

# A PROBLEM DEFERRED?

## NATO's Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons After Chicago

Edited by Hugh Chalmers, Malcolm Chalmers and Andrea Berger



Royal United Services Institute

WHITEHALL REPORT 4-12

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Cover image: President Barack Obama speaks at a news conference at the NATO summit in Chicago, 21 May 2012. *Courtesy of Kiichiro Sato/AP Photo.*



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The views expressed in this paper are the authors' own, and do not necessarily reflect those of RUSI or any other institutions with which the authors are associated.

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## Introduction

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**Malcolm Chalmers and Andrea Berger**

Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have long been at odds over the role that non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) should play in Alliance deterrence policy. Since the end of the Cold War, the perceived relevance of nuclear weapons has been on the decline in most of NATO's older non-nuclear member states, including those which have hosted several thousand of these weapons on their territories in the past. As a result, when US President Obama raised expectations for a radical new approach to US nuclear policy in his April 2009 Prague speech, he found a supportive audience in many Western European capitals. Within months, the new centre-right government in Germany, elected in September 2009, expressed its desire that the US B-61 nuclear gravity bombs stationed on its territory be removed.

Pressure likewise grew on the governments of Belgium and the Netherlands, which are also basing states, to adopt a similar stance. Yet, even as key states in northwestern Europe moved to a more nuclear-sceptic position, many of NATO's newer member states – especially in Central and Eastern Europe – argued for the maintenance of the nuclear status quo, at least until substantial Russian reciprocation could be obtained. The 1997 Founding Act with Russia committed NATO not to locate nuclear storage sites on the territory of new members. This agreement, together with the prospect of further downsizing of US conventional commitments in Europe, left new member states concerned that the strength of NATO's security guarantee for them was less robust than it had been for their Western European counterparts during the Cold War. They therefore remained sceptical of any steps that could be seen as reflecting an undue complacency in relation to Russia. Their opposition to unilateral NSNW withdrawal was shared by France and Turkey.

NATO's response to these differences of view, agreed at its 2010 meeting in Lisbon, was to commission a Deterrence and Defence Posture Review (DDPR), to be completed by the 2012 Chicago Summit. It was hoped that the DDPR would work through the differences between member states and articulate a clear conception of how NATO should defend its interests and deter adversaries in a changing international threat environment.

RUSI's sustained engagement with the issue of NATO non-strategic nuclear weapons has offered a vantage point from which to observe the DDPR process and the changing expectations surrounding it. In early 2011, RUSI predicted that the DDPR would 'likely include consideration of the role of the remaining US non-strategic nuclear weapons stationed in Europe'.<sup>1</sup> In light of the substantial pressures for withdrawal emerging from Germany and other

nuclear basing states, we asked the authors of our previous Whitehall Report to consider what might happen 'If the Bombs Go'.

However, hopes of a comprehensive rethink of Alliance deterrence posture rapidly faded as the DDPR got underway. The momentum associated with Obama's vision of a world free of nuclear weapons subsided along with prospects for post-New START US-Russia arms control. Furthermore, as Igor Sutyagin notes in this volume, the 2012 Russian presidential election saw Vladimir Putin retain his hold on power, increase his anti-Western rhetoric, and use Russia's non-strategic nuclear arsenal as a political tool to preserve regime legitimacy.

Analysts, as a result, increasingly postulated that leaders would join together at the Chicago Summit to 'kick the can' further down the road and avoid taking potentially controversial decisions on the future of US nuclear weapons in Europe. The DDPR confirmed these predictions. While it did explicitly refer to the possibility of further reductions in the number of nuclear weapons based in Europe, it made clear that this would be in the context of further reciprocation from Russia. Given the poor state of strategic relations with Russia there was little expectation that such reciprocation would take place any time soon.<sup>2</sup>

After Chicago, RUSI gathered experts from around Europe to discuss the outcome, and to outline possible future trajectories for the NATO NSNW debate. Karl-Heinz Kamp examined the DDPR process. On which questions was the Alliance inclined to take decisions, on which did it prefer to abstain, and why? Bruno Tertrais highlighted the DDPR's ambiguity on both the role of UK and French strategic nuclear weapons in overall Alliance deterrence, and the relationship between nuclear weapons, missile defence and conventional capabilities. He further considered how these dimensions of NATO posture might evolve over the coming decade. Offering vital insight into the national pressures influencing key NATO stakeholders, Paolo Foradori, Mustafa Kibaroglu, Jacek Durkalec and Igor Sutyagin then considered the perspectives of Italy, Turkey, Central and Eastern Europe, and Russia on NATO's non-strategic nuclear weapons before, during and after the DDPR process.

The papers that follow illuminate key messages that have arisen as a result of the DDPR. For example, Kamp points out that rather than simply addressing 'how to deter whom with what' – a question that is central to formulating a nuclear posture appropriate to NATO's security needs – the Alliance sought to make the DDPR a more holistic study. In doing so, the Alliance also avoided explicitly outlining the interplay or possible trade-offs between nuclear weapons, missile defence and conventional weapons in deterring NATO adversaries, though Bruno Tertrais argues that the DDPR did so implicitly.



That the twenty-eight NATO member states abstained from taking clear positions on these divisive issues is telling. In the months before the Chicago Summit, pressure to maintain Alliance solidarity was immense. Russia was growing rhetorically more aggressive towards NATO, threatening to develop new weapons to overcome, and even pre-emptively strike, NATO's ballistic-missile defence should plans go ahead to deploy these in Poland without Russian agreement. At the same time, multilateral negotiations to resolve the crisis over Iran's nuclear programme accelerating in NATO's backyard were yielding little fruit. The dilemma for the DDPR was thus to preserve cohesion at a crucial time, while also responding to both the desire of some states to have nuclear weapons withdrawn from their soil, and that of others to keep them close as reassurance. Paolo Foradori notes that Italy, despite supporting eventual weapons withdrawal, was preoccupied with national and European economic instability and preferred to emphasise Alliance cohesion during the DDPR negotiations. The process was therefore equally as important as the final text – if not more so.

Given this, the outcome of the DDPR constitutes a bridge across diverging viewpoints. This was a crucial role for the DDPR to play, particularly for Germany, whose domestic political opposition to the continued stationing of US nuclear weapons in Europe itself prompted the Alliance's deterrence review, as Karl-Heinz Kamp reiterates. In the DDPR, the twenty-eight NATO Allies, including Germany, agreed that 'the Alliance's nuclear force posture currently meets the criteria for an effective deterrence and defence posture'. In other words, the status quo was satisfactory for now. Yet, when overlaid on the German coalition government's previous pledge to facilitate the withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons from the country, the result was perceived by the domestic population as contradictory. In 2012, the national media concluded that Germany's agreement to the DDPR, and by extension to keeping nuclear weapons at Büchel air base for now, meant that the government had committed a policy U-turn and taken a concrete decision to extend the life of its dual-capable Tornado aircraft.<sup>3</sup>

However, Berlin was able to deflect criticism surrounding the preservation of NATO's nuclear status quo by drawing attention to the strides it felt it had made in promoting disarmament at the summit. Never before had an Alliance document been as explicit about NATO's intention to evaluate options for 'significant reductions' in forward-based non-strategic nuclear weapons assigned to NATO.

Nevertheless, the relief that this commitment has provided may be a temporary one. The status quo that the DDPR underwrites is not indefinitely sustainable, as many of the authors in this volume have noted. Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands will have to take concrete decisions about whether to purchase new nuclear-capable aircraft at the point when

extending the life of their current F-16s or Tornados is no longer feasible or cost-effective. This decision-making moment will probably be reached during the next few years, and may be accompanied by a fresh period of debate within the Alliance. As ever, the hardest debates may be the ones that these three countries will have at home.

Until that time, the future of the NATO NSNW debate will likely be shaped by the context of relations with Russia. Member states agreed in the DDPR that NATO would be prepared to consider further reducing its requirement for NSNW assigned to NATO in the context of reciprocal steps by Russia. As Jacek Durkalec points out, Central and Eastern European states are anxious about the possible unilateral removal of US non-strategic nuclear weapons from Europe. However, like the DDPR itself, they are unclear about what this 'reciprocity' means, or how it could be realised. Tapering momentum in US-Russian arms control makes the short-term prospects for formal reciprocation extremely challenging. Whether prospects on this issue could improve in the medium term may depend on the wider context of evolving US-Russian relations.

If reciprocation is to be the guiding principle for NATO's approach to this issue, more needs to be done to consider what its own contribution should be. By comparing the number of US NSNW deployed in Europe with the global Russian non-strategic arsenal, including the component of its forces directed at China, NATO may have overstated the extent of Russian numerical strength in NSNW, thereby shifting expectations to Russia to act first by reducing its stockpile or by increasing transparency. Yet Igor Sutyagin's paper suggests instead that, once the European-relevant, deployed, non-strategic arsenals of the US and France are taken into account, NATO and Russia may already enjoy rough parity in NSNW. Rather than waiting for movement by Moscow, he asserts, this numerical equality means that both Russia and NATO have comparable responsibilities to think seriously about what each could bring to the negotiating table.

For now, the DDPR seems to have found a solid middle ground between the domestic pressures felt by Western basing states and Central and Eastern European countries, and the need to preserve Alliance cohesion. With Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands still able to defer decisions on the nuclear implications of dual-capable aircraft replacement, concerned Central and Eastern European states held the more influential position at Chicago. However, Durkalec notes that, if the DDPR arrangement becomes unsustainable, as it may once dual-capable aircraft debates resurface, then Central and Eastern European states could be compelled to reconsider their position against unilateral weapons withdrawal. The balance of influence in NATO collective decision-making could therefore shift over time to favour Western European countries that desire further reductions.

Other external factors could also influence the trajectory of the NATO NSNW debate. Should Iran and the West negotiate an agreement which increases confidence in the peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme, basing states such as Turkey may grow more open to returning non-strategic nuclear weapons to the United States. By contrast, were a clear and present nuclear threat to Europe from the Middle East to develop, NATO's entire deterrence and defence posture would require a fundamental rethink.

The DDPR debate has demonstrated that Europeans continue to seek a strong US commitment to European security, including, albeit in 'extremely remote' circumstances, a willingness to threaten the use of nuclear weapons as a 'supreme guarantee' of their security. Yet, it has also shown that President Obama's commitment to creating the conditions for a world free of nuclear weapons is strongly supported by its European NATO Allies. NATO's nuclear policy has carefully balanced these dual commitments since the 1960s. Whatever the fate of the remaining NSNW in Europe, this tension seems set to inform Atlantic nuclear relations for the foreseeable future.

### Notes and References

1. Malcolm Chalmers and Andrew Somerville (eds), 'If the Bombs Go: European Perspectives on NATO's Nuclear Debate', RUSI Whitehall Report 1-11, May 2011, p. 1.
2. For a comprehensive discussion of these issues, see also Tom Nichols et al. (eds), 'Tactical Nuclear Weapons and NATO', US Army War College, April 2012, and George Perkovich et al., 'Looking beyond the Chicago Summit', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Brookings Institution and the Royal United Services Institute, April 2012.
3. Andrea Berger and Hugh Chalmers, 'A Tornado in a Teacup? Examining Germany's Alleged Nuclear Strike Aircraft Modernisation', *RUSI.org*, 7 September 2012.



# NATO's New Nuclear Consensus

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**Karl-Heinz Kamp**

At its May 2012 summit meeting in Chicago, NATO agreed on a document clumsily entitled the 'Deterrence and Defence Posture Review' (DDPR). This paper was received with little fanfare by the public or media, but it concluded a very intense internal debate on the relevance of nuclear deterrence in NATO strategy. It also ended a fierce dispute over whether or not US non-strategic nuclear weapons need to be deployed on the territory of European Alliance members. Although the review leaves a number of questions unanswered, it constitutes a major leap forward: for the first time since the end of the Cold War, NATO now has a consensus on the role of nuclear weapons in the twenty-first century. How did NATO reach this accord, what does it actually state, and what issues still need to be discussed?

## **The Origins of the DDPR**

As with many long-term initiatives in NATO, the DDPR started as a reaction to an immediate political problem. After the end of the Cold War, NATO kept some US-owned B-61 nuclear bombs in a number of European NATO countries. If needed, they could have been delivered by nuclear-capable fighter aircraft owned by the hosting states. This peculiar 'dual-key' system was developed during the East-West conflict to symbolise NATO's principle of 'extended deterrence', in which the US offers the protection of its nuclear umbrella to its non-nuclear allies.

For many years, this legacy of the Cold War remained unnoticed outside small expert circles, punctuated only occasionally by public demands – primarily from non-governmental institutions in a few NATO countries – for their removal. However, in 2009 the newly elected Conservative-Liberal government in Germany requested the withdrawal of US NSNW from its soil. President Obama's support for a world free of nuclear weapons, as demonstrated by his April 2009 speech in Prague, and his desire to 'reset' the NATO-Russia relationship, had catalysed the debate over NATO's nuclear capabilities to a point where it could no longer be ignored. NATO heads of state and government decided at their 2010 summit in Lisbon to take the plunge and couch the German initiative as part of a major reassessment of NATO's deterrence and defence requirements.

Unfortunately, in a manifestation of another recurring NATO trend, the Alliance decided to seek a solution through a comprehensive and holistic approach. Rather than simply focusing on the nuclear question of 'how to deter whom with what', the reassessment was to include conventional defence requirements, missile defence implications, and options for arms control – an overall 'Deterrence and Defence Posture Review'. As if this

were not enough, NATO leaders also created an arms-control committee – the Weapons of Mass Destruction Control and Disarmament Committee, or WCDC – without ever making fully clear what it was actually for.<sup>1</sup>

Such an all-inclusive approach was almost by definition predestined for calamity. The interrelations between nuclear deterrence, conventional forces, missile defences and arms control are extremely complex and full of political sensitivities. For instance, if the financial crisis were to force NATO members to significantly cut their conventional weapons, should the Alliance compensate by procuring further nuclear weapons, and how could this be explained to the public? If the US were to withdraw their NSNW from Europe, would NATO need to compensate by procuring new conventional arms and how would such procurements be financed? Will a functioning missile-defence system render nuclear weapons redundant, and how much confidence could NATO place in its defences? Upon realising the complexity of this issue, one NATO ambassador groaned that ‘we created a Frankenstein’.<sup>2</sup>

No wonder that at the first DDPR meeting on 25 January 2011 the positions of many NATO states were fundamentally opposed. Germany and the Netherlands wanted to see US nuclear bombs removed from their territories, whereas for most of the new Eastern European members their continued presence in Europe symbolised the credibility of the US nuclear commitment. Some members supported the idea of a NATO declaration guaranteeing that nuclear weapons would never be used against non-nuclear adversaries. Yet Paris vehemently rejected such ‘Negative Security Assurances’ (NSAs), seeing them as an assault on France’s nuclear independence. As a result, the first months of the review process produced no results and the entire project seemed on the verge of failure.

