

# The Difficult Discipline of Nuclear History: A Perspective

by

Robert S. Norris

A Presentation at the Carnegie Conference on  
Non-Proliferation  
November 7, 2005

# The Importance of History

“Before looking forward, it is first necessary to look a long way back.”

Winston Churchill

# Four kinds of policy

- A perspective to examine the nuclear histories of the United States, Soviet Union/Russia, Great Britain, France, China, Israel, South Africa, India, Pakistan, North Korea
- By examining four different kinds of policy that surround nuclear weapons we can assess what we know or what we don't know about these countries. It is a way to enter this difficult topic and define a research agenda.
- A nation that decides to develop and then possess nuclear weapons must eventually adopt four kinds of policy: declaratory, acquisition, employment, deployment.

# Declaratory Policy

Declaratory policy is expressed in public statements by officials who address such basic questions as:

1. why the nation chose to develop and possess nuclear weapons in the first place, why it needs to currently retain them, and why new ones may be required in the future. The all-purpose, elastic concept of deterrence is normally offered as the main reason
2. how the weapons might be used. Most refined in the US: massive retaliation, flexible response, first-use, assured destruction, countervailing strategy, limited nuclear options, preemption, launch on warning, launch under attack, countervalue, counterforce, preventive. Some countries have a declaratory policy of no-first use.
3. what proposals are offered to decrease their dangers? arms control treaties, confidence building measures, notification procedures such as hot lines, or announcements of forthcoming missile tests.

Declaratory policies serve many political and psychological purposes and are directed at several audiences. They are designed to send signals to adversaries, to reassure allies, and to comfort domestic publics.

# Acquisition Policy

- \* The acquisition policy area is mainly about money and the allocation of a nation's resources. It focuses on the techniques of how to research, develop, and produce nuclear warheads and the weapon systems that deliver them and how much it is going to cost.
- \* Either publicly or secretly decisions must be made about what weapons are needed and how they will be purchased and produced. The range is from open US congressional committee hearings and budget documents to the highly secret decisions of e.g., Soviet Union, China, North Korea, Israel and South Africa. Openness is the exception.
- \* The participants are the professional military services, corporations (or their counterparts) and manufacturers, bureaucrats, legislative members (if applicable), laboratories, the media, government leaders. Depending upon the country some or all of the participants weigh in to determine why a weapon is needed.
- \* Description of weapon systems, technical details, cost schedules, dates, performance.

# Employment Policy

- Employment policy establishes goals and determines how nuclear weapons would be used. It concerns the *real* war plans.
- Creates scenarios for use, targets, frequency and timing of strikes, yields of weapon, projected damage levels.
- 
- The actual plans themselves are among the most secret of all information, known only to a few in any country.
- The Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP) was the main U.S. nuclear war plan for strategic forces. There are normally differences between what leaders publicly state about nuclear weapon policy and what is actually in the operational war plans.
- Command and control – who is authorized to issue the order, Presidents, Prime Ministers, General Secretaries? How would it be carried out? Briefcases, footballs, and chegets

# Deployment Policy

- \* Deployment policy is entwined with employment policy. Describes the nuclear order of battle, where the forces are located, at sites within the nation's borders, at foreign bases, on the high seas or under it. Weapons are in missile silos, at strategic bomber and tactical air bases, at submarine and navy bases, on and under the high seas, with army units.
- \* US had the most extensive deployment of its nuclear weapons. Were in all but a few States, numerous territories and possessions and more than 15 foreign countries and at sea. Dramatic changes since the end of the Cold War, enormous consolidation and reduction.
- \* Largely secret, general policy “neither confirm nor deny”
- \* Some info gained from START, INF treaties, accidents

## How Much Do We Know?

	Declaratory	Acquisition	Employment	Deployment
US	7	8	6	8
SU/Russia	4	3	1	2
Britain	5	5	1	6
France	7	6	2	6
China	2	2	1	1
Israel	0	1	0	1
India	2	2	0	1
Pakistan	1	1	0	1
DPRK	1	0	0	0
S.Africa	2	2	1	1

# A History of Proliferation

Date of First Test  
(Number of Tests)

