

NATO AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Is a New Consensus Possible?

Steven Andreasen, Malcolm Chalmers and Isabelle Williams



Royal United Services Institute

OCCASIONAL PAPER

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Executive Summary and Key Propositions

At the Strasbourg/Kehl Summit in April 2009, NATO leaders endorsed a call for the drafting of a new Strategic Concept, the document which sets out the fundamental purpose, tasks and strategy of NATO (the currently operative Concept was agreed in 1999).¹ The revision process for this new Concept is due to be completed in time for approval by member states at the Lisbon Summit to be held 19-21 November.

The revision of NATO's Strategic Concept has provided a context within which member states have begun

a discussion to address whether, and how, NATO nuclear policy should be revised. Specifically, this discussion has included whether NATO's declaratory policy can be modified to reduce the role of its nuclear weapons, and whether further changes should be made in the deployment of the remaining US non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) – or 'tactical' nuclear weapons – currently forward-based in Europe.² This paper is intended to assist these discussions by identifying key propositions around which a consensus could develop and exploring the various policy options that are available to NATO.

Key Propositions Towards a New Consensus

The new Strategic Concept would be an appropriate mechanism for NATO to signal its commitment to the development of new guidance on the role of nuclear weapons in its security policy, on NATO declaratory policy, and on the future role, if any, of Europe-based non-strategic nuclear weapons. Member states could also agree to authorise more detailed work on the development of NATO's nuclear posture during 2011, considering the options in more detail, consistent with the broad guidelines agreed in the Strategic Concept.

Even at this stage, it is possible to identify some key propositions around which a consensus could develop. Key issues would remain for further discussion (not least because the actions of others – including Russia – will shape policy implementation). But there could be widespread, and growing, support for the following:

Proposition One

The Strategic Concept should provide a framework that is both durable and flexible. As part of this, it should signal NATO's support for the process of further reducing the roles and risks of nuclear weapons in security policies globally.

Proposition Two

The Strategic Concept should state that NATO will retain a nuclear component to its deterrent strategy, but should continue to assess whether changes in the configuration of NATO's nuclear forces would be appropriate. Careful co-ordination within NATO in order to ensure the sharing of risks and responsibilities is essential. However, given doubts about their continuing utility, together with NATO's commitment to contribute to global disarmament, this need not necessarily imply

¹ NATO, *Declaration on Alliance Security*, 4 April 2009, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_52838.htm>, accessed 23 June 2010.

² For the purposes of this occasional paper, 'non-strategic nuclear weapons' refers to all nuclear weapons intended for use with nonstrategic nuclear delivery systems – that is, any nuclear weapon not intended for use on a long-range ballistic missile (ICBM or SLBM) or Heavy Bomber. These non-strategic nuclear weapons can be delivered by aircraft or missiles deployed on land or at sea, as well as by artillery, torpedoes, and mines.

continuing deployment of US non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe. Other ways in which sharing can be accomplished should continue to be explored.

Proposition Three

NATO nuclear policy initiatives would be most effective in the context of actions on a broader security and political front, e.g. improving mechanisms for US-NATO-Russia security co-operation (including on missile defence and conventional force postures).

Proposition Four

With respect to declaratory policy, the Strategic Concept should state that the fundamental role of nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear attack and that NATO would only consider nuclear use in extreme circumstances. There is also widespread support for NATO to make clear that (like the US) it would be prepared to work to establish safe conditions for the adoption of deterring nuclear attack as the sole purpose for its nuclear weapons. It should also make clear that neither its nuclear nor conventional posture is intended to undermine Russia's second strike capability, and is committed to working with Russia to reassure it in this regard.

Proposition Five

NATO should state its willingness to support a further reduction and consolidation of US non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe. In parallel, it would state its readiness to deepen engagement with Russia on mutual reductions and consolidation, without prejudice to the ultimate form that this would take. The stated objectives of this approach would be to: complete the consolidation of US non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe to the US; further consolidate Russian NSNW; and increase transparency and security for US and Russian NSNW globally, working towards elimination. The exact relationship between these three objectives and the timing for completing consolidation to the US would be left for future discussions.

Proposition Six

Given the range of complications that formal NATO-Russia nuclear talks would involve, an extension of the bilateral START process probably offers a better vehicle for pursuing further reductions in non-

strategic nuclear arsenals. This could be achieved either through a legally-binding treaty (i.e. explicitly including NSNW in the next START agreement) or through a less formal arrangement, where NSNW were addressed bilaterally outside of, but in concert with, negotiation of further legally-binding treaties. Over time, this approach could develop alongside (and perhaps be increasingly integrated with) transparency and confidence-building measures (including 'no-increase' commitments) between the five recognised nuclear weapon states. Such an approach, however, does not preclude NATO from establishing a process whereby it would seek to deepen its engagement with Russia on mutual reductions and consolidation, perhaps via the NATO-Russia Council.

Proposition Seven

With respect to the 'work plan' beyond the Strategic Concept, NATO should examine the following key questions related to its nuclear policies:

Nuclear sharing: Are there alternatives to current arrangements for nuclear sharing? Might the balance be shifted from operational roles to planning ones? Could the emphasis be shifted from planning in relation to US non-strategic air forces in Europe to joint planning in relation to the US strategic forces that are now the main providers of NATO nuclear deterrence? How might this transition be handled within the Nuclear Planning Group?

Reassurance: What are the benefits and risks involved in alternative means for providing reassurance to allies against future nuclear threats (for example through co-operation in the provision of territorial missile defence or conventional contingency planning in newer member states)? What are the alternatives for maintaining the visibility of NATO's nuclear deterrent as a component of 'reassurance'?

Russia: How can NATO and Russia move toward a co-operative concept of security, making conceptual and operational changes in both strategic and non-strategic nuclear postures as well as co-operating on missile defence and non-threatening conventional force deployments?

Summary of Policy Options

The Future Role of Nuclear Weapons in NATO Security Policy

A number of general questions relating to the role of nuclear weapons in NATO policy provide the context for more specific discussions in the paper relating to both declaratory policy and non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) deployment. These include:

- What does it mean for NATO to retain a nuclear component?
- Do NATO's current nuclear policies and posture reflect current and emerging threats to the Alliance?
- How do missile defence and conventional force postures relate to these questions?

Looking to and beyond the revised Strategic Concept, member states are likely to continue to discuss whether, and how far, they wish to rethink and reconfigure the role of nuclear weapons in NATO's deterrent posture. One important factor in this process will be the Alliance timetable for taking it forward. Given the short amount of time now available before the Lisbon Summit in November, member states may decide that discussion on these key issues continues into 2011 in another form.

NATO Declaratory Policy

This paper explores a number of illustrative (and not mutually exclusive) options with regard to NATO's nuclear declaratory policy (i.e. public statements on the circumstances under which nuclear weapons might be used) that could be considered for inclusion in the 2010 Strategic Concept or after a subsequent NATO review:

Say very little on declaratory policy. This would mean that member states choose to adopt language close to what exists in the current Concept, leaving it to member states – but not the Alliance – to make specific negative security assurances.

Introduce a NATO negative security assurance for non-nuclear states, provided they are in compliance

with the NPT. Recommended in the Group of Experts report, this option would bring NATO more in line with the new US commitment and remove some ambiguity of language in the current Concept.

Adopt the objective of working to establish the conditions for a NATO policy that deterring a nuclear attack is the sole purpose for nuclear weapons. This would bring declaratory policy in relation to nuclear-armed states (as well as non-nuclear states not in compliance with the NPT) into line with the US approach.

Adopt a sole purpose declaratory policy. This would mean going one step further than the US by stating that NATO is already committed to using nuclear weapons only for deterring nuclear attack.

Adopt a declaratory policy that NATO is not seeking to undermine the second-strike capability of Russia's nuclear force, even as its nuclear force (together with that of the US) is reduced. This objective is already implicit in NATO policy but such language would seek to explicitly reassure Russia.

Urge Russia to move in unison with NATO (and China) towards the goal of 'sole purpose'. This option would entail member states agreeing with other key states on a process to adopt a 'sole purpose' doctrine.

US Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons Deployed in Europe

The future of the remaining US non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) in Europe has recently received significant attention. It is widely accepted that these weapons have no military value. However, member states differ on their political value depending largely on their differing perspectives of the security environment. The following options are explored in detail in this paper:

Maintain the status quo. This would involve maintaining the current level of US nuclear force deployments in Europe for the foreseeable future.

