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CHINA & THE U.S. NUCLEAR POSTURE REVIEW

Lora Saalman

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February 2011

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Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Publications Department
1779 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel. +1 202 483 7600
Fax: +1 202 483 1840
www.CarnegieEndowment.org

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Summary

China is increasingly factored into U.S. nuclear strategy. When President Obama released the administration's Nuclear Posture Review (NPR)—a document that guides America's nuclear policy, strategy, capabilities, and force posture for the next five to ten years—in April 2010, China was named 36 times. By contrast, China was barely mentioned in the last NPR completed in 2002. The United States expressed its desire to enhance strategic stability with China, but there needs to be a better understanding of how China perceives America's nuclear posture.

While China is unsure how to interpret the NPR, there is a consensus among Chinese experts that the strategy lacks a complete definition of how strategic stability applies in the context of Sino-U.S. relations. The term—generally used in describing the U.S.-Russia relationship—often signifies a balance between two roughly equal or balanced nuclear powers, but there is a considerable disparity in numbers and capabilities between the United States and China.

As a result, China sees both challenges and opportunities in moving toward strategic stability with the United States. The challenge is that Washington could use nuclear talks to force Beijing to become more transparent without any U.S. commitment to limit its own military ambitions in return. The opportunity is that the two powers could build a relationship based on mutual vulnerability, diminishing the possibility of either side using nuclear coercion or aggression.

To improve nuclear relations, four fundamental issues must first be resolved.

First, the United States and China must clearly define the meaning of strategic stability and what bilateral nuclear cooperation will entail. While Beijing seeks to define specific terms of engagement, Washington relies on broad concepts. A vague approach by the United States, however, carries the risk that its intentions will be misinterpreted and this could damage overall bilateral ties. And in the end, nuclear talks are unlikely to lead anywhere unless both sides are willing to make concessions.

Second, the United States must define and develop concrete confidence-building measures to encourage China to take part in detailed discussions on nuclear issues. Better understanding of the other's motives is critical for both sides. Areas for greater discussion and clarification include: no-first-use policies; advanced conventional weapons systems; use of nuclear weapons in "extreme circumstances," including Taiwan; extended nuclear deterrence; and weaponization of outer space.

Third, the NPR opens the door to greater U.S. engagement with China and it also gives China the chance to shape new strategic trends in the relationship.

Chinese experts differ on when and at what level Beijing should take part in arms control discussions with Washington, but China should actively participate in strategic stability talks now before any new trends develop that hurt its interests.

Fourth, Washington and Beijing should resume and expand on cooperative measures to deepen their interaction, such as reciprocal visits and projects between U.S. and Chinese nuclear laboratories. This cooperation could be expanded into other arenas to include eradicating space debris, sharing data on ballistic missile defense, and developing a joint radar system. Building on such measures will show China that the United States wants to engage on substantive issues and will require China to work with the United States on multiple levels.

It is clear that Washington needs to match its rhetoric on nuclear disarmament with concrete proposals and measures that will build confidence between the United States and China. And Beijing needs to become an active participant in shaping bilateral strategic relations. Without these steps, it will be nearly impossible for a nuclear relationship that is clearly defined by strategic ambiguity today to shift to one of strategic trust—and ultimately strategic stability.

Introduction

The U.S. Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) released in April 2010 mentions China 36 times.¹ More than half these references twin China with Russia, as a state with which the United States seeks strategic stability. By contrast, the publicly available sections of the 2002 NPR hardly mention China, and then only as “an immediate or potential contingency” against which the U.S. nuclear forces must be prepared to act.² The importance accorded to China in the 2010 NPR and the way in which China, along with Russia, is considered have substantial implications for U.S. nuclear policy.

In 2009, a report of an Independent Task Force of the Council on Foreign Relations argued: “mutual vulnerability with China—like mutual vulnerability with Russia—is not a policy choice to be embraced or rejected, but rather a strategic fact to be managed with priority on strategic stability.”³ The 2010 NPR seems to reflect this view, but in ambiguous language that invites speculation and debate, including in China.⁴

Here I consider the issue from a different angle: how Chinese experts assess the NPR and the intentions and interests behind the United States’ pursuit of strategic stability with China. In researching this perspective, I discussed the most recent NPR with dozens of scientists and military and academic experts⁵ on nuclear policy and arms control, and reviewed decades of Chinese journals for references to “strategic stability.”⁶

Chinese analysts are intrigued by the new directions hinted at in the 2010 NPR but are still questioning its implications for China. Chinese experts have heretofore conceived of strategic stability as a relationship between adversaries with relatively equal strategic power—specifically, the United States and the USSR/Russia. They are beginning to consider whether and how the concept could be adjusted to reflect the disparity in capabilities and doctrine between the United States and China.

In doing this, they question U.S. intentions and evolving capabilities. They debate whether and how the Obama administration’s interest in strategic stability and, over time, nuclear disarmament could still serve a hegemonic U.S. strategy, by substituting ballistic missile defense (BMD) and advanced conventional capabilities for nuclear weapons.

In the pages that follow, I explore Chinese views and debates regarding each of these issues, and then consider how a productive dialogue could be designed for officials and/or leading experts between the two countries. Despite their skepticism, Chinese experts see potential benefits in constructing a relationship of “strategic stability” between the United States and China, if this term can be defined more equitably than they fear the United States currently intends.

Chinese analysts are intrigued by the new directions hinted at in the 2010 NPR but are still questioning its implications for China.

Strategic Stability in Context

To gain a better sense of where China and the United States are headed in terms of “strategic stability,” it is essential to understand the origins of the term and its application in the Russia-U.S. strategic context. A number of experts within China maintain that the power balance that underpins strategic stability is lacking in the China-U.S. dynamic.

United States–Russia Strategic Stability

A comprehensive review of all references in Chinese to the words “strategic stability” (*zhanlue wending*)⁷ in the electronic databases of Tsinghua University—

covering the period from the earliest date in the system, 1981, through 2010—reveals 297 such references (figure 1 reflects some of these findings). An analysis of these texts, paired with expert interviews, indicates that “strategic stability” (*zhanlue wendingxing*) and “strategic balance” (*zhanlue pinghengxing*) are often used in tandem or interchangeably.

Figure 1 shows that between 1981 and 2010, the vast majority of Chinese studies emphasized “strategic stability” as a Cold War, U.S.-Soviet construct. This term is generally reserved for describing the balance between

two roughly equivalent or balanced nuclear powers. It follows that China has long insisted that it does not fit into the paradigms of competitive power and nuclear relations that characterized the Cold War.

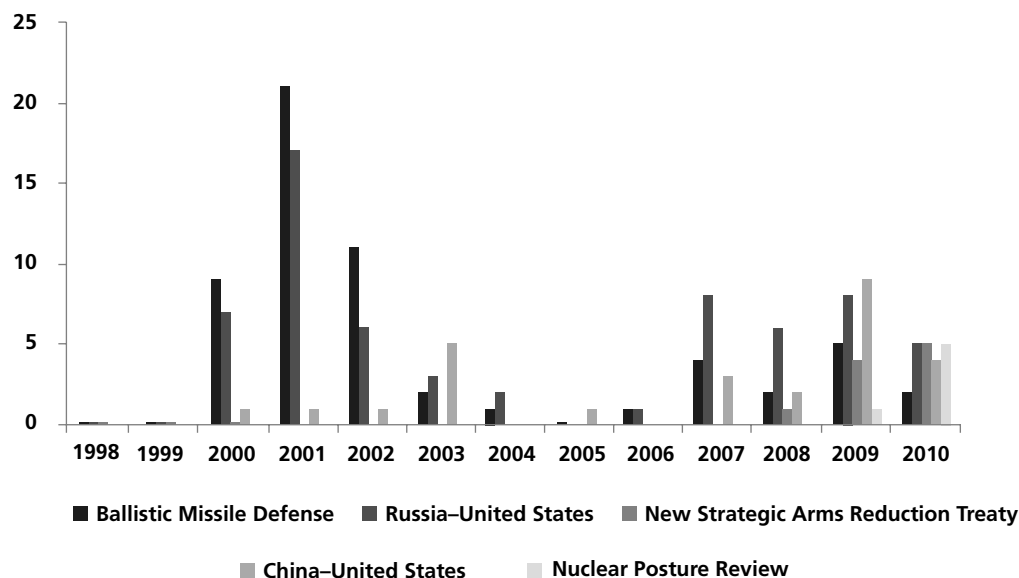
Further reflecting the U.S.-Soviet pedigree of the concept of “strategic stability,” figure 1 shows that strategic stability appeared most frequently in texts during the period between 2001 and 2002, when the United States was in the process of withdrawing from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty.⁸ However, early references to strategic stability, whether in scholarly journals or the popular media, tend to be cursory, with little insight into how this concept applies to the larger discussion of nuclear dynamics, much less Sino-U.S. strategic relations.

Even when the term “strategic stability” features in more lengthy analyses, the security relationship between the United States and the USSR/Russia remains paramount. Li Bin, a professor at Tsinghua University and an arms control expert, and Xiao Tiefeng, a former PhD candidate at Tsinghua University, provide one such in-depth inquiry into the role of nuclear weapons. They also similarly center their discussion of strategic stability upon the U.S.-Russian bilateral security dynamic and BMD.⁹

Li and Xiao’s analysis reveals that although the United States and Russia have roughly equivalent nuclear-weapons arsenals, the two countries face their own gap in more broadly defined international status and power. According to their argument, under the current asymmetry of the international system, with

Chinese experts see potential benefits in constructing a relationship of “strategic stability” between the United States and China, if this term can be defined more equitably than they fear the United States currently intends.

Figure 1. The Number of References to “Strategic Stability” in Chinese Journals, January 1981–September 2010



Note: A survey of journals dated between 1981 and 2010 reveals that “strategic stability” (zhanlue wending) was mentioned in the context of the terms graphed above. From 1981 through 1997, there were no appearances in the sources surveyed of the term “strategic stability.” Sources include: *Zhongguo guofang bao* (China National Defense News), *Gaige yu kaifang* (Party and Government Forum), *Dongfang ribao* (Eastern Daily), *Beifang lunzhong* (The Northern Forum), *Guangming ribao* (Guangming Daily), *Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan yuanbao* (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Report), *Liaowang xinwen zhoubao* (Outlook News Weekly), *Renmin ribao* (People’s Daily), *Zhongguo gongcheng wuli yanjiuyuan keji nianbao* (Chinese Academy of Engineering Physics and Technology Annual Report), *Xiandai guoji guanxi* (Contemporary International Relations), *Guoji zhanwang* (International Outlook), *Shijie zongheng* (The Contemporary World), *Shijie bao* (World Report), *Xinhua meiri dianxun* (Xinhua Daily Telegraph), *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* (World Economics and Politics), *Taipingyang xuebao* (Pacific Academic Journal), *Guoji guancha* (International Observer), *Guoji ziliao xinxi* (International Data Information), *Guoji luntan* (International Forum), *Guoji wenti yanjiu* (International Studies), *Jiefang ribao* (Liberation Daily), *Heping yu fazhan jikan* (Peace and Development Quarterly), *Guofang keji* (Defense Sciences), *Guoji jingji pinglun* (International Economic Review), *Zhongguo jingji shibao* (China Economic Times), *Jiefangjun bao* (PLA Daily), *Dangdai yatai* (Contemporary Asia Pacific), *Guoji zhengzhi yanjiu* (International Political Studies), *Waijiao xueyuan bao* (Foreign Affairs University Journal), *Renmin luntan* (People’s Forum), and *Waijiao pinglun* (Foreign Affairs Review).

the United States assuming a dominant position, even the traditionally defined “strategic stability” between the United States and Russia is adversely affected.

“Balance” (*pingheng*) and “symmetry” (*duicheng*) are integral to the concept of strategic stability and yet are even less visible in Sino-U.S. strategic relations. Li Bin and Nie Hongyi, a former doctoral student of Li and an officer in the PLA (People’s Liberation Army) Navy, when referring to “arms race stability” and “crisis stability,” state that “the concept of strategic stability in classic arms control theory cannot be applied directly to the framework of Sino-U.S. relations.” They argue that “the primary rationale is that the bipolar structure of the Cold War era is of the past, and in the current system the United States is the sole superpower. A concept of strategic stability established under a symmetrical structure is difficult to apply in describing strategic stability under an asymmetrical structure.”¹⁰

As another Chinese expert notes, even as China continues its economic ascent, it still greatly lags behind the United States in military, political, and other arenas of strength and influence that contribute to “comprehensive power” (*zonghe guoli*). Frequent references by Chinese experts to the asymmetry or gap in capabilities and power between China and the United States indicate that the application of the concept of “strategic stability” to Sino-U.S. relations faces significant conceptual hurdles.

China as a “Little Russia”?

A number of Chinese arms control scholars are also sensitive to the different foundations upon which the U.S.-Russia and U.S.-China seek to establish strategic stability. There is an overall skepticism toward perceived attempts to cast China in a Russian mold, a construct that is historically seen as confrontational. “Russia is the only country capable of being compared on par with the United States, while the United States needs China’s participation and cooperation in resolving a number of international issues,” in the words of one Chinese expert.

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The difficulty of applying the U.S.-Russian deterrence model is best illustrated through a brief overview of traditional “strategic stability” references within China. Xia Liping, an arms control expert and professor at Tongji University, defines “arms race stability” (*junbei jingsai wendingxing*) as two parties engaging in (1) coordinating the pace of the arms race, (2) avoiding development of those weapons systems that may provoke one’s opponent from engaging in a nuclear first strike, and (3) increasing mutual transparency and predictability.¹¹

Yet China has long sought to avoid entering into an arms race with the United States, in an attempt to consciously learn from the Soviet Union’s deleterious experience. Moreover, as one Chinese military expert suggested at the Fifth China–U.S. Strategic Dialogue on Strategic Nuclear Dynamics held in November 2010, the “sovietization” (*sulianhua*) of Sino-U.S. strategic relations could have destabilizing consequences. China’s nuclear deterrent is rooted in opacity, not transparency. Under this conception of deterrence, China’s relatively small nuclear arsenal is deemed sufficient, by relying on mobility and survivability, to avoid a preemptive first strike that would potentially decapitate China’s deterrent. As a result, “arms race stability” is currently not a guiding principle in the Sino-U.S. strategic dynamic.¹²

Even before the arrival of the Obama administration and the 2010 NPR, Chinese experts also recognized the importance of “crisis stability” (*weiji wendingxing*). Xia Liping points to the centrality of establishing crisis management mechanisms that prevent both parties from engaging in a “head-on collision” (*ying tou xiang zhuang*).¹³ When facing a host of potential strategic instabilities

in the future between the two countries, whether over Taiwan or the South China Sea, this equation is better suited to Sino-U.S. dynamics.

However, whereas “crisis stability” as a concept is more readily applicable to these two countries’ strategic ties, this concept presupposes a “crisis mindset” and a chance of “first use.” Chinese experts point to their stance of no first use (NFU) and “peaceful rise” as forestalling the level of crisis to which “crisis stability” refers. This also makes “crisis stability” difficult for Chinese analysts to assign to the U.S.-China dynamic.

Although China does not have the attributes of the Soviet Union, and Sino-American relations lack the most alarming features of the U.S.-Soviet contest, Chinese experts recognize that the United States considers China to be its only potential peer competitor in shaping the international system, especially in Asia. In the coming years, the bilateral and trilateral relations between China, Russia, and the United States will affect both regional and international strategic stability.

As a result, Chinese experts understand the increased attention that the United States’ 2010 NPR gives to China, and yet they are far from sure how to interpret it. Is the United States intending to create or accept more balance and equity in its relationship with China, including a limit on new military capabilities and operations? Or does the United States mean by strategic stability that China would accept U.S. hegemony and not seek to challenge U.S. force projection capabilities and policies?

The consensus among Chinese experts is that the NPR lacks a complete definition of how strategic stability applies in the context of China. In fact, the term “vague” or “ambiguous” (*mohu*) is frequently used in China to refer to U.S. intentions regarding “strategic stability,” as well as to particular key elements of the 2010 NPR. Many Chinese analysts continue to assert that the United States is invoking “strategic stability” in order to “pull” (*la ru*) China into greater transparency, which would in turn weaken China’s deterrent.

As one expert argues, “The United States is worried under what conditions China will augment its warhead numbers and delivery system capabilities, but U.S. experts are already clear on the number of China’s nuclear warheads, fissile material stockpiles. Robert Einhorn and others are all well aware.” Such assessments reflect an overall skepticism regarding the United States’ intent behind drawing China into more extensive discussions about strategic stability.

In the coming years, the bilateral and trilateral relations between China, Russia, and the United States will affect both regional and international strategic stability.

