

The US's Post-9/11 Nuclear Strategy and its Security Implication for Russia

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The 9/11 terrorist attacks revealed the vulnerabilities of the US vis-à-vis terrorists and so-called “rogue states”, and built strong consensus among policy makers about the country’s new security environment. Therefore, shortly after 9/11, in order to meet the challenges of a new security environment, new strategies, including a New Nuclear Strategy, were adopted. The New Nuclear Strategy was markedly different from the Cold War strategy. Although key components of the strategy (for example, New Triad and Ballistic Missile Defense) had an inherent defensive nature, they had dangerous implications for Russia, intended or unintended. The Strategy rendered Moscow insecure vis-à-vis the US because of Washington’s increased defense and offence capabilities. Despite being declaratively directed against rogue states and terrorist organizations, the new capabilities were actually highly suitable for achieving nuclear superiority over the US’ main contender in the field, Russia, and threatened to push Moscow into a costly arms-race that it could ill afford. This article aims to outline the changes that were introduced in the US nuclear strategy by the Bush Administration after 9/11, explaining why and how they were perceived as security threats by Russia.

Key words: the US, Russia, Nuclear Strategy, Nuclear Security, Nuclear Powers



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Introduction

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks brought about many crucial changes in US foreign and security policy by generating a new understanding of the national security environment and the US' key adversaries. The New Nuclear Strategy (NNS) of the Bush Administration, revealed with the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), was among the key policies that were overhauled to meet the challenges of the new environment. Based on the view that “terrorists or rogue states armed with weapons of mass destruction will likely test America’s security and commitments to its allies and friends”¹, the defense strategists of the Republican government believed that a “broader array of capability is needed to dissuade states from undertaking political, military, or technical courses of action that would threaten US and allied security.”² Based on these considerations, the Bush Administration initiated a new nuclear strategy that was essentially different from the Cold War approach to nuclear security. What kinds of changes did the Bush Administration introduce after 9/11, and what were the implications for Russia’s security perceptions? This article retroactively analyses the post-9/11 changes in US nuclear strategy, and attempts to explain why and how they engendered insecurity and antagonism on the part of Moscow. This rupture in strategic arms reduction cooperation between the US and Russia has not been repaired so far, despite efforts to rebuild cooperation as part of Barack Obama’s “reset” policy with Moscow.

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According to the idea of “new enemies” in the post-9/11 security environment, the new NNS was strikingly different from that of the Cold War. Although key components of the strategy such as New Triad and Ballistic Missile Defense were inherently defensive, this NNS was a potentially dangerous initiative. Intentionally or not, it had dangerous implications for Russia, since it rendered Moscow insecure vis-à-vis the US due to the increased defense and offence capabilities.

The article is divided into the four parts. The first describes the new security environment which led to the adoption of

1 Global Security (2002) *Nuclear Posture Review (excerpts)*. available at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/policy/dod/npr.htm> (accessed: 14 March 2018)

2 Ibid

the NNS. The next three sections critically examine the major changes introduced by the NNS and their implications for Russian security. The key changes are identified as: change in the main target of the nuclear strategy, initiation of unilateralist “counterproliferation”, and emphasis on Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD).

New Security Environment and New Nuclear Strategy

During the 45 years of the Cold War, the main threats to US security were considered to be the USSR and the Warsaw Pact. Accordingly, the US nuclear strategy was based on the idea of deterrence through mutually assured destruction (MAD), designed “to meet the challenges posed by the Soviet Union, a superpower adversary that deployed an enormous nuclear arsenal and was viewed as a threat to vital US interests.”³ However, the threats of the post-Cold War period were essentially different from those of the Cold War. The 9/11 terrorist attacks changed the Cold War-era threat perceptions in the US by revealing the dangerous capabilities of terrorist organizations. The new NNS, which was adopted in 2002, named terrorists and “rogue states” such as Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, as new rivals and the most dangerous threats to national security.

