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Nuclear Posture Review: Trump and Three Previous Administrations

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Abstract

In February 2018, the Secretary of Defense of the Trump Administration submitted the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR)¹⁾ to Congress. The report specifies the U.S. nuclear policy for several years and influences the progress of the issues surrounding nuclear weapons in international diplomacy decisively. This is the fourth report following those produced under President Bill Clinton in 1994, President George W. Bush in 2002, and President Barack Obama in 2010. This study mainly examines the Trump NPR, and compares it with other three NPRs from the previous administrations. First, it surveys the perception of the international security environment and threat, which constitute the basis of the NPR. Second, it studies what specific roles are entrusted to nuclear weapons under the security policy. Third, it examines how the U.S. nuclear forces and capabilities will be constructed. Fourth, it investigates what postures this new NPR takes towards the issues of nuclear disarmament. Finally, it evaluates the NPR as a whole, compared with the other three previous NPRs.

I Perception of the International Security Environment and Threat

In the Preface of the NPR, the Secretary of Defense, James Mattis, explains as follows²⁾:

For the decade, the United States led the world in efforts to reduce the role and number of nuclear weapons. ...While Russia initially followed America's lead and made similarly sharp reductions in its strategic nuclear forces, it retained large numbers of non-strategic nuclear weapons. Today, Russia is modernizing these weapons as well as its other strategic systems.

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1) Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review*, February 2018. <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Feb/02/200018728861/-1/-1/1/2018-NUCLEAR-POSTURE-REVIEW-FINAL-REPORT.PDF>

2) *Ibid.*, p. I.

Even more troubling has been Russia's adoption of military strategies and capabilities that rely on nuclear escalation for their success. These developments, coupled with Russia's seizure of Crimea and nuclear threats against our allies, mark Moscow's decided return to Great Power competition. China, too, is modernizing and expanding its already considerable nuclear forces. Like Russia, China is pursuing entirely new nuclear capabilities tailored to achieve particular national security objectives while also modernizing its conventional military, challenging traditional U.S. military superiority in the Western Pacific.

The report emphasizes the threats from Russia and China, and in addition, it also refers to North Korea's nuclear provocations and Iran's nuclear ambitions as threats.

The report perceives that global threat conditions have worsened markedly since the most recent 2010 NPR and that Russia and China are contesting the international norms and order that the U.S. has worked with allies, partners, and members of the international community to build and sustain and that these developments have produced increased uncertainty and risk, demanding a renewed seriousness of purpose in deterring threats and assuring allies and partners. It concludes that the current threat environment and future uncertainties necessitate a national commitment to maintain modern and effective nuclear forces, and the infrastructure necessary to support them³⁾.

The report explains the international security circumstances as the return of great power competition as follows⁴⁾:

Since 2010, we have seen the return of Great Power competition. To varying degree, Russia and China have made clear they seek to substantially revise the post-Cold War international order and norms of behavior. Russia has demonstrated its willingness to use force to alter the map of Europe and impose its will on its neighbors, backed by implicit and explicit nuclear first-use threats. Russia is in violation of its international legal and political commitments that directly affect the security of others, including the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, the 2002 Open Sky Treaty, and the 1991 Presidential Nuclear Initiatives. Its occupation of Crimea and

3) *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

4) *Ibid.*, p. 6.

direct support for Russian-led forces in Eastern Ukraine violate its commitment to respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine that they made in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum. China meanwhile has rejected the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration Tribunal that found China's maritime claims in the South China Sea to be without merit and some of its related activities illegal under the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea and customary international law.

The report stresses that Russian strategy and doctrine emphasize the potential coercive and military use of nuclear weapons, and it mistakenly assesses that the threat of nuclear escalation or actual first use of nuclear weapons would serve to "de-escalate" a conflict on favorable terms⁵⁾. It also mentions that China continues to increase the number, capabilities, and protection of its nuclear forces and that while China's declaratory policy and doctrine have not changed, its lack of transparency regarding the scope and scale of its nuclear modernization program raises questions regarding its future intent⁶⁾.

The very fundamental starting point of this report is the perception of the international security environment and the threat to the U.S., its allies, and partners. The report emphasizes from several aspects that the most serious threat to the U.S. is Russia and that there is a return to the Great Power competition. This perception is the starting point of this report and constitutes a very important central element. Under these circumstances, the report demands that modern and effective nuclear weapons and their infrastructure be maintained, and threats must be responded to by increasing nuclear arsenals. Secretary Mattis states that given the range of their potential adversaries, their capabilities and strategic objectives, this review calls for a flexible, tailored deterrence strategy. This review calls for a diverse set of nuclear capabilities that provides an American President with the flexibility to tailor the approach to deterring one or more potential adversaries in different circumstances⁷⁾.