Reduce the number of US NSNW in Europe in existing sites, and become more transparent. This would maintain NSNW deployment in all five countries (Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey) where these currently exist, but would reduce total numbers and declare how many remain.

Reduce and consolidate NSNW into fewer sites, but continue some dual-capable aircraft (DCA) sharing. This would retain some shared involvement in the nuclear mission, perhaps through modifications to existing DCA practices.³

Reduce and consolidate NSNW, while ending dual-capable aircraft (DCA) capability. This option would lead to the end of the DCA capabilities of NATO-European air forces, but maintain US NSNW storage facilities in Italy (and perhaps also in Turkey).

Move towards the removal of all US NSNW from Europe, and find other means of ensuring that responsibility for NATO nuclear forces is shared amongst member states.

NATO and Russian Nuclear Policy

The issue of whether, and if so how, to link NATO's nuclear policy with that of Russia, including

whether the deployment of US NSNW in Europe should be linked in some way to Russia's own NSNW deployments, has become a critical component in the discussion among NATO members on nuclear policy. There are a number of contextual questions that might shed light on the way forward, including:

- Would perceptions of the credibility of NATO deterrence (either within NATO or in potential adversary states) be undermined if Russia had NSNW in Europe and NATO did not?
- Should decisions on the future of NATO's nuclear weapons be conditional on an agreed form of Russian reciprocation, or should NATO seek instead a less formal process of parallel actions including reductions?

The paper explores two options. First, NATO could collectively negotiate with Moscow asymmetric but multilateral reductions to Russian and allied non-strategic nuclear arsenals, achieved either through a legally-binding treaty or perhaps through a less formal arrangement. Second, NATO could support on bilateral consultations or negotiations between the US and Russia on NSNW based on the extension of the START process, again either through a legally binding treaty or a less formal arrangement.

³ The current nuclear weapons sharing arrangements consist of sets of US B61 nuclear gravity bombs housed in sites within a NATO host country. These weapons are 'dual key' systems, which require the authorisation of both the US and the host country in order to be used. The gravity bombs are kept under US military control, but the aircraft (known as Dual-Capable Aircraft or DCA) used to deliver them are purchased, maintained and flown by the host country air force as part of the burden-sharing arrangement.

Background

The Evolving NATO Nuclear Debate

Nuclear weapons in NATO security policy during the Cold War

Nuclear weapons have been a key component of NATO's collective defence policy since its creation in 1949. For much of the Cold War, the United States deployed thousands of non-strategic nuclear weapons on the territory of its European NATO allies. The purpose of these deployments, under the broad rubric of 'extended deterrence', was to underscore the political link between the US and Europe and provide a military capability to deter and if necessary defeat numerically superior Soviet and Warsaw Pact tank armies poised to invade NATO through Germany. NATO's first Strategic Concept of 1949 calls for insuring 'the ability to carry out strategic bombing including the prompt delivery of the atomic bomb'.⁴ The US provided the same nuclear protection to its principal Asian allies, assuring these nations of the US commitment to their security.

Throughout this period, the United States and NATO stated publicly that US nuclear weapons were deployed in Europe; however, the US and NATO would 'neither confirm nor deny' the presence or absence of nuclear weapons at any NATO installation or in any specific country. Moreover, NATO consistently underscored the principle of nuclear burden sharing, both through the deployment of US nuclear weapons in a number of NATO states and by agreement that, in the event of war, some of these weapons would be transferred to allied forces and delivered by allied aircraft; and reaffirmed its nuclear declaratory policy of not ruling out the first use of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear weapons in NATO security policy today

Since the end of the Cold War, the Alliance has

significantly reduced its reliance on nuclear forces. NATO's strategy, while remaining one of war prevention, is no longer dominated by the possibility of escalation involving nuclear weapons. Moreover, its non-strategic nuclear forces are no longer targeted against any country and readiness is now described in terms of 'months.'

The NATO Strategic Concepts adopted in 1991 and 1999 – the basis for NATO policy today – does not contain an explicit threat to use nuclear weapons. The 1999 language does reiterate that nuclear weapons provide a 'unique contribution in rendering the risks of aggression against the alliance incalculable and unacceptable,' but makes clear that the fundamental purpose of the nuclear forces of the Allies is political and the emphasis is on deterring all forms of aggression, not only those that are nuclear: 'to preserve peace and prevent coercion and any kind of war... by ensuring uncertainty in the mind of any aggressor about the nature of the Allies response to military aggression'. The 1999 Concept also notes that NATO's ability to mount a conventional defence has significantly improved and emphasises that the circumstances in which any use of nuclear weapons might have to be contemplated are therefore extremely remote.⁵

In terms of actual deployments, while NATO continues its policy of 'neither confirm nor deny', the number of US weapons has declined significantly since a peak of approximately 8,000 during the Cold War. Data from various non-governmental sources indicates that the US currently deploys approximately 150-240 air-delivered nuclear weapons (B61 gravity bombs) that are deliverable by NATO aircraft (F-15s, F-16s, Tornados) at six air force bases in five countries: Belgium (Kleine Brogel), Germany (Buchel), Italy (Aviano (USAF), Ghedi-Torre), the Netherlands (Volkel), and Turkey (Incirlik (USAF)). This reduction in forward-deployed US nuclear forces has not taken place in isolation.

⁴ NATO, *Strategic Concept For The Defense of the North Atlantic Area*, 19 November 1949, <<http://www.nato.int/docu/stratdoc/eng/a491119a.pdf>>, accessed 29 June 2010.

⁵ NATO, *The Alliance's Strategic Concept*, 24 April 1999, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27433.htm>, accessed 29 June 2010.

It has been part of a wider demilitarisation of Europe, and Central Europe in particular, since 1990.

The contours of the evolving nuclear debate today, inside and outside of NATO

In the past few years there have been several important developments in nuclear weapons issues, including a new US Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), the signing of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) agreement by the US and Russia, and the successful outcome of the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference. Moreover, in the past few years the vision of working toward a world free of nuclear weapons has gained significant political momentum around the globe. This momentum was in large measure made possible by a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed co-authored by George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger and Sam Nunn which also listed a number of steps to reduce urgent nuclear dangers.⁶ In June 2007 the UK became the first of the nuclear weapons states to support this agenda, with Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett making a groundbreaking address in Washington, where she committed the UK to act as a 'disarmament laboratory'.⁷

In the aftermath of President Obama's Prague speech in April 2009 proclaiming support for the vision, other European NATO member states have made clear their strong support for US efforts to reinvigorate the nuclear disarmament agenda. Most recently, five European states (Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Norway) called for a discussion on how NATO can reduce the role of nuclear weapons and move closer to the objective of a world free of nuclear weapons. At the same time, a number of other significant NATO member states, including France and several of NATO's new member states, continue to urge caution in relation to any steps that might be seen

as undermining US extended deterrence in Europe, especially in the absence of significant reciprocation from Russia.

Concerns regarding the spread of nuclear weapons and the threat of nuclear terrorism, as well as a renewed focus by many governments and publics on pursuing urgent steps to reduce nuclear dangers – against the backdrop of NATO discussions on the broad requirements of deterrence and defence and the need for Article V reassurance – frame the current discussion within NATO on the role of nuclear weapons in NATO security policy. Within this broad framework, there are a number of specific points that are central to the NATO nuclear debate.

NATO aircraft in the current inventory of Dual Capable Aircraft (DCA), largely F-16 and Tornado combat aircraft, are reaching the end of their original service lives. It is therefore inevitable that the question of modernisation of capabilities will arise in the next few years, and that countries which propose to retain DCA and nuclear weapons on their soil will have to explain the rationale for doing so to their parliaments and publics. Belgium, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands are likely awaiting the outcome of the new NATO Strategic Concept before deciding whether to proceed with programmes for retaining nuclear sharing arrangements with the US and DCA to support those arrangements. This could have significant implications for procurement of replacement aircraft and/or other capabilities in all four countries – with the Germans facing the earliest decision (circa 2011-13), which may have a trickle-down effect on the others. As of today, prospective cuts in NATO defence spending are making it increasingly problematic to maintain all the fleets of DCA on which NSNW deployment now depends. It remains unclear how long Belgium will continue with deployment of the F-16 or whether the Netherlands will support the acquisition of the (potentially nuclear-capable) F-35 to replace

⁶ Henry A. Kissinger, William J. Perry, Sam Nunn, and George P. Shultz, 'A World Free of Nuclear Weapons', *The Wall Street Journal*, 4 January 2007.

