2025 China-U.S. Nuclear Fail-Safe Dialogue

October 11–14, 2025
Beijing, China

MEETING SYNOPSIS

Overview

» On October 11–14 in Beijing, China, a delegation of American and Asian former officials and experts met with Chinese current and former officials and experts in meetings focused on nuclear fail-safe, which are safeguards that prevent the unauthorized, accidental, or mistaken use of a nuclear weapon. The 2025 workshop, hosted by the Grandview Institution, followed a successful initial meeting in October 2024. Like the 2024 workshop, this second meeting was organized with the support of the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network and Nuclear Threat Initiative.

» The objective was to promote mutual understanding of nuclear fail-safe in China and the U.S. following the first dialogue. Discussion topics included the changes in the international security environment over the past year, and why these changes strengthened the case for fail-safe reviews in every nuclear armed state; the organization of the two U.S. fail-safe reviews; perspectives from China on the value of conducting a national fail-safe review; emerging technologies in the context of fail-safe; and pathways to facilitate global fail-safe.

» Participants welcomed this dialogue and noted the greater analytic depth of discussions following a year of exploring the fail-safe concept. They also expressed strong interest in promoting the importance of fail-safe through the P5 process, expanding the dialogue to include a broader discussion of fail-safe, emerging technologies, nonproliferation and nuclear terrorism, and elevating the engagement to the Track 1.5 level.

Participants agreed:

» The global strategic and security environment has deteriorated since the 2024 workshop. This underlines the importance of candid strategic dialogue to promote mutual understanding and avert or manage crises, and the salience of nuclear fail-safe as a critical unilateral risk reduction measure amidst this rising instability.

- A commitment by leaders to conduct a unilateral nuclear fail-safe review and enact its recommendations was necessary for its success. This requires no negotiation, treaty, or verification; and there is no requirement to share the results of these unilateral, internal reviews. While the 1990–1992 and 2022–2024 U.S. fail-safe reviews offer valuable notional templates for potential reviews by China and other nuclear-armed states, implementation of the 1990–1992 U.S. review recommendations took several years and spanned two presidential administrations.

- The 1990–92 review not only featured unilateral recommendations (most of which remain classified), but also examined possible nuclear risk reduction policies relating to nuclear fail-safe that could involve bilateral or multilateral cooperation. One possible initiative to advance fail-safe would be to explore potential bilateral U.S.-China and multilateral policy recommendations, which could be discussed and agreed upon at the Track-2 level, and used to inform respective decisionmakers considering or implementing fail-safe reviews in their countries. Such measures could increase leadership decision-time as it relates to the possible use of nuclear weapons.

- Other topics could include cooperation against nuclear terrorism and nuclear proliferation, and addressing the vulnerabilities that cyber, AI, space-based systems, and other emerging technologies could generate for national nuclear systems, which could lead to the unauthorized, accidental, or mistaken use of a nuclear weapon.

- New and ongoing international conflicts since the 2024 workshop underlined the value of outreach to other nuclear-armed states on nuclear fail-safe. The differing quality of U.S. and Chinese relationships with certain individual nuclear-armed states meant that more effective progress on global fail-safe could be made by deeper Track-2 fail-safe engagements with specific states being led by the interlocutors with a closer relationship to that state, whether from the U.S. or China respectively.

- The P5 process was a key forum for advancing global fail-safe, especially in the context of the upcoming 2026 NPT Review Conference. Efforts at the P5 Track-1 level and Track-2 level (such as the Young Professionals Network) to promote a P5 commitment to conduct fail-safe reviews could be pursued simultaneously.

- Not all nuclear-armed states are recognized as such under the NPT, and fail-safe outreach to these states would have to be carefully managed to avoid conveying a de facto diplomatic recognition of status equivalent to that of NPT nuclear-weapon states.

- Noting the ambitious agenda for future work, APLN, NTI, and Grandview agreed to coordinate a workplan for 2025–2026. Such a workplan could include the following broad components:

    1. Continuing our joint efforts to promote a fail-safe review in China, and NTI activities to engage and encourage the U.S. government to implement the 2022–24 fail-safe review findings.