In contrast, the 2010 NPR by the Obama Administration stated that the most immediate and extreme threat was nuclear terrorism and the other pressing threat was nuclear proliferation. On Russia and China, the report stated that the U.S. must continue to address the more familiar challenge of ensuring strategic stability with existing nuclear powers. As the prospects for military confrontation had declined

5) *Ibid.*, p. 8.

6) *Ibid.*, p. 11.

7) *Ibid.*, p. II.

dramatically in the decades leading to the report, the report focused on ending Cold War thinking. Fundamental changes in the international security environment enabled the Obama Administration to fulfill its objectives with significantly lower nuclear force levels and with a reduced reliance on nuclear weapons⁸⁾.

The 2002 NPR by the Bush Administration stated that the central threat was the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and ballistic missile systems. The policies under that circumstance were: (1) To promote cooperation with Russia by developing a “new framework” as the Cold War approach was no longer appropriate and to end the relationship based on mutually assured destruction (MAD); (2) to deploy the lowest possible number of nuclear weapons that was necessary for the security of the U.S. and its allies and partners; (3) to develop and deploy a missile defense that would have much bigger capabilities than permitted under the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty; and (4) to give more weight to modern conventional weapons⁹⁾.

The 1994 NPR by the Clinton Administration stated that Russia was no longer an enemy. The Defense Secretary William Perry stated that instead of the competition and nuclear arms race, cooperation and nuclear reduction was in operation, and instead of MAD, they supported Mutual Assured Safety (MAS)¹⁰⁾.

The three previous administrations emphasized that Russia was no longer an enemy, and the most serious threat was not Russia. However, the Trump NPR diverges from this thinking and states that Russia is the most serious threat. This point is one of the most significant characteristics of this new NPR. During the Cold War era the Soviet Union was the most imminent threat and how to deal with this issue was critical to the U.S. In this sense, the new NPR is seen as a return to Cold War thinking as it emphasizes two main issues, that is, the perceptions on the international security environment and the threats in this environment. This demonstrates a return to the Great Power competition.

II The Role of Nuclear Weapons

1 Policy on the Use of Nuclear Weapons

The Trump NPR states that on the use of nuclear weapons “the United States

8) The U.S. Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review Report*, April 2010, pp. 3-6. <http://www.defense.gov/npr/docs/2010%20Nuclear%20Posture%20Review%20Report.pdf>

9) *Special Briefing on the Nuclear Posture Review*, J. D. Crouch, ASD ISP, January 9, 2002 with Slide. http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jan2002/t01092002_t0109npr.html

10) William Perry, Secretary of Defense, *Defense Department Briefing on Nuclear Posture Review*, September 22, 1994.

would only consider the employment of nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States, its allies, and partners.” This sentence is the same as in the Obama NPR. However, this phrase is followed by an important sentence: “Extreme circumstances could include significant non-nuclear strategic attacks. Significant non-nuclear strategic attacks include, but are not limited to, attacks on the U. S., allies, or partner civilian population or infrastructure, and attacks on the U.S., or allied nuclear forces, their command and control, or warning and attack assessment capabilities.¹¹⁾” As a result, they are completely different to each other.

The Trump NPR emphasizes the role of nuclear weapons against attacks from both nuclear and conventional weapons, as it mentions the “deterrence of nuclear and non-nuclear attacks” as the first, most important role of nuclear weapons. This position is different to the Obama NPR, which attempted to limit the employment of nuclear weapons only against attacks by nuclear weapons. The Obama NPR stated that the fundamental role of U.S. nuclear weapons was to deter nuclear attacks on the U.S. and its allies and partners. The role of U.S. nuclear weapons to deter and respond to non-nuclear attacks – conventional, biological, or chemical – had declined significantly and the U.S. would continue to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in deterring non-nuclear attacks¹²⁾.

Regarding the policy of “no first use” of nuclear weapons, which limits the use of nuclear weapons only in the case of nuclear attacks, both the Obama and the Trump NPRs do not adopt this policy. The Trump NPR denies this by stating that the U.S. has never adopted a “no first use” policy and, given the contemporary threat environment, such a policy is currently not justified. On the other hand, the Obama NPR used the phrase “the sole purpose,” which is almost the same as “no first use” and explained that the U.S. was not prepared at the time to adopt a universal policy that defined that “the sole purpose” of U.S. nuclear weapons was to deter nuclear attacks on the U.S., but would work to establish conditions under which such a policy could be safely adopted¹³⁾. The Obama Administration strongly supported that this idea should be pursued eagerly.