United States–China Strategic Stability

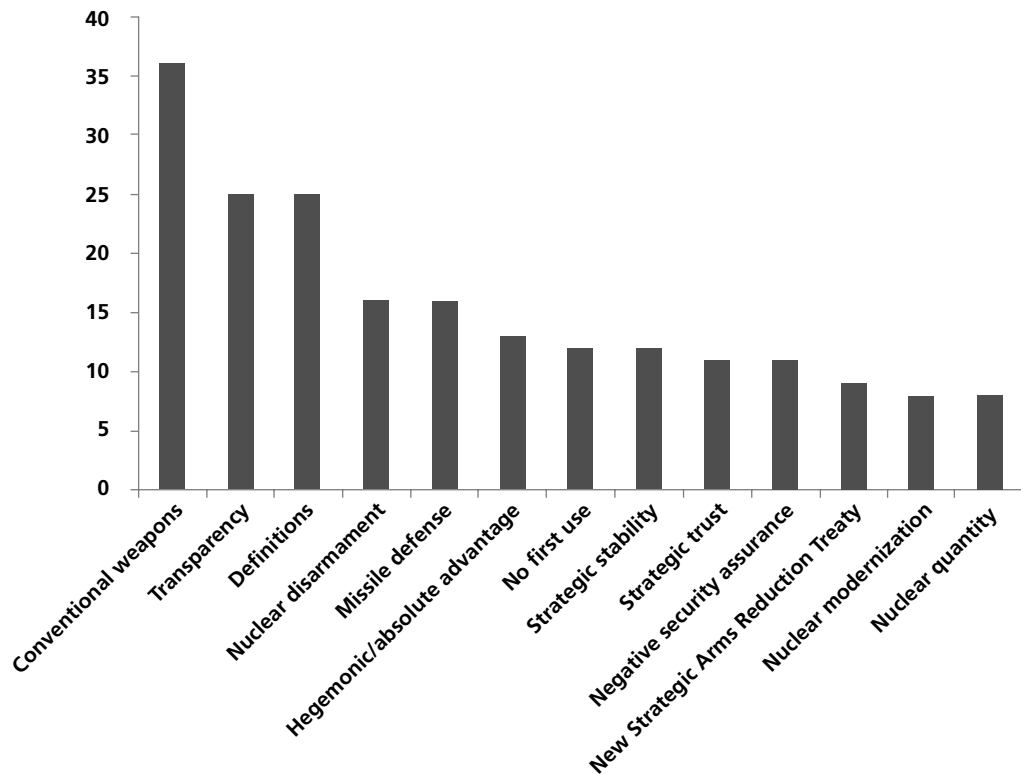
If China does not fit into a concept or model of strategic stability developed to apply to United States–USSR relations, Chinese experts are beginning to analyze the characteristics that United States–China strategic stability would

need to entail. Although a few earlier essays by Li Bin and Xia Liping focus on this question, this interest is relatively new. A spate of articles released after the NPR, as well as interviews and discussions within China, indicate growing interest in how U.S. nuclear policy, the NPR, and the concept of strategic stability may pose a challenge or an opportunity for China.

The challenge stems from the potential for the United States to lure China into a dialogue to increase transparency, without any U.S. commitment to limit its own military ambitions. The opportunity derives from the potential for the United States to codify and structure a deterrent relationship based on mutual vulnerability, diminishing the possibility of nuclear aggression or nuclear coercion.

Figure 2 provides a sense of the issues that Chinese scholars voiced in interviews conducted by the author during the spring and summer of 2010. Traditional concerns—such as hegemony, absolute advantage, BMD, and

Figure 2. The Number of References to Strategic Stability and Other Terms in Discussions Conducted in China on the U.S. NPR



Note: This figure contains statistical findings derived from more than 20 interviews conducted with China’s arms control establishment of scientists and military and academic experts between April 2010 and September 2010. It details those terms receiving the greatest mention among these experts in descending order. These experts’ affiliations included such organizations as the China Arms Control and Disarmament Association (CACDA), Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), China Institute for Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), Academy of Military Sciences (AMS), China Institute of International Studies (CIIS), National Defense University (NDU), Shanghai Institute of Law and Politics, China Peace and Disarmament Association (CPAPD), Tsinghua University, and Fudan University.

NFU—continue to make a significant showing, similar to textual research results. Yet they are surpassed by discussions of how conventional weapons advances and their replacement role for nuclear weapons could affect China.

BMD is frequently referred to in this context, but in overall numbers, it actually receives less mention than conventional weapons systems, falling to fifth place. In fact, when the author recently asked a military expert how he or she would rank China's concerns, advanced conventional weapons, such as conventional prompt global strike (CPGS), topped the list over BMD.

An interest in the nature, purpose, and sincerity of the U.S. commitment to nuclear disarmament is also prominent. For example, an expert at the Institute of Applied Physics and Computational Mathematics, Sun Xiangli states, "In terms of the aspects of nuclear force scale, composition, deployment posture, preparedness, the new administration continues to adhere to the United States' original strategic principles. Although Obama mentions the need to continue bilateral nuclear reductions, and in the recent to midterm there has been scope for further reductions in nuclear-weapons arsenals, realization of a substantial and irreversible reduction is unlikely."¹⁴

Chinese experts question how the pursuit of nuclear disarmament would have an impact on both China's and global security, particularly if conventional weapons and BMD were to reduce or replace U.S. reliance on nuclear forces. In this context, disarmament poses both a promise and a threat to China's ability to deter the United States.¹⁵

Disarmament poses both a promise and a threat to China's ability to deter the United States.

President Obama's Vision

President Barack Obama's nuclear agenda has elicited praise from members of the Chinese arms control community, yet there remain a series of issues relating to sustainability and practicality that are frequently mentioned. Among these, the ability of the United States to make achievements beyond its rhetoric and to sustain these gains from one administration to the next remains a strong theme. It also serves as an oft-cited rationale for China to defer involvement.

A Reduced Cold War Mentality

Although numerous doubts have been raised in China about the U.S. NPR and American nuclear disarmament objectives, the overall Chinese response to the document has been positive. The decision to attach more importance to China and to no longer list it as the target of a nuclear strike are frequently cited among other factors as suggesting that the United States is increasingly amenable to China-U.S. confidence-building measures.

Fan Jishe, deputy director of the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation Studies at the Institute of American Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and Sun Xiangli, among others, suggest that the primary threat faced by the United States no longer emanates from potential nuclear war between major powers or the rise of new powers, and has instead turned toward the threat of proliferation and terrorism.¹⁶

Moreover, arms control experts surveyed in the course of research for this paper laud the fact that “for the first time” an “important official document” declares the goal of seeking “a world without nuclear weapons.” One Chinese military expert voices appreciation for the fact that the NPR demonstrates the United States is finally willing to acknowledge that its nuclear arsenal, in his words, “far exceeds that which is necessary for security purposes” and has in fact become a “liability.”¹⁷

In this way, the United States is increasingly seen by some Chinese experts as leaving behind a degree of the “Cold War mentality” and “ideology” that has characterized its nuclear doctrine for decades. Yet these positive developments are tempered by discussions of whether these represent fundamental and desirable shifts in U.S. nuclear doctrine—in other words, a “new vision,” as advocated by Major General (Retired) Pan Zhenqiang.¹⁸

One Chinese arms control expert notes: “China is no longer listed as a potential target of nuclear strike in the unclassified version of the [NPR].” But

his reference to the “unclassified version” reflects a perception that there is a parallel, classified document. According to this speculation, the open version is simply an iteration of “nuclear policy,” not “nuclear posture.”

Of particular importance, some Chinese analysts challenge the basic premise alluded to in the NPR that the United States might contemplate accepting “mutual vulnerability” with China. In “A Chinese Perspective on the Nuclear Posture Review,” Major General Yao Yunzhu of the Chinese Academy of Military Sciences suggests that the NPR, with its “emphasis on strategic stability, implies

that the United States accepts mutual deterrence with China as a reality and will design its nuclear relationship with China based on that reality.”¹⁹

Yet she also notes that China “will be cautious in looking for indicators that Washington would back reassuring words with a willingness to limit capabilities.”²⁰ Major General Yao and Zhu Xinchun of China’s Institute of Contemporary International Relations, among a number of others, aptly note that rhetoric must be followed by actions.²¹ Otherwise, “strategic stability” threatens to become another “slogan” (*kouhao*).²²

It is perhaps a welcome irony that Chinese analysts are increasingly the ones calling for specificity and deeds to give meaning to and proof for large concepts. This was particularly evident at the Fifth China–U.S. Strategic Dialogue

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on Strategic Nuclear Dynamics. Some U.S. participants cited sensitive issues left on the table by the United States that might dissuade China from participating in high-level “strategic stability” talks, such as China’s greater transparency on its nuclear arsenal, deployment, and planning.

In fact, however, it is the issues that are left off the table by the United States that threaten to keep China away from substantive strategic stability talks, such as concrete measures to address Chinese concerns on arms sales to Taiwan, the arms embargo on China, reconnaissance missions near China’s shores, BMD, NFU declarations, and advanced conventional capabilities. For the Chinese, these issues serve as the primary impediments to such high-level exchanges.²³

Parsing the NPR in China

Of course, words and deeds are often difficult to synchronize. The NPR is an evolutionary development that, though significant for Sino-U.S. relations, remains tempered by political and technological constraints, including potential administration priority shifts and the drive for BMD within Washington. Sun Xiangli argues that the Obama administration’s agenda:

...is closely related to the United States’ consistent policy of maintaining nuclear superiority while ignoring the security concerns of other countries. From a detailed analysis of a series of policies, it is not difficult to discover that while the new administration has made some positive adjustments to nuclear policy, these shifts are far from significant changes to the policies that were inherited. Moreover, it could be said that what did change were [U.S.] priorities and implementation strategy of its security obligations, while the core part of U.S. nuclear strategy essentially remained. This is primarily reflected in three aspects: continued adherence to the past half-century nuclear strategic principle of nuclear war fighting; continuation of the concept of the “new strategic nuclear triad” from the [George W.] Bush administration, unchanged maintenance of its existing basic nuclear posture; preservation of nuclear weapons as the core of national security; and maintenance of the central deterrence function of nuclear weapons. These policies pose obstacles on the path toward the ideals and goals of arms control.²⁴

Recognizing these limitations, a skeptical countercurrent in China refrains from categorizing the 2010 NPR as an indication of a systemic, positive, and durable change in the U.S. nuclear posture. Even while applauding U.S. efforts to reframe its focus on nonproliferation and nuclear terrorism, several Chinese analysts remark that these doctrinal shifts make greater demands of non-nuclear-weapon states than nuclear-weapon states. This distinction serves as an extenuation of the oft-mentioned “double standards” (*shuangchong biao zhun*) in U.S. nuclear policy.²⁵

Some U.S. participants cited sensitive issues left on the table by the United States that might dissuade China from participating in high-level “strategic stability” talks, such as China’s greater transparency on its nuclear arsenal, deployment, and planning.

When Chinese experts refer in private to the newest incarnation of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (known as New START) and the move on the part of the United States to reveal its number of nuclear weapons,²⁶ they also continue to qualify these steps by arguing that the United States and Russia are engaged in accounting “games” (*youxi*). A number of Chinese experts have argued that by simply changing the accounting system, China and Russia are attempting to make the reductions appear more substantial.²⁷

Viewing the contentious battle over ratification of New START in the United States from afar, questions regarding Washington’s ability to follow through on its arms control agenda have naturally arisen in Beijing. These questions even preceded the New START debate and include any number of

unratified treaties, including the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The difficulties and near failure faced by a pro-arms control U.S. administration in ratifying a treaty that largely reinstates preexisting verification measures threatens overall U.S. credibility on arms control.

Similarly, although the majority of Chinese experts applaud the United States’ announcement that its nuclear arsenal contains 5,113 warheads,²⁸ this achievement has also been questioned. A number of Chinese commentators

note that this number does not necessarily encompass the full quantity of U.S. nuclear warheads, in particular due to the exclusion of those in storage that could be returned to service.²⁹ Several Chinese analysts, in exchanges with the author, argued that this indicates that the United States continues to seek the flexibility necessary to reverse its stance.

Li Hong, the secretary-general of China’s Arms Control and Disarmament Association (CACDA), further argues: “From the past year of Obama administration activities in the nuclear arena, it becomes apparent that U.S. ‘rhetoric’ has surpassed ‘action.’ The United States and Russia still deploy enough nuclear weapons to destroy the world several times over, and retain large storage stockpiles that can be returned to deployed status at any time. Additionally, the thousands of tactical nuclear weapons possessed by the United States and Russia have still not entered into their negotiations... There remains a long road to eliminating the threat of nuclear war and enhancing the global nuclear security environment.”³⁰

Frequent mention is also made within China of the explicit NPR declaration that the United States will preserve its nuclear deterrence capabilities “as long as nuclear weapons exist.”³¹ Although there is an understanding of the necessity for the United States to meet its security demands, there remain questions as to how other countries can be compelled to relinquish their nuclear capabilities as long as the United States maintains its own. Conversely, of course, China does not itself propose unilateral nuclear disarmament, so the criticism of the

The difficulties and near failure faced by a pro-arms control U.S. administration in ratifying a treaty that largely reinstates preexisting verification measures threatens overall U.S. credibility on arms control.

United States on this score is a debating point more than a serious invitation to negotiate a detailed road map for multilateral global disarmament.

Xu Jia, a professor at the Luoyang PLA Foreign Languages Institute, characterizes some of the U.S. contradictions as follows: “First, the Obama administration’s promotion of a ‘nuclear-free world’ and the United States’ ongoing maintenance of a strong nuclear deterrent are strongly opposed. Second, U.S. nuclear targets will be moved from fixed to flexible.... Third, on the issue of nuclear-weapons reductions, it is only emphasizing ‘offensive’ capabilities and avoiding ‘defensive’ capabilities.... Fourth, the Obama administration’s non-proliferation policies still retain strong shades of double standards.”³²

Another Chinese arms control analyst adds that if the United States’ nuclear-weapons numbers are reduced but its qualitative nuclear capabilities are augmented, these two actions have the potential to negate one another in a cost/benefit analysis. This expert emphasizes that in making this calculation, the United States’ overall concept of how it defines nuclear modernization remains too obscure and ill defined.

These issues have contributed to a perception that the United States is bent on the “contradictory” pursuits of preventing “horizontal nuclear proliferation and continuing vertical proliferation.”³³ As always, U.S. efforts to develop and deploy BMD and more advanced conventional weapons programs are seen to undermine the very strategic stability that the NPR purports to seek with China, even if these military programs are framed as being conducive to denuclearization.³⁴

Thus, even when not viewed as contradictory, nuclear disarmament, as sought by the United States, is seen by some Chinese analysts as “reducing an ‘excess’ of nuclear weapons” that does not fundamentally “weaken U.S. nuclear superiority and nuclear deterrence.” At the same time, it threatens to weaken “Russia and China’s, in particular China’s, nuclear forces.”³⁵

Sustaining the Momentum

Building on opportunities opened by the NPR remains a challenge, particularly given doubts that current U.S. positions will be reversed by changes in administration or technological fait accompli. Secretary-General Li Hong of CACDA notes that whereas U.S. experts are increasingly reevaluating the role of nuclear weapons, this evolution cannot be achieved in the short term, because the rapidity of reductions will be closely related to the progression of the international security environment.³⁶

On the domestic level, making significant progress toward strategic stability requires a degree of political stability that is difficult to achieve in both policy and practice. More than half the Chinese experts surveyed express skepticism about whether the Obama administration’s nuclear doctrine shifts and policies will be maintained after it leaves office.³⁷ One Chinese expert cites the

complexity and divisiveness of the U.S. political system to suggest that strategic agreements with the United States lack reliability and longevity.

In its drive to promote a nuclear-free world, the United States is painted as wanting to occupy the “moral high ground.”³⁸ However, it is also perceived as facing limitations in this pursuit and as lacking the “will” (*yi yuan*) to achieve this goal. A variety of analysts contend that the United States is not truly willing or prepared, in the midst of meetings and negotiations, to offer specific measures to achieve Sino-U.S. strategic stability. One arms control expert explains: “If the United States truly wants to achieve [strategic stability], then it must find a method for both parties to suffer losses” from conducting a

nuclear strike against their opponent. He emphasizes that the United States “is not willing to truly achieve strategic stability” with China.

Although doubting the “will” of the United States to achieve its arms control objectives, numerous Chinese experts also recognize the difficulty of sustaining the momentum on a document wrought out of “compromise” (*tuoxie*) between competing political parties and interests in Washington.³⁹ As one such example, though New

START passed significant hurdles in the U.S. Congress, one high-ranking Chinese arms control expert stresses that the CTBT and a fissile-material-cut-off treaty are likely to face even greater obstacles.⁴⁰

Given the difficulty of ensuring the sustainability of its current policy and approach, the United States is still seen as able to maximize its own flexibility, while attempting to garner firm commitments from others. In the view of one Chinese scientist, the U.S. military and interest groups are unlikely to change and yet Obama wishes to enact change, thereby leading to tension between competing factions. This scientist, among several military analysts, expressed the view that although the policies of the George W. Bush administration were often unpopular, they had one distinct advantage: Because the administration was more “straightforward” (*tanshuai*) in its approach, it enabled China to assess and predict U.S. decision making and behavior.

In characterizing the Obama administration’s different style of governance, some analysts—like Xu Jia, Zhang Jinrong, and Yan Jiafeng⁴¹—characterize Obama’s approach as a continuation of the Clinton administration’s “lead but hedge” nuclear policy.⁴² Yet the most popular recent characterizations and explorations of Obama’s leadership style include “Obamaism” (*Aobama zhuyi*)⁴³ and “smart power” (*qiao shili*).⁴⁴ The Obama administration is appreciated within China for its skillful diplomacy; however, this comes with the inherent dilemma for some experts in distinguishing between rhetoric and reality.

“Utopian” (*wutuobang*) and “romantic” (*langman*) are words frequently used to describe U.S. nuclear policy shifts under the Obama administration.⁴⁵ These words belie concerns as to the level to which the United States would

The Obama administration is appreciated within China for its skillful diplomacy; however, this comes with the inherent dilemma for some experts in distinguishing between rhetoric and reality.

ultimately be willing to reduce its nuclear arsenal and the extent to which it would continue to advance its conventional weapons capabilities. In evaluating such U.S. strategic trends and tendencies, Chinese pragmatism and realism continue to win out, drawing strong skepticism as to U.S. intent.

Hegemony Versus Transparency

Within Chinese assessments, arms control means little if it perpetuates and even strengthens the existing imbalanced power structure that favors the United States. Calls for multilateral reductions of nuclear weapons and “strategic stability” are viewed within China as an attempt by the United States to maintain its hegemonic position through pressuring other countries into greater transparency and ultimately acceptance of U.S. conventional military dominance.

“Absolute advantage” (*juedui youshi*) and “absolute security” (*juedui anquan*) are catch phrases in Chinese analyses, describing the U.S. aim of remaining the “hegemon” (*bazhu*).⁴⁶ The motive for disarmament is not necessarily seen as ensuring global security but rather as ensuring U.S. absolute security and dominance.⁴⁷

Wang Zhijun⁴⁸ cites a nuclear-free world as being tantamount to the United States: (1) safeguarding its absolute security, (2) seizing the moral high ground, (3) reducing the international community’s hostility, (4) enhancing soft power, and (5) optimizing U.S. national security resources to maximize expansion of conventional military superiority. Although his article preceded the NPR, it reflects current themes. He argues that nuclear disarmament is an attempt to shore up U.S. dominance by robbing other countries of the ability to contend with the United States via nuclear weapons.

