



## BRIEFING PAPER

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# President Trump: the nuclear question

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## Summary

In January 2017, newly inaugurated President Trump called for a new Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) to examine US nuclear policy, strategy, capabilities and force posture to ensure that it is appropriately tailored to 21<sup>st</sup> century threats.

The last examination of US nuclear policy was in 2010 and was widely viewed as a mechanism through which President Obama's vision of 'Global Zero', a world without nuclear weapons, could be pursued. For the first time in US nuclear history, it gave primacy to the threat of nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism, as opposed to a nuclear exchange between nations. As such, one of its main aims was to reduce the role and scope of nuclear weapons in US policy policymaking.

Despite the 'disarmament' overtures of the 2010 NPR, by the end of the Obama administration the US government had set in train a series of nuclear modernisation programmes across the whole of the nuclear triad, which are estimated to cost approximately \$1.2 trillion over the next 30 years.

### **Nuclear Policy under Trump**

During both the election campaign and in his first year in office, there appeared to be a distinct lack of clarity on Trump's nuclear vision which raised interesting questions for the strategic direction of his NPR. Would it build upon the disarmament vision espoused by the Obama administration? Or would it be more assertive in tone, in line with his guiding foreign policy principle of "America first"?

The NPR was published in February 2018. As widely expected, deterrence and not disarmament is the overriding message of the Trump review, and a marked departure from key nuclear policies under the Obama administration that sought to lower the reliance on nuclear weapons and embrace non-proliferation and disarmament.

Echoing the conclusions of the Trump administration's [\*National Defense Strategy\*](#), the 2018 NPR acknowledges the re-emergence of long term 'great power' competition as a defining feature of the strategic environment, along with the threats posed by the nuclear ambitions of North Korea and Iran and by nuclear terrorism.

To that end, the focus of the 2018 NPR is on deterrence, albeit through a new lens. The nuclear triad, supported by a robust nuclear command and control system is considered to continue offering the most cost-effective means of ensuring strategic deterrence. As such, the modernisation programmes begun under the Obama administration are fully supported. However, the NPR also emphasises the need to maintain flexibility in any nuclear response, given "the range of adversaries, their capabilities and strategic objectives", noting that a "one size fits all" approach no longer applies. In a major departure from the 2010 review, the 2018 NPR therefore states the intention to introduce new "flexible", non-strategic, options into the US nuclear inventory in order to provide tailored deterrence.

The NPR also expands the definitions underpinning the US' declaratory policy to include significant non- nuclear strategic attacks, including cyber, on critical infrastructure and civilian populations, and attacks on US or allied nuclear forces, including command and control and warning and attack assessment capabilities, as an "extreme circumstance" that would warrant a nuclear response.

While committing the US to the longer-term goal of disarmament, the NPR also adopts a heavily caveated approach to future arms control, suggesting that "further progress is

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difficult to envision” and that the US would “remain receptive to future arms control negotiations if conditions permit and the potential outcome improves the security of the United States, its allies, and partners”. It does little to address alleged Russian non-compliance with the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty and offers no proposals for moving negotiations forward on the extension of New START, or any potential successor arms control treaty. The NPR also confirms that ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is no longer a policy objective under the Trump administration. It does, however, confirm the US’ intention to maintain its moratorium on nuclear testing.

Reactions to the NPR have been mixed. While many have been supportive of what they regard as a continuation of many of the US’ longstanding nuclear policies, others have been critical of decisions that will add capability to the US nuclear inventory and could potentially lower the nuclear threshold.

# 1. Background

On 27 January 2017 newly inaugurated US President, Donald Trump, signed an Executive Order on [Rebuilding the US Armed Forces](#), which called for a new Nuclear Posture Review to be initiated. The aim of that review was:

To ensure that the United States nuclear deterrent is modern, robust, flexible, resilient, ready, and appropriately tailored to deter 21st-century threats and reassure our allies.

The US Department of Defense [announced](#) the commencement of that review on 17 April 2017.

## 1.1 What is a Nuclear Posture Review?

A Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) is a comprehensive examination, led by the US Department of Defense, of US nuclear policy, strategy, capabilities and force posture.

It is an opportunity for the US administration to set out its rationale for nuclear weapons, and its overall aspirations with respect to nuclear policy, within the context of its overall national security strategy. Congressional support for the conclusions of an NPR is demonstrated through its allocation of resources for relevant programmes.

