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Predicting a Tripolar Nuclear World: Where Does the United States Fit In?

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Editors:

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The New U.S. Nuclear Posture Review

In October 2022, Joseph Biden's administration published the new U.S. Nuclear Posture Review (NPR-2022) as part of a single National Defense Strategy (NDS-2022)¹ package along with the Missile Defense Review (MDR-2022). The previous Nuclear Posture Review appeared in February 2018 during Donald Trump's presidency².

One of the key functions of any publicly available strategic document is to deliver information to other states – both friendly and hostile. Yet only in few areas does this matter as much as in the field of nuclear weapons. NDS-2022, and particularly NPR-2022, contain a significant number of clearly defined U.S. norms and doctrinal guidelines regarding nuclear weapons and strategic stability, with the main target audience being the top political brass of Russia and China.

The Future Tripolar Nuclear World

NDS-2022 notes that “any adversary use of nuclear weapons, regardless of location or yield, would fundamentally alter the nature of a conflict, create the potential for uncontrolled escalation, and have strategic effects.” The document announces the intention of the United States to place “a renewed emphasis on arms control, non-proliferation, and risk reduction.” The ultimate goal of the United States as declared in the strategic document is to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. strategy. At the same time, it is unambiguously stated that **nuclear weapons will continue to provide nuclear deterrent effects that no other element of U.S. military power can replace**. At the same time, Russia and China, according to the United States, are not particularly interested in reducing the role of nuclear weapons in their own strategies.

(presumably, this is a reference to the Petrel, Dagger and Poseidon systems).

By the 2030s, the United States will find itself in the unprecedented situation of having to deter two major nuclear powers at the same time, which will have a clear impact on the situation in the field of deterrence, arms control and strategic stability. **In terms of nuclear potential, the world will become tripolar**³. This, will notably affect the dialogue on offensive weapons reduction with Russia.

NPR-2022 notes that China is actively developing its nuclear potential, creating a full-fledged nuclear triad, and will have at least one thousand warheads by the end of the 2020s. At the same time, Russia continues to rely on nuclear weapons and develop its arsenal, which includes nuclear forces covered by New START (which set a ceiling of 1550 deployed warheads), and 2000 non-strategic warheads and new nuclear systems, including those not covered by New START

It can be assumed that further dialogue between Russia and the United States on this issue will be significantly hamstrung, in addition to another problem: the so-called “Chinese factor” and the desire of the United States to balance its potential with the combined potential of Russia and China. The United States notes that Washington and Moscow have considerable experience when it comes to negotiations on strategic stability and crisis resolution, but little progress has been made in this area with China, “despite consistent U.S. efforts”. What is more, the requirement set out rather bluntly in NPR-2022 for China to adopt a moratorium on fissile material production or provide increased transparency in this area further reduces the

¹ National Defence Strategy of the United States of America // U.S. Department of Defense. October 27, 2022.
URL: <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Oct/27/2003103845/-1/-1/1/2022-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-NPR-MDR.PDF>

² Nuclear Posture Review // U.S. Department of Defense. February 2018.
URL: <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Feb/02/2001872886/-1/-1/1/2018-NUCLEAR-POSTURE-REVIEW-FINAL-REPORT.PDF>

³ Lyon R., “Biden's Nuclear Posture Review is Too Timid for 2022” // The Strategist – The Australian Strategic Policy Institute Blog. November 9, 2022.
URL: <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/bidens-nuclear-posture-review-is-too-timid-for-2022/>

likelihood of any meaningful dialogue developing between Washington and Beijing, especially considering the U.S. intends to resume the production of fissile materials itself.

The United States understands the importance of maintaining U.S.–Russia dialogue in this area, and recognizes the need to continue the implementation of the New START provisions and start working on a new agreement. And while the language used in the discussion of this issue appears somewhat arrogant, on the whole, NPR-2022 allows us to be quietly optimistic about the future of U.S.–Russia dialogue. Moreover, the included requirement to take the “Chinese factor” into account gives Russia the faint hope that British and French nuclear forces might also make its way into the negotiations.

