

# ***Nuclear Weapons***



## **Nuclear Weapons – Talking Points & Takeaways**

**Nuclear Weapons are the problem, not the solution.** Nuclear weapons helped keep us safe during the Cold War, but the rise of terrorism and rogue states is creating a new reality where nuclear weapons can do America more harm than good.

**The greatest security threat to the United States and its allies is nuclear terrorism.** Al Qaeda has stated its desire to obtain nuclear weapons and its willingness to use them against the United States. This, and bioterrorism, are the greatest security threats facing the US and its allies.

**President Obama is standing firmly in the tradition of President Ronald Reagan.** President Reagan wanted a world without nuclear weapons, and he started negotiating the START Treaty with the Soviet Union, which reduces US & Russian stockpiles by 80%. Obama is continuing that tradition through the New START treaty – which makes further cuts to unnecessary Russian and US weapons – and a worldwide effort to secure loose nuclear material.

**America will retain its deterrent and protect its friends.** As America works with other nations to reduce nuclear weapons around the world, the US will retain its nuclear deterrent and continue offering its “nuclear umbrella” to key allies. Doing so is the only way to prevent countries that do not currently have nuclear weapons – such as Saudi Arabia and Japan – from developing them to counter threats such as Iran and North Korea. This would create a dangerous arms race, and increase the number of nuclear weapons in the world, increasing the risk of nuclear terrorism.

## In the Cold War, Nuclear Weapons were protection

**When Nuclear Weapons Made Us Safe.** During the Cold War, nuclear weapons were a critical ingredient in America's efforts to contain the ambitions of the Soviet Union. The strategy of "mutually assured destruction (MAD)" dominated nuclear thinking. If the US had enough nuclear weapons to destroy the USSR, and the USSR had enough weapons to destroy the US, then both nations would be reluctant to go to war for fear of escalating to nuclear conflict. Many believe this strategy helped prevent direct war between the US and the USSR, keeping the Cold War "cold."



**Arms Race and Cuban Missile Crisis.** However, the US and the USSR ended up in an arms race, each side building nuclear weapons by the thousands to make sure the other side couldn't outgun it. But the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 convinced them that the risks of an ever-escalating arms race threatened to lead to an actual nuclear war. This led to a new interest in arms control.



**Arms Control Takes Flight.** Beginning in the 1960s, the US, the USSR and the wider world community put together a number of treaties and agreements that intended to limit the numbers and use of nuclear weapons around the world. For the US and the USSR, the logic of mutually assured destruction still prevailed, but with the caveat that fewer total weapons and more cooperation if mutual, was better.

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## But nuclear proliferation and terrorism have undermined their security guarantee



**Good News: Cold War Ends, US & Russia reduce stockpiles.** The end of the Cold War meant a major reduction in tensions between the US and Russia. Former Soviet states gave up their nuclear weapons. Thanks to the START treaty – negotiations started under Reagan, and signed by Bush just before the collapse of the USSR – the US & Russia set out a path of nuclear weapons reduction that led to an 80% cut in both nations' combined weapons stockpiles.

**Bad News Part 1: India and Pakistan go nuclear.** In 1998, India and Pakistan each detonated a nuclear weapon. Not only did this introduce the threat of nuclear war between volatile, hostile nations. It illustrated that the ability to produce nuclear weapons was in the reach of more nations than before.

**Bad News Part 2: Rogue Regimes.** Pakistan's head scientist then began selling nuclear technology. His black-market network meant that rogue nations such as North Korea could become nuclear powers. North Korea then also began to sell nuclear technology to other rogue nations.

**Bad News Part 3: Terrorism.** Rogue regimes have proven their willingness to sell nuclear technology, terrorists have stated their desire to acquire nuclear weapons. This creates a new danger that did not exist during the Cold War.

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## Today, bipartisan security thinkers see nuclear weapons as the problem, not the solution

The combination of rogue states, increasingly available nuclear technology, and terrorism have created a new paradigm in nuclear thinking: nuclear weapons are now the problem, not the solution. Next to the long-standing concern regarding accidental or deliberate nuclear war, the threat of nuclear terrorism means nuclear weapons are now becoming more of a liability and less of an asset.



