

OPENING STATEMENT BY DR. GRAHAM T. ALLISON  
BEFORE THE  
UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
AT A HEARING CONVENED TO DISCUSS  
"LESSONS LEARNED FROM PAST WMD NEGOTIATIONS"

June 24, 2015

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cardin, and Members:

It is my honor to address the Senate Foreign Relations Committee today on the question of lessons we can learn from earlier nuclear arms control negotiations and agreements to meet the current challenge posed by Iran's nuclear progress. Let me begin by applauding the leadership and members of the Committee for your determination to assure that the U.S.-led campaign to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons is the most effective it can be, and for insisting that Congress plays its essential role in this process.

One of my favorite quotations comes from the German philosopher, Nietzsche, who observed that: "The most common form of human stupidity is forgetting what one is trying to do." I have a framed version of that quotation in my office and try to think about it every day.

In the case of Iran's nuclear challenge, what are we trying to do? In one line: to prevent a nuclear weapon exploding on the territory of the United States or our allies. When asked, "What was the single largest threat to American national security?" Presidents Obama and George W. Bush agreed 100%. As both have said repeatedly: The single largest threat to American national security is nuclear terrorism.

Most people cannot imagine terrorists successfully exploding a bomb in an American city. But few could imagine the 9/11 attack by Al-Qaeda on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon—before it happened.

I have written a book about nuclear terrorism and am happy to provide copies to any members or their staff who would be interested. While it has one chapter on Iran, the book attempts to address the danger of nuclear terrorism as a whole. I applaud the Committee's role in drilling down on the Iranian challenge. But I hope that when you complete that work, you will turn with equal determination to equivalent or even larger potential sources of nuclear weapons that terrorists could use to destroy New York, or Washington, or even Boston.

For perspective, it is worth pausing to consider: if in the next decade terrorists successfully explode a nuclear bomb devastating the heart of a great city in the world, where will the bomb have come from? Iran? Or: North Korea? Pakistan? Russia? Iran poses the most urgent nuclear threat today, but not, I believe, the most significant. If terrorists conduct a successful nuclear attack in the next decade, North Korea and Pakistan rank well ahead of Iran on my list of probable sources for the weapon or its components.

The purpose of today's hearing, however, is to explore lessons from past nuclear negotiations and agreements as you prepare to assess an agreement with Iran to ensure that Iran does not acquire a nuclear bomb. At your request, I have reviewed the history of negotiations and agreements over the past seven decades since the end of World War II. These include: the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968; strategic arms limitation talks and agreements from SALT to New Start; the North Korean accord of 1994; the agreements that helped eliminate nuclear weapons in Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus in the early 1990s; and the agreement that eliminated the Libyan nuclear weapons program in 2003, in which my colleague Ambassador Joseph played a significant role. For members who are interested in reading further, Appendix A provides a short reading list. Recognizing the realities of your schedules, let me summarize my top-ten takeaways from this review.

1. Negotiated agreements to constrain the spread and use of nuclear weapons have been an essential weapon in the arsenal of American national security strategy.
  - Agreements contributed significantly to the fact that we survived and won the Cold War without Armageddon.