NPR-2022 mentions the January 2022, Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapon States on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Races⁴. Listing key points of the Joint Statement (a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought; the commitment of nuclear powers to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament obligations), NPR-2022 focuses on the fact that Russia’s actions are inconsistent with and even undermine the Joint Statement, and notes that China should start a dialogue with the United States. Russia is accused of irresponsible statements and actions and its leaders, according to the document, view nuclear weapons as “a shield behind which to wage unjustified aggression against their neighbors”.

NPR-2022 proceeds from the fact that the United States is itself a “responsible nuclear power” and is focused on the timely replacement of legacy fielded systems, while Russia and China “continue to expand and diversify their nuclear capabilities, to include novel and destabilizing systems, as well as non-nuclear capabilities that could be used to conduct strategic attacks”. At the same time, the document makes it clear that non-nuclear deterrents only contribute to stability and deterrence if they are deployed by the United States and no one else. The use of non-nuclear capabilities helps the United States

strengthen deterrence, raise the nuclear threshold, and undermine adversary confidence in strategies for limited war that rely on the threat of nuclear escalation. The deployment of non-nuclear weapons by Russia and China would potentially destabilize the international situation and support aggressive plans and actions. At the same time, the authors concede that the relationship between nuclear and non-nuclear elements and their joint influence on the course of regional conflicts remains insufficiently studied.

NDS-2022 and NPR-2022 both note that China and Russia “likely possess capabilities” relevant to chemical and biological warfare that pose a threat to the United States, Allied, and partner forces. However, all Russian chemical weapon stockpiles were destroyed in 2017 under the supervision of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)⁵, while the United States destroyed around 95 per cent of its stockpiles⁶, having still to complete the process. The United States maintains that developing its own nuclear capabilities will allow China to incorporate new options into its strategy, including nuclear threats and a limited first strike. Notably, the same actions are seen either as a nuclear threat or as a deterrence measure, depending on which power is behind them.

In regards to North Korea, the threat of nuclear confrontation is growing too. While it is not on the same level as Russia and China in terms of the size and power of its nuclear forces, its arsenal includes nuclear and non-nuclear elements, ballistic missiles and chemical weapons. The message to Pyongyang in the NPR-2022 is clear: any use of nuclear weapons against the United States or its Allies and partners will result in the demise of the North Korean regime. There is no scenario in which the “Kim regime could employ nuclear weapons and survive”. The United States will also use nuclear weapons as an element of deterring non-nuclear threats from North Korea and warns Pyongyang against any violations of the non-proliferation regime. Washington implores Pyongyang to return to negotiations to achieve complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

⁴ Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapon States on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Races // President of Russia. January 3, 2022. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67551> (in Russian)

⁵ “OPCW Marks Completion of Destruction of Russian Chemical Weapons Stockpile” // Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, October 11, 2017. URL: <https://www.opcw.org/media-centre/news/2017/10/opcw-marks-completion-destruction-russian-chemical-weapons-stockpile>

⁶ “US Chemical Weapons Stockpile Elimination: Progress Update” // Arms Control Association, September 23, 2021. URL: <https://www.armscontrol.org/events/2021-09/us-chemical-weapons-stockpile-elimination-progress-update>

Finally, with regard to Iran, NPR-2022 somewhat reduces tensions, noting that Tehran does not possess, nor is it developing, nuclear weapons. At the same time NPR-2022 voices U.S. concerns over the situation with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (although this is more likely a jab at the Republican Party and Donald Trump's administration, than at Iran) and vows to not allow Iran to obtain nuclear weapons. However, as long as Iran does not possess nuclear weapons, the United States will ensure deterrence

through its superiority in conventional forces. NPR-2022 supports the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The United States has taken a more reserved stance on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), although it calls for the commencement of negotiations on the issue, provided that all key states participate. Finally, the United States is critical of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and does not consider it an effective means to achieve a nuclear-weapons-free world.