⁷ Former Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett, Carnegie speech in Washington, June 2007, <<http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/carnegie-speech>>, accessed 23 June 2010.

their current F-16s. Germany is replacing its own nuclear-capable Tornado aircraft with Eurofighters, which do not currently have a nuclear capability.

There have recently been security concerns expressed regarding US nuclear weapons deployed in Europe. In the wake of a major security lapse in the US in August 2007 when six nuclear weapons were unknowingly flown from North Dakota to Louisiana, the US Air Force commissioned a Blue Ribbon Security Review of its nuclear forces. The review concluded that most sites in Europe 'require additional resources to meet [DoD] standards'. The report also found 'inconsistencies in personnel facilities and equipment provided to the security mission by the host nation'. In particular it noted that areas in need of repair at several of the sites included 'support buildings, fencing, lighting and security systems'. The report recommended that American nuclear assets in Europe be consolidated.⁸

The US is not the only nuclear-capable NATO nation. The UK and France also have nuclear capabilities deployed in Europe. Specifically, the UK has an arsenal of up to 225 warheads, for deployment on Trident submarines (the UK's only remaining nuclear deterrent). France has up to 300 nuclear warheads, deployed both on ballistic missile submarines and on Mirage 2000N and Super Etendard aircraft.

Russian non-strategic nuclear weapon deployments remain an important factor in the current debate. According to independent estimates, Russia is thought to possess around 2,000 operational non-strategic weapons, of which 650 are bombs and missiles assigned to land-based aircraft; 700 are missiles, depth charges and torpedoes assigned to naval roles; and 650 are assigned to air defence and missile defence roles. By comparison, the total US inventory of deployed non-strategic forces is thought to be around 500 (including the approximately 150-240 B61 bombs deployed in Europe). Both sides also possess large reserve stockpiles of nuclear

weapons, estimated to amount to some 7,300 for Russia and some 7,100 for the US.⁹

Declaratory policy is in play for the first time in decades. In April 2010, the Obama administration announced the results of its Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) – including a revision in US declaratory policy. Noting that the strategic situation has changed in fundamental ways – together with the advent of US conventional military pre-eminence and continued improvements in US missile defences and capabilities to counter and mitigate the effects of chemical and biological weapons – the administration stated the US is now prepared to strengthen its negative security assurance by declaring that the US will not 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.

In making this declaration, the administration stated that the US reserves the right to make any adjustments in the assurance that may be warranted by the evolution and proliferation of the biological weapons threat and US capacities to counter that threat. Finally, noting that there remains a narrow range of contingencies in which US nuclear weapons may still play a role in deterring a conventional, chemical or biological attack against the US or its allies and partners from states that possess nuclear weapons and states not in compliance with their non-proliferation obligations, the NPR stated that the US is not prepared at present to adopt a universal policy that deterring nuclear attack is the sole purpose of nuclear weapons, but will work to establish conditions under which such a policy could be safely adopted.

On May 26, 2010, UK Foreign Secretary William Hague, noting that the UK has 'long been clear that it would consider using [nuclear weapons] only in extreme circumstances of self-defence, including the defence of our NATO allies', announced that

⁸ US Air Force Headquarters, *Blue Ribbon Review of Nuclear Weapons Policies and Procedures*, 2008, <<http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/usa/doctrine/usaf/BRR-2008.pdf>>, accessed 29 June 2010.

⁹ Robert S Norris and Hans M Kristensen, 'Russian nuclear forces 2010', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, January/ February 2010, p.76.

the government is reviewing UK declaratory policy to 'ensure that it is fully appropriate to the political and security context in 2010 and beyond.'¹⁰ France – which in its most recent defence white paper in 2008 stated the sole purpose of its nuclear deterrent is to 'prevent any State-originating aggression against the vital interests of the nation wherever it may come from and in whatever shape or form' – has not indicated that it is reviewing its position.¹¹

Russia has also made a recent statement regarding nuclear use policy. On February 5, President Dmitry Medvedev signed a new military doctrine stating, 'Russia reserves the right to use nuclear weapons in response to the use of force against it and (or) its allies, nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, as well as in the case of aggression against Russia with conventional weapons, which threaten the very existence of the state.' In comparing the 2010 and 2000 military doctrines, a recent study concludes that, 'The most significant change in the language pertaining to nuclear policy is the new criterion for the employment of nuclear weapons. It has become tighter. Whereas the previous, 2000 Doctrine foresaw the resorting to nuclear weapons 'in situations critical for [the] national security' of Russia, the 2010 version allows for their use in situations when 'the very existence of [Russia] is under threat'.¹² However, the new doctrine – like the old – does continue to preserve the option of first-use. Moreover, the latest Russian military doctrine contains a classified addendum on nuclear use, so its current nuclear use policy remains somewhat unclear.

Nuclear Weapons and the current debate within NATO

Most of the discussion among NATO member states and within NATO has centred on the issue of US non-strategic nuclear weapons deployed in Europe. While the issue of declaratory policy received a considerable amount of attention in the US NPR, the Review also addressed the question of non-strategic nuclear weapons, concluding that the US will retain the capability to forward-deploy US nuclear weapons on non-strategic fighter-bombers and heavy bombers and would continue and expand consultations with allies and partners to address how to ensure the credibility and effectiveness of the US extended deterrent. The Review therefore made it clear that the US will consult with NATO regarding future basing of nuclear weapons in Europe, and is committed to making consensus decisions through NATO processes. The Review also noted that non-strategic nuclear weapons, together with the non-deployed nuclear weapons of both the US and Russia, should be included in any future reduction arrangements between the two countries.

There is concern among NATO members that a public debate over non-strategic nuclear weapons could cause fissures within the alliance. Even with agreement that non-strategic nuclear weapons are of marginal, if any, military utility there remains a considerable divergence of opinion on where to go next. Much of this divergence stems from the internal Alliance debate on the priority to be given to deterrence and defence as compared to arms control and disarmament, as well as the continuing relevance of US non-strategic nuclear weapons deployed in Europe to 'coupling' the US nuclear deterrent to NATO's defence.

¹⁰ William Hague, House of Commons Debate 26 May 2010 cc182-183, <<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100526/debtext/100526-0005.htm#10052612000737>>, accessed 29 June 2010.

¹¹ Présidence de la République, *The French White Paper on defence and national security*, 17 June 2008, <http://www.ambafrance-ca.org/IMG/pdf/Livre_blanco_Press_kit_english_version.pdf>, accessed 29 June 2010.

¹² Nikolai Sokov, 'The New, 2010 Russian Military Doctrine: The Nuclear Angle', James Martin Center For Nonproliferation Studies, 5 February 2010, <http://cns.miis.edu/stories/100205_russian_nuclear_doctrine.htm>, accessed 29 June 2010.

There are a number of new NATO member states that see non-strategic nuclear weapons as symbolic of NATO cohesion and commitment to defence of all NATO member states and these states stress the necessity of Article 5 reassurance and the requirements of deterrence and defence. Given their close proximity to Russia, Iran or both, these states (in addition to other members) may take a conservative view of changes in either US non-strategic nuclear weapons deployments in Europe or declaratory policy.

Nevertheless, certain NATO member states are pushing to reconsider these issues with an eye towards changing policies. In particular, the new German government stated its intention to seek the withdrawal of remaining US nuclear weapons from Germany, albeit in the context of NATO rather than as a unilateral measure (keeping in mind that the Germans face the earliest decision regarding DCA renewals). Most recently, the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jonas Gahr Store, in a June 22 speech in Berlin, recommended there be 'less emphasis on the nuclear component in NATO's deterrence policy, and a readiness to expand the scope of negative security assurances.' Specifically, with respect to non-strategic nuclear weapons he stated, 'it would make good sense (for NATO) to find a means of withdrawing all sub-strategic nuclear weapons from Europe and subsequently eliminating them' and that it was 'vital' to engage Russia. Moreover, he noted that he does not share the view of certain allies that the remaining U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe are 'a transatlantic 'superglue', a fundamental bond' and instead believes that NATO's 'Strategic Concept should not stand in the way of the NPT objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons.'¹³

The Changing Strategic Context

The strategic context facing NATO today has evolved significantly from the circumstances that existed when the last NATO Strategic Concept was published in 1999. The evolution over the past decade – as well as uncertainties about the future security

environment – will shape NATO nuclear policy discussions going forward.

