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## NATO Defence and Deterrence Posture: Central and Eastern European Perspectives

At the Summit in Chicago, NATO members will endorse the final report of the Defence and Deterrence Posture Review (DDPR).<sup>1</sup> The aim of the DDPR is to determine the appropriate mix of nuclear, conventional, and missile defence forces that the Alliance needs to tackle the challenges of an uncertain future. In drawing up the DDPR, NATO members also considered how political instruments such as arms controls could affect its capabilities.

Central and Eastern European (CEE) states<sup>2</sup> were initially sceptical of the review. The reason was that the DDPR process originated from disagreements on NATO nuclear policy and posture. CEE states were concerned that the DDPR may lead to undesired changes in the deterrence potential of the Alliance, particularly relating to the further deployment in Europe of about 180 U.S. non-strategic nuclear weapons.

Despite this initial cautious approach, CEE states perceived the DDPR process as a useful opportunity to influence the debate on the instruments needed by NATO in order to fulfil its core missions, especially collective defence embodied in Article 5. The DDPR enabled CEE states to express their preferences clearly, about the role and posture of nuclear forces assigned to NATO, the path to their reductions, and the role of conventional capabilities and missile defence in the overall mix of NATO capabilities. Such an opportunity was especially important, as in recent years CEE states have raised concerns about NATO's decreasing capability to carry out a collective defence mission. Also, the DDPR process provided CEE

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<sup>1</sup> The paper is part of the partnership between the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM) and the Nuclear Security Project, generously supported by the Nuclear Threat Initiative. The partnership will also involve studies on the post-DDPR developments in NATO.

<sup>2</sup> This paper is based, i.a., on the results of interviews conducted in March 2012 with officials and non-governmental experts from Central and Eastern European states, including the Visegrad Group states—Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary; Baltic States—Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia; as well as Bulgaria and Romania. See final note.

states with a chance to explain and convince other NATO member states about their security perceptions, though their cautious approach to Russia has not been shared by all members.

There are many indications that a debate within NATO about “the appropriate mix of capabilities” will continue after adoption of the final report of the DDPR. The review will most probably not resolve the most controversial issues, including NATO’s future nuclear posture. For this reason, knowledge about CEE perspectives revealed during the DDPR discussions will help in understanding their expectations and priorities in the coming years.

### **Nuclear Policy and Posture**

In the course of the DDPR process, all nine CEE states have demonstrated a cautious approach to any changes in NATO’s nuclear posture. They have favoured maintaining the whole “NATO deterrence package”, including the U.S., UK and French strategic nuclear weapons, U.S. non-strategic nuclear weapons based in Europe, the consultation mechanism, and nuclear exercises. According to their positions, removal of the U.S. non-strategic nuclear weapons from Europe would result in a qualitative change in NATO’s nuclear posture, which at least at this point is not desired.<sup>3</sup> The position of CEE states was close to that of France, a state most vocal against modifications to NATO deterrence capabilities, as well as to that of other states, such as Italy, the UK, and Turkey, with conservative approaches to the nuclear posture. It differed from the position of states such as Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Norway that have been questioning the utility of these weapons in addressing the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century security environment.<sup>4</sup>

During the DDPR process, it was not a priority for CEE states that NATO should have a nuclear declaratory policy that would reflect negative security assurances (NSA) adopted in 2010 by the United States and the United Kingdom. CEE states did not engage actively in the debate on this issue. They were awaiting the conclusion of a debate between France - which had declared broader circumstances of nuclear weapon use in its national nuclear policy, and so was sceptical about such a need - and the UK, U.S. and Germany, which all advocated a NATO political statement limiting the circumstances of nuclear weapon use.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> About 180 U.S. non-strategic nuclear weapons are located in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, and Turkey. During peacetime, they remain under U.S. custody. In case of an armed conflict, under bilateral nuclear sharing arrangements, control over the weapons may be handed over to host states that provide aircraft for their delivery. At present, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Italy, together with the U.S., possess Dual Capable Aircraft that have been adapted in order to be able to perform nuclear tasks. There are conflicting reports about whether Turkish aircraft are certified for a nuclear role. See more: Robert S. Norris, Hans M. Kristensen, “U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, 2011”, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 2011, Vol. 67, No. 1, pp. 64–73; Ian Anthony, Johnny Janssen, “The Future of Nuclear Weapons in NATO”, *International Policy Analysis*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, April 2010.