James Acton analyzed the Trump NPR, and stated that as it includes a seemingly innocuous threat to consider using nuclear weapons if an adversary launches nonnuclear attacks against the U.S. nuclear command and control, or

11) *Op. cit.*, note 1, p. 21.

12) *Op. cit.*, note 8, p. 15.

13) *Op. cit.*, note 8, p. 16.

warning and attack assessment capabilities, this threat marks a significant – and unwelcome – departure from U.S. declaratory policy, and such a response would be utterly disproportionate, and lacks credibility and could prove both ineffective and damaging to U.S. interests¹⁴⁾.

George Perkovich criticized the NPR because it intends to use nuclear weapons against cyberattacks with the following three points. First, nuclear war would be much more devastating to the U.S. than any conceivable cyberattack. Second, it is irrational to retaliate with nuclear weapons: The combined conventional and cyber capabilities of the U.S. are greater than its adversaries'. Third, international law requires that military operations be strictly necessary and that their harm be proportionate to the objectives, and that they do not cause unnecessary suffering¹⁵⁾.

Lynn Rusten also strongly criticized the Trump NPR, stating that it “dangerously lowers the threshold for nuclear use against a range of potential non-nuclear threats, including cyberattacks, and thereby raises the risk of miscalculation and the possibility that nuclear weapons will be used if other countries adopt the same policy.¹⁶⁾”

2 Negative Security Assurances

Both the Trump and Obama NPRs reflect the same policy on negative security assurances, which is “the United States will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states that are party to the NPT and in compliance with their non-proliferation obligations.” However, the Trump NPR has a reservation that given the potential of significant non-nuclear strategic attacks, the U.S. reserves the right to make any adjustment in the assurance, which may be warranted by the evolution and proliferation of non-nuclear strategic attack technologies and U.S. capabilities to counter that threat¹⁷⁾. On the other hand, the Obama NPR reserved the right to adjust the policy given the catastrophic potential

14) James Acton, “Command and Control in the Nuclear Posture Review: Right Problem, Wrong Solution,” *War on the Rocks*, February 5, 2018. <https://warontherocks.com/2018/02/command-and-control-in-the-nuclear-posture-review-right-problem-wrong-solution>

15) George Perkovich, “Really? We’re Gonna Nuke Russia for a Cyberattack?” *Politico*, January 18, 2018. <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/01/18/donald-trump-russia-nuclear-cyberattack-216477>

16) Lynn Rusten, “The Trump Administration’s ‘Wrong Track’ Nuclear Policies,” *Arms Control Today*, March 2018, p. 6.

17) *Op. cit.*, note 1, p. 21.

of biological weapons and the rapid pace of biotechnology development.

In the case of the Bush Administration, their priority was the threat from rogue states, and its potential nuclear attack targets included North Korea, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Libya¹⁸⁾. Although these rogue states were non-nuclear weapon states, the negative security assurances did not apply to these states.

III Nuclear Strategy and Nuclear Capabilities

1 Nuclear Strategy

The key elements of the new NPR by the Trump Administration are the application of a tailored approach to deterring a spectrum of adversaries, threats, and context effectively and the adoption of flexibility to have the appropriate range and mix of nuclear and other capabilities. Russia threatens and exercises limited nuclear first use, suggesting a mistaken expectation that coercive nuclear threat or limited first use could paralyze the U.S. and NATO and thereby end a conflict on terms favorable to Russia, which is called Russia's "escalate to de-escalate doctrine." To correct any Russian misperceptions of advantage and to deter Russian nuclear or non-nuclear strategic attacks credibly, the President must have a range of limited and graduated options. China's military modernization and pursuit of regional dominance have emerged as a major challenge to U.S. interests in Asia. The tailored strategy for China is designed to prevent Beijing from mistakenly concluding that it could secure an advantage through the limited use of its theater nuclear capabilities.

As North Korea poses a clear and grave threat to U.S. and allied security, a complete, verifiable, and irreversible nuclear-free Korean peninsula is a long-standing U.S. objective. As Iran is committed to increasing its influence over neighboring countries and countering U.S. influence, the deterrence strategy is designed to ensure that the Iranian leadership understands that any non-nuclear strategic attack against the U.S. and its allies and partners would be defeated. In Europe and Asia, it is necessary to take measures to strengthen deterrence, and the U.S. will tailor its hedging strategy across a range of potential adversaries¹⁹⁾.

