

**An Arms Control Association and British  
American Security Information Council Report**



# **Reducing the Role of Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Europe: Perspectives and Proposals on the NATO Policy Debate**

May 2011

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Paul Ingram and Oliver Meier, Editors



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## About the Editors

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Oliver Meier is ACA's International Representative and is based in Berlin. He is also a senior researcher with the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg and holds a PhD in political science from the Free University of Berlin. Meier has served on the staff of Uta Zapf, who is a member of the Foreign Relations Committee and chairperson of the subcommittee on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation in the German Bundestag. From 1999-2002, he was Senior Arms Control and Disarmament Researcher with the Verification Research, Training and Information Center in London.

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## Cover Photo

U.S. Air Force F-16 ready to land at Incirlik Airbase, southern Turkey, November 2001. Tarik Tinazay/AFP/Getty Images

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# Introduction

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U.S. nuclear deployments in Europe and associated nuclear-sharing arrangements were a contentious issue during discussions on NATO's new Strategic Concept in 2010 and will likely provoke further debate in the coming months and years.

Ahead of the November 19-20, 2010 Lisbon summit, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen declared the role of nuclear weapons “a very central question” in NATO's updated strategic concept.<sup>1</sup> Rasmussen had good reason to do so. Internally, the debate on the role of nuclear weapons in NATO's defense posture turned out to be divisive. Agreement among allies on a revised nuclear posture was achieved only hours before NATO heads of state and government convened in Lisbon.

Not surprisingly, the new Strategic Concept remains ambiguous and conservative on several key nuclear matters, leaving much to interpretation and later clarification. The allies deferred decisions on key questions such as the balance between conventional and nuclear deterrence and NATO's future role on disarmament, arms control, and nonproliferation to a new Defense and Deterrence Posture Review as well as the newly-created Weapons of Mass Destruction Control and Disarmament committee. The deliberations of these bodies will not only affect relations among the members of the NATO alliance, but they may also influence the course of the future U.S. and global disarmament and nonproliferation enterprise.

In his landmark speech in Prague on April 5, 2009, U.S. President Barack Obama made the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons a central theme of his presidency. Obama pledged to maintain U.S. security commitments but also promised to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in security policy. He argued that such a policy is necessary to increase the credibility of Western nonproliferation efforts and thus increase international unity around central nonproliferation norms, as well as to tackle the in-

creasing threat of nuclear terrorism. Despite progress in other areas—such as the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review, the 2010 Nuclear Security Summit, the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference, and the signing and ratification of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty—NATO's new Strategic Concept does not live up to Obama's promise.

The fundamental elements of NATO's nuclear policies—a first-use policy even against non-nuclear attack and the basing of tactical nuclear weapons on the territory of non-nuclear weapon states under nuclear-sharing arrangements—remain unchanged. If NATO members genuinely want to cooperate with Washington's striving for global nuclear nonproliferation and the contingent disarmament related to it, they have much work to do.

This collection of essays examines the debate about NATO's nuclear posture from a variety of perspectives. It contains contributions written from national (but not necessarily official) perspectives of key countries, written before and after the Lisbon summit. The authors come from different backgrounds. Some have observed the nuclear debate in the alliance from the outside, and some have been (and still are) active participants within the decision-making processes.

We were able to convene this unique group of experts during a year-long project on “Reducing the role of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe,” which was made possible with the financial support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Three nongovernmental organizations with a mandate to promote more effective nonproliferation and arms control efforts cooperated on the project: the Arms Control Association (ACA), the British American

Security Information Council (BASIC), and the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH). The objective was to advance understanding of and support for steps to reduce the role and number of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe and Russia in the context of broader efforts to diminish the salience of nuclear weapons in Europe.

At the core of the undertaking were a series of roundtables for decision-makers and experts concerned with NATO's nuclear posture, organized with the cooperation of local host organizations. These seminars took place in Ankara, Brussels, Helsinki, Tallinn, Warsaw, and Washington.<sup>2</sup> The ideas contained in the papers assembled here were, for the most part, presented at these workshops. The authors touch on central issues in the debate on NATO's nuclear policy and their perspectives will remain a reference point as NATO continues to debate its deterrence and defense posture ahead of the April 2012 summit in the United States.

**Ambassador Peter Gottwald**, federal commissioner for disarmament and arms control at the German Federal Foreign Office, describes the reasons behind Berlin's 2009 initiative to advocate the withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Germany and Europe. Gottwald points out that NATO, as a nuclear alliance, can play a key role in creating the conditions for nuclear disarmament. "By including arms control into the NATO 'toolbox,' the alliance can positively affect the security environment in which it operates," Gottwald states. He points to the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review Report, published in April 2010, which restricts the role of U.S. nuclear weapons and argues that "[n]ow it is NATO's turn to adapt its strategy." Gottwald writes that a realistic intermediate goal "... would be a declaratory policy that defines as the sole purpose of NATO's nuclear weapons deterrence of nuclear attacks on its territory."

**Lukasz Kulesa** of the Polish Institute of International Affairs describes priorities from a Polish and Central European perspective on NATO's future nuclear policy. He argues that Central Europeans' "attitude towards the role of nuclear weapons and wider issue of the deterrence policy of the North Atlantic Alliance is much more varied and nuanced, and reducing them to a 'no changes' camp can result in the oversimplification of the picture and hampers the understanding of the motives of their choices in foreign and security policy." Kulesa describes how the debate on NATO's role in nuclear disarmament "was met with little enthusiasm in the Central European countries" because they feared negative repercussions for U.S. security guarantees. Rather than describing Central Europeans as simply status quo-oriented, it would be more accurate to see them as acting in a low-key fashion, advocating restraint and

a gradual approach to change in policy over alliance nuclear weapons, Kulesa writes.

**Des Browne** (Lord Browne of Ladyton) is a former British secretary of state for defense (May 2006 – October 2008), and now convener of the European Leadership Network for Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation. He argues forcefully "that while there is no case for NATO giving up all its nuclear forces unilaterally there is also no real case for continuing with the status quo." Lord Browne describes how the U.S. intends to reduce its reliance on nuclear deterrence and concludes that NATO's biggest challenge today is to "simultaneously sustain alliance cohesion by providing reassurance to all members of the alliance, but also increase NATO's contribution to global momentum on multilateral nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation, and enhance the prospects of further fruitful arms control dialogue with Russia."

**Oliver Meier's** paper on NATO's new Strategic Concept and the future of tactical nuclear weapons concludes the section of papers written before the Lisbon summit. Drawing on an *Arms Control Today* feature article written jointly with Paul Ingram,<sup>3</sup> Meier argues that given existing differences on nuclear policy, "it is important that the new Strategic Concept does not prevent any meaningful change of NATO's nuclear policies after the Lisbon summit." NATO members should continue to discuss contentious issues in a focused and transparent review of its nuclear policy, to be launched after the Lisbon summit.

While the new Strategic Concept turned out to be a "missed opportunity to reduce the number and role of the 200 forward-deployed U.S. tactical nuclear bombs,"<sup>4</sup> allies did agree on a defense and deterrence posture review (DDPR) to discuss the new balance between conventional and nuclear deterrence, and the contribution of missile defense to allies' security. In addition, they agreed to set-up a new WMD Control and Disarmament committee to strengthen NATO's role in and support for arms control efforts. The last three papers discuss the prospects for these discussions.

**Steven Pifer** of the Brookings Institution describes the Obama administration's perspective on the DDPR by pointing out that Washington is pursuing multiple goals in parallel: reducing the role of nuclear weapons; aligning NATO's declaratory policy with U.S. nuclear doctrine; including tactical nuclear weapons in a follow-on bilateral agreement with Russia; avoiding open rifts among allies; and ensuring European support for and Russian cooperation in missile defense. The administration is currently considering how to balance these different requirements and "it is not clear how soon the U.S. interagency process will come to conclusions on

what to do about non-strategic nuclear weapons," Pifer concludes.

**Mustafa Kibaroglu** of Bilkent University in Ankara describes the Turkish debate on NATO's nuclear policy. He explains why "Turkey, as a host, has long been supportive of retaining U.S. nuclear weapons on its territory." Kibaroglu points out that the "Turkish political and security elite has viewed Turkey's NATO membership as a potent symbol of Turkey's belonging to the West and the U.S. nuclear weapons stationed in Turkey have been seen, in this respect, as a symbol of Turkey's privileged status within NATO." At the same time, he argues that Turkey should "request that the United States drawdown nuclear weapons that are deployed on its territory" *inter alia* because the use of these weapons is not credible and their deterrent function can more effectively be achieved with other means.

**Paul Zajac**, first secretary of the French embassy in Berlin, argues that differences between France and Germany over nuclear disarmament and the role of nuclear weapons "can in fact be reconciled, as shown by NATO's new Strategic Concept." Yet, he also maintains that, from a French perspective, NATO is "not in a position to play a decisive role" on most issues related to nuclear disarmament. Specifically, "a standing committee on disarmament would only play a marginal or even counterproductive role in NATO," Zajac writes. Paris believes that "in a context where nuclear arsenals are increasing worldwide, NATO cannot reduce the effectiveness of its nuclear deterrent, which ought to remain a core element of the collective defense guarantees under Article 5 and is crucial to many allies."

**Paul Ingram**, executive director of the British American Security Information Council, writes that the current compromise in NATO that sees tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) as a bargaining chip to achieve reciprocal measures from Russia could well be counter-productive and weaken the Alliance's position. As key host states face politically challenging decisions over reinvestment in delivery systems and infrastructure, the irreducible paradox around TNW deployments must be faced: how can members still see political benefits from systems that have vague and high-disputed utility for deterrence? Resolution will take leadership that up to now has been decidedly lacking.

All the authors concur that NATO's new Strategic Concept, agreed to in November 2010, does not mark

the end of the debate on NATO's nuclear policy.

We are thankful for the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation's support that enabled us to engage officials, diplomats, lawmakers, nongovernmental experts and the media in discussions on these issues. We would also like to acknowledge the assistance of local partners, namely: the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Berlin and Brussels; the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Berlin and Washington; the International Centre for Defence Studies in Tallinn; the International Strategic Research Organization in Ankara; the International Security Information Service Europe in Brussels; the Peace Union of Finland; and the Polish Institute of International Affairs in Warsaw for co-organizing and hosting excellent meetings. We are looking forward to continuing cooperation with these organizations as NATO continues its discussions on nuclear disarmament, arms control, and nonproliferation.

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#### ENDNOTES

1. Elaine Grossman, "NATO Chief Anticipates Diminished Reliance on Nuclear Arsenal," *Global Security Newswire*, September 8, 2010, [http://gsn.nti.org/gsn/nw\\_20100908\\_9517.php](http://gsn.nti.org/gsn/nw_20100908_9517.php)
2. For an overview of project activities, including seminar reports, see <http://tacticalnuclearweapons.ifsh.de/>
3. Oliver Meier and Paul Ingram, "A Nuclear Posture Review for NATO," *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 40, No. 8, October 2010, pp. 8–15.
4. "Experts Call NATO Strategic Concept 'Missed Opportunity to Reduce Role of Obsolete Tactical Nukes from Europe,'" ACA/BASIC press release, November 19, 2010, <http://www.armscontrol.org/pressroom/NATOMissedOp>



## Section 1

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# The Discussion on NATO's Nuclear Policy Ahead of the Lisbon Summit

# Current NATO Nuclear Policy

By Rt Hon the Lord Browne of Ladyton (Des Browne)

I want to start my comments today by reminding us of four aspects of current NATO nuclear policy.

First, and as captured in the language of the 1999 Strategic Concept, a formulation that in turn, by the way, uses the same words as those used in the 1991 Strategic Concept, “the fundamental purpose of the nuclear forces of the Allies is political: to preserve peace and prevent coercion and any kind of war.”

Second, and according to the same document, “the nuclear forces based in Europe and committed to NATO provide an essential political and military link between the European and the North American members of the Alliance.”

Third, NATO currently argues that nuclear forces fulfill their essential role by ensuring uncertainty in the mind of any aggressor about the nature of the allies’ response to military aggression (note, not just nuclear aggression, but military aggression more broadly defined).

Fourth, and to deliver both the deterrent effect to any potential adversary and the transatlantic cohesion effect described, the current policy says that NATO nuclear forces need to be perceived by all as “both a credible and effective element” of the allies’ strategy in preventing war.

My message today is that while there is no case for NATO giving up all its nuclear forces unilaterally, there is also no real case for continuing with the status quo.

## The changed context

I say this for three principal reasons.

First, the diplomatic context today is quite different from the context within which current NATO policy was formed.

President Obama’s speech in Prague in April 2009, in which he committed to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons, has put us, I believe, in a new era of policymaking and has opened

up new possibilities which NATO has to pursue.

The follow-up to the President’s speech with UN Security Council Resolution 1887 in September 2009 and the Washington Nuclear Security Summit in April 2010 demonstrated broad international support for the objectives the President set out.

More recently, and after a gap of almost a decade, the United States and Russia have resumed strategic arms control negotiations, signing the New START Treaty in Prague in April. If ratification can be achieved, this will add to the momentum and lead to follow on talks with the potential to achieve much deeper cuts.

In May of this year too, a successful outcome was also achieved at the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference in New York, though one should not underestimate what a close run thing it was and how much international pressure among non-nuclear-weapon states there now is to see serious disarmament among the nuclear-weapon states-parties to the NPT.

In my view, there is an opportunity and obligation for the alliance to build further on these recent achievements. The question for NATO as it revises its Strategic Concept ahead of Lisbon is what can it do to add to the disarmament momentum without either undermining alliance cohesion or taking unnecessary risks with alliance security. Just sticking with the status quo, the NATO nuclear position will look insensitive at best and may make the alliance appear oblivious and irrelevant to the changing world taking shape beyond its own borders.

Second, and at a more practical level, under President Obama's leadership the United States has conducted a Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), a process which resulted in a commitment by the U.S. "not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons

against non-nuclear weapons states that are party to the NPT and in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations."

There appears to be some discrepancy between the new U.S. position and the position agreed by NATO in 1999, to use nuclear forces to "ensure uncertainty in the mind of any aggressor about the nature of the Allies' response to military aggression." This discrepancy extends to the different declaratory policies of the UK and France. It needs to be addressed given the reality that it is U.S. nuclear forces that provide the essential backbone of NATO's nuclear deterrent capability. Here the question for NATO as a whole is not only what can it do to reduce the declared roles of nuclear weapons in alliance strategy, but what must it now do to make sure its own strategy is internally coherent.

Third, and most importantly in my view, the internal political dynamics of NATO, as they relate to nuclear policy, have changed since 1999. The foreign ministers of several countries have called for a fuller debate on the future of U.S. sub-strategic nuclear weapons stationed in Europe. In some member countries of the alliance, political momen-



Joe Klamar/AFP/Getty Images

U.S. President Barack Obama outlines his strategy for advancing progress toward "a world without nuclear weapons" at Hradčany Square in Prague, Czech Republic, April 5, 2009.

tum has swung behind a desire to see these weapons removed and there are increasing question marks over the political ability of some European governments to replace the aging dual-capable aircraft upon which these weapons rely. The military utility of the same weapons is increasingly being questioned, and so too, as a result, are their deterrence value and credibility in the eyes of any potential aggressor.

On the other hand, there are some in the alliance who are worried about any decision to remove these

ons use, with all their catastrophic consequences.

The strategic lesson that many in the U.S. are drawing from this is profound. Nuclear deterrence is coming to be seen as a far less persuasive strategic response to a world of potential regional nuclear arms races and nuclear terrorism than it was to the Cold War. Although the U.S. is not dictating what NATO nuclear policy ought to be to the rest of the alliance, it is beginning to rethink deterrence and what it requires as a whole, with a view to downgrading the role and place of nuclear weapons within it.

**The debate on the future of U.S. substrategic weapons stationed in Europe is becoming a proxy for a much more fundamental debate about the confidence of NATO allies in each other.**

substrategic weapons because they believe it may signal a weakening of the transatlantic link and a weakening of U.S. resolve to defend allies in Europe should they come under attack.