<sup>4</sup> It is important, however, to underline that during the DDPR process none of these states advocated for prompt and radical changes in NATO’s current nuclear posture. This observation is based on the interviews with national delegations to NATO, Brussels, September 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Despite NATO’s declaratory policy being of secondary importance to CEE states, they had different views on these issues. Bulgaria, Lithuania and Poland more openly supported reflection of NSA’s in NATO

CEE states did not directly name any specific country which the U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe deter. This notwithstanding, they referred, during the DDRP process, to a vast Russian arsenal of tactical nuclear weapons that may be stored close to NATO borders (including Poland and the Baltic states); to the importance of these weapons in Russia's military doctrine; and to Russia's military exercises, during which it simulated nuclear weapon use. Although Russia is a key factor in determining CEE states' approach to NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements, it is not the only one. CEE states emphasise the role of the U.S. nuclear weapons as a hedge against an uncertain global strategic environment.

States from the region recognise that the U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe are not a war-fighting tool, and are not necessarily relevant to threats that the Alliance may face in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, these weapons are seen as useful political tools in meeting contingencies that, though currently unlikely, are still possible. CEE states underline the unique value of this arsenal in sending a message of the Alliance's unity during crises. Officials from the region do not share concerns that the DCA fleet and B-61 bombs are not credible tools of deterrence.<sup>6</sup>

The U.S. non-strategic nuclear weapons based in Europe are seen as an expression of the indivisibility of Alliance security, and of the principle of burden-sharing and transatlantic ties. However, at least in their personal capacities, officials from certain CEE states place a different value on the role of these weapons. On the one hand, some of them do not treat the U.S. nuclear weapons as indispensable for maintaining the transatlantic link.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, others stress that the U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe represent one of very few physical ties between Europe and the United States. Especially in times of a shrinking conventional presence in Europe, the U.S. nuclear presence in Europe is the ultimate demonstration of the United States' commitment to the defence of Europe.<sup>8</sup>

Current nuclear arrangements are also seen by CEE states as important non-proliferation tools. They indicate that withdrawal of the U.S. nuclear weapons might influence the future nuclear development choices of Turkey, especially if Iran eventually acquires nuclear weapons. This argument is emphasised more by officials from Romania and Bulgaria, mainly because of their geographical location.<sup>9</sup>

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nuclear policy; Estonia, Latvia and Romania have a rather ambivalent approach; and the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia were closer to the position of France in terms of keeping flexibility and opacity as regards the conditions of the use of nuclear weapons. Interviews with officials from CEE states, March 2012.

<sup>6</sup> About such concerns, see: Karl-Heinz Kamp, Major General Robertus C.N. Remkes, "Options for NATO Nuclear Sharing Arrangements", [in] Steve Andreasen, Isabelle Williams, *Reducing Nuclear Risks in Europe: A Framework for Action*, Nuclear Threat Initiative, November 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Interviews with Polish and Slovak officials, Warsaw and Bratislava, March 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Estonian officials, Tallinn, March 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Interviews with officials from Romania and Bulgaria, Bucharest and Sofia, March 2012.

## Conventional Forces

The conventional ingredient of DDPR was at least as important to CEE states as the nuclear element. The positions of CEE states during the review was significantly influenced by their concerns about a decreased level of defence spending by European NATO members since the beginning of financial crises. According to CEE states, NATO's ability to perform its core tasks should not fall victim to austerity measures, and NATO should seek to find solutions that will enable it to maintain credible, conventional deterrence. The position of CEE states was also shaped by plans to withdraw two U.S. brigade combat teams from Europe, and by the shifting focus of U.S. defence and foreign policy towards East Asia. It raised the question of NATO's future overarching goals, and underlined a need to rebalance burden-sharing between the U.S. and European NATO members.

Although CEE states underlined that NATO should have at its disposal the full spectrum of capabilities with which to perform all of its core tasks (including crisis management), they emphasised the importance of maintaining a credible conventional deterrence to the whole NATO territory. While CEE states do not perceive a direct and imminent military threat from any country, they do not believe that this means that NATO should be unprepared to defend against conventional aggression. Their positions are significantly influenced by the activities of Russia, including the invasion of Georgia in 2008, by the on-going reform of the Russian armed forces, and by insufficient military transparency and predictability in Europe in the absence of a functioning conventional arms control regime. More generally, CEE states highlighted that, in a situation in which some traditional or emerging powers increased their defence budgets and acquire advanced conventional capabilities, NATO should not reduce its own military capabilities.

