



Truman National Security Project

Messaging Strategy on Nuclear Weapons

Speaking of Nukes...

1. Reframe the nuclear weapons as the Problem, not the Solution

- Explain that they create risk rather than reduce it; they are liabilities rather than protection tools
- The world has changed: nuclear weapons were designed for Cold War deterrence, not contemporary threats like terrorism
- Insist on the need to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons technology and materials

2. Insist on the step-by-step, *progressive process* of arms reduction rather than an immediate ban

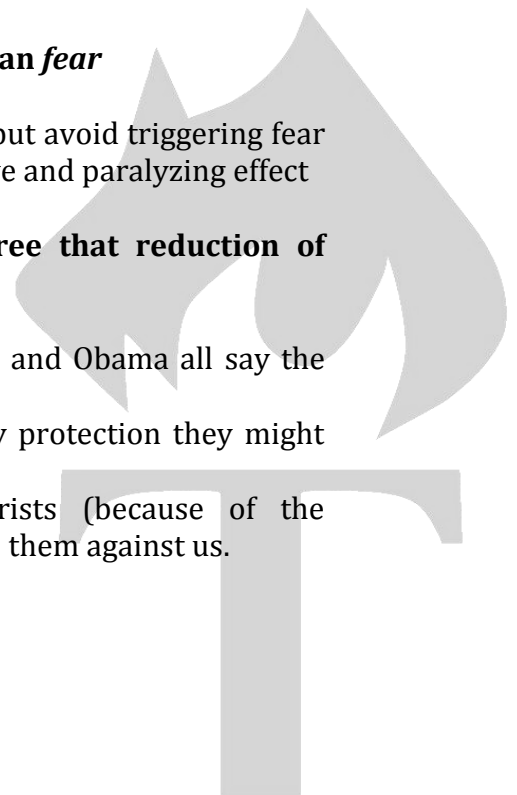
- You are not a moralist, pacifist or wishful-thinker; you are concerned about America's security first, even if a world free of nuclear weapons is the eventual goal
- Arguing for an immediate ban can lead to skepticism and make you appear idealistic
- Speak of progressive work with Russia and other states- such as through the START Treaty- rather than unilateral disarmament

3. Promote *reasonable concern* about the topic, rather than *fear*

- Insist on the destructive power of nuclear weapons but avoid triggering fear of other countries. This can have a counter-productive and paralyzing effect

4. There are many *national security experts* who agree that reduction of nuclear arsenal will lead to more safety

- Refer to the bipartisan approach: Reagan, Kissinger, and Obama all say the same message about nuclear weapons
- Nuclear Weapons are thus not the supreme military protection they might appear
- We cannot use nuclear weapons against terrorists (because of the uncertainty of the threat), but they may be able to use them against us.





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Bad Messaging Ideas

Here are some traps you don't want to fall into:

1. Mixing-up different nuclear issues when you speak about nuclear risk reduction

- For the clarity of your message avoid speaking about nuclear deterrence, no first use policy, halting nuclear tests, targeting different kinds of weapons, nuclear power, etc.
- Instead, speak clearly about nuclear risk reduction

2. Speaking about moral needs, call for peace, using naïve pacifist rhetoric

- Rather, focus on national security needs and experts claims
- Make sure people understand that we are all in the same boat; everyone will lose because of the destructive power of nuclear weapons, and they have unintended consequences

3. Insist on verification, monitoring and follow-up

- You might trigger the idea that the "Other" is not to be trusted and that you have no way to control what others are doing
- It's better to remain focused on the idea that nuclear weapons cannot protect us

4. Look too positive when speaking about the future

- Though it is a fact that cooperation does work in this area, it is important to focus your approach on the Problem, not the Solutions to the problem
- Nuclear weapons are an issue which must not be underestimated, though it often is

