

NUCLEAR DETERRENCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY:

AN ENDURING NECESSITY

Nuclear deterrence has been the cornerstone of American security for more than seventy years and the principal strategy that has prevented major power war and protected our allies even in the most perilous times. We face new and diverse challenges from nuclear-armed states that make deterrence as critical today as it was in the last century. The principles of deterrence have not changed, but the way we apply those principles must evolve to fit the 21st century security environment.

DETERRENCE PRINCIPLES

- › U.S. deterrence strategy prevents attacks by influencing an adversary's decision making, ensuring they see no gain in attacking the United States or our allies.
- › Deterrence encourages restraint by convincing adversaries if they choose to use nuclear weapons, we can, and will impose unacceptable costs that far outweigh any achievable gains.
- › Our nuclear deterrent is effective because potential adversaries know the United States possesses the necessary capabilities to deny them the benefits they seek, impose unacceptable costs and the unquestionable will to do so if necessary.

DETERRENCE REQUIRES A TAILORED APPROACH

- › There cannot be a "one size fits all" approach to deterrence in today's security environment given the range of adversaries, their capabilities, and strategic objectives.
 - Effective deterrence must be tailored to specific threats.
- › Effective deterrence requires the ability to deny benefits and impose "unacceptable" cost.
 - What is considered an "unacceptable cost" varies by actor perceptions of anticipated benefits and circumstance.
- › The fundamental deterrence challenge is to achieve an understanding of what each adversary values most and their tolerance for risk.
 - These are the key building blocks to developing tailored deterrence strategies that reflect the unique deterrence requirements presented by a spectrum of potential adversaries.

DETERRENCE REQUIRES FLEXIBLE CAPABILITIES

- › Tailoring deterrence of potential adversaries in various contingencies requires a flexible set of nuclear capabilities supported by robust command and control.
- › Nuclear forces that are modern, robust, flexible, resilient, ready and appropriately tailored hedge against technological and other uncertainties and adapt to meet evolving threats.