There is no official timeframe for when an NPR must take place, although NPR's have been conducted by each of the three previous US administrations at the start of their term in office. The first review in 1994 was an attempt to adapt US nuclear policy to the realities of the post-Cold War era. The two subsequent reviews, both of which were congressionally mandated, represented further opportunities to evolve US nuclear strategy in line with the shifting security landscape.

### Previous Nuclear Posture Reviews:

September 1994 – Bill Clinton

December 2001 – George W. Bush

April 2010 – Barack Obama

## 2. The 2010 Nuclear Posture Review

The use of the NPR as a mechanism to pursue a particular Presidential agenda was most notable in 2010. It followed shortly after President Obama set out his long-term vision for 'Global Zero', a world without nuclear weapons, during a speech in Prague. The NPR was viewed as a crucial test of the sincerity of President Obama's disarmament agenda; while at the same time justifying the continued existence of the US nuclear deterrent as essential to US national security interests.

The 2010 NPR had five key objectives, which for the first time in US nuclear history gave primacy to the threat of nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism, as opposed to a nuclear exchange between nations:<sup>1</sup>

- Preventing nuclear terrorism and proliferation
- Reducing the role of nuclear weapons
- Maintaining strategic deterrence and stability at reduced nuclear force levels
- Strengthening regional deterrence and reassurance of US allies and partners
- Sustaining a safe, secure and effective nuclear arsenal

Specifically, the Obama administration committed to not conduct nuclear testing, seek ratification and entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT); support negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty; and to not develop new nuclear warheads. Life extension programs (LEP) of existing capabilities would only use nuclear components based on previously tested designs and would not support new military missions or provide new military capabilities. The NPR also retained the right of 'first use' of nuclear weapons, although it pledged not to use, or threaten the use, of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states that are party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and in compliance with their obligations under that treaty.

While the 2010 NPR focused primarily on the next five to ten years, many of the commitments and recommendations set down by the then US administration were considered longer term projects that would "be the work of multiple administrations and Congresses and will require sustained bipartisan consensus".<sup>2</sup>

Despite the 'disarmament' overtures of the 2010 NPR, by the end of the Obama administration the US government had set in train a series of nuclear modernisation programmes across the whole of the nuclear

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<sup>1</sup> Further detail is available in Library briefing [RP10/42, Progress towards nuclear disarmament](#), June 2010

<sup>2</sup> *Nuclear Posture Review Report*, April 2010, Foreword by Secretary Robert Gates

triad, which are estimated to cost approximately \$1.2 trillion over the next 30 years.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Further detail is available in Library Briefing Paper CBP CBP7566, [Nuclear weapons – country comparisons](#)

### 3. Nuclear policy under President Trump

At the beginning of his Presidency, Donald Trump stated that “America first” would be the guiding principle for US foreign policy in the future. However, the implications for US nuclear policy were unclear.

During both the election campaign, and in his first few months of office, there appeared to be a distinct lack of clarity on Trump’s nuclear vision. While identifying nuclear proliferation as the single biggest problem in the world,<sup>4</sup> he also appeared to equally endorse Japan and South Korea developing their own nuclear capabilities in order to offset North Korea.<sup>5</sup> His views on ‘no first use’ were equally mixed, suggesting in an interview with *The New York Times* in March 2016 that he would “not want to be the first one to use them”, but equally that he would use them first as “an absolute last step”.<sup>6</sup> He was even reported to have alluded to their possible use on the battlefield in the war against ISIS, arguing “Somebody hits us within ISIS —you wouldn’t fight back with a nuke?”.<sup>7</sup>

He also called into question the usefulness of the US-Russia New START treaty, reportedly calling it “one-sided” in favour of Russia and allegedly did not respond positively to Putin’s suggestion that the deal should be extended.<sup>8</sup> He also widely criticised the state of America’s nuclear weapons arsenal, and expressed support for, and even expansion of, the US’ modernisation plans. Using the Russian nuclear arsenal as a quantitative benchmark he commented in an interview in February 2017 that “it would be wonderful, a dream would be that no country would have nukes, but if countries are going to have nukes, we’re going to be at the top of the pack”.<sup>9</sup>

The lack of clarity in Donald Trump’s views on nuclear weapons initially raised interesting questions for the strategic direction of the NPR. Would it build upon the vision of ‘Global Zero’ espoused by President Obama? Or, in light of the prevailing international security situation, would President Trump seek to keep the US’ nuclear options open, in particular with respect to Russia, North Korea and Iran? If so, would it open the door to a broader interpretation of the US nuclear modernisation programme and recommend extension of the US nuclear arsenal to include new assets such as lower or variable yield “tactical” nuclear weapons? The NPR process was also considered an opportunity to set out President Trump’s policies with respect to a number of outstanding,