In unclassified literature, Chu Shulong, professor of political science and international relations at the School of Public Policy and Management at Tsinghua University, refers to several commonly raised issues that continue to constitute what the Chinese view as threats to “strategic stability”: (1) U.S. nuclear submarines in the Western Pacific, (2) U.S. BMD (including with Japan), and (3) U.S. policies on Taiwan.⁴⁹ In this respect, CACDA secretary-general Li Hong states, “The United States as the current leader in the international security architecture is more concerned about using nuclear proliferation as a pretext to promote power politics.”⁵⁰

Thus, while citing the benefits to be accrued by the United States in its arms control policies, some experts stress that for China, technical negatives, such as the growing prominence of conventional weapon systems like CPGS, outweigh these political positives. One noted expert emphasizes that even if U.S. nuclear warhead numbers decrease, this is not of great importance to China for its national security.

The nuclear reductions advocated by the Obama administration would not, in fact, diminish the number of nuclear warheads and threats that China faces.

These threats, as noted by Li Bin and Nie Hongyi, stem from other sources, like nuclear submarine deployment shifts, BMD, and space radar developments.⁵¹ Such issues have not been adequately addressed in the arms-control-related advances since the Arms Control Spring of 2010.⁵²

Overall, Chinese analysts generally caution against reading too much into references to China in the NPR as a significant perceptual change on the part of the United States toward China. One senior arms control expert states that China is still seen by the United States as a “potential adversary” and “target” and that relations between the two are still largely “business as usual.”

Li Bin and Xiao Tiefeng similarly cite U.S. efforts to retain its “global leadership position.”⁵³ They note that the size of the U.S. strategic arsenal far exceeds that necessary for strategic stability to be achieved. Given that the NPR and New START, in their view, place few direct limits on these quantitative and qualitative capabilities, they argue that the “main purpose is to use advantages in nuclear weapons numbers to demonstrate the leadership position of the United States. This is currently the primary obstacle to the United

The nuclear warhead numbers that the United States has discussed reducing would not, in fact, diminish the number of nuclear warheads and threats that China faces.

States making significant reductions in its nuclear-weapons numbers.”⁵⁴

Such evaluations point to why several of the experts surveyed by the author advocated China building up sufficient “comprehensive power” (*zonghe shili*) to engage with the United States and Russia in more balanced talks on strategic stability. However, most Chinese analysts argue that this need not require a rush to nuclear parity. Instead,

they contend that until China is more on par with Russia and the United States in all areas of economic, political, and military might, the latter two parties would dominate any strategic talks.

This concern is driven by the perception that the United States is taking advantage of the current imbalance before China rises to the level necessary to engage in balanced negotiating. However, just how much “comprehensive power” China would need to facilitate positive trends is not yet part of the open discussion.⁵⁵

One established arms control expert argues that China will increasingly “have a greater stake in and opinions regarding the direction of Sino-U.S. relations and such unresolved issues.” As such, it is necessary to find a “mutually balanced platform to engage in discussions.” Though such a platform is what the NPR invites China to create with the United States, this intention is not clear to many Chinese observers.⁵⁶

What is clear is that the linkage of “strategic stability” to “balancing” and “power dynamics” is essential to the equation of engaging China. For a country that has long eschewed power politics, this is one issue in which the nature of such dynamics continues to hold center stage.

Issues of Doctrine and Practice

Doctrines within China, such as “no first use,” are often viewed in the West as slogans, much as U.S. “extended deterrence” is seen within China as an excuse for ongoing U.S. regional interference. Moving beyond the rhetoric toward the implications of these doctrines for strategic stability provides a platform to evaluate their application in both negotiation and practice.

No First Use

In determining the issues to be addressed to make headway on “strategic stability,” China’s declaration of NFU and the U.S. refusal to make a similar declaration continue to affect China’s strategic decision making regarding its own nuclear arsenal and how it perceives U.S. commitments. One arms control expert states, “When the international community forms a consensus on the principle of ‘non-use of nuclear weapons,’ this would help countries to seriously consider the abandonment of such weapons. China has always seen nuclear weapons as a kind of retaliatory and deterrent power. Once the United States and Russia promote nuclear disarmament down to a certain level, I think that there would not remain too many concerns about China’s participation in the disarmament process.” Another Chinese scientist argues:

Quantity is already no longer an obstacle to convincing other countries to participate in nuclear disarmament negotiations. A total of 1,550 nuclear weapons can already serve as an initial condition for negotiations. The problem lies in other obstacles. For China, the barrier to participate in nuclear talks means that it will first have to make its nuclear [capabilities] public, ambiguity on nuclear strength is a mode of nuclear deterrence. Making its nuclear [capabilities] public means that China would be abandoning this means of deterrence. The United States continues to adhere to first use of nuclear weapons under extreme circumstances; for China, this means that if it uses military means to resolve the Taiwan or South China Sea issue, then the United States could engage in first use of nuclear weapons. China has a great deal of difficulty, under the pressure of nuclear attack, to participate in nuclear disarmament negotiations.

The absence of U.S. acceptance of NFU in the form of a “sole purpose” declaration,⁵⁷ whether announced or behind the scenes, makes concessions on transparency on the part of China difficult at best. Many Chinese experts see nuclear openness as a slippery slope that could lead China to relinquish its current means of deterrence. Numerous Chinese military and academic experts also allude to a profound gulf between Chinese and U.S. conceptions of transparency.

Several military experts emphasize that the United States is seen within China to demand strategic transparency first to build strategic trust, whereas

Many Chinese experts see nuclear openness as a slippery slope that could lead China to relinquish its current means of deterrence.

China wishes to build strategic trust before engaging in strategic transparency.⁵⁸ What becomes evident from figure 2 above is that both terms receive nearly equal attention and are frequently viewed as inseparable in the strategic calculus within China.

The level of transparency that the United States is assumed to seek from China remains unacceptable, as argued by one Chinese expert, as long as the potential for the United States to use “nuclear coercion” against China still

exists. He argues that until the United States is willing to relinquish nuclear coercion as a tool, the United States will maintain its large weapons arsenal and will not accept NFU. U.S. preservation of the potential for first use of nuclear weapons means that Chinese experts remain concerned that nuclear weapons could be used, under the NPR-cited “extreme circumstances,” to engage in nuclear coercion, particularly over Taiwan or the South China Sea.

However, under coercion, the political-psychological

effects of these weapons must be differentiated from actual “use.” Although some Chinese experts, particularly those in the military, remain preoccupied with the logistical potential for the United States to engage in a first strike, nuclear coercion presents more of a psychological tool. As Li Bin and Xiao Tiefeng note, “From the end of the Cold War through today, U.S. rhetoric on the role of its nuclear weapons has undergone continuous adjustments; however, these references have a commonality, this being that they avoid declaring under which conditions the United States will use nuclear weapons and under which conditions it will not use nuclear weapons.... Maintaining ambiguity on the conditions for use of nuclear weapons is the basic concept behind its nuclear strategy.”⁵⁹

This description is followed by an entreaty that in order to strengthen the effectiveness of nuclear deterrence, the United States should make explicit under what conditions it will use nuclear weapons. Chinese analysts believe this level of transparency should be possible for the United States, because it is not constrained by the low numbers and asymmetry that China faces. Still, Li and Xiao recognize that the United States may be unlikely to clarify the conditions under which it would use nuclear weapons.⁶⁰ Underlying this assessment is the contention that if the United States has a vested interest in maintaining “nuclear coercion” as a tool, then it lacks the incentive to engage in meaningful and substantive nuclear disarmament measures.⁶¹

Chinese concerns do not end there. “If nuclear deterrence is used to constrain nuclear attack, its utility is not great, the reason being that nuclear taboo constrains a country from first use of nuclear weapons,” write Li and Xiao. “If nuclear weapons are used to constrain non-nuclear attack, unless as a means of last resort, the use of nuclear retaliation in constraining non-nuclear attack

The United States is seen within China to demand strategic transparency first to build strategic trust, whereas China wishes to build strategic trust before engaging in strategic transparency.

is of extremely low reliability.⁶² This begs a question: If nuclear taboo already constrains first use, then why is a declaration of NFU necessary?

In part, Li and Xiao address this question by arguing that “there is a need within the global context to eliminate nuclear force policies and practices. The easiest realizable means for this is for countries possessing nuclear weapons to clearly declare that their country’s weapons will only be used for constraining a nuclear attack, and under no circumstances will it engage in the first use of nuclear weapons. If nuclear-weapon states do this, then they will no longer be able to exert an influence of nuclear force; at the same time, the impetus for nuclear proliferation will be greatly reduced.” Yet they are also adamant in arguing that the United States is unable to relinquish its policy of nuclear force.⁶³

This argument, linking the United States’ perception of the utility of nuclear weapons to its refusal to adopt NFU, illustrates why some Chinese analysts question the degree to which U.S. nuclear policy is changing. Without deeper shifts in the valuation of nuclear coercion and potential first use, China will find it difficult to be more transparent, other nuclear-armed states will be reluctant to contemplate nuclear disarmament, and non-nuclear-weapon states will hedge against rules and policies, making it more difficult to acquire nuclear weapons.

Other Chinese arms control experts highlight the connection between nuclear disarmament and NFU even more boldly. Sun Xiangli notes, “Nuclear first strike’s main objective is an enemy country’s (defense) industry forces, military forces and command and control system backbone. As a result, it is difficult to reduce a nuclear arsenal under a nuclear war strategy down to a low level with a few hundred in number.... Unless Obama fundamentally alters the current U.S. nuclear strategic culture, deep nuclear reductions will only be a slogan.”⁶⁴

Thus, despite the tendency in the West to assume that something as pervasive as NFU in Chinese strategic conception has a commonly agreed-upon origin and function, views within China on this issue remain far from uniform. Some Chinese experts, like Li Bin, link the United States’ refusal to accept NFU to nuclear coercion, while others, like Sun Xiangli, link it to extended deterrence and other factors. Furthermore, this debate over NFU similarly informs and permeates discussions of negative security assurances and extended deterrence.

Negative Security Assurances

Articles by Teng Jianqun and Fan Jishe pay particular attention to the reduced role of nuclear weapons in U.S. national security strategy, under expanded negative security assurances (NSA).⁶⁵ The reduction in “calculated ambiguity” or “strategic ambiguity” on the part of the United States is frequently seen as a

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positive effect of the NPR. “The change of declaratory policy means the ‘calculated ambiguity’ policy is no longer that opaque,” one expert comments. “The U.S. position is moving a little closer to the ‘no-first-use’ policy advocated by China. But compared with ‘no first use,’ there are still some gaps to be filled.”

Among these lacunae, in terms of NSA, a number of Chinese experts note that the exact nature of the “extreme circumstances” under which the United States will use nuclear weapons remains ambiguous. Several suggested that the likelihood of a biological or chemical attack against the United States is slim. This raises the salience of the potential that a conflict over Taiwan might be one scenario in which the United States could argue that “extreme circumstances” merited a first strike.

Major General Yao Yunzhu draws attention to strengthened U.S. NSA, noting that the United States “will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) non-nuclear-weapon states that comply with their treaty obligations, even if they were to pose threats of chemical weapon—and less clearly, biological weapon—attacks.”⁶⁶

Yet Yao, too, highlights the implicit caveat: that this declaration does not preclude the United States from using nuclear weapons against the other established nuclear-weapon states, non-NPT states, and NPT members that it deems to be noncompliant with treaty obligations, in particular North Korea and Iran.⁶⁷ Other Chinese arms control experts argue that the Obama administration’s policy toward these two countries has been far harsher than expected.

Xu Jia notes the pressure that U.S. policies toward North Korea and Iran put on China, stating that “while the Obama administration emphasizes the use of negotiations to resolve the Iran issue, it has clearly announced that it will not relinquish the potential for the use of force. Once a war erupts due to a nuclear issue, the Asia-Pacific region’s peace, China’s neighboring stability, even domestic security, all will be influenced. China must be prepared.”⁶⁸ The United States claims latitude in deciding which countries are in compliance with the NPT. This further fuels Chinese perceptions that the United States operates under “double standards.”⁶⁹

Extended Deterrence

A plurality of voices also can be heard on extended deterrence. Yet in China, this concept remains strongly tied to extended “nuclear” deterrence and often lacks reference to the conventional arm. Fan Jishe, in an article subtitled “U.S. Nuclear Policy’s ‘Third Way,’” highlights the fact that in the NPR, the United States has not weakened its nuclear umbrella commitments to its allies.⁷⁰ In his view, the NPR remains geared toward strengthening regional deterrence capabilities, maintaining its preemptive deployment stance and capabilities, and continuing the development of long-range strike capabilities that are not conducive to improving the regional security environment, much less to strategic stability.

One Chinese military analyst asserts that the United States would not be able to accept NFU, in large part because it is bound to its concept of extended deterrence.⁷¹ This expert stresses that under “extreme circumstances,” the United States would still use nuclear weapons first. According to this logic, the United States would not wait until Israel or Japan absorbed a nuclear strike to engage in a counterattack. Under the U.S. nuclear umbrella, these allies in fact have become *de facto* nuclear-weapon states.⁷²

Although views on extended deterrence remain diverse, its adverse impact on other countries’ security perceptions is frequently cited as detrimental to efforts to stem the proliferation of nuclear weapons to and from countries like North Korea and Iran.⁷³ Chinese analysts are aware of the U.S. argument that extended deterrence is used to reassure allies and prevent them from pursuing nuclear weapons. Yet they cite three detrimental byproducts of extended deterrence: (1) impeding nuclear disarmament, (2) stimulating nuclear proliferation, and (3) hindering international security cooperation.

Moreover, this guarantee is seen as having been hijacked by some countries, such as Japan, for engaging in provocative behavior that might be otherwise constrained by a threat of retaliation. On this point, the importance of each side understanding the other’s definitions remains paramount, given that a number of Chinese analysts view “extended deterrence” as meaning only nuclear deterrence, whereas U.S. experts tend to define it as including both nuclear and conventional deterrence. Such differences are crucial to understanding the nature of the threat and response for both sides in a crisis scenario.

Nuclear Modernization

Despite the claims of doctrinal shifts under President Obama, as described above, a number of Chinese strategists emphasize that the U.S. strategic nuclear triad remains. One expert comments, “The ‘new triad’ first invented by the Bush Administration in [the] 2001 N[PR] is still there and will be reinforced, although the new NPR no longer use[s] that term. First, the nuclear triad—ICBMs [intercontinental ballistic missiles], SLBMs [submarine-launched ballistic missiles], and nuclear-capable heavy bombers—will be maintained. Some arms control NGOs suggested replac[ing] [the] triad with [a] dyad by dropping the bomber leg. That would have been a significant positive change. But it has not been accepted by the administration.”⁷⁴

Chinese analysts frequently cite the Obama administration’s fiscal year 2011 budget, submitted to the U.S. Congress in February 2010, as showing the United States’ unwavering commitment to nuclear defense. Teng Jianqun, for example, stresses that “the budget for nuclear-weapons maintenance and nuclear facility modernization was \$7 billion, which increased by nearly 10 percent over the previous fiscal year.... The report still advocates regional nuclear deterrence and the provision of extended nuclear deterrence for all U.S. allies and partners. On one hand, the United States stresses building a world

without nuclear weapons, while on the other hand, it could not let nuclear deterrence go. Apparently, this is a self-contradictory logic.”⁷⁵

Others note that “replacement of nuclear components is allowed with the authorization of [the] President and Congress, providing a ‘back door’ for the pursuit of reliable replacement warheads.” This argument on the part of an arms control scholar demonstrates a commonly held view in China that while the NPR states that the United States will not develop new nuclear weapons, its modernization of nuclear weapons continues.

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These assessments reflect an inherent lack of a common and clear definition of what constitutes nuclear modernization on the part of both countries. One Chinese nuclear

expert comments that while Chinese counterparts understand that the United States seeks to maintain a “secure and credible” nuclear deterrent, this same process makes it difficult to accept the argument that the United States is heading in the direction of nuclear disarmament.⁷⁶

Conventional Weapons

Despite questions about the United States’ commitment and ability to achieve nuclear disarmament, there remain parallel concerns that America will, in fact, prepare itself for disarmament by finding a substitute, or non-nuclear, means to maintain its military supremacy and capability to coerce others. “As more emphasis is placed upon the development of advanced conventional weapons,” one arms control expert notes, “conventional advantage will help persuade American conservatives, or realists, to support the idea of nuclear-free world.” But he also argues that “other states will be deterred from joining the nuclear disarmament process because of their conventional disadvantage.”

Chinese analysts also explore the strategic importance and capabilities of such systems in a prolific number of articles and television programs. CPGS, anti-satellite weapons, and BMD are all cited by academic, military, and scientific experts as posing long-term challenges to the system, as the United States seeks to achieve “absolute security” and other countries struggle to keep up.⁷⁷

CPGS and similar systems might trigger inadvertent responses reminiscent of the Cold War, including the Russians’ policy of launch on warning. Others simply cite the potential that the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons may open the door to the resumption of a large-scale conventional war.⁷⁸ Although New START addressed some of these issues, as with the counting rules that encompass conventionally armed ballistic missiles, Chinese commentators dismiss such measures as ineffectual, not comprehensive enough, or entirely missed.⁷⁹

The overwhelmingly negative Chinese reaction to CPGS is emblematic of the overall response to a number of U.S. conventional weapons advances and programs that are seen as unconstrained by the “nuclear taboo”⁸⁰ mentioned

above that forestalls their use. As such, nuclear deterrence within these analyses has much less of a detrimental and potentially destabilizing role than that of conventional weapons.

This characterization, though not necessarily representative of the entire Chinese arms control community, is an important factor to keep in mind when evaluating negative Chinese reactions to CPGS and other such systems. Wang Zhijun further suggests, “The existence of nuclear weapons on the contrary weakens the conventional weapons advantages of the United States military... Yet promoting global denuclearization is conducive to the maintenance of U.S. conventional military resources to maximize the benefits of U.S. national security.”⁸¹

The U.S. effort to substitute conventional for nuclear forces is criticized within China not only as an impediment to global nuclear disarmament but also for its potential to incite qualitative and quantitative conventional weapons proliferation. One military expert argues that the potential for such conventional capabilities to proliferate is greater than that of nuclear weapons. This could lead to a future conventional weapons arms race that would apply to a much larger range of both state and nonstate actors than occurred during the Cold War.