### **The Results from Chicago**

Given all of these disagreements, it came as a surprise that NATO’s foreign ministers had presented an agreed draft text of the DDPR at their ministerial meeting in April 2012. The paper was a typical NATO consensus document, with highly complex formulations bridging various positions, incomprehensible to an outsider not involved in the tough negotiations over every single full stop and comma. Still, it represented more than the lowest common denominator. It gave clear guidance on at least some of the disputed questions, such as the stationing of NSNW and NATO’s declaratory policy.

The source of this unexpected accord lies primarily in the combination of French steadfastness and the US desire for a harmonious summit meeting. Moreover, President Obama’s enthusiasm for a nuclear-free world had cooled significantly and the idea of a fundamental and positive ‘reset’ with Russia had not materialised. This took the wind out of the sails of those who wanted



to see nuclear reductions by all means. One example of consensus-building was the NSA issue. When Washington indicated that it was prepared to agree to an overall NATO negative security assurance, Paris made it unmistakably clear that this would lead to a declaration 'at twenty-seven'; in other words, without French consent. Confronted with such a possible split during the first NATO summit on US territory since 1999, Washington gave in to avoid any signs of disunity. The agreement of the two was then taken into the so-called 'Quad', the informal meetings of the four largest NATO members (the US, UK, France and Germany) and from there to all other NATO members. On other issues, further policy preferences appeared in the Quad and were balanced and mediated by the United States, not only as the key player in the nuclear field but as the one with the greatest interest in a consensual summit result. The April 2012 draft paper became, with only minor changes, the final DDPR presented to the heads of state and government at the Chicago Summit. Some important nuclear-related elements of the DDPR are given below, and when taken together represent a remarkable NATO accord.

#### *The Requirements for Effective Deterrence and Defence*

Paragraph eight of the DDPR states that NATO's current nuclear force posture meets the requirements for effective deterrence and defence.<sup>3</sup> This implicitly includes the military hardware supporting that posture, such as the B-61 NSNW, the dual-capable aircraft, and their stationing modes in some European countries. Of course, one can discuss whether a nuclear posture that was created during the Cold War to deter an attack by the Warsaw Pact can truly meet the requirements of the twenty-first century. However, the fact remains that twenty-eight NATO leaders gave their approval to this statement, creating a reality from which no NATO government can quickly distance itself.

#### *Maintaining NATO's NSNW*

The review also emphasises that all components of NATO's nuclear posture will have to be kept safe, secure and effective.<sup>4</sup> This implies that the NSNW and their means of delivery have to be modernised once they become technically outdated. The B-61 NSNW are currently undergoing just such modernisation through a thirty-year life-extension programme, providing them with new technical features.<sup>5</sup> It seems that the role of these NSNW will not be changed significantly in the near future, with the review stating that NATO is seeking only to 'create the conditions ... for further reductions of non-strategic nuclear weapons', a very reserved wording for nuclear arms control.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, this obligation only applies to members of NATO's Nuclear Planning Group (NPG), which contains all member states apart from France, which is consequently exempted.

### *Nuclear Collaboration*

If NATO NSNW were to be reduced (but not eliminated), the Alliance would develop concepts for the broad participation of non-nuclear allies in nuclear-related procedures.<sup>7</sup> Many non-nuclear NATO members already participate in nuclear-related procedures through the Support of Nuclear Operations by Conventional Air Tactics (SNOWCAT), which involves offering, amongst other things, air-to-air refuelling, escort flights and reconnaissance. If there were fewer NSNW stationed in Europe, new mechanisms for conventional support for nuclear operations would have to be found to ensure that all allies willing to contribute are able to do so, given a smaller nuclear posture.

### *Negative Security Assurances*

Given the potential discord discussed above, it is understandable that the review discusses negative security assurances in only a very generic way. Rather than making an overall NATO NSA, the DDPR simply acknowledges the unilateral NSAs made individually by the US, UK and France, the three nuclear NATO members.<sup>8</sup> For instance, the United States declared in its 2010 Nuclear Posture Review that it would not use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), in compliance with its obligations.<sup>9</sup> Yet what appears to be an example of serious self-constraint, since it would ban nuclear retaliation after an attack with chemical or biological weapons, is in fact much weaker. The US would not be limited in using nuclear weapons as retaliation against chemical or biological attacks from countries like North Korea or Iran. It could also always argue that North Korea had left the NPT, and that Iran is in clear violation of the non-proliferation regime. In addition to acknowledging these assurances, the DDPR mildly concludes that these assurances *can* have a value in discouraging nuclear proliferation.

### *Nuclear Arms Control*

NATO is ready to consider further reductions of its NSNW, on the condition that Russia's far larger NSNW stockpiles are taken into account, and that Russia reciprocates in a suitable manner.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, NATO will develop ideas on how to achieve greater transparency with regard to existing nuclear forces in Europe.<sup>11</sup>

### **Questions Raised by the DDPR**

Certainly there are a number of issues left open by the DDPR. The goal of a truly comprehensive deterrence and defence review was obviously too ambitious. Some elements of the review also raise further questions. The report describes the contribution of conventional forces to deterrence and defence mainly by stating the obvious: forces have to be capable, flexible and interoperable and these requirements are increasingly in danger because of the budgetary crisis in all member states.<sup>12</sup> The review also states that missile defence can complement nuclear deterrence, but fails to elaborate on how and to what degree.<sup>13</sup> More importantly, it fails to capture the

interrelationships between conventional forces, missile defence and nuclear forces. Like communicating vessels, changes in one category have an impact on others if the overall efficiency of deterrence is held constant. Moreover, the review is not free from inconsistencies. For instance, the DDRP asks for nuclear transparency, clearly aiming at Russia's large and enigmatic European nuclear posture. At the same time, NATO itself is not ready to disclose information on the size and the location of its own NSNW.

These shortcomings are understandable when one considers that NATO's nuclear policies are confronted by some fundamental dilemmas. A fully consistent and unambiguous nuclear strategy document would be almost impossible to produce, regardless of how intensely NATO bodies debated, simply because nuclear deterrence is a concept mired in dilemmas and contradictions. Nuclear deterrence threatens the detonation of weapons that could have devastating consequences for the entire globe, while the use of nuclear weapons must be seen as credible and plausible to ensure that they will never be used. Nuclear deterrence involves conveying a message in a manner in which the sender cannot guarantee that the recipient will understand as intended. Furthermore, for geographical and historical reasons, the threat perceptions of various NATO members differ significantly, and the question of who the recipient should actually be is disputed.

With this in mind, the DDRP has been crucial to NATO's strategic evolution. It has forced all Alliance members to deal with the delicate questions of deterrence which, in an alliance of nuclear and non-nuclear allies, had repeatedly been swept under the carpet. In that sense, the DDRP process was as important as the report itself. Tensions between deterrence and arms-control requirements seem inevitable in any nuclear debate, and from that perspective, the DDRP was as successful as it could ever have been.

### **Now What?**

Depending on the standpoint, NATO's DDRP has either remained too conservative in fencing off any significant changes in its nuclear deterrent posture, or it has succeeded in preserving its nuclear basics for the sake of Alliance cohesion in an unpredictable security environment. Some will argue that NATO has papered over the scepticism that still exists in some countries regarding the need for US nuclear deployments in Europe. Others will highlight the fact that an alliance of twenty-eight nations with different geographical locations, different histories and different threat perceptions found agreement at least on some basics of NATO's future nuclear policy. Either way, the review has been agreed upon at NATO's highest political level, and published as an official summit document, creating a consensus in NATO which has not existed for a long time. Furthermore, it terminates, at least for the time being, the high-level political debate on US nuclear forces in Europe which had been simmering for many years.

However, those who believe that the question of how to preserve a credible nuclear deterrent in an unpredictable security environment has been conclusively answered, and who might hope to close this chapter once and for all, will be proven wrong.<sup>14</sup> Nuclear discussions in NATO will not end; the DDPR has tasked a number of committees to discuss nuclear issues in the years to come. It calls for a new 'planning guidance' since NATO's 'Political Principles of Nuclear Planning and Consultation' date from 1992 and need to be updated to twenty-first-century requirements. In 2011, NATO agreed on an internal political guidance document specifying the broad guidelines given by the 2010 Strategic Concept. This document intentionally left out the issue of nuclear deterrence requirements as the DDPR process was already under way. Thus, a complementing document is necessary to produce new nuclear planning guidance. The DDPR also calls for 'sustained leadership' and 'institutional excellence' as long as NATO remains a nuclear alliance. This could mean that NATO needs to strengthen its nuclear decision-making structures in Brussels. There is already the 'Nuclear Policy Directorate', but its role has been debated in recent years and has been subject to fluctuating interest and organisational positions. The clear positioning of the DDPR in favour of keeping NATO's nuclear posture might increase the relevance of the directorate or might require a similar institution in the military chain of command of the Alliance. Developing political documents or evolving NATO's structures will lead to discussions within the Alliance which are likely to spill over into public debates. Hence, nuclear issues will unavoidably remain on NATO's agenda.

Current or upcoming political developments will also keep the nuclear issue on the front burner. There is a justifiable perception that Iran is striving for nuclear weapons, and neither diplomatic action nor the possibility of military intervention seems to have constrained this effort. A nuclear-capable Iran will again raise questions regarding NATO's deterrence posture and the credibility of US nuclear commitments. Other nations in the region may also pursue a nuclear option, further complicating the deterrence equation. This will also be the case should North Korea continue to test or expand its nuclear capabilities as expected. Are there steps that NATO, or at least NATO's nuclear members (the United States, United Kingdom and France), could take to prevent nuclear proliferation and to stabilise the situation in East Asia?

Lastly, the extent to which the nuclear debate continues within NATO will also be influenced by public opinion in NSNW-hosting states. Even with an agreed Deterrence and Defence Posture Review, it would be almost impossible to keep US NSNW permanently stationed in hosting states should their publics vote strongly for their removal. Therefore, political decision-makers must refrain not only from unilateral or unrepresentative proposals on nuclear cuts, but should also actively explain what is meant by NATO being a 'nuclear alliance'.

NATO's current deterrence and defence posture, as agreed in the DDPR, is neither sacrosanct nor carved in stone. New nuclear developments in the Middle East or in East Asia might require a reassessment. However, any proposed change in this posture will need first to clarify how deterrence can be preserved under new circumstances, and then gain the support of all NATO Allies. Until these conditions are met, the DDPR will remain the foundation of NATO's nuclear posture. Thus, it seems (hopefully) unlikely that a NATO member government will propose fundamental changes to NATO's nuclear capabilities, mostly for domestic reasons, without having checked the nuclear '*acquis communautaire*' of the Alliance first.

A core lesson of the DDPR seems that the Alliance should not shy away from debating very sensitive issues. As one official involved in the process said: 'The DDPR was like a visit to the dentist – you don't want to go but when it's over you are happy that you went there'.<sup>15</sup>

### Notes and References

1. NATO already has committees like the High Level Task Force or the High Level Group, which deal with various aspects of arms control.
2. Author interview with anonymous NATO official.
3. NATO, 'Deterrence and Defence Posture Review', press release issued 20 May 2012, para 8, <[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_87597.htm?mode=pressrelease](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87597.htm?mode=pressrelease)>, accessed 19 September 2012.
4. *Ibid.*, para 11.
5. The modernisation of the B-61 goes back to a 2008 decision by the US Congress to reduce the types of warheads and to increase their security.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, para 12.
8. *Ibid.*, para 10.
9. US Department of Defense, 'Nuclear Posture Review Report', April 2010, p. 15, <<http://www.defense.gov/npr/docs/2010%20nuclear%20posture%20review%20report.pdf>>, accessed 19 September 2012.
10. NATO, 'Deterrence and Defence Posture Review', para 26.
11. *Ibid.*, para 25.

12. *Ibid.*, paras 14, 16.

13. *Ibid.*, para 20.

14. A former NATO secretary-general and two prominent colleagues requested in a recent analysis that NATO should regard the nuclear subject as closed and should instead focus on more important issues. This seems an unrealistic position as it assumes that the beginning or the end of a political debate could be ordered from above. See Lord Robertson, Franklin D Miller and Kori Schake, 'It's Time to Put the Nuclear Issue Behind Us', Atlantic Council Issue Brief, May 2012.

15. Comparison made by an anonymous NATO official.



# Beyond US Nuclear Weapons? NATO and Strategic Deterrence by 2020

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**Bruno Tertrais**

In May 2012, NATO produced its Deterrence and Defence Posture Review, a text devoted to the respective roles of nuclear weapons, missile defence and conventional forces in Alliance strategy. This review process was a UK-proposed diplomatic device, designed to avoid an intra-Alliance crisis at the forthcoming 2010 Lisbon Summit. It satisfied both the countries favourable to nuclear disarmament and missile defence (such as Germany) and those more conservative on deterrence matters (such as France) by allowing them both to air their views.

There are few major innovations in the DDP. New elements include the acknowledgement by NATO of the new Negative Security Assurances (NSAs) given by the United States and the United Kingdom in 2010. The DDP also states that:

While seeking to create the conditions and considering options for further reductions of non-strategic nuclear weapons assigned to NATO, Allies concerned will ensure that all components of NATO's nuclear deterrent remain safe, secure, and effective for as long as NATO remains a nuclear alliance. That requires sustained leadership focus and institutional excellence for the nuclear deterrence mission and planning guidance aligned with 21st century requirements.

