

**CHINA'S MODERNISING NUCLEAR
FORCES: FACING US NUCLEAR
PRIMACY**

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EAI Background Brief No. 1353

Date of Publication: 17 May 2018

Executive Summary

1. Since China's first nuclear bomb test in 1964 and up till the mid-1980s, China had abided by the no-first-use doctrine set by Mao Zedong. Its development of nuclear strength was primarily a typical strategy of existential deterrence and to break the nuclear monopoly of great powers.
2. It has developed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) since the mid-1980s, giving more credibility to its nuclear strategy of retaliation-based nuclear deterrence.
3. From 2001, the legitimacy of its upgrading of nuclear weapons has derived primarily from US' strengthening primacy and nuclear arms race resulting from de facto retrograde US-Russia nuclear disarmament as well as the destabilising global nuclear order.
4. The United States has departed from its nuclear posture during the Cold War and strengthened its nuclear invulnerability with clearer strategy of assured destruction since 2001.
5. The 2018 Nuclear Posture Review released by the Trump administration is perceived by China as lowering the threshold of using nuclear weapons and expanding the reliance of nuclear weapons to protect the United States and its allies.
6. While China strives to preserve its retaliation-based nuclear arsenal, strengthening command and control, it is speeding up the improvement of its nuclear triad, raising the informationisation level of its nuclear forces, and constructing early warning and rapid response capability.
7. China has resorted to diplomatic channels to pressure Washington to accept US vulnerability and maintain US-China strategic stability; it has also proposed that

the United States and Russia should pledge the no-first-use policy before bringing other nuclear weapon states into the disarmament agenda.

8. The challenge that China faces now is how to manage the modernisation of its nuclear forces without disrupting the general world nuclear order while ensuring China's minimum deterrence capability.