# Independent Thesis (15 ECTS)

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Differences and Similarities between the Nuclear Posture Reviews of 2010, 2018 and 2022 NPR

ABSTRACT:
For global super powers, having a nuclear arsenal is a prerequisite. For American presidents, it has been customary to produce a Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) with the purpose of guiding eventual use of nuclear weapons for the next 4-8 years. From 2010 and up until now, three NPR’s have been produced. Given the NPR’s status, the author argues that the NPR – in a conceptual and analytical way – can be seen as military doctrine due to its likeness to how doctrinal authorities define military doctrine. The case of the NPR’s have been studied within the field of foreign analysis, but not in a doctrinal or systematic way. There seem to be a debate whether there is a difference or not between the 2010 and 2018 NPR, but there is no similar debate surrounding the 2022 NPR. This study will examine whether there are any differences or similarities between the NPR’s. The aim of this study is to further our understanding of the documents through the use of a doctrinal analytical framework. The theory used for the analysis was Høiback’s theory on military doctrine, which was operationalized and used to conduct a text analysis on the NPR’s. The analysis suggest that the 2010 NPR is wielded as a tool of change, whereas the 2018 and 2022 NPR are wielded as tools of command. This suggest that it actually is the 2010 NPR that is diverging from a perceived idea of what the NPR are wielded as.

Key Words:
Military doctrine, Nuclear Posture Review, Obama, Trump, Biden, nuclear deterrence
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1. Introduction

1.1. Framing the Problem

For countries aspiring to be super powers, having nuclear weapons is a prerequisite for upholding global power ambitions and project global influence. Since the 1990’s, each American president have outlined the purpose of nuclear weapons in a Nuclear Posture Review (NPR). The first Nuclear Posture Review was published during Democratic President Bill Clinton’s presidency in 1992, and the latest Nuclear Posture Review published was Democratic incumbent president Joe Biden’s in 2022.

When it comes to the NPR’s of former presidents Trump and Obama, there seem to be a discussion of if, and if so, how they differ from each other and a perceived “national policy” on nuclear weapons. One camp argues that Trump’s NPR is shifting towards a more dangerous and uncertain level of deterrence (Harries, 2018; Hayes, 2018; Péczeli, 2018), while another camp suggest that Trump is “returning” to normal nuclear deterrence (Cimbala, 2018). These two fractions have different opinions and are situated within the field of peace studies and strategic studies. However, it does not seem to be a similar debate surrounding the 2022 NPR. Within the field of foreign policy, studies like one of Glaser and Fetter’s have been conducted, that view the NPR as a guide of nuclear counterforce, and they examined how the proposed actions within the NPR could affect foreign policy (2005). Other studies, such as Spear’s, have instead focused on the discrepancy between Obama’s political statements on nuclear weapons and the actual outcome in his NPR (2011).

The NPR is in itself a peculiar document, and can be viewed in different ways, such as a foreign policy document or as a policy document, but the author argues that it in a conceptual way can be seen as a military doctrine.

For Høiback, military doctrine creates cohesion and have to serve as a “conceptual compass (2013, p. 10)”. This Høiback exemplifies through the imaginary creation of a football team, where the coach has to pick a successful team (2013, p. 8). The coach can either pick the best players and hope that their combined talents will succeed, or he can create a play system for the team. The later, Høiback argues, are more successful in the long term as it does not depend on individuals. Høiback defines military doctrine as “authoritative documents military
forces use to guide their actions containing fundamental principles that require judgement in application (2013, p. 22)”. Høiback’s argument can be applied to the NPR’s. In for example Obama’s 2010 NPR, it is stated that “this nuclear posture review provides a roadmap for implementing President Obama’s agenda for reducing risks to the United States, our allies and partners and the international community (Department of Defense, 2010)”. In President Trump’s NPR, it is instead stated that “for any president, the use of nuclear weapons is contemplated only in the most extreme circumstances to protect our vital interests and those of our allies (Department of Defense, 2018)”. In Biden’s NPR, it is stated that “this Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) describes United States nuclear strategy, policy, posture, and forces in support of the National Security Strategy (NSS) and National Defense Strategy (NDS) (Department of Defense, 2022, p. 1)”. By showing that the NPR’s share similarities with Høiback’s definition of military doctrine, the NPR can be conceptually labeled as a doctrine and thus analyzed as a doctrine, regardless of whether it is an actual doctrine or not. This creates the possibility to examine aspects of continuity or change in the NPR’s that there seems to be a discussion about.

1.2. Research Question
What similarities and differences can be found in the 2010, 2018 and 2022 NPR’s?

1.3. Aim
The aim of this study is to conduct a systematic analysis of three NPR’s in order to uncover possible consistencies or divergences between the three NPR’s. Viewing the documents as military doctrine would provide a theoretical framework for analysis that would further our understanding of the contents of the NPR’s. Additionally, the use of a military doctrine theory provides the possibility to discover further aspects of, and points of comparison, into what purpose a NPR can have.

1.4. Delimitations
This study does not examine the two first NPR’s since they are hard to find. Also, one is incomplete which would hamper a systematic comparison. This study also delimits itself to only study NPR’s, and not surrounding documents such as Biden’s National Defense Strategy.
1.5. Literature Review

In summary, military doctrine is seen by the articles as a tool to conceptualize military forces. However, doctrine can be used to serve different purposes. Common denominators are the need for doctrine and the struggle to produce a relevant doctrine. Some important differences are that doctrine can either be viewed as a concept or as an action that requires implementation. The articles are providing different perspectives on how to view doctrines. The field of foreign analysis shows that NPR’s have been scientifically examined from a foreign policy perspective, where it mainly has been studied as a political document. Within the presented articles, no comparison between NPR’s have been presented. Several studies build upon Høiback’s research (Angstrom and Widen, 2016; Kronvall and Petersson, 2016; Nisser, 2022), which deem the theory as a scientifically relevant framework that can further the studies of NPR’s. Combining the field of foreign analysis with military doctrine could make for an interesting cross-fertilization.

Biddle argues that it is the way how, from doctrine, forces are employed in battle that determines victory or defeat (2010, p. ix). Biddle insists that force employment is doctrine executed. Biddle argues that the success of force employment can be measured in how the forces uses their doctrinal and tactical ideas (2010, p. ix). Using a multimodal research design, Biddle systematically examines the role of force employment. He argues that he is the first to systematically search for “soft” variables such as force employment in wars (2010, p. x). Biddle has a clear notion that doctrine determines victory or defeat (2010, p. x).

