-weapons-free zones. China will also maintain a purely defensive nuclear strategy and support the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty's (CTBT) entry into force as well as completion of the negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) at an early date.

Although the goal of a nuclear-free world is welcome, the majority of Chinese experts and analysts are not so optimistic about the prospect of its realization. As Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA) describes it, moving toward zero is like “climbing a mountain, the top of the mountain being zero nuclear weapons. We might not get there in my lifetime, but we need to be heading up the mountain, not down the mountain.”²² Many Chinese believe Beijing is already near the top, while Moscow and Washington, accounting for more than 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons, are still near the bottom. Thus, Russia and the United States must find their way forward. The question is not “When will China join the United States and Russia in helping to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons?” It is, rather, “When will the United States and Russia join China on the way to that goal?” In particular, it is imperative for the United States to take the lead toward significant disarmament success.

Some Chinese argue that even deep U.S. and Russian reductions would still leave a long path ahead. Even with 1,500–1,675 deployed strategic warheads each, as the ongoing Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) negotiations target, both nuclear powers would still have enormous nuclear arsenals. In practice, given that both nuclear superpowers have huge arsenals that have been

become a burden, both should not have problems cutting their arsenals to lower levels (e.g., no more than 1,000 total warheads each). Some Chinese wonder if Washington and Moscow could overcome internal political and bureaucratic resistance to reaching even this relatively easy level of armaments, while others question if they will even try. Moreover, even if both arsenals eventually are reduced to a lower level, could they go down to a point that would be a truly meaningful step toward a nuclear-free world?²³

To move toward deeper reductions, China believes that the United States must take measures to devalue the role of nuclear weapons in its national security and foreign policy, including adopting a nuclear no-first-use strategy. Within the

China cannot reduce its nuclear weapons until the U.S. and Russia have made deeper cuts.

United States, there are voices of opposition against the nuclear-free vision, even from inside the president's own party.²⁴ Within the administration itself, strong debate continues among key parts of the national security establishment about Obama's nuclear-free vision.²⁵ It is, therefore, necessary to wait and see whether Obama will be the next president to suffer setbacks on

nuclear policy at the hands of politics and the U.S. bureaucracy. For now, many Chinese are concerned that the United States is still increasing its nuclear deterrent and continues its strategic modernization programs.

Many Chinese experts and analysts are not optimistic about Russia's commitment to deep reductions either. Substantial reductions in the Russian nuclear arsenal would be challenged by a number of factors, including U.S. missile defense and space weapons programs, and would be opposed on grounds of Russia's inferior conventional capability. In practice, Russia currently sees the modernization of its nuclear and conventional forces as a top priority.²⁶

Some Chinese officials and analysts suspect the intentions behind this new move toward a nuclear-free world. They argue that it could aim to constrain China's nuclear modernization process. For instance, to respond to U.S. missile defense deployments, China may need to build more warheads to maintain its deterrent capability. Such an expansion could run into pressure generated by the downsizing trend of Russian and U.S. arsenals. As Moscow and Washington move toward deeper cuts, both capitals could also push Beijing to be more transparent about its arsenal.

Moreover, China suspects that the United States might want to take the moral high ground with this new campaign and thus reduce the pressure from nonnuclear weapons states regarding U.S. compliance with NPT obligations. In particular, the five recognized nuclear weapons states under the NPT have failed

to meet their obligations under Article VI, as reaffirmed at the 2000 and 2005 NPT review conferences. More complaints could come from nonnuclear weapon states on this matter at the upcoming review conference in May 2010. To avoid presenting old wine in new bottles, the Obama administration needs to take bolder actions toward the goal of a nuclear-free world. Although the path is lengthy, arduous, and rocky, many Chinese believe that “where there’s a will, there is a way.”

Linchpin of a Nuclear-Free Vision: No-First-Use

For Beijing, the first and most important bold step toward nuclear disarmament would be a global agreement on no-first-use of nuclear weapons, which China has advocated ever since it became a nuclear-weapons state. As China stated at the UN General Assembly in 1971:

What is of the first and foremost importance is that the nuclear weapon states should undertake the obligation not to be the first to use nuclear weapons against each other; particularly the obligation not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states, nor against nuclear-free zones. If there is indeed the will to avoid a nuclear war and to work towards complete prohibition of nuclear weapons, it should not be difficult to undertake such obligations.²⁷

In January 1994, China submitted a formal draft treaty on the no-first-use of nuclear weapons to the other four NPT nuclear-weapons states.

