

Global Security Rule Sets

An Analysis of the Current Global Security Environment and Rule Sets Governing Nuclear Weapons Release

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America is in a unique position in its history. In maintaining its position as the world's only superpower, the US consistently finds itself taking on the role of a global cop, chief exporter of hard and soft power, and primary impetus for globalization. A view of the current global situation shows an America that can benefit greatly from the effects of globalization and soft power. Similarly, America's power can be reduced significantly if globalization and its soft power are not handled properly. At the same time, America has slowly come to realize that its next major adversary is not a near peer competitor but terrorism and disconnected nations that seek nuclear capabilities. In dealing with this new threat, America needs to come to terms with its own nuclear arsenal and build a security rule set that will establish for the world explicitly what actions will cause the US to consider nuclear weapons release. This rule set; however, needs to be established with sensitivity to the US's international interests in globalization and soft power. The US must find a way to establish its doctrine governing nuclear weapons release without threatening other peaceful nations in the process.

GLOBALIZATION AND A NEW ENEMY

Since the early 1970's the world has gradually seen a shift in the nature of global security. With the concept of mutually assured destruction (MAD), global thermonuclear war between great powers was effectively made obsolete.¹ Such sentiments were reaffirmed by the arms limitations treaties of the 1970's and, of course, the arms reduction treaties that soon followed. As author Thomas Barnett points out, a new "security rule set" among nuclear powers emerged.² The global powers at the time (namely the USSR and the US) bought into the rule that MAD deterred either nation from

¹ Thomas P. M. Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map* (New York: Putnam, 2004), 31.

² Barnett, 40.

attacking the other.³ This rule set has since been expanded to all nuclear powers. It is simply inconceivable that the nuclear powers of the world would go to war with each other – such is the success of deterrence.

Deterrence, however, is not the only factor to consider in global security. The “connected” nations, that is, the financially and politically stable nations who abide by an international set of rules and norms and engage in global commerce, cannot go to war with each other because they have moved beyond mutually assured destruction and into mutually assured dependence.⁴ The phenomena now known as globalization precludes war among connected nations because: 1) these nations buy into the rule set of deterrence, and 2) these nations are interdependent economically in such a way as to make war financially impossible.⁵

9/11 crystallized this shift in the international atmosphere.⁶ Government officials were essentially shocked out of the Cold War mindset that the US still needed to worry about a near peer competitor as its chief potential adversary. With the fall of the Twin Towers and a gaping hole in the Pentagon what had been true for at least a decade was finally realized – the chief adversary of the US was the “disconnected” world.⁷

At first glance international terrorism may seem to be the primary culprit of 9/11; however, this view is too simplistic. International terrorism (or transnational terrorism) is a symptom of a much deeper problem. Terrorism is a reaction or an effect of two worlds existing on a single planet. The connected world and the disconnected world and their widening gap is the real cause of 9/11.

³ Ibid., 40.

⁴ Ibid., 122.

⁵ Ibid., 40.

⁶ Barnett, 33.

⁷ Ibid., 32.

The connected world is the world that the US is integrally a part of. It is the world of international trade, human rights, freedoms and liberties, widely available education, low birthrates, and stable governments.⁸ The connected world is that world bound together through telecommunications, financial institutions, and a shared desire for a peaceful world. Connected nations include the US, Canada, the UK, Russia, China, Japan, Australia, India, Brazil, and most other nations of similar stature.⁹ These nations are the ones actively engaged in globalization, and as a result, engage in predictable behavior for all these nations abide by international treaties, norms, conventions, and rules.¹⁰ Thomas Barnett calls these nations the “functioning core.”¹¹

Conversely, Barnett calls the nations that are not connected to the rest of the world and do not abide by a fixed set of norms and rules the “non-integrating gap.”¹² These nations, which at one time were called third world nations, are characterized by the fact that they do not participate in globalization.¹³ These are the nations that for the last decade have been the source of genocide and mass violence. These are the “hot spots,” the places where almost all US military operations have occurred since 1990.¹⁴ The non-integrating gap is comprised mostly of Central and Southwest Asia (the Middle East), Africa (minus South Africa), Central America, and South America (excluding Brazil, Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay).¹⁵ These nations are failed nations, with little to no civilized rule of law, governend typically by war lords or dictators. Most nations of the non-integrating gap have limited technology and manufacturing capabilities and rely on

⁸ Ibid., 125.

⁹ Ibid., 131-132.

¹⁰ Ibid., 125.

¹¹ Ibid., 125.

¹² Barnett, 32.

¹³ Ibid., 132.

¹⁴ Ibid., 144.

¹⁵ Ibid., 149.

natural resources as their primary export.¹⁶ Most of the money in these nations is held by an elite few while the masses live destitute, squalid lives.