Biddle uses different military operations to investigate the role of force employment. In regard to doctrine, Biddle concludes that doctrine should not be changed for the sake of change. Rather, doctrine should be changed only as much as needed, which Biddle argues is not too much and not too little (2010, p. 206). It is dangerous changing a doctrine too rapidly, as it can risk being too radical a change and therefore seen as vague due to the lack of proper definitions of concepts (2010, p. 206). For further studies, Biddle suggests that research must be conducted “on the causes and consequence of variance in force employment (2010, p. 206)”. Biddle argues that more research needs to study why doctrine changes and the effects of change.
Similar to Biddle, Høiback argues that doctrine is vague, and aspires to trace the process of doctrine (2016, p. 186). He argues further that doctrine’s nature must be understood before an actual use of doctrine. However, like Biddle, Høiback is concerned with military doctrine, but he differs from Biddle in that he presents his own theory. Following a short process tracing of the concept of doctrine, Høiback leads the reader into what constitutes a good doctrine, and how to mitigate risks and challenges when creating it (2016, p. 188). Høiback makes the claim that people creating doctrines need to consider theory, culture and authority in order to make it legitimate. In this way, Høiback continues, is it possible to avoid creating a doctrine that is vague (2016, p. 188). Høiback also makes a distinction between doctrine usage “as a tool of command, a tool of change and tool of education” (2016, p. 190). Here, Høiback uses doctrine theory as a conceptual idea for further defining what military doctrine really is.

Høiback makes the claim that the existence of doctrine is important, even though the doctrine is seen as “bad”. To support this, he lists several reasons as to why doctrine is still relevant, despite its challenging nature. The most prominent of the arguments are that doctrine could help lessen frictions of war (Høiback, 2016, p. 192). Høiback suggests implicitly that further studies should be conducted towards creating a unity of perspective on how to view doctrine (2016, p. 196).

If Høiback is concerned with the conceptual aspects of doctrine, Nisser is concerned with military doctrine’s implementation. His study uses doctrine theory in a theory testing way. In Nisser’s study, the success and failure of doctrine implementation within the US Armed forces are examined (2022, p. 1). The theory that Nisser tests in his comparative case study is developed by himself after having viewed several other studies touching upon the subject of doctrinal implementation. Nisser argues that his theory is a compromised model of what makes a doctrinal implementation successful (2022, p. 2). Similar to Høiback, Nisser’s model is concerned with culture, credibility and authority.

In the 2022 study, Nisser examines how the doctrinal implementation of the 1976 Active Defense doctrine and the replacing 1982 AirLand Battle doctrine has been seen as either a failure or a success in the US Armed Forces. Nisser reaches the conclusion that the factor of cultural coherence and employing inclusivity when creating the doctrine are most important when determining whether an implementation is a failure or success (2022, p. 12). He also
suggest that the factor of credibility is less important than previously thought (2022, p. 8). The factor of authority is not examined explicitly in the study. He suggests that further research is needed, especially considering the novelty of the theory (2022, p. 14). However, doctrine making does not exists in a vacuum. Instead, it is often derived from policy.

Drawing inspiration from Høiback’s reasoning about how doctrines can serve different purposes, Ångström and Widén present a way of “identifying standards of quality for doctrine” that is based on the perception of the doctrine (2016, pp. 201–202). In contrast to Høiback, however, Ångström and Widén argues that the perspective Høiback represents is an utilitarian perspective (2016, p. 201). Their study uses military doctrine as a concept. The authors refutes the rationalist view of doctrine as a force multiplier, and present a constructivist approach of military doctrine as a religion (2016, p. 201). Ångström and Widén argues that doctrine should be viewed as a religious scripture rather than a document of force multiplying (2016, p. 202). By viewing doctrine as a document of faith, it will be easier to evaluate the quality of the military doctrine since it provides a more “practice-oriented measure of quality” (Ångström and Widén, 2016, p. 205). By this reasoning, Ångström and Widén suggest that the quality standard of a doctrine is measured through its “legitimacy, credibility and creating a sense of belonging” (2016, p. 210). It is the perceptions of the quality that is the most important (Ångström and Widén, 2016, p. 210).

Using Høiback’s three functions of doctrine, Kronvall and Peterson examines the development of Norwegian and Swedish doctrines (2016). Kronvall and Peterson are examining how Swedish and Norwegian defense transformation have been influenced by seeing doctrine as a tool of education, a tool of operations and a tool of change with the aim to examine how doctrine can cause defense transformation (2016, p. 280). Their findings suggest that the doctrine have played a part in shaping the new defense transformation in the Swedish and Norwegian Armed Forces (2016, p. 292). However, they also discuss that not only doctrine can be at “fault” for causing a defense transformation (2016, p. 293). Threat perception and political “buzz-words” can also affect defense transformation (Kronvall and Petersson, 2016, p. 293). To summarize the articles’ findings, all three of Høiback’s proposed views on doctrine was found in the transforming of each nation’s armed forces (Kronvall and Petersson, 2016, p. 292).
As have been stated in the introduction, the field of foreign policy analysis have also studied the case of NPR. In particular Spear’s study resembles this study, but instead of comparing different NPR’s, her study instead examines what factors that resulted in the gap of president Obama’s 2009 Prague speech and his 2010 NPR (2011, p. 241). In her analysis, she uses the tool of bureaucratic politics to examine the struggle of creating a NPR. Spear views the NPR as a “key defense document that sets the tone for all American nuclear policies and practices (2011, p. 241)”.

In another foreign policy analysis study, the document is seen as a document “which provides the official guidance for U.S. Nuclear strategy […]” (Glaser and Fetter, 2005, p. 85). Glaser and Fetter views the document as a guide that provides possible answers to U.S. challenges when it comes to nuclear threats (2005, p. 85). In the article, the authors examine the role of nuclear counterforce that the 2002 NPR presents as an important area of development and how potential use of nuclear counterforce will affect US foreign policy (2005, p. 85). In their analysis, the authors conclude that the proposed use of nuclear weapons as a nuclear counterforce may have a role to play, but that it most likely will not strengthen U.S. security (2005, p. 123). By examining the effects of the NPR’s proposal, the authors effectively contributes to our understanding of how nuclear guidance affects foreign policy.

1.6. Disposition
Following the first chapter is the theory chapter. In there, the theoretical framework of Høiback will be presented. After the theory has been presented and motivated for, the chosen method of this study will be introduced. Then, the analysis chapter will declare the conducted analysis of the three NPR’s and provide a discussion of the findings. The analysis is structured after the theoretical elements and the discussion is interwoven with the analysis in order to guide both reader and author. Lastly, a concluding chapter will summarize the findings and answer the research question presented in the first chapter.
2. Theory

2.1. Elements of Doctrine

In *Understanding Military Doctrine*, Høiback argues that a doctrine must consist of three different elements as described in figure 1. These elements are theory, culture and authority and they are to be regarded as the anatomical parts of doctrine (Høiback, 2013, p. 10).

Between those dimensions are three functions that doctrine can serve as. These are as a tool of change, as a tool of education and as a tool of command (Høiback, 2013, pp. 157, 161). These tools guide how the doctrine can be utilized and it is the balancing between the different elements that decides which function doctrine serve (Høiback, 2013, pp. 57, 157). For Høiback, a doctrine is defined as “authoritative documents military forces use to guide their actions containing fundamental principles that require judgement in application (2013, p. 22)”. However, Høiback also present the dilemma of doctrine, which is to balance between being too or less prescriptive. If a doctrine is too prescriptive, the risk of it backfiring is higher. If it is less prescriptive, it instead risks being watered down (Høiback, 2013, p. 12).

