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### TRUMP'S NATIONAL SECURITY PLAN WARNS OF 'GREAT POWER COMPETITION' WITH RUSSIA AND CHINA

By

Mark Landler and David E. Sanger

WASHINGTON – President Trump declared Monday that the United States faced growing competition from Russia and China, two great-power rivals that he said “seek to challenge American influence, values and wealth.”

But Mr. Trump, in presenting a new national security strategy that carried distinct echoes of the Cold War, said nothing about Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, even though the official strategy document itself warns briefly of “Russia using information tools in an attempt to undermine the legitimacy of democracies.”

Mr. Trump referred instead to a Sunday telephone call from President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, who thanked him for intelligence that the C.I.A. had passed on to Russian authorities, which Mr. Trump said foiled a terrorist attack in St. Petersburg that could have killed thousands of people.

“That’s a great thing,” he said, “and the way it’s supposed to work.”

Mr. Trump broke with his two most recent predecessors, Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush, in announcing the national security strategy himself. But Mr. Trump’s speech seemed oddly divorced from the 55-page document, a blueprint for American policy on issues including jihadi extremism, space exploration, bio-threats and pandemics.

Speaking to an audience that included cabinet members and military officers, the president delivered a campaignlike address, with calls to build a wall along the nation’s southern border with Mexico and a heavy dose of self-

congratulation for the bull market, the low jobless rate and tax cuts, which he said were “days away.”

“America is in the game,” he said. “And America is going to win.”

Mr. Trump’s tone was decidedly more upbeat than the analysis in his own strategy. While he spoke of surging confidence and a fast-growing economy, the document describes a world that has been on a three-decade holiday from superpower rivalry, and suggests that holiday is over.

“After being dismissed as a phenomenon of an earlier century, great power competition returned,” the document says. It then tries to lend intellectual coherence to a foreign policy that is often defined by Mr. Trump’s Twitter messages or his gut instincts about which world leaders are strong, which are weak and which are prepared to cut a deal.

While the document’s description of pushing back against China on trade is familiar from the campaign, its description of the challenge posed by Russia seems at odds with Mr. Trump’s own refusal to criticize Mr. Putin for his seizure of Crimea, efforts to destabilize Ukraine and his violations of a key nuclear treaty with the United States. In fact, the document describes Russia’s behavior in far more critical terms than Mr. Trump himself did.

China and Russia, the document says, “are determined to make economies less free and less fair, to grow their militaries, and to control information and data to repress their societies and expand their influence.”

“These competitions require the United States to rethink the policies of the past two decades – policies based on the assumption that engagement with rivals and their inclusion in international institutions and global commerce would turn them into benign actors and trustworthy partners,” the document continues. “For the most part, this premise turned out to be false.”

While Mr. Obama’s two national security strategies emphasized cooperation with allies and economic partners, Mr. Trump’s attempts to walk the line between his campaign slogan of “America First” and an insistence that he is not rejecting working with American partners – as long as they do so on terms advantageous to the United States.

While Mr. Obama used his strategies to de-emphasize nuclear weapons as a key to American defense, Mr. Trump calls those weapons “the foundation of our strategy to preserve peace and stability by deterring aggression against the United States, our allies and our partners.”

The national security strategies of past administrations were sometimes strong predictors of future action: It was Mr. Bush’s strategy, in 2002, that revived a national debate about the justifications for pre-emptive military action. That document helped form the rationale for the invasion of Iraq six months later, arguing that the risks of inaction in the face of a major threat made “a compelling case for taking anticipatory actions to defend ourselves.”

The new strategy never uses the word “pre-emption,” including in its discussion of North Korea. This omission comes despite the fact that Mr. Trump’s national security adviser, Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, has said that if diplomacy and sanctions fail, “preventive war,” or a pre-emptive strike, might be needed to keep the North from attacking the United States.

Administration officials, previewing the document, also noted it refers to China as a “strategic competitor.” That is a radical shift from the language that the Obama administration used toward Beijing, which Mr. Obama viewed as a partner in confronting global threats, from Iran’s nuclear program to climate change.

Mr. Bush used the phrase “strategic competitor” in reference to China when he ran for the White House in 2000, drawing a contrast with Bill Clinton, who liked to refer to China as a “strategic partner.” The Trump administration’s language suggests the United States will push back robustly on China’s state-driven economic practices and expansionist claims in the South China Sea.

Mr. Trump has tried working with China to curb North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs, even setting aside his “America First” trade agenda in an effort to persuade President Xi Jinping to put more economic pressure on the government of Kim Jong-un.

But the strategy outlined in the document suggests a return to his campaign promises, and states explicitly that “the United States will no longer turn a blind eye to violations, cheating or economic aggression.”

Another section refers to preserving the “national security innovation base,” at a moment the administration is considering steps to keep China from investing in promising American technology.

In another shift from his predecessor, Mr. Trump’s strategy does not recognize the changing climate as a threat to national security. The document instead places climate under a section on embracing “energy dominance,” and says that while “climate policies will continue to shape the global energy system,” American leadership will be “indispensable to countering an anti-growth energy agenda.”

That puts it at odds with the Pentagon, which has continued to highlight national security threats from a changing climate, including refugee flows as a result of droughts and intensifying storms and the repercussions of rising sea waters.

In some key areas, like the use of cyberattacks against the United States, the document described the problems facing the nation rather than prescribing solutions. It refers to cyberweapons as a new threat because they can strike “without ever physically crossing our borders.”

“Deterrence today is significantly more complex to achieve than during the Cold War,” the document reads, saying a mix of inexpensive weapons and “the use of

cybertools have allowed state and nonstate competitors to harm the United States across various domains.”

America’s adversaries have learned to “operate below the threshold of open military conflict and at the edges of international law,” it continues.

But the document deals with the subject at some remove, not dwelling on how Russia used cyber techniques in an attempt to interfere with the 2016 election. And it does nothing to describe any broad national strategy to guard against meddling in future elections.

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