It further states that '[c]onsistent with our commitment to remain a nuclear alliance for as long as nuclear weapons exist', NATO will 'develop concepts for how to ensure the broadest possible participation of Allies concerned in their nuclear sharing arrangements, including in case NATO were to decide to reduce its reliance on non-strategic nuclear weapons based in Europe'.<sup>1</sup>

The DDP also implicitly ranks the contributions of nuclear weapons, conventional weapons and missile defence. Nuclear weapons are described as a 'core component of NATO's overall capabilities for deterrence and defence alongside conventional and missile defence forces'.<sup>2</sup> Conventional weapons are described as making 'indispensable contributions' to deterrence and defence. Missile defence is described only as an 'important addition'.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, missile defence is taking a backseat to nuclear weapons here.

Will this hierarchy still be the same in 2020? This paper seeks to go beyond the DDP and look at the possible evolution of the components of NATO deterrence and defence strategy between now and the end of the decade.

In some scenarios, the future of Alliance strategic deterrence may involve a reduced role for US nuclear weapons, counterbalanced by a new emphasis on missile defence and perhaps UK and French nuclear weapons. However, the Alliance should be mindful of zero-sum mentalities: there is no easily substitutable equivalence between US and European nuclear weapons, or between nuclear deterrence and missile defence.

### **The Components of the Allied Deterrent: Possible Evolutions**

#### *The Role of US Nuclear Weapons in Europe*

Despite what some critics say, there has been no nuclear status quo in Europe since the end of the Cold War. The NATO nuclear stockpile has been reduced by more than 95 per cent, US nuclear weapons have been removed from Greece and the UK, and the role of nuclear weapons in NATO strategy has been substantially reduced. There have been many attempts to discuss non-strategic arms-control options with Russia.<sup>4</sup>

While a degradation of relations with Russia would probably encourage the modernisation of the NATO nuclear deterrent, several other factors could further this downward trend in the coming decade. For example, the beginning of a serious US-Russia attempt to negotiate global nuclear reductions (for instance, as a single package, strategic and non-strategic) could act as a dampener and weaken the chances of modernisation, at least on the European side.

The current generation of NATO's dual-capable aircraft (DCA) – German and Italian Tornados, and US, Belgian, Dutch and Turkish F-16s – will last until around the end of the decade. The Netherlands, Italy and Turkey could retain their nuclear role, in addition to the US, after 2020, assuming they confirm their acquisition of the F-35, which is currently slated to enter service in 2019 (with the first US dual-capable plane being available by 2021).

The B-61 nuclear bomb is to undergo a life extension programme, consolidating four existing modifications into a single B-61 modification, known as the Mod-12, with an improved guidance system. By 2022–23 (when the first B-61 Mod-12s become available), NATO could be endowed with a modernised nuclear capability, which will be less dependent on suppression of enemy air-defence operations than the previous generation of aircraft, due to the stealth characteristics of the F-35.<sup>5</sup>

However, a worsening of the financial and budgetary crisis would put these plans into doubt. The cost estimate for the B-61 life extension has reportedly skyrocketed to \$10 billion.<sup>6</sup> The modernisation of the bomb will also involve \$1.2 billion for a new guidance system (the B-61 Tail Subassembly), and its adaptation to the F-35 will cost \$340 million.<sup>7</sup> It is unlikely that the US Congress

will happily approve such costly programmes without pressuring the Allies to make financial commitments to the common Alliance deterrent. It is equally unlikely that DCA nations will decide to fund the nuclear capability of their next-generation aircraft without a serious degradation of the international security environment. This is particularly the case with Germany's current rejection of the Eurofighter Typhoon option. Discounting host-nation support for the B-61, the cost of moving towards a nuclear-capable F-35 is about \$5–10 million per airplane, and would be more for a nuclear-capable Eurofighter. The sums involved might appear quite low by the standards of defence budgets, but the symbolism of the nuclear mission will make it an easy target for lawmakers looking to make cuts, particularly in Europe.

Even if budgetary constraints were not an obstacle, domestic political factors might preclude the continuation of the DCA role for some Allies. Belgium and Germany do not intend to acquire the F-35. Many in these two countries are hardly the staunchest supporters of nuclear sharing, promoting reduction, rather than maintenance, in the role of nuclear weapons in NATO strategy. It is thus possible that by 2020 only Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey and the United States will end up maintaining a DCA role. Yet if Belgium and Germany were to give up their nuclear roles, it is by no means certain that Dutch leaders would remain immune to the political ripple effects of such decisions. The Hague has been, along with Berlin, Brussels and a few other capitals such as Oslo, a supporter of a change in NATO nuclear policy.

Apart from Belgium and Germany, the choices made by Turkey will be important in shaping the Alliance's nuclear future. Depending on the evolution of its relations with the US, Europe and Iran (and of the Iranian nuclear crisis itself), Ankara could end up being the strongest supporter of NATO's nuclear arrangements. Conversely, it could reject the presence of US nuclear weapons on its soil: Turkey could demand the withdrawal of these weapons as a statement of independence, if it believed that NATO was about to withdraw all US nuclear weapons, or to symbolically demonstrate to its Middle Eastern neighbours its support for a WMD-free zone in the region. A hypothetical Turkish drift away from the Alliance could also be an incentive for some of its neighbours (notably Bulgaria and Romania) to continue supporting a US nuclear presence in Europe, in order to prevent a hypothetical nuclear temptation in Ankara.<sup>8</sup>

#### *The Role of UK and French Nuclear Weapons*

The DDRP confirmed that 'the independent strategic nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France, which have a deterrent role of their own, contribute to the overall deterrence and security of the Allies' – a classic NATO formulation since 1974.<sup>9</sup> Could UK and French nuclear weapons take on a more important role in NATO strategy? Such a question would be particularly relevant if costs or political pressures were to rule out the modernisation of

the US nuclear presence in Europe. However, there is no credible scenario in which the UK and France could provide a substitute for the US nuclear role in NATO.

To begin with, Britain's replacement of Trident by a new system is not yet entirely assured, despite remaining the most probable scenario. While London has already invested politically and financially in the succession of Trident, the 'Main Gate', or the principal decision, will only be made around 2016, after the next general election. A combination of severe budgetary pressures, political difficulties (for instance, if a new Labour-Liberal Democrat majority were to come to power after the next election), and uncertainties over the fate of the UK nuclear installations in Scotland with the latter's independence debate might throw these plans into doubt.

For its part, France remains outside the Nuclear Planning Group and associated structures: it does not make its nuclear weapons available for NATO planning. This stance was confirmed during the 2007–08 defence review and is unlikely to change any time soon. Even though Paris is now a full member of the integrated military structure, there would be a political cost for any French president altering this stance without any obvious benefit for the country. Would a withdrawal of US nuclear weapons from Europe change the picture?

A scenario in which France stations nuclear-armed aircraft in one or two NATO countries, and perhaps even provides airborne nuclear weapons for its allies, remains very unlikely unless Washington withdraws the B-61s from Europe against the will of its allies. A scenario in which France becomes another nuclear-sharing DCA ally is even less likely. France would have to alter its nuclear stance towards NATO, abandon its airborne component for political or budgetary reasons (despite its relatively modest costs), and allow French aircraft to carry US nuclear bombs.<sup>10</sup>

The only credible scenario would be for Paris to develop common nuclear planning, in the form of joint UK-French non-strategic nuclear options to the benefit of NATO, in addition to its own national plans (as, it is assumed, London already does), particularly if there were no more US nuclear weapons in Europe.<sup>11</sup> There has been a consistent French discourse in the past twenty years to the effect that as the vital interests of EU members are increasingly intertwined, the French nuclear force *de facto* protects European vital interests just as much as French ones.

There is no perfect trade-off between European and US nuclear deterrence: London and Paris could not be substitutes for US nuclear protection. For political and military reasons, many NATO members would consider that the UK and France could not be as effective nuclear guarantors as the United

States, thus limiting the value of the reassurance that they could provide to their European Allies. There is also the weight of history: several Eastern European countries would not want to have their security dependent on London and Paris. Separately, potential adversaries are likely to consider that the willingness of the UK and France to defend Europe with nuclear weapons is less assured than the US's – because they are smaller powers, geographically more vulnerable than the United States, and sometimes seen (wrongly) as less prone to use force. Note also that France consistently refers to a role for its deterrence in the protection of the EU, thus leaving out non-members, in particular Turkey.

A more realistic scenario would be a stronger Franco-British nuclear commitment to the security of Europe in general. London and Paris have increased their bilateral co-operation through the Lancaster House Treaty of 2010. However, the treaty focuses on stockpile maintenance and technical co-operation in general; it does not entail any new operational or strategic co-operation. Nevertheless, it does confirm that the two countries 'do not see situations arising in which the vital interests of either Party could be threatened without the vital interests of the other also being threatened', a sentence included in several UK-French communiqués since 1995.<sup>12</sup> One can imagine London and Paris making a stronger and more explicit common statement to the effect that their nuclear forces protect European vital interests.<sup>13</sup> This would complement the US commitment to the protection of Europe and would be, in that sense, an element of nuclear burden-sharing. There is no reason to believe that it would undermine the US role, but could it 'compensate' for the withdrawal of US weapons from Europe? If US weapons were withdrawn through consensus (due to an improved security environment, or after successful negotiation with Russia), Europe may feel no need for additional nuclear guarantees. However, in the extreme scenario in which the US withdraws its non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) against the wishes of the other NATO members, there would probably be some value in a stronger European nuclear guarantee.

#### *The Role of Missile Defence*

At the Chicago Summit, the Allies declared that an interim missile-defence capability was now operational, as the first step of the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA). Though technically modest, this capability is symbolically important. It will grow in importance as a possible complement to nuclear deterrence and as an element of general deterrence; it may one day be seen by many Alliance members as a substitute to nuclear weapons.

*A complement to nuclear deterrence:* Missile defence provides an additional means for coupling the defence of the US with that of Europe. Hence the DDPR's claim that missile defence will 'further strengthen the transatlantic link, and contribute to the indivisible security of the Alliance'.<sup>14</sup> It provides an

alternative when nuclear deterrence cannot, by definition, apply: in case the threat is below the threshold of vital interests; in case of an unauthorised missile launch; and in case of an accidental missile launch. It is also an insurance policy in case of a failure of nuclear deterrence: where perhaps the adversary has misunderstood the threshold of vital interests; in a case where it is unreceptive to the very logic of deterrence; or in a case where it has misjudged the Alliance's resolve to use nuclear weapons.

*An element of general deterrence:* In a sense, missile defence is also, more broadly, an element of general deterrence (nuclear and conventional). It is often described as deterrence by denial, as opposed to deterrence by retaliation. At the least, it would 'complicate an adversary's planning, and provide damage mitigation'. It could also 'provide valuable decision space in times of crisis', as the DDPR puts it.<sup>15</sup> It can be argued that missile defence thus reinforces the freedom of action of Alliance political authorities by ensuring that they would not necessarily have to retaliate (by conventional or nuclear means) if an adversary struck their territories.

*A substitute to nuclear weapons?* By 2018–20, missile defence could be considered as a partial substitute to nuclear weapons. The stationing of interceptors in Eastern Europe, with the participation of European and US operators, could replace the burden-sharing and stationing roles previously fulfilled by US nuclear weapons. The protection offered against a significant WMD attack could similarly substitute the capabilities offered by nuclear weapons.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, for the first time, the protection of the North American continent will depend on assets based in Europe, coupling the US with Europe more than their forward-based nuclear weapons do now.

An effective Phase-III system would bolster the case for considering missile defence as a substitute for in-theatre nuclear weapons. However, such a substitution would remain less than perfect. Nobody 'fears' missile defence (again, this would be deterrence by denial and not by retaliation), and it would cover only small-scale, albeit significant, ballistic attacks. Moreover, what if the Iranian threat were to disappear, following a new revolution for instance? Would Eastern Europeans still be keen to host interceptors that had no military value, just in the name of burden-sharing and reassurance? They might be keen to maintain systems already deployed, but could hesitate before accepting new systems.

#### *The Role of Conventional Forces*

In contrast to nuclear weapons and missile defence, by 2020 conventional means are unlikely to play a greater role in deterring major military and WMD threats. The permanent presence of American troops in Europe will continue to be reduced, in line with the US 2012 defence strategy. In recent years, US plans for 'prompt global strike' assets have been reoriented towards



futuristic hypersonic weapons, which will not be available for several years (and probably in limited numbers). European countries will certainly not spend more – and in fact probably less, despite US calls for greater burden-sharing – on their conventional defence.

In any case, just as NATO theatre nuclear weapons in the 1950s and 1960s were a poor substitute for adequate conventional forces, the latter could be even less of a substitute for nuclear deterrence, for technical, strategic and psychological reasons.<sup>17</sup> Even if NATO could afford it, a massive conventional rearmament effort could have an unwanted effect: that of lowering the Russian nuclear threshold and causing Moscow to rely even more on NSNW than it does today.

#### **Five Illustrative Scenarios for 2020**

A forthcoming major change in NATO deterrence posture has been predicted so often over the past twenty years that it would be unwise to affirm that it will undergo a radical evolution in the coming eight years. With this caveat and the above dynamics in mind, what could be the shape of the NATO deterrent by 2020?

It is prudent to suggest that the most likely scenario will remain, by default, a situation very close to that which exists today: an essential role for nuclear weapons, a limited missile-defence programme, and little strategic role (that is, against major military and WMD threats) for conventional means. The very nature of NATO as an organisation – which does not make it prone to rapid and radical changes – conspires in that direction, as does Russia's assertive behaviour, the ongoing Iranian nuclear crisis, the limited prospects for bilateral arms control, and the lack of appetite in the Alliance for increased defence spending.

At the same time, the future appears more open than it was ten years ago: the launch of the missile-defence EPAA programme, France's return into the integrated military structure, as well as plans for a modernised NATO nuclear deterrent are new elements which allow for the design of very different scenarios.

Three factors will shape the contours of the Alliance deterrence posture. First, the political evolution of Russia and the Iranian nuclear crisis will influence threat perceptions and NATO's collective will to sustain or modernise its deterrent. Secondly, the evolution of the financial crisis will impact all components of the NATO deterrent, including DCA and B-61 modernisation, UK and French nuclear modernisation programmes, and the EPAA. Thirdly, the choices made by three key countries – Germany, France and Turkey – regarding their nuclear relationship with NATO.