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<sup>4</sup> “Here’s what Donald Trump has said about nuclear weapons” *Time Magazine*, 3 August 2016

<sup>5</sup> “Transcript: Donald Trump expounds his views on foreign policy”, *The New York Times*, 26 March 2016

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>7</sup> [“What does Donald Trump really think about using nuclear weapons?”](#), *NBC News*, 28 September 2016

<sup>8</sup> [“Trump wants to make sure US nuclear arsenal at top of the pack”](#), *Reuters*, 24 February 2017 and “A President in need of a Russia policy”, *Arms Control Today*, March 2017

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*

high priority, issues including the US' response to alleged Russian contravention of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty;<sup>10</sup> the future of US-Russian nuclear arms control;<sup>11</sup> and whether to seek ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).<sup>12</sup>

### 3.1 Outcomes of the Nuclear Posture Review

The [Nuclear Posture Review](#) was published by the Department of Defense in February 2018.

As widely expected deterrence and not disarmament is the overriding message of the Trump administration's NPR, and a marked departure from key nuclear policies under the Obama administration that sought to lower the reliance on nuclear weapons and embrace non-proliferation and disarmament.

Echoing the conclusions of the Trump administration's [National Defense Strategy](#), the 2018 NPR acknowledges the re-emergence of long term 'great power' competition as a defining feature of the strategic environment. Russian and Chinese nuclear modernization and expansion,<sup>13</sup> in tandem with Russia's increasing belligerence on the international stage, is therefore central to the NPR's strategic threat assessment, along with the threats posed by the nuclear ambitions of North Korea and Iran and by nuclear terrorism. In his preface to the NPR Defense Secretary James Mattis comments:

We must look reality in the eye and see the world as it is, not as we wish it to be. This NPR reflects the current, pragmatic assessment of the threats we face and the uncertainties regarding the future security environment [...]

global threat conditions have worsened markedly since the most recent 2010 NPR, including increasingly explicit nuclear threats from potential adversaries. The United States now faces a more diverse and advanced nuclear-threat environment than ever before, with considerable dynamism in potential adversaries' development and deployment programs for nuclear weapons and delivery systems.<sup>14</sup>

Deterrence, and not disarmament, is the overriding message of the Trump administration's Nuclear Posture Review.

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<sup>10</sup> The INF Treaty eliminates nuclear capable ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with a range of 500km- 5,500 km (and their launchers) forbidding their possession, development or flight testing. The US first accused Russia of violating the treaty in 2014 suggesting that it was flight testing a new intermediate-range, land-based cruise missile. Russia has refuted this accusation, while also suggesting that by deploying its ballistic missile shield in Eastern Europe the US is, itself, contravening the INF treaty.

<sup>11</sup> The [New START treaty](#) expires on 5 February 2021, unless it is superseded by a subsequent disarmament agreement. Under Article XIV it can also be extended for a 5-year period if both Parties agree. If either option were to be pursued the process would begin during this Presidential term.

<sup>12</sup> The United States has signed, but not ratified the CTBT. As an [Annex 2 state](#), ratification of the CTBT by the United States is required before the treaty can enter force. 36 of the 44 Annex 2 states have signed and ratified the treaty. There are currently 8 'hold-out' states: the US, China, Egypt, Iran and Israel (who have also signed but not ratified the treaty), and India, Pakistan and North Korea. The US Senate has previously refused to ratify the treaty, in 1999, over concerns that the US would not be able to effectively maintain its nuclear arsenal and that detection technology was not accurate enough to effectively monitor a ban.

<sup>13</sup> This is examined in greater detail in Library Briefing Paper CBP7566, [Nuclear weapons – country comparisons](#)

<sup>14</sup> US Nuclear Posture Review, Preface, p.II

To that end, the focus of the 2018 NPR is on deterrence, albeit through a new lens. As the US Deputy Secretary of Energy noted in a Pentagon press conference:

Over the past decade, while the United States has led the world in [nuclear] reductions, every one of our potential nuclear adversaries has been pursuing the exact opposite strategy.

These powers are increasing the numbers and types of nuclear weapons in their arsenal, with some of them establishing doctrines of limited and coercive nuclear use [...]