Høiback list several fallacies about doctrine, in which the most important fallacies concern the risk of doctrine being too virtue-based and doctrine that encompasses “everything” (2013, pp. 14–15).

![Figure 1 Høiback's Doctrinal Pyramid](image-url)
2.1.1. Theory

For Høiback, the part of theory is about “what we ought to do (2013, p. 57)”. Theory – or rationality – is one part of his tripartite model above. However, the role of theory is met with skepticism. Høiback himself argues that theory in doctrine needs to balance on a sharp edge in order to not let the doctrine become too intellectual and thus less palpable for its presumed users (2013, p. 58). There will always be sceptics to why an idea or a concept is seen as a theory, and Høiback argues that the sceptics will not connect theory to doctrine. Instead, Høiback says that connecting theory to doctrine is mainly a job of either a coherentist or a foundationalist. Høiback explains that the foundationalist believes that doctrine-making rests on “unassailable truths” (2013, p. 66) whereas the coherentist instead believes that no “unassailable truths” exist (2013, p. 66). What unites these epistemological beliefs is the notion that there needs to be something that the doctrine can rest on.

Moving past the epistemological debate, Høiback argues that the theoretical aspects of doctrine can rest on either facts or by “social justification” (2013, p. 90). Høiback also suggest that theory is for “coping, not copying (2013, p. 102)”. In an article, Høiback explains that theory needs to convince it followers of its righteousness (2011, p. 884). It needs to be “justified (Høiback, 2011, p. 884)”. However, Høiback leans more toward the coherentist approach, and argues that the theory is a tool, not a mirror (2011).

2.1.2. Culture

Høiback argues that strategic culture is a-rational, and is an important aspect of military doctrine. It is a “practice in interaction with discourse” (2013, p. 104). A-rational means “an alternative conception of reason as such, one which spurns utility and abstraction for the feel and flavor of things.” (Eagleton quoted in Høiback, 2013, p. 104). Høiback suggests that there are three different schools of strategic culture scholars, but that the field of strategic culture research has reached a stalemate. In order to determine culture’s effect on strategic thinking, one should not examine the “why and for what purpose”; instead, Høiback argues, it is the how that needs examining (2013, p. 113). The way we speak of war forms how we view war (Høiback, 2013, p. 114). This leads Høiback to his first statement of what culture is. Seeing as practice needs to engage with the military discourse, culture should be seen as an important tool when making doctrine. However, the relation between practice and discourse should be one where discourse broadens practice (Høiback, 2013, p. 214).
When writing a military doctrine, Høiback argues that good doctrine not only describes how ends are achieved, but also provides followers with a “spiritual” why (2013, p. 118). In order to do so, Høiback suggest that the doctrine employs storytelling. Storytelling is a way of providing virtue and guiding, both morally and creatively (Høiback, 2013, pp.120-121). Most importantly, Høiback means that storytelling can free doctrine from the “tyranny of principles” (2013, p. 121). This could help expand the military discourse and thus give the practice some more tools to work with.

To conclude Høiback’s reasoning on culture and its connection to doctrine making, Høiback argues that for culture to be relevant in doctrine making, it needs to have casual power and be adaptive (2013, p. 127). With causal power, Høiback intends that culture should be an aspect of doctrine. When culture is adaptive, it means that it is flexible and that the makers of doctrine do not blindly follow cultural beliefs (Høiback, 2013, p. 128).

2.1.3 Authority

When Høiback discusses authority, he is using it in a non-cognitive way (2013, p. 129). Høiback exemplifies that the non-cognitive authority could be prohibitions or laws. Diving deeper into Høiback’s third element, authority could also be political beliefs and notions that can affect what a doctrine will look like (2013, p. 129). This sort of non-cognitive authority doctrine makers have to put up with since the Armed Forces most often are controlled by civilian politicians (Høiback, 2013, p. 130). For Høiback, there is an “unequal dialogue” between civilian politicians and military generals. However, this dialogue is mandatory since the military should follow decisions made by democratically elected politicians (Høiback, 2013, p. 131). When creating a doctrine, there must be a virtuous dialogue that merit both civilian and military experts alike. The virtuous dialogue is created when generals and politicians “dare to air opinions” with each other (Høiback, 2013, p. 135). One problem that Høiback finds is the meddling of non-experts in matters that experts work within (2013, p. 135). Statements and beliefs that are said outside of the expert’s field can still affect the beliefs experts have, which runs the risk of experts saying what the non-experts want to hear (Høiback, 2013, p. 136). For a doctrine to be relevant to both an expert and a non-expert, the doctrine must “find the balance between discourse and the realities of war” (Høiback, 2013, p. 143). Høiback also states that the element of authority needs to institutionalize the doctrine (2011, p. 887).
3.2. Tools of Doctrine

Here, the three tools of doctrine will be presented. The classification of the doctrine stems from what elements are emphasized the most.

2.2.1. Tool of Command

Located on the axis between theory and authority, the tool of command presents itself. Høiback explains that the tool of command is an effect that the doctrine has if the elements authority and theory is emphasized. When the doctrine is used as a tool of command, its overarching purpose is to provide the follower with a “what to do” (Høiback, 2013, p. 157). Høiback argues that doctrine is often seen as a tool of command, and that it serves to “enhance military cohesion” (2013, p. 161).

2.2.2. Tool of Change

When a doctrine is weighted towards authority and culture, the doctrine tends to become a tool of change (Høiback, 2013, p. 169). Høiback suggest that doctrine can influence and affect culture and that it mostly happens after large military debacles (2013, pp. 170-171). When an organization stands before a challenge or just have experienced a shock, producing a new doctrine can help guide the organization through new challenges (Høiback, 2013, p. 170).

2.2.3. Tool of Education

The last function that doctrine can serve is the function of education. By this, Høiback means that a doctrine that serves as a tool of education provides the follower with an identity and conceptualization (2013, p. 157). Høiback debunks the claim that indoctrination and education are similar, and instead counters that they can be seen as synonyms, but underscores that indoctrination is the result of an education that has not provided the follower with the possibility to challenge notions (2013, p. 158).

2.3. Critique Against the Theory

A problem with Høiback’s theory is his philosophical approach when theorizing military doctrine. The discussion on doctrine are abstract and non-tangible, which can affect this study’s ability to operationalize Høiback’s framework in a scientifically persuasive way. That could make the theory too “broad” and all-encompassing, which could make it harder to apply to specific cases. A methodological challenge with Høiback’s theory is that in some cases, the dimensions of doctrine is not clearly defined. For example, Høiback’s reasoning provides an attempt at harnessing strategic culture when making a doctrine, but it could still be considered
unclear and unprecise. However, this study will still use Høiback’s theoretical reasoning as it provides guiding in how to create and wield a military doctrine. Seeing as this study aims to examine how the three NPR’s differ from each other, it is important that the definitions are as clear as possible. This makes the validity of the operationalization pivotal for this study.