The nuclear threat to NATO has evolved. Today, the main focus of concern is no longer Russia, but the related threats posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons (most urgently in a conflict-prone Middle East) and nuclear terrorism. The accelerating spread of nuclear weapons, nuclear know-how, and nuclear material has brought the issue to a tipping point. There is a very real possibility that the deadliest weapons ever invented could fall into dangerous hands. Indeed, the wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan had their roots in concerns over the potential nexus between the spread of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. Today, these concerns are a central driver with respect to other related issues, including missile defence. Moreover, they are a central aspect to US and NATO relations with a number of states including Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Syria, Egypt and Israel.

NATO nuclear policy issues do not exist in a security or political vacuum – in particular with respect to Russia. As former Senator Sam Nunn has recently noted, if there is to be success in dealing with the hydra-headed threats of emerging new nuclear weapons states, proliferation of enrichment, poorly secured nuclear material and catastrophic terrorism, many nations must co-operate. It must be recognised, however, that these tasks are virtually impossible without the co-operation of Russia. It is abundantly clear that Russia itself faces these same threats and that its own security is dependent on co-operation with NATO and the United States. The New START Treaty suggests there is some scope for further progress in co-operation; however tensions remain in relation to the future alignment of NATO as well as missile defence. More broadly, questions associated with Russia's role in Euro-Atlantic security continue unresolved, with countries divided over their analysis of the direction of Russian foreign and security policy and the terms and conditions under which co-operation with Russia could take place.

¹³ Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jonas Gahr Store, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Speech, Berlin, 22 June 2010, <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/aktuelt/taler_artikler/utenriksministeren/2010/disarmament_cid=609548>, accessed 22 July 2010

The May 2010 NPT Review Conference in New York underscored the importance of reinforcing a broad international consensus behind nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and civil nuclear uses – but also the ‘fragility’ of this framework and some of the many challenges going forward from New York. One such challenge is the issue of non-strategic nuclear weapons, which received sustained attention in the Review Conference. One NGO observer wrote that ‘the calls to reduce and eliminate this class of weapons have been more vocal than at any previous Review Conference’.¹⁴

More broadly, the Review Conference has highlighted the continuing challenge and importance of including major emerging powers in efforts to strengthen international disarmament and non-proliferation norms and regimes. The urgency of this exercise is underscored by signs that at least some of these states may seek to match military might to economic growth. US-NATO nuclear policies in relation to Russia and the Middle East need to take into account this wider context.

Recent Developments in NATO

Tallinn Meeting

On 22 April 2010 in Tallinn, NATO Foreign Ministers met and discussed the process of drafting the new Strategic Concept. In the run up to that meeting, Foreign Ministers from five NATO nations (Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Norway) wrote a letter to the NATO Secretary General requesting that the issue of non-strategic nuclear weapons be placed on the agenda at the meeting in Estonia.

In Tallinn, US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton made clear that NATO’s discussion about the future of its nuclear weapons policy should

be guided by an agreed set of principles, starting with a commitment that decisions will be made by NATO, not unilaterally by Washington. Clinton also said that a nuclear NATO is consistent with Obama’s Prague speech because as long as nuclear weapons exist the US is committed to meeting the future security needs of the Alliance and deterring any adversary.

Clinton went on to elaborate on five principles that she believed should guide NATO deliberations on NATO’s approach to nuclear weapons. First, as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a ‘nuclear alliance’. Second, as a ‘nuclear alliance’, sharing nuclear risks and responsibilities widely is fundamental. Third, it is the administration’s ‘broad aim’ to continue to reduce the role and number of nuclear weapons in its overall arsenal. Fourth, she called on the allies to broaden deterrence by pursuing territorial missile defence. And finally, she laid out a formula for linking any future reductions in US nuclear weapons in Europe to Russian agreement to increase transparency on non-strategic weapons in Europe, relocate these weapons away from the territory of NATO members and include non-strategic weapons in the next round of US-Russian arms control discussions alongside strategic and non-deployed nuclear weapons.¹⁵

While in Tallinn, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen also told a news conference that in his view ‘the presence of the American nuclear weapons in Europe is an essential part of a credible deterrent’ and that they should not be removed as long as other countries possess nuclear weapons. This view, however, has not been echoed by all members of the Alliance.

While the discussion in Tallinn marked a new phase of engagement among members on NATO nuclear issues, the direction of that discussion – in terms of outcomes – remains fluid and there are a number

¹⁴ Rebecca Johnson, ‘Non-Proliferation Treaty Blog: Day 18’, 21 May 2010, <<http://acronyminstitute.wordpress.com/2010/05/21/day-16/>>, accessed 29 June 2010.

¹⁵ US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Remarks made in a dinner speech at the NATO Foreign Ministers’ meeting in Tallinn on 22 April 2010, <http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2010_05/NATO>, accessed 29 June 2010.

of potential outcomes, both for the November Strategic Concept and beyond, that could fit within the principles articulated by Secretary Clinton.

Report of the NATO Group of Experts

Last year, Secretary General Rasmussen asked former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to chair a group of twelve international experts to facilitate the process of drafting the new Strategic Concept. The Experts' Group consulted with a range of policy makers and experts and visited all NATO capitals before presenting its report ('NATO 2010: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement') to NATO on 17 May.¹⁶

With respect to nuclear weapons issues, the language in the Report recommends a change in NATO nuclear declaratory policy, and points toward further reductions and 'possible eventual elimination' of non-strategic nuclear weapons.

The Report does include 'traditional' language relating to nuclear weapons policy, stating:

As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO should continue to maintain secure and reliable nuclear forces, with widely shared responsibility for deployment and operational support, at the minimum level required by the prevailing security environment.

Under current security conditions, the retention of some US forward-deployed systems on European soil reinforces the principle of extended nuclear deterrence and collective defense.

However, the Report also includes language suggesting that NATO's nuclear policies and posture can and should evolve, and points a direction for that evolution.

The report recommends that 'NATO should endorse a policy of not using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states that are a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation

obligations'. This would entail NATO adopting a more restrictive nuclear use policy than either the existing NATO policy or the policy adopted by the United States in their 2010 NPR (where there is a possible exception noted for biological weapons threats).

With respect to NATO's policy of widely shared responsibility for deployment and operational support, the Report implies that changes are possible, but that any 'change in this policy, including in the geographic distribution of NATO nuclear deployments in Europe, should be made, as with other major decisions, by the Alliance as a whole'.

With respect to preserving shared risks and responsibilities, while the Report endorses the retention of some US forward-deployed systems on European soil 'under current security conditions', the Report also recognises that nuclear deployments on the territory of European states per se are not necessarily required for solidarity and risk sharing: 'Broad participation of the non-nuclear Allies is an essential sign of transatlantic solidarity and risk sharing. Participation by the non-nuclear states can take place in the form of nuclear deployments on their territory or by non-nuclear support measures'.

With respect to Russia, the Report outlines a clear direction for NATO nuclear policy (reductions and possible eventual elimination) and a formula for 'consultations' and 'dialogue' with Russia that is pointedly not linked to formal negotiations or a requirement for a new arms control treaty per se: 'The Alliance ... should welcome consultations with Russia in pursuit of increased transparency and further mutual reductions. ... There should be an ongoing NATO dialogue with Russia on nuclear perceptions, concepts, doctrines, and transparency. These talks should help set the stage for the further reductions and possible eventual elimination of the entire class of sub-strategic nuclear weapons'.

¹⁶ NATO, 'NATO 2010: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement – Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO', 17 May 2010, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_63654.htm>, accessed 29 June 2010.

With respect to internal NATO deliberations, the report highlights the need for NATO to increase its focus and effort relating to nuclear policy issues: 'NATO should re-establish the Special Consultative Group on Arms Control for the purpose of facilitating its own internal dialogue about the whole range of issues related to nuclear doctrine, arms control initiatives, and proliferation'.

Going forward, advocates of the nuclear status quo – at least as it pertains to the deployment of US non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe – can find comfort in the Experts' Group Report's near-term embrace of retaining 'some' US forward-deployed 'systems' on European soil 'under current security conditions'. Moreover, supporters of the status quo are likely to argue that 'current security conditions' should be read as 'years' – and that the language in the Report regarding Russia implies a firm linkage between NATO and Russian non-strategic nuclear weapons deployments.

On balance, however, the Report's language does suggest a template for a more 'change-friendly' Strategic Concept in November. The key variables are: which aspects of the NATO Group of Experts report do NATO governments embrace; how does the Secretary General incorporate the Report's recommendations and subsequent NATO dialogue into his draft of the Strategic Concept; and what side of the ledger does the US government come down on, if any.