The new NSS illustrated the need for a new approach, stating that rogue states are sponsoring terrorism and rejecting core American values; it argued that their leaders “are more willing to take risks, especially with respect to the use of WMDs, than the “status quo, “risk-averse” adversary that the United States faced in the Cold War”⁴. The traditional deterrence modality was seen as less reliable.

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Even before the 9/11 attacks, George W. Bush frequently criticized the Clinton Administration’s nuclear strategy, saying that although a decade had passed since the end of the Cold War, the US remained locked in a Cold War mentality. After 9/11,

3 Glaser, C. and Fetter, S. (2005). Counterforce Revisited: Assessing the Nuclear Posture Review’s New Missions, *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 2

4 Global Security (2002) *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. available at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/national/nss-020920.pdf> (accessed 25 March 2018)

President Bush directed the Department of Defense to review US nuclear strategy from the bottom up. Several documents were adopted which outlined the NNS. The foundational document of the NNS was the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR). First submitted to the Congress on 31 December 2001, it was then leaked to the media. The National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction (National Security Presidential Directive (NSDP) 17) and National Policy on Missile Defense (NSDP 23) were signed by President Bush at the end of 2002. These documents completed the definition of the main directions of the US' post-9/11 nuclear strategy.

The NNS brought about three main changes. Firstly, it defined new enemies, and therefore a new structure for US nuclear forces to meet the entailed threats. Secondly, it was based on the idea of “active counterproliferation” rather than non-proliferation; this counterproliferation was unilateral rather than multilateral. Lastly, the NNS emphasized the development of National Missile Defense, previously prohibited under the multilateral regime.

New Target and New Triad

The first notable innovation of NNS was the shift from deterring other nuclear powers to defending against rogue states, failed states, and non-state groups with nuclear weapons.⁵ The NPR listed the conditions under which resort to nuclear weapons was allowed, and explicitly outlined the logic of threats from rogue states and terrorists.

“North Korea, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Libya are among the countries that could be involved in immediate, potential, or unexpected contingencies. All have longstanding hostility toward the United States and its security partners; North Korea and Iraq in particular have been chronic military concerns. All sponsor or harbour terrorists and all have active WMD and missile programs.”⁶

The NPR stated that resort to nuclear weapons would be

⁵ Global Security (2002) *Nuclear Posture Review (excerpts)*. available at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/policy/dod/npr.htm> (accessed: 14 March 2018)

⁶ Ibid

permissible in the event of a biological or chemical attack; against targets able to withstand non-nuclear attack; in retaliation for attack with nuclear weapons; or in the event of surprising military developments.⁷

As mentioned above, terrorist organizations along with rogue states were considered as the main threats to the US. President Bush argued that unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction could deliver those weapons via missiles to the US, or secretly provide them to terrorist allies.⁸ The belief that these new adversaries were more likely to attack and less susceptible to deterrence, the NNS asserted defense capability against rogue states and terrorists groups and enabled pre-emptive strikes with accurate weapons. For this purpose, the NPR adopted a new triad of nuclear forces, placing strong emphasis on defense potential and highly accurate and bunker-destroying weapons (for pre-emptively destroying remote caves of terrorists and rogue states' hardened nuclear facilities).

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Thus, the New Triad was markedly different from the Cold War Triad of nuclear forces (composed of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs), and long-range nuclear-armed bombers) and consisted of the following three elements:

- Offensive strike systems (both nuclear and conventional - more accurate and earth-penetrating);
- Defenses (both active - such as ballistic missile - and passive defenses)
- A revitalized defense infrastructure providing new capabilities in a timely fashion to meet emerging threats.⁹

Plans for new developments in the US nuclear arms strategy had negative implications for Russia's security, whether intentional or not. Firstly, in the NPR, Russia was mentioned among the

7 Richter, P. (2002). U.S. Works Up Plan for Using Nuclear Arms. *The Los Angeles Times*, available at: <http://www.articles.latimes.com/2002/mar/09/.../mn-31965> (accessed 25 March 2018)