2. Negotiated agreements to constrain nuclear weapons are not an alternative to military, economic, political, and covert instruments in geopolitical competition. Instead, they are one strand of a coherent, comprehensive strategy for protecting and advancing American national interests.
  - “Peace through strength” means first and foremost military strength. But military strength rests on the foundation of economic strength. And military strength is most effective when used as a complement to diplomatic, economic, political, and covert tools—the entire arsenal of American power.
3. Because negotiated agreements are by definition negotiated— not imposed—they require give and take: compromise. As any parent or legislator knows well, the results of any negotiation invites a standard litany of criticism: from buyers’/sellers’ remorse about the possibility of a better deal, to more extreme charges of “appeasement” or “conspiring with the enemy.”
4. The claim that the US cannot reach advantageous agreements with a regime or government that is Evil has certain plausibility—but is false.
  - No 20<sup>th</sup> century leader demonstrated greater strategic clarity in identifying the evil of Hitler’s Nazism than Winston Churchill. No 20<sup>th</sup> century leader demonstrated a clearer-eyed view of Stalin’s Communist Soviet Union than Winston Churchill. But Churchill eagerly allied with Stalin to defeat Hitler. When critics accused him of having made a deal with the Devil, Churchill replied: “If Hitler invaded hell I would make at least a favorable reference to the devil in the House of Commons.”
  - No American President was more determined to bury Communism than Ronald Reagan. No American President was more eager to negotiate and reach agreements with what he rightly called the Evil Empire than Ronald Reagan. As he noted, “I didn’t have much faith in Communists or put much stock in their word. Still, it was dangerous to continue the East-West nuclear standoff forever, and I decided that if the Russians wouldn’t take the first step, I should.”
5. Claims that the US cannot reach advantageous agreements to constrain nuclear arms with governments that cannot be trusted, that inherently lie and cheat, and who will undoubtedly seek to deceive the US and violate the agreement sound right—but are wrong.
  - No regime was more inherently devious than the Soviet Union. According to Lenin’s operational codes, it was the Soviet leader’s duty to deceive capitalists and out-manuever them. True to

character, the Soviet Union cheated, for example, in placing radars in locations excluded by the ABM Treaty. But reviewing the history, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the cheating was marginal rather than material. The US discovered the cheating, called the Soviets out for it, and engaged in a process that produced compliance good enough to achieve our objectives.

- To minimize cheating, agreements focused on parameters that could be verified by US intelligence. Thus SALT and START limited not nuclear warheads, which we could not monitor, but launchers, which we could. While other nations' intelligence committees and international organizations like the IAEA have been important supplements, the US has wisely not subcontracted verification to others.
6. Claims that the US cannot reach agreements to constrain nuclear arms in ways that advance our interests in dealing with states that are actively engaged in terrorism against us or our allies, or even actively killing Americans in on-going military conflict, have a ring of plausibility—but on the historical record are incorrect.
- During the Vietnam War, Soviet-manned surface-to-air missiles shot down American pilots over Vietnam, and Americans bombed Soviet air defense units. Despite these realities, President Nixon negotiated and concluded SALT I, imposing quantitative limits on the US-Soviet missile buildup, and creating, as Henry Kissinger described it, “a platform of coexistence.”
7. Claims that the US cannot reach advantageous agreements to constrain nuclear arms with states we are seeking to contain, or subvert, or even overthrow, again sound right—but are, on the historical record, wrong.
- Again, see President Ronald Reagan. His administration's core national security strategy for competition with the Soviet Union has been declassified and is attached in Appendix C. It states that “U.S. policy towards the Soviet Union will consist of three elements: external resistance to Soviet imperialism; internal pressure on the USSR to weaken the sources of Soviet imperialism;” and “engaging the Soviet Union in negotiations to attempt to reach agreements which protect and enhance U.S. interests and which are consistent with the principle of strict reciprocity and mutual interest.” At the same time his administration was negotiating and signing agreements, on the one hand, it redoubled efforts to undermine the Soviet regime, on the other. And in 1991 the Soviet Union disappeared.