Beijing believes that no-first-use would not only be beneficial to international security broadly, but also in the national interests of states that adopt the policy. A no-first-use policy would be an important measure to strengthen the nonproliferation regime and to promote further reductions of nuclear weapons. As long as nuclear weapons states rely on their use for any purpose, other nations will be tempted to develop or acquire such weapons or other weapons of mass destruction in response. Conversely, no-first-use would discourage other states from seeking nuclear weapons by removing a basic proliferation incentive while decreasing the role of such weapons.

More importantly, a no-first-use strategy would be an imperative step toward a nuclear-free world. If a country truly adheres to the no-first-use strategy, the only purpose of its nuclear weapons is to deter a nuclear attack. Thus, as discussed earlier, its force posture based on a no-first-use strategy would be much different from that with a first-use option. For instance, under no-first-use, the military strategy of each state will be switched from war-fighting strategy to pure deterrence. The size of the operational nuclear arsenals would be much smaller than those intended for first use, making deeper cuts more feasible. In effect, a nuclear force dominated by the no-first-use doctrine would not need emphasis on speed or offensive readiness. Thus, it should be easier to take nuclear forces off

alert and remove warheads from delivery vehicles. Because the role of nuclear weapons is only for strategic deterrence and not for war-fighting, there should be no need for nonstrategic nuclear forces. If nuclear weapons are directed only at an attacker's soft targets for retaliation instead of military targets for preemption, then there would be no need for higher-precision weapons required for first-use purposes.²⁸ If the United States and Russia truly intend to take steps toward a nuclear-free world, they need to adopt the no-first-use nuclear strategy.

For Beijing, the first step would be a global agreement on no-first-use of nuclear weapons.

Interim Steps toward a Nuclear-Free World

In order to ensure common security and create a favorable regional and international environment for nuclear disarmament, China has called for pursuing a security concept based on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, and cooperation.²⁹ Beijing supports concluding, at an early date, an international legal instrument on

the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons and holds that “nuclear disarmament should be a just and reasonable process of gradual reduction towards a downward balance.” Any measures of nuclear disarmament should follow the guidelines of “promoting global strategic balance and stability and undiminished security for all.”³⁰ To this end, Beijing supports four key interim steps by the nuclear weapons states—deep superpower reductions, devaluing the role of nuclear weapons, CTBT ratification, and FMCT negotiations—although it is particularly wary about the U.S. missile defense and space weapons programs as potential roadblocks toward a nuclear-free world.

Deep Reductions in U.S. and Russian Arsenals

The United States and Russia are currently negotiating a reduction to a level of 1,500–1,675 deployed strategic warheads each and are discussing further dismantlement. They currently have total stockpiles of about 10,000 warheads each. China is estimated to have a total stockpile of only 200 warheads.³¹

Based on China's general principle of nuclear disarmament and given that the United States and Russia have huge nuclear capacities in quantity and quality, Beijing has called on both countries to take the nuclear disarmament lead. In its 2008 white paper, Beijing emphasizes that:

... [t]he two countries possessing the largest nuclear arsenals bear special and primary responsibility for nuclear disarmament. They should earnestly comply with the relevant agreements already concluded, and further drastically reduce their nuclear arsenals in a verifiable and irreversible manner, so as to create the necessary

conditions for the participation of other nuclear-weapon states in the process of nuclear disarmament.³²

Even after deciding to reduce their deployed strategic nuclear arsenal to around 1,500–1,675 warheads, the United States and Russia would still have a huge inventory of nuclear weapons. Thus, both should take the lead in committing to make further substantial reductions of their respective nuclear arsenals.

Beijing does not state when China itself would participate in the process of nuclear reduction.³³ Many Chinese analysts believe that Beijing may wish to wait until the United States and Russia reduce their stockpiles to no more than about 1,000 total warheads each (instead of deployed strategic ones) from their current totals of about 10,000 total warheads. China could then join by reducing its arsenal. In practice, when the United States and Russia cut their total warheads to a lower level (say around 1,000), China may need to reveal the size of its nuclear force as a way to create the necessary confidence for both to continue their reductions. At that time, although China may not need to reduce its arsenal directly, Beijing could pledge a lower cap of its forces (say around 200 total warheads) while both nuclear powers are coming down from around 1,000 warheads. Meanwhile, China should be invited into and should be willing to participate as an observer in the verification process for the U.S.-Russian reductions. China's participation in the verification process would help to build confidence on all sides and to allow China to acquire experience for its future reductions.