I want to dwell on this point because, in my view, there are serious issues at stake here and they go well beyond alliance nuclear policy. Indeed, the debate on the future of U.S. substrategic weapons stationed in Europe is becoming a proxy for a much more fundamental debate about the confidence of NATO allies in each other. There is also, I believe, a misunderstanding taking place about what the real drivers of attitudes in the different parts of the alliance actually are.

There are some in Europe, for example, who think the U.S. administration's interest in nuclear disarmament merely reflects the idealist elements of President Obama's make-up and that the current emphasis on disarmament will pass. This could not be further from the truth. What is going on in the U.S. is a change in the hierarchy of perceived threats to U.S. national security, with new nuclear threats moving to the top of the list. There are individual countries of concern, like Iran, North Korea, and Pakistan; there are concerns over regional proliferation dynamics in the Middle East and South and East Asia, concerns over terrorists acquiring a nuclear capability; and a realization that, as the global nuclear industry expands to meet the challenge of climate change, so will the availability of potentially lethal nuclear material. Without further action, the perception is of a real danger that the U.S. and the world will be overwhelmed by proliferation risks and incidents of nuclear weap-

It is doing so because it no longer believes that status quo thinking on nuclear deterrence represents the safe option for the long term. This has serious implications for how the U.S. will come to understand deterrence, burden-sharing and the requirements of a strong transatlantic link within the context of NATO as a whole and, therefore, serious implications for the way European allies need to think about these issues as well.

On the other hand, there are those in the U.S. and Western Europe who think some European allies are reluctant to let go of the U.S. substrategic weapons only because they are trapped in Cold War thinking. Again, this could not be further from the truth.

I have come here from meetings in Turkey where I have been discussing with colleagues the issue of NATO nuclear policy in the context of the threats facing that country. My overriding impression is that the substrategic weapons stationed there have an importance to Turkey, not because of the weapons themselves or their military utility but because the relationship between Turkey, the U.S., and its NATO allies is under strain for other reasons. Turkey perceives threats to its national security which it does not think its allies understand. Its concerns are now dominated by events in the Middle East, not Europe. It does not feel as secure as some countries in the Western European part of the alliance. Turkey's relationship with and confidence in the U.S. was deeply damaged by the experience of the Bush administration and by what it perceives as the failure of the U.S. to help Turkey in its struggle with the PKK. Turkey is not wedded to U.S. substrategic weapons but in the absence of its other concerns being addressed, they

have become of symbolic importance. If its wider concerns can be addressed, progress on NATO nuclear posture might be possible.

I will not dwell on them here, but there are similar dynamics at work in central and Eastern Europe.

The point of all this, in my view, is that the alliance is not having the honest conversations it needs to have to make progress on the challenges it needs to address today.

### Next Steps

For me, the implications of all this for NATO are clear. The allies cannot and should not avoid a reexamination of the 1999 nuclear policy formulation and what it means in practice but in addressing it, must engage in a serious conversation about more fundamental issues.

The core ideas of deterrence, alliance solidarity, burden sharing, and the transatlantic link remain central to our security but the question before the alliance is how best to implement them in the changed circumstances we face today. In particular, a key question is how best to implement these core ideas in ways which simultaneously sustain alliance cohesion by providing reassurance to all members of the alliance, but also increase NATO's contribution to global momentum on multilateral nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation, and enhance the prospects of further fruitful arms control dialogue with Russia.

For me, and for over 30 other European colleagues who signed the recent leadership statement on NATO nuclear policy, this points to the need for a full, inclusive, and transparent review of NATO force posture that addresses the following questions:

1. What can NATO do to help establish safe conditions for the adoption of deterring nuclear attacks as the sole purpose for its nuclear weapons, consistent with the direction of travel set out in the U.S. NPR and with the ambition to reduce the number and roles of nuclear weapons in the NATO arsenal?
2. Are NATO's current nuclear arrangements the only available and credible option for providing European allies with reassurance? What alternative options are available that could provide this reassurance while also allowing NATO to do more to support international moves toward

multilateral nuclear disarmament? What might the risks and benefits of each of these alternatives be?

3. What alternatives to current nuclear burden-sharing arrangements might be available, if any, that could both maintain the political cohesion of the alliance and maintain the principle that nuclear risks and burdens are shared across the alliance while also allowing more courageous steps on nuclear disarmament to be taken?

4. How can we best engage with Russia on this agenda?

These are important questions. They go to the heart of NATO's approach to delivering its own security, its longer-term political cohesion in changing conditions, and the stability of its relationship with Russia. The challenge for NATO is now to simultaneously maintain its own cohesion while moving to strengthen the global nonproliferation regime and further reduce urgent nuclear dangers. The alliance has a responsibility to show more leadership on the nuclear challenges of the 21st century. It must do so by pursuing an honest conversation within its own membership.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Des Browne** is convener of the European Leadership Network for Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation. He is also the convener of the Top Level Group or UK Parliamentarians for Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament and Nonproliferation. Lord Browne served as secretary of state for defense 2006-08, at the time that the decision to renew the Trident system was made by the government and taken through Parliament. He was also secretary of state for Scotland 2007-08; parliamentary under-secretary of state, Northern Ireland Office 2001-03; and the Prime Minister's special envoy to Sri Lanka 2009. This paper was delivered at the roundtable on "NATO nuclear policies, the New Strategic Concept and European Security," hosted by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Brussels, October 6, 2010. The paper also formed the basis of a talk given to a UN Association conference in Edinburgh, October 25, 2010.

# Options for Arms Control to Reduce the Role of Nuclear Weapons in NATO

By Peter Gottwald

Ever since the Harmel report,<sup>1</sup> NATO has been committed to a broad approach to security, including arms control, disarmament and other cooperative security tools as a necessary complement to military capabilities. The declaration on the alliance's security adopted by the 2009 Strasbourg summit reflects this twofold approach by restating that deterrence, including through nuclear capabilities, will remain a core element of NATO strategy while at the same time NATO will continue to play its part in reinforcing arms control and promoting nuclear and conventional disarmament and nonproliferation.

We expect that these two principles will be reaffirmed in NATO's new Strategic Concept. But that will not be enough: While reaffirming them, NATO also has to redefine them in light of today's security environment. This is a task for which the new NATO strategy can only be the starting point. Both principles are interlinked: On the one hand, NATO's military doctrine has to be consistent with the arms control obligations and objectives of its members. As a nuclear alliance, NATO carries a special responsibility for the pursuit of the nuclear disarmament obligation under Article VI of the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). On the other hand, a working arms control and nonproliferation architecture as well as progress in disarmament can positively alter the security considerations underlying NATO's deterrence posture.

That is the reason why, at the informal foreign ministers meeting in Tallinn in April this year, the foreign ministers of Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Norway launched a comprehensive discussion on deterrence as well as arms control and disarmament.

After a period of neglect, disarmament has gained new momentum in recent months. President Obama's vision of a nuclear weapon free world has been translated into a U.S. Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) with a remarkable reassessment of the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. strategy. In particular,

the NPR came to the conclusion: "Since the end of the cold war the strategic situation has changed in fundamental ways. With the advent of U.S. conventional military preeminence and continued improvement in U.S. missile defenses and capabilities to counter and mitigate the effects of CBW, the role of U.S. nuclear weapons in deterring non-nuclear attacks—conventional, biological, or chemical—has declined significantly."<sup>2</sup> The NPR draws from this the following conclusion: "The United States will continue to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in deterring non-nuclear attacks."<sup>3</sup>

Now it is NATO's turn to adapt its strategy.

Already NATO's 1999 strategy recognized the fundamental changes after the end of the Cold War and stressed that NATO's nuclear forces will be kept at the minimum level consistent with the prevailing security environment. Further changes have since taken place. Traditional threats have receded. New threats such as terrorism, including nuclear terrorism, and ever more threatening proliferation concerns have emerged. To counter those challenges, classic nuclear deterrence is poorly suited, or even completely useless. At the same time, as highlighted in the NPR, the so-called "revolution in military affairs" has transformed conventional capabilities and new capabilities such as missile defenses have become operational.

All these developments imply a reduced salience of nuclear weapons. It is time to draw the

appropriate conclusions.

Not only are technological changes relevant, but our ability to create a better security environment can also be a determining factor. Progress in arms control—that is, agreed measures to build confidence through transparency measures and by imposing limitations on range, location, or operational status of certain weapon systems—can contribute to further reduce the reliance on nuclear weapons.

Taken together, these are more than just incremental changes. It is time to acknowledge that any continued role for nuclear weapons has to be seen in a new light. In his April 2009 speech in Prague, President Obama drew the same conclusion that Henry Kissinger and his associates have drawn: that “nuclear weapons are becoming less an asset and more a liability” in official U.S. policy. Obama adopted “the pursuit of a world without nuclear weapons” as a necessary and realistic, albeit very long-term, objective. The inherent dangers of nuclear weapons, the specter of proliferation, and nuclear terrorism all contribute to the conclusion that a world without nuclear weapons is the safer option, in particular if conventional weapons and a more stable political environment—including through effective arms control—give us the confidence that this will not impair but enhance our security.

There is a broad range of areas where arms control

can create or improve security, leading to further reductions in the salience of nuclear weapons, including for NATO. Once the alliance has redefined the general guiding principles of its strategy, NATO members should examine them in the further follow-up and review process of NATO’s nuclear posture.

The 2010 NPT Review Conference endorsed the long-term goal of a nuclear weapon free world and reaffirmed the unequivocal commitment of the nuclear-weapon states to the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. This defines the grand direction in which all NPT states, including NATO’s members, have committed themselves to go.

A realistic intermediate goal would be a declaratory policy that defines as the sole purpose of NATO’s nuclear weapons deterrence of nuclear attacks on its territory. The NPR announced that the United States “will work to establish conditions under which such a policy could be safely adopted.”<sup>4</sup> This should also be an issue to be examined by NATO.

A dialogue on nuclear doctrines among the nuclear-weapon states could be a major step toward more transparency and confidence building. Russia, which continues to rely heavily on nuclear deterrence, should be particularly engaged in such a dialogue. The NATO-Russia Council could be an appropriate forum to discuss this between the alliance and Moscow.



Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton reads from the Nuclear Posture Review during a news briefing with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Navy Admiral Mike Mullen (L) and Defense Secretary Robert Gates at the Pentagon, April 6, 2010.

Assurances to non-nuclear-weapon states that they will not be the target of a nuclear attack, known as negative security assurances, are a legitimate request of states in particular when they do

CFE regime, which is the cornerstone of the European security architecture. Progress in this field would increase confidence and counter the argument that is advanced by Russia that it needs to maintain its

## **By including arms control in the NATO “toolbox,” the alliance can positively affect the security environment in which it operates.**

not profit from extended nuclear deterrence. The United States in its NPR has acknowledged this, albeit with the significant qualification that states, to benefit from extended negative security guarantees, have to be in good standing with their nonproliferation obligations. This too could be a path that NATO should examine.

Declaratory policies have to be followed by practical implementation. For instance, further decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons (“de-alerting”) can reduce the risk of human error and increase mutual confidence. While the NPR maintained the current alert posture of U.S. strategic nuclear forces, it opened a window by initiating studies into possibilities for future reductions.

By stating its intention to work toward withdrawal of the remaining nuclear weapons from Germany, the German government induced a debate about the future of NATO’s remaining nonstrategic nuclear weapons in Europe. This debate concerns NATO as a whole, and we should work toward a NATO consensus on this important question. In this debate we also have to take the large Russian arsenal of nonstrategic nuclear weapons into account. We welcome the commitment by the NPT Review Conference to reduce and ultimately eliminate all types of nuclear weapons. We appreciate that the United States’ NPR proposed that nonstrategic nuclear weapons “be included in any future reduction arrangements between the United States and Russia.”<sup>5</sup> Following ratification of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty—which we hope will occur soon—there is a window of opportunity. The Polish-Norwegian proposal to speak with Russia about confidence building measures, e.g., in the framework of the NATO-Russia Council, could facilitate future negotiations between the United States and Russia on these matters.<sup>6</sup>

Arms control can also make a positive difference regarding the interrelationship between nuclear weapons policy and conventional forces. After a long time of deadlock, we are now finally engaged in a joint NATO initiative to overcome the crisis of the

heavy reliance on nuclear weapons because of a conventional inferiority and a perceived conventional threat from NATO.

In conclusion, arms control remains an integral part of our security policy. By including arms control in the NATO “toolbox,” the alliance can positively affect the security environment in which it operates. Reducing the role of nuclear weapons in NATO strategy has to be seen as a dynamic process, and should accompany us through the period covered by NATO’s new Strategic Concept and beyond.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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### ENDNOTES

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5. Ibid, p. 28.
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# Polish and Central European Priorities for NATO's Future Nuclear Policy

By Łukasz Kulesa

In the present debate over the future of NATO's nuclear policy, and especially the stationing of U.S. substrategic nuclear weapons in Europe, the countries of Central Europe (understood here as the "Baltic Three"—Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—plus Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia) are usually presented as the staunch supporters of the nuclear status quo, in favor of the permanent deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe out of the fear of Russia. In fact, their attitude toward the role of nuclear weapons and the wider issue of the North Atlantic Alliance's deterrence policy is much more varied and nuanced, and reducing them to a "no changes" camp can result in the oversimplification of the picture and hampers understanding of the motives behind the organization's foreign and security policy.

It is worth emphasizing that when the discussion of the nuclear dimension of NATO intensified in recent months, the countries of the region were publicly confronted with policy choices they would have preferred to make in a low-key fashion inside the alliance. The collusion of external elements, such as the Obama administration's emphasis on nuclear disarmament, the heightened interest of the international expert community in NATO's nuclear policy, and the public method of preparing the new Strategic Concept, forced the Central Europeans to take a stance on issues that previously had been the subject of interest only to a small group of foreign affairs and defense officials dealing with NATO's nuclear portfolio at the members' capitals and in Brussels.

Analyzing the positions of the countries of the region begins with the continued relevance of the alliance's three political commitments on nuclear policy—the "three no's"—unveiled in 1996 and declared in the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act. The alliance declared there that it had "no intention, no plan and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new members, nor any need to change any aspect of NATO's nuclear posture or nuclear policy."<sup>1</sup> This pledge was an element of a larger package of concessions made to alleviate Russian concerns

about the effects of NATO enlargement.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding the criticism of the political pledges limiting the alliance's freedom of action, the candidate countries accepted the "three no's" as an unavoidable part of the enlargement bargain. In the context of the nuclear policy of the alliance, this means that while countries of Central Europe have been participating in the proceedings of the Nuclear Planning Group and have been playing a role in shaping NATO nuclear policy (including the formulation of the new Strategic Concept in this aspect), they are not involved in nuclear sharing arrangements per se. Moreover, from the point of view of the region, in the current and foreseeable future it is difficult to envisage a situation in which the "three no's"-policy would be changed, e.g., to allow for stationing of nuclear weapons in Central Europe.<sup>3</sup>

## Perception of the role of nuclear deterrence

While nuclear deterrence has been present in the background of many debates on security in Central Europe, little attention has been given until recently to the specific aspects of the nuclear extended deterrence provided by the United States through NATO.<sup>4</sup> In general, the strategic establishments within the



Miguel Riopala/AFP/Getty Images

Poland's President Bronislaw Komorowski (R) chats with NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen (L) at the NATO Summit held November 19-20, 2010 in Lisbon, Portugal.

countries of the region perceive the need for nuclear weapons as a stabilizing element in the relationship between the United States and Russia. Support for nuclear disarmament is virtually nonexistent in the public discourse. Therefore, it is also by and large absent from the programs of the political parties and from the media.<sup>5</sup> Many in the experts' community in these countries remain skeptical about the wisdom of pursuing zero nuclear weapons in the present strategic environment, not only because of lingering security anxieties concerning Russia, but also due to the possibility that Iran or other countries in the vicinity of Europe may acquire nuclear weapons.<sup>6</sup> Such attitudes are further reinforced by the memories of the Soviet era, when the so-called peace narrative was often used by official Communist propaganda, and Western European supporters of nuclear disarmament were seen by many as playing into the Kremlin's hands.