During the DDPR process, CEE states strived to convince other NATO members about their perspective. One of the issues which was important to them was strengthening consultations within NATO about the consequences of transfers of advanced military technologies and capabilities from NATO members to third-party states, including Russia. Such consultations were deemed insufficient, for example, in the case of the acquisition of the Mistral-class ship by Russia from France.

CEE states underline that NATO members should have credible capabilities to provide reinforcement in times of crisis. For this reason, they highlight the importance of NATO members' possession of adequate conventional capabilities, and of reinvigorating the NATO Response Force (NRF) as a tool for increasing allied interoperability. CEE states greeted favourably the U.S. pledge to assign one brigade to NRF, and to rotate a battalion-sized task-force to Europe. According to them, Smart Defence projects initiated in Chicago should also contribute to effectiveness of Article 5 missions.

In addition, CEE states, especially the Baltic States and Poland, advocate "appropriate visible assurance". Such assurances encompass the routine update of contingency plans,

conducting regular live exercises based on Article 5 scenarios, developing and maintaining CEE infrastructure to enable reinforcements (host nation support), and the presence in Central and Eastern Europe of NATO institutions, especially elements of the NATO command structure.<sup>10</sup>

While indicating the importance of “visible assurances” in strengthening the Alliance’s credibility, officials from CEE states emphasise that the quality, not quantity of reassurance really matters, and that “visible assurance” should have a primarily functional, not only symbolic, role. Some officials from CEE states are cautious about overemphasizing their role. In their views, too many reassurances could be counter-productive.<sup>11</sup> Also, focusing too much on “visible assurance” could send out the wrong message - that NATO is not able to fulfil its core task.<sup>12</sup>

Although CEE states perceive the importance of NATO’s robust conventional deterrence and “visible assurance”, they do not acknowledge a direct link between strengthening NATO’s conventional capabilities and reducing the number of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe. Nuclear and conventional capabilities are considered in CEE states as totally different categories of armaments, required to provide a response to different kind of contingencies. Appropriate reinforcement capabilities and “visible assurances” are seen as indispensable, whether or not the U.S. nuclear weapons are based in Europe.

In recent years, the positions of CEE states on “visible assurance” were influenced by financial austerity measures. For this reason, although they were dissatisfied with the fact that reform of NATO’s command structure did not address the imbalance in the distribution of NATO core institutions, they did not oppose it. CEE states were also aware that it was unrealistic to expect significant additional NATO investment and presence when taking into account the financial constraints (including substantial defence budget cuts across CEE).

CEE states realise that if they do not fulfil their obligations to the Alliance, they do not have right to make demands vis-a-vis other members. Many officials from CEE states underlined their continued engagement in the Afghanistan mission even when faced with severe cuts in their defence budgets, prompted by economic crises. In the run up to the Chicago Summit, many states from the region committed themselves to strengthening their national contributions to NATO.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For background information on “visible assurance” and possible options of strengthening them, see: Jacek Durkalec, “New Strategic Concept and NATO’s “visible assurances” towards Central and Eastern Europe”, *Bulletin PISM*, 15 December 2010; Hans Binnendijk, Catherine McArdle Kelleher, “NATO Reassurance and Nuclear Reductions: Creating the Conditions”, [in] S. Andreasen, I. Williams, op.cit; George Perkovich, Malcolm Chalmers, Steven Pifer, Paul Schulte, and Jaclyn Tandler, “Looking Beyond the Chicago Summit: Nuclear Weapons in Europe and the Future of NATO”, *Carnegie Papers*, April 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Hungarian officials, Budapest, March 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with an Estonian official, Tallinn, March 2012.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, *Joint Communiqué of the Ministerial Committee, Ministers of National Defence of the Baltic States*, 2 December 2011, Kaunas, Lithuania; *Declaration of the Visegrad Group*, “Responsibility for a

In upcoming years, CEE states will focus on routine updates of contingency plans, and regular live exercises encompassing Article 5 scenarios. In addition, the current status and expectations of CEE states regarding “visible assurances” are as follows:

All three Baltic States are satisfied with the extension of Baltic Air Policing, which visibly manifests the Allies’ commitment to securing the integrity of their territories. Latvia and Estonia expect, in forthcoming years, the conclusion of modernisation of their airfields so they can support the Siauliai airbase in Lithuania, which is the main operating base of a mission. All three Baltic states are also satisfied with planned bilateral and multilateral exercises, including the Steadfast Jazz 2013 exercises that will take place in Lithuania, Estonia and Poland. Beyond the Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (COE) in Estonia, and the Energy Security COE developed in Lithuania, the Baltic states do not expect to host any additional NATO institutions.<sup>14</sup>

NATO commands located in Poland include the Joint Force Training Centre (part of Allied Command Transformation - the only key element of the NATO command structure in CEE) and the 3rd NATO Signal Battalion Headquarters (the only element of the Allied Command Operation in CEE). Additionally, Poland hosts the Multinational Corps Northeast Headquarters<sup>15</sup> and develops the Military Police COE. It is also continuing to host, on a rotational basis, a U.S. Patriot battery, getting ready to host an Aviation Detachment, tasked with supporting rotational deployment of U.S. military aircraft to Poland. In 2018, Poland is scheduled to begin hosting the U.S. missile defence site.

Hungary currently hosts the Heavy Airlift Wing, located at Pápa Airbase, and the Military Medical COE. The Joint Chemical, Biological, Radiation and Nuclear Defence COE and Multinational Logistic Coordination Centres are based in the Czech Republic, while Slovakia hosts the Explosive Ordnance Disposal COE. These states do not see a strong need for additional NATO/U.S. presence in their territories.<sup>16</sup>

Romania hosts Human Intelligence COE, and in 2015 will be the location of the U.S. missile defence site. Bulgaria would like, in the future, to establish a Disaster Response COE. Both states would like to reinvigorate cooperation with the U.S. in relation to existing joint training facilities.

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Strong NATO”, 18 April 2012; *Joint Communiqué of the Ministers of Defence of the Visegrad Group*, Litomerice, 4 May 2012.

<sup>14</sup> Centres of Excellence are considered to be international military organisations. They are not elements of the NATO command structure. Their personnel and functioning are not financed by the NATO common budget but from national or international funds. They support NATO tasks by providing expertise in specific areas.

<sup>15</sup> The Headquarters is a part of the NATO Deployable Force Structure, which supports the NATO command structure. It has supported ISAF missions, but also can support Article 5 missions.

<sup>16</sup> The Czech Republic is ready, however, to host elements of the U.S. missile defence system if they would give a significant added value to NATO territorial missile defence.

## Missile Defence

The NATO missile defence system is regarded by CEE states as an important element in NATO's mix of capabilities, and they stress importance of declaring Interim Operational Capability during the Chicago summit. They subscribe to the assessment of an increasing ballistic missile threat. In fact, Bulgaria and Romania are already in range of Iranian missiles.

Although officials from CEE states do not perceive their countries as being high on the list of targets of a future nuclear Iran, they stress that NATO security should be indivisible. NATO missile defence, with the U.S. European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) as its crucial element, is also perceived as a tool for strengthening the U.S. presence in Europe. Additionally, as noted above, Romania and especially Poland perceive deployment of elements of EPAA in their territories as an important element of the U.S. permanent presence in the region.

CEE states agree that territorial missile defence cannot substitute any other element of NATO mix of capabilities, including the U.S. non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe. They recognise its value in strengthening deterrence by denial, which only complement but do not substitute traditional deterrence by retaliation. During the DDRR debate, such a position seemed to be represented by the majority of NATO members. Even Belgium and the Netherlands, although more open to changes in NATO's nuclear posture, have held a similar position regarding the link between missile defence and NATO nuclear weapons. The main advocate of such a strong link has been Germany, with the support of Norway.<sup>17</sup>

CEE states recognised, however, that missile defence would have an impact on NATO's defence and deterrence posture, and may lead to changes in the overall "mix of capabilities". They stress, however, that it is too early to predict the consequences of NATO's missile defence system, as it is still far from being established. Although, at the current stage, officials from CEE states expect that territorial missile defence would be implemented as is currently planned, they are aware that its realisation depends on many factors, such as the evolution of the ballistic missiles threat, the affordability of MD systems, and the availability of proven technologies. Also, in their views, changes in the "overall mix of capabilities" should be incremental, as NATO is still developing command and control arrangements, and territorial missile defence has to be introduced gradually to military doctrine, plans and exercises.