The Obama NPR listed five key objectives of its nuclear weapons policies and

18) *Nuclear Posture Review [Excerpts] Submitted to Congress on 3 December 2001*, 8 January 2002, Nuclear Posture Review Report, pp. 1-6. http://globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/95_dod/npr.htm

19) *Op. cit.*, note 1, pp. 25-40.

posture: (1) preventing nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism; (2) reducing the role of U.S. nuclear weapons in U.S. national security strategy; (3) maintaining strategic deference and strategy at lower nuclear force levels; (4) strengthening regional deterrence and reassuring U.S. allies and partners; and (5) sustaining safe, secure, and effective nuclear arsenals²⁰.

The Bush NPR established a New Triad, composed of (1) offensive strike systems (both nuclear and non-nuclear); (2) defenses (both active and passive); and (3) a revitalized defense infrastructure that will provide new capabilities in a timely fashion to meet emerging threats. It shifted America's strategic forces from the threat-based approach of the Cold War to a capabilities-based approach²¹.

2 Nuclear Capabilities

The nuclear Triad remains the central element of U.S. nuclear capabilities, consisting of nuclear ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) armed with SLBMs; land-based ICBMs; and strategic bombers carrying gravity bombs and air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs). Their replacement programs are as follows: for the sea-based deterrent force, the COLUMBIA-class program that will deliver a minimum of 12 SSBNs to replace the current OHIO fleet, as a replacement of the ICBM, the U.S. will begin fielding the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrence (GBSD), and for strategic bombers, the U.S. will develop and deploy the next-generation bomber, the B-21 Raider, and as the replacement for the aging ALCM, the LRSO will be introduced²².

One of the most outstanding characteristics of this NPR is the significant enhancement of deterrence with non-strategic nuclear capabilities. As Russia's belief that limited nuclear first use, potentially including low-yield weapons, can provide an advantage is partly based on Moscow's perception that its greater number and variety of non-strategic nuclear systems provide a coercive advantage in crises and at lower level conflict, expanding flexible U.S. nuclear options now, to include low-yield options, is important for the preservation of a credible deterrence against regional aggression²³.

Regarding this emphasis on non-strategic nuclear forces, Steven Pifer critically analyzes the very concept itself, stating: "Getting into a competition in

20) *Op. cit.*, note 8, p. 2.

21) *Op. cit.*, note 18, pp. 1-6.

22) *Op. cit.*, note 1, pp. 44-50.

23) *Op. cit.*, note 1, pp. 53-54.

low-yield nuclear arms runs the risk of inadvertently signaling that use of low-yield non-strategic nuclear weapons would be seen as different from strategic nuclear arms and somehow might be acceptable. However, it is profoundly in the American interest that in a conflict, nuclear weapons not be used. It would be wiser to seek to raise the threshold for nuclear use.²⁴⁾

Maxwell Downman also criticizes this U.S. policy, stating²⁵⁾:

Small yield nuclear weapons with increased accuracy are destabilizing. They make nuclear weapons more usable, as they would theoretically cause fewer indiscriminate civilian casualties. This gives opportunities and incentives to use nuclear weapons in a wider set of conflict scenarios. By developing a range of low-yield options, the United States is beginning to mimic the Russian policies they frequently criticize. Russia reserves the right to use nuclear weapons to try and halt a conflict it fears it is losing: a policy known as “escalate to de-escalate.” Conflict between the United States and Russia, if it happens, will likely play out in Europe; the prospect of both states believing they can use nuclear weapons to manage escalation drastically raises the possibility of nuclear use on the Continent.

The U.S., for this purpose, in the near-term will modify a small number of existing SLBM warheads to provide a low-yield option, and in the longer term, pursue modern nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCM). The development of a low-yield warhead is to ensure a prompt response option that can penetrate adversary defenses.

SLCMs will provide a much needed non-strategic regional presence, an assured response capability, and an INF-Treaty compliant response to Russia’s continuing Treaty violation. The U.S. pursuit of SLCMs may provide the necessary incentive for Russia to seriously negotiate a reduction of its non-strategic nuclear weapons, just as the prior Western deployment of intermediate-range nuclear forces in Europe led to the 1987 INF Treaty²⁶⁾. This option is the opposite direction of the Obama NPR, which decided to withdraw nuclear-armed SLCMs.