The United States needs to respond by achieving new and effective balance in our deterrent capabilities.<sup>15</sup>

### Extension of the US nuclear arsenal

The NPR therefore reiterates the view of previous NPR: that the nuclear triad supported by a robust command and control and communications (C3) system, is the most cost-effective means of ensuring strategic nuclear deterrence. Consequently, it re-affirms the administration's commitment to the nuclear modernisation programmes already underway across each leg of the triad and to the modernisation of nuclear C3.<sup>16</sup> The review also commits to the major recapitalisation of the nuclear complex in order to "ensure the capability to design, produce, and maintain nuclear weapons".<sup>17</sup>

However, the NPR also emphasises the need to maintain flexibility in any nuclear response, given "the range of adversaries, their capabilities and strategic objectives", noting that a "one size fits all" approach no longer applies.<sup>18</sup>

The principles of deterrence have not changed, but the way we apply those principles must evolve to fit the 21<sup>st</sup> century security environment.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> US Department of Defense, *News Briefing on the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review*, 2 February 2018

<sup>16</sup> The US nuclear modernisation programme is examined in greater detail in Library Briefing Paper CBP7566, [Nuclear weapons – country comparisons](#)

<sup>17</sup> US Department of Defense, *News Briefing on the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review*, 2 February 2018

<sup>18</sup> US Department of Defense, [Nuclear Posture Review Fact Sheet: Nuclear Deterrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century](#), February 2018

<sup>19</sup> US Department of Defense, [Nuclear Posture Review Fact Sheet: Nuclear Deterrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century](#), February 2018

The 2018 NPR, in a major departure from the 2010 review, therefore states the DoD's intention to introduce new "flexible", non-strategic, options into the US nuclear inventory in order to provide tailored deterrence. Specifically, the NPR recommends lowering the yield of some existing submarine-launched ballistic missile warheads, and re-introducing nuclear capable, sea-launched cruise missiles.<sup>20</sup> However, the Pentagon has sought to emphasise that neither recommendation requires the development of new nuclear warheads, that they will not result in an increase to the nuclear stockpile and that they are compliant with all of the US' arms control treaty obligations.<sup>21</sup> The NPR refers to them as "modest enhancements to current capabilities".<sup>22</sup>

The NPR also argues that the introduction of such capabilities does not lower the nuclear threshold. Instead it argues that:

Expanding flexible U.S. nuclear options now, to include low-yield options, is important for the preservation of credible deterrence against regional aggression. It will raise the nuclear threshold and help ensure that potential adversaries perceive no possible advantage in limited nuclear escalation, making nuclear employment less likely.<sup>23</sup>

This approach is widely considered to be a response to Russia's significant arsenal of non-strategic nuclear weapons, which are not covered by any arms control treaty, and its, albeit officially undeclared, nuclear policy of "escalate to de-escalate" whereby the limited use first use of non-strategic nuclear weapons would be considered to end a low-level conventional conflict in their favour.

However, many have argued that while the introduction of lower-yield warheads and new cruise missiles may not be a quantitative increase in the size of the US nuclear arsenal, it does represent a qualitative increase in capability and therefore undermines any overtures towards disarmament.

Hans Kristensen, Director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists commented:

Anyone can come up with a scenario that requires a new weapon. What's missing from the debate is why the existing and planned capabilities are not sufficient. The United States already has flexible nuclear forces, advanced conventional capabilities, tailored war plans and low-yield warheads in its arsenal.<sup>24</sup>

Lynn Rusten of the Nuclear Threat Initiative supports this view arguing that "to suggest the current US nuclear arsenal does not provide a sufficient deterrent to Russia or any other nation is preposterous". She also goes on to comment that "it is disingenuous to deem a low-yield warhead on an SLBM a nonstrategic weapon". Instead, she argues that

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<sup>20</sup> Prior to 2010 the US Navy deployed the nuclear Tomahawk land-attack cruise missile (TLAM/N) aboard some of its attack submarines. Its withdrawal from service was announced in the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review.