For the above-mentioned reasons, the perspective of an open debate on NATO's role in nuclear disarmament was met with little enthusiasm in the Central European countries. While recognizing the validity of questions asked about the alliance's future nuclear policy, especially the continued deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe, there was also a fear that the debate would divide member states, creating a clash between an idealistic agenda and a more cautious approach. It was argued that the unilateral withdrawal of the U.S. weapons from Europe could result in the weakening of the transatlantic link and the Article 5 guarantees,<sup>7</sup> and that it could be perceived as a victory in Russia. As put in a 2009 interview by a Hungarian official, "opening Pandora's box" was not seen as being in the interest of the alliance.<sup>8</sup>

When the issue of the future role of nuclear deter-

rence in the alliance was put on the agenda in the context of the discussion over the new Strategic Concept, the reactions from the countries of the region initially tended to reemphasize the strategic, political, and symbolic significance of NATO's nuclear-sharing arrangement. It was being lauded as one of the most important elements of the transatlantic link, binding the security of Europe to the United States through a wide sharing of risks and burdens between the allies. As put by a NATO ambassador of a newer member state: "Nuclear deterrence by the US and through NATO and with the presence of American warheads in Europe is the ultimate test of NATO's credibility."<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the removal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe was presented as a development that would radically change the implementation

of the alliance's function of preventing aggression through credible deterrence. It was also alleged that such a change would have a significant impact on the level of confidence in NATO and in the United States as felt in the region. This argumentation has been reflected, e.g., in the 2009 U.S. congressional report, "America's Strategic Posture," which stated that "some allies located near Russia believe that U.S. nonstrategic forces in Europe are essential to prevent nuclear coercion by Moscow and indeed that modernized U.S./NATO forces are essential for restoring a sense of balance in the face of Russia's nuclear renewal."<sup>10</sup>

The statements made in the initial phase of the discussion can be interpreted as an attempt to preempt an early decision on the future of the deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe. While the issue had previously been considered as secondary for countries in Central Europe, the perspective of a unilateral withdrawal driven by nuclear disarmament arguments was interpreted in the context of a wider discussion about the credibility of the U.S. commitment to Europe, Article 5 guarantees, and the policy toward Russia. The prevailing opinion in the region was that the U.S. presence and link with Europe should be strengthened rather than weakened. Hence, any proposals to change the status quo were met with suspicion and resistance.<sup>11</sup>

### Similarities and differences in the region

The Central European members of NATO held generally similar views regarding the need to reemphasize and strengthen the common defense function of the alliance. While taking part in the out-of-area missions of the alliance, they were increasingly wor-

ried about what they perceived as the neglect of the “classical” NATO agenda of defense planning and preparation for Article 5 contingencies. Their views regarding the possibility of aggression or strategic coercion applied against the NATO countries have been much more pessimistic than those of the Western European allies, with Russia still seen as a source of possible future threats.

Still, differences in geographic location, as well as foreign and security policy objectives, influence the positions of the countries of the region. Among the Baltic Three countries, the issue of the credibility of Article 5 guarantees is front and center. Given the location and modest military capabilities of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, NATO’s deterrence potential (including the ability to deploy on their territories and reinforce their sea and air defenses), is seen as an indispensable insurance in the event of a security crisis involving Russia.<sup>12</sup> Despite concentrating on the demands of strengthening the conventional reassurances, the Baltic states’ opposition to the withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe might stem from the assumption that this capability could provide NATO with additional instruments to counter any aggressive actions on behalf of Russia, providing a credible escalation option between conventional capabilities and strategic nuclear forces.

The position of Poland, as the biggest and probably most influential country of the region in the alliance, differs in some aspects. First, Poland’s leaders do not consider their country to be as dependent on NATO’s support and deterrence capabilities during a crisis as the Baltic Three countries are—both because of the potential of their own armed forces and Poland’s perceived political weight in conducting relations with Russia, the United States, and other NATO countries. The fear of abandonment by other allies during a crisis, while still present in the

Polish thinking, is offset by a growing sense of self-confidence as a medium-sized European power. Secondly, Warsaw considers itself capable of conducting a proactive policy going beyond the defense of the nuclear status quo, drawing from its previous experiences and record of activities related to arms control and nonproliferation (e.g., Polish participation in the Proliferation Security Initiative).

To the surprise of many observers, Poland became engaged in the public debate on the future of the tactical nuclear weapons, presenting forward-looking ideas on their removal. In February 2010, a joint op-ed was published by the Foreign Ministers of Sweden and Poland—Carl Bildt and Radosław Sikorski respectively.<sup>13</sup> The ministers called for wide-reaching reductions and ultimate withdrawal by the United States and Russia of substrategic nuclear weapons from European territory, calling them “dangerous remnants of a dangerous past.”<sup>14</sup> Next, in April 2010, Poland, together with Norway, put forward a non-paper to NATO allies, arguing that the issue needs to be addressed in the larger framework of Russian-NATO relations and suggesting a “step-by-step approach, including transparency and confidence-building measures as well as balanced and mutual arms reductions.”<sup>15</sup>

Through these initiatives, Poland wanted to prevent other members of the alliance from taking unilateral actions. Warsaw also wanted to frame the issue as the problem of reducing and ultimately withdrawing tactical nuclear weapons from Europe as such (Russia included) instead of looking at it as an internal NATO problem. At the same time, because of its policy of re-establishing a political dialogue with Russia (which was initiated in late 2009 with the additional dimension created by the tragic death of President Lech Kaczyński in a plane crash in Russia in April 2010), Poland wanted to highlight the potential of using the dialogue with Russia on tactical nuclear weapons as a confidence-building measure.

The rest of the countries of the region—the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia—belong to the group of “Article 5 supporters” in NATO and therefore have remained wary of the fast-tracking of any unilateral decisions by NATO on the nuclear issue. However, their official attitude toward Russia has been less emotional and less cautious than that of the countries in the northern part of Central Europe. Consequently, the arguments about the deterrence value of U.S. substrategic nuclear weapons had not been as important for them as the arguments connected with



**Urmas Paet, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia (L) and Radosław Sikorski, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland (R), NATO Summit, November 2010. In a February 1, 2010 op-ed, Sikorski and Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt called for “early progress on steep reductions in sub-strategic nuclear weapons.”**

NATO

solidarity, alliance cohesion, and transatlantic link embodied by the nuclear-sharing arrangements. Additionally, during the most heated phase of the debate over the new Strategic Concept, the three countries have been going through parliamentary elections, with the left-wing ruling parties losing

to take bolder steps toward the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Europe, the April 2010 Nuclear Posture Review Report stated that in Europe, “the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons—combined with NATO’s unique nuclear sharing arrangements (...) contribute to alliance cohesion and provide reassurance to allies

**Central European representatives have been acting in a low-key fashion, advocating restraint and a gradual approach toward changing the alliance’s nuclear weapons policy.**

to their right-wing opponents. In the case of the Czech Republic, an experts’ caretaker government was in place between the March 2009 and May 2010 elections. While foreign and security issues played a marginal role in the election campaigns, the new center-right and right-wing coalition governments have engaged in the last phase of the debate on the Strategic Concept, bringing with them a strong emphasis on the need to strengthen the common defense function of the alliance.

**Nuclear sharing and the non-nuclear elements of deterrence: priorities of the Central European countries**

When discussing nuclear sharing, the influence of the Central Europeans is limited because of their “passive” status in the implementation of the alliance’s nuclear policy. However, the position of the countries of the region has been one of the factors influencing the development of the debate on the nuclear issues at NATO. They have been acting as a counterbalance of sorts to the German initiative of providing consultations inside NATO and with the United States on the removal of nuclear weapons from the German territory.<sup>16</sup> This initiative has been followed in February 2010 by a joint letter of the foreign ministers of Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Norway to NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen calling for a “comprehensive discussion” on NATO’s contribution in the field of arms control, disarmament, and nonproliferation, while continuing to provide “credible deterrence.”<sup>17</sup>

In contrast to these actions, Central European representatives have been acting in a low-key fashion, advocating restraint and a gradual approach toward changing the alliance’s nuclear weapons policy. Their position, which is worth noting, bears a close resemblance to the position ultimately taken by the Obama administration. Despite the widespread calls

and partners who feel exposed to regional threats.”<sup>18</sup> That argumentation seems to mirror the stance prevailing in Central Europe (and also probably in some circles in Turkey) that the times are not ripe yet for a radical change of the nuclear policy and unilateral withdrawal. Polish diplomats also pointed to the fragment of the report listing topics for the U.S.-Russian strategic dialogue, which would include Russia discussing “steps it could take to allay concerns in the West about its nonstrategic nuclear arsenal, such as further consolidating its nonstrategic systems in a small number of secure facilities deep within Russia.”<sup>19</sup> The idea of consolidating nonstrategic nuclear weapons away from the Russian borders was included in the Polish-Swedish and Polish-Norwegian proposals presented earlier.

The countries of the region were also satisfied with the five NATO nuclear policy principles formulated by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at the meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Tallinn on April 22-23, 2010, and the accompanying statement by Rasmussen who pronounced his belief that “the presence of American nuclear weapons in Europe is an essential part of a credible deterrent.”<sup>20</sup> While controversial in a number of more progressive-thinking NATO member states, the formula proposed by Clinton was welcomed by the Central European states.<sup>21</sup> The U.S. position seemed to remove the possibility of a policy split in the alliance at the November 19-20 Lisbon summit over the nonstrategic weapons and nuclear-sharing arrangements, while opening up the possibility to seek the engagement of Russia in the reductions of substrategic arsenals.

The position on the nuclear strategy of the alliance taken by the NATO Group of Experts (chaired by Madeleine K. Albright, with the participation of two members from the region: Adam Rotfeld of Poland and Aivis Ronis of Latvia) in the May 2010 report, “NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement,” also echoed the general preferences of the

countries of the region. It stated that “the retention of some U.S. forward-deployed systems on European soil reinforces the principle of extended nuclear deterrence and collective defense,” while “broad participation of the non-nuclear allies is an essential sign of transatlantic solidarity and risk sharing. Participation by the non-nuclear-weapon states can take place in the form of nuclear deployments on their territory or by non-nuclear support measures.”<sup>22</sup> The latter formulation is especially important for the countries of Central Europe, which, according to the “three no’s,” have limited options for participating in the nuclear risk- and burden-sharing.

The experts in the region recognize that their preferred gradual approach is difficult to accept for those NATO member states which support a more radical change in the nuclear strategy (including partial or complete withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe), and also does not address the dilemma posed by the aging of the dual-capable aircraft deployed by the European allies. Therefore, it is understood that these issues, and especially the future of nuclear sharing, will be dealt with at a later stage, possibly in the form of a review of nuclear policy initiated after the Lisbon summit.

### The non-nuclear instruments of assurance

While the terms and intensity of the NATO nuclear policy debate forced the countries of the region to take a stance on the issue, it remains important to underline that this issue plays a minor role in the overall bid of Central European members of NATO to boost the importance of the collective defense and deterrence function (“Article 5”) of the alliance. From their point of view, it is primarily the non-nuclear dimension of the deterrence policy of NATO that is in urgent need of fixing.<sup>23</sup> They might support the nuclear-sharing arrangements and the deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe, but their underlying motive is not the perceived utility of the sub-strategic weapons in any future threat scenario (with a possible exception of this threat perception by some analysts in the Baltic Three states), but rather a strong preference for preserving the security link with the United States and the mechanisms and capabilities serving directly the defense of the alliance’s territory.

The debate over the reassurances (i.e., ways to increase credibility of the security guarantees of NATO and the United States in the eyes of members of the alliance, primarily in Central Europe) has focused not on

the nuclear, but on the conventional dimension: the political, bureaucratic and military decisions which the alliance can take to balance the recent emphasis on expeditionary operations, as well as to provide a basic level of insurance needed for Central Europeans to embrace the policy of engagement with Russia. In the view of the countries of the region, the two-track approach of reassurance and reengagement with Russia may provide the basis for consensus on the new Strategic Concept.

On the political level, there is an expectation that the new Strategic Concept will uphold collective defense as a core task of the alliance. The understanding of this task should of course take into account the recently emerged threats of cyber-attacks and large-scale terrorist acts, but it must also include the sustained political will and readiness of NATO member states to act together in case of an attack against their territories or in a situation of political coercion supported by military means. For the countries of Central Europe, uncertainty regarding the future course of Russia remains the primary cause for highlighting the need to maintain readiness to conduct collective defense-related tasks. Nevertheless, they also have a more general fear of NATO being gradually transformed into an instrument for out-of-area interventions, or (even worse), an organization with a constant identity crisis. They hope that collective defense could provide a backbone for NATO for the next decade, especially since the International Security Assistance Force operation in Afghanistan reveals tensions and different visions of priorities between the allies.

The support of Central European allies for making territorial missile defense a NATO mission can also be treated as a means for strengthening the collective defense function of the alliance. Countries of Central Europe supported the previous U.S. administration’s



NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen presents the NATO Strategic Concept to the media, Nov. 19, 2010.

plans for deploying missile defense assets in Europe (including interceptors in Poland and a tracking radar in the Czech Republic) as a way of strengthening the transatlantic link and tying the security of the region to the United States. They also viewed Russia's opposition to deployment as a signal that Moscow is eager to put limits on their freedom of action in the security domain. Therefore, in spite of the immediate negative backlash of the September 2009 decision by the Obama administration to switch to the Phased Adaptive Approach, which changed the previously agreed deployment decision, Central Europeans are still eager to embrace territorial missile defense as a NATO project, based on U.S. capabilities. At the same time, they expect that such a decision would ultimately bring the deployment of U.S. assets to the same place as envisioned by the George W. Bush administration (Warsaw and Washington have already agreed that the SM-3 interceptors should be based in Poland in later stages of the project). They also make clear that the offers of cooperation with Russia on missile defense should not include giving Moscow a veto right over the future development of a NATO system.<sup>24</sup>

On the bureaucratic/military level, Central Europeans look primarily at the following elements of reassurance:

- increased attention to Article 5 tasks in the functioning of the alliance's institutions and in the work of the military command structure, which should be capable of conducting operations across the whole spectrum of scenarios, including defensive operations, reform of the intelligence-sharing and cooperation system;
- resumption of the practice of routine defense planning in the form of updating or preparing plans for Article 5 contingencies for specific countries or regions and correspondingly setting the criteria for the development of capabilities of the NATO countries' armed forces;
- placing additional NATO facilities and developing further NATO infrastructure in the territories of the Central European states;
- conducting exercises testing NATO's readiness for conducting Article 5-related missions, including in the territories of the Central European members;
- developing the NATO Response Force with the Article 5 missions in mind.

Taken together, these proposals aim to anchor NATO more firmly than before to the traditional concept of the defense of its members' territories. This is of para-

mount importance for the Central European leaders and the strategic communities in these countries as they try to generate support for the alliance among their populations. In their view, NATO's engagement in out-of-area missions (which is generally not questioned by Central Europeans) must be paired with increased visibility of the alliance's security umbrella for citizens. It can be argued that this aspect of NATO's new Strategic Concept would be far more important for the countries of the region than the subtleties of the adaptation of NATO's nuclear strategy.

### Conclusion: nuclear strategy in the new Strategic Concept

The more successful the Central European NATO members are in securing proper language on the reassurance package and the adoption of the two-track approach to Russia (as outlined above), the less inclined they will be to act as spoilers in the area of nuclear policy. Elements such as pronouncing NATO's general support for the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, stronger emphasis on arms control, or the adoption of the declaratory policy on the use of nuclear weapons based on the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review, would most likely not be contested by the Central Europeans, even if they might be problematic for France or the United Kingdom.

On the core issue of the future of the substrategic nuclear weapons, the countries of the region would most probably resist any eleventh-hour attempts to commit NATO to the withdrawal of the U.S. weapons from some or all locations in Europe, by referring to the principle of "no unilateral decisions" on the future of the deployments. They would also insist on sending a clear signal on the linkage between NATO's future actions and the Russian stance on its deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. Given the fact that Moscow remains noncommittal on engaging in any talks on substrategic weapons, it would be too early to draw a precise roadmap for future negotiations in Lisbon, including the question of whether future talks should take place between NATO and Russia or between the United States and Russia.<sup>25</sup> Still, from the point of view of the region, Russia should be pressured further on the issue of its substrategic weapons, including through calls for more transparency.