2.3. Why Høiback?
This study chooses to utilize Høiback’s theory because it has been widely accepted as a leading authority on doctrinal theory. Several authors (Nisser, Angstrom and Widén, Kronvall and Peterson) develops and discusses Höiback’s findings. The theoretical framework is therefore scholarly accepted. Høiback’s broad theory provides the user with a wider palate to classify doctrines, which in turn makes possible a more nuanced analysis. It is of interest to use Høiback’s theory and apply it to a case on which it has not been applied before particularly due to its broadness and its scholarly acceptance. It is methodologically challenging to operationalize, but the theory offers a possibility to conduct a fruitful examination on material that has not been studied as doctrines before because of how abstract it is. It is therefore theoretically beneficial and empirically useful.
3. Method

3.1. Research Design and Research Discussion

The design of this study is a qualitative text analysis of the case of NPR. It is a theory consuming study studying the case of NPR’s. Within this case, three units of analysis have been chosen. A theory consuming study is mainly concerned with studying one case (Esaiasson et al., 2017, p. 43). One challenge connected to the theory consuming approach is that the line between a theory consuming design and a theory testing design is blurred (Esaiasson et al., 2017, p. 44). It is therefore a matter of definition and research aim that guides if the study is a theory testing one or a theory consuming one. In this study, the author argues that this is a theory consuming study based on the single focus on NPR. The three units of analysis are three different documents within this unit. The choices fell on the 2010, 2018 and 2022 NPR since there seem to be a debate whether the 2010 and 2018 differ from each other. The 2022 NPR was chosen since it would help broaden the perspective of NPR’s and give this study the possibility to examine the phenomenon of NPR’s. This could be interesting to examine since a study could provide a relatively objective comparison between the three NPR’s that could lead to a greater understanding of the NPR’s purpose. Through Høiback’s broad theory, the cases of the NPR can be examined with new analytical “frames”. This is similar to the “creation of a meaning” that Esaiasson et al. suggest qualitative text analysis helps explains (2017, p. 211).

In this study, the author chose to – in a conceptual and analytical way – view the NPR’s as doctrines. This was done in order to be able to use Høiback’s broad theory and produce a fruitful study of how NPR’s can be understood. However, the author understands that it does not come without it challenges. The NPR’s are broad political documents, which does not necessarily mean that they can be interpreted as doctrines. This can in turn question if Høiback’s theory is the right choice for this study. That would risk creating a discord between what the theory is capable of and what the units of analysis are, which in turn could create a study in which the theory and the material have a discord (Johannessen et al., 2020, p. 37). As stated previously, the author have tried to benchmark the NPR as a concept with that of doctrine as a concept. The main idea behind the benchmarking is to provide a congruence between what authorities within the field believe to be a military doctrine, and finding such
traits within the NPR’s. This offers the possibility to treat the NPR’s as doctrines conceptually and analytically, which enables a study of the NPR’s though the lenses of military doctrine.

The qualitative text analysis will be conducted utilizing the theoretical framework of Høiback, with which operational indicators are used to ask questions to the NPR’s. The indicators operationalized from Høiback are found through a close reading of the language used. The qualitative text analysis was deemed as the most relevant method for conducting this study since it enables a closer examination of the units, which could help uncover eventual differences between the documents (Esaiasson et al., 2017, p. 211). However, one problem with the text analysis is that the author is responsible for the interpretation of the texts, which could be a potential validity problem. This is mitigated through supporting the interpretations with quotations in accordance with Bergström et al.’s recommendation (2012, pp. 272, 290). Another problem of validity comes from concept validity.

The validity that is challenging in this study is the concept validity Esaiasson et al. presents (2017, pp. 58–59). It is a challenge since the operationalization down below has been developed by the author himself. This means that operational indicators could differ, which could affect the concept validity as it would mean that the theoretical net is not “fine” enough to catch what the study first intended to study (Esaiasson et al., 2017, p. 58). When creating the analytical framework, the author chose between using the three elements or the three tools. Both set of theoretical terms could be used, but the author ultimately chose to operationalize the three elements. This study’s aim of examining differences between NPR’s are more likely to be fulfilled by using the three elements as the analytical basis. This is because the tools’ “borrow” indicators from two elements, which increases the risk of having indicators that collapses against each other due to being too similar, which in turn would reduce the study’s scientific credibility.

When conducting the analysis, the author chose to read each NPR individually and chronologically and mark every quote that could provide a possible answer to the operationalization’s question. The author did not read anything other than the actual NPR’s. By doing this, the author hopes to minimize the presence of unsystematic faults and thus better the reliability that Esaiasson et al. discusses (2017, p. 58). Combining this systematic approach with the operationalization, the author argues that this study has reached a sufficient
level of results validity. While it could be argued that the results validity and reliability is hampered through the interpretive approach, this have been mitigated through the use of quotations when presenting the findings and through defining the operational indicators as precisely as possible.

3.2. Constructing the Analytical framework

Seeing as there have been few studies in which Høiback’s theory has been operationalized, it will be a methodological challenge to motivate for this study’s chosen operationalization. However, there are some studies that previously have used Høiback’s theory (Kronvall and Petersson, 2016; Kling, 2017). Kling’s study is only an independent thesis. In this operationalization, the author will partly take inspiration from previous studies when constructing the analytical framework. However, as Esaiasson et al. writes, it is still important to reflect upon the choices made during the operationalization process (2017, p. 61).

The author will use the three elements of theory, culture and authority in order to examine the difference between the 2010, 2018 and 2022 NPR. The theoretical definitions presented in the chapter before will then be used as fundament for constructing operational indicators, which will be used to ask questions to the two different NPR’s.

3.2.1. Defining Theory Indicators

As stated earlier, Høiback defines theory as “what is ought to be done (2013, p. 57)”. That gives the element the following operational indicators:

- What ideas about what is ought to be done are presented?
- How is the reader persuaded to agree with the ideas presented in the NPR?

3.2.2. Defining Culture Indicators

Høiback defines culture as the provider of the “why” something are to be conducted and it provides the reader with a sense of identity and belonging (2013, p. 118).

- What story does the NPR tell?
- What role do the personnel play in the story?

3.2.3. Defining Authority Indicators

In Høiback’s theory, authority is defined as “what needs to be done (2013, p. 57)”. 

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- What type of flexibility is employed?
- In what way do the actions proposed in the documents present authority?

### 3.3. Analytical Framework

Building upon the earlier chapters’ work, this chapter will present a finished table of operational indicators. This is done in order to summarize the finished product for the reader.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Theoretical Definition</th>
<th>Operational Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Theory     | What is ought to be done. | - What ideas about what is ought to be done are presented?  
- How is the reader persuaded to agree with the ideas presented in the NPR? |
| Culture    | Why something is needed to be done. | - What story does the NPR tell?  
- What role do the personnel play in the story? |
| Authority  | What is needed to be done. | - What type of flexibility is employed?  
- In what way do the actions proposed in the documents present authority? |

### 3.4. Empirical and Ethical Considerations

The text analysis meant that the study’s chosen material were examined according to the four criteria’s of source criticism Esaiasson et al. presents (2017, p. 288).
In accordance with the authenticity criteria, the material chosen was considered to have a high grade. Since the documents have gone through an extensive review through different US departments, one would have to presume that the documents are what they say they are (Esaiasson et al., 2017, p. 291).