The Role of Nuclear Weapons in U.S. Strategy

According to NPR-2022, U.S. nuclear weapons are designed to deter a strategic attack of any form or scale (including existing and future non-nuclear threats of potential strategic importance), provide nuclear assurances to its Allies and partners, and "achieve U.S. objectives if deterrence fails." It is noted that "hedging against an uncertain future" is no longer a stated goal for nuclear weapons. According to NPR-2022: "As long as nuclear weapons exist, the fundamental role of nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear attack on the United States, our Allies, and partners". The United States would only consider the use of nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States or its Allies and partners. The United States will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states that are party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations. The inclusion of both allies and partners in the U.S. nuclear policy formula raises a number of extremely provocative questions and blurs the limits of the possible use of nuclear weapons by the United States.

NPR-2022 also rejects the concept of "No First Use" of nuclear weapons. According to the document, in the event that the decision to employ nuclear weapons is taken, the United States will try to end the conflict while inflicting as little damage as possible and ensuring the most favorable conditions for the United States, its Allies and partners. NPR-2022 notes that following a thorough review of other options for a nuclear declaratory policy, including the "No First Use" and "Sole Purpose" policies, a decision

was made to abandon such approaches because they would result in an unacceptable level of risk in light of the range of non-nuclear capabilities being developed and fielded by adversaries that could inflict strategic-level damage to the United States, its Allies, and partners. The United States acknowledges that its goal is to someday arrive at a "sole purpose declaration," but "some Allies and partners are particularly vulnerable to attacks with non-nuclear means that could produce devastating effects." In this regard, it is worth remembering that the "No First Use" and "Sole Purpose" doctrines were a key element of Joe Biden's election campaign⁷.

The U.S. nuclear policy is deliberately ambiguous. The idea is to make it difficult for adversaries to make decisions, such as initiating a crisis or armed conflict, or use non-nuclear strategic weapons or nuclear weapons of any yield. After the publication of NPR-2022, the United States will update the protocols and conditions for the use of nuclear weapons. NPR-2022 reiterates that it will be implemented in accordance with international humanitarian law, and that the United States will not intentionally target civilian populations or objects with nuclear weapons.

Special attention is also paid to preventing the accidental use of nuclear weapons and the protections that are in place to mitigate this risk. NPR-2022 draws attention to such measures as lowering the readiness level of the strategic nuclear forces (SNF), building up strategic nuclear forces that are capable of withstanding a first nuclear strike, targeting nuclear forces on duty in areas of the World Ocean, rather than at enemy territory, etc.

⁷ Kristensen H., Korda M., "The 2022 Nuclear Posture Review: Arms Control Subdued by Military Rivalry" // FAS, October 27, 2022. URL: <https://fas.org/blogs/security/2022/10/2022-nuclear-posture-review/>

Regional Nuclear Deterrence

Throughout the NPR-2022, the United States expresses concern over Russia's or China's ability to use nuclear weapons in a limited capacity, as well as its fears over nuclear threats and a hypothetical situation where Washington would be forced to sacrifice its own interests and security, or the security of its Allies or partners, in order to avoid a nuclear conflict. Washington intends to develop forces to prevent such a development. The concept to "escalate to de-escalate," which the United States attributes to Russia in the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review, is notably absent from the 2022 version.

Particular attention is paid to low-yield nuclear weapons, namely the W76-2 warheads, which were first deployed in early 2020 on Sea-Launched Cruise Missiles (SLBMs), dual-purpose tactical aviation (F-35A fighters with B61-12 bombs) and the Long-Range Standoff (LRSO) air-launched cruise missiles. At the same time, the United States will continue to maintain and upgrade a full-fledged nuclear triad to ensure the strategic deterrence of Russia.

The United States fears a limited nuclear conflict and sees the possibility of Russia's limited use of nuclear weapons in a conventional regional conflict to achieve victory or avoid defeat as the main threat. Preventing such a situation from unfolding is a priority for both the United States and NATO. Linking regional and strategic nuclear deterrence is one of the key tasks of U.S. nuclear policy. It must be stressed, as Dmitry Stefanovich rightly notes⁸, that it is impossible to separate regional cases from the global landscape if nuclear powers are involved in these situations.