With the delivery of the NATO Group of Experts' report in May, the NATO Secretary General is expected to present a draft of the Strategic Concept to the NATO members sometime in September-October. NATO is then expected to adopt a new Strategic Concept at a summit in Lisbon in mid-November 2010. The process of engagement between the September/October draft and November adoption is currently not clear.

The Future Role of Nuclear Weapons in NATO

As discussed in the preceding sections, the strategic context shaping NATO's security environment has changed and will continue to evolve. Moreover, there are a number of forces in play that will impact, both directly and indirectly, upon the role of nuclear weapons in NATO security policy today and in the future including: the role of DCA in NATO and the implications for DCA modernisation; security concerns regarding non-strategic nuclear weapons; Russia's stockpile of non-strategic nuclear weapons; a significant shift in US declaratory policy; global momentum behind practical steps towards a world free of nuclear weapons; and divergent views among NATO members on the future role of nuclear weapons in NATO security policies.

Nevertheless, there is general agreement among NATO members that the alliance should retain a nuclear component to its deterrent strategy – although what this means for NATO nuclear policies, in particular declaratory policy and non-strategic nuclear weapons, remains open.

It is important for Alliance members to engage in a serious discussion of questions relating to the role of nuclear weapons in NATO security policy that would also inform decisions relating to both declaratory policy and the deployment of US non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe. Specifically:

What does it mean for NATO to retain a nuclear component? Does the relationship between national nuclear arsenals (the US, UK, and France) and NATO by itself define NATO as a nuclear alliance? How do the various roles relating to nuclear weapons in NATO (e.g. basing, planning, consultation, vetoes) weigh in this assessment?

Do NATO's current nuclear policies and posture reflect current and emerging threats to the Alliance? Specifically, how far should NATO (and NATO states) nuclear policies and posture be shaped by:

What is the impact of Nuclear developments in Iran, the Middle East and North Korea or the threat of nuclear terrorism?

What is the role of Russian nuclear policies and posture, including non-strategic nuclear weapons deployed in Europe? Can NATO and Russia find ways to work together to reduce the risks of these weapons as well as the risks of these weapons getting into the hands of terrorists?

How do missile defence and conventional force postures relate to these questions? What are the possible benefits and tensions? The deployment of effective missile defence in Europe could further de-link nuclear developments in Iran from NATO nuclear policies and posture. Moreover, if the US and NATO can establish a basis for co-operation with Moscow on missile defence – including addressing Russian concerns over the US and NATO missile defence programme, as well as working co-operatively with Russia on multiple aspects of this issue (e.g. threat assessment, early warning, development, procurement and deployment) – this could significantly shape thinking on NATO nuclear policy. Similarly, action on conventional arms restraint could be a major factor in future nuclear arms reductions, especially non-strategic nuclear weapons.

Two broad options illustrate the approaches that could be articulated on the role of nuclear weapons in NATO security policy, either in the November Strategic Concept or perhaps in a subsequent NATO review – such as a Nuclear Posture Review – that would be launched after the Strategic Concept is agreed (an initiative that has been discussed at least informally by some NATO member states). If one of these options was adopted, one could expect NATO nuclear policy to revolve around this policy (albeit with marginal variations) for at least the next three to five years.

Option One – Grounded in the status quo

This approach suggests that the US would continue to deploy non-strategic nuclear weapons in NATO member states, and host countries will accept whatever DCA upgrades are necessary to preserve existing nuclear sharing arrangements; and member states will continue to commit to existing NATO declaratory policy underscoring that the fundamental purpose of NATO nuclear forces is political with the emphasis on deterring all forms of aggression.

This approach suggests NATO may judge that changes in NATO nuclear policies are unlikely to improve and may even undermine NATO security. For example, NATO members may conclude that changes in US non-strategic nuclear weapons deployments or declaratory policy are unlikely to be reciprocated by Russia or improve US-NATO relations with Russia in a meaningful way; likely to be read as a 'lack of resolve' by Tehran; or potentially lead an aggressor state to conclude that an attack involving biological weapons against a NATO member would not trigger a devastating response. In this circumstance, NATO may judge that changes to the nuclear status quo create more risk than reward.

Option Two – Open to re-thinking and re-configuring the role of nuclear weapons in its deterrent posture

This approach suggests that the role of nuclear weapons in NATO security policies can and should be changed in ways that will improve NATO security and that these changes could include significant adjustments in existing declaratory policy and/or policies relating to the deployment of US non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe. This option also assumes a greater role for NATO in nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control.

The option implies that – by definition – three nuclear weapon states in NATO are a strong foundation for an alliance with a nuclear component, and that – as the NATO Group of Experts concluded – participation by the non-nuclear allies can take place in the form of 'non-nuclear support measures'.

Adopting Option two also implies that nuclear developments in Iran or North Korea should not preclude changes to NATO nuclear policies and posture, and that these threats can be effectively addressed without maintaining the nuclear status quo. Option two would also signal that NATO is prepared to make adjustments in its nuclear policies and posture, believing it can use these changes to leverage changes in Russian nuclear policies and posture and potentially reduce the threat of nuclear terrorism through enhanced security of non-strategic nuclear weapons and co-operation with Moscow.

NATO Declaratory Policy

There are a number of specific questions relating to changes of nuclear declaratory policy that should also be discussed within NATO. They include:

Is the current level of 'ambiguity' regarding the threat of nuclear first use necessary to deter or defeat existing or emerging threats to NATO security, including the threat of nuclear terrorism?

How valuable a signal would it be in terms of underscoring a NATO contribution to reduce reliance on nuclear weapons globally if NATO were to adopt a new declaratory policy that further reduced the importance of nuclear weapons?

How far will, and should, the new US Nuclear Posture Review commitments on declaratory policy necessitate changes in NATO policy?

To what extent should Russian declaratory policy be taken into account in formulating NATO's approach?

The following options are illustrative and could be considered for introduction either in the 2010 Strategic Concept or after a subsequent NATO review.

Option One – Say very little on declaratory policy

The 1999 Strategic Concept made clear that 'the circumstances in which any use of nuclear weapons might have to be contemplated' are 'extremely

remote'.¹⁷ The 2010 Strategic Concept could repeat this formulation. The 1999 Concept also referred to the possibility that nuclear weapons could be used to deter the use of 'NBC [Nuclear, Biological and Chemical] weapons', and stated that nuclear weapons made a contribution to making the risks of any aggression against the Alliance 'incalculable and unacceptable'.¹⁸ In order to avoid any possible contradiction between national declaratory policies and the new Concept, these formulations could be removed or diluted.

When the 1999 Concept was agreed, the US, UK and France had already given similar negative security assurances (NSAs) to non-nuclear states, as part of the package of steps taken in the build-up to the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995.¹⁹ Yet the 1999 Concept chose not to repeat these assurances, despite its statement that 'support for arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation' would continue to play a major role in achieving its security objectives.²⁰ NATO could take a similar approach in 2010, effectively leaving it to member states, not the Alliance, to make such assurances. Current differences between the national NSAs of the US, UK and France could increase the attractiveness of this option. It is possible, even likely in the UK's case, that European nuclear member states will bring their NSAs more into line with the new US formulation, first promulgated in the April 2010 NPR. But there may not be time to do so before the Strategic Concept is due to be agreed. It is possible that even in subsequent policy documents important differences in declaratory

policy between the three nuclear weapon states could remain.

Option Two – Introduce a NATO negative security assurance for non-nuclear states, in line with the new US NPR commitment

The Group of Experts Review has proposed that 'NATO should endorse a policy of not using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states that are party to the NPT and in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation commitments'.²¹

This would bring NATO into line with the commitment made by the US in its NPR. Unlike the more ambiguous formulation in the 1999 Strategic Concept, this stance would rule out the use of nuclear weapons in response to the use of conventional, chemical and biological weapons, provided that the state in question was NPT-compliant. It would be a clear signal that NATO as a whole endorses US efforts to visibly restrict the circumstances in which it would use nuclear weapons.

Neither the UK nor France has yet adopted such a stance in relation to its own nuclear declaratory policy. Both states retain nuclear forces, in large measure, in order to insure against the possibility that US and NATO nuclear guarantees may not be reliable in times of supreme national emergency, or at least that potential aggressors might believe this to be the case. Both states, in such circumstances of national self-reliance, might feel less confident

¹⁷ NATO, *The Alliance's Strategic Concept*, 24 April 1999, para. 64, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27433.htm>, accessed 29 June 2010.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, para. 46.