The independent criteria could prove harder to reach since the NPR could have non-scientific incentives to lean towards a certain direction. To combat this, the author decided to produce a theoretical framework that is as objective as possible. This way, the author lessened the risk of colored opinions defiling the study (Esaiasson et al., 2017, p. 293).

Simultaneity, the third criteria of Esaiasson et al., is about relating the content of the source to when the content actually happened in reality (2017, p. 294). The documents the author used have been limited to 2010, 2018 and 2022, thus minimizing the risk of a low simultaneity score.

Tendency, finally, is concerned with how the author has an incentive to lie (Esaiasson et al., 2017, p. 294). Like the independent criteria, this criterion could be harder to reach since the documents have incentives to not be an honest researcher. This too the author have mitigated through the acknowledgement of the problem. Since the political coloring of the documents are not the study’s main focus, this is seen as a minor problem.

The ethical considerations in this study pertains to scholarly conduct. Since the study did not involve people, it is hard to argue that individuals have come to harm in this study the way Esaiasson et al. suggest (2017, p. 354). The scholarly conduct that the author pledged to follow are concerned with a honest and systematic study (Esaiasson et al., 2017, pp. 24–25). To achieve this, the author aimed to be as transparent as possible with how the study has been conducted (Esaiasson et al., 2017, pp. 24–25).
4. Analysis

4.1 Introducing the Nuclear Posture Reviews

4.1.1. Nuclear Posture Review 2010
The Nuclear Posture Review of 2010 were to provide a “road map for implementing president Obama’s agenda for reducing nuclear risks to the United States” (Department of Defense, 2010).

The NPR of 2010 presented five focal points in “1. Preventing nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism; 2. Reducing the role of U.S. nuclear weapons in U.S. national security strategy; 3. Maintaining strategic deterrence and stability at reduced nuclear force levels; 4. Strengthening regional deterrence and reassuring U.S. allies and partners; and 5. Sustaining a safe, secure, and effective nuclear arsenal. (Department of Defense, 2010)”.

Obama’s NPR of 2010 states that the biggest security threat would be the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the risk of nuclear terrorism (Department of Defense, 2010). The NPR believed that through an US first step of nuclear disarmament, more countries would follow (Department of Defense, 2010).

4.1.2. Nuclear Posture Review 2018
The 2018 NPR was created during an era of a deteriorating security situation in the world (Department of Defense, 2018, p. v). This NPR proposed modernization and sustainment of current nuclear stock (Department of Defense, 2018). Although there are no explicit focal points, the DoD points out the following as important (not the author’s own text):

- A continuation of the nuclear triad.
- Being flexible and securing nuclear capabilities is an inexpensive way of upholding deterrence.
- Further enhancing of regional nuclear deterrence with non-strategic nuclear weapons.
- The US needs to modernize and further sustain their current nuclear arsenal in order to continue being a deterrent.
- The nuclear systems need to be replaced during the next decade.
Ensuring a strong nuclear deterrent is paramount to stop proliferation and continue disarmament together with other nuclear states. (Department of Defense, 2018, p. V-XVI)

4.1.3. Nuclear Posture Review 2022
The 2022 NPR is conducted differently from the previous two NPR’s. One such difference is that the NPR is not a stand-alone document. Instead, it is fused together with National Defense Strategy and the Missile Defense Review to form a National Defense Strategy (Department of Defense, 2022, p. iii). It also singles out China as the sole competitor for global influence. The 2022 NPR’s places its focus on US-China great power competition, but also pushes for a “reminder of nuclear risk in contemporary conflict (Department of Defense, 2022, p. 1)”. The two most important focal points the 2022 NPR presents are:

- Adopt a strategy and declaratory policy that maintain a very high bar for nuclear employment while assuring Allies and partners, and complicating adversary decision calculus.
- Adopt an integrated deterrence approach that works to leverage nuclear and non-nuclear capabilities to tailor deterrence under specific circumstances. (Department of Defense, 2022, p. 3)

4.2. Theory

4.2.1. 2010 NPR
4.2.1.1. What ideas about what is ought to be done are presented?
One idea of the document are that the world has changed, and that the U.S. need to change with it. There is no need of a nuclear arsenal as big as the one of the Cold War. However, the U.S. still needs a nuclear weapons arsenal in order to remain a credible deterrent as long as nuclear weapons exist, which the NPR also writes: “Indeed, as long as nuclear weapons exist, the United States will sustain safe, secure and effective nuclear forces (Department of Defense, 2010, p. v)”. But, instead of creating deterrence based on quantity, the U.S. wants to sustain its nuclear arsenal and reduce nuclear forces levels and the”’role of nuclear weapons in US National security strategy (Department of Defense, 2010, p. iii)”’. One other idea is that there is a need to “[…] better align our nuclear policies and posture to our most urgent priorities – preventing nuclear terrorism and nuclear proliferation (Department of Defense, 2010, p. v)”.
4.2.1.2. How is the reader persuaded to agree with the ideas presented in the NPR? The text in the NPR suggest that the follower need to follow the document through the use of logic and presidential order. The NPR is by default a presidential guide on how he envisions American nuclear deterrence, but the NPR also recognizes that there is a need to anchor proposals across the political spectrum. That makes one part of the persuasion based on tangible power such as politics. This is seen in the quote “a balanced, integrated and sustained strategy will require a strong bipartisan consensus (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 2)”. The NPR panders to the urgency and need for the U.S. to contribute to international security. By doing this, the document uses a qualitative argument that panders to intangible things such as emotions. This can be seen in the quote that “the United States will seek the peace and security of a world free from nuclear weapons (Department of Defense, 2010, p. iii)”. Another quote that signals the need for the follower to agree with the NPR on the basis of urgency is “[the] failure of reassurance could lead to a decision by one or more non-nuclear states to seek nuclear deterrents of their own, an outcome which could contribute to an unraveling of the NPT regime and to a greater likelihood of nuclear weapon use (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 4)”.

4.2.2. 2018 NPR

4.2.2.1. What ideas about what is ought to be done are presented? As the NPR writes, the “review rests on a bedrock truth: nuclear weapons have and will continue to play a critical role in deterring nuclear attack and in preventing large-scale conventional war between nuclear-armed states for the foreseeable future (Department of Defense, 2018, p. iii)”. To counter this, the U.S. need to continue to use nuclear weapons, and enhance “deterrence with non-strategic nuclear capabilities (Department of Defense, 2022, p. xi)”. One other idea is that the security environment has changed and that “since 2010 we have seen the return of great power competition (Department of Defense, 2018, p. 6)” which need the U.S. to “convince adversaries that even limited use of nuclear weapons will be more costly than they can tolerate, it in fact raises that threshold (Department of Defense, 2018, p. ii)”.