Devalue the Role of Nuclear Weapons

Beijing holds that to substantially advance toward a nuclear-free world, each nuclear state must change its nuclear doctrine from one based on a preemptive strike to one that is purely defensive and based on a no-first-use policy. Before achieving a nuclear-weapons-free world, Beijing believes that the most feasible intermediate steps should include a commitment by all nuclear powers to adopt a policy of no-first-use of nuclear weapons at any time and under any circumstances and an unconditional commitment by all nuclear powers not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against nonnuclear states or nuclear weapons-free zones as well as to negotiate a relevant international and legally binding convention banning the use of nuclear weapons in conflicts.³⁴

A number of measures need to be taken in order to diminish the role of nuclear weapons in national security policy. These steps include: 1) abandoning the policies of nuclear deterrence based on the first use of nuclear weapons; 2) banning policies of lowering the threshold of using nuclear weapons; 3) halting the development of new types of nuclear weapons; 4) no longer listing any countries as targets of a nuclear strike; 5) withdrawing all nuclear weapons deployed outside their own territories; and 6) abandoning the policy

Beijing supports four key interim steps by the nuclear weapons states.

and practice of a “nuclear umbrella” and “nuclear sharing.” Even though Obama pledged to put an end to Cold War thinking and “reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy, and urge others to do the same,”³⁵ how far the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) can go to make these changes will be watched carefully in Beijing.

Call for the CTBT Ratification

China supports the purposes and objectives of the CTBT and believes that it contributes to preventing proliferation and promoting nuclear disarmament. China has actually established a competent national agency to prepare for the implementation of the treaty.³⁶ China signed the CTBT in 1996 but has not yet ratified it, partly because it was rejected by the U.S. Senate in 1999. In its latest white paper, Beijing clearly states its position on the CTBT, which is to support the early entry into force of the treaty and to continue to honor its moratorium commitment on nuclear testing.³⁷ As a result, Beijing has called on all countries that have not done so to sign and ratify the treaty so that it can come into force as soon as possible.³⁸

Most likely, Beijing’s ratification of the CTBT will follow Washington’s ratification, which Obama had stated would be a priority. If Washington fails to ratify the treaty again for whatever reason, Beijing may continue to wait. Even worse, if the United States intends to resume nuclear tests and its missile defense and space weaponization plans move forward and threaten the Chinese deterrence capability even more, it could make Chinese ratification more difficult. Under those circumstances, China may feel the need to conduct additional nuclear tests and develop new warheads that include decoys or maneuverable warheads to counter any developments in U.S. missile defense capability.

Participate in the FMCT Negotiations

Beijing’s recent position on an FMCT is that such a treaty would be “conducive to preventing nuclear weapons proliferation and promoting nuclear disarmament.” China has advocated negotiations to “conclude at an early date a multilateral, non-discriminatory and internationally and effectively verifiable FMCT, based on a comprehensive and balanced program of work acceptable to all.”³⁹

China is believed to have stopped its production of highly enriched uranium (HEU) in 1987 and production of plutonium for weapons purposes around 1991.

Due to its concerns about U.S. missile defense and space weapons plans, however, China had stated its willingness to simultaneously discuss an FMCT and the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS). In 2003, China dropped its insistence on a formal linkage between an FMCT and the PAROS negotiations and agreed to a negotiation of an FMCT alone. The United States, however, proposed an FMCT without verification in 2004, essentially blocking the restarting of negotiations yet again, although Obama declared in Prague that “the United States will seek a new treaty that verifiably ends the production of fissile materials intended for use in state nuclear weapons.”⁴⁰

Although China's recent position on an FMCT is to support the negotiations, the reference to “a comprehensive and balanced program of work acceptable to all” could mean a consideration of space weapons issues. In practice, if Beijing remains concerned about U.S. missile defense, one optional countermeasure for China is to build more ICBMs (even though its current stockpile is sufficient), which would mean a need for more plutonium and HEU to fuel those weapons, ultimately hurting China's support of an FMCT. China may go so far as to be unwilling to negotiate or join an FMCT under those circumstances.⁴¹ In other words, U.S. missile defense and space weapons plans will affect China's willingness to participate in an FMCT negotiation.