Taking into account that the new Strategic Concept is to be a short document, it might be sufficient that it reaffirms the principle of NATO as a nuclear-weapons alliance, without mentioning the specifics of the deployments and the nuclear sharing. These issues could be decided later in the process of the internal NATO review, during which the attitudes of the countries that do not want to participate in the nuclear sharing arrangements, such as Germany, can be addressed. That may be a formula acceptable to all the allies, and it would be useful in maintaining the cohe-

sion of NATO and sending a message of solidarity from Lisbon—which seems to be the ultimate policy goal for the countries of Central Europe.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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# NATO's New Strategic Concept and the Future of Tactical Nuclear Weapons

By Oliver Meier

**N**ATO can and should reduce its reliance on nuclear weapons. First, President Barack Obama with his April 2009 Prague speech has changed the way in which nuclear deterrence is discussed in many NATO member states. The goal of Global Zero has become the yardstick against which any action on nuclear weapons is measured. That is one reason why most of the five nations that currently still host U.S. tactical nuclear weapons on their territory are no longer comfortable with the nuclear status quo.<sup>1</sup> There is broad support in parliaments and among the public of many European countries to withdraw the remaining 200 or so U.S. tactical nuclear weapons. While opposition to involvement in nuclear sharing has not reached the level where it is forcing governments to take immediate action, it will prevent new investments to maintain current nuclear sharing arrangements. Thus, it would be extremely costly politically and put substantial strain on alliance cohesion if host nations were asked by NATO allies to invest in new nuclear-capable delivery aircraft simply because allies are unable to reach a consensual decision to phase out nuclear sharing.

Second, the remaining U.S. nuclear weapons deployed in Europe do not have a military value. This is a view unanimously shared among allies. The new Strategic Concept is likely to recognize this fact by emphasizing that the circumstances in which any use of nuclear weapons might be contemplated are extremely remote. The reservations of some Central European states and particularly the Baltic states with regard to changes of NATO's nuclear posture are not related to the military value of nuclear sharing but to the credibility of security assurances by the United States and the alliance more generally.<sup>2</sup> The same argument can be made for Turkey.<sup>3</sup>

Third, from a nonproliferation point of view it is important that the new Strategic Concept backs up efforts to prevent the spread of weapons. The alliance is conventionally superior to any potential oppo-

nent;<sup>4</sup> it also has a unique and prominent position in the global nuclear landscape. Three of the five nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) nuclear-weapon states are NATO members. Of the fourteen states that have nuclear weapons on their territory, eight are members of NATO. NATO remains the only alliance which practices nuclear sharing. The United States is the only nuclear-weapon state that still deploys nuclear weapons on the territories of non-nuclear-weapon states. Against this background, it is evident that the outcome of discussions on the nuclear aspects of NATO's new Strategic Concept will make a real difference. What NATO does on nuclear policy sends an important signal about how serious the alliance, and the West more generally, are about nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation. Does the alliance support President Obama's agenda to take steps toward



a world without nuclear weapons or will it continue to see its nuclear weapons as valuable instruments of national defense?

There is a real danger that NATO's new Strategic Concept will not provide the active support for efforts to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons that many are hoping for. On three key issues the Strategic Concept could prevent any meaningful change of NATO's nuclear posture in the foreseeable future.<sup>5</sup>

### Declaratory policy

There is little doubt that NATO's current declaratory policy is outdated. It was developed under conditions of the nuclear standoff in Europe, when short-range nuclear weapons were supposed to defeat conventionally superior Soviet forces and to provide an escalatory capability.<sup>6</sup> Both functions obviously no longer apply today.

It is a reflection of this diminished value of nuclear weapons that the April 2010 Nuclear Posture Review has restricted the circumstances under which the United States is prepared to use nuclear weapons.<sup>7</sup>

It would be problematic and counterproductive if NATO, in the new Strategic Concept, were to emphasize that it remains a nuclear alliance to deter *any* attack or coercion against it. Keeping the core of NATO's first-use posture intact would signal that

the alliance does not reduce the value of its nuclear weapons and is unable to bring its declaratory policy in line with today's requirements.

Another problem is the lack of coherence between NATO's and the U.S.'s declaratory policies. It would undermine the Obama administration's efforts to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons if NATO's nuclear posture would continue to be broader than U.S. declaratory policy. France particularly has been opposing any changes to NATO's nuclear policy and it would be ironic if the only NATO member that does not participate in the Nuclear Planning Group were able to veto meaningful changes of the alliance's nuclear policy.

### Nuclear posture and the future of nuclear sharing

Not surprisingly, in the new Strategic Concept, NATO is likely to recommit itself to being a nuclear alliance along the lines of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's remarks at the April 22-23 meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Tallinn. Given the fact that three nuclear weapons states are members of the alliance, this is a fairly obvious statement to make.

Assessing the need for the continued basing of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe is a more complex question. Clinton in Tallinn referred to this indirectly



Raigo Pajula/AFP/Getty Images

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton speaks at a press conference during the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in Tallinn on April 23, 2010.

by emphasizing the fundamental value of “sharing nuclear risks and responsibilities.”<sup>8</sup> Burden sharing is a key principle for a military alliance but many NATO members currently are more interested in having the value of burden sharing demonstrated on the battlefields in Afghanistan rather than at nuclear weapon storage sites in Central Europe.

Such a strong linkage between changes of NATO’s future nuclear posture and Russia’s nuclear policy is unneeded and counterproductive. In fact, there no longer exists a direct strategic connection between the tactical nuclear weapons postures of NATO and Russia. On both sides, the reasons for maintaining these weapons are primarily internal. It therefore

## **By linking its nuclear force posture to Russian reciprocal measures, NATO would be putting itself at the mercy of Moscow.**

If NATO heads of state and government in Lisbon were to commit themselves again to ensure the broadest possible participation of allies in planning of nuclear roles or the peacetime basing of nuclear forces, command, control, and consultation arrangements, this would unnecessarily restrict options to change NATO’s nuclear posture in the future. Such a statement would also run counter to the expressed will of Germany to have U.S. nuclear weapons withdrawn from Europe.

### **Arms control and linkages with Russia’s nuclear posture**

German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle wants to make disarmament and arms control a “trademark” of the alliance. The new Strategic Concept could contain several elements toward that end. Thus, the new concept is likely to endorse the concept of a world free of nuclear weapons, though linked to the usual French reservations that Global Zero must be pursued in a manner that promotes international stability and is based on the principle of undiminished security for all. NATO is also likely to strengthen its internal dialogue on arms control—nuclear and conventional—by creating a new mechanism along the lines of the recommendations of the NATO Group of Experts.<sup>9</sup>

It is more controversial whether changes in NATO’s nuclear posture—including further reductions of the U.S. nuclear weapons deployed in Europe or even their complete withdrawal—should be linked to reciprocal measures by Russia. On this issue, the new Strategic Concept is also likely to be conservative by stating that it should be NATO’s aim to seek Russian agreement to increase transparency of its nuclear weapons stockpile and to encourage Russia to relocate weapons away from the borders with NATO states. It seems as if NATO places any further steps that the alliance itself might take in the context of the disparity between Russia’s stockpile of tactical nuclear weapons and NATO holdings.

makes little sense to argue that NATO and Russia should negotiate their future force postures in a “give and take” arms control context.

To be sure, tactical nuclear weapons need to be included in future arms control talks. All NATO members have recognized this principle in the Final Declaration of the 2010 NPT Review Conference.<sup>10</sup> But such talks are likely to take many years to complete, regardless of whether tactical weapons would be included in follow-on talks to New START or whether they will be addressed in separate negotiations on nonstrategic weapons.<sup>11</sup> Postponing a decision to withdraw U.S. nuclear weapons deployed in Europe until an agreement with Russia is reached would also be problematic because of the lack of support for maintaining NATO’s current nuclear sharing arrangements in many NATO countries. By linking its nuclear force posture to Russian reciprocal measures, NATO would be putting itself at the mercy of Moscow. Given Russia’s lack of willingness to engage in talks concerning tactical nuclear weapons, such a linkage would give Moscow unnecessary leverage over NATO deliberations on the alliance’s future nuclear posture.

### **A NATO nuclear posture review**

In the short term, it is important that the new Strategic Concept does not prevent any meaningful change of NATO’s nuclear policies after the Lisbon summit. Thus, the concept should focus on areas where there is consensus among NATO allies, i.e., that NATO:

- will continue to rely on a mix of conventional and nuclear forces for deterrence,
- supports the goal of a nuclear weapons free world,
- needs to do more to support arms control and disarmament.



General James Cartwright, Vice-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said at an April 8, 2010 briefing in Washington that U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe do not serve a military function that cannot be addressed by other U.S. military assets, such as the B-2 strategic bomber, above, which can deliver B-61 nuclear bombs from U.S. bases to virtually any point around the globe.

Such a minimalistic Strategic Concept would provide a framework for discussions among NATO members on controversial issues after the Lisbon summit, as part of a NATO Nuclear Posture Review (NATO NPR).<sup>12</sup> This process should be based on four considerations:

- A NATO NPR should be comprehensive. In order to be meaningful, such a review needs to address all political and military issues related to the future of nuclear sharing. All options should be on the table.
- At the same time, a NATO NPR should focus on a revision of NATO's nuclear weapons policy. Obviously, NATO's nuclear posture is linked to other security issues (such as missile defense and conventional security). The temptation for some within NATO might be great to discuss all unfinished business under the heading of a broader strategic review. However, under such a broad review there would be a real danger that progress on nuclear issues would be held hostage by unjustified linkages.
- A NATO NPR should aim to give guidance on the operational aspects of NATO's nuclear

policies, including the future of nuclear sharing arrangements. Thus, the development of a new military strategy could wait until a NATO NPR is completed. Given the advanced stage of deliberations on nuclear issues, a NATO NPR could be finished within a year and deliver its report to the 2011 fall ministerials in November.

- Post-Lisbon discussions on NATO's nuclear posture should be open, inclusive, and transparent. In the run-up to the Lisbon summit, it has become clear that NATO's nuclear posture can no longer be discussed from a military perspective only. The fact that foreign ministers at Tallinn have had NATO nuclear policy on their agenda has set a precedent that NATO will have to follow from now on. Against this background, the North Atlantic Council, maybe in a reinforced format, would be an appropriate forum to address NATO's future nuclear posture.<sup>13</sup> The current process illustrates the dangers of closed-door discussions on nuclear policies. On key issues, the draft Strategic Concept appears to have become more conservative after the public discussions were terminated by the secretary-

general following the release of the Albright report in May of last year.

Any decision on NATO's nuclear posture will have to be made by consensus. But this principle should not be seen as an opportunity to block evolution. To do so would greatly damage alliance cohesion because, in Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands, there now exists broad parliamentary and popular support for a withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from their territories. The most politically viable course of action may turn out to be a decision to phase out nuclear sharing in the medium term and to develop more credible non-nuclear instruments that would provide assurance and spur a constructive dialogue with Russia over European security. A NATO NPR could be just the right vehicle to build consensus behind such an approach—but for that to happen the new Strategic Concept must not foreclose any options for a post-Lisbon discussion on nuclear issues.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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## ENDNOTES

1. Under NATO nuclear-sharing arrangements, the United States is believed to deploy nuclear weapons in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey. In a February 26, 2010 letter, the foreign ministers of Belgium, Germany, Luxemburg, Norway and the Netherlands called for a "comprehensive review" of NATO's nuclear policies.
2. See Lukasz Kulesa: "Polish and Central European Priorities on NATO's Future Nuclear Policy," Arms Control Association/British American Security Information Council/Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, *Nuclear Policy Paper No. 2*, Washington, D.C./London/Hamburg, November 2010, [http://www.ifsh.de/IFAR\\_english/pdf/Nuclear\\_Policy\\_Paper\\_No2.pdf](http://www.ifsh.de/IFAR_english/pdf/Nuclear_Policy_Paper_No2.pdf)
3. See Mustafa Kibaroglu: "Reassessing the Role of U.S. Nuclear Weapons in Turkey," in: *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 40, Issue 5, June 2010, pp. 8–13, [www.armscontrol.org/act/2010\\_06/Kibaroglu](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2010_06/Kibaroglu)
4. NATO members account for about 61% of global defense spending, 71% of global military procurement expenditure and 80% of global research and development spending. See Michael Brzoska's testimony to the foreign affairs committee hearing on "NATO's new Strategic Concept," German Bundestag, Berlin, October 6, 2010.

5. This assessment is based on background interviews and private meetings following the distribution of the first draft of the new Concept on October 14, 2011 to the North Atlantic Council and the second and third drafts to capitals in the week around October 26 and November 5, 2011 respectively. The drafts remain classified.

6. The relevant language was essentially carried over in the current Strategic Concept which states that " ... the Alliance's conventional forces alone cannot ensure credible deterrence. Nuclear weapons make a unique contribution in rendering the risks of aggression against the Alliance incalculable and unacceptable. Thus, they remain essential to preserve peace." "NATO (1999): The Alliance's Strategic Concept." Approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington D.C. NATO, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_27433.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27433.htm), paragraph 46.

7. In the April 2010 Nuclear Posture Review Report, the United States has declared that it is "now prepared to strengthen its long-standing 'negative security assurance' by declaring that the United States will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states that are party to the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations." U.S. Department of Defense, "Nuclear Posture Review Report," Washington, D.C., April 2010, p. 15.

8. U.S. Department of State: "Excerpts from Remarks by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton at NATO Working Dinner on Nuclear Issues and Missile Defense," Tallinn, April 28, 2010.

9. The Group of Experts, chaired by Madeleine Albright, recommended that NATO should "invite an ongoing dialogue with Russia on nuclear perceptions, concepts, doctrines, and transparency, and should convene a Special Consultative Group in order to inform and coordinate its internal dialogue about nuclear-related issues." "NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement. Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO." NATO Public Affairs Division. Brussels, May 2010, <http://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/expertsreport.pdf>, p. 44.

10. NPT states-parties at the 2010 review conference called upon the nuclear-weapon states to "[a]ddress the question of all nuclear weapons regardless of their type or their location as an integral part of the general nuclear disarmament process." "Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," New York, May 2010, Action 5 (b).

11. On this issue in particular see Miles Pomper/William Potter/Nikolai Sokov: "Reducing Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Europe," in: *Survival*, Vol. 52, No. 1, February/March 2010, pp. 75–96.

12. For an elaboration of this section see Oliver Meier/Paul Ingram: "A Nuclear Posture Review for NATO," in *Arms Control Today*, Vol 40, Issue 8, October 2010, pp. 8–15, [http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2010\\_10/Meier-Ingram](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2010_10/Meier-Ingram)

13. See Detlef Waechter: "Why NATO Is on the Right Track," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Policy Outlook, Washington, D.C., 2010, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/nato\\_right\\_track.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/nato_right_track.pdf)

## Section 2

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# The Future of NATO's Nuclear Policy and Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Europe

# The United States, NATO's Strategic Concept, and Nuclear Issues

By Steven Pifer

By all appearances, Washington was very satisfied with the November 2010 Lisbon summit outcome and new Strategic Concept regarding nuclear weapons and arms control. Although allies held diverse views, NATO limited a damaging internal fight and adopted a position that essentially reflects both President Obama's Prague agenda and the five principles articulated by Secretary Clinton at the informal NATO ministerial in Tallinn in April 2010.

Two processes are now proceeding in parallel: the NATO Deterrence and Defense Posture Review (DDPR) and development of a U.S. approach to nonstrategic nuclear weapons for a possible future negotiation with Russia. U.S. officials can envisage a range of outcomes for the nuclear portion of the DDPR and U.S. negotiating approach. A number of suggestions have been advanced within the U.S. government for approaching the question of nonstrategic nuclear weapons, but—other than agreeing on transparency as a useful first step—the interagency process has only just begun. Although many in Washington see a possibility to reduce U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe, in considering a U.S. position, Washington will want to reassure Central European allies and be mindful that nuclear policy in Europe has global implications.