4.2.2.2. How is the reader persuaded to agree with the ideas presented in the NPR?
The reader is persuaded to agree through both presenting numbers supporting the modernization and nuclear force enhancement and through pandering to the reader’s will to defend the U.S.. This is done by reiterating throughout the document that the enemies are becoming increasingly incalculable. The world is changing and “other nuclear-armed states have not followed our lead (Department of Defense, 2018, p. 7).” Therefore, the U.S. need to adjust to the “two forms of uncertainty regarding the future security environment” which are “geopolitical” and “technical” uncertainty (Department of Defense, 2018, p. 14). This has a qualitative effect that panders to emotion and identity. The document also supports the possible modernization and the enhancements of low yield options through showing how little it will cost in comparison to the total defense budget. The NPR says that costs, “while substantial, are moderate in historical terms and represent a small fraction of the DoD budget (Department of Defense, 2018, p. 52).” By doing this, the NPR provides a tangible statement that is quantifiable.

4.2.3. 2022 NPR

4.2.3.1. What ideas about what is ought to be done are presented?

One idea that the NPR puts forth is that the world has become even more complex, and that the U.S. need to ensure “a safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrent, and strong and credible extended deterrence (Department of Defense, 2022, p. 25)“. Another idea that is presented is the idea that the U.S. need to prepare for an even unstable security situation in the future. This preparation is done through the acknowledgement of rising competitors such as China, which “likely intends to possess at least 1000 deliverable warheads by the end of the decade (Department of Defense, 2022, p. 4)”. The NPR suggest that the U.S. needs to further “assure allies and partners” and continue a “strategic dialogue” with China (Department of Defense, 2022, p. 8,13). However, the NPR insinuates that China is not interested in a strategic dialogue: “[the U.S.] has made little progress with the PRC (Department of Defense, 2022, p. 13).” The U.S. also will scrap the plans of creating a low-yield submarine launched nuclear missile that the 2018 NPR proposed (Department of Defense, 2022, p. 21).

4.2.3.2. How is the reader persuaded to agree with the ideas presented in the NPR?

The reader is persuaded to agree with the NPR through the conceptual design of the NPR. By placing it in a broader context, the NPR can be more legitimate. This is seen when the NPR refers back to National Strategy Document, which implicitly could be a way to further
package the ideas that the NPR presents. By claiming that the NPR stems from the “broader objectives of our National Defense Strategy (Department of Defense, 2022, p. 25)”, the NPR creates a sense of importance. However, this also has the effect of creating a distancing between the reader and the why. By referring to a “bigger” document, the reader can be deterred from agreeing with the NPR. This makes the argument neither tangible nor intangible.

4.2.4 On Theory
The 2010 argues that deterrence can be achieved through a reduction of its nuclear forces. The differences between the 2018 NPR and the 2022 NPR are less prominent, but they still exist. For example, the 2018 NPR seem to be using more types of arguments in order to persuade its reader to follow the ideas of what is ought to be done. The 2018 NPR uses both qualitative and quantitative arguments by both pandering to the readers’ emotions and to their logical sense. The 2022 NPR uses a more intangible argument by pandering to the readers’ sense of duty and pride.

4.3. Culture

4.3.1. 2010 NPR

4.3.1.1. What story does the NPR tell?
In the 2010 NPR, it seems as if the NPR portrays a vision for the U.S., stating that “the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) outlines the Administration’s approach to promoting the President’s agenda for reducing nuclear dangers and pursuing the goal of a world without nuclear weapons [...] (Department of Defense, 2010, p. iii)“. Obama’s mission for a nuclear free world and the NPR’s writing of how the U.S. will achieve nuclear disarmament show that the U.S. have embarked on a new journey. Still, the U.S. wants to be an eligible “protector”. This is exemplified by the statement that “the threat of global nuclear war has become remote, but the risk of nuclear attack has increased (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 3)” and by the statement that “a failure of reassurance could lead to a decision by one or more non-nuclear states to seek nuclear deterrents of their own, an outcome which could contribute to an unraveling of the NPT regime and to a greater likelihood of nuclear weapon use (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 4)”. In this world, terrorism is the main threat and is the antagonist of the story told in the NPR. This is seen in the quote above. However, there are also a story of needing to keep a watchful eye,
seeing as “[…] Russia’s nuclear force will remain a significant factor in determining how much and how fast we are prepared to reduce U.S. Forces (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 30)“.

4.3.1.2. What role do the personnel play in the story?
There are two instances in which the followers are implicitly encouraged to continue what they are doing, and those instances are when the president thank them for their service and excellence. Also, it could be argued that the NPR panders to a followers presumed wish of being part of a change. This is seen in the NPR’s arguing that “ renewal of the sense of national purpose and direction in nuclear strategy will also be helpful (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 41)”. The follower thus play a role of upholding a moral high ground.

Throughout the document, however, there is a suggestion that the NPR contributes to a safer world with its proposed actions. The NPR highlights the fight against nuclear terrorism and nuclear proliferation as one that can make the world a better place. The NPR makes itself out to be the defender of the responsible and just U.S. The NPR argues that the suggestions it presents “ … not only move us toward the ultimate goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons worldwide but can, in their own right, reinvigorate the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, erect higher barriers to the acquisition of nuclear weapons and nuclear materials by test groups, and strengthen U.S. and international security (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 49)”. This makes the personnel play the role of the President’s “helpers”.

4.3.2. 2018 NPR
4.3.2.1. What story does the NPR tell?
The story told is one where the enemies are becoming stronger, and the U.S. risk falling behind if action is not taken. This is emphasized throughout the document, and particularly so in the chapter of “an evolving and uncertain international security environment (Department of Defense, 2018, p. 5)”. It underscores the difference between the 2018 NPR and the previous NPR of 2010, and says that the 2010 NPR “was based on a number of key findings and expectations regarding the nature of the security environment that have not since been realized (Department of Defense, 2018, p. 6)”. It also says that it “will immediately begin efforts to restore [SLCM] capabilities (Department of Defense, 2018, p. 55)” that the previous
NPR removed. This enforces the story that the 2018 NPR is a break away from the previous NPR.

4.3.2.2. What role do the personnel play in the story?
The role of the personnel in the 2018 NPR is that the world is not as amicable as it was before, and that the personnel need to prepare for a more unstable security situation. The 2018 NPR states that “while the United states has continued to reduce the number and salience of nuclear weapons, others, including Russia and China, have moved in the opposite direction (Department of Defense, 2018, p. 2)”. This serves as a why and could be an encouragement for the personnel to continue to perform their duties. The NPR also speaks to the personnel’s sense of duty, stating that “theirs is an unsung duty of the utmost importance (Department of Defense, 2018, p. ix)”. This has the effect that the personnel are seen as dutiful servants of the nation. One other way that the NPR may encourage the personnel is that it promises to invest in the nuclear force structure and the different platforms. It also gives a detailed overview of how the investments will be used, which may be used to encourage more sceptic followers. As the NPR writes, ”this 6.4 Percent of the current DoD defense budget required for the long term replacement program represents less than one percent of the overall state budget (Department of Defense, 2018, p. xi)”.