The development of low-yield, strategic-range nuclear weapons by the U.S is in part the next

step in the its military's search for an asymmetric response to limited nuclear threats. In the case of the W76-2 warheads, this is an attempt to balance U.S adversary tactical nuclear weapons by creating a weapon that is tactical in terms of yield, but strategic in terms of launch range, and is capable of effectively overcoming the enemy's air defense systems. The goal here is to ensure early deployment, while the F-35A is expected to be deployed with B61-12 bombs and the LRSO. The very idea of a low-yield nuclear weapon such as the W76-2 is viewed with a certain degree of skepticism by a number of experts⁹. Moreover, it has all the hallmarks of a tool for making the same kind of nuclear threats the United States accuses China and Russia of making, as well as a means for launching a limited first nuclear strike. Additionally, low-yield nuclear weapons further blur the lines between nuclear, non-nuclear, strategic and regional/tactical weapons. In all fairness, NPR-2022 does state that the deterrence value of the W76-2 will be regularly reviewed.

The United States emphasizes the importance of regional nuclear deterrence, especially in Europe. NATO will continue to be a nuclear alliance as long as nuclear weapons exist. The United States will continue to carry out joint nuclear missions and deploy its nuclear weapons in Europe, particularly with OTA dual-use technology. An important (but not determining) factor in this context is the ever-strengthening position of the U.S. military-industrial complex in Europe.

As for the Indo-Pacific, NPR-2022 notes the U.S. commitment to multilateral dialogue formats with Japan, South Korea and Australia on issues of regional deterrence, which goes hand in hand with Washington's policy of tying together its network of bilateral relations.

B83-1 and SLCM-N

NPR-2022 does not bring anything radically new to the program for the development and modernization of U.S. strategic nuclear forces. Predictably, the decision to retire the B83-1 gravity bomb and cancel the SLCM-N program remain

in force. The Pentagon is expected to announce a replacement for the B83-1 as a means for countering deeply buried and well-fortified targets in the near future. The cancellation of the SLCM-N program, launched following the 2018 Nuclear

⁸ Stefanovich D., "Nuclear Deterrence-2022" // Valdai Discussion Club, November 17, 2022.
URL: https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/nuclear-deterrence-2022/?sphrase_id=1435587 (in Russian)

⁹ Bogdanov K., "Not a Very Nuclear War" // RIAC, February 18, 2020.
URL: <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/ne-ochen-yadernaya-voyna/> (in Russian)

Posture Review, will save more than \$2 billion on R&D costs alone¹⁰, and its functional purposes are likely to be taken over by the W76-2. In fact, the SLCM-N program promoted during Trump's presidency turned out to be detrimental to the needs of U.S. nuclear strategy, significantly complicating the implementation of daily tasks for the U.S. Navy and diverting large resources from higher priority programs.

Notably, these decisions were very much watered down in the final version of the 2023 Fiscal Year National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA-2023)¹¹, which was introduced on December 6th by the leaders of the United States Senate Committee on Armed Services and the House Armed Services Committee. As for the B83-1, Congress did not take the Pentagon's word for it and ordered the Secretary of Defense to send a detailed study of options for countering deeply buried and well-fortified targets to the United States Senate Committee on Armed Services and the House Armed Services Committee within 180 days of the adoption of NDAA-2023. The study had to include an assessment of the military's role and the significance of such targets, weapons system capabilities of effectively hitting these targets (including a mandatory assessment of the prospects for extending the lifetime of or upgrading the B83-1), and a strategy for deploying such systems (at least two alternatives). The law prohibits the Pentagon and the Department of Energy from retiring more than 25 per cent of the B83-1 inventory earlier than 90 days after the study is submitted to Congress. The report should be unclassified, although attachments may be classified.