8 Cirincione, J. (2008). Strategic Collapse: The Failure of the Bush Nuclear Doctrine. *Arms Control Association*. available at: http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008_11/cirincione (accessed 21 March 2018)

9 Global Security (2002) *Nuclear Posture Review (excerpts)*. available at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/policy/dod/npr.htm> (accessed: 14 March 2018)

states of concern, meaning that it remains among the potential nuclear strike targets:

“Russia’s nuclear forces and programs, nevertheless, remain a concern. Russia faces many strategic problems around its periphery and its future course cannot be charted with certainty. US planning must take this into account. In the event that US relations with Russia significantly worsen in the future, the US may need to revise its nuclear force levels and posture.”¹⁰

Russia’s reaction to the NPR was one of strong concern. Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation said, “I must, however, say frankly that these statements [concerning the NPR] do worry us.”¹¹ Sergei Ivanov, then Defense Minister, went further by stating that, “it can only give rise to regret and concern, not only from Russia but from the entire world community. Such a plan can destabilize the situation and make it much tenser...”¹² This reaction was the result of changes to the NNS, which negatively affected Russia’s security perceptions.

While the Russian strategic arsenal has been eroded, the United States envisioned continuing modernization of its weapons. US strategic forces have shrunk in number since the end of the Cold War, but they have become more lethal.

Secondly, the NPR indicated that the US was aiming to achieve primacy over Russia. Chuba and Crouch depict the “new triad” of the Bush Administration’s NPR as a tool of nuclear primacy.¹³ New Triad and other developments introduced by the NPR undermined the nuclear balance between the two states threatened to render Russia’s nuclear deterrence ineffective. Even though the NPR intended to reduce the number of US warheads (down to 1700-2200 operationally deployed warheads¹⁴), it increased the nuclear power of the country by adding new advanced strike and defense capabilities. While the Russian strategic arsenal has been eroded, the United States envisioned continuing modernization of its weapons. US

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ *International Reaction to the Leaked Nuclear Posture Review*. (2009). Nuclear and WMD, available at: http://www.basicint.org/nuclear/US_Policy/NPRreactions-0402.htm (accessed 26 March 2018)

¹² Reuters/Russia Journal, quoted in *International Reaction to the Leaked Nuclear Posture Review*. (2009). Nuclear and WMD, available at: http://www.basicint.org/nuclear/US_Policy/NPRreactions-0402.htm (accessed 26 March 2018)

¹³ Chyba C. and Crouch D. (2009). Understanding the U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy Debate, *The Washington Quarterly*, 32:3, p. 24

¹⁴ Global Security (2002) *Nuclear Posture Review (excerpts)*. available at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/policy/dod/npr.htm> (accessed: 14 March 2018)

strategic forces have shrunk in number since the end of the Cold War, but they have become more lethal.¹⁵ Thus while the new strategy ostensibly targeted rogue states and terrorist groups' facilities, the new capabilities were entailed nuclear superiority over rivals, including Russia. For example, it was argued that new ground burst nuclear weapons were designed for a variety of missions, such as destroying North Korean WMD bunkers or remote cave complexes housing terrorist leaders. But Lieber and Press emphasize that the US already possessed a "number of highly accurate, similar-yield warheads that would be ideal for these purposes."¹⁶ Therefore, the decision to upgrade the fuse of many SLBM warheads (the W76s) to permit ground bursts makes sense only if the mission is destroying hundreds of Russian hardened missile silos. Similarly, US efforts to advance current SLBMs to increase their accuracy from 90 metres to 12 metres was consistent with the destruction of very difficult targets such as Russian missile silos. Against other targets such as terrorist caves or relatively shallow bunkers in Iran and North Korea, "it makes no difference whether the 100-kiloton warhead detonates 30 or 90 meters away"¹⁷. Furthermore, new small but accurate nuclear weapons were perfectly capable of destroying Russian Topol mobile missile launchers, which were considered the backbone of the country's nuclear forces. Earth penetrating nuclear weapons would have the capacity to destroy Russia's most important underground nuclear command facilities like Yamanatau and Kosvinsky.¹⁸

In sum, to meet the challenges posed by new adversaries, the main target of the new nuclear strategy was defense against rogue/failed states and terrorists with WMDs. According to this new target, the New Triad of nuclear forces was adopted: adding new advanced strike and defense capabilities to the US' nuclear power. But deliberately or not, these new capabilities negatively impacted Russian security by enabling the nuclear primacy of the US.

