



Written by [Gary Benoit](#) on April 5, 2009

Obama's "World Without Nuclear Weapons"

President Barack Obama called for a "world without nuclear weapons" when he spoke in Prague on April 5. But nations obviously will not disarm in a vacuum. And so he also called for a "stronger, global regime" that would fill the vacuum and ensure that all nations follow the rules.

"Today, I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons," Obama said in Prague. "This goal will not be reached quickly — perhaps not in my lifetime. It will take patience and persistence."



Obama said "the United States will take concrete steps toward a world without nuclear weapons" — including negotiating a new strategic arms reduction with Russia, and pursuing ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty as well as "a new treaty that verifiably ends the production of fissile materials intended for use in state nuclear weapons." Obama also said that, "together, we will strengthen the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty."

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And he said that "we should build a new framework for civil nuclear cooperation, including an international fuel bank, so that countries can access peaceful power without increasing the risks of proliferation."

That last point illustrates that Obama is not proposing putting the nuclear genie back in the bottle for all time (an impossibility, anyway) but placing that nuclear genie under international regulation. And coupled with that regulation will be international security that ensures compliance.

As Obama put it in Prague: "We go forward with no illusions. Some will break the rules, but that is why we need a structure in place that ensures that when any nation does, they will face consequences." He then added regarding North Korea's launch of a long-range rocket:

This morning, we were reminded again why we need a new and more rigorous approach to address this threat. North Korea broke the rules once more by testing a rocket that could be used for a long-range missile.

This provocation underscores the need for action — not just this afternoon at the UN Security Council, but in our determination to prevent the spread of these weapons. Rules must be binding. Violations must be punished. Words must mean something. The world must stand together to prevent the spread of these weapons. Now is the time for a strong international response. North Korea must know that the path to security and respect will never come through threats and illegal weapons. And all nations must come together to build a stronger, global regime.

Obviously, Obama intends to capitalize on the North Korean provocation to build the "stronger, global regime" he envisions. "We should come together to turn efforts such as the Proliferation Security



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Initiative and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism into durable international institutions,” he said. “And we should start by having a Global Summit on Nuclear Security that the United States will host within the next year.”

Obama’s grandiose vision for a world without nuclear weapons reminds this writer of the [Freedom From War: The United States Program for General and Complete Disarmament in a Peaceful World](#) (State Department Publication 7277), the 1961 three-stage disarmament proposal President John F. Kennedy submitted to the United Nations. The third stage of plan states that “progressive controlled disarmament and continuously developing principles and procedures of international law would proceed to a point where no state would have the military power to challenge the progressively strengthened U.N. Peace Force.”

Obama did not say anything in his Prague speech about a “strengthened U.N. Peace Force,” but he did call for strengthening NATO, a “regional arrangement” of the kind described in [Chapter VIII](#) of the UN Charter. As recently as April 4, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of NATO, the military alliance reaffirmed its “adherence to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations” in its “Declaration on Alliance Security.”

Obama envisions an expanded role for NATO, perhaps recognizing that Americans might be more willing to support international military efforts if they’re carried out under NATO than directly under the UN — though that could change in the future. “No alliance can afford to stand still,” Obama said of NATO in Prague. “We must work together as NATO members so that we have contingency plans in place to deal with new threats, wherever they may come from. We must strengthen our cooperation with one another, and with other nations and institutions around the world, to confront dangers that recognize no borders.”

Those dangers include the nuclear threat, and Obama’s solution to that threat — a “stronger, global regime” to police the world — will perhaps become even more obvious as more details become available. Don’t be surprised if more details make the Obama disarmament plan sound more like the plan originally spelled out in *Freedom From War* — a plan that, so far as this writer knows, has never been formally withdrawn.

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