CEE states favour cooperation between NATO and Russia on missile defence, but they believe that the terms of this cooperation should be set by the Alliance itself. Hence NATO should implement a missile defence system despite Russia's objections, which they perceived as unjustified. Especially in Poland and the Baltic States, concerns were expressed about Russia's plans to deploy Iskander short-range missiles in Kaliningrad as a response to the deployment of elements of EPAA in CEE. While CEE states support proposals for creating

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<sup>17</sup> Interviews with national delegations to NATO, Brussels, September 2011.

joint early-warning and response-coordination centres, they stress that NATO's and Russia's missile defence systems should be independent, that NATO should have full operational responsibility for defending its territories, and that Russia should not have the right to veto NATO decisions relating to use of the system. CEE states will not consent to a situation in which missile defence of their territories is provided by Russia. Also, it would be very sensitive in CEE states if the missile defence plans currently envisaged were not realised or were postponed in the light of Russian objections.

### **Prospects for Nuclear Reductions**

CEE states recognise that a new dynamic towards nuclear disarmament requires action by NATO. In the 2010 Strategic Concept, they agreed to work towards creating conditions for a nuclear weapon-free world. Nevertheless, CEE states stress that disarmament and arms control should not change the basic focus of NATO, which is deterrence and defence.

While CEE states oppose the withdrawal of the U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe, they all see room for quantitative changes in the current nuclear posture. The reason for this is that, even with fewer nuclear weapons in Europe, NATO's deterrence package would remain intact.<sup>18</sup> Also, consolidation of the U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe could be possible, as long as it does not lead to their total withdrawal.<sup>19</sup>

At this stage, officials from CEE states avoid speaking about specific circumstances that may lead to withdrawal of the U.S. weapons from Europe, or about the timeframe in which it may happen. They tend to perceive the withdrawal as a long-term vision.

CEE states emphasise strongly that any NATO reductions should not be pursued unilaterally. They unanimously underline the role of Russia's reciprocity. They all support the U.S. commitment to include non-strategic nuclear weapons in the new START follow-on Treaty, and the U.S. pledge that NATO members would be consulted during such negotiations. CEE states underscore that NATO members should strive to achieve reciprocity with Russia, even if Russia is not at present interested in talking about non-strategic nuclear weapons. Whether reciprocal steps would be a result of an arms control treaty between the United States and Russia, or of an informal agreement, does not seem to be of significant importance. CEE states may agree on some NATO moves if there is a 100% certainty that Russia will reciprocate.<sup>20</sup> CEE states are sceptical, however, that unilateral moves by NATO would provoke Russian steps. They are concerned that such actions would simply be pocketed by Russia, weakening the position of U.S./NATO in future negotiations.

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with a Hungarian official, Budapest, March 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with a Czech official, Prague, March 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with a Lithuanian official, Vilnius, March 2012.



Among CEE states, Poland was the most active proponent of such an approach, and proved able to influence the position of other countries of the region. Since the beginning of the debate on NATO's nuclear posture, Poland emphasised that changes in NATO's nuclear posture, including the elimination of non-strategic nuclear weapons, were possible and even desirable, on condition that Russia took reciprocal steps. By joining with Norway in promoting a step by step approach to the reduction of nuclear weapons in Europe, Poland wanted to direct attention to unresolved questions relating to Russia's arsenal.<sup>21</sup> It also wanted to show that even a state with a cautious approach to changes in NATO's nuclear posture could have a positive agenda and could seek common ground with states that desire reductions. The Polish-Norwegian initiative of April 2010 influenced the principles of nuclear policy presented by the U.S. Secretary of State H. Clinton in that same month in Tallinn, and the provisions of NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept.<sup>22</sup>

The proactive approach of Poland was also visible in the DDPR process. Together with Norway, Germany and the Netherlands, Poland elaborated a set of proposals aimed at contributing to a dialogue between NATO and Russia, about how to increase transparency and confidence with regards to tactical nuclear weapons in Europe.<sup>23</sup> Although the non-paper was initially supported only by the Czech Republic and Hungary, it was later endorsed by all CEE states. During the DDPR process, the non-paper served as a basis for a proposal of mutual transparency measures that could be presented to Russia at a suitable moment.