15 Lieber, K. and Press, D. (2006). 'The End of MAD? The Nuclear Dimension of U.S. Primacy', *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 4

16 *ibid*

17 Global Security (2002) *Nuclear Posture Review (excerpts)*. available at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/policy/dod/npr.htm> (accessed: 14 March 2018)

18 Minuteman Elite and Earth Penetrating Warheads. (2007). *Science and Global Security*, available at: <http://sciencesecurity.livejournal.com/46554.html> (accessed 16 March 2018)

Proactive Counter-proliferation

Prior to the NNS, the US had been employing a large array of means for nonproliferation including multilateral control regimes (nonproliferation treaty), bilateral influence over domestic regimes (e.g. Egypt), expanding the nuclear umbrella (e.g. case of Sweden), sanctions on trade of fissile materials and sanctions on WMD pursuing countries etc.¹⁹ But the new strategy, which according to President Bush was not “nonproliferation” but rather “counterproliferation”²⁰; and focused on “who” rather than “what”. It also involved more coercive actions (sanctions and pressure) than diplomacy and negotiation, and was more unilateral than multilateral. The primary threat was considered to come from a small number of rogue states that had no regard for international norms and were determined to acquire nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. The new strategy posited that punitive and coercive “counterproliferation” was more likely to dissuade those actors from acquiring nuclear weapons.²¹

The United States became more inclined to direct coercive actions such as pre-emptive attack or unilateral sanctions than diplomacy, on the basis that traditional concepts of deterrence would not work against a terrorist enemy. The argument was that the “US must be prepared to stop rogue states and their terrorist clients before they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction against the United States and our allies and friends.”²² The National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction was adopted in 2002 to strengthen counterproliferation efforts. It stated that “because deterrence may not succeed”, the US must be capable of pre-emptive measures, which “requires capabilities to detect and destroy an adversary’s WMD assets before these weapons are used.”²³

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19 Levite, A. (2002/2003). Never Say Never Again: Nuclear Reversal Revisited, *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 3

20 Bolton, J. (2004). Washington DC: The Bush Administration’s Forward Strategy for Nonproliferation. *Address to the American Enterprise Institute*, available at: http://www.nti.org/e_research/official_docs/dos/dos101904.pdf

21 Cirincione, J. (2008). Strategic Collapse: The Failure of the Bush Nuclear Doctrine. *Arms Control Association*. available at: http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008_11/cirincione (accessed 21 March 2018)

22 Global Security (2002) *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. available at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/national/nss-020920.pdf> (accessed 25 March 2018)

23 White House (2002) *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*, available at: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/16092.pdf> (accessed 22 March 2018)

The Bush Administration started to withdraw from multilateral regimes and ignore international conferences in order to free the US from multilateral restrictions, with the aim of developing a unilateralist counterproliferation policy. This was seen as a better fit with US interests in regard to preventing rogue states and terrorists from acquiring WMDs. The first step toward unilateralism was the boycott of the United Nations' conference, convened to encourage international support for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The boycott "fits a pattern of unilateralist non-engagement that is becoming the hallmark of the Bush Administration's arms control policy", said Daryl Kimball from the Arms Control Association.²⁴ Then President Bush declared on November 13 2001 that the United States would reduce "operationally deployed nuclear warheads" from approximately 5,300 to between 1,700 and 2,200 over the next decade.²⁵ This unilateral step was different to previous reduction initiatives, which had been implemented mutually pursuant to negotiations with USSR and later Russia. President Bush also announced on December 13 2001 that the United States was withdrawing from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972.²⁶ Administration officials also ignored the 2005 nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, sending only low-ranking officials and rebuffing efforts to gain a compromise agreement, without apparent consequences.²⁷