24) Steven Pifer, “Questions about the Nuclear Posture Review,” Brookings, February 5, 2018. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/02/05/questions-about-nuclear-posture-review/>

25) Maxwell Downman, “Trump’s Nuclear Posture Review Endangers Europe,” BASIC, 8 February 2018. <http://www.basic.org/issues/projects/natos-nuclear-posture>

26) *Op. cit.*, note 1, p. 55.

Steve Pifer also criticizes the NPR policy of modifying existing SLBM warheads to provide a low-yield option, stating²⁷⁾:

While submarine-launched ballistic missiles have traditionally been regarded as strategic, the new NPR describes the low-yield Trident D5 warheads as bolstering U.S. regional non-strategic nuclear capabilities. But this concept prompts questions. First, could a Trident D5 launch be misinterpreted? It would not be clear that the warhead is “small” until it detonated over a target. Second, a U.S. ballistic missile submarine can carry 20 Trident missiles, typically with a total of 80 to 100 nuclear warheads, a sizeable part of the U.S. strategic deterrent. The reason the United States maintains such a large portion of its nuclear warheads on submarines is that they are hard to find and thus survivable. However, a submarine firing a Trident missile to deliver a low-yield warhead would reveal its location. Would the U.S. Navy want to risk that?

Regarding nuclear weapons infrastructure, the Trump NPR expresses its intention to resume nuclear testing, stating “along with its nuclear weapons development and production infrastructure, National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) will maintain the capability to resume underground nuclear explosive testing if called upon to do so. The U.S. will not seek Senate ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty but will continue to observe a nuclear test moratorium that began in 1992. This posture was adopted with the understanding that the United States must remain ready to resume nuclear testing if necessary to meet severe technical or geopolitical challenges.” On the development of new nuclear weapons, it states “should a technical or geopolitical development demand new nuclear weapons, it is crucial that the nuclear weapons workforce possess the skills and the knowledge needed to design, develop, and manufacture warheads of different design in a timely manner²⁸⁾.”

Contrary to this, the Obama NPR clearly stated “the United States will not conduct nuclear testing, and will pursue ratification and entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. The United States will not develop new nuclear warheads. Life Extension Programs will use only nuclear components based on previously tested designs, and will not support new military missions or

27) *Op. cit.*, note 24.

28) *Op. cit.*, note 1, p. 63.

provide for new military capability.²⁹⁾”

The summary of nuclear weapons capabilities under the Obama NPR was as follows:

- (1) Stable deterrence could be maintained while reducing the accountable U.S. strategic delivery vehicles by approximately 50 percent from the START level and reducing accountable strategic warheads by approximately 30 percent from the 2002 Moscow Treaty level.
- (2) During the ten-year duration of New START, the nuclear Triad of ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers would be maintained.
- (3) All U.S. ICBMs would be “de-MIRVed” to a single warhead each to increase stability.
- (4) Some ability to “upload” non-deployed nuclear weapons on existing delivery vehicles should be retained.
- (5) Contributions by non-nuclear systems to U.S. regional deterrence and reassurance goals will be preserved³⁰⁾.

New capabilities under the Bush NPR included defeating hard and deeply buried targets, defeating mobile and relocatable targets, defeating chemical and biological agents, and improved accuracy for effectiveness and reduced collateral damage³¹⁾.

IV Nuclear Disarmament

1 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

The Trump NPR understands that the NPT is the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, and stresses that the U.S. remains committed to nuclear non-proliferation, continues to abide by its obligations under the NPT, and will work to strengthen the NPT regime³²⁾. Lisbeth Gronlund strongly criticizes this new policy, stating that the NPR ignores the U.S. obligation to take effective measures toward nuclear disarmament and reverses recent progress since the end of the Cold War. The new negative security assurances and the position on the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty move away from the Obama Administration’s NPR and these measures will weaken the NPT regime³³⁾.

29) *Op. cit.*, note 8, pp. 38-39.

30) *Op. cit.*, note 8, p. 25.

31) *Op. cit.*, note 18, pp. 46-48.

32) *Op. cit.*, note 1, p. 70.

33) Lisbeth Gronlund, “Trump’s Nuclear Posture Review: Top Take-Aways,” Union of Concerned Scientists, February 2, 2018.