    2. Upgrading U.S.-China fail-safe interactions to the Track 1.5 level. This included an invitation for U.S. Track-2 participation at a prominent MoD-hosted arms control forum in Changsha, Hunan Province, in 2026.

    3. Working together to promote a joint or coordinated statements by China and the U.S. on fail-safe, or perhaps a P5 statement in advance of next year's NPT Review Conference, if possible. This could be a simple statement similar to the January 2022 P5 statement that "A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought." However, as agreeing to a meaningful statement was the priority, the NPT Review Conference need not be the

deadline for coordinating a P5 statement if more time is required. Other opportunities could include a similar statement at the 2026 G7; the 2026 Munich Security Conference led by the Euro-Atlantic Security Leadership Group (EASLG); and Track-2 joint statements by senior figures from nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states.

4. Pursuing Track-2 fail-safe engagements with non-NPT nuclear-armed states, led by the interlocutors with the closest relationship to that state.
5. Explore a possible China/France/Russia/UK/U.S. Track 2/1.5 fail-safe workshop. This could be a 2026 or possibly 2027 initiative.
6. Planning for a third China-U.S. fail-safe dialogue in Beijing, circa October 2026.

Bottom line

» This second dialogue continued the remarkable progress and constructive engagements established in the 2024 workshop. The joint commitment to develop a detailed 2025–2026 workplan for advancing nuclear fail-safe was testament to this progress, as was the invitation to U.S. participants to attend the Track 1.5 arms control forum in Changsha in 2026. The three organizations look forward to building upon this strong platform through their joint activities in the coming year.

APLN
ASIA-PACIFIC LEADERSHIP NETWORK

EUROPEAN LEADERSHIP NETWORK

国观智库
GRANDVIEW INSTITUTION

NTI
BUILDING A SAFER WORLD

2025中美核故障安全对话

2025年10月11–14日
中国 北京

会议纪要

概述

» 2025年10月11–14日，来自美国及亚洲的前政府官员及专家代表团在中国北京与中方现任及前官员和专家举行会晤，围绕核故障安全（nuclear fail-safe）展开深入讨论，即防止核武器未经授权、意外或误用的安全保障措施。本次研讨会由国观智库主办，延续了2024年10月首次会议取得的成功。此次会议同样得到亚太领导网络（APLN）及减少核威胁倡议组织（NTI）的支持与协办。

» 此次会议旨在延续首次对话成果，进一步增进中美双方对核故障安全的相互理解。与会者围绕多个议题展开讨论，包括：过去一年国际安全环境的变化，以及这些变化为何进一步凸显拥核国家开展核故障安全审查的必要性；美国两轮核故障安全审查的组织与实施经验；中方对开展国家层面核故障安全审查必要性和价值的看法；新兴技术发展对核故障安全的影响；以及推动全球核故障安全发展的可能路径。

» 与会者对此次对话表示欢迎，并指出，经过一年来围绕核故障安全概念的探讨，相关讨论在分析深度方面有所提升。与会者还表示，希望借助五核国机制（P5 process）进一步提升国际社会对核故障安全重要性的认识，并拓展对话议程，将核故障安全、新兴技术、核不扩散和核恐怖主义等议题纳入更广泛的讨论，同时推动将这一交流机制提升至 1.5轨层级。

与会者一致认为：

» 自2024年研讨会以来，全球战略与安全环境进一步恶化。这更加凸显了开展坦诚战略对话的重要意义，以增进彼此理解，防止危机发生或妥善管控危机。同时，在国际局势日趋动荡的背景下，核故障安全作为一项重要的单边风险降低措施，其意义也愈发突出。

» 领导人承诺开展单边核故障安全审查并落实相关建议，是审查取得成效的关键所在。此类审查无需谈判、条约或核查机制，也不要求共享各国单方面、内部审查的结果。1990–1992年及2022–2024年美国开展的核故障安全审查为中国及其他拥核国家未来可能推进的相关审查提供了重要的概念性参考框架。然而，1990–1992年美国审查所提出的建议在后续实施过程中耗时多年，并跨越了两届总统任期。