The unilateralism of the new US nuclear strategy was problematic for Russia's security because the unilateralist arms control policy and withdrawal from international treaties prevented Russia from restricting America's nuclear armament plans. Russia's unhappiness with the United States' new unilateral approach became clear from statements by President Putin describing US' unilateral withdrawal from treaties as "wrong", and declaring that "a legal vacuum in the realm of strategic stability must not be allowed to

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24 Kimball, D. (2001) CTBT Rogue State?. *Arms Control Today*, *Arms Control Association*. available at: http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2001_12/ctbtanalysisdec01 (accessed 23 March 2018)

25 McNamara, R. (2005) Apocalypse Soon. *Foreign Policy*, No. 148, pp. 29-35

26 BBC (13 December 2001) America withdraws from ABM treaty, available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/1707812.stm> (accessed 18 March 2018)

27 Cirincione, J. (2008). Strategic Collapse: The Failure of the Bush Nuclear Doctrine. *Arms Control Association*. available at: http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008_11/cirincione (accessed 21 March 2018)

occur.”²⁸ Previously, the two states had cooperated in the field of arms reduction and control by negotiating and signing treaties. This allowed Russia to preserve nuclear parity despite lacking the resources to engage in an arms race. But US unilateralism prevented Russia from exerting any kind of influence over the US in regard to nuclear parity, and therefore threatened to fuel a new nuclear arming race.

The first signs of this tendency were revealed when the NPR made it clear that warheads reduced unilaterally by the US would not be completely de-commissioned, but rather maintained as “responsive forces”.²⁹ This clearly imposed a burden on Russia to either accept the US’ primacy or engage in an arms race that it could not afford. On November 13 2001, Bush declared that

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nuclear weapons would be reduced to between 1,700 and 2,200 over the next decade. He stated that “this scaling back would approach the 1,500 to 2,200 range that Putin had proposed for Russia.”³⁰ However, the new NPR presented quite a different story. While Russia suggested mutual warhead reductions to 1500, or even 1000, the United States insisted on reducing the number of deployed warheads to 2200, with additional warheads kept in storage.³¹ NPR (2002) assumed that strategic offensive nuclear weapons in much larger numbers than 1,700 to 2,200 would be part of US military forces for the next several decades. Although the number of deployed warheads was expected to be reduced to 3,800 in 2007 and further to 1,700-2,200 by 2012, the warheads and many of the launch vehicles taken off deployment were set to be maintained in a “responsive” reserve from which they could be easily returned to the operationally deployed force.³² With Russian nuclear forces aging, and the lack of funds to keep parity by deploying new warheads, this development placed a heavy burden on Russia to engage in preserving balance with the US. Thus Russia also had to stop dismantling

28 Savel'yev, A. (2009). Russia and the U.S.: A Strategic Relationship, *International Affairs*, No. 1, page(s): 13-22

29 Global Security (2002) *Nuclear Posture Review (excerpts)*. available at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/policy/dod/npr.htm> (accessed: 14 March 2018)

30 McNamara, R. (2005) *Apocalypse Soon. Foreign Policy*, No. 148, pp. 29-35

31 Gottenmoeller, R. (2004). Russia's Defense Policy, *Carnegie Endowment*. available at: <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/events/?fa=eventDetail&id=687&prog=zgp> (accessed 23 March 2018)

32 Woolf, A. (2002). The Nuclear Posture Review: Overview and Emerging Issues, *CRS Report for Congress*. available at: <http://www.iwar.org.uk/news-archive/crs/8039.pdf> (accessed 24 March 2018)

its Multiple Independently-targetable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) forces of SS-18 and SS-20 Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM), which remain the core of its strategic forces. Moreover, Russia continued the deployment of a new ICBM (SS-27), and also continued to develop new fifth generation submarines and new Submarine-launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBM).³³

In sum, the NNS represented a more coercive and unilateral counterproliferation policy, which put undesirable pressure on Russia by preventing Moscow from controlling parity through bilateral and multilateral treaties.