The DDPR and U.S. interagency processes will be interrelated. Any U.S. proposal for negotiations on nonstrategic nuclear weapons with Russia will be vetted with allies. Synchronizing these processes could pose a challenge, though a manageable one, barring a Russian decision to engage quickly on further nuclear cuts. That is the larger question: How soon will the Russians be ready for further negotiations? The current signals coming out of Moscow suggest they are in no hurry.

## Lisbon and the Strategic Concept

U.S. officials are very satisfied with the Lisbon summit and the new Strategic Concept approved by alliance leaders.<sup>1</sup> From Washington's perspective, the outcome on nuclear weapons and arms control came

out well. It reflects both President Obama's Prague agenda—reducing the number and role of nuclear weapons—and the five principles put forward by Secretary Clinton at the April 2010 informal ministerial meeting in Tallinn:

- “As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance;
- “As a nuclear alliance, widely sharing nuclear risks and responsibilities is fundamental;
- “The broader goal of the alliance must be to reduce the number and role of nuclear weapons and recognize that NATO has already dramatically reduced its reliance on nuclear weapons;
- “The alliance must broaden deterrence against 21st century threats, including missile defense, strengthen Article V training and exercises, and draft additional contingency plans to counter new threats; and
- “In any future reductions NATO's aim ‘should be to seek Russian agreement to increase transparency on non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe, relocate these weapons away from the territory of NATO members, and include non-strategic nuclear weapons in the next round of U.S.-Russian arms control discussions alongside strategic and non-deployed nuclear weapons.’”<sup>2</sup>

These principles established a spectrum—a broad spectrum, to be sure—of possible outcomes. In the run-up to Lisbon, the question became where, within that spectrum, the NATO debate regarding the Strategic Concept would come down. For its part, Washington was ready to accept almost any consensus that allies might find, assuming it would be somewhere on the spectrum defined by Tallinn.

Given the diverse views within NATO on the nuclear question, avoiding a major intra-alliance row was also a principal U.S. objective. Washington saw the Tallinn principles as useful in reassuring the Central European NATO members, who feared a precipitous change in alliance nuclear policy. U.S. officials worked actively to steer the French and Germans to a resolution of their differences, again looking for an answer consistent with the Tallinn principles. The Strategic Concept provided that.

### NATO Nuclear Posture and the DDPR

The United States currently deploys some 200 B61 nuclear bombs in Europe for delivery by U.S. and allied dual-capable aircraft.<sup>3</sup> U.S. political and military officials see virtually no military utility to those weapons. When Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Cartwright was asked in April 2010 whether there was “a military mission performed by these aircraft-deliv-

ered weapons that cannot be performed by either U.S. strategic forces or U.S. conventional forces,” he replied “no.”<sup>4</sup> That said, Washington understands that the weapons can play—as they have in the past—an important political role as a symbol of U.S. commitment to the security of its European allies.

While Washington does not regard Russia as a threat and does not see a need for the DDPR to strengthen deterrence against Russia, U.S. officials are mindful of the concerns of Central European and Baltic allies, for whom the U.S. nuclear umbrella now seems to play a more important role than for other allies. One question for the DDPR is how to define “the appropriate mix of conventional, nuclear and missile defense forces” for the alliance and whether that might allow some adjustment of NATO’s nuclear posture.

As the 2010 U.S. Nuclear Posture Review stated, the United States would like to reduce the role of nuclear weapons. The fact that the rationale for the nuclear weapons deployed forward in Europe is entirely, or almost entirely, political would appear to allow room for reductions. U.S. officials believe the Tallinn principles could even accommodate an outcome in which all U.S. nuclear weapons were removed from Europe, though this would be very condition-dependent. (In such a case, allies might share risks and responsibilities by basing U.S. dual-capable aircraft on their ter-



National Nuclear Security Administration head Thomas P. D’Agostino (R) speaks with members of the press about the Nuclear Posture Review during a press conference with Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Ellen Tauscher (L) and Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Jim Miller (C) at the Pentagon, April 6, 2010.

ritories or hosting such aircraft for periodic exercises. U.S. officials also recognize that some allies read the Tallinn principles as meaning that nuclear weapons will stay in Europe.)

Given the U.S. Phased Adaptive Approach and the Lisbon summit decisions, missile defense of NATO territory will presumably assume a greater proportion of the deterrence and defense burden-share. Declining defense budgets, on the other hand, mean that NATO will likely be shedding rather than adding conventional capabilities, making it difficult for conventional forces to assume a greater share of the load in the mix with nuclear and missile defense forces.

While reductions are seen as possible, consolidating nuclear weapons at a smaller number of sites in Europe is seen as a far more complicated question. Many in Washington believe that NATO could not reduce the number of countries in which nuclear weapons are stationed from five to four. The assumption is that, were Germany to no longer host nuclear weapons, the Netherlands and Belgium would follow suit, so that consolidation would go from five to two countries, and possibly to one or zero. This is related to concern about the ripple effect of Germany replacing its dual-capable Tornados with non-nuclear-capable Eurofighters on Dutch and Belgian decisions regarding nuclear wiring for replacement aircraft for their F-16s. An attempt at consolidation into fewer countries thus could strain the principle of alliance-wide burden sharing.

As for declaratory policy, U.S. officials do not want NATO declaratory policy to be inconsistent with U.S. declaratory policy. Some would like to see NATO move to adopt the U.S. position from the Nuclear Posture Review of seeking to create conditions in which the “sole purpose” of nuclear weapons would be to deter nuclear attack on the United States, its allies and partners. One question, in such a case, is whether some NATO allies might then argue that the conditions for “sole purpose” already exist *in Europe* and advocate jumping NATO policy “ahead” of U.S. policy. Moreover, U.S. officials widely recognize that France, which seeks to maintain maximum ambiguity about the circumstances in which it might resort to use of nuclear weapons, would oppose NATO moving toward adopting the U.S. declaratory policy. Washington is not eager for a fight with Paris on this question.

A related issue is whether NATO might adopt a negative security assurance similar to that articulated in the Nuclear Posture Review, i.e. that

nuclear weapons would not be used or threatened against any non-nuclear weapons state party to the NPT and in compliance with its NPT obligations. U.S. officials hold different views; some see this as a desirable outcome for the DDPR, while others question whether NATO should offer negative security assurances. Washington understands that this also would be a difficult issue with the French.

One other consideration for Washington is that the position it takes regarding NATO nuclear policy will have global implications—in particular in East Asia and the Middle East, where the United States seeks to reassure allies and friends in the face of the North Korean and Iranian nuclear programs as well as China’s growing power. For example, U.S. nuclear weapons were withdrawn from South Korea and nuclear cruise missiles removed from U.S. naval ships after the 1991 presidential nuclear initiatives. Since then, the U.S. nuclear umbrella for allies in East Asia has been provided by U.S.-based strategic nuclear forces and nonstrategic weapons that are forward-deployable. The deterrence credibility of *forward-deployable* U.S. nuclear weapons for allies in East Asia, however, is enhanced by the fact that such weapons are *forward-deployed* in Europe. Deployments in Europe demonstrate U.S. readiness to forward-deploy nuclear weapons; were they to be withdrawn from Europe, how would that affect the deterrence credibility of forward-deployable nonstrategic nuclear weapons?

### Looking Forward on Arms Control

When President Obama signed the New START Treaty, he stated that there should be follow-on negotiations that would also address reductions in nonstrategic and nondeployed strategic nuclear



U.S. President Barack Obama signs the New START Treaty into law as (L-R) Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Sen. John Kerry (D-MA), and Sen. Richard Lugar (R-IN) look on during an Oval Office ceremony February 2, 2011 in Washington, D.C.

Alex Wong/Getty Images



warheads. The Tallinn principles advocate including nonstrategic nuclear arms “alongside” strategic and nondeployed nuclear weapons in the next round of U.S.-Russian negotiations. The Senate’s resolution of ratification for New START, moreover,

provide for *de jure* equal limits—would require large and asymmetric Russian reductions, and perhaps *only* Russian reductions. U.S. officials understand that persuading the Russians to accept this kind of outcome would be difficult.

**Interest in capping the number of U.S. nondeployed strategic warheads—an area of U.S. advantage—may create an incentive for the Russians to consider reductions in their nonstrategic nuclear weapons.**

calls on the president to “seek to initiate, following consultation with NATO allies,” within one year of New START’s entry into force, negotiations with Moscow “to address the disparity” in Russian and U.S. nonstrategic nuclear stockpiles.

The U.S. internal process of preparing for a next round of negotiations with Russia began only in February. (Although New START was completed in April 2010, securing its ratification was the consuming focus for the official U.S. arms control community through the Senate vote on December 22.) An interagency working group to develop options for treating nonstrategic nuclear weapons has been established; it brings together U.S. experts on nuclear arms control and NATO (who may bring very different perspectives to the discussion of these issues).

A number of ideas have been advanced, even though the interagency process is just beginning its formal review. As the process proceeds, it will almost certainly focus on measures regarding nonstrategic nuclear *warheads* rather than *delivery systems*. The delivery systems—which, on the U.S. side, consist only of nuclear-capable tactical aircraft—have primarily conventional roles and missions. Neither the U.S. nor Russian militaries will want to constrain such systems as the result of a nuclear arms agreement.

One negotiating option would seek a discrete limit on U.S. and Russian nonstrategic nuclear warheads. Achieving such an outcome could prove difficult given the disparity between U.S. and Russian numbers. Following retirement of the nuclear warheads for sea-launched cruise missiles, the U.S. nonstrategic nuclear arsenal will comprise some 500 B61 gravity bombs, with about 200 deployed forward in Europe.<sup>5</sup> For its part, Russia is estimated to have 3700-5400 nonstrategic nuclear warheads of all types, with a deliverable capacity of about 2000.<sup>6</sup> Any equal limit—and it is difficult to see how the United States could negotiate any arms control treaty with Russia that did not

Harkening back to the 1980s’ negotiations on intermediate-range nuclear forces, one variant of this option would be a zero/zero outcome, eliminating nonstrategic nuclear warheads from both the U.S. and Russian arsenals. The likelihood of achieving this, however, would be extremely low and is recognized as such within the U.S. government.

An alternative negotiating option would seek to include nonstrategic nuclear warheads with other nuclear warheads under a single limit covering all nuclear warheads on each side.<sup>7</sup> (Under this approach, the sides would likely also negotiate limits on deployed strategic delivery vehicles and strategic launchers, as in New START, but they would not negotiate limits on delivery systems for nonstrategic nuclear warheads.) The option of a single limit, perhaps combined with a sublimit on deployed strategic warheads, is receiving favorable attention within the official U.S. arms control community.

One reason why many U.S. officials lean in this direction is that a single limit covering all nuclear warheads could create bargaining leverage. Russian interest in capping the number of U.S. nondeployed strategic warheads—an area of U.S. advantage—may create an incentive for the Russians to consider reductions in their nonstrategic nuclear weapons.<sup>8</sup> A single limit on all nuclear weapons would open the possibility that Russia might make asymmetric reductions in—but still retain more—nonstrategic nuclear weapons, while the United States made asymmetric reductions in—but still retained more—nondeployed strategic warheads.

A negotiating approach will have to consider whether limits should be applied on a regional basis, constraining nuclear weapons in Europe only, or on a global basis. While U.S. officials do not totally discount a Europe-only approach, the transportability of nuclear warheads could undermine any regional limitation. Washington will also be mindful of the Asian dimension. U.S. al-



Tim Sloan/AFP/Getty Images

President Obama talks with national security advisor Tom Donilon at the NATO Summit in Lisbon, November 2010.

lies in Asia (as well as China) would object to any agreement that had the effect of moving Russian nuclear weapons out of Europe to sites east of the Urals, and Japanese diplomats have already made that point to their American counterparts. As the 1980s' experience with the negotiations on intermediate-range nuclear missiles demonstrated, Japan may go further and ask that an agreement reduce Russian nuclear weapons in Asia as well as Europe.

The interagency process will examine other options, including those specified in the Strategic Concept: greater transparency regarding Russian nonstrategic nuclear forces in Europe and relocation of those forces away from NATO borders. In prepared remarks for the Carnegie International Nuclear Policy Conference on March 29, National Security Advisor Tom Donilon said that increasing transparency on "the numbers, locations and types of non-strategic forces in Europe" could be a first step in advance of a new treaty.

Some officials have suggested looking at the concept

of the 1991 presidential nuclear initiatives, which produced major reductions in U.S. and Russian nonstrategic nuclear forces (Donilon's remarks appear to allow for this). Reductions in the U.S. nonstrategic nuclear arsenal over the past 20 years, however, leave the United States with relatively limited scope for new unilateral steps. While it might reduce numbers in Europe or overall, for example, Washington could not make unilateral reductions on the scale of 1991 and could not, as it did then, eliminate an entire class of nonstrategic nuclear weapons, as the U.S. nonstrategic inventory now comprises 500 B61 gravity bombs.

One idea that has been floated—as a measure in the run-up to conclusion of a treaty or in place of one—is parallel unilateral reductions in nonstrategic nuclear warheads, such as equal percentage reductions. (It would be difficult to put this into a treaty, as the result would be unequal.) Defining the percentage could pose a challenge.

Some within the U.S. government argue that the United States should not become too tied to a ne-

gotiated outcome. Believing that an agreement on further reductions with Russia—or even agreement on new negotiations—may be difficult to reach, they do not want the United States locked into a position in which it could not unilaterally reduce nuclear weapons if it determined that U.S. security interests permitted doing so. There is also a risk that requiring negotiation and treaty-based solutions will give greater value to systems on both sides that are largely redundant and provide a disincentive to reduce their numbers sooner.

Verification will present a major issue in any negotiation covering nonstrategic nuclear weapons, particularly because the focus will be on warheads rather than delivery systems. This will raise new monitoring challenges—for example, whether to allow inspectors access to weapons in storage areas. The U.S. interagency process has established a monitoring and verification working group to examine such questions.

### Managing Parallel Processes—A Chicken-and-Egg Question?

The timeline for NATO's DDPR aims to produce a concept by September and a more definitive position by the time of the 2012 NATO summit. The Senate resolution of ratification requires that the president “seek to initiate” negotiations with Russia by February 2012.

U.S. officials agree on the importance of consulting with NATO allies as they develop their thinking on nonstrategic nuclear weapons. Washington regards the consultations with allies during the Nuclear Posture Review as a generally positive experience. Should a negotiation with Russia begin to develop, however, they hope that the DDPR and the need for NATO to find a consensus view will not hold things up.

That said, it is not clear how soon the U.S. interagency process will come to conclusions on what to do about nonstrategic nuclear weapons. Some U.S. officials would like to move quickly, building on the momentum of New START's ratification and entry into force. A big question is whether the president will want to push forward rapidly on next steps. And, with everything else going on, would there be time and bandwidth to make this question a priority?

Other U.S. officials see less urgency, in part for two reasons. First, there is no consensus view among European allies on NATO's nuclear posture and arms control, and it is unclear how quickly one might emerge (allies may be awaiting signals from Washington as to its preferences). Second, the Russians have shown little interest in an early return to nuclear arms negotiations, asserting that other issues—such as missile defense, long-range conventional precision strike and conventional forces in Europe—must be resolved first. The Russians have said that nonstrategic nuclear weapons should be re-

moved to national territory before any negotiation. It is very unlikely that Washington will accept that as a precondition for negotiations, though it could be a part of an eventual agreement, depending on the agreement's other terms.