CEE states realise that the future of NATO's nuclear posture, including their preference for avoiding unilateral steps by NATO, depends mostly on national decisions of the U.S. and those European states that host weapons and possess DCAs. The practical role of CEE states in NATO's nuclear mission seems limited to non-nuclear support of nuclear missions by some of them. It may also include a contribution to financing the nuclear infrastructure from a common NATO budget.

Officials from CEE states take into account that the U.S. reassessment of nuclear deterrence requirements may lead to some changes in U.S. nuclear forces deployed in Europe. From the perspective of CEE countries, however, there are no major fears about any unilateral actions by the U.S. The situation looks more problematic with regard to the role of Western European states. Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium perceive a reduction and ultimate withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from their territories as a demonstration of a clear commitment by NATO members to a world free of nuclear weapons. The long-term DCA role of these countries is also uncertain. Although they underline that when taking any

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<sup>21</sup> See: Jonas Gahr Store, Radoslaw Sikorski, *Joint Statement by Foreign Ministers of Norway and Poland*, Oslo, Norway, 9 April 2010.

<sup>22</sup> For text of principles, see: Oliver Meier, "NATO Chief's Remarks Highlight Policy Rift", *Arms Control Today*, May 2010; "Active Engagement, Modern Defence" *Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation adopted by Heads of State and Government in Lisbon*, November 2010, par. 26.

<sup>23</sup> *Non-paper submitted by Poland, Norway, Germany and the Netherlands, about increasing transparency and confidence with regard to tactical nuclear weapons in Europe*, Berlin, Germany, 14 April 2011.

decisions they will take into consideration the expectations of their NATO partners, it cannot be excluded that their internal political dynamics might force some changes in NATO's nuclear posture. Nevertheless, even if CEE states have some "lingering concerns" about the future decisions of Western European states, they tend to perceive the status quo as politically, militarily and technically feasible in the foreseeable future—at least until discussions within NATO about the next Strategic Concept around 2020.<sup>24</sup>

### **Policy Recommendations: A Way Forward after the Chicago Summit**

Even if, during the DDPR debate, CEE states would be able to convince all NATO members about their security concerns, and even if a final DDPR document acknowledged all of the priorities of CEE states presented during the debate, their realisation is uncertain. Developments in NATO's strategic environment, the financial situation on both sides of the Atlantic, and the overall political dynamic within NATO member states will play a crucial role in the practical implementation of the DDPR.

The conclusion of the DDPR process is unlikely to lead to the disappearance of divergent perspectives within NATO about the "appropriate mix of NATO capabilities". The future of the Alliance nuclear posture, particularly basing the U.S. non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe will remain controversial.

In the scenario that is most desired by CEE states, any reductions in NATO's nuclear posture would be a result of an agreement with Russia on transparency measures and reciprocal reductions. CEE states do not recognise a direct link between strengthening conventional or territorial missile defence capabilities, or "visible assurances", and reducing the role of nuclear weapons. The realisation of their priorities in these areas, however, may influence their calculations on NATO's nuclear posture. Officials from CEE states avoid speaking about particular conditions that may lead to the withdrawal of the U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe. However, except for the total elimination of this category of armaments, it seems likely that the withdrawal would not raise objections if stable and predictable relations with Russia were achieved and new emerging threats did not necessitate the retention of some U.S. weapons in Europe.

CEE states, however, cannot take for granted that reductions in the U.S. nuclear forces in Europe would be pursued according to their wishes. Even if the overwhelming majority of CEE states seem to share the formal/informal view that, absent U.S.–Russia negotiations on tactical nuclear weapons, the DDPR process should be finished in Chicago "for the time being"<sup>25</sup>, they should not expect that burying the DDPR and related nuclear topics will let sleeping dogs lie. There is no guarantee that other NATO members would be willing or able to maintain the current nuclear posture until discussion on the next Strategic Concept around 2020 or until the point at which conditions for changes acceptable by CEE

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<sup>24</sup> Correspondence with a Hungarian official, May 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Correspondence with a Hungarian official, May 2012.

states are met. For this particular reason, it is in the interest of CEE states that reciprocal reductions with Russia are achieved sooner rather than later.