Ballistic Missile Defense

The Bush Administration decided that the US offensive nuclear forces alone could not deter threats to the United States, its allies, and its friends, “because terrorists have few assets to hold at risk, are too difficult to find or communicate with, or because they would view retaliation as furthering their cause.”³⁴ They believed that a combination of offensive strike forces and defensive capabilities was needed to defend against the diverse set of potential adversaries and unexpected threats the United States would likely face during the upcoming decades. Therefore, the Administration attached great importance to the development and deployment of missile defense systems. Missile defense was designed as insurance against the failure of traditional deterrence.³⁵

To build strong anti-missile defense including land-based, sea-based and space-based capabilities, the United States withdrew from the ABM Treaty, removing legal obstacles for developing and deploying of missile shield. “I have concluded the ABM treaty hinders our government’s ability to develop ways to protect our people from future terrorist or rogue-state missile attacks,” Bush announced following a meeting with his National Security

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33 McDonough, D. (2006) *Nuclear superiority : the 'new triad' and the evolution of nuclear strategy*. London: Routledge for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, p. 80-82

34 Chyba C. and Crouch D. (2009). Understanding the U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy Debate, *The Washington Quarterly*, 32:3

35 Peoples C. (2010). *Justifying Ballistic Missile Defense*. Cambridge University Press. P. 186

Council in 2001.³⁶ The ABM Treaty between the US and USSR was signed back on May 26 1972, when the Cold War was at its height, and aimed to restrict each country's ability to build national anti-missile systems. On December 13 2001, President Bush officially announced his country's withdrawal from the treaty. He justified this move based on the threat from terrorists and rogue states: "We know that the terrorists and some of those who support them seek the ability to deliver death and destruction to our doorstep via missile. And we must have the freedom and the flexibility to develop effective defenses against those attacks."³⁷ Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz supported the idea, asserting that "nukes will give freedom of action to international bullies like Iraq, like Iran, like North Korea to threaten us. It makes no sense, in the era when technology allows us to take away the ability to attack us, to leave us vulnerable to that threat."³⁸

In December 2002, NSDP 23 – the National Policy on Ballistic Missile Defense - was signed by President Bush. The document outlined a plan to deploy ballistic missile defense systems abroad by 2004. The first contingent of NMD interceptors was deployed in 2004, and this was only the starting point for a large, multilayered missile defense system. To this end, the United States has doubled its investment in missile defense, accelerating research and development on a range of land, air, sea, and space-based missile defense systems.³⁹ According to the Administration, the proposed missile shield in Europe would help defend US forces stationed in Europe, US friends and allies in the region, as well as to defend the country against long-range ballistic missile threats, namely from Iran.⁴⁰

Hitherto, despite the US's striking conventional superiority, Russia did not feel critically insecure vis-à-vis the US because of the security guarantees entailed by MAD. Therefore Russia

36 BBC (13 December 2001) America withdraws from ABM treaty, available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/1707812.stm> (accessed 18 March 2018)

37 Withdrawal from ABM Treaty. (2001). *The Washington Post* Transcript of the Speech President Bush's Speech

38 Peoples C. (2010). *Justifying Ballistic Missile Defense*. Cambridge University Press. P. 191

39 Lieber, K. and Press, D. (2006). The End of MAD? The Nuclear Dimension of U.S. Primacy, *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 4, p. 7–44