Key Challenges

Beijing has paid close attention to the missile defense issue. Chinese officials have expressed a growing concern that U.S. space and missile defense plans will stimulate a costly and destabilizing arms race.⁴² In its 2008 white paper, Beijing maintains that “the global missile defense program will be detrimental to strategic balance and stability, undermine international and regional security, and have a negative impact on the process of nuclear disarmament.”⁴³ Responding to continued U.S. missile defense cooperation with Taiwan and Japan, China further contended that:

... the establishment of a global missile-defense system, including the deployment of the system in some parts of the world and related cooperation ... is neither conducive to global arms control and non-proliferation efforts nor favorable to mutual trust among states and regional stability. We hope that parties concerned could seriously consider other countries' position and concern, so as to address this issue properly.⁴⁴

Some Chinese officials are concerned that even a limited missile defense system could neutralize China's fewer and smaller nuclear forces. “It is evident that the U.S. [national missile defense system] will seriously undermine the effectiveness of China's limited nuclear capability from the first day of its deployment,” said Sha Zukang, while he served as the Chinese disarmament

ambassador to the UN and a former director general of the Department of Arms Control and Disarmament at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "This cannot but cause grave concerns to China," he said.⁴⁵ Many Chinese officials assume that China is the real target for U.S. missile defense and space planning. From Beijing's perspective, it is inconceivable that Washington would expend such massive resources on a system that would be purely defensive and aimed only at "rogue" states.

Although the Obama administration had changed the Eastern European elements of the missile defense program, thus temporarily relaxing Russian concerns and encouraging Moscow's willingness to negotiate a START follow-up, the United States still plans to develop its missile defense systems, which could impede further reduction of U.S. and Russian arsenals. Even worse, the changes in the Eastern European elements do nothing to relax China's concerns about U.S. domestic ground-based midcourse defense systems based in California and Alaska, which U.S. officials claim are mainly there to target rogue missiles, but are assumed in Beijing to indirectly target China. Eventually, as a countermeasure to U.S. missile defense, China would likely be forced to build more warheads to maintain its nuclear deterrent, which could encourage India and then Pakistan to follow suit.

China also continues to oppose any space weapons plans.⁴⁶ As Beijing stated in August 2009:

Under current circumstances, especially amid the advancement of outer space technologies and rapid change of international security situations, the risk of weaponization of outer space is increasing. This is against the interests of all countries. . . . China always stands against the weaponization of or an arms race in outer space. China is of the view that to negotiate and conclude an international legally-binding instrument is the best option to prevent the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space.⁴⁷

Beijing maintains that the deployment of space weapons "will disrupt strategic balance and stability, undermine international and national security and do harm to the existing arms control instruments, in particular those related to nuclear weapons and missiles, thus triggering new arms races."⁴⁸ Also, China worries that the combination of future U.S. space weapons and its missile defense system could neutralize its limited nuclear deterrence and thus subject China to political or strategic blackmail. In addition, such systems would give the United States much more freedom to intervene in China's efforts at reunification with Taiwan. This concern is enhanced by U.S. moves in recent years to boost cooperation in research and development of missile defense in East Asia.

Beijing maintains that space weaponization would seriously disrupt the arms control and disarmament process. The inherent offensive and first-strike

capabilities offered by space weapons would likely provoke destabilizing military and political responses from other countries. As Hu Xiaodi, then the Chinese disarmament ambassador to the UN Office in Geneva, warned in 2001:

With lethal weapons flying overhead in orbit and disrupting global strategic stability, why should people eliminate [weapons of mass destruction] or missiles on the ground? This cannot but do harm to global peace, security and stability, [and] hence be detrimental to the fundamental interests of all states.⁴⁹

Beijing, therefore, has urged the Conference on Disarmament to “negotiate and conclude relevant international legal instrument(s) as soon as possible so as to prevent the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space, and to promote the nuclear disarmament process.”⁵⁰ In the past, Washington denied an arms race in outer space and was against negotiating a PAROS treaty. On January 11, 2007, a Chinese weather satellite (the FY-1C polar orbit satellite of the Fengyun series, at an altitude of 537 miles) was destroyed by a kinetic kill vehicle that was launched with a multistage solid-fuel missile from China. Beijing perhaps hoped to use this antisatellite test to push Washington to seriously consider the risks of a space weapons race and to start a PAROS treaty negotiation. Eventually, if the diplomatic effort fails, the test could be used as a hedge and mark the beginning of China's own space weapons program.