- As President Reagan's Secretary of State, George Shultz noted, "Reagan believed in being strong enough to defend one's interests, but he viewed that strength as a means, not an end in itself. He was ready to negotiate with his adversaries. In that readiness, he was sharply different from most of his conservative supporters, who advocated strength for America but who did not want to use that strength as a basis for the inevitable give-and-take of the negotiating process."
  - Washington Post columnist George Will accused Reagan of "accelerating moral disarmament—actual disarmament will follow." William Buckley's National Review called Reagan's INF Agreement a "suicide pact." About such criticism, President Reagan observed: "Some of my more radical conservative supporters protested that in negotiating with the Russians I was plotting to trade away our country's future security. I assured them we wouldn't sign any agreements that placed us at a disadvantage, but still got lots of flak from them—many of whom, I was convinced, thought we had to prepare for nuclear war because it was 'inevitable.'" Shultz put the point more vividly: Critics of the INF Treaty "felt that President Reagan and I were naïve, that the Soviet Union was not changing as we thought it was, and we should not go forward with the treaty. They were absolutely wrong, deeply wrong. And if they had had their way, it would have been a tragedy. President Reagan was right. Anyway, we stuck to our guns, the treaty was ratified, and the Soviet Union changed. It is not there anymore."
8. From the record of arms control negotiations and agreements by both Republican and Democrat presidents – from Nixon and Reagan and both Bushes, to Kennedy, Johnson, Clinton and Obama – one brute take-away is hard to deny: agreements have reduced risks of war, reduced the numbers of nuclear weapons, reduced uncertainties in estimating threats, and enhanced predictability.
- As Henry Kissinger said to this committee five years ago, "A number of objectives characterize arms control negotiations: to reduce or eliminate the danger of war by miscalculation, which requires transparency of design and deployment; to bring about the maximum stability in the balance of forces to reduce incentives for nuclear war by design, especially by reducing incentives for surprise attack; to overcome the danger of accidents fostered by the automaticity of the new technology."
  - To see graphically what impact agreements (together with other strands of determined strategies) have had, see charts 1-4 in

Appendix B. It is no exaggeration to say that the NPT bent the arc of history.

9. The case of North Korea is more complicated and is unquestionably a non-proliferation failure. The historical facts of the case, however, have been so swamped by narratives that they are now legend. I have a chapter in *Nuclear Terrorism* on North Korea. As you consider where policy failed, I suggested that you keep in mind four bottom lines:
- During the eight years in which North Korea was constrained by the nuclear agreement of 1994, how many additional weapons or weapons equivalent of fissile material did North Korea add to its arsenal (according to the best estimates of the US Intelligence community)?
  - During the period of 2003-2008 when the US confronted North Korea for cheating, abrogated the agreement, and sought to isolate and sanction it, how many additional nuclear weapons or weapons equivalent did North Korea add to its arsenal (according to the best estimates of the US Intelligence community)?
  - Under which treatment—agreements or confrontation—did North Korea conduct a nuclear weapons test?
  - Under which treatment— negotiations or confrontation—both in the Clinton-Bush period and the Obama period did North Korea build its nuclear arsenal of the more than a dozen weapons that it has today (according to estimates of the US Intelligence community)?
10. Negotiated agreements to constrain nuclear weapons are not good or bad per se. Assessments of a specific agreement—including in particular the agreement with Iran, if there is one—depend first on the specific details of the agreement and second on the feasible alternatives.