**Al Qaeda wants a nuclear weapon:** *"To possess the weapons that could counter those of the infidels is a religious duty."*  
Osama bin Laden



**Nuclear Accidents.** *"Mistakes are made in every other human endeavor. Why should nuclear weapons be exempt?"* Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger

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## Leaders are calling for a new nuclear paradigm

The argument that nuclear weapons are becoming more of a liability than an asset crosses partisan lines. The idea began to gain public momentum when four former high ranking US officials – Republican Henry Kissinger (Sec. of State under Nixon), Republican George Schultz (Sec. of State under Reagan), Democrat William Perry (Sec. of Defense under Clinton), and Democratic Sam Nunn (Senator) – teamed up to write about the issue in the *Wall Street Journal*. Nicknamed "The Four Horsemen," they argued:



- **Nuclear Terrorism.** The accelerating spread of nuclear weapons, nuclear know-how and nuclear material has brought us to a nuclear tipping point. There is a very real possibility that the deadliest weapons ever invented could fall into dangerous hands.
- **Cold War Over.** Nuclear weapons were an essential part of deterrence during the Cold War. But deterrence is becoming increasingly hazardous and decreasingly effective.
- **Nuclear Accidents.** New nuclear states do not have the benefit of years of step-by-step safeguards put in effect during the Cold War to prevent nuclear accidents, misjudgments or unauthorized launches.

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## Nuclear Terrorism is the Greatest Threat to US

In April 2009, President Obama gave a major speech in Prague in which he stated "America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons." Like the Four Horsemen (see previous slide), he argued that the spread of nuclear technology and the stated desire of terrorist organizations to obtain nuclear weapons posed a new threat to America. He has made the case that the single greatest threat to US security is the threat of nuclear terrorism.



*"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."*

## Obama's policy is rooted in Ronald Reagan's vision

President Obama is not the first American President to unequivocally state his desire to see the abolition of nuclear weapons. President Reagan also envisioned a world free of nuclear weapons. He set in motion the first START treaty, and negotiated a series of nuclear reduction measures with the Soviet Union.



*President Ronald Reagan called for the abolishment of "all nuclear weapons," which he considered to be "totally irrational, totally inhumane, good for nothing but killing, possibly destructive of life on earth and civilization."*

## But neither Reagan nor Obama wanted unilateral disarmament

**Reducing nuclear weapons is crucial for our security - but the goal is a world free of these weapons, not a United States free of them, with other countries retaining this ability!**

It would be unwise and irresponsible for the US to disarm while others do not. That's why America must lead an international effort to reduce the number of nuclear weapons in the world, safeguard nuclear materials, and prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to new nations.



*"Make no mistake: As long as these weapons exist, the United States will maintain a safe, secure and effective arsenal to deter any adversary, and guarantee that defense to our allies."*

- President Obama

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## Making a new nuclear paradigm a reality requires a trio of policies

- 1.) **Eliminate unnecessary nuclear weapons, and strengthen barriers against other countries obtaining new nuclear weapons.** Fewer weapons mean fewer chances for terrorism or accidents.
- 2.) **Reduce the prestige of nuclear weapons so fewer nations want them.** By working with other nations to shift the paradigm toward recognizing nuclear weapons as the problem, the U.S. tries to make them less desirable.
- 3.) **En route to eliminating nukes, the US will maintain lower levels of nuclear weapons , enough to serve as a security umbrella for our allies and reliable, credible deterrent for foes.** Nuclear weapons will not be eliminated in our lifetimes. While reducing overall nuclear levels, the U.S. will maintain enough weapons to deter countries like North Korea from attacking South Korea and Japan, and to reassure allies who might otherwise seek their own nuclear deterrence.



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## New START Treaty – Reducing Redundant Weapons

The first START Treaty was begun under President Reagan, signed in 1991 under President George H.W. Bush, and entered force under President Clinton. It reduced Cold War tensions and cut US and Russian nuclear arsenals by nearly 80%. The treaty expired in December 2009.



**New START.** President Obama and Russian President Dmitri Medvedev signed a follow up to the START Treaty – “New START” – in April 2010.

**Cut Nuclear Arsenals.** New START would reduce each nation’s long-range nuclear weapons from a ceiling of 2,200 each, to between 1,500 and 1,675 each.



**Why Is It Important?** The US and Russia account for 95% of the world’s nuclear weapons – more than enough firepower to destroy the planet several times over. It’s redundant and dangerous. Plus, Russia’s ability to guard its nuclear material is suspect. The treaty also builds momentum for other non-proliferation efforts.

**What’s Next?** Russia’s legislature and the US Senate must both ratify the treaty. In the Senate, 2/3 of the Senators present must approve.

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## Progress on Securing Loose Nukes at April Summit

**Keeping nuclear material under lock and key.** In April 2010, leaders from nearly 50 nations came to Washington for a Nuclear Security Summit. The summit was part of President Obama’s effort to work with countries around the world to lock down all loose nuclear material, to prevent from falling into terrorist hands. It was the largest gathering of heads of state since the mid-1940s.



**US and Russia agree to eliminate plutonium.** The two nations agree to eliminate 68,000 metric tons of plutonium from their weapons programs – enough to create 17,000 nuclear weapons.