¹⁹ UN Security Council, Resolution 984, <<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N95/106/06/PDF/N9510606.pdf?OpenElement>>, accessed 29 June 2010.

²⁰ NATO, *The Alliance's Strategic Concept*, 24 April 1999, para.40, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27433.htm>, accessed 29 June 2010.

²¹ NATO, 'NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement – Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO', 17 May 2010.

in their conventional superiority than they do when allied with the US. Both states may be more willing to endorse a more restrictive declaratory policy for NATO, even if they retain some elements of their current ambiguous NSAs on a national basis. On the other hand, they may prefer not to draw further attention to any lack of confidence they may have in NATO security guarantees.

Option Three – Adopt the objective of working to establish the conditions for a NATO policy that deterring nuclear attack is the sole purpose for nuclear weapons

This option (which could be combined with Option one or two) would make clear that NATO would work towards a policy that, even when faced with a nuclear-armed opponent, it would not use its nuclear weapons for any purpose other than the deterrence of nuclear attack.

This would accord with current US NPR policy. As in the case of that policy, however, it would remain unclear as to what the ‘conditions’ would be in which ‘sole purpose’ could in the future be established. The confidence-building value of such a step could be significantly limited as a result.

Option Four – Adopt now a ‘sole purpose’ declaratory policy

In this option, NATO would state that deterring nuclear attack is the sole purpose for NATO’s nuclear deterrent.

This would go one step further than the US NPR. It could be consistent with it, however, were the US to believe that the conditions for ‘sole purpose’ had been met in relation to NATO contingencies (related to NATO’s role as a regional, not a global, organisation), even if they had not yet been met in relation to other US global commitments. For example, some might argue that the future conventional superiority of the US is less secure against major powers that might pose a threat to its allies in Asia than it is against those major powers

that might pose a threat to its allies in Europe. Some NATO-European states might question the message that such a differentiation would send about the strength of the US security commitment to NATO allies. But it would send a clear message that the alliance was seeking to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in its policy.

Option Five – Adopt a declaratory policy that NATO is not seeking to undermine the second-strike capability of Russia’s nuclear force, even as its nuclear force (together with that of the US) is reduced

The main motivation of such a policy would be to reassure Russia, and thereby make further progress on shared interests (including nuclear arms reductions and political confidence-building) more likely.

The purpose of such a declaratory policy would be to ensure that reassurance of Russia plays an explicit role in the development of future NATO capabilities and deployments, alongside the goals of deterrence and intra-alliance reassurance. Such an objective is already implicit in NATO policy. As the Group of Experts makes clear, however, Russian doubts persist on whether NATO could pose a military threat to its homeland. And plans for the development of missile defence and long-range conventional strike capabilities are often seen in Russia as having the potential to pose a threat to its strategic forces, especially if it were to reduce the size of those forces further. A declaratory policy along these lines might help to address these concerns, and could be used as a basis for more detailed confidence-building discussions.

Option Six – Urge Russia to move in unison with NATO (and China) towards the goal of ‘sole purpose’

This approach could be combined in some way with each of the previous options, and would respond to the call by the International Commission of Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (the Evans-

²² Gareth Evans and Yoriko Kawaguchi (co-chairs), *Eliminating Nuclear Threats: A Practical Agenda for Global Policymakers* (Canberra: International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, 2009), paragraph 17. 28-32.

Kawaguchi Commission) for the nuclear-armed states to agree to adopt a 'No First Use' doctrine by 2025, as part of a multilateral agreement to reach a 'minimisation point'.²²

This option may have some value as a complement to a US (or NATO) commitment to move to 'sole purpose'. The case for making a NATO 'sole purpose' policy conditional on a Russian move in this direction is much less clear. If such a conditional approach were to be adopted, the potential for the generation of distrust would be considerable, given the lack of verifiability of such a policy.²³ Nor is it clear why a NATO commitment to 'sole purpose' should be dependent on whether or not Russia adopts such a policy. The shape of the nuclear forces that NATO would need to retain under a 'sole purpose' policy, moreover, would surely depend much more on the shape of others' nuclear forces than on their declaratory policies.

Nor is it clear that NATO is the appropriate forum for entering into global multilateral arms control discussions. A dialogue between the five recognised nuclear weapon states on confidence-building measures 'in the context of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation' has already begun, with its first meeting in September 2009. And the 2010 NPT Review Conference has agreed that the nuclear weapon states should accelerate efforts on nuclear disarmament.²⁴ NATO could usefully state its support for the conclusions of the Review Conference on this question. It is less clear that NATO, as an organisation, has a specific role of its own in this process.

US Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons Deployed in Europe

There are a number of specific questions relating to US NSNW deployed in Europe that should be discussed within NATO. They include:

What is the value of US non-strategic nuclear weapons to the NATO Alliance, militarily and politically? Strategic nuclear forces (in the US, UK and France) will continue to play a vital role in deterring nuclear attack on NATO member states. Given the diminished military role for NSNW in Europe, should consideration be given to removing them as part of efforts to demonstrate NATO's commitment to reducing the salience and role of nuclear weapons?

The continued existence of non-strategic nuclear weapons exacerbates the terrorist threat, as these weapons are smaller and more portable and thus are inviting targets for theft, especially if the bases storing these weapons are not adequately secured. Are we confident that US non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe are safe and secure and protected from theft and sabotage? Is there more that can be done, short of removal?

Should the role that nuclear burden-sharing plays in NATO be re-thought, in order to give more emphasis to non-proliferation considerations (for example, nuclear security, or no non-nuclear fingers on nuclear triggers)? Can nuclear risks and burdens continue to be shared by the Allies with the consolidation, reduction and eventual elimination of US non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe?

To what extent is Russian reciprocity necessary in order for NATO to take further steps on non-strategic nuclear weapons? And what form might such reciprocity take?

The following options are illustrative and could be taken in the 2010 Strategic Concept or after a subsequent NATO review.

²³ The latest Russian military doctrine contains a classified addendum on nuclear use, so its current nuclear use policy remains unclear. All nuclear weapon states are likely to continue to maintain classification of many operational aspects of nuclear policy, not least for purposes of survivability and security.

²⁴ 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, *Final Document*, 2010, p.21, <[http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=NPT/CONF.2010/50 \(VOL.I\)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=NPT/CONF.2010/50 (VOL.I))>, accessed 29 June 2010.

Option One – Maintain the status quo

This would involve maintaining current US nuclear force deployments in Europe. Upgrades to NATO DCA would go forward in all basing countries when this becomes necessary.

The main argument in favour of such a policy is that current arrangements reflect a delicate balance of responsibilities, developed over time, and that precipitate moves to change these arrangements could risk destabilising Alliance unity. Most supporters of this option concede that NSNWs in Europe no longer have a military purpose. But they are sceptical of intermediate ‘consolidation’ options (see below), and argue that the removal of all US nuclear weapons from Europe could be seen as signalling a step too far in the denuclearisation of NATO security policy, at a time when Russia maintains large numbers of its own NSNW in Europe, and new nuclear-armed states could emerge on Europe’s periphery.

Critics, on the other hand, argue that the maintenance of nuclear forces for which there is no longer a deterrent role is inconsistent with NATO member states’ commitment to contribute to reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in security policy. They are concerned with continuing risks of theft or accident involved in forward deployments, together with the financial costs that are incurred in an effort to limit these risks. Given the clear opposition of Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium to their deployment, they argue, maintenance of the status quo is untenable in the long run, and poses risks of its own to Alliance unity in the short run.

Option Two – Reduce, retain all existing deployment sites, but increase transparency

NATO would make a further reduction in the numbers of weapons deployed in Europe, but without reducing the number of storage sites. One of the obstacles to such an option at present is the lack of official transparency on how many NSNW are currently in place. But reducing further – say to ten weapons on each of six sites – and then (regularly) declaring the total number in Europe and pledging not to increase it, could preserve the commitment

to nuclear burden sharing while showing readiness to contribute to the arms control process. Increased transparency in particular could be a useful follow-on to the recent US declaration on its total stockpile, and could be used to encourage reciprocal steps by Russia. Some critics might be concerned at a further weakening of NATO’s bargaining position in advance of NSNW negotiations. Others might argue that it did not go far enough, since it would leave all existing nuclear bases in place, with all the attendant problems of host-nation support and costly security provision that these now present. Even so, in all options except a ‘zero option’ (and perhaps even then), transparency measures might provide a useful bridge between NSNW deployments and arms control aspirations.