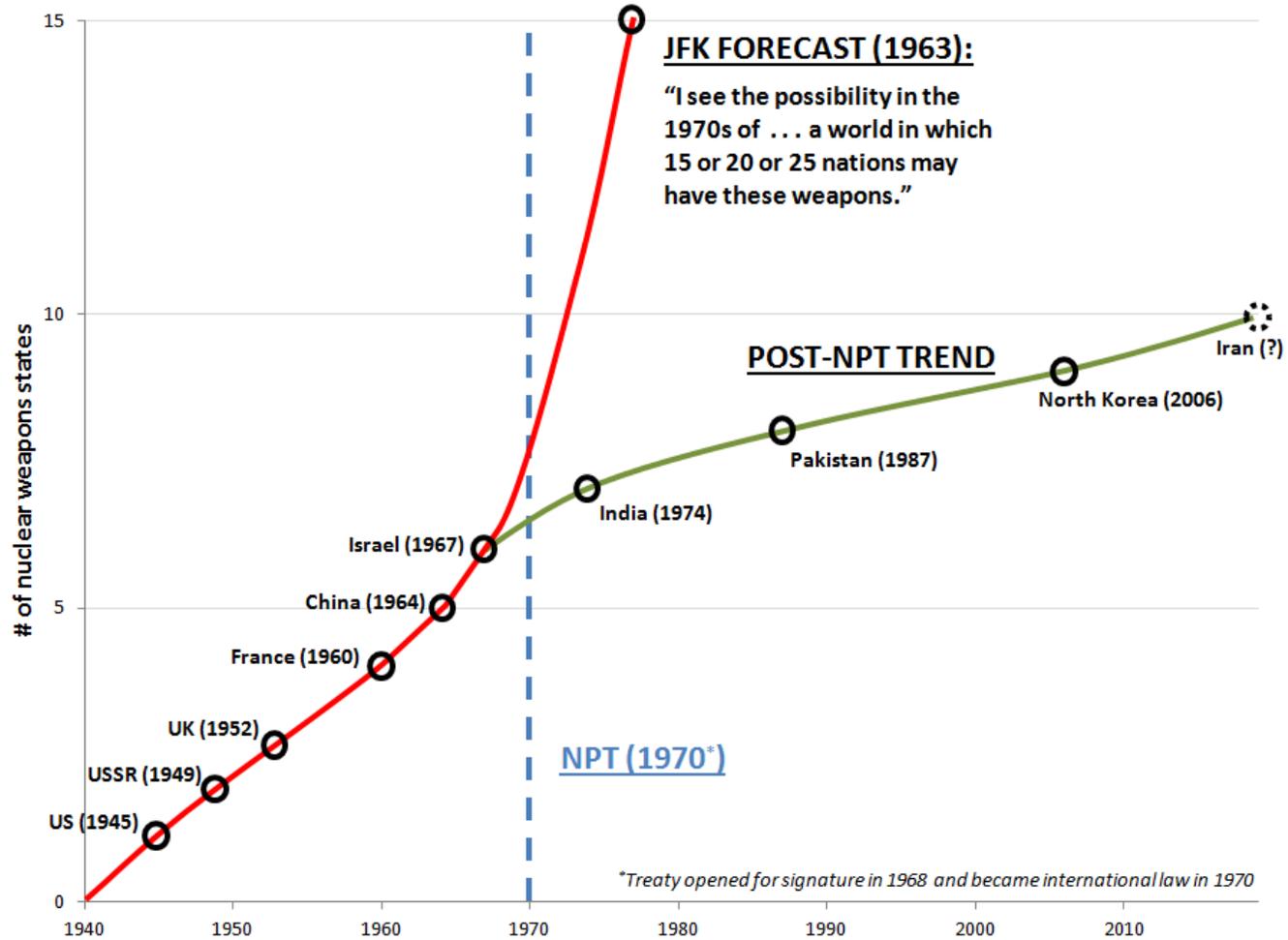
In sum, if Secretary Kerry and his team bring back an agreement that successfully translates key parameters of the Framework Accord reached by the P5+1 and Iran into legally-binding constraints, including intrusive procedures for inspection, verification, and challenges, I believe it will be difficult to responsibly reject that agreement. The burden will be on those who propose to do so to describe a feasible alternative that will better protect and defend American national security.

## **Appendix A: Recommended Readings**

- Graham Allison and Albert Carnesale, "Can the West Accept *Da* for an Answer?" (Daedalus, Vol. 116, No. 3, Summer 1987)
  - *Offers 10 propositions and principles as navigational aids in assessing arms control agreements*
- Avis Bohlen, William Burns, Steven Pifer, and John Woodworth, "The Treaty on Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces: History and Lessons Learned" (Brookings Institution, Arms Control Series Paper 9, December 2012)
  - *Focuses on 1987 INF treaty and provides several good insights in separate 'lessons' section*
- George Bunn, *Arms Control by Committee: Managing negotiations with the Russians* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992)
  - *Historical overview of past arms control agreements, arguing that continued attention to arms control still necessary in post-Cold War era*
- Robert G. Joseph, *Countering WMD: The Libyan Experience* (Washington, DC: National Institute Press, 2009)
  - *First-hand account of Gaddafi's decision to eliminate its chemical and nuclear weapons programs*
- National Security Decision Directive 75, "U.S. Relations with the USSR" (White House, January 17, 1983) [*full document attached below*]
  - *Declassified memo shows how Reagan sought to simultaneously undermine Soviets and engage them in arms control negotiations*
- Gary Samore, ed., "North Korea's Weapons Programmes: A Net Assessment," IISS Strategic Dossier (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2004)
  - *Provides assessment of North Korea's nuclear, chemical, biological, and missile programs.*
- Joel Wit, Daniel Poneman and Robert Gallucci, *Going Critical: The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2004)
  - *Proposes recommendations for resolving current North Korea crisis. Many recommendations are applicable beyond DPRK case*
- Amy Woolf, "Next steps in nuclear arms control with Russia: Issues for Congress" (Congressional Research Service, January 6, 2014)
  - *Discusses Cold War arms control precedent and includes section on role of Congress in arms control*