The various parameters involved can be combined in five coherent, illustrative scenarios of change.<sup>18</sup>

*Scenario One: A Revitalised Deterrent*

If Iran were to develop an overt nuclear-weapons capability, and tensions with Russia were to continue, NATO would face, for the first time in its history, two nuclear-armed adversaries on its borders. This would logically lead to a decision to modernise the NATO DCA, maintain nuclear sharing, and proceed with Phases III and IV of the EPAA. The balance of nuclear deterrence and missile defence would not change much compared with the status quo.

*Scenario Two: A Modernised Deterrent*

This scenario assumes a degradation of NATO-Russian relations and a continued risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East (without Iran going overtly nuclear). This would logically lead, in the absence of overriding political and financial constraints, to the modernisation of the current DCA and their weapons, with perhaps only Italy and Turkey remaining nuclear hosts and sharing nations. The role of missile defence would remain complementary to that of nuclear deterrence.

*Scenario Three: A Rebalanced Deterrent*

If overriding political and financial constraints (including demands for the withdrawal of US nuclear weapons from certain states) are present in the above formulation, a new scenario of a rebalanced deterrent may result. This could include a limited but modernised US nuclear presence (consolidated on one or two sites), the end of nuclear sharing, and an increased role for UK and French weapons. Some NATO nations might call upon France to make a stronger commitment to the common deterrent. Here, too, the role of missile defence would remain complementary.

*Scenario Four: A Restructured Deterrent*

If stabilised strategic relations with Russia allowed for the negotiated withdrawal of US nuclear weapons from Europe, London and Paris might then be called upon to make a stronger nuclear commitment to the security of Europe. If the Iranian ballistic and nuclear threat was seen to increase, the EPAA would be taken to Phases III and IV. In this scenario, nuclear weapons would take a backseat to missile defence, both in terms of deterrence and burden-sharing, in NATO strategy.

*Scenario Five: A Recessed Deterrent*

If by 2015–16 the Iranian nuclear crisis were solved in a satisfactory manner and relations with Russia were to stabilise, it is unlikely that NATO would decide to modernise its DCA and proceed with Phases III and IV of the EPAA. This would be the case particularly if the financial and budgetary crisis were to remain severe. The US nuclear guarantee to Europe would be maintained,

but Washington would, in a sense, deter 'from behind'. The UK might renounce its decision to produce a successor to Trident.

### Conclusion

Despite the Alliance's natural inertia and the pressures for continuity in these matters, the current situation might not be sustainable beyond 2020, if only because of the need to modernise NATO's DCA. Adjusting various components of the Alliance deterrent, in particular the balance between nuclear weapons and missile defence, and between US and European nuclear weapons, could partly compensate for any changes, but only to a limited extent. Looking to the future, it is important to remember that threat perceptions, budgetary constraints and domestic political preferences, as opposed to nuclear theology and elaborate conceptual constructs, will be the primary factors determining the shape of the NATO deterrent.

However, absent a radical change in the geopolitical environment, budgetary and domestic political pressures could trump sound strategic analysis. This would lead NATO to a scenario in which it has an 'inappropriate mix' of fewer and ageing nuclear weapons, dwindling and inappropriate conventional forces, and a limited and symbolic missile-defence capability.

As usual, in times of great uncertainty, the preferred course of action for NATO should be that which does not foreclose options for the future. The right choice for the Alliance would thus be to proceed with the modernisation of its DCA, perhaps accompanied by a reduction in the number of aircraft available for the nuclear mission. This would make some savings and produce symbolic disarmament gestures (that is, if modernised capabilities allow for the same missions to be fulfilled with a smaller number of systems). Ideally, the B-61 Mod-12 would be platform independent, allowing NATO members to make their aircraft and nuclear-sharing choices independently.

Some claim that modernisation would be looked upon by Russia with 'deep suspicion' and would thus 'worsen the prospects for further negotiations on NSNW reductions'.<sup>19</sup> The reverse is more likely: not unlike NATO's 1979 dual-track decision (deploying new missiles and offering to negotiate), it could open the way for serious bilateral arms control.

### Notes and References

1. NATO, 'Deterrence and Defence Posture Review', press release issued 20 May 2012, para 11, <[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_87597.htm?mode=pressrelease](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87597.htm?mode=pressrelease)>, accessed 19 September 2012.
2. *Ibid.*, para 8.

3. *Ibid.*, paras 13, 18.
4. Some analysts have commented that 'It is encouraging that a process to revise the nuclear status quo has finally begun: NATO members are finally prepared to discuss tactical nuclear arms control and transparency with Russia'; see Daryl G Kimball et al., 'NATO and Nuclear Weapons: Opportunities Missed and Next Steps Forward', *Arms Control Now*, 21 May 2012. This is a surprising statement. The United States and the Atlantic Alliance have been trying (with some, limited success) to tackle these issues with Moscow for almost fifteen years. Since the late 1990s, entire meetings of the NATO-Russia Council have been devoted to the question of non-strategic nuclear weapons, and US negotiators have broached the topic tens of times with their Russian counterparts.
5. Some opponents of NATO nuclear modernisation claim that it 'might prove enticing to military planners', make the B-61s 'more credibly usable in war-fighting scenarios', and open the door to 'high-technology tactical nuclear deterrence and, in fact, compellence'; see Edmond E Seay III, 'Nuclear Dilemmas Remaining After Chicago', Nuclear Policy Paper No. 10, ACA/BASIC/IFSH, May 2012, p. 3. This bizarre description is at odds with both the reality of Alliance strategy and political control over nuclear planning. It also discounts the fact that the B-61 Mod-12 will not offer a new military capability: the improved guidance system is made necessary by the reduction of the bomb's yield, which itself is caused by the inclusion of improved safety and security features (thus leaving less space for the fissile core). Furthermore, the modernisation of NATO nuclear weapons should be welcomed by experts who affirm that today's nuclear posture is 'incapable of providing meaningful reassurance to allies who are concerned about potential future conflicts with unfriendly neighbors'. However, the same author claims that 'this is arguably a good thing' (Seay, 'Nuclear Dilemmas', p. 4).
6. Hans M Kristensen, 'B61-12: NNSA's Gold-Plated Nuclear Bomb Project', *FAS Strategic Security Blog*, 26 July 2012.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Jacek Durkalec, 'NATO Defence and Deterrence Posture: Central and Eastern European Perspectives', Policy Paper No. 29, Polish Institute for International Affairs, May 2012, p. 3. There is no realistic scenario in which Turkey would have a national nuclear deterrence force by 2020, but perceptions matter.
9. NATO, 'Deterrence and Defence Posture Review', para 9.
10. Note also that even though France considers all of its nuclear weapons to be strategic by nature (and Paris does not see any reason why its deterrent should be affected by a US-Russian agreement covering air-based nuclear weapons), it is always possible that a future French president could decide to give up the airborne component, rather than maintaining the only nuclear weapons in NATO-Europe not based at sea after a

complete withdrawal of US weapons. In this case, the scenarios mentioned earlier in the paragraph would be irrelevant.

11. The idea of making part of the French nuclear force available to NATO, which had been briefly floated around in Paris in the mid-1990s in case France reintegrated into the military structure, could be rejuvenated. (At that time, France had three nuclear squadrons and the discussion centred on making one available to NATO should Paris return to the military structure.) Paris does not consider its air-based weapons as being non-strategic. A deterrence upside of a greater French role would be the fact that France's nuclear doctrine covers a slightly wider spectrum of threats than US and UK doctrines; Paris also has a unique air-based capability on its aircraft carrier.
12. Joint Anglo-French Communiqué, 2 November 2010, <<https://update.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/anglo-french-communication.pdf>>, accessed 19 September 2012.
13. An explicit reference to the European Union would leave out Norway and Turkey.
14. NATO, 'Deterrence and Defence Posture Review', para 18.
15. *Ibid.*, para 20.
16. Phase III (by 2018) would include SM-3 Block IIA on Aegis frigates and two land locations (Poland and Romania). Phase IV (by 2020) would be identical, except for a new version of the interceptor (SM-3 Block IIB).
17. On this see Bruno Tertrais, 'In Defence of Deterrence', Institut Français des Relations Internationales, 2011.
18. By 2020, a new component might have to be added: cyber-warfare, provided that targeting and attribution are improved.
19. Seay, 'Nuclear Dilemmas', pp. 3–4.



# Keeping NATO Cohesive: The Illustrative Case of Italy

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**Paolo Foradori**

Of all European NATO states that participate in the forward deployment of US nuclear capabilities, Italy hosts the largest number of US non-strategic nuclear weapons.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, Italy's position on the current and future role of NATO NSNW in Europe has been understudied. The Italian case is not only an interesting situation in itself; it is also worth considering because it exemplifies the broader European perspective regarding the NSNW issue.

Indeed, Rome's viewpoint is illustrative of NATO's effort to strike a difficult compromise between Alliance obligations and disarmament aspirations. Italy, like most NATO members, no longer attributes significant value to the forward deployment of NSNW in Europe. However, Italy and most of its partners are also aware that a minority of European Allies – namely Turkey and some of the newer NATO members in Central and Eastern Europe<sup>2</sup> – continue to attribute residual assurance value to these weapons. Thus, Rome's priority is to avoid harming the Alliance over an issue that is rather irrelevant from a domestic point of view, but potentially divisive at the Alliance level. Pressing this individual issue is not considered to be worth the damage it could cause to NATO cohesion. While Italy would feel no great regret if NSNW were further reduced or even eliminated as a step towards a world free of nuclear weapons, the equilibrium achieved at the Lisbon and Chicago Summits is preferred over any concrete decision that may degrade NATO solidarity. Although diplomatic styles and languages may differ, the yielding stance that has been adopted by Italy is shared by most NATO partners, as the cohesion of the Alliance typically takes precedence over other considerations.

## **In Search of a Compromise**

It is estimated that of the 150–80 B-61 gravity bombs deployed in Europe, fifty to seventy bombs are currently hosted in Italy, the majority of which are held at the Aviano air base while the remainder are held at the Ghedi Torre air base. In addition, Italy possesses sixty-nine nuclear-capable Tornado aircraft.<sup>3</sup>

These numbers represent a dramatic reduction from the Cold War era, when Italy was one of the primary nuclear basing states in Western Europe, with a few hundred US nuclear weapons deployed on its territory between the mid-1950s and the early 1990s. Historically, hosting US NSNW has played a key role in the country's security and defence policy, serving a series of interrelated international and domestic objectives.<sup>4</sup> First, it contributed to Italy's status and prestige, thereby furthering its ambitions to become the



equal of other European powers. Second, Italian governments sought to secure decision-making powers in the event of an actual nuclear war. Third, the forward deployment of US NSNW was intended to reaffirm domestically Italy's pro-Western stance in the face of all opposing political parties and forces within the country, including the strongest communist party in Europe. Finally, despite being technically, scientifically and economically capable, Italy was unwilling to pursue its own national nuclear-weapons programme. Hosting US NSNW was considered to be an acceptable way for Italy to enjoy the military and political benefits associated with the possession of this nuclear capability.

#### *Devaluing Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons*

Since the end of the Cold War, the salience of NSNW in Italy has declined dramatically. The relevance of these weapons to the country's defence policy has diminished profoundly, and post-Cold War thinking dominates Rome's view of the forward deployment of US nuclear weapons.<sup>5</sup> This position is clearly expressed by former Italian Foreign Minister Massimo D'Alema who, using terms very similar to those of his German counterpart Guido Westerwelle,<sup>6</sup> describes NSNW as 'relics with no justifiable reason for their continuing existence ... they remain as testimonies from the past, with no utility in today's world'.<sup>7</sup> NSNW are no longer considered to be crucial assets for facing threats to Italy's security, and there are no realistic scenarios for their employment. Alternative conventional military means are believed to be capable of effectively meeting the country's needs. Furthermore, from Rome's perspective, NSNW are no longer regarded as political weapons that are necessary to guarantee Washington's commitment to Italy's defence. The relationship between Italy and the US is considered to be strong enough to withstand the withdrawal of US NSNW from Europe.<sup>8</sup>

Despite playing an extremely important role in Italy's initial willingness to host US NSNW, Italy's post-Cold War thinking no longer recognises the association of NSNW with international status or prestige. The Italian public's distaste for nuclear energy grew rapidly after the Chernobyl disaster of 1986, and has been exemplified by the passage of two nation-wide referendums that opposed the country's development of a civilian nuclear programme.<sup>9</sup> The second of these, which passed in 2011, buried any Italian ambition to exploit nuclear technology. It is reasonable to assume that the anti-nuclear sentiment of the Italian populace may be even stronger for military applications. According to Matthew Evangelista, 'The promotion of nuclear disarmament could become a source of status for Italy as a middle power – much as Italy has sought to bolster its status in the international realm with campaigns against the death penalty, against torture, and in favor of human rights'.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, Italy's commitment to global nuclear disarmament has grown stronger.<sup>11</sup> Italy's diplomatic initiatives support efforts to make the process

of nuclear disarmament and arms control intrinsic to the security of NATO and to reduce NATO's dependence on nuclear weapons.<sup>12</sup> The objective of further reducing and eventually eliminating NSNW from Europe is deemed by many representatives of the Italian foreign policy elite to be an important contribution towards the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons. According to President Giorgio Napolitano, 'NATO should consider how to contribute to the nuclear-free world goal of President Obama's Prague speech. Small, well-thought, concrete and concerted steps can go a long way in creating momentum toward the final goal'.<sup>13</sup>

The nuclear issue remains at the periphery of the Italian political debate and commands little public interest. Despite this, the parliament passed bipartisan motions in 2009, 2010 and 2012 that reiterate its desire for the government to assume an active role in supporting disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation measures in all international forums.<sup>14</sup> Although they are not binding, these motions reinforce the country's stance against nuclear weapons and reflect the intentions of a broad, cross-party alliance in Italian politics to steer the government, within a multilateral framework, towards the reduction and potential elimination of NSNW. The most recent motion, which was passed weeks before the NATO summit in Chicago, explicitly committed the government to, amongst other things, 'support, within the context of the Deterrence and Defence Posture Review and in light of the next NATO summit in Chicago in May 2012, the opportunity of further reductions in the numbers of [NSNW] in Europe, with a view to their elimination'. However, unless the government decides to tackle the issue head-on, these motions will remain within the realm of declaratory policy, without resolving the conflict between disarmament rhetoric and actual national policy towards NSNW.