2 Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)

The Trump NPR recognizes the effectiveness of the CTBT more or less, but it will not seek Senate ratification of the CTBT and reserves the possibility of the resumption of nuclear testing, stating as follows³⁴⁾:

Although the United States will not seek Senate ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, it will continue to support the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization Preparatory Committee as well as the related International Monitoring System and the International Data Center, which detect nuclear tests and monitor seismic activity. The United States will not resume nuclear explosive testing unless necessary to ensure the safety and effectiveness of the U.S. nuclear arsenal and calls on all states possessing nuclear weapons to declare or maintain a moratorium on nuclear testing.

In contrast, the Obama NPR stated that the U.S. would not conduct nuclear testing and would pursue ratification and entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty³⁵⁾. Subsequently, the new NPR has been interpreted as a big drawback from previous reports. The 1994 Clinton NPR strongly supported a CTBT stating that it retained nuclear weapons capability without testing. The Clinton Administration was an active promoter of the negotiation of a CTBT and succeeded to adopt the treaty in 1996. The Bush NPR supported a moratorium on nuclear testing but proposed a promotion of the preparation posture for nuclear testing by taking several measures because it is difficult to judge the capabilities of stocked nuclear arsenals objectively without testing them.

3 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

The Trump NPR rejects the treaty and states as follows³⁶⁾:

It is important to recognize that the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty, opened for signature at the UN in 2017, is fueled by wholly unrealistic expectations of the elimination of nuclear arsenals without the prerequisite transformation of the international security environment. This effort has

34) *Op. cit.*, note 1, p. 72.

35) *Op. cit.*, note 8, p. 38.

36) *Op. cit.*, note 1, p. 72.

polarized the international community and seeks to inject disarmament issues into non-proliferation fora, potentially damaging the non-proliferation regime. This Treaty could damage U.S. security and the security of many allies and partners who rely on U.S. extended nuclear deterrence. The terms of the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty also could undermine ongoing and prospective military cooperation between the United States and signatory states, cooperation that is crucial to the maintenance of credibly extended nuclear deterrence.

4 U.S.-Russia Nuclear Reduction

The Trump NPR only states: “New START is in effect through February 2021 and with mutual agreement, may be extended for up to five years to 2026³⁷⁾.” It is not clear whether the administration is willing to continue the nuclear reduction process or to extend the Treaty. Anna Peczeli severely criticizes this position, stating that as tensions are high between the U.S. and Russia, losing the verification and transparency measures of New START would be a fundamental mistake³⁸⁾.

By stating that further progress is difficult, the NPR does not plan to take any positive action on nuclear arms control. Daryl Kimball analyzes it critically, citing a “threatening security environment,” and states that the Trump Administration is effectively abandoning the traditional global leadership role of the U.S. on nuclear arms control³⁹⁾.

The Obama NPR expressed that as a first measure it would conclude a verifiable New START, and push ratification and early entry into force of the CTBT, seek commencement of negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT), and initiate a comprehensive national research and development program to support continued progress toward a world free of nuclear weapons⁴⁰⁾. It would also engage Russia, after ratification and entry into force of the New START, in negotiations aimed at achieving substantial further nuclear force reductions and transparency that would cover all nuclear weapons – deployed and non-deployed, strategic and non-strategic. Following substantial further nuclear force reductions

37) *Op. cit.*, note 1, p. 73.

38) Anna Peczeli, “The Experts on the New Nuclear Posture Review,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, February 2, 2018. <http://thebulletin.org/experts-new-nuclear-posture-reiew11480>

39) Daryl Kimball, “A Dangerous Retreat from Disarmament Diplomacy,” *Arms Control Today*, March 2018, p. 3.

40) *Op. cit.*, note 8, pp. 12-13.

with Russia, it would engage with other states possessing nuclear weapons, over time, in a multilateral effort to limit, reduce, and eventually eliminate all nuclear weapons worldwide⁴¹⁾.

Under the Bush NPR, the plan to reduce operationally deployed nuclear warheads to 1700-2200 in ten years unilaterally without a treaty with Russia was stipulated⁴²⁾. With a strong desire from President Putin to develop a treaty, the Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty (SORT) was concluded in 2002, but this treaty was very concise, with no verification or other provisions.

Maggie Tennis and Strobe Talbott sharply criticize the Trump NPR, stating⁴³⁾:

Trump ignores America's responsibility since the dawn of the atomic age to avoid Armageddon and maintain a commitment to arms control and non-proliferation. His words suggest a willingness in both the administration and Congress to risk key nuclear treaties, like the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction (New START) Treaty, for the sake of muscle-flexing and displays of military might. This trend is misguided and ruinous. Without concerted efforts to maintain INF and New START, the arms control regime could fall apart.