It should be no surprise then, that transnational terrorism emerged out of the non-integrating gap. The 9/11 attacks were a signal, a clear indicator that the non-integrating gap can no longer be ignored by the globalized world. It is disconnectedness that is the US's chief adversary in the near future for it is disconnectedness that breeds nations such as Iran and Syria, or leaders such as Saddam and Kim Jong Il, or terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda. Nations in the non-integrating gap must be cleaned up and welcomed into the globalized world. By connecting these nations and giving them a stake in the global economy they will behave by the same rules and norms recognized by the functioning core.¹⁷ By treating the underlying problem dictators and terrorist organizations will essentially be starved out of their host countries since they no longer have fear and hatred to live off of.¹⁸

SOFT POWER IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

The tendency of globalization to integrate nations on numerous levels results in an increase in the importance of soft power. The ability to get nations to behave in a specific manner, not because they are forced to but because they want to, is the primary benefit of attaining soft power.¹⁹ The US maintains a great deal of its influence in the world through soft power and the export of its values and way of life.²⁰ In this sense the US is able to shape the world in its image. This alteration is, of course, a benefit to the

¹⁶ Ibid., 134.

¹⁷ Barnett, 199.

¹⁸ Ibid., 83.

¹⁹ Joseph S. Nye Jr., *The Paradox of American Power* (New York: Oxford UP, 2002), 8-9.

²⁰ Nye, 11.

US because it ensures more like-minded nations that inherently want to behave in a manner consistent with the US's desires.²¹

While the US government plays a limited role in bolstering soft power, the government can do a great deal to reduce that power. Other nations only want to adopt US values so long as they are attractive. If the government adopts policies that alienate or anger other nations then US soft power is weakened as the US will appear less desirable.²² “Both hard and soft power will be necessary for successful foreign policy in a global information age. Our leaders must make sure that they exercise our hard power in a manner that does not undercut our soft power.”²³

The importance for the US to maintain its soft power cannot be over stated in a globalized world. As long as other nations want to adopt American values and standards then the globalized world will look increasingly like an Americanized world. While other nations will evolve cultural variations to the “American way,” the core values governing the civilized world will remain closely intertwined with America's values. Such a result naturally benefits America by bolstering its power and wealth. It is hard power that can win wars but only soft power can maintain peace by changing people's mindsets and values.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

In an effort to maintain its soft power while reaffirming its hard power, the US needs to adopt a clearly stated global rule security set regarding the use of nuclear weapons. As the world's preeminent military power it is incumbent upon the US to set the standards by which the global community can expect nuclear states to abide.

²¹ Ibid., 169.

²² Ibid., 141.

²³ Ibid., 141.

Currently the US informally maintains a policy that in military conflicts the US retains the right to use whatever resources it deems appropriate, up to and including use of nuclear weapons for strategic or tactical purposes. While US strategists may envision such a vague statement as being sufficient to make aggressors think twice for fear of an unknown US retaliation, it is also just as likely that such a vague rule set deters no one for they assume that the nuclear option would never actually be considered (except in a MAD situation).

In establishing a formal security rule set the US must first consider its potential adversaries and levels of conflict that can be expected. First there are nations such as Russia that possess a nuclear capability on par (relative to the rest of the world) with the US's capabilities, that is, Russia can engage in a massive nuclear strike involving hundreds or thousands of weapons. This situation already is governed by the MAD rule set and as a result seems to be the most unlikely of all scenarios. In a slightly less severe situation one can consider a large conventional battle that may include a small number of low yield nuclear weapons being detonated. This scenario best describes what a war with China may be like. Currently there is no formal rule set governing US behavior in this situation. Below this level of conflict is a small scale conventional war with a much weaker adversary of unknown or limited nuclear capabilities. Such a war may or may not involve the use of one or two nuclear devices of low yield by the adversary. This scenario reflects the war with Iraq or what a war with North Korea may be like. Next, there may be a small conventional war with an adversary with no known nuclear capabilities such as occurred in Afghanistan. Finally the US may engage in wars with non-state actors such as transnational terrorists that have the resources to acquire and use

crude nuclear, chemical or biological devices against others. While by no means a comprehensive list of all possible conflict scenarios, the above mentioned situations cover some of the most likely events that would require the US to consider nuclear weapons release.

By considering these various scenarios the US can establish a publicly known global security rule set paving the way for other countries to follow. The end result of such an action will be to create an atmosphere of predictable and known behavior that a country can be expected to exhibit when in a situation that may result in the use of nuclear weapons. The purpose of this rule set is not necessarily to deter enemies (MAD already covers deterrence) but to provide transparency and predictability when discussing use of one of the most devastating weapons on the planet.