4.3.3. 2022 NPR
4.3.3.1. What story does the NPR tell?
The NPR tells the story of a U.S. that is facing an increasingly complex security situation and that soon will face the threat of not one but two “major powers with modern and diverse nuclear capabilities – the PRC and Russia (Department of Defense, 2022) ”. The NPR paints a bleak picture of what the future has to offer, suggesting that Russia has grown irresponsible and that they use nuclear “weapons as a shield behind which to wage unjustified aggression against their neighbors (Department of Defense, 2022, p. 2).” It also tells the story that nuclear states have a responsibility to be “responsible custodians of these nuclear capabilities and work with a sense of urgency to create a security environment that would ultimately allow for their elimination (Department of Defense, 2022, p. 2)”. This implies that the U.S. needs to answer the call for being the responsible nuclear superpower it needs to be. This is also illustrated in the quote that the U.S., unlike some of its competitors, will not use nuclear weapons to intimidate others or as part of an expansionist security policy (Department of Defense, 2022, p. 7).”
4.3.3.2. What role do the personnel play in the story?

The personnel play a vital role, and are “a national asset whose accomplishments are rarely seen but vitally important (Department of Defense, 2022, p. 3)”. They are seen as valued assets that enables the deterrence of competitors. The NPR wants the personnel to continue playing a role of defenders of honesty and democracy and to work together with allies and partners. The NPR says, for example, that “extended nuclear deterrence relationships play an important role here by operationalizing collective defense that couples U.S. and Allied security and gives Allies and partners the confidence to resist coercion and vigorously defend shared interests (Department of Defense, 2022, p. 10)”. However, the personnel also seem to play a trusted role. There are a lot of actions to do, and the NPR seem to implicitly trust their personnel to conduct operations as stated in the NPR, even though “multi-domain stability challenges will grow (Department of Defense, 2022, p. 6)”. The personnel will “follow guidelines for managing escalation risk (Department of Defense, 2022, p. 12)”. 

4.3.4. On Culture

When discussing the aspect of culture, the 2010 NPR tells of another story than later NPR’s. While the later focuses on an deteriorating security situation with increasingly, the 2010 NPR instead puts the danger of nuclear terrorism and nuclear proliferation at the forefront. This sets the tone for what the NPR recommends for actions. Both “enemies” that the 2010 NPR presents have a conceptual and less pronounced presence, whereas the 2018 and 2022 NPR’s have enemies that are more palpable. However, the 2010 NPR does view China and Russia as competitors, but it also present a story of cooperation and mutual prosperity. In contrast, the later NPR’s instead paints a bleaker picture of the state of the world. However, it is hard to discuss the 2010 NPR without taking in the context in which it was produced. The times then were different, and Russia had, for example, not yet invaded Ukraine. This makes the NPR contextual and harder to judge with the adopted analytical framework. Still, the main difference between the NPR’s are that of a cultural one, which is exemplified by the different type of storytelling that the 2010 NPR presents. Both NPR’s mentions that the world is less secure and that great power competition is back. The 2018 NPR mention that China is on the rise, but still pronounces Russia as its main nuclear competitor. The 2022 NPR instead concludes that Russia is irresponsible and not to be trusted, and suggest that China will be the bigger challenge in the future. Both NPR’s are authoritative, and they share a similar told story.
4.4. Authority

4.4.1. 2010 NPR

4.4.1.1. What type of flexibility is employed?

As stated on the first page, the DoD writes that “this [NPR] provides a roadmap for implementing President Obama’s agenda for reducing nuclear risks to the United States […]” (Department of Defense, 2010, p. i). It also says that the “NPR reflects the President’s national security priorities …” (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 9). This makes it not as flexible, as it implicitly suggests that an established roadmap exists. The tone of the language used also implies a conceptual inflexibility. This is evident in for example the chapter of the executive summary, in which actions formed as “the United States will pursue high-level, bilateral dialogues on strategic stability with both Russia and China […]” (Department of Defense, 2010, p. x) are presented. This suggest, that the ideas presented within the document is non-flexible, both in a literal and figurative way.

At the same time, flexibility seem to be concentrated to the higher levels of command within the U.S. chain of command. For example, the NPR states that it wants to “maximize presidential decision time” (Department of Defense, 2010, p. x). Although the quote does not necessarily mention flexibility, it does indicate the will to make the decision time as long as possible, which implies the use of flexibility. Also, the document NPR seem to be written in broad terms, which gives the reader the possibility to interpret what the NPR wants to convey. This could give some leeway and flexibility. This is exemplified through the use of terms such as “balanced”, “integrated” and “sustained” when discussing strategy (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 2). The NPR also touches on material flexibility when it says that it will maintain its nuclear triad and begin refurbishment of command, control and communications. This is evident in the suggestion that “during the ten-year duration of New START, the nuclear triad of ICBMs, SLBM, and heavy bombers will be maintained” (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 25).

4.4.1.2 In what way do the actions proposed in the documents present authority?

There is a frequent use of the verbs must, will, and shall throughout the documents. This gives the impression that the document is an authoritative commandment. Some examples of this can be shown in most chapters, such as the chapter of Critical Infrastructure and Human Capital, in which it says that “in order to sustain a safe, secure and effective U.S. nuclear
stockpile as long as nuclear weapons exists, the United States must possess a modern physical infrastructure […] (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 40)”. Another example is the sentence that “life extension programs will only use nuclear components based on previously tested designs, and will not support new military missions or provide for new military capabilities (Department of Defense, 2010, p. 40)”.

Another aspect that can present authority is the aspect that the NPR was produced by different actors and departments. It was an interagency effort: “from beginning to end, this review was an interagency effort, and as such reflects the strengths of what can be accomplished when our government’s departments work in concert (Department of Defense, 2010, p. i)”.

### 4.4.2. 2018 NPR

4.4.2.1. What type of flexibility is employed?

In the document, the ideas presented are seen as not that flexible in the sense that they are almost commandments. The world has changed and “this 2018 NPR assesses previous nuclear policies and requirements that were established amid a more benign nuclear environment and more amicable Great Power relations (Department of Defense, 2018, p. vi)”.

The suggestions of the 2018 NPR are decisive and is built on the idea that the U.S. faces a worsened security situation and that “Russia and China are contesting the international norms and order we have worked with our allies, partners and members of the international community to build and sustain (Department of Defense, 2018, p. 2)”.

The suggestions are written as commandments that, for example, “calls for a diverse range and mix of U.S. deterrence options. Now and into the future, to ensure strategic stability (Department of Defense, 2018, p. 26)”.

There is small room for flexibility when it comes to taking initiatives.

Flexibility is employed in relatively high degree. The ideas of a “tailored deterrence” and “flexible capabilities” are presented, which are signs of flexibility employed (Department of Defense, 2018, p. 26). These ideas are formulated to provide a tangible solution for effective deterrence “across a spectrum of adversaries, threats and contexts (Department of Defense, 2018, p. 26)”.

Flexibility is employed in the sense of decision-making, but less so when it comes to how to get the reader to be flexible. The 2018 NPR also writes about the ongoing modernization of the nuclear triad and the nuclear communications, command and control centers. It also writes about creating low-yield options of existing missiles and expanding
non-strategic nuclear forces. It writes that “expanding flexible nuclear options now, to include low-yield options, is important for the preservation of credible deterrence against regional aggression (Department of Defense, 2018, p. 54)”.