Because of this, it is also in the interest of CEE states that they engage actively in finding ways to convince Russia to agree to reciprocal steps. Even though presenting Russia with NATO's proposal on transparency measures would be a significant progress, it should not be treated as an excuse for a "pause" in a nuclear debate within NATO. The fact that the U.S. will bilaterally negotiate with Russia any future reductions in these weapons, and that NATO members would only be consulted during the process, should not lead to the responsibility for seeking a reduction of nuclear weapons in Europe being left solely to the U.S. CEE states should build consensus within NATO about further talks on nuclear issues.

The particular forum in which a debate within NATO is conducted is of secondary importance. The NATO WMD Control and Disarmament Committee, initially created to support the DDR process, could play an instrumental role in this process. Other NATO bodies could also perform such a task.

During further intra-Alliance nuclear debate, CEE states should encourage other NATO members, including the U.S., to analyse carefully all of the means at NATO's disposal to "seek" Russian reciprocity. It should be considered whether U.S. proposals for new START follow-up negotiations with Russia, that include discussions on strategic weapons, non-deployed warheads and tactical nuclear weapons, should be supplemented by other instruments to encourage Russia to take part in negotiations. NATO members should also analyse whether and how future talks on conventional arms controls in Europe and U.S./NATO-Russia discussions on missile defence could be used effectively to convince Russia to take steps related to its tactical nuclear arsenal. For example, what concessions in these fields could be offered to Russia, which would convince Russia to negotiate on tactical nuclear weapons but would not at the same time significantly decrease NATO's capabilities to perform its Article 5 mission?

Furthermore, CEE states should encourage the U.S. and other NATO members to discuss possible trade-offs, that the U.S. could offer Russia in future negotiations. If NATO members agreed that verifiable relocation of the Russian arsenal, away from territories of NATO members, is their priority for forthcoming years, they should reconsider their reluctant approach to the withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons and analyse whether it would not be beneficial to them if they publicly announce that they would withdraw U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe (or consolidate them in fewer sites) in exchange for Russia's relocation of its arsenal. Such an announcement may put additional pressure on Russia and would not oblige NATO to take any unilateral steps.

CEE states should also ensure that NATO has available alternative options of nuclear burden-sharing. For example, whether reconstituting the U.S. nuclear weapons from the U.S. back to Europe could replace current nuclear sharing arrangements. Alternative options

would be useful, if in future Russia would be ready to discuss reductions in numbers or elimination of tactical nuclear weapons. Having such options in place would make consultation with NATO members easier for the U.S., and would provide the U.S. with more flexibility during negotiations with Russia. Such options would also be indispensable if political and fiscal pressures in states playing crucial roles in current nuclear arrangements necessitate some NATO reductions. Even if a unilateral withdrawal of all B-61 bombs resulting from political pressure is perceived as unlikely, it is still possible.

Different options of some non-nuclear reassurances, going beyond to currently envisaged “visible assurance”, to states most exposed to nuclear arsenals based in the vicinity of NATO borders, could also be beneficial to CEE states. Such options could be implemented if, despite U.S. and other NATO members’ efforts, Russia was not ready to make reciprocal reductions and NATO members, for various reasons, decided to undertake significant reductions in the U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe.

In any case, by using such a proactive approach, CEE states would demonstrate that the requirement for Russian reciprocity is not CEE states’ excuse for inaction, but that it reflects their serious commitment to reduce nuclear weapons in Europe. It could serve as a mean to demonstrate to states that seek changes in current posture that their preferences are taken into account. Consequently, it could unify all NATO members in their approach to seeking conditions towards a nuclear weapons-free world.

*This paper is a result of author interviews with government officials (from ministries of foreign affairs and defence, and in the case of some states, with presidential advisory bodies) and non-governmental experts, conducted in March 2012 in nine capitals of Central and Eastern European states.<sup>26</sup> The paper also uses author’s insights gained from interviews conducted during a study visit to NATO HQ in Brussels in September 2011, with 13 national delegations to NATO (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, and the UK) as well as representatives of the NATO International Secretariat and International Military Staff. The author would like to thank all interviewees for their openness and stimulating insights, and everyone who made the interviews possible. The author is also thankful to all participants of the round table “Reducing the Role of Nuclear Weapons in European Security: Central and Eastern European Perspectives” organised by PISM on 19 April 2012, whose thoughts influenced the paper.*

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<sup>26</sup> See more: <http://www.pism.pl/research/Non-Proliferation-and-Arms-Control-Project/study-visits>.