#### *Prioritising Alliance Cohesion*

Although NSNW have lost much of their original relevance as military and political tools, Italy is aware that other members of the Alliance have different security perceptions. Some fear abandonment and continue to feel reassured by the forward deployment of US NSNW in Europe.<sup>15</sup> To safeguard the cohesion of the Alliance, these viewpoints must be considered. In the words of the president of the Chamber of Deputies, 'The credibility of an organisation like NATO depends greatly on its cohesion. Therefore, a shared priority is to prevent any possible jeopardy to the principle of indivisibility in the alliance's security'.<sup>16</sup> Another senior Italian diplomat summarised this perspective: 'Italy is firmly in favour of global disarmament and amenable to further reductions in the number of [NSNW], even to their complete withdrawal; however, this can only come about through measured, well-calibrated, and shared actions that maintain the alliance's cohesion'.<sup>17</sup>

Italy continues to regard NATO as the fundamental multilateral framework within which its national defence, security and foreign policy interests are best ensured. Thus, the principles of solidarity and indivisible security that underpin the Euro-Atlantic mutual defence pact are given priority over the elimination of NSNW, an issue that is of limited significance from a national perspective and is certainly insufficiently important to justify provoking a quarrel with other NATO members. Maintaining Alliance cohesion is particularly significant at present. The challenges presented by a difficult adjustment to new international challenges, the lack of a clearly-defined post-Cold War *raison d'être*, and its schizophrenic identity as both a traditional Article V defence alliance and a global expeditionary force have made the Alliance particularly volatile.

Given this delicate situation, Italy prefers that the issue of the future of NSNW be addressed with extreme caution to avoid radical or unilateral initiatives that could cause rifts in the Alliance. Italy favours a co-operative and gradual approach that is attentive to the security perceptions and concerns of all NATO members. To a large extent, the process by which decisions are made is as important as the actual decisions themselves.

When Italy was *forced* to take a position on this issue by the German-led initiative that pressed NATO to open a discussion on NSNW in the run-up to the 2010 Strategic Concept, it did not hesitate to side with the more conservative elements of NATO. Italy chose to avoid harming the cohesion of the Alliance, at the cost of slowing the process towards the long-term objective of nuclear abolition.

### **The Future**

As discussed, Italy no longer considers hosting US NSNW to be indispensable to the country's foreign and security policy. Thus, Italy would not be sorry to see NSNW further reduced or eliminated if and when such a consensus emerges within NATO. For this to happen, however, NATO-Russian relations must improve significantly, particularly in the eyes of the new NATO members of Central and Eastern Europe, which still have to be convinced that these Cold War weapons are no longer needed.

In the meantime, the post-Chicago status quo suits Italy, which is largely satisfied with the outcome of NATO's Deterrence and Defence Posture Review (DDPR). The compromise involved in the DDPR, which has temporarily bridged the differences between the opposing camps of nuclear withdrawal and retention, reflects Italy's policy of accommodation. In the words of an Italian diplomat at NATO, 'Italy is content with the balance struck by the DDPR, which preserves the status quo of the Lisbon Strategic Concept but keeps the door open to a process that could lead to further innovations in the future'.<sup>18</sup>

In this regard, Italy has strongly supported the language of paragraph 12 of the DDPR,<sup>19</sup> which tasks ‘appropriate committees’ within the North Atlantic Council with the development of ‘concepts for how to ensure the broadest possible participation of Allies concerned in their nuclear sharing arrangements, including in case NATO were to decide to reduce its reliance on non-strategic nuclear weapons based in Europe’.<sup>20</sup>

The Italian perspective of the ‘concepts’ introduced by paragraph 12 of the DDPR is not yet clear. While the country is open to discussing nearly all of the available options, any hypothesis involving the consolidation of European NSNW in Italy (or in Italy and Turkey), should other NATO European countries decide to withdraw NSNW from their soil, would be firmly rejected. This is ‘the country’s only non-negotiable *red line*, which we don’t want to be crossed’.<sup>21</sup>

There are two plausible reasons for this position. First, the broadest possible participation in the peacetime deployment of nuclear forces is deemed to be a cornerstone of the Alliance’s burden-sharing arrangements. Thus, a further reduction of the number of host countries might affect NATO’s cohesion, preserving which, as discussed, is the main concern of Italy.<sup>22</sup> Secondly, in contrast to the Cold War era, when Rome thought that its international status could be improved by the presence of US NSNW, Italy now does not want to be singled out as the only *Western* European country that hosts US NSNW. Due to the continuing process of nuclear de-legitimation, a ‘negative prestige’ is currently attached to nuclear weapons. It would be harmful to Italy’s international reputation to keep these weapons if their elimination is sought, and achieved, by other Western European powers.<sup>23</sup>

Other scenarios of consolidation that do not result in the singling out of Italy, such as a plan for gradually consolidating NSNW in the United States, might be politically more palatable to Rome. Again, such decisions would still have to be reached with the consent of all NATO nations.<sup>24</sup> The aforementioned 2012 parliamentary motion hints at this possibility by calling on the Italian government to support:<sup>25</sup>

[T]he opportunity to further reduce the number of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, with the goal of their elimination, through the support of concrete proposals which permit defining, in a consensual way within the Atlantic Alliance, intermediary steps and a final timing for the implementation of this objective; these actions should consider developments in the broader political and security context of the relations between NATO and the Russian Federation and be conducted within a framework of reciprocity.

According to the first signatory of the motion,<sup>26</sup> this wording refers to a proposal by former US Senator Sam Nunn, which is explicitly referenced in

the motion's preamble. The proposal calls for the consolidation of NSNW to the US within five years, with the final timing and pace of the consolidation process determined by broad political and security developments between NATO and Russia, including but not limited to NSNW deployments near NATO's borders.<sup>27</sup>

For the many reasons discussed in this paper, Italy is unlikely to alter the NSNW status quo. Additionally, the current technocratic government is in power for the sole purpose of preventing default and economic crisis. Given this government's limited mandate, its technical nature, and the fact that it is fully occupied by other economic and social priorities, it is doubtful that the Italian government would be willing to take a decision about this issue. The general lack of public interest and concern regarding the custody of these weapons, and the fact that a decision about the purchase of new F-35s to replace the ageing dual-capable Tornados has already been made,<sup>28</sup> imply that the status quo is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

The compromise of the DDPR – agreed upon at the highest political level in NATO – reflects many of the complex calculations and trade-offs made by Italy regarding the continued forward deployment of US NSNW. Moreover, NATO, just like Italy, has decided that the residual presence of a couple of hundred NSNW is, at least for the moment, not worth risking the cohesion of the Alliance over.

### Notes and References

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5. Paolo Foradori, 'Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Italy: Striking a Balance between Disarmament Aspirations and Alliance Obligations', *The Nonproliferation Review* (Vol. 19, No. 1, March 2012), pp. 13–29.

6. After the elections of November 2009, the new German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle made his support for Angela Merkel's coalition government conditional on its definite commitment to the elimination of NSNW, which he called 'a relic of the Cold War ... [that] no longer serve[s] a military purpose'. Guido Westerwelle, speech given at the 46<sup>th</sup> Munich Security Conference, 6 February 2010, <<http://www.securityconference.de/Westerwelle-Guido.568+M544261a91d7.0.html>>, accessed 19 September 2012.
7. Author interview with Massimo D'Alema, Rome, 15 July 2010. D'Alema belongs to the Partito Democratico (PD) group in parliament and is both a member of the Foreign and Community Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies and the president of the Parliamentary Committee for the Security of the Republic (COPASIR). He was prime minister (1998–2000) and foreign minister (2006–08).
8. Author interview with Gianfranco Fini, 15 July 2010. Fini, a member of the parliamentary group Futuro e Libertà per il Terzo Polo, was foreign minister (2004–06) and is currently president of the Italian Chamber of Deputies. Fini answered the questions in a personal, and not an official, capacity.
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12. Author interview with a senior official of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rome, 18 June 2012.
13. Giorgio Napolitano, president of the Italian Republic, address to the North Atlantic Council, 2 March 2010, <<http://www.quirinale.it/elementi/Continua.aspx?tipo=Discorso&key=1794>>, accessed 19 September 2012.
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20. NATO, 'Deterrence and Defence Posture Review', press release issued 20 May 2012, para 12, <[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_87597.htm?mode=pressrelease](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87597.htm?mode=pressrelease)>, accessed 19 September 2012.
21. Author interview with a senior Italian diplomat in NATO, 7 June 2012.
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24. For a discussion of possible consolidation scenarios, see George Perkovich, Malcolm Chalmers, Steven Pifer, Paul Schulte and Jaclyn Tandler, 'Looking Beyond the Chicago



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28. It is interesting to note that the political and public discussion about the purchase of the F-35 aircraft did not involve the possible nuclear role of this fighter but rather revolved around the high cost of the aircraft and the subsequent need to buy fewer fighters than originally planned (a reduction in the purchased quantity from 120 to 90 aircraft).



# Turkey's Unchanging NSNW Policy

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**Mustafa Kibaroglu**

Even in the absence of an imminent nuclear threat to Turkish or European security today, views held by the Turkish security elite on the role of NATO non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) have altered little over the past two decades. Civilian and military officials think alike. This uniformity in viewpoint seemingly stems from the prestige attributed to nuclear power – as is the case elsewhere in the world. However, there are, of course, other specific reasons why Turkish civilian and military officials want to retain American nuclear weapons on Turkey's soil; the first and foremost is the perceived threat from a changing and uncertain international security environment.

Turkish policy holds that nuclear weapons continue to be critically important to the security of NATO, despite being regarded more as political weapons. It also commits Turkey to the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons and supports every effort in that direction. This commitment becomes even more important when considered in the light of the developments taking place in Turkey's backyard, such as the internal turmoil in Syria and Iran's resolve to advance its own nuclear capabilities. However, Turkish officials stress that attaining such a goal will not be possible any time soon, and that patience will be needed for a nuclear-weapons-free world to be realised. So long as these weapons still exist elsewhere, they argue, it is indispensable for NATO to preserve a safe, secure and effective nuclear arsenal capable of deterring adversaries and reassuring the Allies.

Turkey therefore emphasises its preference that NATO explicitly confirm its commitment to preserving an effective and credible deterrent by maintaining a combination of conventional and nuclear capabilities. The country also remains determined to preserve the transatlantic link and share a portion of the nuclear burden, contributing to the fundamental principles of NATO nuclear strategy.<sup>1</sup>

The deployment of these weapons in Europe is therefore considered an integral part of allied burden-sharing, and Turkey would prefer that other NATO members also continue to host US nuclear weapons, if only in symbolic numbers, to avoid being isolated as the only European NATO member hosting US nuclear weapons. In 2005, there were reportedly some 480 tactical nuclear weapons deployed in a handful of NATO countries.<sup>2</sup> This figure has decreased to approximately 200 according to more recent reports.<sup>3</sup>

Since the US nuclear weapons stationed on Turkish territory are assigned a high strategic value, both politically and militarily, within Turkey's national security policy, Turkish governments have refrained from modifying standing

policy. Most officials believe that this state policy should not be the victim of hastiness or short-term political goals. Hence the current Justice and Development Party (AKP) government essentially maintains the policy of its predecessor with respect to not only the status of US nuclear weapons deployed in Turkey, but also the role and significance of these weapons within national security.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Origins and Profile of US Nuclear Weapons in Turkey**

The decision to deploy US nuclear weapons in Turkey was taken at NATO's Paris Summit in December 1957. Accordingly, American intermediate-range nuclear missiles, namely the Jupiter missile, were first deployed near Izmir in 1961. Around the same time, US nuclear weapons deliverable by American and Turkish military aircraft were progressively deployed to select air bases near Ankara, Eskisehir, Balikesir and Malatya. However, a secret agreement reached between US President John F Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev during the Cuban Missile Crisis stipulated that Jupiter would be withdrawn from Turkey in subsequent years.<sup>5</sup> The other, aircraft-based, nuclear weapons in Turkey remained, and continued to do so for the next half century.

The withdrawal of Jupiter missiles from Turkish territory, after only two years of deployment, did not dramatically change Turkey's role in the nuclear strategies of the United States or in the contingency planning of NATO during the remainder of the Cold War or thereafter. By the mid-1980s, 'the United States had stored some 500 nuclear warheads in Turkey, and as many as 300 of them were bombs for aircraft and Turkish squadrons consisting of nuclear-certified F-104s, F-4s, and F-100s, [which] could be armed with four types of bombs with yields up to several hundred kilotons'.<sup>6</sup> These squadrons of jet fighters, stationed at air bases across the country, were assigned to nuclear-strike missions as part of NATO contingency plans.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Case for Change in Turkish Policy**

As mentioned above, there is little desire within Turkish political or military circles to see US nuclear weapons repatriated in the near future. This perspective is best understood by viewing international security developments through a rather narrow lens, which emphasises only the military perspective. A broader lens, however, which also considers the political and economic dimensions of Turkey's relations with other countries, particularly within its region, yields an alternate analysis and set of policy prescriptions, which involving the draw-down of US nuclear weapons stationed in Turkey.<sup>8</sup>

#### *Lack of Military Use*

There is widespread agreement among international security experts that no feasible scenario exists in which NATO NSNW deployed in Europe would be used. By extension, there is no military utility for these weapons.

Turkey remains extremely cautious about singling out countries in its neighbourhood, as recent statements by national politicians illustrate.<sup>9</sup> Ankara's posture on the Iranian issue, the source of threat in deliberations over the 'Missile Shield' debate, is a prime example. It is therefore unlikely that Turkey would consider taking part in contingencies which involve the use of Turkish-based US nuclear weapons against Iran unless it acquires a nuclear-weapons capability that it intends to use against Turkey or the Allies. In the absence of such a development, it is difficult to foresee a potential adversary being relevant to the nuclear weapons stationed in the country.