Option Three – Reduce and consolidate into fewer sites, but continue some DCA sharing

NATO would further consolidate and reduce US non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe, while retaining shared involvement in the nuclear mission through continuing DCA deployments and perhaps modifications to existing practice involving DCA.

This option appears to offer the potential for a compromise that might meet the concerns of many of those involved in the NSNW debate. It could, for example, involve the consolidation of US nuclear weapons in Europe from six sites to one or two. This could reduce safety concerns and related costs, as well as respond to political pressure to remove nuclear weapons from particular member states.

In order to maintain wide participation in remaining nuclear operations as well as ‘coupling’ between the US and NATO, military personnel from several NATO European member states could be assigned to the DCA that continued to operate from these remaining one or two bases. Some have suggested the formation of a ‘NATO Dual-Capable Air Wing’, modelled on the NATO Early Warning and Control Force. Such a Wing could be operated from a single base or two by mixed-nationality air crews and financed through national contributions, thus ensuring that a large proportion of member states were directly involved in nuclear deterrence.

While it would maintain long-readiness nuclear capabilities, it would remain available for NATO conventional operations.

Yet the creation of innovative mechanisms of this sort would not be easy. It could be difficult to persuade member states to make the additional financial commitments that would be required, both for the maintenance and modernisation of the capability. Since the creation of such a capability solely for nuclear roles could not be justified on cost-effectiveness grounds such a step would require agreement on the protocols for deciding the circumstances under which this multinational capability could be operationally deployed. Given national sensitivities in this regard, this may not be straightforward. Not all states may be willing to cede authority for the combat deployment of their personnel to a supranational commander, even when wider authorisation for the mission has been given by the NATO Council.

A similar consideration would presumably apply, a fortiori, in relation to the nuclear employment of the NATO Dual-Capable Air Wing. At one extreme, such a Wing might only be permitted to arm its aircraft with nuclear weapons once all contributing member states had agreed to do so, effectively replacing the current 'dual-key' system with a '28 key' system. Such a system might be seen as having some merit as a means of extending the scope of nuclear burden sharing to member states that have no nuclear role at present. But it would add to the (already very strong) perception that such a force would never be used in practice. In such circumstances, critics would argue, a NATO Nuclear wing that would contribute even less than the current arrangement to overall deterrence could hardly justify the budgetary priority that its deployment would require.

Another possibility might be to consolidate US nuclear munitions in a single site (most likely in Italy), but continue to train selected air force units in other NATO member states for long-notice nuclear missions involving their DCA. While this would address political sensitivities about the basing of nuclear weapons on the territories of

some member states, however, it could intensify concerns in the country that was now the sole European NSNW base. Even if Italian concerns over being singled out could be overcome, there would be problems (most immediately in Germany) in ensuring that future generations of NATO European aircraft retained nuclear capabilities.

Option Four – Reduce and consolidate, while ending DCA capability

This option would end the DCA capabilities of NATO-European air forces, but maintain US NSNW storage facilities in Italy (and perhaps also in Turkey).

This option would retain an important symbol of the continuing role of nuclear weapons in the defence of NATO-Europe, while reducing the costs and safety risks involved in doing so, and taking a significant further step towards reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in Europe. Since it would not involve any change from the status quo at Aviano, Italy may be less likely to block such a step than it would in relation to the consolidated DCA option. While it would not fulfil the objective of sharing the burdens of nuclear deterrence, other means of doing so could perhaps be found (see below). Critics could argue that such a step would miss the opportunity that a complete removal of US nuclear weapons from the territory of other states would provide. They would also question whether there is any operational utility to basing NSNW in Europe, given US strategic capabilities – a relevant concern for any of the options above that retains DCA and/or US NSNW deployments in Europe.

Option Five – Move towards the removal of all US NSNW from Europe, and find other means of ensuring that responsibility for NATO nuclear forces is shared amongst member states

This option would be the most direct way of showing that NATO supports international efforts to achieve accelerated progress on nuclear disarmament. It would remove the last nuclear weapons located on the territory of non-nuclear weapon states, and reduce the security risks that are involved in these deployments. At the same time, because

these weapons are widely agreed to have outlived their operational purpose, this option need not undermine NATO's commitment to retaining a role for nuclear weapons in its security policy.

In principle, a wide range of options could be explored through which non-nuclear member states would share in the political burden of providing the nuclear component of NATO security. If the US were to retain NSNW on its own territory, this could take the form of consultative mechanisms for their possible use in NATO missions, possibly supplemented by staff secondments to relevant US-based NSNW units. If the US nuclear guarantee to Europe were to be based solely on its strategic forces, however, other methods of burden sharing would have to be explored. The extent of such co-operation might be constrained by US security restrictions limiting access to sensitive areas, even to NATO allies. Possible options involving strategic nuclear weapons might, nevertheless, include: periodic short-term visits of US-based B-52 or B-2 strategic bombers to European bases; postings of officers from non-nuclear NATO countries to US strategic command facilities; posting of NATO officers to US strategic bomber units; and/or an enhanced, or at least more publicised, role for NATO's Nuclear Planning Group. The development of a NATO role in organising territorial missile defence also provides the alliance with direct involvement in collective defence against nuclear threats; and some argue that this provides a functional, and more relevant, substitute for the nuclear burden sharing arrangements of the Cold War. Others, by contrast, remain concerned that none of the alternatives proposed so far can match the symbolic salience provided by joint operation of nuclear tasks, including the direct involvement of European political leaders and military forces in the wartime use of nuclear weapons.

NATO and Russian Nuclear Policy

There are a number of specific questions relating to whether the deployment of US NSNW in Europe should be linked in some way to Russia's own NSNW

deployments. They include:

Would perceptions of the credibility of NATO deterrence (either within NATO or in potential adversary states) be undermined if Russia had NSNW in Europe and NATO did not?

Should decisions on the future of NATO's NSNW be conditional on an agreed form of Russian reciprocation, either through a legally binding treaty or a less formal process of parallel actions including reductions? And should the process of engaging Russia on NSNW be conducted through NATO or bilaterally with the US?

Estimated Arsenals

Assessing options in this area is made more difficult by the lack of publicly available information on the size and nature of the relevant NSNW deployments of both the US and Russia. Neither government has been prepared to publish details of its NSNW arsenal. But the Federation of American Scientists (FAS), which former NATO Secretary-General George Robertson used in a recent briefing note on NSNW in Europe, has estimated that the US possesses about 1,200 NSNW worldwide, of which 500 are operational (the rest are in storage or awaiting dismantlement). Around 200 out of this total are deployed in Europe, and 200 or so free-fall bombs are deployed with US-based non-strategic aircraft. The final 100 NSNW warheads are deployed with US Navy submarine-launched cruise missiles, soon to be retired as a result of the 2010 NPR.

According to FAS estimates, Russia has a significantly larger arsenal of non-strategic weapons. While the US has around 500 operational NSNW, Russia possesses around 2,000 operational non-strategic weapons, of which 650 are bombs and missiles assigned to land-based aircraft, 700 are missiles, depth charges and torpedoes assigned to naval roles, and 700 are assigned to Russia's anti-ballistic missile and air defences. An additional 3,300 non-strategic Russian warheads are estimated to be in reserve or awaiting dismantlement.²⁵

²⁵ Robert S Norris and Hans M Kristensen, 'Russian nuclear forces 2010', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, January/February 2010, p.76.

Table 1: Comparing non-START-counted nuclear weapon types and numbers; some very approximate estimates.

	US	Russia
Land-based Aircraft	400	650
Maritime Roles	100	700
Missile defence & air defence	-	700
Total operational	500	2,050
Non-strategic (in reserve or store or awaiting dismantlement)	700	3,300
Strategic (in reserve or store or awaiting dismantlement)	6,900	6,000
Total (in store or reserve or awaiting dismantlement)	7,600	9,300
TOTAL	8,100	11,350

Source: FAS

If NATO were to seek to link reductions in its own NSNW forces to Russia's own deployments it would first have to establish which weapons should be the focus of such an agreement, and what the most appropriate forum for such discussions/negotiations should be.

The issue of Russia's non-strategic weapons has already been discussed in relation to the planned follow-on to the recently signed New START Treaty. The Treaty limits the number of nuclear warheads that the US and Russia can deploy on strategic delivery vehicles, but places no limits on other nuclear weapons in the possession of the two countries. Thus, while the New START limits both countries to no more than 1,550 deployed strategic warheads each, the US has confirmed that it has a total of 5,113 deployed and reserve warheads in its stockpile. In addition, FAS estimates that the US has around 4,500 retired (but largely intact) assembled warheads, together with 14,000 stored plutonium pits.²⁶ Russia has similarly large numbers of nuclear weapons that are not counted against New START limits.