V Historical Development of U. S. Nuclear Policies

The first Nuclear Posture Review was published under the Clinton Administration in 1994, and each following administration also published their own versions, making their nuclear policy clear at the beginning of their term. In this chapter, I will clarify how each administration perceived nuclear weapons in their overall foreign policy under their specific international security environment, and how they understood the importance of nuclear disarmament in their policies.

1 Perception of International Security Environment

The international security environment under the Clinton Administration was shortly after the end of the Cold War and the dismantlement of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Treaty Organization. The INF Treaty was fully implemented by destroying many intermediate-range nuclear weapons, and the START Treaty was

41) *Op. cit.*, note 8, pp. 47.

42) *Op. cit.*, note 18, p. 15.

43) Maggie Tennis and Strobe Talbott, "Another Arms Race? No and Nyet," Brookings, *Order from Chaos*, February 20, 2018. <http://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/02/20/another-arms-race-no-and-nyet/>

signed in 1991. The U.S. was generally conceived as a victor of the Cold War, and there was a large difference in power between the U.S. and Russia. As a result, Russia was no longer conceived of as an enemy. The Clinton NPR stated that the role of the U.S. was to lead the further reduction of nuclear weapons while hedging Russia's return to a confronting and military government as a result of the failure of the Russian revolution. The most imminent threats were nuclear terrorism and the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The Bush Administration perceived that the international security environment radically changed as ten years had passed since the end of the Cold War. The Bush NPR perceived that while some contingencies were necessary for Russia, the present and most serious threat was nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, biological weapons, and the missile delivery systems possessed by many states. In particular, the most threatening problems were the so-called rogue states, including North Korea, Iran, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. Consequently, the Bush NPR emphasized nuclear arms development and nuclear capabilities in response to these threats.

The Obama Administration recognized that the most serious threat was no longer Russia, but rather nuclear terrorism and nuclear proliferation. Under the previous administration, the relations between the U.S. and Russia worsened because the Bush Administration unilaterally withdrew from the ABM Treaty and developed and deployed the ABM system, which had been prohibited under the ABM Treaty. This action was criticized by Russia as it jeopardized the security parity between them. In addition, the U.S. also had an outstanding advantage of having more conventional weapons.

Under these circumstances, the Obama Administration attempted to reduce the confrontation and succeeded to "reset" the confrontational relations. A summit meeting was held, and START negotiations were resumed, and the two states agreed on the New START Treaty in 2010. The Treaty which reduced the number of nuclear warheads to 1550 was implemented by February 2018. However, in 2014, Russia militarily invaded Crimea and included it in Russia's territory, which was a clear violation of the rule of international law. In addition, Russia conducted actions that were deemed in violation of legal and political agreements. In the area of nuclear weapons, this included an alleged violation of the INF Treaty, which prohibits the development and testing of land-based cruise missiles (GLCMs).

The Trump Administration began working on its NPR when the security environment with Russia was bad, and the Trump NPR stresses that the most imminent security threat to the U.S. is recent Russian behavior. Russia possesses many non-strategic nuclear weapons, and by modernizing them, it adopted a new

military doctrine. Additionally, it behaves contrary to the rules of international law and international commitments, and subsequently, the U.S. perceives that Russia is returning the world to a Great Power competition. As a result, Russia is perceived as the most imminent threat to the U.S. In addition, China is also perceived to be a threat as it is modernizing and expanding its nuclear weapons and challenging traditional U.S. supremacy in the Western Pacific, although it was not conceived of as a threat by the three previous administrations. China is now perceived as a threat by the current administration and the U.S. now emphasizes that there is a Great Power competition even between the U.S. and China.

2 Responses to the Security Circumstances

Based on the perception of a good security environment, the Clinton Administration continued with the process of a substantive nuclear reduction and made efforts to reduce nuclear weapons further. It solved the difficult questions of the START Treaty, which emerged after the dismantlement of the Soviet Union and led to the successful ratification of the revised START Treaty. President Clinton was a strong promoter of the negotiation of a CTBT, his administration took on a very cooperative attitude in international society, and the Treaty was signed in 1996.

The Bush Administration perceived that Russia was no longer an enemy and pronounced a unilateral deep cut of strategic nuclear weapons. By accepting Russia's wish, in 2002, the two countries concluded the SORT. However, the administration decided to unilaterally withdraw from the 1972 ABM Treaty, which was perceived by Russia as fundamental for strategic parity and stability. However, the fundamental attitude of the administration was "unilateralism," which meant that the U.S. unilateral interest would decide any policy with no regard to an international or cooperative nature. In particular, in order to cope with the so-called rogue states, it proceeded with providing nuclear weapons with many new missions.