Russian interest in an early start to new negotiations would generate pressure on Washington and NATO to identify elements of a negotiating position on nonstrategic nuclear weapons sooner rather than later—and perhaps force the alliance to confront questions which may be difficult and which NATO can for now sidestep. But given the lack of Russian interest in early negotiations and absent the development of a consensus among European allies on nonstrategic nuclear weapons, there appears to be little external pressure on the interagency process, National Security Council principals or the president to take a decision.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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### ENDNOTES

1. Much of the discussion that follows is based on the author's conversations with officials at the White House, State Department, and Defense Department in March 2011.
2. “NATO Clings to Its Cold War Relics,” Arms Control Association, Issue Brief – Vol. 1, No. 1, April 27, 2010, <http://www.armscontrol.org/issuebriefs/NATORElics>
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4. Council on Foreign Relations meeting, “Nuclear Posture Review,” April 8, 2010, [http://www.defense.gov/npr/docs/Council\\_on\\_Foreign\\_Relation.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/npr/docs/Council_on_Foreign_Relation.pdf)
5. “Nuclear Notebook: U.S. Nuclear Forces, 2011.”
6. Hans M. Kristensen and Robert S. Norris, “Nuclear Notebook: Russian Nuclear Forces, 2011,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, May/June 2011 (forthcoming).
7. Nuclear weapons that have been retired and are in the queue for dismantlement would probably not be included under this limit.
8. The United States will implement much of its New START reductions by downloading warheads from missiles, e.g., all Minuteman III ICBMs, which can carry up to three warheads, will be downloaded to carry only one warhead. The United States will thus have the possibility to upload nondeployed warheads back onto strategic ballistic missiles. The Russians appear to intend to eliminate missiles with little or no downloading, so their missiles will have no slots for additional warheads. Constraining nondeployed strategic warheads would be a way for Russia to limit the U.S. upload capacity.

# Turkey, NATO and Nuclear Sharing: Prospects After NATO's Lisbon Summit

By Mustafa Kibaroglu

In the run-up to the Lisbon summit meeting of NATO on November 19-20, 2010, where the new Strategic Concept of the alliance was adopted, the status of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons deployed in five European countries, namely Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey was a significant topic of debate, and remains so afterwards. Some have suggested the speedy withdrawal of these weapons while others have endorsed their extended stay on the continent for as long as there are nuclear threats to the alliance.<sup>1</sup>

Turkey, as a host, has long been supportive of retaining U.S. nuclear weapons on its territory for various reasons and also expected others to continue to deploy these weapons as part of the burden sharing and solidarity principles of the alliance. Turkey believes that the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe strengthens the U.S. commitment to transatlantic security, and contributes to the credibility of the extended deterrent. It therefore maintains a policy that implicitly supports deployment in Turkey, one that has remained the same for decades, and continues under the current Justice and Development Party (known as AKP, for its Turkish acronym) government. Whether it would survive significant changes in the deployment of theater nuclear weapons in other NATO states is more doubtful.

This being the case for the allied countries in general, and from Turkey's perspective in particular, this paper will present primarily the views in the political, diplomatic, and military circles in Turkey with respect to the prolonged deployment of the U.S. tactical nuclear weapons on Turkish soil. It concludes that Turkey, preferably together with other NATO members, should take the initiative in asking the United States to draw them down and remove them entirely, in the interests of Turkish security and alliance cohesion.

## Turkey's official stance toward the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons on its soil

It is not the practice of NATO members to discuss nuclear deployments in Europe; details remain classified. Even the identity of host states is a secret, so there are inevitable tensions for any politician to admit to such deployments. But Turkey has unique sensitivities that have prevented discussion even in private of its hosting of U.S. nuclear warheads. Turkey's stance is largely unchanged since the first U.S. nuclear weapons were deployed in Turkey in February 1959.<sup>2</sup>

## Profile of U.S. nuclear weapons in Turkey

By the mid-1980s, "the United States [had] store[d] some 500 nuclear warheads in Turkey, and as many as 300 of them [were] bombs for aircraft. U.S. nuclear bombs [were] stored at four airbases—Eskisehir, Murted, Erhac, and Balikesir—for use by four Turkish Air Force units. The Turkish squadrons consisting of nuclear-certified aircraft as F-104s, F-4s, and F-100s, [were] armed with four types of bombs with yields up to a couple of hundred kilotons. The U.S. Army also [had] nuclear weapons in Turkey, [which were] allocated for support of the Turkish First and Third Armies. Custodian detachments at Cakmakli, Ortakoy, Corlu, Izmit,

and Erzurum store[d] about 190 warheads for obsolete 1950s-vintage Turkish Army Honest John short-range missile launchers (four battalions) and 32 eight-inch guns.”<sup>3</sup>

Turkey still hosts U.S. tactical nuclear weapons on its territory, albeit in much smaller numbers. They are limited to one location, the Incirlik base near Adana on the eastern Mediterranean coast of Turkey.<sup>4</sup> All other nuclear weapons have been withdrawn from the bases mentioned above. Moreover, the Turkish Air Force no longer has any operational link with the remaining tactical nuclear weapons deployed at Incirlik.<sup>5</sup> F-104s have not been in service since 1994. F-4s are still in service after modernization of some 54 of them by Israeli Aerospace Industries in 1997. Yet, only the F-16 “Fighting Falcons” of the Turkish Air Force participate in NATO’s nuclear strike exercises known as “Steadfast Noon,” during which crews are trained in loading, unloading and employing B61 tactical nuclear weapons. The Turkish aircraft in these exercises serve as a non-nuclear air defense escort rather than a nuclear strike force.<sup>6</sup>

### **Significance of nuclear weapons for Turkey**

Even in the absence of an imminent nuclear threat to Turkey’s security, the view among both civilian and military Turkish security elites does not seem to have changed since the Cold War. One explanation for the uniformity of their views lies in the prestige attributed to nuclear weapons. There are specific reasons that explain why Turkish government officials and civilian and military bureaucrats want to retain U.S. nuclear weapons on Turkey’s soil, first and foremost being the perceived threat from the still uncertain international security environment. Turkish government officials’ views were expressed (in not-for-attribution notes) as follows:

“Nuclear weapons continue to preserve their critical importance for the security of the [North Atlantic] alliance, yet they are regarded more as political weapons. Our country is committed to the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons, and thus we support every effort in that direction. ... Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that attaining such a goal will not be possible any



**A Turkish Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcon waits for clearance to take off during the 2007 Falcon Air Meet in Azraq, Jordan, May 23, 2007.**

time soon, and that more time and patience will be needed to realize this objective. Hence, so long as these weapons do still exist in other parts of the world, it is indispensable for NATO to preserve a safe, secure, and effective nuclear arsenal that will be capable of deterring all sorts of enemies in order to ensure the security of all of its allies. ... [In NATO’s new Strategic Concept] our country want[ed] to see an explicit confirmation [of the alliance] to the preservation of an effective and credible deterrent by way of maintaining a combination of conventional and nuclear weapons capability. In addition to that, our determination for the preservation of the transatlantic link and solidarity as well as fair risk and burden sharing to continue to constitute the fundamental principles of the nuclear strategy of the alliance will persist.”<sup>7</sup>

The above quote emphasizes that while Turkey supports nuclear disarmament, in the foreseeable future it wants to maintain nuclear weapons on its soil for both security and political reasons.<sup>8</sup>

### **Logic behind deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons in Turkey**

There is, indeed, a very simple logic connecting Turkey’s membership within NATO and the deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons on its territory.

For a long time, the Turkish political and security elite<sup>9</sup> has viewed Turkey's NATO membership as a potent symbol of Turkey's belonging to the West and the U.S. nuclear weapons stationed in Turkey have been seen, in this respect, as a symbol of Turkey's privileged status within NATO. In this context, there is an unexpressed fear that an American decision to withdraw nuclear weapons from Turkey could weaken Turkey's position within the alliance, and hence undermine to an extent the attraction of NATO membership in the minds of many. This perspective remained prevalent in the higher echelons of the Turkish state mechanism through dozens of governments formed by various political parties coming from different ideological dispositions and diverse worldviews for half a century. It has been so even with the AKP in power since 2002, which has brought a new approach to Turkish foreign policy making by opening many of the taboo-like issues to public debate. The AKP government has taken a series of bold and courageous steps in Turkey's long-established security strategies, such as the Cyprus issue as well as the relations with Middle Eastern neighbors in particular, in accordance with the "zero conflict" doctrine, which is a brainchild of the current Foreign Minister Ahmed Davutoglu. Notwithstanding its reformist attitude toward many traditional foreign policy issues of Turkey, the AKP government as well has preferred to shy away from displaying its well-known pragmatism in the area of U.S. nuclear weapons that are stationed in Turkey.

The decision to deploy nuclear weapons in Turkey was first taken at the North Atlantic Council meeting of the alliance during the Paris summit in December 1957. At that time, there was the right-wing and conservative Democratic Party (known as DP, for its Turkish acronym) government under the Premiership of Adnan Menderes, which came to power with the first multi-party general elections in the country in 1950 and consolidated its government with the following general elections in 1955. Prime Minister Menderes was said to be lukewarm to the idea of deploying nuclear weapons in Turkey, possibly due to the possible negative consequences of such a decision for Turkey in its relations with the Soviet Union, which had expressed its opposition.<sup>10</sup> There are also views that Prime Minister Menderes had actually planned an official visit to Moscow, which was scheduled for the end of May 1960, possibly to discuss,

among others, the weapons deployment issue. The military coup d'état on May 27, 1960 led to the demise of the Prime Minister and members of his cabinet on the grounds that they threatened the secular nature of the republic, and prevented any possible reconciliation with Moscow.

In the years after the coup, social, political, and economic life suffered from stiff political rivalry between the leading political parties that governed Turkey. There was serious domestic disorder, on the verge of a civil war. The economy was in shambles and there was financial crisis and hardship, preparing the ground for military intervention to overthrow elected governments on three occasions in 1960, 1971, and 1980. Each military coup overhauled the entire state bureaucracy and restructured the administrative mechanism with a view to reestablishing the constitutional order in accordance with the founding principles of the republic, by appointing new cadres of politicians as well as technocrats and practitioners to key positions.

This all ensured that politicians focused upon issues that were related to the most immediate concerns of the ruling elite, such as strengthening the economy and maintaining order in the country. Strategic matters, such as the hosting of U.S. nuclear missiles (Jupiters) or the atomic bombs stationed in several bases all over Turkey, were left to the military and maybe a handful of civilian experts who had no desire whatsoever to discuss these issues publicly, for fear of losing control. Despite Turkey's transformation into a stable democratic, open, and transparent society, politicians, diplomats and, more so, the military with few exceptions, are



Turkish Defense Minister Mehmet Vecdi Gönül (L) and NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, March 2011.

NATO

still reluctant to discuss the status of U.S. nuclear weapons deployed in Turkey.

When civilian politicians did focus on foreign affairs, it tended to be on disputes with Greece, a NATO ally, over the issues in the Aegean Sea, including the width of the territorial waters and

would again reserve its legitimate right to resort to using nuclear weapons first in the event of aggression from a nuclear-weapons state or an ally of a nuclear-weapons state, regardless of the weapons used by the aggressor. This change in Russian attitude was concomitant with the declaration of the so-called

## **The issue of U.S. nuclear weapons in Turkey has never been the subject of any serious dispute between Turkey and the United States.**

airspace, the delimitation of the continental shelf, re-militarization of the islands by Greece, and the exploitation of the exclusive economic zones by the parties, etc. And of course there was the “Cyprus issue,” which has been undermining the relationship with the United States for decades.

But it was the experience in the lead-up to and after the March 2003 U.S. war on Iraq followed by the U.S. occupation that damaged bilateral relations more seriously, and highlighted anti-American feelings in the Turkish population.<sup>11</sup> More recently, Turkey’s promotion of the Tehran Declaration in May 2010,<sup>12</sup> and the fall-out from Turkey’s dispute with Israel over the killing of nine Turkish nationals involved in challenging the Israeli blockade of Gaza have led to many (prematurely) questioning the alignment of Turkey with the West. Nevertheless, the issue of U.S. nuclear weapons in Turkey has never been the subject of any serious dispute between Turkey and the United States, or the subject of any public debate by sections of Turkish society that might otherwise be quite open to criticizing the relationship with the United States.

### **Turkish view on “first-use” strategy**

In addition to the status the Turkish elite associates with nuclear weapons, there are also the raw security calculations that conclude nuclear weapons can provide a credible deterrent. During the Cold War years, the main source of threat came from the Soviet Union, and Turkey actively endorsed the “first-use” nuclear strategy of the alliance. Turkish views about the “first-use” strategy remain the same even after the end of the Cold War. As NATO survived the end of the Cold War and enlarged, Russia has undergone drastic changes, and the imbalance in the conventional weapons systems turned in favor of NATO.<sup>13</sup> Russian military elites abandoned their “no-first-use” strategy and declared instead in 1993 three years after the end of the Cold War, that Russia

“near abroad” doctrine. Although simple logic would suggest that, having an indisputable superiority in conventional forces, it was NATO’s turn to adopt the “no-first-use” strategy, it was believed that a switch in NATO strategy in that direction would not bring about a concurrent change in the Russian strategy from “first-use” to again a “no-first-use.”

On the other hand, NATO had its own constraints as far as the threat of proliferation of WMD, especially in the Middle East, was concerned. NATO’s effort to adapt itself to meet the challenges of the post-Cold War security environment produced guidelines for appropriate responses to proliferation. The overarching principles that guide NATO’s envisaged defense response include, among others, to “maintain *freedom of action* and demonstration to any potential adversary that the alliance will not be coerced by the threat or use of WMD.”<sup>14</sup> A similar stance was adopted by NATO within its new Strategic Concept adopted at the Lisbon summit in November 2010:

“Deterrence, based on an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional capabilities, remains a core element of our overall strategy. The circumstances in which any use of nuclear weapons might have to be contemplated are extremely remote. As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance.”<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, Turkish security elites have not seen any prospect for a switch to a “no-first-use” strategy. Although dramatic changes have taken place in the security environment of Turkey, credibility of the nuclear posture and, hence, deterrence of NATO compounded with the implicit “first use” strategy of the alliance continues to be of utmost importance for Turkish security elites.<sup>16</sup>

### **Reconciling “first-use” strategy with “zero conflict” doctrine**

Turkish leaders attempt to reconcile this with their policy of nonproliferation in the region by pointing to the historical legacy of these weapons, and the need for patience. There is clearly a level of discomfort in the government over the inconsistency between these deployments in Turkey and the calls for nuclear disarmament and stronger nonproliferation measures. President Abdullah Gul was recently challenged on this and reportedly said that the U.S. NATO weapons “constitute a very different category” than “producing one’s own nuclear weapons.”<sup>17</sup> Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu echoed this belief more recently, citing Turkey’s threat perception emanating from the uncertain strategic security environment as the most fundamental reason for Turkey retaining these weapons, but also lamenting that, “we have been doomed with this [nuclear] legacy.” He continued by declaring clearly Turkey’s desire for a nuclear-weapons-free world and a nuclear-weapons-free Middle East, but that “the need for transition cannot be used by others to create new imbalances.”<sup>18</sup>

Ambassador Tacan Ildem, director-general of international security in the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was reported to express the government’s policy clearly at a Foreign Policy Institute workshop on the new Strategic Concept in June 2010. Speaking favorably about President Obama’s vision for a world free of nuclear weapons, he also highlighted the commitment of NATO member states to move together on the issue, notwithstanding the clear desire of some states to see substrategic systems withdrawn from their own territories. He said the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review made “clear reference to the fact that even the U.S. will not make decisions unilaterally.” He indicated that the Turks had already considered the possibility of consolidation in fewer countries and were decidedly hostile to the idea:

“Among the guiding principles, there is one [about] fair risk and burden sharing. So if three allies say no then I will put the question to you whether it will be fair risk a burden sharing to keep those systems in a nation’s soil.”<sup>19</sup>

In communication more recently, Ambassador Ildem has also cited a commonly held view amongst NATO officials that “despite deep cuts in the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals, there [was] no convincing evidence that such a progress toward total nuclear disarmament has prevented emergence of new proliferators in the world.”<sup>20</sup>

These views reflect others expressed by officials anonymously in private. Turkey expects NATO to preserve a safe, secure, and effective nuclear arsenal as part of its deterrent capability, and values the strengthening this is seen to bring to the transatlantic link and alliance solidarity, reflecting what they perceive to be fair risk and burden sharing.<sup>21</sup>

### **Pressures grow to reconsider the policy**

It is clear that Turkish officials have no desire yet to request the U.S. to take back its nuclear weapons in the near future, but they could experience greater pressures in the future to change their policy.