## Appendix B: Charts

### Chart 1



Source: Graham Allison & Federation of American Scientists

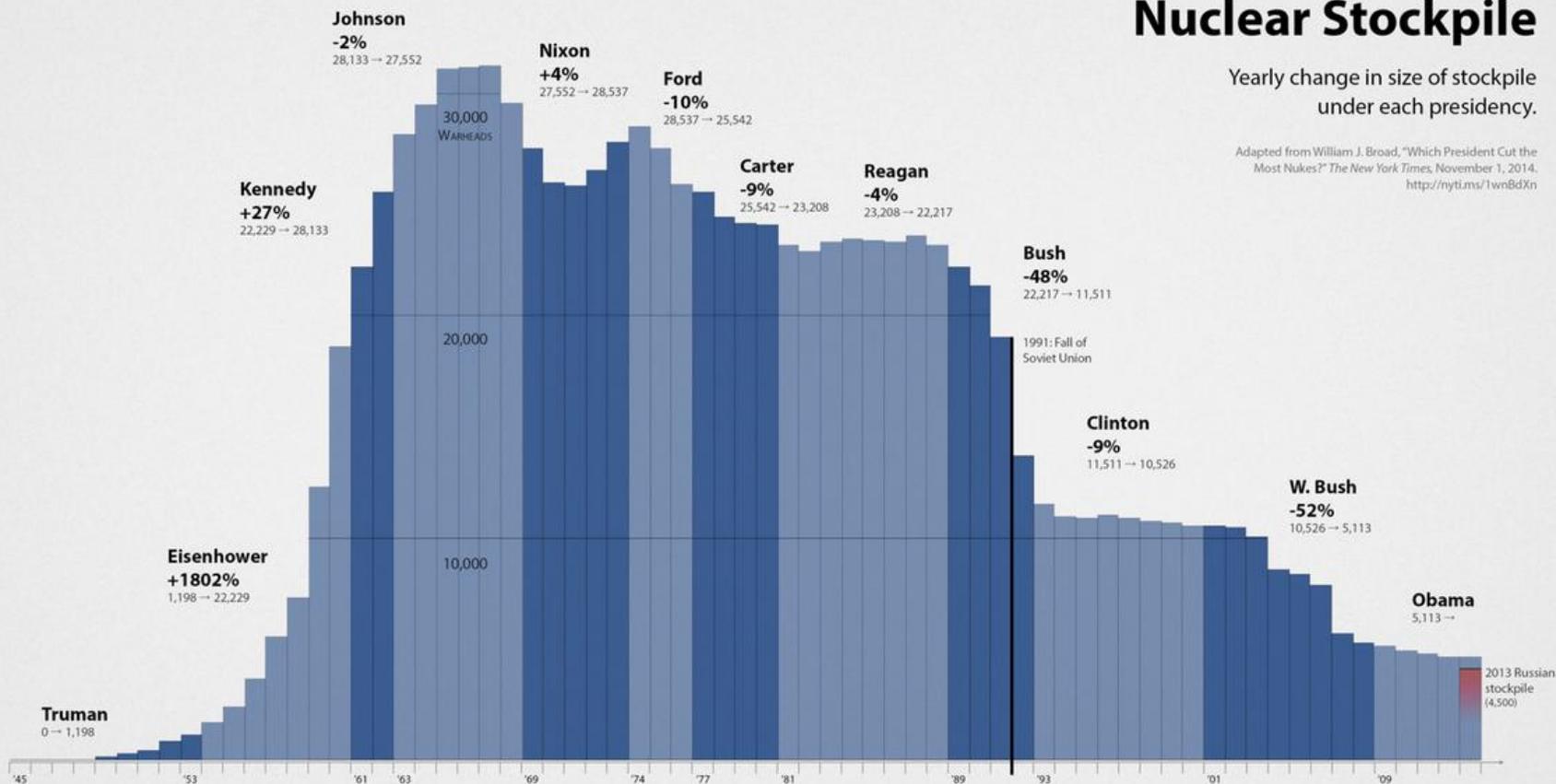
# Chart 2

Maximum Soviet stockpile, 40,159 in 1986

## The American Nuclear Stockpile

Yearly change in size of stockpile under each presidency.