Syria presents an interesting possibility. Despite greatly strained relations following the downing of a Turkish jet fighter by the Syrian air defence units in international airspace in the eastern Mediterranean and the recent exchanges of artillery fire over their borders, envisioning Syria as a possible target for nuclear weapons remains highly unlikely.<sup>10</sup> A similar situation applies in relations with Iraq, which was until recently a protectorate of the US after the 2003 war. There can be no other scenarios involving potential uses of US nuclear weapons deployed on Turkey's territory, considering that Turkey's other neighbours are Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece. While Turkey has problematic relations with Armenia and Greece, no sober approach would contemplate using NATO nuclear weapons against these US-allied countries. By the same token, contingencies involving the use of NSNW against Russia would have no significance in the case of a confrontation that would justify their continued deployment. That is to say, if a confrontation between NATO and Russia were to come to the point of the use of force against each other, then the presence of nuclear weapons on Turkish territory would most likely have no significant effect on the outcome of such a catastrophic development. Therefore, trying to justify the deployment of NSNW in Turkey for such contingencies would not make much sense.

#### *A Nuclear-Free Turkey and NATO Deterrence*

Many believe in the need to preserve NATO's extended nuclear deterrence guarantees, and argue that withdrawal of US nuclear weapons from Europe (or Turkey) would weaken the Alliance's deterrent capability. Yet in an age of intensified relations between NATO and Russia, as a result of the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act<sup>11</sup> and the formation of the NATO-Russia Council in 2002,<sup>12</sup> it is difficult to envisage confrontational military scenarios between NATO and Russia. Even if this were to be the case, the presence of US NSNW in Europe would not play any significant role in deterring Russia from potentially hostile policies towards former Warsaw Pact members. In contingencies where NATO would want to deter Russia from pursuing a particular course of action, NSNW would probably be the last tool proposed in the formulation of effective Alliance strategy. Instead, strategic nuclear weapons would have to be considered for an effective deterrent against a

nuclear threat from Russia. Moreover, the reassurance aspect of extended deterrence may still be achieved by means of temporary deployment of US nuclear submarines in the eastern Mediterranean and also by way of port visits to allied countries like Turkey and Greece. Instead of sending nuclear missiles, visiting US submarines would send a powerful deterrent message toward the hypothetical aggressor.<sup>13</sup> Hence, it must be acknowledged that NATO's extended deterrence is far too comprehensive a concept to depend solely on a small number of NSNW deployed in only a handful of allied countries.

*Inconsistent Policy on the WMD-Free Zone in the Middle East*

Turkish political and military authorities have repeatedly emphasised the need to create a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East, which should eventually be expanded to a WMD-free zone in the Middle East. These statements have been made in the shadow of concerns over the existing nuclear capabilities of Israel as well as the significant achievements observed in the Iranian nuclear programme.<sup>14</sup> It is true that the creation of a WMD-free zone would address many of the region's security problems. However, the powerful reservations of key states like Israel, Iran and Egypt obstruct the timely realisation of this goal. That said, high-level Turkish statements are often met with suggestions by regional security experts (particularly those in Iran) that Turkey implement its own proposals by ridding its territory of US nuclear weapons.<sup>15</sup> There is a certain degree of rationale in this criticism, as consistency in Turkey's position would require the removal of NSNW from its soil. In theory, the presence of US nuclear weapons on Turkish territory would not preclude Turkey from lending its support to a nuclear-weapons-free zone. However, in practice, due to its ever-increasing involvement in the politics of the Middle East, especially over the last decade, Turkey is seen by its southern neighbours as an integral part of the region.

*Lack of a Nuclear-Strike Mission for the Turkish Air Force*

The Turkish air force no longer has a role in the nuclear-strike missions of the Alliance. During the Cold War and its immediate aftermath, Turkish air force units continued to take part in nuclear-strike exercises carried out by allied countries. More recently, however, Turkish military aircraft have been participating in these exercises as non-nuclear air-defence escort units.<sup>16</sup> The Turkish military's control over the US nuclear weapons deployed on its territory is therefore minimised, raising some concerns over the decision-making and command-and-control procedures pertaining to these weapons. This issue may become problematic in the future. To avoid any possible unwanted consequences stemming from diminished authority over the use of these weapons, and taking into consideration that the US may wish to use them without Turkish permission, withdrawal would be a wise policy for Turkey.

**The Iran Factor**

One particular concern of some individuals in Western policy, military and scholarly circles must be addressed here. If, at some point in the future, the United States or NATO agreed to withdraw nuclear weapons stationed in Turkey, and if Iran were to weaponise its nuclear capabilities, there are postulations that Turkey might be compelled to develop its own nuclear capability.<sup>17</sup> This issue is very much open to speculation, and such suggestions are generally founded upon weak situational analysis. There is no question that Turkey would be negatively affected by an Iranian nuclear bomb. Yet this outcome would not in itself be grounds for Turkey to go down the same path, at least if an Iranian nuclear weapon materialised in the foreseeable future. Three reasons support this assertion: first, Turkey is a NATO member and would continue to benefit from extended deterrence; second, Turkey has a European vocation and is unlikely to risk jeopardising its chances of EU accession' and third, Turkey has historically observed its obligations and commitments under international treaties and conventions, demonstrating its aversion to being treated as a 'rogue state'.<sup>18</sup> It can also be deduced from the earlier discussion that the US nuclear weapons that have long been stationed on Turkish territory now have only symbolic value, and thus their possible withdrawal alone is not likely to prompt Turkey to embark upon a crash nuclear programme. Together, these points should offer confidence that the physical presence of US nuclear weapons in Turkey would not be the only thing preventing the Turkish domino from falling in the event of a nuclear-armed Iran.

**Conclusion**

Against this background, logic suggests that Turkey should withdraw US nuclear weapons deployed on its territory. However, Turkish governments have so far been cool to this idea and have taken no concrete steps that would suggest otherwise. It is, first and foremost, Turkey's responsibility to take a decision in this respect before developments in other political and military forums dictate policy. By deciding to withdraw these weapons, Turkey may set a very valuable and meaningful precedent for the countries in its neighbourhood. Turkey's profile, which is increasing in the Middle Eastern public domain as well as amongst the political and military authorities of these countries, may help to improve its previously less-than-favourable image in the region.

Turkey has nothing to lose by returning nuclear weapons stationed on its territory. However, there are certainly significant political and military gains to be had by contributing to multinational confidence-building efforts in this highly unstable part of the world. Now is the time to take bold yet courageous decisions, as Turkish decision-makers have proven they are willing and able to do on a number of occasions.



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# After the DDPR: Central and Eastern European Perspectives

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**Jacek Durkalec**

The Deterrence and Defence Posture Review (DDPR) finalised at the NATO Summit in Chicago in May 2012 represented a consensus among all NATO states regarding NATO's 'appropriate mix of capabilities', including its nuclear forces.<sup>1</sup> As Central and Eastern European states had hoped, the review endorsed the NATO nuclear status quo and reaffirmed the effectiveness of all elements of the NATO deterrent, including the forward-deployed US non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) in Europe. Furthermore, the DDPR confirmed a consensus that NATO members would be prepared to consider reducing NSNW in the context of reciprocal steps by Russia, seemingly bolstering a commitment that while 'seeking' such reciprocity, they would avoid any 'significant' unilateral reductions of forward-deployed US NSNW.<sup>2</sup> Even Allies considered to be open to unilateral NATO NSNW reductions, such as Germany, agreed that NATO should only significantly alter its NSNW deployment with Russian reciprocation.<sup>3</sup>

However, the dilemma within NATO over how to maintain an effective deterrent while simultaneously creating the conditions for a world free of nuclear weapons was not resolved in Chicago. Despite highlighting a need for Russian reciprocity, the DDPR is ambiguous about what reciprocal steps from Russia might enable NATO to undertake certain actions. This leaves space for divergent interpretation among NATO Allies. For this reason, Central and Eastern European states have to engage further in debates within the Alliance, primarily in discussions tasked by the DDPR aimed at clarifying just what forms of reciprocity could lead to significant changes in NATO's NSNW posture.<sup>4</sup> Engaging in this debate would enable Central and Eastern European states to influence other NATO members' positions, and to refine their own, regarding this trade-off.

## **Considering a Trade-Off**

Within this debate the approaches, and even the levels of engagement, of Central and Eastern European states will vary to some extent, as they did during the DDPR process. Poland will probably strive to retain its position as the most active regional player, while its preferences may be shaped by its ambition to be perceived as the bridge between proponents and opponents of further reductions or elimination of forward-deployed NSNW. The Baltic states, which are most vulnerable to any potential threat from Russia, are likely to have a more cautious approach to potential trade-offs.

*The Prize*

The Central and Eastern European states do not perceive Russia to be an imminent threat, and are vitally interested in a constructive NATO-Russian relationship. However, they stress that Russia's military capabilities, including its nuclear forces, should be taken into account in NATO's strategic considerations. The 2008 Russian-Georgian war strengthened their perception that a conventional military threat from Russia cannot be ignored.

Russian NSNW have been a matter of particular concern for Russia's neighbours such as Poland and the Baltic states. For several years, they have expressed worries about the presence of nuclear-capable delivery vehicles and the possible presence of Russian NSNW near their borders, particularly in Kaliningrad.<sup>5</sup> Their fears were exacerbated by the 2009 *Zapad* exercises – in which Russia simulated a nuclear strike against Poland – and by Russian threats to deploy dual-capable Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad in response to planned US missile-defence bases in Poland. Continued uncertainty regarding the numbers, locations, doctrine, operational status and command arrangements of Russian NSNW make it impossible to alleviate their worries.

Central and Eastern European states are concerned that in contrast to NATO, which has already substantially reduced its arsenal to about 180 US NSNW, Russia still retains a substantially larger number of operational warheads in Europe. According to unofficial estimates this arsenal could include about 2,000 operational NSNW.<sup>6</sup> As such, in the face of current uncertainties and risks related to Russia's nuclear posture, Central and Eastern European states perceive that this is not an appropriate time to change NATO's current nuclear arrangements.

*The Price*

The value that states place on the stationing of US NSNW in Europe will certainly influence their positions on what price should be paid during any NSNW trade-off between NATO and Russia. Central and Eastern European states seem to vary in the value they place on the role of forward-deployed NSNW as an important embodiment of both the transatlantic link and the principle of Alliance burden-sharing. Poland, for instance, seems to emphasise its role as a bargaining chip in potential US-Russian negotiations,<sup>7</sup> so while it may not support significant unilateral reductions, it may be more open to repatriating forward-deployed NSNW to the US. Others, for example the Czech Republic and Hungary, publicly assert the more 'traditional' roles of these weapons, and seem to be more sceptical about the withdrawal of NSNW.<sup>8</sup>

Nonetheless, these states' positions will also be significantly influenced by their assessment of the overall condition of the Alliance and its strategic environment. During the DDPR process, for example, their approaches

to NSNW in Europe were influenced by a range of wider concerns, which will continue to affect positions on NSNW trade-offs. These included the uncertainty about long-term US engagement in Europe; their concerns about the gradual weakening of NATO's conventional forces, exacerbated by defence cuts; ambiguities about the implementation of 'visible assurances'; uncertainties regarding the contribution of missile defence to NATO's deterrent; their concerns about a potentially nuclear-armed Iran; and last but not least their belief that NATO nuclear disarmament steps will have a limited impact on the decisions of potential proliferators of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

### **The Bargaining Chips**

The three main categories of reciprocal steps that may be sought from Russia regarding its NSNW have already been laid out in NATO's Strategic Concept, and the hopes of Central and Eastern European states will be consistent with these categories: securing increased transparency; the relocation of Russian NSNW away from the proximity of NATO Allies, and a reduced disparity between NATO and Russian arsenals. Yet, as with other NATO members, Central and Eastern European countries do not seem to know themselves what these requirements mean in practice. It is nonetheless possible, taking into account the positions on European-based NSNW articulated so far, to speculate about how they may wish to balance the trade-offs in each category.

#### *Transparency*

Central and Eastern European states agree that reciprocal transparency related to NSNW will be an important confidence-building measure in the NATO-Russian relationship and may pave the way for further steps such as reciprocal relocations or reductions of NSNW.

Given Russia's suspected failure to fully implement the 1991–92 Presidential Nuclear Initiatives, it would be important for Central and Eastern European states that any agreement – whether on NSNW transparency, relocation or reduction – is verifiable and sustainable.<sup>9</sup> As such, they would desire a mechanism that would enable NATO or the US to verify the number and locations of Russia's warheads, and would provide warning in case Russia decided to make any changes in its arsenal. However, even unverified transparency measures, such as formalised reporting or announcements, regarding the number and location of NSNW are likely to be perceived by Central and Eastern European states as a step towards an agreement to reduce or relocate NSNW.

An initial list of desired transparency measures was included in an April 2011 non-paper promoted by Poland, and eventually endorsed by all Central and Eastern European states.<sup>10</sup> The non-paper first proposed the exchange

of information on NSNW through an agreed standard reporting format for warhead inventories. It also proposed notifications of NSNW movements; reciprocal visits by military officials; clarifications of the role of nuclear weapons in military doctrines, policies and concepts; and exchanges of information regarding the number of weapons that have been eliminated or put into storage as a result of the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives.<sup>11</sup>

A more detailed proposal of possible NATO-Russian NSNW transparency measures was prepared during the DDR process by the Weapons of Mass Destruction Control and Disarmament Committee (WCDC).<sup>12</sup> It is, however, unclear whether and in what way the WCDC's work informed or modified the options included in the non-paper. The language of the DDR suggests that NATO members have yet to reach agreement on a common proposal of transparency measures that could be presented to Russia.<sup>13</sup>

As Russian NSNW may be located next to Poland and the Baltic states, these states would prefer to have as much information about Russian NSNW as possible. However, their expectations will be tempered by the US assessment of whether transparency measures proposed in a NATO-Russian framework will contribute to potential bilateral nuclear arms-control negotiations in a US-Russian framework. Similarly, their expectations will also be tempered by a consideration of the potential impact of mutual transparency on NATO's deterrence capabilities and the security concerns of NSNW-hosting states, which will probably be decisive in this matter. It is unlikely that hosting states could be convinced to pay for Central and Eastern European states' peace of mind by exchanging an uncomfortable amount of information regarding the NSNW hosted on their soil.