40 Hildreth, S. and Ek, C. (2008) Long-Range Ballistic Missile Defense in Europe, *Congressional Research Service Report for Congress*. available at: <http://italy.usembassy.gov/pdf/other/RL34051.pdf> (accessed 15 March 2018)

was heavily reliant on nuclear deterrence to compensate for conventional weaknesses during the post-Cold War period. As Klein argued, as soon as both sides in an adversarial relationship acquire nuclear capabilities, classical strategic notions of winning and losing, of defeating an enemy, were rendered obsolete.⁴¹ He further posits that the road to stability and order thus “resides in the virtues of vulnerability. In other words, “no defense.”⁴² But the new BMD of US was conceived as very dangerous for Russia on the grounds that:

“it might pose the illusion invulnerability or worse yet, pose the real threat of invincibility to a country. If the country could indeed hide behind an effective defensive shield, what would assure its rivals that they would not be ultimately subject to attack? Thus no country would feel safe from it.”⁴³

BMD posed a threat to Russia because it could give the US first strike advantage, by enabling the US to defend against Russian second strikes. This seriously damaged Russia’s nuclear security perceptions. However, many critiques argue that BMD was not be able to fully eliminate MAD, because even a few hundred incoming warheads would overwhelm any plausible defense, and Russia possessed 3.500 warheads that could reach US territory.⁴⁴ Although this criticism is reasonable, Lieber and Press argue that even a limited missile shield could be a powerful complement to the offensive capabilities of US nuclear forces:

“If the United States struck before Russian forces were alerted, Russia would be lucky if half-dozen warheads survived. Facing a small number of incoming warheads US interceptors could simply target them all.”⁴⁵

The logic here is that until this strategy was initiated, the idea of mutually assured destruction made war between US and Russia almost unthinkable. But the US’ new missile defense capacity

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41 Klein, B. (1994). *Strategic studies and world order*. Cambridge; New York. Cambridge University Press, p. 60

42 Ibid, p. 62

43 Ibid, p. 61

44 Lieber, K. and Press, D. (2006). The End of MAD? The Nuclear Dimension of U.S. Primacy, *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 4, p. 7–44

45 *ibid*

eliminated MAD while rendering Russia insecure vis-à-vis the US. Thus, despite being nominally directed against rogue states and terrorist organizations, the new ballistic defense threatened to deprive Russia of its nuclear deterrent.

Whereas Russia's official reaction to the US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty was fairly moderate, the US intention to deploy elements of a missile defense system in Central Europe aroused strong protest on the Russian side. President Putin highlighted that "a system of US nuclear weapons" and a system of the US "strategic nuclear complex" had appeared in Europe; he compared the deployment of a US missile shield in [central] Europe with the deployment of Pershing missiles and the entire situation that evolved with "the one that brought about the Caribbean Crisis."⁴⁶ When tensions were at their height because of missile shield deployment, Russia's then-military chief of staff, Yuri Baluyevsky, said, "Moscow is ready to use force, including pre-emptively and with nuclear weapons, to defend itself against the emerging situation."⁴⁷ The result

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was that Russia declared it would no longer be bound by the START II nuclear arms reduction agreement.⁴⁸ In addition, US plans to deploy missile defense systems in Europe provoked an immediate response from Russia, which deployed its own missiles in Kaliningrad, leading to rising tensions at the European Union level.⁴⁹

In sum, US actions within the NNS have undermined Russia's security by giving the US first strike advantage.

In Lieu of Conclusion

The September 11 terrorist attacks revealed the capabilities of terrorists to strike the US, and its vulnerabilities vis-à-vis rogue states and terrorists. This built strong consensus among Americans

46 Savel'yev, A. (2009). Russia and the U.S.: A Strategic Relationship, *International Affairs*, No. 1

47 *Russia Warns of Nuclear Defence*. (2008). BBC. available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7198181.stm> (accessed 25 March 2018)

48 Boese, W. (2002). Russia Declares Itself No Longer Bound by START II. *Arms Control Association*, available at: <http://www.armscontrol.org/print/1094> (accessed 18 March 2018)

49 Komen, J. (2009). *EU-Russia relations - Where are we now?*. Euro-Power. available at: http://www.euro-power.fr/pdf/EP0043_KOM0001_03.2009.pdf (accessed 22 March 2018)

about the new security environment pursuant to new enemies of the US. Therefore, shortly after the 9/11 attacks, the decision was made to adopt new strategies, including a new Nuclear Strategy, in order to meet new challenges of a new security environment. These new strategies marked a significant shift from those of the Cold War.