Finally, Washington's strategic nuclear intentions toward Beijing could influence China's willingness to participate in the nuclear disarmament process. In particular, China worries that the United States could use nuclear weapons against China in a potential Taiwan conflict. The Bush administration's 2001 NPR specifically mentions the possibility of using nuclear weapons during a conflict in the Taiwan Strait and the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons.⁵¹ That administration's Pentagon draft of the Doctrine on Joint Nuclear Operations maintained an aggressive nuclear posture as well by including the possible use of nuclear weapons to preempt an adversary's attack with weapons of mass destruction and increasing the role of such weapons in regional nuclear operations.⁵² Beijing, however, has never threatened nuclear use in the cross-strait conflict. If Washington and Beijing can agree to rule out the use of nuclear weapons during a Taiwan conflict, it would greatly encourage Beijing's participation in the nuclear disarmament process.

To reduce Beijing's concerns about U.S. missile defense and space weapons intentions and Washington strategic nuclear policy more generally, Washington should consider adopting a number of interim confidence-building measures, including: 1) U.S. acknowledgment of the serious nature of China's concerns, as

U.S. missile defense and space weapons plans will affect China's position on an FMCT.

China worries that the U.S. could use nuclear weapons in a potential Taiwan conflict.

well as an assurance that a U.S. missile defense system will not target China; 2) a U.S. pledge to adopt a bilateral no-first-use policy toward China, particularly one in which both capitals agree to rule out the use of nuclear weapons during a Taiwan conflict; 3) clear exclusion of Taiwan in the U.S.-Japanese joint theater missile defense plan and prohibition of

the sale of theater missile defenses to Taiwan; and 4) a negotiation on banning space weapons and additional limitations on the scale and scope of the envisioned U.S. non-space-based missile defense architecture.⁵³ This would include placing a limit on the number of missile defense interceptors and restricting the system to the minimum required to deal with rogue threats. Such steps would be very helpful to convince skeptics in China that the Obama administration is serious about taking bold steps to bring about a world free of nuclear weapons.

Moving Forward

To move toward disarmament, Beijing believes that all nuclear states should adopt a no-first-use-policy and use it to essentially redefine the role of nuclear weapons in their national and international security doctrines. Furthermore, Beijing hopes to see concrete steps be taken to ratify the CTBT, so that it may come into force, and negotiate an FMCT. Although China stands ready to support this agenda, it is up to the two countries with the overwhelming number of the world's warheads to take the lead. As Russian and U.S. nuclear weapons levels decline, Beijing would take concrete steps to move toward disarmament, provided that the United States does not deploy a missile defense system or program to weaponize outer space that would compromise China's minimum deterrent. Ultimately, the key to accomplishing Obama's vision of a nuclear-free world is to move toward national security postures based on mutual trust and cooperation. Without that basis, the president's vision will remain simply a dream.

Notes

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39. Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Negotiation on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty," August 10, 2009, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/jks/kjlc/hwt/t410739.htm>.
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42. On January 11, 2010, China conducted a test on ground-based midcourse missile interception technology within its territory. Beijing stated that "the test has achieved the expected objective. The test is defensive in nature and is not targeted at any country." See "China Conducts Test on Ground-Based Midcourse Missile Interception," *China View*, January 11, 2010, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2010-01/11/content_12792329.htm. The following day, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson confirmed that Beijing's position on missile defense remains unchanged. See Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Jiang Yu's Regular Press Conference on January 12, 2010," January 13, 2010, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/2511/t651245.htm>.
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45. Sha Zukang, "The Impact of the U.S. Missile Defense Programme on the Global Security Structure" (paper, Beijing, March 13–15, 2000) (paper presented at the CPAPD/ORG Joint Seminar on Missile Defense and the Future of the ABM Treaty).
46. What the Obama administration's space policy would be is unclear at this point. The administration is currently in the process of assessing U.S. space policy, and the new space strategy may be expected within the next year. Early administration statements on space and antispace weapons were far more conciliatory compared to those of the Bush administration. If Beijing interprets any kind of missile defense as one part of space weaponization, Beijing's push for negotiations on the prevention of an arms race in space will be continued.
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48. "Statement by Ambassador Hu Xiaodi at the Plenary of the 2nd Part of the 2005 Session of the Conference on Disarmament," June 30, 2005, <http://www.china-un.ch/eng/cjkk/cjthsm/t201853.htm>.
49. Hu Xiaodi, remarks at panel discussions on "A Treaty to Prohibit Weapons and War in Space?" and "Missiles: How Can We Reduce the Dangers They Pose?" October 11, 2001 (sponsored by the NGO Committee on Peace and Disarmament in cooperation with the UN Department of Disarmament Affairs and the UN Department of Public Information).
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