<sup>21</sup> US Department of Defense, *News Briefing on the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review*, 2 February 2018

<sup>22</sup> US Department of Defense, [2018 Nuclear Posture Review Factsheet](#), February 2018

<sup>23</sup> US Nuclear Posture Review, p.XII

<sup>24</sup> "Here is a draft of Trump's nuclear review. He wants a lot more nukes", *The Huffington Post*, 12 January 2018

“nuclear warheads are neither strategic or nonstrategic; that nomenclature refers to their delivery vehicle. A low-yield nuclear warhead on an SLBM is still a strategic nuclear weapon”.<sup>25</sup>

Several commentators have also questioned the theory that having greater low-yield nuclear options raises the nuclear threshold, as opposed to lowering it given the likelihood of escalation into a large-scale nuclear exchange. As former Secretary of State George Schultz commented in testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee in January 2018:

A nuclear weapon is a nuclear weapon. You use a small one, then you go to a bigger one. I think nuclear weapons are nuclear weapons and we need to draw the line there.<sup>26</sup>

The lack of detail on the financing of additional nuclear capabilities has also attracted criticism, given the widely adopted view that the current modernisation programme is already unaffordable and will be difficult to sustain without significant cuts elsewhere.

### Declaratory policy

While the NPR remains consistent in terms of the overarching approach that nuclear weapons will only be used in “the most extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States, its allies and partners”,<sup>27</sup> what is defined as an “extreme circumstance” differs significantly from the previous NPR. The Trump NPR expands the definition of “extreme circumstances” to include significant non-nuclear strategic attacks, including cyber, on critical infrastructure and civilian populations, and attacks on US or allied nuclear forces, including command and control and warning and attack assessment capabilities.

The NPR also places a caveat on the negative security assurances extended to those non-nuclear weapon states that are party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and in compliance with their non-proliferation obligations. Under the new NPR the US “reserves the right to make any adjustment in the assurance that may be warranted by the evolution and proliferation of non-nuclear strategic attack technologies and US capabilities to counter that threat”.<sup>28</sup>

This change in language has caused concern among experts who have argued that it could have the effect of lowering the bar for first use of nuclear weapons and that threatening such use in response to cyberattacks or attacks on nuclear C3 would lack credibility. James Acton of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has suggested that the use of nuclear weapons in the latter circumstance would “violate any notion of proportionality” as a non-nuclear strike on US satellites “would almost certainly cause no human casualties”.<sup>29</sup>

“Four successive Republican and Democratic administrations since the end of the Cold War had sought to reduce the role and number of nuclear weapons in US national security strategy. This NPR makes a dangerous and unjustified U-turn...”

Lynn Rusten, Nuclear Threat Initiative

<sup>25</sup> “The Trump administration’s ‘wrong track’ nuclear policies”, *Arms Control Today*, March 2018

<sup>26</sup> [Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing](#), 25 January 2018

<sup>27</sup> US Nuclear Posture Review, p.21

<sup>28</sup> US Nuclear Posture Review, p.21

<sup>29</sup> “Trump seeks expanded nuclear capabilities”, *Arms Control Today*, March 2018

Daryl Kimball of the Arms Control Association has also argued:

Nuclear weapons are unlike any other weapons. The use of even a small number of these weapons would be catastrophic. Threatening nuclear attack to counter new kinds of “asymmetric” threats is unnecessary, would increase the risk of nuclear weapons use, and would make it easier for other countries to justify excessive roles for nuclear weapons in their policies.<sup>30</sup>

The Trump administration has, however, argued that its stance merely clarifies existing policies, rather than marking a radical departure from the previous NPR.<sup>31</sup>

### **What does the NPR say about future arms control?**

While the NPR commits the US to the long term aim of disarmament it also acknowledges that “progress in arms control is not an end in and of itself and depends on the security environment and the participation of willing partners”.

Given the strategic threat assessment underpinning the NPR however, particularly with respect to Russia, it is therefore unsurprising that the review does not adopt a positive approach to future arms control:

Further progress is difficult to envision, however, in an environment that is characterized by continuing significant non-compliance with existing arms control obligations and commitments, and by potential adversaries who seek to change borders and overturn existing norms.

In this regard, Russia continues to violate a series of arms control treaties and commitments.<sup>32</sup>

However, it goes on to state:

The United States remains willing to engage in a prudent arms control agenda. We are prepared to consider arms control opportunities that return parties to compliance, predictability, and transparency, and remain receptive to future arms control negotiations if conditions permit and the potential outcome improves the security of the United States, its allies, and partners.<sup>33</sup>

This heavily caveated approach to future arms control has, however, drawn considerable criticism from commentators who have accused the US administration of abdicating global leadership on disarmament and non-proliferation issues.