Such a possibility also suggests that although a number of Chinese experts may perceive the United States to be preserving its “hegemonic status” through the transition under disarmament from nuclear weapons to conventional weapons, this would in fact be a short-term trend. If this leads to a conventional weapons arms race and the greater potential for proliferation, then the United States would find a greater number of future challengers and potentially successors to its conventional weapons superiority.

Fan Jishe elaborates by stating that “the United States intends to strengthen building of its advanced conventional weapons capabilities, including CPGS, while at the same time refraining from limiting in any way development and deployment of ballistic missile defenses. These two aspects have the potential to harm strategic stability between major powers, and could have a major impact on the United States’ disarmament agenda.”⁸²

Beyond the conventional realm, countries that cannot rival the United States in conventional weapons capabilities will pursue or increase their reliance upon nuclear weapons, thereby undermining nuclear disarmament efforts. Indeed, some in China worry that the United States may be developing conventional capabilities that will unravel the global gains derived from strategic reductions and lead to a conventional arms race.

Ballistic Missile Defense

Although ballistic missile defense is not cited quite as often as in the past (see figure 2), it continues to occupy a prominent position in discussions of Chinese

nuclear deterrent capabilities and security. In fact, it is frequently mentioned in tandem with discussions of advanced conventional capabilities, in particular CPGS.⁸³ According to this view, shared by a variety of Chinese experts, BMD increases risks of deterrence failure or U.S. power projection that could lead to military conflict.⁸⁴

Chu Shulong refers to the deleterious impact of U.S. BMD on Chinese conceptions of whether the United States will engage in the first use of nuclear weapons. Aside from tactical concerns, some Chinese analysts cite not so much

Indeed, some in China worry that the United States may be developing conventional capabilities that will unravel the global gains derived from strategic reductions and lead to a conventional arms race.

the BMD system itself as a threat but rather the potential for it to increase U.S. miscalculations as to its absolute security, leading to aggressive and escalatory behavior—moreover, in opening the door to space weaponization.⁸⁵

Discussions of U.S. space weapons developments are increasingly interwoven into the stability discourse, whether through BMD, space radar, or the ability of the United States to detect Chinese mobile missiles. Such concerns can be seen in the reaction of Li Daguang, a senior military space specialist at China's National Defense

University, to the U.S. test flight of the X-37B space plane in April 2010. These are just a few of the many programs that threaten strategic balance in the Chinese conception.⁸⁶

Moreover, the idea that BMD is among the systems that serve as stepping stones toward nuclear disarmament has drawn skepticism from Chinese analysts. Sun Xiangli, among others, points to the difficulty of other states disarming as long as the United States possesses such systems.⁸⁷ Thus, even if BMD makes disarmament more feasible for the United States, this may not be the case globally. The secretary-general of CACDA, Li Hong, makes a similar argument, stating that “the United States, in researching and developing new concept weapons to replace nuclear deterrence, has the potential to bring about a new military technology race.”⁸⁸

When U.S. difficulties in achieving its BMD aims are broached as potentially self-constraining factors on U.S. programs,⁸⁹ the frequent response is that even if such systems are currently unsuccessful or limited in scope, China must plan for the day when these systems will work at full capacity and threaten China's nuclear deterrent. China's countermeasures will not wait for BMD to deliver on its potential.

Moreover, a number of Chinese analysts anticipate that this day will come sooner rather than later, under the ongoing support accorded by the Obama administration to BMD. As one Chinese military expert put it, “Obama has remade U.S. ballistic missile defense into a good thing. Under these conditions, it has a much greater potential to succeed.” Sun Xiangli makes a similar argument, pointing to the BMD “inheritance” that the Obama administration has received and continues to expand.⁹⁰

Although she emphasizes Russian objections to these systems and efforts to include them in limits imposed by New START, Sun Xiangli also notes that the global community is largely powerless to constrain this development. Such arguments frequently emerge in conversations with Chinese experts. It has even been intimated that under the deployment of fully operational and potentially limitless BMD, China would need to start reconsidering its own nuclear posture, including stockpile numbers, NFU, and the like.

There is a consensus among a number of the Chinese analysts surveyed for this paper that in the face of such U.S. BMD, space weapons, nuclear submarine deployments, and conventional weapons improvements, China's nuclear modernization must include qualitative improvements of the technologies associated with missiles, survivability, maneuverability, and nuclear submarine platforms. The potential for such U.S. systems to trigger Chinese responses and imitation is already reflected in present signs and allegations that China is engaged in developing hit-to-kill and directed energy technologies that can be applied to BMD and anti-satellite weapons.⁹¹ Some Chinese arms control experts reference China's 863 Program to illustrate this point,⁹² noting that it emerged just three years after U.S. President Ronald Reagan created the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).

One expert recently cited the consequences of the United States' pursuit of directed energy weapons and refusal to make headway on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) initiative as factors that both technologically and politically propel such technological pursuits within China. He further suggested that U.S. BMD also contributed to accelerating Chinese efforts in anti-ship ballistic missiles and guidance. The United States should never believe that it can "monopolize" military capabilities, states one Chinese analyst.

Yet in making these assessments, experts in China frequently note that these developments are "situation-based" rather than "capability-based" advances. A variety of arms control experts argue that these Chinese technological developments should not be viewed as full-blown BMD or antisatellite weapons. Instead, they are intended to prevent what one Chinese expert labels a "science surprise." Such systems target specific scenarios that China might face, for example, over Taiwan or the South China Sea. Thus, whether or not U.S. military advances are directed at China, they elicit a response that has definite escalatory potential.

This "action-reaction dynamic" between the United States and China has significant implications for such programs as BMD and CPGS and also for overall pursuits in space weaponization. These pressures have played and will continue to play an integral role in shaping China's military modernization.⁹³ Whether by engendering a conventional arms race or increasing the reliance of other countries on nuclear weapons, a number of Chinese experts find this future to be potentially more unstable and not necessarily nuclear-free.⁹⁴

Chinese analysts maintain that “the United States mistakenly assumes that China will use the opportunity presented by U.S. disarmament to race to parity.” In their estimation, the problem is not nuclear, but rather conventional in nature. According to one expert, “ballistic missile defense and this type of system is a detriment to strategic stability. It consists of both defensive and offensive uses. The United States plans on using military and space to achieve global-scale ballistic missile defense.... Ballistic missile defense is in China’s environment. The aforementioned conditions will cause nuclear disarmament

to fail. These policies will bring about ... increased conventional armed forces and a conventional arms race.”

Although Washington remains fixated on the potential for China to attempt to race to nuclear parity, Chinese analysts are much more preoccupied with the potential for a conventional arms race brought on by the United States’ unswerving pursuit of deterrent substitutes.

Although Washington remains fixated on the potential for China to attempt to race to nuclear parity, Chinese analysts are much more preoccupied with the potential for a conventional arms race brought on by the United States’ unswerving pursuit of deterrent substitutes.⁹⁵ Some Chinese experts view this as contributing to the hypocrisy of the United States demanding greater flexibility and change on the part of China while at the same time refusing to reconsider its own trajectory.⁹⁶ In sum, Chinese experts, in both conversations and writing, emphasize that

conventional weapons advances and BMD, which are touted by the United States as an essential part of its drive toward nuclear disarmament, are inimical to Chinese conceptions of “strategic stability.”

Advocacy for military capabilities that are seen to be detrimental to strategic stability in the same document that promotes strategic stability ultimately represents a circular logic that makes enhanced Chinese participation in such talks difficult at best. As asserted by Teng Jianqun, unless strategic stability talks address this “self-contradictory logic” with practical and targeted confidence-building measures, Sino-U.S. strategic stability talks are likely to continue to falter.⁹⁷

Strategic Stability and Trust

Within China, “strategic stability” and “strategic trust” are often intertwined as an extenuation of one another. There has long been a trend of arguing for trust to be in place to set the conditions for stability. Yet while Chinese analysts have been historically inclined toward a greater focus on such abstract principles, there is an increasing demand for specificity in confidence-building measures and practice.

Slogans and Principles

Given the questions surrounding the United States’ intent in promoting Sino-U.S. “strategic stability,” one noted Chinese expert refers to it as a mere

“slogan” (*kouhao*). This arms control expert goes on to argue that the U.S. use of the term “strategic stability” (*zhanlue wendingxing*) within the NPR is “not serious” (*bu renzhen*). This reasoning stems from the perception that the “United States is not willing to discuss specific measures for achieving strategic stability.” Some experts in China contend that U.S. “experts have not given serious consideration to what the true meaning of strategic stability is, and have not adequately prepared to achieve strategic stability with China.”

In citing the difference between U.S. cooperation with Russia and discussion of concrete measures on “de-MIRV-ing” (that is, reducing stockpiles of multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles), this Chinese expert’s analysis highlights the fact that the United States lacks similar details in its dealings with China. Instead, he argues that the United States opts for broad terminology and slogans to discuss strategic stability and interdependence. This example reflects a growing interest among a number of Chinese experts to set up verifiable and irreversible means and measures to achieve nuclear disarmament, interdependence, and ultimately mutual vulnerability.⁹⁸

Although the 2010 NPR may in some ways represent an embryonic “new vision,” until the NPR is issued in a form that contains concrete definitions and proposals, the perception within China that certain core elements of U.S. nuclear doctrine have ossified is likely to persist. Given that China itself is a country often given to using “slogans” (*kouhao*) and “principles” (*yuanze*) to guide its strategic relations, this demand for more concrete definitions, proposals, and confidence-building measures is significant.

In fact, these trends indicate that the United States is facing a reversal of traditional roles in Sino-U.S. arms control relations. China is now the nation looking for precise definitions, combined with concrete measures and steps, while the United States has become the nation speaking in grandiose terms and slogans. Under such conditions, the United States has an opportunity to make specific proposals to change the trajectory of the Sino-U.S. quest for strategic stability.

This current situation is also an opportunity for the Chinese side—as argued by Sun Xiangli, Teng Jianqun, and others—to make a more significant impact on defining the issues for Sino-U.S. strategic relations. As a start, Chinese analysts see the need to recalibrate the imbalance in the Sino-U.S. power dynamic. One contends:

The main reason the United States hopes to strengthen Sino-U.S. strategic dialogue is not to take care of China’s interests and demands but rather to maintain the status quo of relations between the two countries. (The United States believes that Sino-U.S. relations are currently in their best period; however, the Chinese people do not see it this way.)... In fact, the United States does not see China as a strategic rival with balanced power but rather as a strategic adversary with a great gap [in power]. This is the basis for the long-term instability that

China is now the nation looking for precise definitions, combined with concrete measures and steps, while the United States has become the nation speaking in grandiose terms and slogans.

Sino-U.S. strategic relations will face. If the United States government really wants Sino-U.S. strategic balance, then it should take care of China's most basic requirements, that is, sovereignty claims, noninterference in the issues of Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang. If this is accomplished, the Sino-U.S. strategic balance will be much more stable.

A Chinese military expert recently emphasized that if both sides are content with the "state" of strategic stability, then there is no incentive to destroy it. However, the above quotation and overview suggest a prevailing dissatisfaction within China toward the status quo and an overall imbalance between the two countries.

Chu Shulong also notes the importance of China's eliminating this power gap so that it stands on a more balanced footing when it comes to establishing strategic stability with the United States. Chu argued in April 2009 that in terms of "strategic stability," he does not view China as a status quo power,⁹⁹ in part due to China's "developing and modernizing" of its military.¹⁰⁰ He emphasizes that this does not imply that China is interested in engaging in "an arms race with the U.S. or seeking parity with the U.S." Nonetheless, he notes the importance of improving China's capabilities, including in the strategic area, to "give us confidence, maybe to get U.S. confidence that there is stability, strategic stability between us."¹⁰¹

A number of Chinese analysts continue to argue for more cost-effective and asymmetrical means to maintain the survivability of their deterrent, such as mobility, decoys, and chaff. At the same time, Chinese experts are concerned that the United States' pursuit of BMD, CPGS, and other such conventional systems makes it risky for China to consider numerical and posture adjustments in its nuclear arsenal. So while there might not be an overt call for nuclear parity, there remains a trend toward nuclear perpetuation.

Also of concern is the lack of strategic trust that is perceived to hinder Sino-U.S. relations. At the Fifth U.S.-China Strategic Dialogue on Strategic Nuclear Dynamics, one Chinese expert suggested the level at which the United States monitors China already meets, if not exceeds, that directed at the former Soviet Union, indicating an even greater lack of strategic trust than was present during the Cold War.

Yet when making such arguments, what often remains overlooked is that this is precisely why strategic stability talks can benefit the two countries. U.S.-Soviet relations were largely shaped by frequent interaction at the arms control level. Although this symbolized a degree of the mutual tension that China wishes to avoid, it conversely led to enhanced interaction and understanding between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Whether through declarations of NFU, cooperation on nonproliferation measures, discussion on issues like BMD, and conventional weapons developments, experts like CACDA secretary-general Li Hong repeatedly emphasize the role of "mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation."¹⁰²

Although such demands may appear to be purely rhetorical, these experts similarly view many of the U.S.-Russian agreements—such as the most recent, New START—as more symbolic than real. Thus, although there is some support among Chinese experts to increase the level of talks, a number still note that “talking” is not enough. Major General Yao Yunzhu asserts:

The NPR urges high-level dialogues with China “to enhance confidence, improve transparency and reduce mistrust.” However, China’s concern over BMD and PGS [prompt global strike] needs more than just dialogues and talks if it is to be relieved. If China is regarded as part of the “newly emerged regional missile threat,” not only against Taiwan, but also against U.S. regional allies, U.S. maritime dominance in the Pacific, and military troops and installations of the United States and its allies in the region, against which the United States and its allies are setting up regional BMD architectures, tension over the BMD is going to stay and loom larger than before.¹⁰³

Chinese experts add that NFU, arms sales to Taiwan, the definition of “extreme circumstances,” and other terms used in the NPR have a bearing on China’s own security environment. These are the issues that matter most to Chinese experts. Although “strategic stability” and “strategic trust” have the potential to be mere abstractions, there are concrete issues of nuclear doctrine and deterrent substitutes and means for cooperation sought by Chinese experts that can propel strategic stability discussions to the next level if the United States is ready to engage.¹⁰⁴

The Discussion Mechanism

As seen above, the Chinese have already begun to intensify their focus on the Sino-U.S. strategic stability dynamic. Yet for the moment, the network of strategic relations remains divided into two pairs of bilateral relations: U.S.-Russia and U.S.-China. Rarely, with only a few exceptions, does one find reference within China to trilateral mechanisms, whether for talks on strategic stability or nuclear disarmament.

By contrast, a number of analysts outside China are often preoccupied with moving toward strategic talks between the United States, China, and Russia.¹⁰⁵ Although such proposals are not without merit, they also have the potential to increase the sense within China of asymmetry vis-à-vis these two countries that possess vastly larger nuclear arsenals as deterrents. China frets over the possibility that it may become a target of negotiation pressures or an excuse for a lack of any future progress by the United States and Russia on nuclear disarmament and other related issues.

When asked about the potential dynamics of trilateral as opposed to bilateral discussions on strategic stability and disarmament, one Chinese military analyst noted the potential for “teaming up” to occur between two members of the triad, leaving one member invariably under pressure. On certain occasions,

this could work to China's advantage if it were a part of the dyad on an issue of concern. However, if faced with pressure from the United States and Russia on such issues as transparency and nuclear stockpile numbers, China would find it difficult to risk the occurrence of such a detrimental and imbalanced coupling.

In fact, the issue of such "pressure" (*yali*) is a frequent theme in Chinese experts' writings.¹⁰⁶ Fan Jishe states that "China on nuclear issues is extremely restrained; however, in the future, it could face nuclear transparency pressures."¹⁰⁷ He further notes: "In sum, due to the adjustments made to U.S. nuclear policy, international nuclear disarmament and nuclear arms control are on a rising trajectory, and will put pressure on small to medium-sized nuclear-weapon states."¹⁰⁸

However, this is not necessarily a foregone conclusion, nor would the structure of such talks be limited to one format. One military expert surveyed asserts that China's senior officials were unlikely to take part in strategic stability talks on the order of those mentioned in the NPR but may be willing to participate in capabilities-specific negotiations on BMD or conventional weapons advances, like CPGS.¹⁰⁹ Another high-ranking expert suggests that high-level bilateral talks behind closed doors on NFU assurances between the United States and China would also be well received.

From Abstraction to Action

Despite differences in the concerns and definitions surrounding the intentions that underlie the U.S. nuclear posture, there are signs that China's traditional wait-and-see approach may be shifting. Although the majority of references to "strategic stability" occur in a very superficial manner in the context of U.S.-Russian relations, more in-depth analyses of China and the United States with respect to this dynamic are on the rise. Some Chinese experts have also begun to call for a more active role for China in arms control discussions.¹¹⁰

For instance, well before the release of the 2010 NPR, Xia Liping cited the centrality of "cooperative security, comprehensive security, coordinated security and common security" (*hezuo anquan, zonghe anquan, xietiao anquan he*

gongtong anquan).¹¹¹ He argued that this new broad "strategic stability" framework should not only target traditional strategic security issues, like nuclear weapons and BMD, but also provide a mechanism for countries to cooperate on issues like antiterrorism, nonproliferation, crisis prevention, crisis management, regional security, and transnational security.¹¹²

More recently, in the 2008 article "A Study of Sino-U.S. Strategic Stability," Li Bin and Nie Hongyi added to the list of issues for expanded talks on Sino-U.S. strategic stability, raising China's concerns over the eastward deployment of U.S. nuclear submarines, as well as the development of U.S. BMD and space radar.¹¹³ All these systems are seen as

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detrimental to China's nuclear deterrent in terms of reconnaissance, targeting China's mobile weapons, and negating or giving a false sense of security in countering China's missiles and space weaponization.