» 1990–1992年的审查不仅提出了若干单边建议（其中大部分至今仍属机密），还探讨了与核故障安全相关、可能通过双边或多边合作推进的核风险降低政策。其中一项可能推动核故障安全的路径是探索中美

双边及多边层面的政策建议，并在二轨层面加以讨论并形成共识，进而为各国在考虑或实施核故障安全审查时的决策者提供参考。这类措施有望延长领导人在可能动用核武器情境下的决策时间。

» 其他讨论议题还可包括加强反核恐怖主义与防扩散领域的合作，以及应对网络技术、人工智能、天基系统等新兴技术可能对国家核系统带来的安全漏洞。这些漏洞在特定情况下可能增加核武器遭到未经授权、意外或误用的风险。

» 自2024年研讨会以来，新出现及持续中的国际冲突进一步凸显了围绕核故障安全加强与其他拥核国家沟通交流的重要性。考虑到美中两国同其他各拥核国关系基础互异、情况各别，在推动全球核故障安全进程方面，由与相关国家关系更为密切的一方（无论是美方还是中方）分别牵头，针对具体国家开展更深入的二轨交流，或将更有助于取得实质性进展。

» 五核国机制是推动全球核故障安全的重要平台，尤其在即将召开的 2026 年《不扩散核武器条约》（NPT）审议大会背景下更具现实意义。在五核国一轨与二轨层面（包括青年专业人员网络Young Professionals Network等机制）同时推进相关工作，以促成五核国就开展核故障安全审查达成承诺。

» 并非所有拥核国家都在《不扩散核武器条约》框架下被认定为核武器国家。因此，在对这些国家开展核故障安全相关交流时，需要审慎把握方式，以避免在事实上被解读为对其核武器国家地位的外交承认，使其等同于《不扩散核武器条约》核武器国家。

» 鉴于未来工作议程任务繁重，APLN、NTI与国观智库同意协调制定一项2025–2026工作计划。工作计划拟围绕以下几个方面展开：

1. 继续共同推动中国开展核故障安全审查，并支持NTI开展相关工作进而推动并鼓励美国政府落实2022—2024 年核故障安全审查的有关建议。

2. 推动中美核故障安全对话升级至1.5轨层级。这包括邀请美国二轨对话代表于 2026 年赴中国湖南长沙参加由国防部主办的重要军控论坛。

3. 共同推动中美就核故障安全发表联合声明或分别发表内容协调一致的声明。如条件成熟，可争取推动五核国机制在明年《不扩散核武器条约》审议大会召开前发表共同声明。声明内容可较为简洁，例如借鉴 2022 年 1 月五核国联合声明中的表述：“核战争打不赢，也打不得。”鉴于首要目标是就声明内容达成具有实质意义的共识，如仍需更多时间协调五核国的立场，则无须以明年《不扩散核武器条约》审议大会作为发表声明的最后期限。此外，还可考虑借助其他平台或形式推进相关倡议，例如在 2026 年七国集团（G7）峰会期间发表类似声明，在由欧洲–大西洋安全领导力小组 Euro–Atlantic Security Leadership Group（EASLG）主导的 2026 年慕尼黑安全会议上推动相关倡议，以及推动核武器国家和无核武器国家资深人士在二轨框架下发表联合声明。

4. 推动与《不扩散核武器条约》框架外的拥核国家开展二轨核故障安全对话，并由与相关国家联系最为密切的一方牵头推进有关工作。

5. 探讨举办中国、法国、俄罗斯、英国和美国二轨/1.5轨核故障安全研讨会的可行性，可考虑于 2026 年或 2027 年启动。

6. 着手筹备第三届中美核故障安全研讨会，拟于 2026 年10月在北京举行。

核心要点

» 本次第二轮对话延续了在2024年研讨会上所取得的积极进展与建设性互动。双方共同承诺制定一份涵盖2025–2026年的详细核故障安全工作计划，充分体现了这一进展；此外，邀请美方与会人员出席 2026 年在长沙举行的1.5轨军控论坛，也构成了重要成果之一。三家机构期待在未来一年继续依托这一良好基础，通过合作进一步深化互动。