### **Alleged Russian non-compliance with the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF)**

Prior to the publication of the NPR, pressure had been building within Congress for the US to develop a new nuclear ground-launched cruise missile (GLCM), in response to Russian actions, that would, if tested and

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<sup>30</sup> “Trump’s more dangerous nuclear posture”, *Arms Control Today*, January/February 2018

<sup>31</sup> US Department of Defense, *News Briefing on the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review*, 2 February 2018

<sup>32</sup> US Nuclear Posture Review, p.73

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p.74

deployed, contravene the INF treaty's provisions.<sup>34</sup> The White House had objected to the establishment of such a programme, although it equally offered its support for "broad authorization of research and development on missile systems, including those prohibited by the treaty, to determine candidate systems that could become programs of record".<sup>35</sup>

In December 2017 the US administration announced that it would introduce economic and military measures in order to induce Russia back into compliance, which included sanctions and a review of the research and development options for new US conventional, ground-launched intermediate-range missiles.<sup>36</sup> Funding for the research and development of a treaty-prohibited GLCM was approved by Congress in the [2018 Defense Authorization Act](#).

The NPR reiterates these measures,<sup>37</sup> while also calling for the re-introduction of a nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile, which is also acknowledged as "an arms control compliant response to Russia's non-compliance with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, its non-strategic nuclear arsenal, and its other destabilizing behaviors".<sup>38</sup> However, this acknowledgement has been interpreted by several observers as evidence that the purpose of the new sea-launched cruise missile is inherently political, and has no utility in military terms.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the NPR goes on to state:

If Russia returns to compliance with its arms control obligations, reduces its non-strategic nuclear arsenal, and corrects its other destabilizing behaviors, the United States may reconsider the pursuit of a SLCM.<sup>40</sup>

The State Department has also indicated that research and development on a GLCM would also cease if Russia returned to full and verifiable compliance with its INF obligations.<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, for the future, the NPR states:

Regarding the INF Treaty, the United States complies with and remains committed to preserving the Treaty. However, the value of the INF Treaty, or any arms control treaty, depends on all parties remaining in compliance. For over four years, the United States has pressed Russia to return to compliance, and will continue to exert appropriate pressure to restore Russian compliance and preserve the INF Treaty.

Nevertheless, Moscow must understand that the United States will not forever endure Russia's continuing non-compliance. The

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<sup>34</sup> Pursuing research and development would not in itself contravene the INF treaty's provisions which prohibits either State Party from producing or flight testing any missiles which fall within the range parameters set out in the treaty ([Article VI](#))

<sup>35</sup> White House, [Statement of Administration Policy on National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018](#), 7 September 2017

<sup>36</sup> [US Department of State Press Statement](#), 8 December 2017

<sup>37</sup> US Nuclear Posture Review, p.10

<sup>38</sup> US Nuclear Posture Review, p. XII

<sup>39</sup> This is an argument that has been put forward by BASIC, among others. See: "Trump's Nuclear Posture Review endangers Europe", *BASIC Blogspot*, 21 February 2018

<sup>40</sup> US Nuclear Posture Review, P.55

<sup>41</sup> [US Department of State Press Statement](#), 8 December 2017

status quo, in which the United States continues to comply while Russia continues deployments in violation of the Treaty, is untenable.<sup>42</sup>

### **New START**

The NPR outlines the US' ongoing commitment to implement the New START treaty and suggests that it has sought to establish discussions on a next round of negotiated reductions, which it also claims Russia has "rebuffed".<sup>43</sup> However, while acknowledging the option of extending the treaty to 2026, the review stops short of committing to an extension of New START, or establishing a successor treaty, and offers no proposals for moving this issue forward.

The Trump administration has since established an interagency review which is examining the options with respect to any extension or successor to New START. At present the review has no timetable for conclusion, and in August 2018 National Security Adviser, John Bolton, suggested the review was only in its "early stages".<sup>44</sup>

### **Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)**

While the NPR confirms the US' intention to maintain its moratorium on nuclear testing, ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is no longer a policy objective under the Trump administration. The US will, however, continue to support the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organisation Preparatory Commission,<sup>45</sup> as well as the International Monitoring System and the International Data Centre.

The NPR states:

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.<sup>46</sup>

#### **Box 1: Suggested reading**

- Library briefing paper CBP8421, [Prospects for US-Russian nuclear arms control](#), 22 October 2018

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<sup>42</sup> US Nuclear Posture Review, p.74

<sup>43</sup> US Nuclear Posture Review, p.74

<sup>44</sup> "No arms control advances in US-Russian talks", *Arms Control Today*, September 2018

<sup>45</sup> The [CTBTO](#) is the body responsible for promoting the treaty and building up the verification regime.

<sup>46</sup> US Nuclear Posture Review, p.72

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