This NNS changed the main target from deterrence through MAD, to defense from rogue states and terrorists. It entailed the launch of an active proliferation policy which was more unilateral and more coercive, and announced the deployment of BMD to defend the country, its allies, and troops on foreign soils from potential nuclear strikes by rogue states and terrorist groups. The structure of nuclear forces changed accordingly, producing new capabilities in defense and offence. These innovations increased the threat of US nuclear primacy via innovations perfectly suited to destroying Russian nuclear facilities. To remove the legal obstacles to developing new nuclear and anti-nuclear weapons, the US started to withdraw from international treaties. This strategy of unilateralism worsened the situation for Russia, because it prevented Moscow from restricting the development of US nuclear forces through multilateral treaties, while at the same time lacking the capacity to engage in an arms race. Finally, the deployment of BMD deprived Russia of deterrence via MAD, which had compensated for conventional weakness during the post-Cold War period, and thus threatened to render Russia insecure because of the US new first strike advantage.

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So, what is the legacy of the Bush Administration's post-9/11 nuclear strategy, and how has it evolved since? In early April 2010, then-US President Barack Obama unveiled his Administration's Nuclear Posture Review (NPR). The document marked a break with the Bush Administration's more hawkish policy, and constituted the core of what became known as the Obama nuclear doctrine. It included significant limitations on the circumstances under which Washington would use nuclear weapons, and stated US support for bolstering the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and other efforts to halt and reverse

the spread of nuclear arms.⁵⁰ The new strategy forbade the use of nuclear weapons against signatories in good standing of the NPT, provided that they were in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations and did not pose a “critical threat” to the United States, forswore the testing of nuclear weapons and development of new nuclear warheads, and committed the Administration to seek Senate ratification and the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).⁵¹ In another departure from his predecessor, Obama declared that the US would refrain from developing new atomic arms, having faced initial resistance from the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Pentagon.⁵²

Most importantly, Obama and Russian President Dmitri Medvedev signed a treaty to reduce each country’s nuclear arsenal to 1550 weapons apiece.⁵³ Thus, as a part of the general “reset” policy with Russia, the Obama Administration worked on improving relations with Moscow in the field of WMD along with other strategic weapons. The current Trump Administration also announced that it would continue much of the Obama Administration’s nuclear weapons policy, but take a more aggressive stance toward Russia, North Korea, and China.⁵⁴ The Trump Administration has not called for any new expansion of nuclear arsenal and has endorsed adherence to existing arms control agreements, including the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty signed between Russia and the US. Trump has concluded that the US should, in the main, follow Obama’s blueprint for modernizing the nuclear arsenal, including new bomber aircraft, submarines, and land-based missiles.

50 Eli Clifton (April 2010) Mixed Reviews for Obama’s Nuclear Strategy, *IPS*, retrieved April 19, 2012, available at: <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=50936> (accessed: 21 March 2018)

51 Ibid

52 Mark Tarn (April 2010) Barack Obama to limit use of US nuclear weapons, *The Guardian*, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/apr/06/obama-us-nuclear-weapons-strategy> (accessed: 18 March 2018)

53 William Bradley (April 2010) Obama’s Nuclear Strategy and the Russian Resurgence, *Huffingtonpost*, available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/william-bradley/obamas-nuclear-strategy-a_b_534027.html (accessed: 19 March 2018)

54 The Guardian (2018) *Warnings as Trump administration hardens nuclear policy against Russia*, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/feb/03/trump-administration-hardens-nuclear-policy-against-russia> (accessed: 20 March 2018)