**Bomb-grade nuclear material out of reactors.** Countries agreed to end the use of bomb-grade nuclear materials in civilian nuclear facilities when possible.

**Unilateral Actions.** Several nations undertook unilateral commitments to enhance nuclear security, such as Ukraine, which committed to giving up its stockpile of highly enriched uranium – enough to make several nuclear bombs.

**Four Year Deadline.** Countries endorsed Obama’s goal of securing all vulnerable nuclear materials in 4 years.

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## Securing Loose Nuclear Material- Other Initiatives



**Cooperative Threat Reduction Program (CTR).** Also known as the “Nunn-Lugar” program, named after the bipartisan Senators who founded it, this program provides funding and expertise for former Soviet Union states to decommission nuclear weapons stockpiles and safeguard nuclear material. To date, the program has successfully deactivated more than 7,500 strategic nuclear warheads.

**Global Threat Reduction Initiative (GTRI).** The US Department of Energy launched this program in 2004. It is designed to repatriate and secure nuclear fuel, as well as getting nuclear reactors to use newer, more proliferation-resistant technology.

**Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI).** The PSI is a global effort that aims to stop trafficking of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), their delivery systems, and related materials to and from states and non-state actors of proliferation concern. The initiative was launched by President Bush in 2003, and was adopted unanimously by the United Nations Security Council.

## The Backbone for Stopping Nuclear Proliferation remains the 1969 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

The 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is the backbone of the international non-proliferation regime. More than 180 nations, including the US, are signatories.



*The NPT is a grand bargain between official nuclear weapons nations and non-nuclear weapons nations.*

**Nuclear Weapons States.** Pledged to eventually get rid of nuclear weapons. There are five official nuclear weapons states: the US, Russia, China, the UK, and France. The NPT means that these are the only states that are allowed to legally have nuclear weapons.



**Non-Nuclear Weapons States.** Not allowed to have nuclear weapons, but would have the right to acquire or produce nuclear energy.

## Threats to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

New nuclear challenges are making it ever more critical for the international community to reform the NPT, and the non-proliferation regime more generally.



**New Nuclear Powers.** A number of nations – such as North Korea, Pakistan, India, and, it is assumed, Israel – have developed nuclear weapons in contradiction to the NPT's grand bargain. It's in the international community's interest to make sure that these nuclear powers do not allow their weapons to proliferate beyond their borders.



**North Korea & Iran.** North Korea has nuclear weapons and Iran may have them soon. From Iran's support of terrorism to North Korea's penchant for selling military technology abroad – and the fact that their weapons might start regional nuclear arms races – it's critical to deal with these proliferation threats.



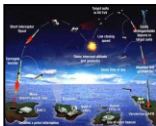
**Nuclear Energy.** Rising gas prices and rising concerns over climate change is increasing the appeal of nuclear energy. Yet a civilian nuclear program can be converted into a weapons program fairly quickly and easily. The international community must work to make sure nations' have access to nuclear energy, while safeguarding against new nuclear weapons programs.

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## Other Challenges Remain



**Assuring US Allies.** US allies – such as Saudi Arabia, Japan, and South Korea – might decide to develop nuclear weapons of their own if they cannot count on America's nuclear security guarantee. The US must continue to provide such a guarantee as it works to reduce its weapons, or risk greater proliferation across more countries. Already, Gulf States are working to develop nuclear power—which they do not need, given their oil reserves, and which appears to be a hedge against a loss of the U.S. nuclear security umbrella.



**Missile Defense.** Conservatives in the US are reluctant to support any initiatives that might limit US ability to deploy missile defense. Russia and others may decide to increase nuclear abilities if the US does field a system that threatens them. This requires a delicate balancing act.



**International Consensus.** Achieving international consensus on nuclear proliferation issues will require nations with different interests to work together. It took Russia and the US a decade to negotiate the first START Treaty. Cooperation between nations will be a long, slow process.

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## Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty – No New Weapons

The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) prohibits “any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion.” The United States signed the treaty in 1996, but the Senate failed to ratify it in 1999. Ratification of the CTBT by the US would benefit American security in several ways:



**Lock in US technological advantage.** The US has a sophisticated nuclear program that cannot be matched – unless other nations can test. The US also has the ability to run computer simulations to assess safety and status of currently existing weapons. Ratifying CTBT would lock in that advantage.

**Curb the Spread of Nuclear Weapons.** If nations aren’t testing nuclear weapons, they have less incentive to develop them.

**Moral Leadership.** If the US joins, other major nuclear powers nations – such as China and India – are more likely to join.

**Verification.** It would establish a global monitoring network to detect and deter cheating.

**Legal Constraints.** The CTBT is a treaty that could create legal constraints on nations that have not signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

## Nuclear Weapons – Sources

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