Following the release of the NPR, Sun Xiangli provided one of the most extensive lists to date of goals for China to advocate and pursue within arms control. She declared: "In light of the deviation of the leading nuclear powers' international arms control development from the correct path, it is the responsibility of scholars and politicians of other countries, including China, to raise the issue of existing problems in the arms control arena, to search for [a] truly sustainable nuclear arms control agenda that can be further developed."¹⁴ Because such analyses are relatively rare, it is worthwhile to highlight the elements that Sun Xiangli would include in "China's new arms control agenda":

1. Call for the nuclear powers to completely change their strategic nuclear culture, relinquish the strategic nuclear principle based on the goal of winning a nuclear war, and shift toward the path of deep nuclear reductions and equalization.
2. Oppose the development of global ballistic missile defense systems, support the building up of a connection between offensive strategic weapons and defensive strategic weapons, develop verifiable limits on the development of strategic ballistic missile defense, and effectively safeguard global strategic stability.
3. Promote the process of U.S.-Russian continued bilateral nuclear disarmament, with the next step in nuclear reductions strictly adhering to the principles of irreversibility and verifiability; reduction activities should not be limited to shifts in deployment posture but should also include substantive destruction of delivery devices, nuclear missiles, and nuclear warheads.
4. Encourage the United States and Russia to accelerate the process of destroying decommissioned nuclear warheads and nuclear materials, and strengthening nuclear safety and security measures for large nuclear-weapons arsenals and nuclear materials.
5. Call for all nuclear-weapon states to relinquish their policy of first use of nuclear weapons, commit themselves under no circumstances to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons, and conclude a legally binding international instrument to this effect.
6. When the conditions are mature, encourage all countries to participate in the process of nuclear disarmament, and discuss how to control their respective nuclear arsenals at low levels and how to implement measures to reduce the risk of accidental nuclear launch.

7. Actively take part in international nonproliferation and anti-nuclear-terrorism cooperation, support the strengthening of the International Atomic Energy Agency's safeguards, respect each country's right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and promote cooperation and assistance on nuclear safety technology.
8. Call for international balanced resolution of regional nuclear proliferation issues, promote feasible solutions to regional security concerns, build regional security assurance mechanisms, and eradicate the root of motivations for developing nuclear weapons.
9. Retain its nuclear strategic culture of preventing nuclear war, and actively promote it toward other states.
10. Call for each state to actively participate in the process of global nuclear disarmament and nuclear arms control, and prior to achieving the goal of a "world free of nuclear weapons," strive for the early realization of a global low-level, high-stability nuclear strategic balance, and strive to contain each nuclear threat at the lowest level possible.¹¹⁵

This detailed, forward-thinking presentation by Sun Xiangli suggests a possible framework for confidence-building measures. Whether through expanding the scope of "strategic stability" into both strategic and conventional spheres or widening the range of topics within new cooperative mechanisms, these experts demonstrate a willingness to reconceptualize Sino-U.S. relations and to redefine "strategic stability" vis-à-vis China.

To be sure, experts in China still largely confine their suggestions and initiatives to the expectations of the United States and Russia. For example, Sun's analysis still contains the view, commonly held in China, that only once the United States and Russia have taken the first significant steps toward nuclear disarmament, and unspecified "conditions are mature," will China among others join the effort.

Nonetheless, the statements and initiatives given above reveal that there is a relatively limited but growing call among China's arms control elite to define the terms used in the NPR. What is noteworthy is that this call is no longer confined to asking the United States to provide its own definitions but is increasingly expanding toward China seeking its own terms. Although this is a positive development, there is also a strong potential for these definitions to diverge from the vision and intent outlined by the United States in the most recent NPR.

For each positive assessment contained within Chinese articles and interviews, there is also an undercurrent of dissatisfaction and skepticism regarding the United States' intentions and long-term strategic goals. Thus, to better comprehend and pursue "strategic stability" between the United States and China, it is essential to define, enumerate, and address Chinese experts' concerns. Without putting these issues on the table, the likelihood of substantive

high-level strategic stability talks remains a distant ideal rather than a practical reality. The following suggests the first steps toward achieving this goal.

Conclusion

For all the inherent contradictions and concerns raised by Chinese analysts in evaluating the 2010 U.S. Nuclear Posture Review, this document still offers a unique opportunity for both the United States and China to jointly construct confidence-building measures. Under President Obama, the United States has expressed a desire to open communication channels with China that go beyond those of previous administrations. But a key question remains: how to define the potential content of talks on strategic stability that would satisfy both governments sufficiently to motivate them to begin. Within this equation, four issues are fundamental.

First, although the NPR invites enhanced dialogue with China on strategic stability, it is not clear what this cooperation will entail and what “strategic stability” means in the context of Sino–U.S. relations. If this undefined approach is intended to elicit cooperation with Beijing in defining the terms and agenda of such a dialogue, as some in Washington suggest, then there are advantages to this method.

However, this approach also carries inherent risks in that the message, especially when not clearly conveyed, results in speculation and alternative readings of U.S. policy that may damage overall ties and mutual understanding. It also leads to doubts within China as to the United States’ sincerity, because questions about whether the United States is willing to accept mutual vulnerability with China remain unanswered.

China, which is historically more inclined to discuss topics in terms of broad principles (*yuanze*) and slogans (*kouhao*), has put forward a body of experts who are interested in defining terms and realizing confidence-building measures in response to the NPR. At the same time, the United States has issued a document replete with broad concepts but little detail as to the next steps in engagement.

This reversal of traditional roles represents an opportunity for the United States to find a balance between the abstract and the defined, to work toward defining strategic stability and other broad concepts mentioned in the NPR in the context of China. In doing so, the Chinese experts surveyed for this paper find a number of terms and developments within the NPR to be in tension and, more important, directly contrary to U.S. actions in Asia.

China’s list of U.S. actions contradicting its rhetoric is lengthy. BMD and the pursuit of increasingly advanced conventional weapons capabilities, as sought

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in the NPR, threaten to diminish the very strategic stability that the United States purports to advance. Nuclear submarine deployments, space weapons, and reconnaissance missions close to China's shores, though not mentioned among U.S. pursuits in the NPR, are also seen within China to be detrimental to strategic stability.

Discussions of this subject in Washington find many American officials and analysts doubting, for strategic and/or political reasons, that the U.S. government will change course on one or all of the aforementioned Chinese concerns. If this is the case, then Chinese experts' allegations that the United States has ultimately become "status quo" or stagnant in its arms control efforts may have a strong basis in reality.

If the NPR's rhetoric is reduced to slogans that are not reflected in action, then the chances for real dialogue will not materialize.

Moreover, if the NPR's rhetoric is reduced to slogans that are not reflected in action, then the chances for real dialogue will not materialize. Instead, the growing numbers of Chinese experts looking to augment China's shaping of international arms control efforts are likely to develop their own parallel and potentially divergent agendas. Holding strategic stability talks for the sake of holding talks may increase basic communication, but these talks are unlikely to achieve their aims without concessions from both sides.

The second fundamental issue is that engaging China means coming up with both the definitions and concrete confidence-building measures that are most likely to bring China to the table for more in-depth discussions. As Admiral Richard W. Mies has argued, "The great danger in the United States is that a lot of people write a lot of different things, and the danger from our standpoint is the Chinese sometimes pick and choose which ones they choose to believe and which ones they don't."¹¹⁶

In the vacuum left by what the Chinese experts deem to be "vague" or "ambiguous" U.S. proposals, selectivity might not only expand but could also heighten the possibility of alternative and sometimes inaccurate readings of the United States' nuclear posture and policy. U.S. analysts are often similarly limited by their reliance on a small number of sources within China to evaluate the Chinese position, thus often missing the internal debate and variety of viewpoints available.

A simplification of Chinese demands exacerbates the potential for the United States to disregard some of China's legitimate security concerns and internal discussions. These appear in the following, by no means exhaustive, list of topics that most frequently appeared in the author's discussions and textual research conducted in China on the NPR. The potential areas of increased discussion and clarification include:

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1. definitions and terms in the NPR, in particular "strategic stability" vis-à-vis China;

2. specific proposals for technical cooperation and controls that promote sustainability, beyond political rhetoric limited to one administration;¹¹⁷
3. budgetary expenditures related to nuclear modernization;
4. NFU talks in a private bilateral or multilateral forum;
5. advanced conventional weapons programs, such as CPGS;
6. nuclear submarine deployments in the Pacific and monitoring via surveillance vessels;
7. the use of nuclear weapons in “extreme circumstances,” particularly in the context of Taiwan;
8. extended deterrence and BMD cooperation with Japan and other nations;
9. the weaponization of outer space; and
10. enhanced scientist-to-scientist and lab-to-lab cooperation.

Although it may not be feasible for all these issues to be raised within the context of talks on Sino-U.S. strategic stability, it is imperative not to exclude any of them in principle.¹¹⁸ Nor should they be unidirectional, for the United States also has its own concerns pertaining to China’s reactions to and advances in some of the aforementioned arenas. Chinese analysts emphasize the need for the United States to take these concerns seriously as a first step toward building the sort of confidence on which a fruitful dialogue on strategic stability could be based.

Inviting the scientific and military communities in both countries to engage on these issues is essential to bringing a long-neglected level of communication back into the Sino-U.S. strategic relations dynamic. If Chinese experts and officials sense that the United States will categorically reject any limitations on U.S. military technologies and deployments that could eradicate China’s deterrent, they will find any talk of “strategic stability” hollow.

In the meantime, it could be counterproductive to trumpet potential new U.S. capabilities, such as CPGS, as levers to pressure Chinese willingness to engage in strategic cooperation.¹¹⁹ This argument may have a strategic foundation at the level of power politics, yet it is also likely to further push China down the road toward the expansion of its nuclear arsenal or other unforeseen consequences in a conventional arms race.

One of the dangers is that China remains largely reactive and imitative in its approach toward U.S. military and scientific trends. It is likely to respond with similar technological and ultimately military developments when faced with such provocations, whether the challenge is perceived or real.

Holding strategic stability talks for the sake of holding talks may increase basic communication, but these talks are unlikely to achieve their aims without concessions from both sides.

Third, notwithstanding its ambiguities, the NPR has opened the door to engage China. As such, China has the opportunity to foster, create, and shape the development of new Sino-U.S. strategic trends. Some Chinese arms control experts, like Sun Xiangli, have argued for a more active and engaged role for China in determining the future of arms control: “It is also hoped that Chinese arms control scholars and politicians will deeply investigate international arms control issues, put forward our own nuclear arms control agenda, in order to seek to make a contribution to finding the correct path of international nuclear arms control.”¹²⁰

However, some Chinese arms control analysts continue to maintain that China should defer direct involvement in strategic dialogues and potential arms control discussions. Other experts argue that the nature of the Chinese governmental structure precludes frank discussions at the higher echelons of power. A number still suggest that nuclear issues do not rank that highly among China’s security concerns. Given the large gap between China and the United States in capabilities and the perceived unlikelihood of nuclear conflict, a variety of Chinese experts question the current need for such high-level talks.¹²¹

Analysts in China maintain that additional conditions should be addressed before China becomes involved. China first expects the United States and Russia to make further advances in reducing their own significant arsenals of strategic and tactical nuclear weapons. Many Chinese experts emphasize that China should wait until its “comprehensive power” (*zonghe shili*) is on par with that

of the United States and Russia to engage in serious negotiations on strategic stability. This is not necessarily a call for parity but rather an exhortation to wait. China can easily adjust the bar on what constitutes “on par” and relegate substantive talks to the point of abstraction.

Such reluctance may reflect a Chinese perception that “strategic stability talks” are a euphemism for “disarmament talks” and “transparency talks,” regardless of the number of issues that could be addressed under the former framework. Chinese experts have repeatedly demonstrated a desire to address a broader set of issues with concrete

measures and results, as mentioned above. If both China and the United States only engage in “vague” (*mohu*) discussions of “principles” (*yuanze*), these misperceptions will linger and substantive talks on strategic stability will remain distant.

Therefore, although the United States needs to propose more concrete definitions and technical proposals, China could also be well served by heeding the exhortations of such experts as Sun Xiangli and Teng Jianqun to become an active participant before these newly defined trends start operating against its interests. Whether this occurs through making its own set of concrete proposals and measures or in cooperating with U.S. counterparts to define some of

If Chinese experts and officials sense that the United States will categorically reject any limitations on U.S. military technologies that could eradicate China’s deterrent, they will find any talk of “strategic stability” hollow.

the terms and strategies raised in this paper, China could go a long way toward fulfilling one of the central tenets associated with its own principles of “peaceful rise” (*heping jueqi*) and ‘win–win’ (*shuangying*).”

Fourth, a variety of cooperative mechanisms already exist that can be expanded to ensure that policy and posture coincide with practice. Whether through targeted joint studies on some of the doctrinal and practical issues mentioned in this paper or via projects similar to the Sino-U.S. jointly compiled *English-Chinese, Chinese-English Nuclear Security Glossary*,¹²² such endeavors represent models for deepened interaction that have already proven successful.

Furthermore, arenas of cooperative research could include the eradication of space debris, BMD-related data sharing, and a joint radar system.¹²³ Verification, nuclear security, nuclear fuel cycle cooperation, and strengthening measures against withdrawal from the NPT also constitute avenues of progress that would go a long way toward enhancing sustainable Sino-U.S. interaction.

Prior to the Cox Report, the U.S. Lawrence Livermore, Los Alamos, and Sandia national laboratories undertook reciprocal visits and projects with China’s Institute of Applied Physics and Computational Mathematics and the China Institute of Atomic Energy. While there has been interaction since then, it needs to be expanded, regularized, and made official. The Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific provides an informal mechanism for scholars, officials, and others in their private capacities to discuss political and security issues and challenges. More targeted meetings and sessions on specific topics serve to bring the discussion down to the practical and policy level.¹²⁴

The expansion of concrete Sino-U.S. measures and forums is integral to breaking down the perception that the United States lacks the will and desire to engage China on substantive issues.¹²⁵ At the same time, if the United States is able to deliver on more such proposals, China’s commitment to engage at multiple levels—beyond Track 2 and Track 1.5 to ultimately include Track 1—should be part of the reciprocal process.¹²⁶ Nonetheless, Track 1 should not be seen as a panacea. Although Track 1 is an integral part of the process of enhancing Sino-U.S. strategic relations, it best functions when complemented by the sorts of joint research and frank discussions that best occur within China at the Track 1.5 and Track 2 levels.

China’s system is often mistakenly pegged as a purely top-down system, but in fact the bottom-up approach is also essential. Track 1.5 and Track 2 discussions frequently pave the way for a Track 1 execution of policy. Rather than serving as a replacement for Track 1, they are integral complements for gaining the background and understanding that high-level officials are unlikely to be able to develop on their own. Whether through follow-up reports or the disseminating role of conference observers, the importance of the “seen and unseen” levers of

If both China and the United States only engage in “vague” discussions of “principles,” misperceptions will linger and substantive talks on strategic stability will remain distant.

Chinese policy decisions must be recognized as part of the process.

Beyond differences in approach, engaging to resolve gaps in definitions can serve to mitigate sources of misperception. Just as much as U.S.-China strategic stability talks are an issue of what both countries are willing to put on the table,

Unless the United States fully engages China with concrete proposals and confidence-building measures to match its rhetoric and unless China is willing to truly participate in shaping Sino-U.S. strategic relations, both countries will find it difficult to shift from “strategic ambiguity” to “strategic trust,” and ultimately to “strategic stability.”

they are just as much a function of what remains off the table, whether this be BMD, CPGS, directed energy weapons, or even the recognition of Sino-U.S. “strategic stability” as tantamount to mutual vulnerability. Engagement on these issues should not be relegated to the next NPR.

No matter how “strategic stability” is defined within the Nuclear Posture Review and whether this term is ultimately even used to encapsulate U.S.-China strategic relations, one thing remains clear. Unless the United States fully engages China with concrete proposals and confidence-building measures to match its rhetoric and unless China is willing to truly participate in shaping Sino-U.S. strategic relations, both countries will find it difficult to shift from “strategic

ambiguity” to “strategic trust,” and ultimately to “strategic stability.”