The US's nuclear rule set must consist of four pillars: MAD, minimize weapon size, strategic use only, and a prohibition against first strikes. MAD will serve to continue deterrence against the major nuclear powers. While the effects of globalization are reducing the importance of MAD as a deterrent, such a posture will still remain relevant to the pragmatic war planner. The US should openly pursue a policy of using the smallest weapon yield required to achieve the desired effects. This policy would encourage research into reduced yield nuclear weapons and would help the US in minimizing the damage and radiological effects apparent during post-war reconstruction. The US should adopt a policy explicitly limiting nuclear weapons use for strategic purposes, nuclear weapons release can never be delegated to ranks lower than the President. Finally the US should re-affirm its commitment in the Cold War to a policy

against the first-use of nuclear weapons or any other weapon of mass destruction (chemical or biological in nature).

By stating these four rules the US would reassure other nations that research into reduced yield nuclear weapons did not constitute a threat. In addition, this new rule set coincides well with the revised views of potential adversaries. Since the US's chief threat in the near future is disconnected states and transnational terrorism, the new rule set allows the US to retaliate against those parties in an appropriate manner should they attack the US with a weapon of mass destruction. The rule set also puts the rest of the world "on notice" as to what actions will incite certain reactions from the US.

Although, even with this rule set established, the US must always be cautious for there are larger issues that must be considered when discussing use of nuclear devices of any yield. In the world of globalization US military action never occurs in a vacuum. Each time the US makes a major move in the world consequences ripple throughout the globe. When that major move is the decision to launch nuclear weapons as part of an offensive strike, the consequence ripples turn into tidal waves. The economies of the globalized world thrive on consistency and predictability and that stable atmosphere cannot exist when nuclear weapons dominate the thoughts of investors.²⁴

Since the end of the Cold War the US has comfortably maintained its position as a global hegemon. While traditional international theorists have predicted that the natural course of events is for other nations to ally themselves in an effort to balance the lone superpower, this behavior has not yet been seen.²⁵ The main reason for this fact is that for the first time in history there is a hegemon that does not threaten the rest of the world

²⁴ Nye, 15.

²⁵ Nye, 2.

and does not seek to enslave other nations or expand its territorial borders. If, however, the US establishes this new rule set in a confrontational manner, it may make other nations finally feel the need to counter US dominance. The US must proceed cautiously in establishing its new security rule set.

What is important to realize is that there needs to be an alignment of strategy and force structure. Gradually Pentagon war planners are realizing that the future threat to the US is not a peer competitor but transnational terrorism and the failed states of the disconnected world.²⁶ But even if provoked, the US must carefully consider the effects of using nuclear weapons against failed nations or terrorists. Post war Iraq has shown the difficulty in winning the peace and the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people. If the US had invaded Iraq using nuclear weapons (even if provoked through violation of one of the security rules) it is hard to believe that the US would ever be able to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people. The US constantly emphasized that it was at war with the leadership of Iraq, not the Iraqi people; however, a strategic nuclear strike against the leadership may still affect the Iraqi people due to the aura that surrounds nuclear weapons. The terrorist organizations within Iraq that seek to disrupt the peace would be provided with the perfect propaganda tool to recruit young soldiers, “America used nuclear weapons on our sacred land.” In the end it would not matter how low the yield of the nuclear device was; in a world where perception is reality the propagandists would win hands down every time in the battle for global opinion.

It is clear that the US must consider the physical and psychological effects of using a nuclear weapon on the populous. In fighting the rouge regimes of a disconnected nation it will remain important that the US refrain from holding the citizens of a nation

²⁶ Barnett, 83.

accountable for the actions of the ruling regime. Although at times the only reason why the offensive regime may have been able to maintain power was due to an accepting public, holding the public responsible will not help US interests in the area. After a regime has been disposed of, the US and international community as a whole must work tirelessly to introduce the people into a world of internationally accepted values and norms. The transition from a disconnected state to a war ravaged connected state is difficult and cannot be helped by holding the population responsible for not deposing of their government themselves.

The US must constantly balance its unique position as the world's only military superpower with the need to project itself as a benevolent nation, fighting only for just causes.²⁷ Establishment of an openly declared rule set to govern the use of nuclear weapons is one step towards seeking that balance. Globalization has prospered because of America exporting security and thus stability around the world. A nuclear weapons rule set is an extension of this exportation of security. However, America must always be wary of using nuclear weapons, even in the almost inevitable instance of when one of the rules is broken. America must carefully weigh its national security concerns with the needs of the global community. Ideally though, in an increasingly globalized world dominated by American soft power, US national security concerns and global concerns will slowly converge into one. This situation will be nirvana for America but will only be possible through the exportation of security and rule sets, American soft power, and encouraging globalization.

²⁷ Nye, 171.

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