If further steep reductions in deployed strategic weapons are to be agreed, both the US and Russia are likely to seek greater assurance in relation to these uncounted weapons. While Russia has expressed particular concern over the larger size of the US strategic responsive force (warheads that could be uploaded onto empty slots on ballistic missiles at relatively short notice), the US is keen to include Russian non-strategic weapons in the process. Options for making progress in relation to both these categories of weapons might involve some combination of new data exchange provisions and formal limitations.

Option One – NATO could 'collectively negotiate with Moscow asymmetric but multilateral reductions to Russian and allied non-strategic nuclear arsenals':²⁷ This could be achieved either through a legally-binding treaty or perhaps through a less formal arrangement.

Arguably, there is a partial precedent for this in the early stages of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) negotiations during the 1980s, in which various proposals were made to limit the number

²⁶ Hans M Kristensen, 'US discloses size of total nuclear stockpile', FAS Strategic Security Blog, 3 May 2010.

²⁷ Franklin Miller, George Robertson and Kori Schake, 'Germany Opens Pandora's Box', Centre for European Reform Briefing Note, February 2010.

of such weapons deployed in Europe. Yet both the development and the eventual outcome of that process may have lessons for how the issue of Russian NSNW is tackled today. First and most important, although the main US weapons involved (ground-launched cruise and Pershing 2 missiles) were deployed in Europe, NATO was never a direct participant in negotiations, which were always bilateral between the US and Russia. Rather, through the Special Group and later the Special Consultative Group, its involvement was limited to the facilitation of consultations between the US and its European allies so as to inform the US position in what remained a bilateral negotiation. Second, the eventual deal was a global one, outlawing INF deployments worldwide. This was necessary, among other reasons, to assure Russia that it was not being asked to accept limitations on its own territory while the US was not being asked to do the same.

NATO could, in principle, set aside this precedent and seek to lead consultations or perhaps even formal negotiations on NSNW specifically focused on Europe, possibly using the territory covered by the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) as a basis. But pursuing such a path, in parallel to US-Russia talks on a successor to New START, is likely to have little support from NATO member states, and would be complicated by the fact that the warheads are owned by the US. Even if a small high-level group were to lead the NATO team in the negotiations, NATO member states would have to agree unanimously to any settlement that was proposed. There would also be a potential for considerable overlap and confusion between the US-Russia and the NATO-Russia tracks. For example, if it were to be asked to negotiate European nuclear limitations with NATO, Russia could ask for any negotiation to include the nuclear forces of both the UK and France, a proposal that would open up a whole series of separate issues.

Option Two – Extension of the bilateral START process: Given the range of potential complications

that formal NATO-Russia nuclear talks would involve, an extension of the bilateral START process probably offers a better vehicle for negotiating further reductions in nuclear arsenals. This could be achieved either through a legally binding treaty (i.e. explicitly including NSNW in a new START agreement) or through a less formal arrangement, where NSNW were addressed bilaterally outside of, but in concert with, further treaties. Over time this approach could develop alongside (and perhaps be increasingly integrated with) transparency and confidence-building measures (including 'no-increase' commitments) between the five recognised nuclear weapon states.

Deployed NSNW account for only 7 per cent and 15 per cent respectively of total US and Russian inventories of non-START-counted nuclear weapons.²⁸ This relatively small role might make it easier for the two large nuclear powers to make steep reductions in this sub-category without substantially altering the overall balance of nuclear forces. It could, on the other hand, make any prospects for agreed reductions in deployed NSNWs dependent on the resolution of broader questions, for example on warhead verification and limitations on US strategic reserve forces.

Whether or not it proves possible to achieve bilateral reductions in NSNW, the relatively small role that these forces now play in both US and Russian arsenals suggests that withdrawal of the last US warheads from Europe (unilateral or otherwise) may make less difference to external perceptions of NATO and US deterrent capability than is sometimes suggested. And in so doing this it emphasises that the key remaining motivation for retaining US NSNW in Europe is now a burden sharing one. If the rationale for NATO NSNW is to ensure that non-nuclear countries share in nuclear force operations including European basing and DCA for as long as NATO has a nuclear component, however, it makes no sense to enter negotiations with the stated objective of eliminating these weapons.

²⁸ The US has 500 deployed NSNWs, compared with a total of 7,600 warheads that are not covered in START. Russia's deployed NSNW (air-delivered and maritime) are estimated to total 1,350, compared with a total of 9,300 warheads not counted by START. Russian nuclear weapons deployed for strategic defence are not included as 'tactical'.

As discussed above, there may be alternative ways of ensuring nuclear burden sharing that would allow the removal of all NSNW, but could still gain a wide degree of acceptance within NATO. Such options may be more likely to gain backing, however, if a parallel process of reductions in Russian NSNW were under way. The radical changes in its conventional forces that are now taking place, including sharp reductions in 'skeletonised' capabilities, suggests that the Russian Government is more open than previously to a reorientation of its military capabilities away from provision for major war. Russia's latest military doctrine suggests that it remains more reluctant than the US to move towards a 'sole purpose' doctrine, reserving the right to use nuclear weapons first 'when the very existence of the State is under threat'. Given the likely threats it faces, however, provision for this scenario might only require a fraction of current levels of deployed NSNW. Importantly, if this 'last resort' scenario were the main rationale for NSNW, it would suggest that such weapons should be deployed in secure locations deep inside national territory. Were this logic to be followed, and forward-

deployed weapons were to be withdrawn to less vulnerable rear-area locations, it could provide a valuable confidence-building function. The value of such a relocation and consolidation could be increased by joint US-Russian work on securing remaining weapons from theft and terrorist attack, as well as by a wider data exchange on non-START nuclear arsenals.

No matter what the approach, however, NATO and the US should not overestimate the leverage over Russia that its remaining NSNW can provide. Russia could decide to redeploy its own NSNW, as part of a wider policy of 'reset' with Europe and the US. If so, it might make it easier for NATO to establish a new policy consensus that did not require the forward deployment of its own NSNW. Before making such steps by NATO conditional on successful negotiations, however, those who support a negotiated path to a legally binding accord need to be prepared to accept that the most likely outcome is that NATO NSNW will remain in place for some time to come.

About the Authors

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Steven Andreasen is a national security consultant with the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) in Washington, D.C., and teaches courses on National Security Policy and Crisis Management in Foreign Affairs at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota. He served as Director for Defense Policy and Arms Control on the U.S. National Security Council at the White House from February 1993 – January 2001. He was the principal advisor on strategic policy, nuclear arms control and missile defense to the National Security Advisor and the President. During the Bush Sr. and Reagan Administrations, Andreasen served in the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, dealing with a wide-range of defense policy, arms control, nuclear weapons and intelligence issues. As a Presidential Management Fellow, he served as a Special Assistant to Ambassador Paul H. Nitze in the U.S. State Department focusing on the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks, and as a Foreign Policy and Defense Legislative Assistant in the office of U.S. Senator Albert Gore Jr. Andreasen received his B.A. from Gustavus Adolphus College in 1984 and graduated with an M.A. from the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota in 1986. In 2002, Andreasen was the Democratic candidate for Congress in Minnesota's First Congressional District. His articles and opinion pieces have been published in *Foreign Affairs*, *Survival*, the *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, *Boston Globe*, *San Jose Mercury News*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Baltimore Sun*, *Politico*, *Arms Control Today*, *Strategic Survey*, and *In the National Interest*.

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NATO AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS:

Is a New Consensus Possible?

Steven Andreasen, Malcolm Chalmers and Isabelle Williams

As NATO prepares to agree a new Strategic Concept, questions surrounding the future of nuclear weapons in its security policy have risen to the top of the agenda. Three of the five hosts of US non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe (Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands) have called for a discussion on how NATO can reduce the role of these weapons and move towards the objective of a world free of nuclear arms. But some other countries continue to view these deployments as an essential component of NATO's extended deterrent posture. All member states agree on the importance of building a NATO consensus on this sensitive issue, not least so that the Alliance can focus its energy on more pressing strategic challenges.

'NATO and Nuclear Weapons: Is a New Consensus Possible?' analyses the policy options that are open to NATO, recommending seven propositions around which the Alliance might be able to forge a new consensus. The report argues that it is possible to develop a new policy for NATO that allows for a further reduction of the role of nuclear weapons without threatening either Alliance cohesion or strategic stability.

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