Notes

- 1 U.S. Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review Report*, <http://www.defense.gov/npr/docs/2010%20Nuclear%20Posture%20Review%20Report.pdf>.
- 2 “Due to the combination of China’s still-developing strategic objectives and its ongoing modernization of its nuclear and non-nuclear forces, China is a country that could be involved in an immediate or potential contingency (16–17).” “Nuclear Posture Review [Excerpts], Submitted to Congress on 31 December 2001,” *Global Security*, January 8, 2002, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/policy/dod/npr.htm>.
- 3 William J. Perry, Brent Scowcroft, and Charles D. Ferguson, “U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy,” Independent Task Force Report 62, April 2009, www.cfr.org.
- 4 On April 6, 2009, Brad Roberts, then with the Institute for Defense Analyses, and his colleagues, also stated, “We have a simple choice in front of us as a nation, as the United States, of accepting that what China is doing in the way of modernization is necessary and appropriate as an adaptive response to the things that we’re doing in our posture for another reason. Alternatively, we choose to say, we can’t live with that. China’s modernization is threatening and we need to think more of China in the way we have thought of the rogue states, rather than the way we might think about Russia.” Brad Roberts, Chu Shulong, and Admiral Richard Mies, U.S. Navy (Retired), “U.S.-China Strategic Stability,” presentation at Carnegie International Nonproliferation Conference, Washington, D.C., April 6, 2009.
- 5 This essay is drawn from more than 20 interviews and eight conferences attended with China’s arms control establishment of scientists, military, and academic experts, since the release of the Nuclear Posture Review. Organizations included China Arms Control and Disarmament Association (CACDA), Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), China Institute for Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), Academy of Military Sciences (AMS), China Institute of International Studies (CIIS), National Defense University (NDU), Shanghai Institute of Law and Politics, China Peace and Disarmament Association (CPAPD), Tsinghua University, and Fudan University. The authors of open publications are quoted by name, but those experts participating in closed conferences and discussions remain anonymous.
- 6 This essay also relies upon articles from the Tsinghua University electronic database covering the period from January 1981 to September 2010 that reference strategic stability in these publications: *Zhongguo guofang bao* (*China National Defense News*), *Gaige yu kaifang* (*Party and Government Forum*), *Dongfang ribao* (*Eastern Daily*), *Beifang lunzhong* (*The Northern Forum*), *Guangming ribao* (*Guangming Daily*), *Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan yuanbao* (*Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Report*), *Liaowang xinwen zhouban* (*Outlook News Weekly*), *Renmin*

ribao (People's Daily), *Zhongguo gongcheng wuli yanjiuyuan keji nianbao* (Chinese Academy of Engineering Physics and Technology Annual Report), *Xiandai guoji guanxi* (Contemporary International Relations), *Guoji zhanwang* (International Outlook), *Shijie zongheng* (The Contemporary World), *Shijie bao* (World Report), *Xinhua meiri dianxun* (Xinhua Daily Telegraph), *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* (World Economics and Politics), *Taipingyang xuebao* (Pacific Academic Journal), *Guoji guancha* (International Observer), *Guoji ziliao xinxi* (International Data Information), *Guoji luntan* (International Forum), *Guoji wenti yanjiu* (International Studies), *Jiefang ribao* (Liberation Daily), *Heping yu fazhan jikan* (Peace and Development Quarterly), *Guofang keji* (Defense Sciences), *Guoji jingji pinglun* (International Economic Review), *Zhongguo jingji shibao* (China Economic Times), *Jiefangjun bao* (PLA Daily), *Dangdai yatai* (Contemporary Asia Pacific), *Guoji zhengzhi yanjiu* (International Political Studies), *Waijiao xueyuan bao* (Foreign Affairs University Journal), *Renmin luntan* (People's Forum), and *Waijiao pinglun* (Foreign Affairs Review), as well as television debate programs, such as *Jinri Guanzhu* (Today's Focus). A few of these articles mentioning "strategic stability" have been translated into English, among these are Su Hao, "Concept of Integrative Security and the Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation," (Journal Name Unavailable), 2009, 382–96; Shi Ze, "Russia's Rise and Its Relations with the United States," *China International Studies*, Fall 2007, 4–20; and Yuan Peng, "Sino-U.S. Strategic Mutual Trust," *Contemporary International Relations*, March–April 2008, 1–15.

- 7 This term is frequently, but not always, written as "zhanlue wendingxing." As such, to engage in a more comprehensive search, the author limited the search words to "zhanlue wending." From a survey of articles, it was discovered that "zhanlue pingheng" is used interchangeably and frequently in the same context with "zhanlue wending." Rather than limiting the results of this research, it suggests that the findings could be greater in amount. However, to avoid statistical duplication of articles in the context of this essay, the author confined her search to "zhanlue wending."
- 8 It is noteworthy that in 2003, when the United States began its military campaign in Iraq, that analyses addressing "strategic stability" dropped precipitously. Without the concomitant research to discover whether there is a correlation between these shifts in security interest and analysis, it is nonetheless worth pointing out this significant drop.
- 9 "Russia's opposition to U.S. deployment of ballistic missile defense systems, reflects Russia's pursuit of strategic stability; Russia's pursuit of deployed strategic nuclear-weapons numbers is commensurate with that of the United States, and is not simply to maintain strategic stability, but is for maintaining Russia's great power status. The result of the U.S.-Russian game is that the number of nuclear weapons deployed by both parties is roughly equivalent, and the U.S. will temporarily not deploy missile defense systems in Eastern Europe. However, the United States has the capability to double the number of its deployed strategic nuclear weapons at any time, while Russia does not have the ability to rapidly expand its deployed nuclear force; the United States has also not guaranteed to never deploy ballistic missile defense systems in Eastern Europe. As a result, the gap in the United States and Russia's international status is conspicuous. If the United States and Russia were to only regard nuclear weapons as a security measure, rather as than a symbol of national status, then they would not be so stubborn on the issue of nuclear-weapons numbers at nuclear arms reduction negotiations, the process of nuclear disarmament would be much smoother, and they would even be able to engage in unilateral disarmament to reduce their number of nuclear weapons." Li Bin and Xiao Tiefeng, "Chongshen hewuqi de zuoyong" ("Reexamining the Role of Nuclear Weapons"), *Waijiao pinglun* (Foreign Affairs Review), no. 3 (2010): 8.

- 10 Author's translation from Li Bin and Nie Hongyi, "Zhongmei zhanlue wendingxing de kaocha" ("A Study of Sino-U.S. Strategic Stability"), *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* (*World Economics and Politics*), no. 2 (2008): 13. Gregory Kulacki at the Union of Concerned Scientists has made a complete translation of this article, available at www.ucsusa.org/assets/.../Li-and-Nie-translation-final-5-22-09.pdf. He has translated the aforementioned phrase as follows: "However, the concept of strategic stability in classic arms control theory cannot be applied directly to the framework of China-U.S. relations, the main reason being that the pattern of bi-polar parity in the Cold War period has already become the past, at present is a pattern with a supremely dominant United States, so it is difficult for a concept built on strategic stability under a pattern of bi-polar parity to describe the problem of stability under an asymmetric pattern."
- 11 Xia Liping, in turn, closely associates "arms race stability" with increased "transparency" and "predictability." Linkage of these three elements illustrates a conceptual stumbling block for applying "arms race stability" to the current Sino-U.S. strategic dynamic. This is not to say that transparency and predictability cannot be achieved outside of the context of an arms race. Chinese experts would no doubt argue, predictability is achieved through China's stance of no first use (NFU).
- 12 However, given the pressures of BMD and conventional prompt global strike (CPGS), these conceptions could change. The section of this paper, titled "Conventional Weapons," explores this issue and begs the question as to whether or not when faced with U.S. BMD and CPGS as deterrent replacements.
- 13 He notes that during the Cold War, when political-military crises frequently occurred, "deterrence stability" (*weishe wendingxing*) eliminated the necessity for either party to engage in a first strike. Xia Liping, "Lun goujian xin shiji daguo zhanlue wending kuangjia" ("On Building a Strategic Stability Framework for the New Century"), *Dangdai yatai* (*Journal of Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies*), no. 2 (2003): 48.
- 14 Sun Xiangli, "Zhongguo junkong de xin tiaozhan yu xin yicheng" ("Chinese Arms Control's New Challenges and New Agenda"), *Waijiao pinglun* (*Foreign Affairs Review*), no. 3 (2010): 16.
- 15 Zhang Jinrong and Yan Jiafeng, "Aobama zhengfu 'he taishi pingu' baogao pingxi" ("Commentary on the Obama Administration's 'Nuclear Posture Review' Report"), *Guoji luntan* (*International Forum*), vol. 12, no. 4 (July 2010): 11.
- 16 Fan Jishe, "Renmin ribao guoji luntan: meiguo he zhengce de 'di san tiao daolu'" ("People's Daily International Forum: U.S. Nuclear Policy's 'Third Way'"), *Renmin wang* (*People's Web*), April 20, 2010, <http://opinion.people.com.cn/GB/11407995.html>; Sun, "Zhongguo junkong de xin tiaozhan yu xin yicheng" ("Chinese Arms Control's New Challenges and New Agenda"), 12.
- 17 One noted arms control expert and scientist concedes that the NPR demonstrates improvements in U.S. policy in such areas as nuclear nonproliferation, nuclear terrorism, Sino-U.S. and Russo-U.S. strategic stability, the role of nuclear weapons, negative security assurances, and a declaration of non-use of nuclear weapons in retaliation for a biological or chemical weapon attack.
- 18 Pan Zhenqiang, "Abolishing Nuclear Weapons: Why Not Outlaw Them First?" in *Abolishing Nuclear Weapons: A Debate*, edited by George Perkovich and James M. Acton (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 2009), 259; Major General (Retired) Pan Zhenqiang has held a number of positions in China, including but not limited to, deputy chairman, China Foundation for International Studies; and senior adviser, China Reform Forum and Research

- Director, Institute for Strategy and Management of the Central University of Finance and Economics in China.
- 19 Yao Yunzhu, “A Chinese Perspective on the Nuclear Posture Review,” *Proliferation Analysis*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 6, 2010.
 - 20 Ibid.
 - 21 Niu Xinchun, “Aobama waijiao: Mengxiang yu xianshi” (Obama Diplomacy: Dreams and Realities), *Heping yu fazhan (Peace and Development)*, no. 6 (December 2009): 5–8.
 - 22 In accordance with the judgment that China’s power is on the rise, one Chinese strategist argues, “Yet, in terms of Sino-U.S. strategic balance, this is primarily based on a judgment regarding the future growth of China’s power. Because of this, the United States contains China [to prevent it] from becoming its rival; curbing the growth of China’s overall power becomes the premise for maintaining Sino-U.S. strategic balance. This is why the United States government hopes to maintain the status quo of Sino-U.S. relations, because this situation is what the United States believes to be strategic balance, but this is not a strategic balance that China can accept. This is why China was not willing to accept the United States call in September [2009] for ‘strategic reassurance,’ because this is balance as sought by the U.S. side.”
 - 23 In response to these arguments, one U.S. representative pointed to the United States’ cancellation of its multiple-kill vehicle, which would have served as a direct threat to China’s security and interests as it is intended to mitigate the issue of distinguishing between active missile warheads and decoys by destroying all possible targets in the immediate vicinity, as just such a confidence-building measure. Although this may be the case, the trend within China on this and other initiatives all the way to nuclear disarmament has been to view such decisions as a part of the natural U.S. military evolution, rather than a function of a concession made on China’s behalf to further mutual trust, much less strategic stability. Turner Brinton, “Pentagon Cancels T-Sat Program, Trims Missile Defense,” *Space News*, April 6, 2009, <http://www.spacenews.com/military/pentagon-cancels-t-sat-program-trims-missile-defense.html>.
 - 24 Sun, “Zhongguo junkong de xin tiaozhan yu xin yicheng” (“Chinese Arms Control’s New Challenges and New Agenda”), 16.
 - 25 This distinction reflects a common view within the Chinese arms control community that “arms control” equates with constraints on nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states alike, which is preferable to the term “nonproliferation,” which places a greater burden on non-nuclear-weapon states. Xia Liping, “Lun zhongguo he zhanlue de yanjin yu goucheng” (“On the Evolution and Structure of China’s Nuclear Policy”), *Dangdai yatai (Journal of Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies)*, no. 4 (2010): 116; Kong Guang and Yao Yunzhu, “‘Wu hewuqi shijie’ yundong pingxi” (“Analysis of the ‘Nuclear-Weapons-Free World’ Movement”), *Guoji zhengzhi (International Politics)*, December 2009, 121; Li Hong, “Fuza duoyuanhua de quanqiu he anquan huanjing” (“A Complex and Diversified Global Nuclear Security Environment”), *Heping yu fazhan (Peace and Development)*, no. 3 (June 2010): 20.
 - 26 “Treaty Between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms,” U.S. Department of State, April 8, 2010, www.state.gov/documents/organization/140035.pdf; Tom Z. Collina, “U.S. Reveals Nuclear Force Plan, Arsenal Levels,”

Arms Control Today, Arms Control Association, http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2010_06/USArsenal.

- 27 Fan Jishe, “‘Meiguo junkong yu fangkuosan zhengce yantaohui’ zongshu” (“‘U.S. Arms Control and Nonproliferation Policy Symposium’ Summary”), *Meiguo yanjiu* (*American Studies Quarterly*), no. 2 (June 5, 2010): 155.
- 28 “Fact Sheet: Increasing Transparency in the U.S. Nuclear Weapons Stockpile,” Department of Defense, May 3, 2010, <http://www.defense.gov>.
- 29 Li Deshun, “Mei e xin tiaoyue: Guangkaihua, bujieguo” (“US-Russian New Treaty: An Opening but No Result”), *Shijie Zhishi* (*World Affairs*), no. 6 (2010): 44–45. As translated on Arms Control Archive (*Junbei kongzhi wenji*), *Keji yu junbei kongzhi* (*Science and Arms Control*), <http://learn.tsinghua.edu.cn:8080/2000990313/archive.htm>; Li Deshun, “Aobama zhengfu ‘he taishi pinggu’ baogao pouxi” (Analysis of the Obama Administration’s ‘Nuclear Posture Review’ Report), *Waijiao pinglun* (*Foreign Affairs Review*), no. 3 (2010): 31–39.
- 30 Li, “Fuza duoyuanhua de quanqiu he anquan huanjing” (“A Complex and Diversified Global Nuclear Security Environment”), 19.
- 31 “Nuclear Posture Review Report,” Department of Defense, April 2010, iii, <http://www.defense.gov/npr/>.
- 32 Xu Jia, “Aobama zhengfu he zhengce tanxi” (“An Analysis of the Obama Administration’s Nuclear Policies”), *Guoji zhengzhi* (*International Politics*), no. 10 (2009): 69–70.
- 33 Xia Liping, “Lun meiguo fanhe kuosan zhanlue yu fang kuosan zhengce” (“On U.S. Counterproliferation Strategy and Nuclear Nonproliferation Policy”), *Guoji wenti yanjiu* (*International Studies*), no. 1 (2008): 12.
- 34 The examples far exceed this small sampling, but a few of the more prominent include Zhu Yifeng, “Fouding ‘fandao tiaoyue’ shibi dongyao guoji zhanlue wending jishi” (“Negating the ‘ABM Treaty’ Is Bound to Shake the Cornerstone of International Strategic Stability”), *Zhongguo guofangbao* (*China Defense Journal*), no. 4, February 23, 2001; Zhou Xuehai, “Luoji, zhengce, xianshi: He weishe lilun yu meiguo daodan fangyu jihua” (“Logic, Policy and Reality: Nuclear Deterrence Theory and U.S. Missile Defence Planning”), *Guoji luntan* (*International Forum*), vol. 2, no. 5 (October 2000): 1–6; Wang Lijiu, “Mei e caijian zhanlue wuqi de jin Cheng ji quxiang” (“The United States and China’s Progress and Trends in Strategic Weapons Reductions”), *Xiandai guoji guanxi* (*Contemporary International Relations*), no. 8 (2000): 14–18; Qiao Mu, “Mei e fandao tiaoyue zhizheng jiqi guoji yingxiang” (“The United States and Russia’s ABM Treaty Dispute and Its Global Impact”), *Xiandai shijie* (*Modern World*), no. 2 (2002): 34–35; Zhu Feng, “Meiguo daodan fangyu jihua dui guoji anquan de chongji” (“The U.S. Missile Defense Plan’s Impact on International Security”), *Ouzhou* (*Europe*), no. 4 (2000): 26–33; Liu Jinzhi, “Meiguo de guojia daodan fangyu xitong” (The United States’ National Missile Defense System), *Guojizhengzhi yanjiu* (*International Politics*), no. 2 (2001): 76–85; Zhu Qiangguo, “Meiguo tuichu ‘fandao tiaoyue’ de dongyin ji qianzang de zhanlue yitu” (“Motivations Behind U.S. Withdrawal from the ‘ABM Treaty’ and Underlying Strategic Intentions”), *Waijiao xueyuan xuebao* (*Foreign Affairs Journal*), no. 1 (2002): 62–69; Zhu Feng, “Xiaobushi zhengfu de daodan fangyu jihua yu ‘xin zhanlue kuangjia’” (“The George W. Bush Administration’s Missile Defense Plan and ‘New Strategic Framework’”), *Taipingyang xuebao* (*Asia-Pacific Journal*), no. 3 (2001): 31–39; Huang Ying, “Xianzhi fan dandao daodan xitong tiaoyue de qian ding yu meiguo de tuichu” (“Ratification of the ABM Treaty and the United

- States' Withdrawal"), *Beifang lunzong (The Northern Forum)*, no. 3 (2002): 37–39; Xia Liping, "Daodan fangyu yu meiguo yatai anquan zhanlue" ("Missile Defense and the United States' Asia-Pacific Strategy"), *Taipingyang xuebao (Asia-Pacific Journal)*, no. 4 (2003): 15–24; Ni Xiaochuan, "E mei weirao NMD wenti de zhengdou" (The United States and Russia's Struggle Surrounding NMD), *Heping yu fazhan jikan (Peace and Development Quarterly)*, no. 3 (2000): 20–23, 51; and Guo Shaobing, "Fan dandaodaodan yu 'Fandao tiaoyue'" ("Missile Defense and the 'ABM Treaty'"), *Jiaoxue cankao (Education Reference)*, no. 8 (2002): 58–60.
- 35 Qian Wenrong, "Aobama 'wuhewu shijie' changyi de zhenshi yitu" ("Obama's 'Nuclear-Weapons-Free World'"), *Heping yu fazhan (Peace and Development)*, no. 3 (June 2010): 4.
- 36 Li, "Fuza duoyuanhua de quanqiu he anquan huanjing" ("A Complex and Diversified Global Nuclear Security Environment"), 18.
- 37 As a Chinese arms control expert told the author, it is difficult to argue whether the NPR is the first step toward realizing Obama's speech in Prague. The election of a new U.S. president in 2013 or 2017 could change this.
- 38 Teng Jianqun, "Junkong zhuanjia teng jianqun jiedu meiguo 'he taishi baogao'" ("Arms Control Expert Teng Jianqun Interprets the U.S. 'Nuclear Posture Review'"), *Guofangbu wangzhan (Ministry of Defense website)*, <http://www.mod.gov.cn>, April 7, 2010.
- 39 Li, "Aobama zhengfu 'he taishi pinggu' baogao pouxi" (Analysis of the Obama Administration's 'Nuclear Posture Review' Report), 31–39.
- 40 Not all Chinese analysts are as pessimistic about the chances for the CTBT, yet they still view this as a potential means to constrain China. Xu Jia states, "The likelihood that the Obama administration will pass the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is rather great.... If this treaty goes into effect, facing the continued replacement and renovation of the U.S. nuclear arsenal, under the conditions of high-technology limitations, China will in the future face a number of constraints and difficulties." Xu Jia, "Aobama zhengfu yatai anquan zhanlue tanxi" (An Analysis of Obama Administration Asia-Pacific Security Strategy), *Heping yu fazhan (Peace and Development)*, no. 2 (April 2010): 27–31.
- 41 Xu Jia, at the time of writing the article, was a professor at the Luoyang PLA Foreign Languages Institute. Although the article does not list the affiliations of Zhang Jinrong and Yan Jiafeng, online research suggests that the former expert may be affiliated with the military political department of Anhui Province.
- 42 Xu, "Aobama zhengfu he zhengce tanxi" ("An Analysis of the Obama Administration's Nuclear Policies"), 70; Zhang and Yan, "Aobama zhengfu 'he taishi pinggu' baogao pingxi" ("Commentary on the Obama Administration's 'Nuclear Posture Review' Report"), 8.
- 43 Chen Dongxiao, "Aobama zhuyi' ji qi dui zhongmei guanxi de yingxiang" ("Obamaism" and its Impact on Sino-U.S. Relations"), *Guoji zhanwang (International Outlook)*, no. 4 (2010): 10–17.
- 44 Cited most recently by Li Changhe, executive vice president of the China Arms Control and Disarmament Association. Li Changhe, "Guoji junkong yu caijun xin taishi" ("New Trends in International Arms Control and Disarmament"), *Guoji zhanwang (International Outlook)*, no. 4 (2010): 7; Wang Xiaowei and Wang Tian, "Lun aobama zhengfu 'qiao shili' wajiao de shizhi" ("On the Essence of the Obama Administration's 'Smart Power' Diplomacy"), *Heping yu fazhan (Peace and*