Strategic Nuclear Forces

NPR-2022 points out a problem that has long been known – the short, or sometimes non-existent timeframes between the end of component service life of the current U.S. nuclear triad and its entry into combat duty of next-generation systems. The United States will continue the large-scale rearmament of its strategic nuclear forces, the total cost of which, according to estimates by the Congressional Budget Office, will reach approximately \$634 billion by 2030¹². The

The NDAA-2023 restrictions concerning the SLCM-N turned out to be even more significant. Legislators requested that the Secretary of Defense submit a report on deterrence measures for the limited use of nuclear weapons by Russia, China or North Korea on the field of military operations. Particularly, the military leadership would be required to produce an operational concept for nuclear SLCMs with various combat duty scenarios and a report on the ramifications of deploying nuclear SLCMs, including for deterrence, the balance of power in the region, and the combat services of the naval forces. The head of the National Nuclear Security Administration would be required to deliver an estimate of the timeframes and costs of developing and manufacturing a version of the W80-4 warhead for a nuclear SLCM. To prepare these materials, the Secretary of Defense would have to land on one solution as the best option based on an analysis of the nuclear SLCM alternatives. At the very least, the main conclusions of the analysis of the various options should be unclassified.

Additionally, Congress provided an unsolicited \$25 million for R&D into nuclear SLCM, and another \$20 million for R&D into the W80-4. The numbers themselves are immaterial, but the decisions made by Congress clearly speak to the intensity of the ongoing discussions in the United States even on issues pertaining to the nuclear sphere that have supposedly already been decided, as well as to the difficulty of making decisions, including at home, on nuclear arms control.

new U.S. nuclear triad will be based on 400 Sentinel ICBMs, 12 Columbia-class ballistic missile submarines, B-52H bombers (the total service life of which, according to current plans, will approach 100 years), and up to 100 new B-21s with LRSO air-launched cruise missiles.

NPR-2022 lauds the National Nuclear Security Administration's stockpile stewardship program, which, according to the United States, enables

¹⁰ Nuclear-Armed Sea-Launched Cruise Missile (SLCM-N) // Congressional Research Service, April 25, 2022. URL: <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/nuke/IF12084.pdf>

¹¹ Rules Committee Print 117-70. Text of the House Amendment to the Senate Amendment to H.R. 7776 // Committee on Rules, December 6, 2022. URL: <https://rules.house.gov/sites/democrats.rules.house.gov/files/BILLS-117HR7776EAS-RCP117-70.pdf>

¹² Projected Costs of U.S. Nuclear Forces, 2021 to 2030 // Congressional Budget Office. May 2021. URL: <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/57240>

it to ensure an effective nuclear deterrent without requiring a return to nuclear explosive testing and sets a “responsible example for all nuclear weapon states.” At the same time, NPR-2022 points to the need to upgrade the U.S. nuclear arsenal. The Pentagon is working with the National Nuclear Security Administration to develop a Nuclear Deterrent Risk Management Strategy in order to ensure the overall sustainability and success of the U.S. nuclear program portfolio. The National Nuclear Security Administration will establish a Science and Technology Innovation Initiative to bring new technologies and scientific discoveries to the U.S. nuclear weapons industry.

Finally, the National Nuclear Security Administration will institute a Production-Based

Resilience Program (PRP) to ensure that nuclear weapons can be produced efficiently in the future that are sufficiently resilient to adapt to changing geopolitical or technological conditions. Tellingly, there are no new details in the new Nuclear Posture Review regarding the resumption of the production of fissile materials for military purposes, such as the need to ensure the production of at least 80 plutonium pits per year by 2030, which was explicitly stated in the 2018 version of the document. The Production-Based Resilience Program will involve the production of plutonium cores at Savannah River and Los Alamos National Laboratory, the manufacturing of non-nuclear components, the launch and modernization of uranium conversion and enrichment facilities, and the production of lithium and tritium.

It’s All About the Missiles

Compared to the rather stunning Nuclear Posture Review and comprehensive National Defense Strategy, the Missile Defense Review looks rather mundane. However, it hides a number of interesting details. MDR-2022 notes the rapid rise in threats posed by missile technologies, hypersonic weapons and Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS) since the publication of the previous Missile Defense Review in 2019¹³. In particular, it points to the low threshold for the use of UAS by state and non-state actors and the potential threat of using UAS to the U.S. homeland itself.