Adapted from William J. Broad, "Which President Cut the Most Nukes?" *The New York Times*, November 1, 2014. <http://nyti.ms/1wnBdXn>



Note: Percent stockpile change for each president is measured from first year of their administration through first year of successor's administration.

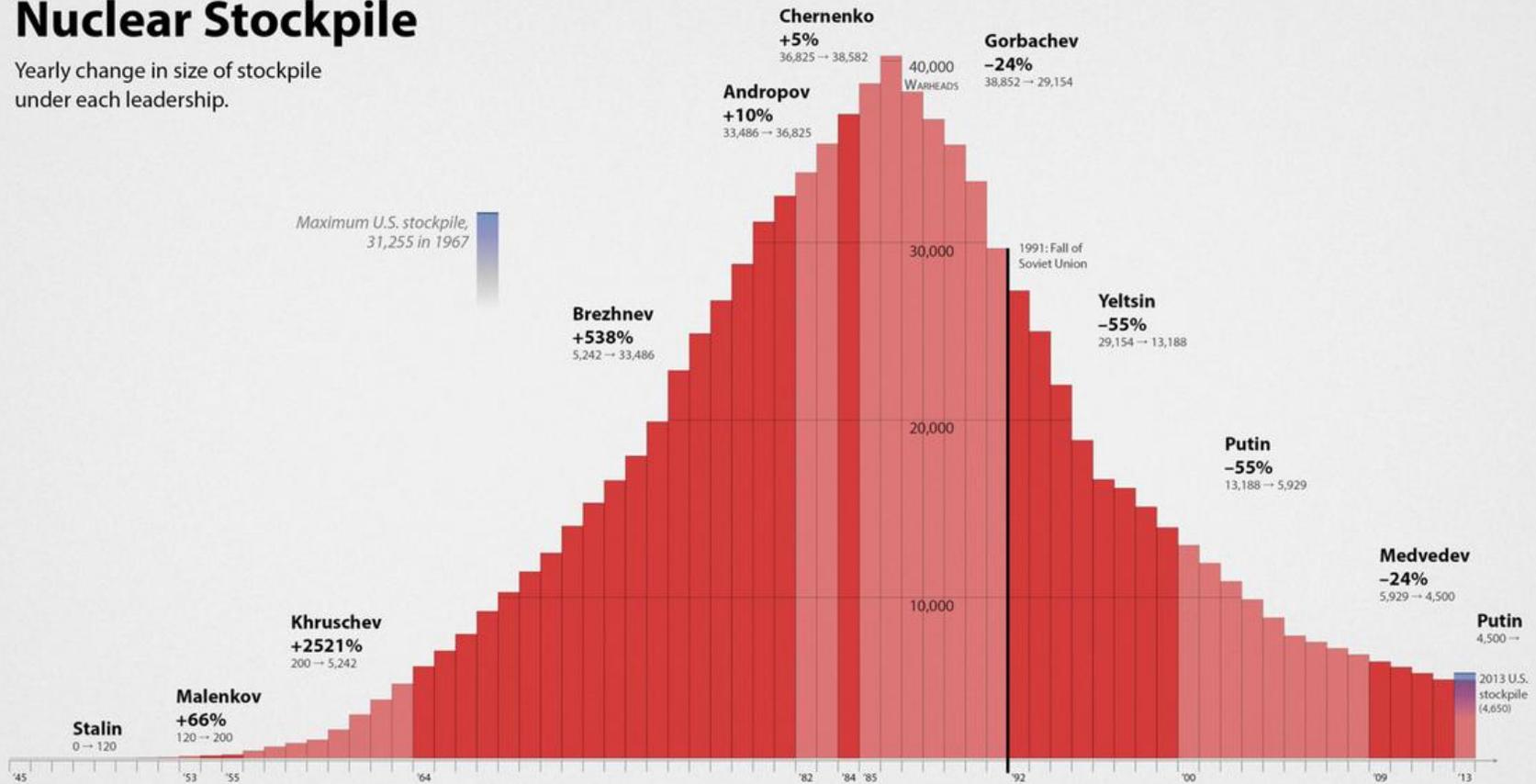
Sources:

1. "Global nuclear weapons inventories, 1945-2010" *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*; <http://bos.sagepub.com/content/66/4/77.full.pdf+html>
2. "World nuclear forces — Yearbook 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014" *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*; <http://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2010/08>

# Chart 3

## The Soviet / Russian Nuclear Stockpile

Yearly change in size of stockpile under each leadership.



Note: Percent stockpile change for each leader is measured from first year of their administration through first year of successor's administration.

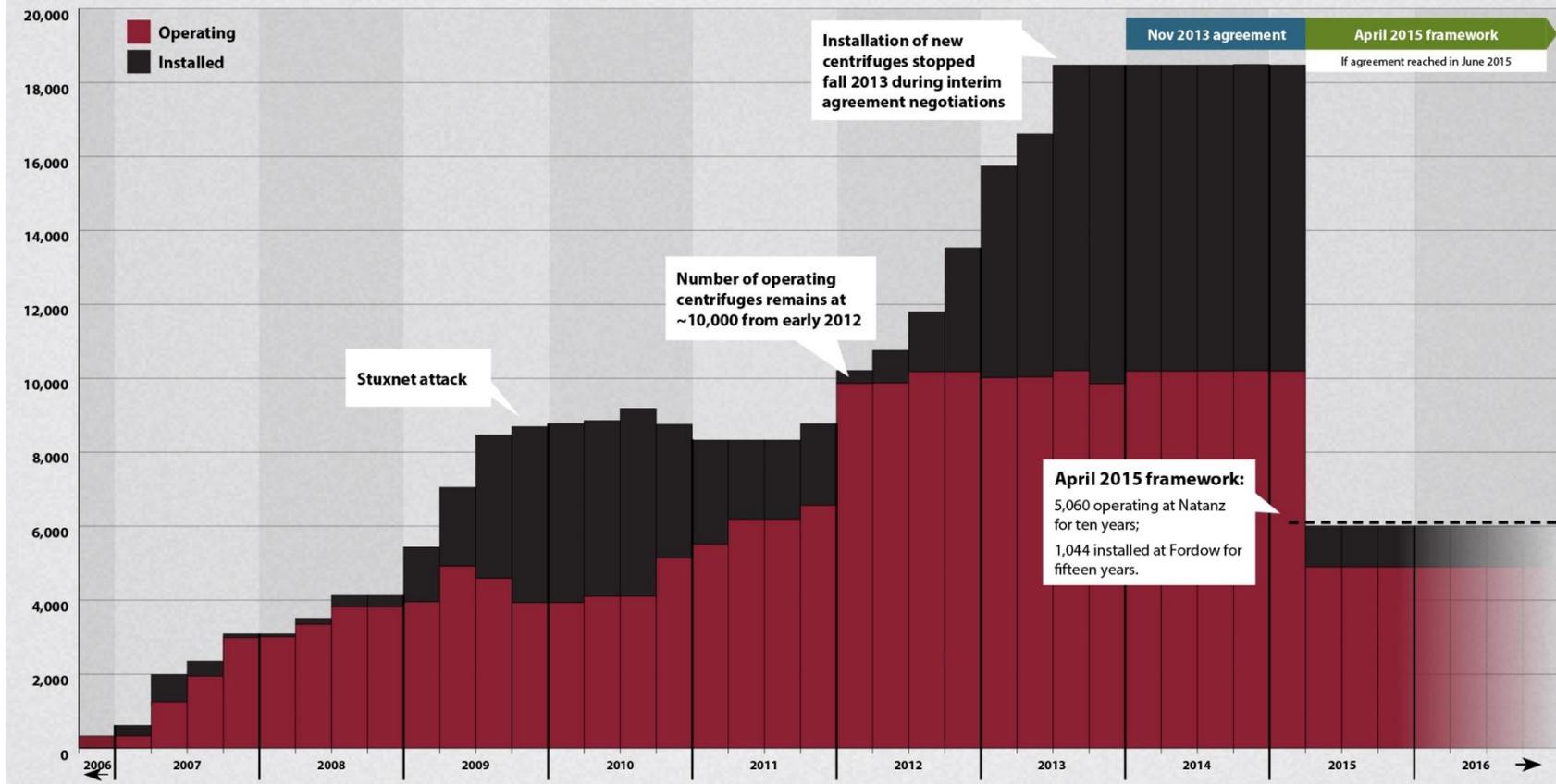
Sources:

- "Global nuclear weapons inventories, 1945-2010" Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists; <http://bos.sagepub.com/content/66/4/77.full.pdf+html>
- "World nuclear forces—Yearbook 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014" Stockholm International Peace Research Institute; <http://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2010/08>

# Chart 4

## IR-1 Centrifuges at Natanz and Fordow, 2007-present

Belfer Center  
Source: International Atomic Energy Agency



**Appendix C: NSDD-75**

Approved For Release 2008/02/20 : CIA-RDP97M00248R000401070001-8

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE  
THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE  
THE DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT  
AND BUDGET  
THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE  
THE UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE TO THE  
UNITED NATIONS  
CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
DIRECTOR, UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

SUBJECT: NSDD 75 on "U.S. Relations with the USSR" (S)

The President has approved National Security Decision Directive on "U.S. Relations with the USSR". A copy is attached for your information. This is a sensitive document; distribution should be made only on a need-to-know basis. (S)

FOR THE PRESIDENT:

  
William P. Clark

Attachment  
NSDD-75

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January 17, 1983

National Security Decision  
Directive Number 75U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE USSR (S)

U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union will consist of three elements: external resistance to Soviet imperialism; internal pressure on the USSR to weaken the sources of Soviet imperialism; and negotiations to eliminate, on the basis of strict reciprocity, outstanding disagreements. Specifically, U.S. tasks are:

1. To contain and over time reverse Soviet expansionism by competing effectively on a sustained basis with the Soviet Union in all international arenas -- particularly in the overall military balance and in geographical regions of priority concern to the United States. This will remain the primary focus of U.S. policy toward the USSR.
2. To promote, within the narrow limits available to us, the process of change in the Soviet Union toward a more pluralistic political and economic system in which the power of the privileged ruling elite is gradually reduced. The U.S. recognizes that Soviet aggressiveness has deep roots in the internal system, and that relations with the USSR should therefore take into account whether or not they help to strengthen this system and its capacity to engage in aggression.
3. To engage the Soviet Union in negotiations to attempt to reach agreements which protect and enhance U.S. interests and which are consistent with the principle of strict reciprocity and mutual interest. This is important when the Soviet Union is in the midst of a process of political succession. (S)

In order to implement this threefold strategy, the U.S. must convey clearly to Moscow that unacceptable behavior will incur costs that would outweigh any gains. At the same time, the U.S. must make clear to the Soviets that genuine restraint in their behavior would create the possibility of an East-West relationship that might bring important benefits for the Soviet Union. It is particularly important that this message be conveyed clearly during the succession period, since this may be a particularly opportune time for external forces to affect the policies of Brezhnev's successors. (S)

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