- Development*), no. 6 (December 2009): 1–4; Kong and Yao, “‘Wu hewuqi shijie’ yundong pingxi” (“Analysis of the ‘Nuclear-Weapons-Free World’ Movement”), 122; Wang Zhijun, “Cong meiguo ‘juedui anquan’ linian kan aobama ‘wuhe shijie’ sixiang” (“A Look at Obama’s ‘Nuclear-Free-World’ from the U.S. Philosophy of ‘Absolute Security’”), *Heping yu fazhan (Peace and Development)*, no. 6 (December 2009): 12.
- 45 Kong and Yao, “‘Wu hewuqi shijie’ yundong pingxi” (“Analysis of the ‘Nuclear-Weapons-Free World’ Movement”), 124.
- 46 Zhang and Yan, “Aobama zhengfu ‘he taishi ping’ baogao pingxi” (“Commentary on the Obama Administration’s ‘Nuclear Posture Review’ Report”), 10; Teng Jianqun, “He caijun chuntian daole ma? Zhongguo guoji wenti yanjiusuo junkong yanjiu zhongxin zhuren teng jianqun jieshi meiguo ‘hetaishi baogao’” (Has the Nuclear Spring Arrived? Teng Jianqun, director of the Center for Arms Control and International Security Studies Explains the U.S. ‘Nuclear Posture Review’) *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo guofangbu (Ministry of National Defense of the People’s Republic of China)*, April 7, 2010; English-language version available at “PRC: JFJB Interviews Scholar on US Nuclear Posture Review,” CPP20100408702001 *Beijing Jiefangjun Bao Online*, Open Source Center, April 8, 2010; Wang and Wang, “Lun aobama zhengfu ‘qiao shili’ wajiao de shizhi” (“On the Essence of the Obama Administration’s ‘Smart Power’ Diplomacy”), 1–4; Wang Zhijun, “Cong meiguo ‘juedui anquan’ linian kan aobama ‘wuhe shijie’ sixiang” (“A Look at Obama’s ‘Nuclear-Free-World’ from the U.S. Philosophy of ‘Absolute Security’”), 12.
- 47 Wang and Wang, “Lun aobama zhengfu ‘qiao shili’ wajiao de shizhi” (“On the Essence of the Obama Administration’s ‘Smart Power’ Diplomacy”), 1–4; Wang Zhijun, “Cong meiguo ‘juedui anquan’ linian kan aobama ‘wuhe shijie’ sixiang” (“A Look at Obama’s ‘Nuclear-Free-World’ from the U.S. Philosophy of ‘Absolute Security’”), 12.
- 48 At the time of the writing of the article, Wang Zhijun served as the director and assistant professor at the Nanjing Army Command College’s Department of National Defense Economics.
- 49 Roberts, Chu, and Mies, “U.S.-China Strategic Stability.”
- 50 Li, “Fuza duoyuanhua de quanqiu he anquan huanjing” (“A Complex and Diversified Global Nuclear Security Environment”), 19.
- 51 Li and Nie, “Zhongmei zhanlue wendingxing de kaocha” (“A Study of Sino-U.S. Strategic Stability”).
- 52 For more information on Chinese expert reactions to the “Arms Control Spring,” see the following event summary: “Arms Control Spring in Beijing,” Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy, July 8, 2010, <http://carnegieendowment.org/events/?fa=eventDetail&id=3008>.
- 53 “The United States’ new ‘Nuclear Posture Review’ expresses the intent to use strategic stability to deal with its nuclear relations with China and Russia. Actually, strategic stability in the ‘Nuclear Posture Review’ is a very secondary consideration; U.S. leadership in the world is the main consideration. The number of U.S. nuclear weapons is not based on calculations of strategic stability requirements, but is determined according to calculations on the United States’ global leadership position.” “If the United States is truly pursuing strategic stability, the ability to ensure reliable nuclear retaliatory capability, then the United States would only need to retain several nuclear submarines, carrying a total of several hundred nuclear warheads, which

would be more than enough. In fact, the United States has deployed 1,550 strategic nuclear weapons that can be counted; combined with a total number of 5,113 nuclear weapons that can be deployed at any time, this greatly exceeds the requirements of strategic stability. The United States in calculating the total amount of nuclear weapons it needs, relies on the following: (1) the number of U.S. deployed strategic nuclear weapons must not be less than that of Russia; (2) after adding in the nuclear weapons that can be deployed at any time, this number must be significantly greater than the number of Russia's deployed strategic nuclear weapons; (3) the number of nuclear weapons deployed by the United States must be substantially more than that of other countries possessing nuclear weapons. The underpinnings of these calculations have nothing to do with strategic stability. The Nuclear Posture Review and the U.S.-Russia New START provide extremely few specific limits that contribute to strategic stability, such as restrictions on land-based missiles carrying multiple warheads; additionally, the U.S.-Russia New START is not clear on the strength of limits on ballistic missile defense. The United States seeks advantages in nuclear-weapons numbers (including qualitative advantages), and this does not contribute to strategic stability, its main purpose is to use advantages in nuclear-weapons numbers to demonstrate the leadership position of the United States. This is currently the primary obstacle to the United States making significant reductions in its nuclear-weapons numbers." Li Bin and Xiao Tiefeng, "Chongshen hewuqi de zuoyong" ("Reexamining the Role of Nuclear Weapons"), 7–8.

54 Ibid.

55 There is a vibrant body of literature in China regarding its rise, but few successful attempts to measure what constitutes comprehensive power and its role. One of the more noteworthy efforts is contained within the following article: Yan Xuetong, "Zhongguo jueqi de shili diwei" ("China's Power Status in Its Rise"), *Guoji zhengzhi kexue (International Political Science)*, no. 2 (2005): 1–25.

56 At one recent closed arms control conference, a Chinese participant pointedly asked a U.S. speaker as to the intent behind and definition of "strategic stability" within the context of strategic dialogues sought with China. A number of participants at the same event intimated that increasing China's transparency on its nuclear deterrent was a central motivation.

57 For a description of the nuances of NFU and sole-purpose terminology, see Michael S. Gerson, "No First Use: The Next Step for U.S. Nuclear Policy," *International Security*, vol. 35, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 7–47. Gerson argues that "the United States should adopt a more restrictive nuclear policy such as no first use (NFU), perhaps in the form of a declaration that the 'sole purpose' of U.S. nuclear weapons is to deter a nuclear attack."

58 Another Chinese expert recently noted at a conference attended by the author that China's concept of nuclear transparency constitutes "transparency of intent," such as doctrines of NFU, whereas the United States' concept constitutes "transparency of capabilities," such as nuclear-weapons stockpile numbers.

59 Li Bin and Xiao Tiefeng, "Chongshen hewuqi de zuoyong" ("Reexamining the Role of Nuclear Weapons"), 6.

60 Ibid.

61 "Strategic stability theory's primary consideration is how to prevent countries possessing nuclear weapons from engaging in first use. In accordance with a model of rational decision making, if a country after engaging in first use will face nuclear retaliation; moreover, this nuclear retaliation is severe and is able to achieve the level of assured destruction of one's opponent, then in facing this unacceptable loss, this

nuclear-weapons state will relinquish plans to engage in first use of nuclear weapons.” Ibid., 4.

62 Ibid., 5.

63 “The extremely unfortunate fact is that the United States after undergoing domestic debate, in its new Nuclear Posture Review still remains unable to relinquish its policy of nuclear force, and is only able to express its intention to continue its efforts to move forward in this direction. Given the powerful role of the United States in norm building, a number of nuclear-weapon states for the time being are also unable to relinquish their nuclear weapons force policies. This can lead non-nuclear-weapon states to feel disappointed. Prior to this NPT Review Conference, the United States made a pledge of no first use to a number of non-nuclear-weapon states. But in fact, this was not the first time, prior to this in 1995, the United States also made a similar pledge. If the United States does not eliminate no first use in more fundamental policy documents, with the vagaries of time and adjustments in the U.S. government, the United States’ no-first-use pledge to non-nuclear-weapon states will be inundated with conditions. Eliminating nuclear force policies and practices is also conducive to speeding up the process of deeper nuclear reductions. This is extremely significant in influencing the U.S. and Russian domestic nuclear policy debate. At present, the U.S. and Russian declared nuclear policy still maintains ambiguity; this can lead each country’s domestic populace to mistakenly assume that their nuclear weapons are extremely useful, and in this manner, the process of nuclear disarmament will be rather slow. Once citizens realize that nuclear weapons are not that useful, obstacles in achieving nuclear disarmament and a nuclear-free world will be significantly reduced.” Ibid., 7.

64 Sun, “Zhongguo junkong de xin tiaozhan yu xin yicheng” (“Chinese Arms Control’s New Challenges and New Agenda”), 17.

65 Fan Jishe, “Meiguo fabu ‘he taishi baogao’ shouci tiaozheng he zhanlue” (“The United States Releases Its ‘Nuclear Posture Review’ for the First Time Adjusting Nuclear Strategy”), *Zhongguo guangbo wang (China Radio Network)*, April 7, 2010, http://china.cnr.cn/newszh/yaowen/201004/t20100407_506250736.html; Fan, “Renmin ribao guoji luntan: meiguo he zhengce de ‘di san tiao daolu’” (“*People’s Daily* International Forum: U.S. Nuclear Policy’s ‘Third Way’”); Teng Jianqun, “He caijun chuntian daole ma? Zhongguo guoji wenti yanjiusuo junkong yanjiu zhongxin zhuren teng jianqun jieshi meiguo ‘hetaishi baogao’” (Has the Nuclear Spring Arrived? Teng Jianqun, director of the Center for Arms Control and International Security Studies Explains the U.S. ‘Nuclear Posture Review’”).

66 Yao Yunzhu, “A Chinese Perspective on the Nuclear Posture Review.”

67 Ibid.

68 Xu, “Aobama zhengfu yatai anquan zhanlue tanxi” (An Analysis of Obama Administration Asia-Pacific Security Strategy), 27–31.

69 In an article written in the months following the release of the NPR, Sun Xiangli continues to follow a traditional argument in China, opining that “the United States on nonproliferation is engaged in an unbalanced policy and double standards that undermine nonproliferation objectives. The United States on the one hand is strictly controlling non-nuclear-weapon states’ nuclear fuel cycle technology development, while on the other hand allowing Japan to possess technology and equipment for a complete nuclear fuel cycle; on the one hand is oppressing DPRK [North Korea], Iran, and Pakistan’s development of nuclear capabilities, while on the other hand turning a blind eye to the Israel nuclear issue, moreover due to geopolitical demands still wishes to engage in nuclear cooperation with India, without hesitating to

destroy existing international rules on nuclear exports, the United States has always preferred controls on the use of technology, economic sanctions, forced containment, even military attack in addressing nuclear issues; moreover, it ignores resolution of regional security concerns, without working hard to reduce or eliminate the motivations behind proliferation. This type of nonproliferation policy is unable to truly resolve the issue of nuclear proliferation and is incapable of truly generating a cohesive international consensus on nonproliferation and counternuclear terrorism.” Sun, “Zhongguo junkong de xin tiaozhan yu xin yicheng” (“Chinese Arms Control’s New Challenges and New Agenda”), 18–19.

- 70 Fan, “Renmin ribao guoji luntan: meiguo he zhengce de ‘di san tiao daolu’” (“*People’s Daily* International Forum: U.S. Nuclear Policy’s ‘Third Way’”).
- 71 By contrast, another arms control expert delinked NFU from U.S. extended deterrence. Instead, he attributed U.S. motives for rejecting NFU to another rationale. He drew a connection between the United States’ large arsenal size, NFU, and nuclear coercion. According to his logic, a declaration of NFU would make a vast U.S. arsenal unnecessary, forcing the issue of drastic nuclear reductions. But in practicing nuclear coercion, the United States finds it necessary to retain a large nuclear arsenal. As a result, the United States’ refusal to accept NFU and drastic nuclear elimination is tied up with its use of “nuclear coercion” as a tool against China and other powers.
- 72 Kong and Yao, “‘Wu hewuqi shijie’ yundong pingxi” (“Analysis of the ‘Nuclear-Weapons-Free World’ Movement”), 124.
- 73 “The United States uses its provision of a nuclear umbrella to demonstrate its strong leadership position to allies. The United States uses this method to emphasize its international leadership position as a massive military power, while U.S. allies on the one hand use this as a means of expressing their support for U.S. leadership authority, and on the other hand to show their superiority over countries that do not have access to a nuclear umbrella. To non-aligned non-nuclear-weapon states, the nuclear umbrella reflects a nuclear military alliance that exerts potential pressure. Therefore, these countries always strongly demand that nuclear-weapon states guarantee not to use nuclear weapons against them.” Li and Xiao, “Chongshen hewuqi de zuoyong” (“Reexamining the Role of Nuclear Weapons”), 9.
- 74 Li, “Aobama zhengfu ‘he taishi pinggu’ baogao pouxi” (Analysis of the Obama Administration’s ‘Nuclear Posture Review’ Report), 37.
- 75 Teng Jianqun, “He caijun chuntian daole ma? Zhongguo guoji wenti yanjiusuo junkong yanjiu zhongxin zhuren teng jianqun jieshi meiguo ‘hetaishi baogao’” (Has the Nuclear Spring Arrived? Teng Jianqun, director of the Center for Arms Control and International Security Studies Explains the U.S. ‘Nuclear Posture Review’”).
- 76 Of course, U.S. officials and experts cite China’s ongoing strategic modernization programs as evidence of a similar impediment to nuclear disarmament.
- 77 This attention to such conventional weapons systems is evident in scholarly and media articles, television debate shows, conferences, and interviews alike. The following are just two examples from the popular debate program *Jinri guanzhu* (Today’s Focus): “Yige xiaoshi quanqiu daji: meiguo rang shijie geng weixian?” (“Within One Hour Strike Anywhere on the Globe: Does the United States Make the World More Dangerous?”), *Jinri guanzhu* (Today’s Focus), April 26, 2010, <http://space.tv.cctv.com/video/VIDE1272293786202882>; “Mei ‘kongtian feiji’ yucheng xin weixie?” (“Will the United States ‘Space Plane’ Become a New Threat?”) *Jinri guanzhu* (Today’s Focus), April 22, 2010, <http://space.tv.cctv.com/video/VIDE1271948621502882>; and articles like Chen Xinneng, “Jicai dui di jingdao

wuqi weilai fazhan qushi” (“Machine Cutting’s Impact on Future Trends in Ground Precision Guided Weapons”), *Guoji zhanlue yanjiu (International Strategic Studies)*, no. 3 (July 2009): 51–55.

- 78 Kong and Yao, “Wu hewuqi shijie’ yundong pingxi” (“Analysis of the ‘Nuclear-Weapons-Free World’ Movement”), 124.
- 79 This will be the topic of an upcoming companion paper by the author.
- 80 “This form of nuclear taboo constrains policy makers aspirations of launching a nuclear attack. The higher the level of effectiveness of nuclear taboo, the smaller the potential for a country possessing nuclear weapons to engage in nuclear attack, and the lesser the value of nuclear deterrence. Currently, experts in the nuclear arena tend to accept the existence of this nuclear taboo on the nonuse of nuclear weapons. However, there are some experts who do not dare to guarantee whether the nuclear taboo is 100 percent effective, for once the nuclear taboo is broken, there would be extremely serious consequences. To this end, some experts would rather continue to utilize nuclear deterrence as a means to constrain the extremely small potential of a country launching a nuclear attack. A fair view is: In today’s world, the potential for a country to launch a nuclear attack is extremely small. If nuclear deterrence policy still has a degree of effectiveness in constraining a nuclear attack, this utility is also extremely small.” Li and Xiao, “Chongshen hewuqi de zuoyong” (“Reexamining the Role of Nuclear Weapons”), 5; Dai Ying, Li Bin and Wu Riqiang, “Jinji yu junbei kongzhi” (Taboo and Arms Control), *Shijie zhengzhi yu jingji (World Economics and Politics)*, no. 8 (2010): 48–62.
- 81 Wang cites the following reasons: “First, as mentioned above, a large number of nuclear weapons cannot be used for actual combat, but rather require a huge investment for maintenance; this is neither economical nor beneficial to the United States investing more funding into conventional weapons development, denuclearization is a more economical method of guaranteeing security. Second, nuclear deterrence strategy formulated on the basis of nuclear weapons has difficulty generating reliable military benefits....Third, denuclearization can increase the effectiveness of U.S. political security and deterrence. The U.S. military believes that developing and using more powerful conventional weaponry on the battlefield not only prevents the necessity of shouldering political and moral responsibility, but rather can engender a greater force of threat and degree of credible deterrence,” in particular citing Prompt Global Strike. Wang, “Cong meiguo ‘juedui anquan’ linian kan aobama ‘wube shijie’ sixiang” (“A Look at Obama’s ‘Nuclear-Free-World’ from the U.S. Philosophy of ‘Absolute Security’”), 14–15.
- 82 Fan Jishe, “Renmin ribao guoji luntan: meiguo he zhengce de ‘di san tiao daolu’” (“*People’s Daily* International Forum: U.S. Nuclear Policy’s ‘Third Way’”).
- 83 In the words of one arms control scholar from correspondence with the author, “If one day the United States can rely on ballistic missile defense and conventional deterrence to replace the current role of nuclear weapons, the United States may take the lead in calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons. However, if the United States makes such significant progress in defense and conventional weapons, mightn’t other countries follow suit? Mightn’t they develop nuclear weapons? ... The United States undertaking ballistic missile defense and conventional weapons modernization to surpass all other countries is not sufficient to lead us toward a nuclear-free world. The United States continues its pursuit of absolute security for itself. When the power and effectiveness of conventional weapons becomes similar to that of nuclear weapons, conventional and nuclear boundaries are also blurred. This is enough to trigger a new arms race.”