#### *Relocation*

As with transparency measures, removal of Russian nuclear warheads from territories adjacent to NATO borders is particularly important to Poland and the Baltic states. Some observers from Poland and Latvia have suggested that NATO and Russia might agree to a limited non-deployment zone for NSNW on either side of the NATO-Russian border.<sup>14</sup> However, there is little discussion over exactly what area this zone might encompass. The relocation of Russian NSNW beyond the Ural Mountains would probably be preferable to Central and Eastern European states, while they would similarly not be averse to consolidating US NSNW into fewer sites in Europe.

Again, while Central and Eastern European states may prefer some hosting locations over others, any decision on consolidation will depend heavily on the opinion of hosting states. From a practical perspective, given that Russian and US warheads could be relocated quickly, or delivered over a relatively long range, robust verification mechanisms for relocation may be more important than the exact locations themselves. Similarly, it would not



be particularly important if such an agreement were secured through US-Russian bilateral negotiations or through a NATO-Russian framework.

It is likely that Central and Eastern European states would prefer that relocation of Russian weapons were accompanied by reductions in the Russian arsenal. Simply relocating Russian NSNW stockpiles beyond the Urals without reducing them would create an impression that NATO members were enhancing their own security at the expense of NATO partners in Asia.

#### *Numerical Reductions*

Central and Eastern European states are interested in phased, reciprocal reductions that would gradually lessen the disparity between NATO and Russian NSNW. The US-Russia New START follow-on treaty negotiations seem to be the preferred option for achieving this goal.

While the opacity of Russia's NSNW forces persists, and due to the US need to preserve negotiating flexibility, Central and Eastern European states would probably avoid advocating a particular numerical limit during debates within NATO. Rather, it would be more useful if NATO members at this stage elaborated a list of principles that could be applied to any upcoming US-Russian negotiations. Such principles could be broad enough to leave space for further internal NATO consultations during any actual US-Russian negotiations.

Whether the US and Russia agree to reduce their NSNW holdings by certain proportions, or to a shared upper limit, will be a matter of secondary importance. However, Central and Eastern European states would probably insist that the numerical disparity between NATO and Russian NSNW should be addressed by pursuing deeper reductions in the Russian NSNW arsenal. Although they stand by this principle, it is unlikely that they would aim to achieve absolute numerical parity in a shared cap on NSNW. If NSNW reductions were linked to further strategic nuclear reductions, there is a chance Russia may accept uneven reductions to its NSNW arsenal in exchange for uneven cuts in the US non-deployed strategic arsenal, where the latter enjoys a numerical advantage. To elicit uneven cuts in Russia's NSNW arsenal, Central and Eastern European states will probably try to exploit the fact that, in contrast to Russia, NATO has already made dramatic unilateral cuts to the number of NATO NSNW in Europe.

For Poland and the Baltic states, an alternative could be to seek from Russia reductions in the NSNW that are most threatening to them, such as those delivered by strictly offensive systems such as short-range ballistic missiles. While eliminating Russian nuclear-tipped short-range ballistic missiles may not reduce the overall number of Russian NSNW, it would reduce the number

of ways in which such weapons could be used against them. Although the elimination of Russian warheads for short-range missiles was included in the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives, it is still unclear if such steps were ever taken. However, if US-Russian negotiations resulted in Russia reducing its nuclear air defence assets, or any other part of its NSNW arsenal, Central and Eastern European states would still see this as a step towards further NATO-Russian reductions.

Although Central and Eastern European states see space for numerical reduction in forward-deployed US NSNW, the exact level of reductions they would consider in the context of reciprocal Russian steps would depend upon their, and subsequently NATO's, assumptions about deterrence requirements. It is likely that the US study of further nuclear arsenal cuts, conducted in the framework of the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review's implementation study, will have a crucial role in defining the requirements.<sup>15</sup> Central and Eastern European approaches will also be influenced by NATO deliberations on additional concepts for how to ensure the broadest possible participation in nuclear-sharing arrangements.<sup>16</sup>

It is likely that the most controversial issue among Central and Eastern European states will be whether the complete withdrawal of forward-deployed US NSNW should be contemplated during potential NATO or US talks with Russia. While Poland seems to be the most open to such a scenario, it is unclear what kind of developments would make it consent to such a step. The Baltic states would probably be extremely reluctant to consider such an option.

#### **Alternative Concessions?**

Central and Eastern European states are aware that Russia's conventional inferiority when compared to NATO is the main rationale behind Russia's NSNW arsenal. Nonetheless, they would object to tempting Russia into reciprocal reductions in NSNW by offering conventional concessions from NATO. Although NATO maintains conventional superiority in Europe, Central and Eastern European states feel that within their region Russia has the conventional upper-hand, and it is this regional element that concerns them the most. They are also concerned that the lack of a functioning conventional arms-control regime in Europe makes it challenging to assess properly Russia's conventional forces, which are currently undergoing modernisation. Central and Eastern European states would rather see mutual NATO-Russian concerns related to conventional forces resolved by modernising and revitalising the conventional arms-control regime in Europe, rather than linking conventional arms to NSNW that might block progress in each field. They might, however, consider a process of parallel but not closely linked negotiations, particularly given Polish and Baltic state concerns about Russian dual-capable short-range missiles.

Similarly, Central and Eastern European states are currently against sweetening any NSNW trade-off with Russia by offering concessions related to NATO's ballistic-missile-defence capabilities. Russia has expressed particular concerns about the potential deployment of missile-defence assets in Poland as part of Phases III and IV of the US European Phased Adaptive Approach, but Poland has objected to any steps that may alter current plans. By the same token, if Russia demanded concessions regarding the deployment of US ballistic missile interceptors in Romania, this would be met by considerable opposition from Romania and Bulgaria, which are both currently in range of Iranian ballistic missiles.

However, if Central and Eastern European states wish to convince Russia to alleviate their concerns related to NSNW, they may have to reconsider. Ultimately, whether or not ballistic-missile defence is used as a bargaining chip in any NSNW trade-off depends upon the US, which has so far consistently rejected any limits on its missile-defence system.

### **Conclusions**

It is likely that Central and Eastern European states share the US's cautious optimism that Russia may alter its currently reluctant approach to reciprocal NSNW reductions, and that patience may provide opportunities to address the concerns of NATO states both for and against NSNW reductions. Given that the DDPR strengthens the idea that NSNW reductions will be made in the context of reciprocal Russian steps, Central and Eastern European states will be eager to convince NATO members that they should avoid any significant unilateral steps, and that any reciprocal measures should not diminish the perceived security of any NATO state. This approach is unlikely to change even if transparency measures reveal that Russia has fewer NSNW than typically expected.

It is, however, plausible that all Central and Eastern European states will be open-minded to political realities that may emerge in the future and that new perspectives regarding the most desirable forms of reciprocity may evolve. Even the states that are most resistant to unilateral reductions may have to reconsider if the nuclear status quo becomes unsustainable. Decisions made by hosting states such as Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands regarding the next generation of nuclear-capable aircraft, and ultimately their willingness to continue hosting NSNW, will complicate Central and Eastern European approaches to NSNW reductions considerably. Similarly, they will have to take into account the position of the US, UK and France in wider disarmament movements, changes in Russian foreign policy towards NATO, and the effects of potential WMD-proliferation on NATO Allies such as Turkey.

While the positions of Central and Eastern European states are not carved in stone, they will not shy away from pressing the case for their preferred form

of reciprocity. They favour a step-by-step approach to reciprocity, beginning with talks on reciprocal transparency and confidence-building measures and leading to reciprocal reductions and, if possible, the relocation of Russian NSNW. Given the current deadlock between NATO and Russia regarding NSNW reductions, prioritising one category of reciprocation above another does not seem relevant at the moment. Central and Eastern European states will probably welcome any path that leads towards a satisfactory process for the negotiation and implementation of reciprocal NSNW agreements.

### Notes and References

1. Central and Eastern European states include: Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, the Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia), Bulgaria and Romania. This paper is based on the author's reflections after interviews in the capitals of all of the Central and Eastern European NATO member states, conducted in March 2012. For more about these states' approaches to the NATO DDR, see: Jacek Durkalec, 'NATO Defence and Deterrence Posture: Central and Eastern European Perspectives', PISM Policy Paper No. 29, 15 May 2012, <<http://www.pism.pl/Publikacje/PISM-Policy-Papers/No-29-NATO-Defence-and-Deterrence-Posture-Central-and-Eastern-European-Perspectives>>, accessed 19 September 2012. The author would like to thank those who commented on earlier drafts of this paper, particularly Andrea Berger, Hugh Chalmers, Lukasz Kulesa, Isabelle Williams and David S Yost.
2. NATO, 'Deterrence and Defence Posture Review', press release issued 20 May 2012, para 27, <[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_87597.htm?mode=pressrelease](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87597.htm?mode=pressrelease)>, accessed 19 September 2012. NATO has not clarified what 'significant' unilateral reductions might be. Such wording may imply that NATO members may agree to minor, but classified, reductions to retain their potential value in US-Russian nuclear-arms-control negotiations. Guy B Roberts, 'Role of Nuclear Weapons in NATO's Deterrence and Defense Posture Review: Prospects for Change', in Tom Nichols, Douglas Stuart and Jeffrey D McCausland (eds), *Tactical Nuclear Weapons and NATO* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2012), p. 396.
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6. *Ibid.*, p. 53, figure 13.
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8. See, for example: Jiri Sedivy and Eva Svobodova, 'Czech expectations for the Chicago Summit', *Polish Quarterly of International Affairs* (Vol. 21, No. 1, Winter 2012), pp. 13–14; Peter Siklosi, 'NATO Summit in Chicago: Hungarian Perspective', CENAA (Bratislava) Transatlantic Files, 1/2012, p. 9, <[http://cenaa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Transatlantic-files-2012\\_1.pdf](http://cenaa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Transatlantic-files-2012_1.pdf)>, accessed 19 September 2012.
9. For example, according to the final report of the bipartisan US Congressional Commission: Russia 'is no longer in compliance with its PNI commitments'. *America's Strategic Posture: The Final Report of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2009), p. 13.
10. 'Non-paper submitted by Poland, Norway, Germany and the Netherlands about increasing transparency and confidence with regard to tactical nuclear weapons in Europe', Berlin, 14 April 2011, <<http://www.fas.org/programs/ssp/nukes/nuclearweapons/nato-nonpaper041411.pdf>>, accessed 19 September 2012.
11. The Presidential Nuclear Initiatives were public, unilateral declarations exchanged by Presidents George H W Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev in 1991 and Boris Yeltsin in 1992, in which they committed to remove, reduce, eliminate or consolidate certain categories of NSNW. As they did not include verification measures, there are doubts whether Russia has fully met its commitments, especially as to whether it eliminated nuclear warheads for short-range missiles. Kristensen, 'Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons', pp. 46–51.
12. *Armscontrol.org*, 'NAC Taskings to the Weapons of Mass Destruction Control and Disarmament Committee (WCDC)', <[http://www.armscontrol.org/system/files/DEU\\_F\\_WP.pdf](http://www.armscontrol.org/system/files/DEU_F_WP.pdf)>, accessed 19 September 2012.
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15. For more information, see Robert Burns, 'New Nuclear Arms Cuts Seem Likely, Maybe Not Until After Election', *Washington Times*, 2 July 2012, <[http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/jul/2/new-nuclear-arms-cuts-seem-likely-maybe-not-until-/->](http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/jul/2/new-nuclear-arms-cuts-seem-likely-maybe-not-until-/), accessed 19 September 2012.
16. NATO, 'Deterrence and Defence Posture Review', para 12.



# The Russian Perspective on NSNW

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Igor Sutyagin

Any discussion of Russian attitudes towards NATO non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) can quickly tie itself into a Gordian Knot, given the complexities of Russia's current circumstances. The nation has lost its empire and its political classes are unable to reform Russia into a modern economic power. The rapid development of Russia's new competitors, including its once aspiring 'younger brother' China, and the comparative successes of its old competitors cast these and other frustrations in a painful light, leading to a deepening mismatch between Russian plans and Russian realities. The Russian government is losing its influence in domestic and international politics, and is contemplating a future of modernised NATO NSNW and ballistic-missile-defence (BMD) capabilities, forcing the Kremlin to clutch at straws in an attempt to preserve Russia's international status. Non-strategic nuclear weapons are one of these straws, and as such it is very difficult for Russian politicians to even discuss NSNW reductions.

## The Domestic Dimension

The Center of Strategic Research (CSR), the same organisation that successfully predicted the public unrest that followed the December 2011 parliamentary elections, has found that active supporters of Vladimir Putin and his team are rapidly being marginalised within Russian society.<sup>1</sup> As the majority of the support Putin still enjoys comes from social strata characterised by highly fluid political views and preferences, this support could quickly evaporate.<sup>2</sup>

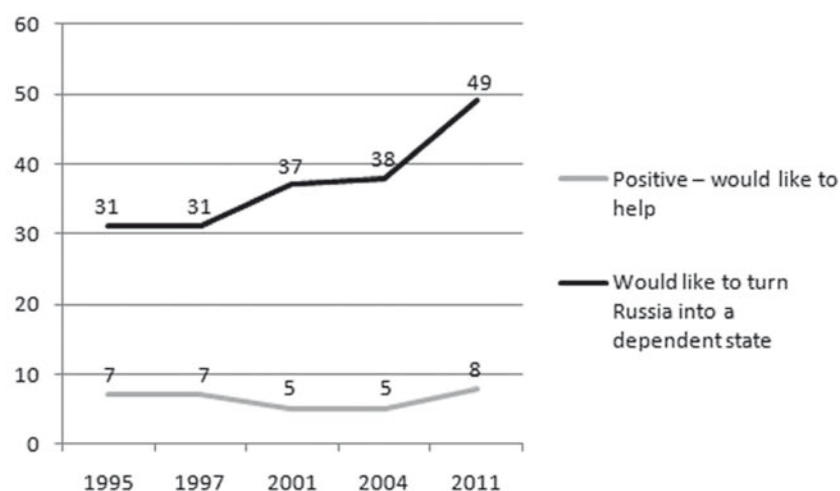
One of the anticipated outcomes of the (fraudulent) parliamentary and presidential elections was to project an outward image of nation-wide support, legitimising both the 'collective Putin' team and its policies. The critical point, however, is that not all Russians have accepted these efforts to legitimise Putin's grasp on power. As the government's domestic support fades, so does its ability to keep a grip on the domestic situation, the country as a whole, and ultimately its place in power. There is, therefore, an ever-more urgent need for the Kremlin to find a mechanism to stop, or at least slow, the erosion of support for the 'collective Putin'.