### **No credible military use of tactical nuclear weapons**

While there are regular exercises that practice the delivery of NATO’s nuclear weapons, there is a widespread belief that they have no significant military value as there is no feasible scenario within which the necessary agreement would be reached to use these weapons. This is particularly so in the case of Turkey’s politics. Before and during the November 2010 summit to consider the new Strategic Concept, there was a heated debate over missile defense and whether Iran would



Tacan Ildem, Permanent Representative to NATO for Turkey, July 2009.

NATO



be explicitly singled out as the principal reason for deployments. While the United States was adamant in including such a reference (partly to assuage Russia), the Turks were equally adamant in resisting such naming. In the end, the Turkish view predominated. Could it therefore be possible that Turkey would consider involvement in any active nuclear threats against Iran, particularly in any preemptive scenario? The possibility runs counter to Turkey's recent diplomacy toward Iran, as well as Syria. In the latter case, Turkey has signed dozens of protocols during the joint ministerial cabinet meetings held in Damascus in December 2009 followed by the High Level Strategic Council meetings held between the two countries. Other neighbors in the region are even less likely targets of nuclear threats.

***Extended deterrence can be achieved without nuclear weapons on Turkey's soil***

Some argue that withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe (or Turkey) would weaken the credibility of NATO's extended deterrent capability. In an age of intensified relations between NATO and Russia, as a result of the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act<sup>22</sup> and the establishment in 2002 of the NATO-Russia Council,<sup>23</sup> it is difficult to envisage scenarios where U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in Europe would have any significant role in deterring Russia over and above the deterrent value provided by strategic nuclear weapons, or, more importantly, conventional capabilities. Moreover, the symbolism of extended deterrence by local deployment may still be achieved by means of temporary deployment of U.S. nuclear submarines carrying nuclear missiles in the eastern Mediterranean and also by way of port visits to allied countries like Turkey and Greece.<sup>24</sup> Hence, it must be acknowledged that "extended deterrence" of NATO is far too comprehensive a concept to depend simply on a small number of tactical nuclear weapons deployed in only a handful of allied countries.

***Turkey's approach toward a NWFZ/ME***

Turkish political and military authorities have time and again emphasized the need to realize the creation of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East (NWFZ/ME) at an early date when making statements about the existing nuclear



Atta Kenare/AFP/Getty Images

**Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim (L), Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki (C) and their Turkish counterpart Ahmet Davutoglu after signing a nuclear fuel swap deal in Tehran on May 17, 2010 under which 1,200 kilograms of Iranian low enriched uranium would have been shipped to Turkey. The deal was never implemented.**

capabilities of Israel as well as the significant achievements observed in the nuclear program of Iran.<sup>25</sup> While realization of the dream is yet a long way off, the creation of a NWFZ/ME is a major and crucial objective with an impact extending far beyond tackling the threat of nuclear weapon proliferation in the region; indeed, it would be a panacea for most of the security problems that exist in the region. Some have said that if Turkish statements are to have any meaning at all, Turkey will have to consider its own contribution to the project by freeing its own territory from nuclear weapons that belong to the United States.<sup>26</sup> There is a certain degree of rationality in this criticism coming from regional security experts, especially those in Iran, in whose view, for Turkey to be consistent with its own rhetoric, U.S. nuclear weapons must be sent back.

In this context, one particular concern of American political and military elites must be noted here.

Among the views that have been expressed by a number of influential figures in the political, military, and scholarly circles in the United States with regard to possible reactions of Turkey to Iran's weaponization of its nuclear capabilities, some have proposed that Turkey would consider developing its own nuclear weapons should the United States withdraw its nuclear weapons deployed in Turkey.<sup>27</sup> While there is no question that Turkey's security will be negatively affected by Iran's nuclear bomb, such an eventuality will not in itself be a cause for Turkey to follow suit and to go down the same path, at least for the foreseeable future for three reasons: first, Turkey is a NATO member and would still benefit

from extended deterrence; second, Turkey would throw away its chances for future membership in the EU, a crucial foreign policy objective; and third, Turkey has a long state tradition of observing its obligations and commitments under international treaties and conventions, and thus would not like to be treated as a “rogue state.”<sup>28</sup> Maintaining U.S. free-fall bombs in Turkey on the basis that it prevents proliferation, as some suggest, is misguided.

### **Turkish air force no longer has a nuclear strike mission**

The Turkish air force no longer has a role in the nuclear strike missions of the alliance. During the Cold War period and in its immediate aftermath, Turkish air force units continued to take part in the nuclear strike exercises carried out by a number of allied countries. Over the last several years, however, Turkish military aircraft have participated in these exercises as non-nuclear air defense escort units rather than a nuclear strike force.<sup>29</sup> Hence, the Turkish military’s involvement in the deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons is minimal, raising questions over Turkey’s role in the decision-making procedures pertaining to the status and the mission of these weapons, which may turn out to be a highly problematic issue in the future.

### **Threat of terrorism**

U.S. nuclear weapons in Turkey are stationed in the Incirlik base near Adana in southern Turkey, neighboring Syria, and need strong protection against any unauthorized access. Moreover, just because of the mere presence of these weapons, the base itself may be the target of terrorist groups. There are observations as well as recommendations to this effect that have been made by the U.S. Air Force, which are documented in the “Blue Ribbon Review” on nuclear weapons policies and procedures published in February 2008. The review recommends investigating “potential consolidation of resources to minimize variances and to reduce vulnerabilities at overseas locations” upon the observation that “host nation security at overseas nuclear-capable units varies from country to country in terms of personnel, facility, and equipment.”<sup>30</sup> Hence, the risks are clearly acknowledged by the United States, and that must also concern Turkish authorities.

### **Conclusion**

Against this background, there is a good argument that Turkey should request that the United States draw down nuclear weapons that are deployed on its territory. However, Turkish governments have so far been cool to this idea and have taken no concrete steps that would suggest otherwise. The U.S. nuclear weapons may in any case be sent back sooner than

most people might expect, and a proactive decision by Turkey could prove beneficial by setting a very valuable and meaningful precedent for the countries in its neighborhood. Turkey’s profile, which is increasing in the Middle Eastern public domain as well as among the political and military authorities, may help enhance its image in the region. Now is the time to make bold decisions.

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7. Written notes on the 2010 U.S. NPR (in Turkish), given to the author by officials from various branches of the government, July 2010, Ankara. Name of the note taker withheld by request.
8. Mustafa Kibaroglu, “Acceptance and Anxiety: Turkey (Mostly) Embraces Obama’s Nuclear Posture,” *Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 18, No. 1, March 2011, pp. 201-217.
9. The phrase “security elite” will denote throughout this chapter the civilian and military officials from the Turkish

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Ministry of Defense, the General Staff, and the General Secretariat of National Security Council, as well as the scholarly people who contribute in various forms in the policy-making process in issues pertaining to national and international security.

10. Author's ad hoc conversations with retired diplomats and military experts on various occasions.

11. Mustafa Kibaroglu and Tarik Oguzlu, "Turkey and the United States in the 21st Century: Friends or Foes?" *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. 20, No. 4, Winter 2008, pp. 367-382.

12. In the Tehran declaration, Iran, Brazil and Turkey agree on the proposal for a swap deal involving the exchange of Iranian low-enriched uranium in return for fuel for a nuclear research reactor in Tehran. The deal, designed as a confidence-building measure to break the deadlock in the dispute around Iran's nuclear program, eventually faltered because of U.S. opposition to it. See Mustafa Kibaroglu, "The Iranian quagmire: How to move forward; Position: Resuscitate the nuclear swap deal," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 66, No. 6, November/December 2010, pp. 102-108.

13. Although a clear cut comparison, in retrospect, between the conventional weapons arsenals of NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries was hardly possible, it was generally estimated that the Warsaw Pact had a "1.5 to 1" or at best "2 to 1" superiority over NATO. However, the imbalance between NATO and Russia was said to amount to a "3 to 1" level in favor of NATO in the post-Cold War era. Conversations with Turkish military experts and with Dr. Nikolai Sokov from the Center for Nonproliferation Studies of the Monterey Institute of International Studies, February 1997.

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15. *Strategic Concept For the Defence and Security of The Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, Lisbon, November 2010, paragraph 17, p. 4, available at [www.nato.int/lisbon2010/strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf](http://www.nato.int/lisbon2010/strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf)

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2010, Ankara," *Dis Politika/Foreign Policy*, Vol. 36, Autumn 2010, pp. 9-12.

20. Views expressed by Ambassador Tacan Ildem during an interview with the author at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, February 2, 2011, Ankara.

21. Views on the 2010 U.S. NPR (in Turkish) presented to the author in written form upon his request by officials from various branches of the government, July 2010, Ankara. Name(s) of the person(s) who provided these views are withheld by request.

22. The "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russia Federation" was signed in Paris on May 27 1997 by the heads of states and governments of the North Atlantic Alliance, the secretary-general of NATO and the president of the Russian Federation. The Founding Act is the expression of an enduring commitment, undertaken at the highest political level, to work together to build a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic area. It creates the framework for a new security partnership and for building a stable, peaceful, and undivided Europe. It commits the alliance and Russia to forging a closer relationship, not only in their own interests, but also in the wider interests of all other states in the Euro-Atlantic region. See [www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2001/hb030303.htm](http://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2001/hb030303.htm)

23. The NATO-Russia Council (NRC) is a mechanism for consultation, consensus-building, cooperation, joint decision, and joint action. Within the NRC, the individual NATO member states and Russia work as equal partners on a wide spectrum of security issues of common interest. See [www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_50091.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50091.htm)

24. Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Turkey and Shared Responsibilities," in Scott Sagan (ed.), *Shared Responsibilities for Nuclear Disarmament* (American Academy of Arts & Sciences, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2010), pp. 24-27.

25. Mustafa Kibaroglu and Baris Caglar "Implications of a Nuclear Iran for Turkey," *Middle East Policy*, Middle East Policy Council, Vol. XV, No. 4, Winter 2008, , Washington, D.C., pp. 59-80.

26. Amr Moussa, Secretary-General of the Arab League, expressed such an opinion to the author during the Global Zero Convention held in Paris on February 2, 2010. Similar views were expressed to the author by other experts from the region such as Dr. Mahmoud Vaezi, Director of the Center for Strategic Research in Tehran, back on December 25, 2004 during the author's research trip to Iran.

27. George Schultz, former U.S. Secretary of State in the George Bush administration, expressed such an opinion to the author during a workshop organized by CISAC at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California on September 16, 2010.

28. Mustafa Kibaroglu and Baris Caglar, *Implications of a Nuclear Iran for Turkey*, *ibid*.

29. Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Reassessing the Role of US Nuclear Weapons in Turkey," *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 40, Issue 5, June 2010, pp. 8-13.

30. U.S. Air Force, *Blue Ribbon Review, Nuclear Weapons Policies and Procedures, Executive Summary*, Released February 12, 2008, p. 9.

# NATO's Defense and Deterrence Posture Review: A French Perspective on Nuclear Issues

By Paul Zajac

The allied posture review, as called for by the heads of state and government at the Lisbon summit to implement the guidelines of the Strategic Concept, should bring about the strengthening of allied security. The review is not a disarmament review. On the contrary, the overall aim is to ensure that NATO's whole range of capabilities will be adapted to the prevailing security environment. This requires, first and foremost, addressing European conventional capability shortfalls and preserving the allied deterrent by reaffirming NATO's nuclear posture. Moreover, the legitimate commitment to disarmament should not confuse this message, which is crucial to our security, while other competent bodies are capable of advancing the disarmament agenda. In this context, it is also possible to seek the adaptation of nuclear weapons assigned to NATO to the strategic context. This paper will focus on nuclear issues, leaving aside the crucial question of conventional capabilities in Europe and will comment on Franco-German discussions, thus reflecting the author's current position.

On the eve of the Lisbon summit, a number of people announced that disputes would break out between France and Germany over the role of nuclear weapons in the alliance's strategy. In reality, a new Strategic Concept, NATO reform, the launching of a transition in Afghanistan, and the revival of NATO-Russia cooperation, including on anti-missile defense, were agreed to at the meeting. During the summit, the allied heads of state and government also called for a "review" of NATO's posture in order to implement all the Strategic Concept guidelines on defense and deterrence.

## Franco-German disputes: appearances and realities

A "pro-nuclear France," a "pro-disarmament" Germany: In the eyes of many, the positions of Berlin and Paris are alleged to conflict irremediably. However, they can in fact be reconciled, as shown by NATO's

new Strategic Concept. In Lisbon, all the allies reaffirmed the relevance of an allied nuclear deterrence. For its part, France fully supports the objective of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1887 to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons, which is referred to in the new Strategic Concept. It should also be recalled that France has already adopted unparalleled disarmament measures by reducing the number of its nuclear warheads to 300 and irreversibly dismantling its land component, nuclear test sites, and fissile material production plants. France demonstrated its commitment through such concrete actions.

Germany and France share a priority objective: guaranteeing and enhancing allied security in an increasingly uncertain strategic environment. Uncertainties include, first and foremost, increasing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their

delivery systems. This convergence of analysis finds very concrete expression of Franco-German cooperation in all nonproliferation areas, including, in response to the Iranian crisis (P5+1), as well as through operational cooperation in the framework of the Proliferation Security Initiative, joint promotion of the 2002 Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, implementation of new European Union actions on nonproliferation, and strengthening of the International Atomic Energy Agency. There is real convergence of views between France and Germany on these issues that are crucial to our security.



CTBTO Photo/Sophie Paris

(L-R) H.E. Omar Zniber of Morocco, H.E. Florence Mangin of France, and Tibor Toth, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO, at the Conference on Facilitating the Entry Into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, United Nations, New York, September 25, 2009.

### What should be NATO's role in disarmament?

For all the allies, disarmament is not a goal in itself but a means of strengthening our common security. Yet, in that area, the logic of exemplarity reaches its limit when it risks leading to unilateral disarmament without reciprocity and, hence, without a security gain. We should, therefore, make progress through negotiations with all concerned states in the appropriate frameworks. Tangible developments in disarmament take place on that basis, as shown by the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) negotiations between the United States and Russia. France is in favor of an approach to disarmament based on reciprocity of commitments and the inclusion of all relevant actors, which, in addition, helps to limit proliferation risks.

With this in mind, the allies' primary objectives are promoting ratification of the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, launching unconditional negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty within the United Nations Conference on Disarmament, and supporting bilateral disarmament agreements by Russia and the United States—which alone account for 90% of the world's nuclear arsenals. The entry into force of New START is an important contribution to this process. France and Germany are in agreement on these issues.

Yet NATO is not in a position to play a decisive role on its own in most of these issues. In particular, a standing committee on disarmament would only play a marginal or even counterproductive role in NATO. As its composition will be restricted to the allies, the committee will, consequently, be unable to play a decisive role in relation to the above-mentioned disarmament and nonproliferation goals. At best, it will be a forum for in-house discussions without any concrete impact, while running the risk of creating artificial divisions among allies without

any relevance to the real issues at stake. At worst, it will help promote the allies' unilateral disarmament measures to the detriment of their common security. In any event, it is likely, by sheer bureaucratic logic, to help promote a disarmament agenda exclusive of any other security consideration and without any relevance to deterrence and nonproliferation issues. Regarding the posture review, the allies have decided to set up a provisional committee tasked with making a contribution to disarmament issues. By the end of the review, the allies will need to determine whether or not it will be opportune to set up a standing committee.

### Maintaining the alliance's nuclear deterrent

In this context, the specific role of NATO is to continue to guarantee the allied deterrent. In the face of threats to allied security—first and foremost from Iran—NATO must send unambiguous signals about our determination to confront them. The Strategic Concept clearly states that, as long as there are nuclear weapons in the world, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance. In a context where nuclear arsenals are increasing worldwide, NATO cannot reduce the effectiveness of its nuclear deterrent, which ought to remain a core element of the collective defense guarantees under Article 5. It remains crucial to many allies.