- 84 Major General Yao Yunzhu further emphasizes, “Ballistic missile defense (BMD) and conventionally armed ballistic missiles play a bigger role in deterring potential regional nuclear adversaries and maintaining strategic stability with Russia and China, promising to be a source of tension in the future.” Yao Yunzhu, “A Chinese Perspective on the Nuclear Posture Review.”
- 85 When at a recent arms control conference, the author raised the issue of missile defense. In response, a senior arms control expert noted that this system is more significant from a space weaponization standpoint than in terms of its apparent missile intercept capabilities.
- 86 Li Daguang, “Li Daguang: ‘X-37B’ Shoufei gei shijie dailai shenme?” (“Li Daguang: What Does the Maiden Flight of the ‘X-37B’ Bring to the World?”), *Xinhua Wang (Xinhua Web)*, June 3, 2010, http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2010-06/03/content_13611259.htm.
- 87 “The logic is: Under nuclear-free conditions, ballistic missile defense facilitates strategic stability, because ballistic missile defense can counter surprise attacks by rogue states with a small number of nuclear weapons, counter the risk of nuclear attack posed by countries that suddenly cross the nuclear threshold. Actually, this logic has some problems: First, cooperative development of ballistic missile defense is lacking in a realistic basis. In fact, early in 1986 when the United States and the Soviet Union held a summit in Reykjavik, Iceland, heads of the United States and Soviet Union raised the goal of moving towards a nuclear-free world, but due to both parties’ sharp differences on Star Wars (ballistic missile defense program), this aspiration went down the drain.... Second, under nuclear-free conditions, while facing the threat of nuclear attack from a small number of nuclear weapons, however, making ballistic missile defense 100 percent effective is also unlikely, in particular considering the limitations faced by many countries in terms of economic and technological capabilities, they would find it very difficult to build-up their own ballistic missile defenses.... Third, in moving toward the goal of a nuclear-free world, deep nuclear reductions are the only way, but as long as ballistic missile defense systems exist, it will be very difficult to get other countries to reduce their nuclear arsenals to very low levels, as a result, development of ballistic missile defense systems presents a structural obstacle to deep nuclear force reductions.” Sun, “Zhongguo junkong de xin tiaozhan yu xin yicheng” (“Chinese Arms Control’s New Challenges and New Agenda”), 17. Another Chinese arms control expert raised the following issue, with the author stating that “the U.S. will continue developing ballistic missile defense capability. The U.S. has adjusted the type of interceptors and steps of deployment of ballistic missile defense system, but its ultimate goal is still to defend against ICBM threats, which will definitely compromise the potential deterrence capability of other nuclear powers. The NPR clearly states that the U.S. will refuse any talks aimed at limiting the development of ballistic missile defense. Against this background, other nuclear powers have to find ways to maintain the credibility of their own nuclear deterrence ‘as long as nuclear weapons exist.’”
- 88 Li, “Fuza duoyuanhua de quanqiu he anquan huanjing” (“A Complex and Diversified Global Nuclear Security Environment”), 18.
- 89 George N. Lewis and Theodore A. Postol, “A Flawed and Dangerous U.S. Ballistic Missile Defense Plan,” Arms Control Association, May 2010, http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2010_05/Lewis-Postol. “Ballistic Missile Defense Agency Responds to *New York Times* Article,” Ballistic Missile Defense Agency, May 18, 2010, www.mda.mil/news/10news0005.html.
- 90 “Historically, limiting the development of ballistic missile defense systems was the cornerstone of the entirety of nuclear arms control. Development of ballistic missile

defenses would not only easily bring about a nuclear arms race, poison relations between nuclear-weapon states, destroy strategic stability, moreover, it would make deep nuclear reductions difficult to achieve. U.S. arms control advocates have continued to oppose ballistic missile defense systems, the Democratic Party has opposed or advocated controls on the development of ballistic missile defenses. For a number of years, whether one opposes ballistic missile defense has been a measure for differentiating between the Democratic and Republican parties. Originally, people hoped that the Obama administration would be able to come up with new ideas on this issue, however, from the policies enacted by the Obama administration since coming into power, on this question, the Democratic Party has undertaken the default position of the Republicans. Regardless of whether the Obama administration readjusts Bush administration plans for ballistic missile defense systems in Eastern Europe, raised the principle that ballistic missile defense must be deployed under reliable experimental verification, strengthened strategic dialogue and cooperation with Russia and China on this issue, yet the direction of U.S. development and deployment of strategic ballistic missile defense has been inherited.” Sun, “Zhongguo junkong de xin tiaozhan yu xin yicheng” (“Chinese Arms Control’s New Challenges and New Agenda”), 14–15.

- 91 Imitation extends beyond systems and crosses over into doctrine, when it comes to “core interests,” “strategic stability,” and other such terms. Though the contents of such terms in Chinese may differ, their roots are firmly connected to their U.S. correlaries.
- 92 “In 1986, to meet the global challenges of new technology revolution and competition, four Chinese scientists, Wang Daheng, Wang Ganchang, Yang Jiachi, and Chen Fangyun jointly proposed to accelerate China’s high-technology development. With strategic vision and resolution, the late Chinese leader Mr. Deng Xiaoping personally approved the National High-Tech R&D Program, namely the 863 Program. Implemented during three successive Five-Year Plans, the program has boosted China’s overall high-tech development, R&D capacity, socioeconomic development, and national security.” This indicates the potential spiraling effect of such U.S. programs. “National High-Tech R&D Program (863 Program),” Ministry of Science and Technology of the People’s Republic of China, http://www.most.gov.cn/eng/programmes1/200610/t20061009_36225.htm.
- 93 Sun Xiangli argues that “under the current form of imbalanced international arms control development, China’s nuclear force structure and nuclear arms control also face new challenges, among these is how to face the dual pressures of maintaining the credibility of its nuclear deterrent and how to address the evolution of multilateral nuclear disarmament. One of the main pressures stems from the comprehensive development of foreign offensive nuclear forces and defensive forces. Because the United States pulled out of the ABM Treaty, while refusing to limit its space weaponization capabilities, the United States detection, tracking, recognition and missile intercept etc. ballistic missile defense capabilities have continued to develop.... The second pressure comes from the imbalanced development of international arms control.... Also, regarding nuclear transparency, the character of China’s nuclear strategy, nuclear-weapons development, use policy etc. have always been transparent, however, because its nuclear force levels are extremely limited, in order to ensure a high level of survivability and effective deterrence, the specific number and deployment of its nuclear forces retain ambiguity, and in this regard pose difficulties in achieving transparency.” Sun, “Zhongguo junkong de xin tiaozhan yu xin yicheng” (“Chinese Arms Control’s New Challenges and New Agenda”), 19–20.
- 94 Li Deshun makes particular reference to the enhanced potentiality of a first strike made by a conventionally dominant power like the United States and the inherent imbalance that such unmitigated dominance will bring to international security

- relations. Li, “Aobama zhengfu ‘he taishi pinggu’ baogao pouxi” (Analysis of the Obama Administration’s ‘Nuclear Posture Review’ Report), 36.
- 95 China Arms Control and Disarmament Secretary General Li Hong sums up these concerns by citing four major issues with ballistic missile defense as (1) destroying the international strategic balance built through “mutually assured destruction”; (2) having an impact on countries with small to midrange nuclear arsenals, by damaging these countries’ nuclear deterrence capabilities; (3) hindering the process of nuclear reductions, leading to an arms race; and (4) bringing about the weaponization of space, by spurring an arms race, causing long-term damage to international strategic stability and worsening the nuclear security environment. Li, “Fuza duoyuanhua de quanqiu he anquan huanjing” (“A Complex and Diversified Global Nuclear Security Environment”), 21.
- 96 On this point, the author has noted a distinct evolution in Chinese approaches to arms control talks, which as recently as 2004 were primarily spent discussing the Taiwan issue, but in recent years, such as at the International Commission on Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament (ICNND) meeting in Beijing in May 2009 and the CFISS-Pacific Forum CSIS-RAND-IDA-DTRA/ASCO Fifth U.S.-China Strategic Dialogue on Strategic Nuclear Dynamics, played a much more circumscribed role.
- 97 Teng, “Junkong zhuanjia teng jianqun jiedu meiguo ‘he taishi baogao’” (“Arms Control Expert Teng Jianqun Interprets the U.S. ‘Nuclear Posture Review’”).
- 98 Kong and Yao, “‘Wu hewuqi shijie’ yundong pingxi” (“Analysis of the ‘Nuclear-Weapons-Free World’ Movement”), 124.
- 99 For more information on the debate over China’s regional and global role and whether it constitutes a “status quo power,” see Alastair I. Johnston, “Is China a Status Quo Power?” *International Security*, vol. 27, no. 4, Spring 2003, 5–56.
- 100 Roberts, Chu, and Mies, “U.S.-China Strategic Stability.”
- 101 “So strategic suitability [*sic*] in Beijing as my observation is very much capability. It’s not strategy, not intention, but is capability. In this area, I do agree that China is not a status quo power. China is developing, is modernizing its military force, including strategic force. It’s a really dynamic situation there. But we think it’s necessary for defense for strategical [*sic*] stability.” He continued by stating, “Stability cannot be achieved without maintain [*sic*] there—[inaudible]—that we have strategic stability between our two countries are too huge. So we need to narrow down the difference. But this does not mean China is going to be [in] an arms race with U.S. or seeking parity with U.S. This is not letting [*sic*] answer, but we need to improve our capability, including strategic area, to give us confidence, maybe to get U.S. confidence that there is stability, strategic stability between us.” Roberts, Chu, and Mies, “U.S.-China Strategic Stability.”
- 102 Li, “Fuza duoyuanhua de quanqiu he anquan huanjing” (“A Complex and Diversified Global Nuclear Security Environment”), 19.
- 103 Yao Yunzhu, “A Chinese Perspective on the Nuclear Posture Review.”
- 104 Qi Huaigao, “Zhongguo duobian hezuo tixi yu meiguo shuangbian tongmeng tixi zai dongya de maodun yu jianrong” (“Conflict and Compatibility in East Asia of China’s Multilateral Cooperative System and the U.S. Bilateral Alliance System”), *Zhongguo yu shijie zhuanlun (Profile of China and the World)*, no. 2 (2009): 9–16; Wei Ling, “Dier guidao wajiao: Xianshi zhuyi yuanyuan yu shehui guifan zhuanxiang” (“Track-Two Diplomacy: The Origins of Realism and the Direction of Social Norms”), *Wajiao pinglun (Foreign Affairs Review)*, no. 3 (2009): 58–70.

- 105 Cristina Hansell and William C. Potter, eds., “Engaging China and Russia on Nuclear Disarmament,” Occasional Paper 15, James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, <http://cns.miis.edu/opapers/op15/op15.pdf>.
- 106 Shen Dingli, “Yazhou yu shijie de he wenti” (“Asia and Global Nuclear Issues”), *Guoji guancha (International Observer)*, no. 4 (2008): 5; Sun Xiangli and Xu Jia, “Aobama zhengfu he zhengce tanxi” (“Analysis of Obama Administration Nuclear Policy”), *Guoji zhengzhi (International Politics)*, October 2009, 70; Fan, “Meiguo junkong yu fangkuosan zhengce yantaohui’ zongshu” (“U.S. Arms Control and Nonproliferation Policy Symposium’ Summary”), 154–55; Li Bin and Xiao Tiefeng, “Chongshen hewuqi de zuoyong” (“Reexamining the Role of Nuclear Weapons”), 7–8.
- 107 Fan, “Meiguo junkong yu fangkuosan zhengce yantaohui’ zongshu” (“U.S. Arms Control and Nonproliferation Policy Symposium’ Summary”), 154.
- 108 Ibid., 155.
- 109 The expert emphasized, “Unless these talks include discussions on ballistic missile defense and conventional weapons, they will have little utility. The effect of these weapons remains the same, which is to still guarantee U.S. absolute advantage.” These are issues that must be addressed in the Chinese conception, before “strategic stability” talks can move forward.
- 110 Sun, “Zhongguo junkong de xin tiaozhan yu xin yicheng” (“Chinese Arms Control’s New Challenges and New Agenda”), 20-21.
- 111 Xia, “Lun goujian xin shiji daguo zhanlue wending kuangjia” (“On Building a Strategic Stability Framework for the New Century”).
- 112 Xia, “Lun goujian xin shiji daguo zhanlue wending kuangjia” (“On Building a Strategic Stability Framework for the New Century”), 54.
- 113 Li and Nie, “Zhongmei zhanlue wendingxing de kaocha” (“A Study of Sino-U.S. Strategic Stability”), 15–16.
- 114 Sun, “Zhongguo junkong de xin tiaozhan yu xin yicheng” (“Chinese Arms Control’s New Challenges and New Agenda”), 20–21.
- 115 Ibid.
- 116 Roberts, Chu, and Mies, “U.S.-China Strategic Stability.”
- 117 These measures could include technological constraints or a cooperative framework, as being considered by the United States with Russia on BMD, which mitigate its potential use or coercive threat toward China’s deterrent.
- 118 The order of importance of these issues could largely follow the ranking cited in figure 2.
- 119 Henry Sokolski, “Missiles for Peace: With Strong Conventional Strike Options, the U.S. Can Lessen Nuclear Threats,” *Armed Forces Journal*, September 2010, <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2010/08/4662003/>.
- 120 Sun, “Zhongguo junkong de xin tiaozhan yu xin yicheng” (“Chinese Arms Control’s New Challenges and New Agenda”), 21.
- 121 They remain agitated by the level of U.S. surveillance efforts in the region that are thought to exceed those conducted against the Soviet Union during the Cold War.
- 122 This glossary was created by the U.S. National Academies Committee on International Security and Arms Control and the Chinese Scientists Group on Arms

Control of the Chinese People's Association for Peace and Disarmament. *English-Chinese, Chinese-English Nuclear Security Glossary* (Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2008). Such glossaries are useful in explaining differences between Chinese and American views on such concepts as “extended deterrence” in the nuclear and conventional military realm.

- 123 These measures could include technological constraints or a cooperative framework, as being considered by the United States with Russia on BMD, which mitigate its potential use or coercive threat towards China's deterrent.
- 124 The September 2009 conference hosted by the United Kingdom for the P-5 countries (the five permanent UN Security Council members) to discuss confidence-building measures toward nuclear disarmament, including discussions between nuclear-weapons scientists on verification and compliance challenges, also serves as an example of successful multilateral engagement that could supplement such bilateral programs. “UK Statement to the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference,” Foreign and Commonwealth Office, May 21, 2010, <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=News&id=22266131>.
- 125 In fact, a number of these arenas for cooperation and strengthened measures were raised by Chinese participants at the “Arms Control Spring in Beijing” hosted by the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy on July 8, 2010; for an overview of these measures, see the event summary at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/events/?fa=eventDetail&id=3008>.
- 126 Track 1 diplomacy refers to official governmental diplomacy, conducted between official representatives of states or authorities, such as heads of state, state department or ministry of foreign affairs officials, and other governmental departments and ministries. There are several interpretations of Track 1.5 diplomacy, with the most prominent being an interactive conflict-resolution process, conducted by an international NGO, with the informal participation of decision makers and government representatives. Track 2 diplomacy is characterized by unofficial policy dialogue.

About the Author

LORA SAALMAN, PhD, is a Beijing-based associate in the Nuclear Policy Program at the Carnegie Endowment. Under the auspices of a Stanton Nuclear Security Fellowship, Saalman's research focuses on Chinese nuclear weapon and nonproliferation policies and Sino-Indian strategic relations, linking the work of Carnegie's programs in Beijing and Washington.

Saalman completed her PhD at Tsinghua University in Beijing, where she was the first American to earn a doctorate from its Department of International Relations. Her dissertation, which she wrote in Chinese and will translate into English, covers the impact of U.S. and European export control shifts on Sino-Indian military modernization.

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CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

1779 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036
United States

P +1 202 483 7600 F +1 202 483 1840

CarnegieEndowment.org | info@CarnegieEndowment.org

MOSCOW

CARNEGIE MOSCOW CENTER

Tverskaya, 16/2
125009 Moscow
Russia

P +7 495 935 8904 F +7 495 935 8906

Carnegie.ru | info@Carnegie.ru

BEIJING

CARNEGIE-TSINGHUA CENTER FOR GLOBAL POLICY

No. 1 East Zhongguancun Street, Building 1
Tsinghua University Science Park
Innovation Tower, Room B1202C
Haidian District, Beijing 100084
China

P +86 10 8215 0178 F +86 10 6270 3536

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CARNEGIE MIDDLE EAST CENTER

Emir Bechir Street, Lazarieh Tower
Bldg. No. 2026 1210, 5th flr.
P.O. Box 11-1061

Downtown Beirut
Lebanon

P +961 1 99 12 91 F +961 1 99 15 91

Carnegie-MEC.org | info@Carnegie-MEC.org

BRUSSELS

CARNEGIE EUROPE

Rue du Congrès 15
1000 Brussels
Belgium

P +32 2735 5650 F +32 2736 6222

CarnegieEurope.eu | brussels@ceip.org