MDR-2022 points out that China has been closing the gap on the United States in many areas, including conventional ballistic missiles and hypersonic weapons technologies. Meanwhile, the threat emanating from North Korea and Iran, which are developing their own missile weapons and UAS programs, is intensifying. The document also notes that Russia will have difficulty maintaining its large arsenal of precision guided weapons moving forward because of the high-volume use of such weapons during the Ukraine conflict and the wide-ranging economic sanctions.

U.S. missile defense systems are aimed at raising the threshold for conflict and reducing the

likelihood of limited strikes being launched against the United States, its Allies and partners. Missile defense and nuclear weapons complement each other within the framework of integrated deterrence, including deterrence by denial. Most importantly, it is noted that strategic nuclear forces are tasked with deterring the nuclear threat from China and Russia, while missile defense is only for smaller adversaries such as North Korea. MDR-2022 points out that U.S. ground-based midcourse defense (GMD) systems are not capable of defeating the sophisticated Russian and Chinese ICBMs or air, or sea-launched ballistic missiles, which directly contradicts what was stated in the 2019 version of the document. The fact that the wording of the MDR-2022 included “the United States recognizes the interrelationship between strategic offensive arms and strategic defensive arms” in the preamble to New START was something of a sensation¹⁴. The Missile Defense Review further notes that strengthening mutual transparency and predictability with regard to strategic offensive and defensive weapons could help reduce the risk of conflict.

The United States plans to eventually replace ground-based interceptor (GBI) systems with next-generation interceptors (NGI) and develop

¹³ Missile Defence Review // U.S. Department of Defense. 2019. URL: https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Interactive/2018/11-2019-Missile-Defense-Review/The%202019%20MDR_Executive%20Summary.pdf

¹⁴ Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States of America on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms // President of Russia. April 8, 2010. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/512> (in Russian)

countermeasures to UAS, hypersonic weapons, and conventional cruise missiles to deter the limited use of non-nuclear weapons for strategic

purposes. Here, special emphasis is placed on reconnaissance and detection and warning systems.

Conclusions

During the 2020 presidential election campaign, Joe Biden promised that if he won, he would reduce the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. strategies and adopt the “sole purpose” concept as the basis of the country’s nuclear policy¹⁵. He spoke about this in 2017 when he was vice president, summarizing the work of the Obama administration in the nuclear field¹⁶. But these promises turned out to be empty, and the role of the Ukraine conflict should not be exaggerated here. Observers realized that there would be no fundamental changes in the nuclear policy of the

United States under Joe Biden even before the special military operation¹⁷. These presentments were compounded following the dismissal in September 2021 of Leonor Tomero as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, a well-known proponent of reducing the role of nuclear weapons, and who had been tasked with preparing the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review and Missile Defense Review¹⁸. The restrictions imposed by Congress on the B83-1 and SLCM-N in NPR-2022 also highlight the fact that arms control in the 2020s will continue to be an extremely tricky issue.

¹⁵ Biden J.R., Jr., “Why America Must Lead Again” // Foreign Affairs. April 3, 2020.
URL: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-01-23/why-america-must-lead-again>

¹⁶ Remarks by the Vice President on Nuclear Security // The White House President Barack Obama. January 12, 2017.
URL: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/12/remarks-vice-president-nuclear-security>

¹⁷ Cirincione J., “Achieving a Safer U.S. Nuclear Posture” // Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft. February 7, 2022.
URL: <https://quincyinst.org/report/achieving-a-safer-u-s-nuclear-posture/>

¹⁸ Gould J., “Biden Hit with Backlash over Removal of Pentagon’s Top Nuclear Policy Official” // Defense News. September 27, 2021.
URL: <https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2021/09/27/biden-hit-with-backlash-over-removal-of-pentagons-top-nuclear-policy-official/>

Notes



Tel.: +7 (495) 225 6283
Fax: +7 (495) 225 6284
welcome@russiancouncil.ru

119049, Moscow,
8, 4th Dobryninsky pereulok

russiancouncil.ru