4.4.2.2. In what way do the actions proposed in the documents present authority? They present authority through what is to be done, and the document presents a set of orders that are to be performed. The documents are using the verbs will, are to and should when proposing the strategic alignment present in the NPR. As the NPR writes, “the United States will pursue initiatives to ensure the necessary capability, capacity and responsiveness of the nuclear weapons infrastructure and the needed skills of the workforce, including the following … (Department of Defense, 2018, p. xv)”. Another way that the document issues authority is through the explicit statement of China and Russia as peer or near-peer competitors that risk tipping the global security balance negatively. This is illustrated by the NPR giving Russia and China their own chapters. For example, the NPR presents “diplomatic, economic and military measures (Department of Defense, 2018, p. 10)”, This creates a sense of authority to international readers, and it is part of the U.S. force posturing. The NPR underscores this and says that “to varying degrees, Russia and China have made clear that they seek to substantially revise the post-cold war world order and norms of behavior (Department of Defense, 2018, p. 6)”. However, the NPR does not explicitly mention China as its new competitor. The NPR still views Russia as its nuclear counterpart, but that China is embarking on a journey of rearmament.

4.4.3. 2022 NPR

4.4.3.1. What type of flexibility is employed? The type of flexibility that is employed mainly concerns response time, deterrence and flexibility through partnership. The NPR does not concern itself with flexibility regarding individual initiatives, and states that “survivable and redundant sensors” allows the president “sufficient time to gather information and consider courses of action (Department of Defense, 2022, p. 12)”. This implies that the president makes the calls and no one else. The flexibility otherwise presented includes response time. As stated in the quote above, the sensor chains serves to provide the executing power ability to choose a proper answer to a perceived threat. The NPR also “takes steps to strengthen extended deterrence and Allied Assurance” which
pushes for a flexibility with partners and allies in order to deter “regional aggression (Department of Defense, 2022, pp. 3, 9)”.

4.4.3.2. In what way do the actions proposed in the documents present authority? Like the other NPR’s, this NPR also contains several statements that are written as commands or orders. This NPR frequently uses the verbs shall, will and are to, as exemplified by “we will deter through safe, secure and effective nuclear forces” which “requires modernizing nuclear forces (Department of Defense, 2022, p. 9)”. Another example is “if we are not confident we can deter escalation, it will be more difficult for our leaders to make the decision to project conventional military power to protect vital national security interests (Department of Defense, 2022, p. 7)” This does signal authority, and that the NPR is clear in its objectives. The document also signals authority when it is put in the same document as the Missile Defense Review and the National Defense Strategy (Department of Defense, 2018, p. iii). By putting it in a broader context, the importance of interoperability and the NPR’s role in U.S. national defense policy is highlighted. However, it could also be argued that by not making the NPR a standalone document, the authority of the document itself is undermined.

4.4.4. On Authority
When comparing the three NPR’s, it seems as if there is a difference between the 2010 and the 2018 and 2022 NPR. While the 2010 NPR does exude authority, it does less so than the other NPR’s. This is due to it using less commandments, and using a more “guiding language that requires interpretation. However, they are still similar in the way they address authority. Like the 2010 NPR, they still show authority through the use of language. The 2018 NPR tries to provide some flexibility through the introduction of a low-yield SLBM. This proposed introduction was also rolled back by the succeeding NPR, the 2022 NPR. It is clear, however, that the 2018 NPR wants to break away from the 2010 NPR legacy. The 2018 mentions at least once that it wants to break away from the 2010 NPR. This type of communication is not seen in the 2022 NPR. The only thing that it differs from the 2018 NPR is the cancellation of a low-yield, non-strategic warhead. The things that differ are the degree of authority. While the 2018 NPR is a stand-alone document, the 2022 comes in a package. It could therefore be argued that the 2022 NPR is more authoritative and less flexible, since it does not stand on its own.
4.5. Summary

Given the analysis, the author would suggest that there are no big differences between the NPR’s of 2018 and 2022. This is based due to them having similar storytelling and authority. However, they persuade their readers in different ways. Considering the different political parties that the 2018 and 2022 NPRs stem from, this is quite a surprise. Instead, the big difference is between the 2010 NPR and the 2018 and 2020 NPR. This is due to the 2010 NPR having a different cultural element and a less authoritative element. The cultural difference comes from the different types of stories told. Through using Høiback’s theoretical framework, the author would suggest that the 2018 and 2022 are leaning towards a tool of command due to them being authoritative and theory-heavy. The 2010 NPR would be classified as a tool of change, due to it leaning toward authority and culture. From this information, the author would suggest that it actually is the 2010 NPR that seems to deviate from a nuclear “norm”, and not the other way around, considering that the 2018 and 2022 NPR’s are more similar. However, to draw this conclusion, a study of all existing NPR’s would be vital.
5. Closure

5.1. Conclusions
This study aimed to conduct a systematic analysis of three NPR’s in order to uncover possible consistencies or divergences between the three NPR’s. This aim is executed through the research question of “What similarities and differences can be found in the 2010, 2018 and 2022 NPR’s?” To conclude the study and to achieve the aim of this study, the answer to the above mentioned question will be presented.

The NPR’s differ from each other in mainly one way, and that is how they are used. While the 2010 NPR seems to be wielded as a tool of change, the 2018 and 2022 NPR seem to be wielded as tools of command. While the 2010 NPR relies on the element of culture and authority – which, according to Høiback, makes it a tool of change – the 2018 and 2022 NPR’s instead relies on authority and theory, making them tools of command. This suggest that it actually is the 2010 NPR that differs from what could be perceived as a “normal” NPR, considering that the 2018 and 2022 are wielded as the same type of tool. This conclusion supports Biddle’s idea that it is unfavorable to change a doctrine for the sake of change. The conclusion suggest that Kronwall and Peterson’s argument about “buzz words” affecting military transformation could perhaps be applied to the case of NPR’s. This conclusion also suggest that Ångström and Widén’s way of viewing doctrine could potentially be helpful if one would want to further understand the perception of quality that the stories within the NPR’s provide. However, this conclusion needs to be strengthened by studying all NPR’s to see how they are wielded.

5.2. Further Research
Further research should be conducted on the two earlier NPR’s in order to examine whether the 2010 NPR is diverging from or are consistent with the “nature“ of NPR documents. This eventual study would either strengthen or refute this study’s finding. Another study could potentially study the NPR’s with a different theory, perhaps using Ångström and Widén’s concept. This study could potentially help gain a further understanding of how the NPR’s could be understood.
5.3. Relevancy for the Profession

This study is of relevancy considering that Sweden are soon-to-be members of NATO, which relies heavily on U.S. Nuclear deterrence for the defense of Europe. By analyzing the documents that guide this nuclear umbrella, a better understanding of Europe’s – and eventually Sweden’s – deterrence will be produced. This study provides a start to better interpret U.S. national policy and its implications for allies within the context of NATO. By having a better understanding of U.S. nuclear policy, officers will be given a partial context of what the European deterrence consists of.
References