The alliance's public nuclear posture is a key component of its deterrence capability. Insofar as deterrence is designed to influence the calculations of a potential adversary so as to deter any attack against our vital interests, it is essential to preserve a stable, unambivalent message. Any modification that would

cloud our intentions and lead potential adversaries to have doubts about our determination would diminish NATO's deterrence capability and, hence, our security. For this reason, it is important to gauge the balance between support for the prospect of a world without nuclear weapons and the unambiguous reaf-

firmation of the allied nuclear deterrent. In particular, this implies avoiding the impression of diminishing the role of nuclear deterrence in favour of a missile defense system. Nuclear deterrence is designed to deter any aggression against our vital interests. It is the final and irreplaceable assurance against any type of attack. Missile defense, for its part, is designed to counter a limited ballistic attack conducted with unsophisticated resources. These are two different logics that can complement one another yet can never substitute for the other. Stating the contrary would definitely risk jeopardizing the effectiveness of our deterrence and, hence, our security. Regarding missile defense, what really needs to be addressed is a framework for realistic cooperation with Russia. This issue requires a very concrete definition of arrangements to enable cooperation between NATO and Moscow with due regard for the competencies of both parties. This first implies that we should avoid letting it be thought that it will bring about in-depth changes in the strategic equilibria. Affirming that anti-missile defense is a substitute for nuclear weapons will not enable us to maintain favorable conditions for this discussion.

with security conditions, following a thorough analysis of the latter. This topic should be discussed among allies in the framework of the strategic posture review, with contributions from the Nuclear Planning Group. Still, there are many outstanding questions: Should arsenals be modernized? Should the number

of weapons be reduced? Should they be concentrated in one location? How can a dialogue on Russian tactical weapons be started? All of these questions should be tackled solely with an eye to increasing allied security. They require an in-depth and serious debate, without predetermination of the final outcome.

To seek to weaken the alliance's nuclear posture in order to advance the goal of modifying arsenals would mean addressing the problem the wrong way round. To retain its deterrent effectiveness, the allied nuclear posture should be as stable as possible. In the 1990s, NATO engaged in significant reductions of tactical arsenals without altering the foundations of the nuclear posture in the 1991 and 1999 Strategic Concepts. Initiating the adaptation of dedicated arsenals in no way requires altering the equilibrium of the posture defined by the 2010 Strategic Concept.

We should remember that most of the alliance's nuclear deterrence capability is still ensured by U.S. strategic arsenals with contributions from France and the United Kingdom's strategic arsenals. These elements are crucial to NATO's nuclear posture, which should remain compatible with the nuclear policy of each of its three nuclear-weapon-state allies. It is for this reason that NATO simply has a nuclear "posture" rather than, strictly speaking, a nuclear-weapons-use policy. Instead, it is the sole responsibility of the nuclear-weapon states to decide, at the last instance, on the conditions for the use of nuclear weapons. In particular, there can be no question of NATO committing itself on the issue of negative security assurances, which are unilateral legal acts adopted by nuclear-weapon states.

## **There can be no question of NATO committing itself on the issue of negative security assurances, which are unilateral legal acts adopted by nuclear-weapon states.**

### **Adaptation of nuclear arsenals assigned to NATO**

To implement the new strategic concept, the alliance will need to ensure that NATO's capabilities are adapted to the prevailing security environment. This will require in particular addressing the shortfalls in European conventional capabilities, developing a common missile defense policy and adapting nuclear arsenals assigned to NATO – in this order of priority.

Regarding the last issue, the aim should be to guarantee a principle of strict sufficiency by maintaining the number of weapons at the lowest level compatible

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# The Opportunities for NATO in the Deterrence and Defense Posture Review

By Paul Ingram

**N**ATO is an institution that takes prides in its flexibility. After all, it has a claim to being the most powerful, most capable military alliance the world has ever seen. Yet, as an Alliance of 28 members it not only has trouble achieving the consensus required for its policy decisions, it also can move slowly, much to the frustration of many of its members.

The Cold War ended 21 years ago leading to rapid draw-downs in the deployment of U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons, including many forward-deployed tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. But some member states have been frustrated with the lack of progress over the last decade. This frustration, along with the increasingly influential calls for global nuclear disarmament and domestic political pressures, led recent German governments to call for the remaining withdrawal of U.S. nuclear bombs from Europe. There is strong domestic backing for this position in the Bundestag and in the wider German public. The chapter in this volume by Peter Gottwald, the coordinator of policy in this area for the German Foreign Ministry, outlines the purpose and intention of this policy well.

The response from some allies has been to limit these ambitions and establish clear principles governing NATO evolution on the issue, such as the need to move together and to seek reciprocal measures from Russia as NATO conducts a Deterrence and Defense Posture Review (DDPR). But such efforts may end up being counter-productive if the intention is to control or close down the debate.

Our roundtables this past year have surfaced a number of diverging perspectives on some of the inescapable contradictions in NATO's current deterrent posture.

- Tactical nuclear weapons deployed within Europe are generally assumed to strengthen Alliance security by deterring external threats. However, the secrecy surrounding their deployment

(few are aware the weapons remain in NATO and their location and numbers are classified) potentially reduces that deterrence and undermines public support for deployment at a time of budget pressure.

- Although NATO plans for the deployment of nuclear weapons in regular joint exercises, there are no genuinely credible crisis scenarios in which member states would support the deployment of NATO's tactical nuclear weapons, further weakening their deterrent value.
- The deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe is perceived by many as a "glue" that strengthens Alliance cohesion and burden sharing, but the deployments are controversial in some NATO member states, a situation that only serves to highlight the radically different attitudes among the allies regarding nuclear weapons. Wider fissures in the alliance could emerge if certain allies block the evolution of Alliance nuclear policy and host governments block investment in the modernization of tactical nuclear weapons delivery systems.

Clearly, NATO member states all value their membership in an alliance that can provide security and they all believe that strategic nuclear weapons play an important role in providing the ultimate guarantee for NATO. Going forward, the debate within the Alliance is therefore not about whether it should retain a nuclear deterrence posture, but rather on

how much and how quickly that posture and force structure—especially as it related to the 180 or so tactical nuclear bombs in five European NATO states—can evolve in the context of significant calls to move completely away from nuclear weapons.

### Negotiations with Russia

One of the most significant questions hanging over deliberations in NATO is whether the Cold War really is over and how the Alliance can best approach Russia. The current reality is that the risk of nuclear war has evaporated and Russia is a strategic partner for NATO; yet there remains a mutual distrust between NATO and Russia. While neither sees the other as a current threat, Russia's official posture explicitly points to the danger of NATO becoming a threat in the future, while some NATO members talk openly about Russia in similar terms (even if official communiqués and military actions avoid explicitly naming Russia).

Russia is estimated to have about two thousand tactical nuclear weapons, including unusable nuclear air defense systems, warheads stored centrally for air delivery, and naval nuclear-tipped cruise missiles. In addition, Iskander missiles have a nuclear capability, and their numbers are set to increase. The Russians have given contradictory signals of intent in recent statements, and have announced ambitious modernization plans for their strategic nuclear forces. Even though the numbers of deployed strategic nuclear warheads and delivery systems are set to decline below recently agreed limits under the New START Treaty, there are grounds for considerable concern.

There can be no doubt as to which country the United States and NATO are focused on when they consider the need for nuclear deployments. Both NATO and Russia suspect that were they to take unilateral progressive steps toward disarmament, the other would immediately exploit any strategic advantage and a new equilibrium would be reached to the disadvantage of the initiator. Despite uncomfortable cooperation in a number of areas, Russia is seen ultimately as a strategic competitor rather than partner.

Even though Russia was present at the 2010 NATO Summit in Lisbon and cooperative agreements made on missile defense and other issues, this adversarial approach was evident when decision-makers made any further draw-downs in the deployment of nuclear weapons conditional upon reciprocal measures from Russia. This occurred despite the fact that the most significant, and possibly only credible reason for retaining tactical nuclear weapons in Europe is



NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen meets with Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, Moscow, December 2009.

internal politics, having to do with NATO cohesion and the coupling of U.S. forces to Europe.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, NATO's tactical nuclear weapons have no strategic linkage to Russia's. Nevertheless, this approach arises from the perception that NATO's nuclear weapons in Europe are a negotiating asset, to be traded with Russia to achieve a new balance at lower levels of deployment. Unfortunately, NATO's existing deployments of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe hold little if any value in negotiations with Russia. In fact, they could actually be a significant liability. Russian leaders could be holding onto their own tactical nuclear weapons for similar reasons, safe in the knowledge that NATO's nuclear deployments place significant strain on the cohesion of the Alliance and have a limited shelf life independent of Russian deployment decisions.

Senior Russian leaders have outlined several conditions for negotiations involving tactical nuclear weapons that suggest they are in no hurry to do so. The conditions include: the withdrawal of U.S. forward-deployed tactical nuclear weapons from Europe and the dismantling of the associated infrastructure; full implementation of New START; inclusion of other capabilities, namely missile defense and strategic conventional capabilities; and the multilateralization of the nuclear arms control process. These are high bars, but we need not be discouraged. It is the nature of a hard-nosed negotiator that they start with tough demands.

For its part NATO's leaders have made clear that they will be seeking reciprocity from Russia before agreeing to reduce the number and location of the remaining tactical warheads in Europe. But what specifically is NATO seeking in reciprocity? Clarity is absolutely critical prior to negotiations. NATO sees its security as



affected more directly by the deployment of Russian tactical weapons than Russian security is affected by NATO deployments, and thus NATO has a direct interest in seeking agreement. So far the emphasis has been on transparency of Russian deployments and their relocation away from the borders of NATO, but it could also include discussion on posture and role. The sequencing of this agreement presents many challenges,

only does the effectiveness of the deterrent dwindle to insignificance, but also the political value becomes increasingly shaky over time, valuable resources and political capital are wasted, and the reputation of the Alliance itself suffers. This 'irreducible paradox' needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency in the deterrence and defense review this and next year.

## **One of the most significant questions hanging over deliberations in NATO is whether the Cold War really is over and how the Alliance can best approach Russia.**

but should not be beyond the wit of negotiators.

The outcome depends in large part on how NATO perceives Russia and the purpose of negotiations. NATO needs to avoid the pitfalls of seeing Russia as an adversary that cannot be trusted. This could lead to the retention of redundant NATO weapons systems on NATO's side and prompt Russia to accelerate offensive strategic nuclear deployments. Attempts to use NATO's tactical nuclear weapons as a bargaining chip could simply weaken the Alliance in its negotiations with Russia in the immediate term and threaten cohesion in the longer term as Germany and the Benelux states may pull out of the nuclear sharing arrangements by default.

### **The Irreducible Paradox**

Many within NATO are convinced that its tactical nuclear weapons have a crucial political value in signalling America's commitment to European defense, NATO's resolve to respond in a crisis, alliance cohesion and burden sharing. "Nuclear coupling" is seen as central. Thus, a draw-down of such weapons would be seen by a few NATO members as reducing U.S. commitment to European security and NATO's commitment to nuclear deterrence.

The question remains: can all this be built upon an edifice that ultimately rests on a nuclear weapons system that could not be used in any credible scenario? Nuclear use would require open Alliance-wide conversations about bombing St. Petersburg at a time of crisis. And how much flexibility is there in achieving desired signals by changing posture, readiness and deployments without undermining that claimed cohesion? While NATO members exercise with the deployment of nuclear-related assets annually on imaginary scenarios, the political credibility of the nuclear threat behind the deployment is highly dubious. And as this fact becomes increasingly clear, not

### **NATO's Sword of Damocles: the German debate**

While NATO decisions have until now been dominated by conservative and cautious political and strategic calculations within NATO and capitals, the German public may in the end unravel the nuclear sharing practices by resolutely opposing any investments in new aircraft. This is not due to German pacifism, but to the belief that the Cold War has ended and that it is time to lock countries into commitments that reduce and then eliminate nuclear weapons. It is a narrative that involves a more benign view of the possibilities of reconciliation with Russia, but it is also an approach that seeks to achieve a sustainable security. It includes an assumption that you don't achieve direction of travel by always engaging in threats or building up leverage for the next negotiation in a manner that leaves one's negotiating partner feeling vulnerable beforehand and that seeks to achieve maximum security at the others' expense. And of course, such public debates are happening at a time when governments' top priorities lie in reducing public deficits and making painful cuts to defense budgets.

The German government could hold on to their nuclear-capable Tornado bombers for some time, but the costs of maintaining a small number of nuclear-armed Tornados are likely to increase significantly as its air force relies increasingly on replacement Typhoon aircraft. The Typhoon could technically be modified, but this would involve giving U.S. technicians access to commercially sensitive information and require additional funding, which would undoubtedly be opposed by the Bundestag. It is about as difficult to come up with a credible political scenario in which Germany would be actively engaged in nuclear sharing arrangements in 20 to 30 years time, as it is to come up with a

scenario in which NATO's nuclear weapons would actually be used in a crisis in preference to other capabilities at NATO's disposal.

### Leadership on the issue

The deterrence and defense review currently under way in NATO circles faces a number of tricky disputes between allies that some may be tempted to sweep under the carpet. The Obama Administration has made a particularly big effort to take full account of the diverse opinions of its allies before making a decision to proceed, a hallmark of this Presidency and a clear departure from the previous. In the words of one participant at our Tallinn roundtable, "they need to minimize the degree to which everyone is dissatisfied." But a failure to make a clear decision on the future of NATO's tactical nuclear weapons could be even more dangerous.

The United States will play the central role in steering the DDPR. It is the Americans who sit in negotiations with the Russians and who own and deploy NATO's tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. It is the United States that offers the security guarantees so sought-after by many Europeans and can offer alternatives that reassure allies. The U.S. Nuclear Posture Review of 2010 clearly stated as an objective a reduced dependency upon nuclear deterrence. NATO's Deterrence and Defense Posture Review offers a big chance to deliver on this. This involves Alliance-wide consultations, which require leadership from the Americans beyond defining principles.

The view expressed by many officials participating in our policy roundtables was that public discussion of NATO nuclear policy could be dangerous, as the issues are too complex, and public opinion overly influenced by simplistic judgments on both sides of the debate (anti-nuclear or xenophobic). One participant said, "Maybe we shouldn't [open this to public debate] ... it's scary, it alters political dynamics, is bad for relations with Russia, and for intelligence relations." This fear arises partly from a belief that Europeans are comfortable existing under a distant strategic U.S. nuclear umbrella, out of sight and out of mind. But that approach fails to account for the long-term corrosive nature of an unbalanced nuclear burden and can lead to resentment on the part of the United States.

The United States deploys nuclear weapons strictly in accordance with its interpretation of U.S. interests, not for any sense of benign gift to allies. The withdrawal of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons from Europe could indeed be a relief for leaders in Washington who recognize they have no real military utility. In the long run, an approach that sought to ignore public opinion would inevitably lead to public support for alliance nuclear policy ebbing away in the face of shrinking

budgets and stronger demands for justification of public spend.

Russia, the United States, and NATO need to escape the tactical nuclear weapons trap. Seeing the need for reductions on both sides is not the same as making the link explicit and conditional. It is crucial that the deterrence and defense review seeks new ideas to help break this deadlock, including:

- Agreement on measures modelled on the 1990/91 Presidential Nuclear Initiatives, whereby unilateral withdrawals of tactical nuclear weapons were announced simultaneously and without verification measures. New variations could include declarations of stockpiles and pledges by NATO and Russia not to modernize their tactical nuclear weapons or associated delivery vehicles;
- Early agreement in principle by NATO members that inclusion of tactical nuclear weapons in a New START follow-on agreement would be conducive to European security, but also that such intentions should not be a reason to delay appropriate unilateral moves by NATO that seek to rationalize the current situation;
- Agreements on cooperative measures on missile defense and early-warning data sharing to increase trust and confidence;
- Greater transparency of capabilities and intentions around new technologies, such as missile defense and prompt global strike systems; and
- Greater consultation between the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China regarding nuclear weapons policy and security.

There could be more at stake in the deterrence and defense posture review than meets the eye. NATO would do well to consider its public reputation, particularly its efficient use of scarce resources for operations that tackle issues the public genuinely sees as threats to European security. While there is no appetite yet for NATO to abandon its commitment to nuclear deterrence, this has already been decoupled from the deployment of outdated nuclear bombs that the public does not even know are there.

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