The Obama Administration also perceived that Russia was no longer an enemy and set the nuclear reduction treaty with Russia as its most important challenge and so the New START Treaty was concluded in 2010. The administration also planned to promote more robust and transparent relations with Russia and China through bilateral talks. However, as the relations with Russia became worse in Obama's second term, there was no clear progress in these bilateral relations.

The Trump Administration strongly supports an "America First" policy for all

foreign policy issues. The administration perceives that there has been a severe deterioration in international security circumstances and decided to respond to this by modernizing its nuclear weapons and in particular deploying more usable nuclear weapons. This principal attitude is close to Bush's unilateralism, and both administrations seem to respond to international threats with nuclear weapons rather than cooperative measures.

3 Nuclear Disarmament

The Clinton Administration, which took office just after the end of the Cold War, was very active in the promotion of nuclear disarmament. It took on the already signed START Treaty and managed its final complete implementation. As new independent states emerged because of the dismantlement of the Soviet Union, the administration attempted to include Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan into the Treaty. It also made efforts for the new states to join the NPT and succeeded. At the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, the U.S. took on a leadership role for the indefinite extension of the treaty and the promise to conclude a CTBT by 1996. The CTBT was signed successfully in September 1996, but the U.S. Senate rejected its ratification.

The Bush Administration adhered to "unilateralism" and responded negatively to cooperative measures such as international agreements. On strategic nuclear reduction, the U.S. unilaterally decided upon and implemented the reduction of its nuclear warheads. The administration concluded the SORT simply as a good gesture to Russia. The Treaty stipulates a reduction to 1700-2200 nuclear weapons, which was the same as the U.S. unilateral decision, and it included no verification clause or any other precise clauses. The administration also responded negatively to the CTBT and proceeded to strengthen the preparatory works for nuclear testing.

The Obama Administration was eager for the ratification and entry into force of the CTBT and made efforts to gain the approval of its ratification by the U.S. Senate. However, the administration did not achieve this. On the reduction of strategic nuclear weapons, the administration reset the relations with Russia and successfully concluded the New START Treaty, which stipulated a reduction to 1550 nuclear warheads. It was active in further reducing nuclear weapons and proposed a further cut by one third to around 1000-1100, but Russia did not accept this. The administration argued for multilateral negotiations for further substantive reductions, including strategic and non-strategic, and deployed and non-deployed nuclear weapons, but the reality was difficult to achieve.

The Trump Administration does not show any interest in nuclear disarmament

and arms control, which requires a cooperative approach. The administration explained that it is impossible to think about further progress in arms control, and points to further nuclear modernization and strengthening. It has not mentioned the reduction of strategic nuclear weapons or the extension of the New START Treaty. It has clearly expressed that it will not ask for the approval of the ratification of the CTBT and leaves open the possibility of the resumption of nuclear testing.

Conclusion

The most significant characteristics of the Trump NPR is the perception of Russia and China as enemies and in order to win the Great Power competition, the modernization and strengthening of nuclear weapons are necessary. John Wolfsthal analyzes this situation as follows⁴⁴:

Unfortunately, instead of using tried and trusted tools like arms control and engagement to manage the high-risk frictions between Washington and Moscow, the United States appears poised to pursue the one thing that failed to make America and its allies safer in the Cold War: a nuclear arms race more likely to stoke conflict than deter it. What's equally troubling is that new NPR treats regular, high-level engagement and diplomacy as an afterthought rather than an integral part of U.S. nuclear-security strategy.

Through this, he is expressing the fact that the Trump Administration has adopted an "America First" policy, U.S. national interest is the most important priority, and it is attempting to accomplish its purposes by any means. President Trump opposes any international institutions and systems that have supported the interests of international society as a whole and adopts very egoistic policies, and in some cases, they are unilaterally implemented.

By viewing the situation from the viewpoint of improving international peace and security, rather than the peace and security of one nation, it is much more useful and effective to proceed using Great Power cooperation rather than Great Power competition. In order to escape from the current dangerous situation, cooperation and engagement among the great powers and other countries are indispensable.

44) Jon Wolfsthal, "US Approach to Russia in New Nuclear Posture Review Risks Boosting Chances of Conflict," February 2, 2018. <https://www.russianmatters.org/analysis/us-approach-russia-new-nuclear-posture-reivew-risks-boosting-chances-conflict>