Maintaining the necessary capabilities to defend against an external threat is probably the only policy with near-universal support within current Russian society.<sup>3</sup> Such an 'external threat' remains officially undefined, but for nearly fifty years NATO has been the primary focus. While NATO-Russian relations enjoyed a brief thaw during Gorbachev's *Perestroika* and the subsequent years under Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin and his team have since spent a great deal of effort trying to restore an anti-American, anti-Western and anti-NATO mood in Russia.<sup>4</sup> They hope that rallying a substantial share of Russian

society around the need to ‘repel the external threat’ will consolidate support for the regime and its policies.

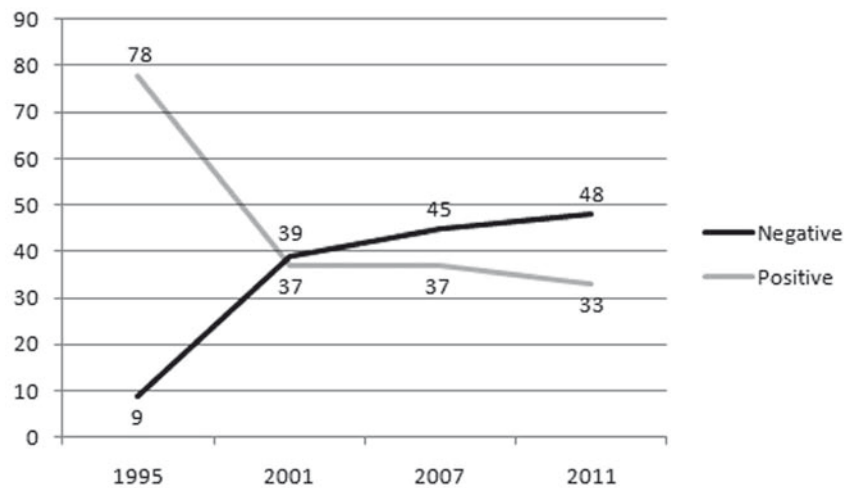
To achieve this, they are prepared not only to exploit existing domestic mistrust of the West, but also to invent new fears. The Kremlin’s December 2011 accusation that the US State Department was providing financial support to protests against the recent election results is one example of such invention. It has recently been found that xenophobia and anti-Western sentiment is extremely widespread in Russian society (see Figure 1 below), and nearly half of Russians believe that the West aims to undermine Russia’s interests and sovereignty.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 1:** The Russian population’s assessment of foreign powers’ attitudes towards Russia attitude.



This suggests that Putin’s efforts have been widely successful. The regime has restored NATO to its historic position as the ‘external threat’ in the eyes of Russians, while ignoring other possible emerging threats from China, for example. Public perception of the US, the major player in the NATO alliance, also illustrates the resonance of Putin’s anti-Western campaigning (see Figure 2 on the next page).<sup>6</sup> Within Russia, it is now widely believed that NATO is a tool used by Washington to carry out its own policy priorities. This leads to the conclusion that the current Russian ruling elite will make all possible use of these popular anti-Western feelings to secure its own power within Russia – which also leaves the Kremlin with little incentive to resolve the advertised threats from the West.



**Figure 2:** The Russian population's attitudes towards the US.

### Russia's Threat Perceptions

#### *NATO Nuclear Force Modernisation*

Interestingly, policies being pursued in the West provide the Kremlin with credible threats which, whether sincerely believed or not, inform Russia's approach to NSNW reductions. The modernisation plans for the US B-61 nuclear bombs, some of which are deployed in Europe, are one example. Recently published information suggests that the modernisation will include the installation of guidance kits on the updated bomb, known as the B-61 Mod-12, which could improve accuracy to a level equivalent to US JDAM munitions.<sup>7</sup> The Pentagon has not denied this assertion. Compounding Russian nervousness, the most likely delivery vehicle for the B-61 Mod-12 will be the F-35 stealth aircraft.

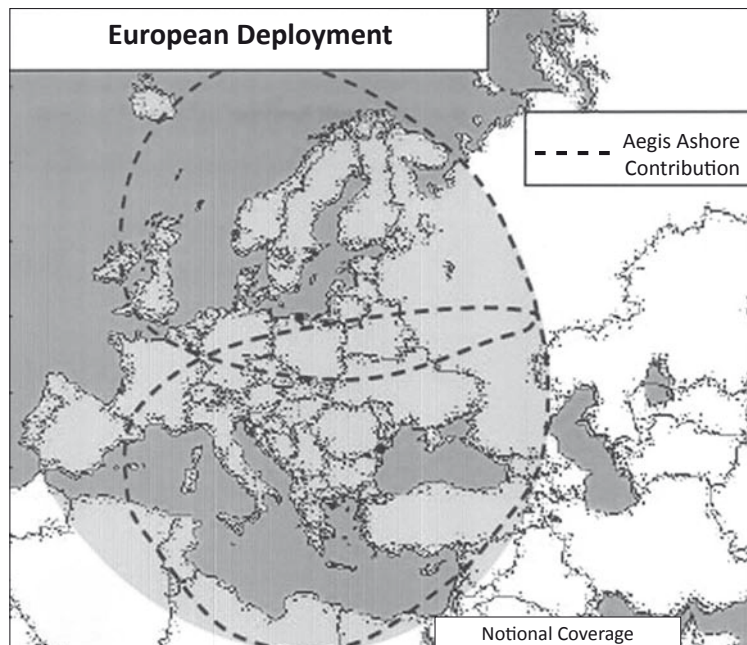
The combination of stealth aircraft armed with precision-guided nuclear bombs gives Russia the impression that the US (or NATO) could deliver, without prior warning, a disarming nuclear strike. Compounding this fear is the thought that NATO might believe that its ballistic-missile-defence system could intercept any remaining missiles Russia might launch in response. Hence Russia's 2010 military doctrinal conclusion that the 'creation and deployment of strategic [BMD] systems, undermining the strategic stability and violating the existing correlation of forces in the missile-nuclear sphere', is one of the main external threats to Russian security.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the decision by both Washington and NATO to offer, as well as NATO's acknowledgement of, negative security assurances to non-nuclear states in good standing with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty leaves Russia seeing itself as the only target of NATO's European-based NSNW. When all is said

and done, this combination looks like the perfect war-fighting tool aimed against Russia. Now that this fear has become an official part of Russia's National Security Strategy and Military Doctrine, it does not matter whether it is honestly held or cynically used to gain domestic support. The doctrine represents the official national position. In light of this fear, Russia may feel it needs to rely more heavily on NSNW; not least because many elements of its NSNW stockpile can bypass NATO's BMD system and increase the costs that the West might suffer in response to a first strike to unacceptable levels.

#### *NATO Ballistic-Missile Defences*

The form and structure of the NATO BMD system, as expressed through the US European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA), engenders further fears in Russia. The wide area in which NATO BMD interceptors could attack and bring down ballistic missiles, as substantiated by Lieutenant General Patrick O'Reilly of the US Missile Defense Agency (and shown in Figure 3 below),<sup>9</sup> can be interpreted in two different ways. From a Western perspective, a wide area can be defended against hostile ballistic-missile attacks. For the Russian leadership, however, the Cold War logic – taught to the Soviets by Robert McNamara and his US successors – abides.

**Figure 3:** The notional intercept range of the EPAA Phase IV interceptors.



First, as discussed above, any BMD system that can negate elements of Russia's strategic deterrent could create a first-strike advantage. Secondly, the belief, widely held among Russia's conservative circles,<sup>10</sup> is that some elements of the interceptor forces planned by the United States for the EPAA deployment are in fact strike missiles disguised as interceptors.

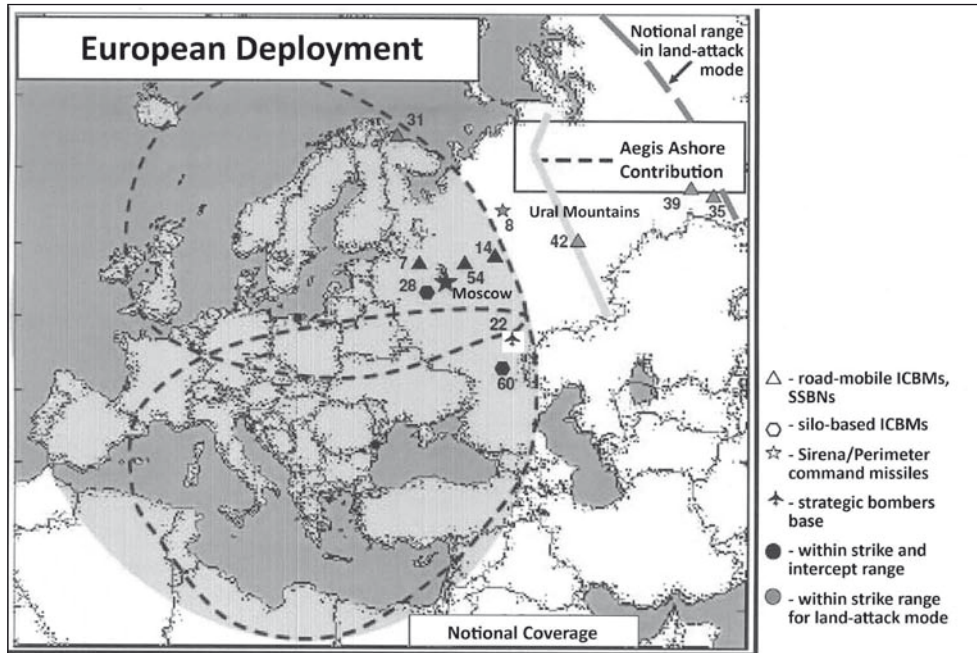
These disguised strike missiles could carry light-weight nuclear warheads to attack soft targets deep in Russian territory<sup>11</sup> – which might include the above-ground shelters for the Russian Topol, Topol-M, and Yars road-mobile ICBMs of Russia's six Strategic Rocket Forces (SRF) Divisions;<sup>12</sup> the Russian Air Force Long-Range Aviation 22<sup>nd</sup> Bomber Division airfields; as well as the base of the Russian Northern Fleet 31<sup>st</sup> SSBN Division.<sup>13</sup> While these targets are already vulnerable to other nuclear forces, such 'disguised' interceptors could reach their targets in a much shorter time than existing forces, leaving little opportunity for defensive responses such as dispersal.

Russian fears in this regard are likely a result of the mirror-imaging of their own national military planning: for decades it was standard practice for Soviet and Russian air-defence units to train using their surface-to-air missiles in a land-attack mode as a secondary combat task (see Figure 4 on the next page).<sup>14</sup> If this were indeed the case on the NATO side, nearly half of Russian territory and up to two-thirds of Russia's strategic nuclear forces would be within the strike range of the European-based US interceptors configured in land-attack mode (see Figure 5 on the next page). Putin's response to this perceived threat suggests a level of paranoia; his Executive Order of 7 May 2012 attaches further bilateral strategic nuclear reductions to a US guarantee, backed up by verifiable technical restrictions, that the US global BMD system is not aimed at Russia.<sup>15</sup> Whether justified or not, these BMD-related fears present the Kremlin with a suitable opportunity to internalise them into a useful component of a broader domestic political campaign, playing off anti-American sentiment and support for a robust defence against external foes.

For anybody sceptical of the level of Russian paranoia, it is worth noting that President Medvedev's statement of 23 November 2011 regarding European BMD-deployment plans repeated many points outlined in General Secretary Andropov's statement regarding Pershing-II deployment in Europe,<sup>16</sup> delivered almost thirty years earlier. Both involve increased early-warning radar coverage, strengthened air-defence coverage, the deployment of shorter-range missiles to threaten US and NATO missiles, increased nuclear submarine patrols, and potential withdrawal from nuclear arms-control negotiations. While Andropov may not have detailed some of these moves, the basic steps are exactly the same.

Striking similarities in the policies and statements of Russian leaders in rather different strategic environments prove that paranoia surrounding NATO interceptors contributes to the shape of contemporary Russian policy. There is no other plausible explanation for the deployment of additional early-warning radars or air-defence units as a response to an opponent's ballistic-missile *defence*. The Russian leadership is genuinely worried about the reincarnation of the Pershing-II in Europe. It is not by accident that Putin said in April 2007, referring to BMD-deployment in Europe, '[these] equal for Russia the Pershing

**Figure 4:** The Kremlin's perception of the intercept range of the EPAA Phase IV interceptors.



**Figure 5:** How the EPAA Phase IV affects Russian territory and its strategic nuclear forces.



**Note:** Each black/grey and black dot represents one division of Russia's strategic nuclear forces, including land-, sea- and air-based systems.

missiles deployment in the past – the threat is the absolute same for us'.<sup>17</sup> As Russia categorises strategic and non-strategic warheads according to range, the range of these 'disguised' interceptors (as with the Pershing-II missiles) would place them in the non-strategic nuclear-weapon category. From this perspective, Russia's approach to NSNW reductions is inextricably linked to NATO's European BMD. If Russia perceives the latter as simply a guise under which to covertly deploy more capable versions of the former, the two are essentially equivalent. While the US links negotiations over the reduction of NSNW to reductions in strategic nuclear weapons, Russia similarly links the negotiated reduction in strategic nuclear weapons to restrictions in BMD. As such, through this three-way coupling, Russia will not consider reductions in NSNW without also restricting NATO's BMD.

### **Prospects for NSNW Reductions**

Yet another aspect of the NSNW problem is the fact that current estimates of the Russian NSNW stockpile seem to have been exaggerated. A RUSI study shows that there are approximately 440–80 operationally available non-strategic nuclear strike weapons deployed in Russia's western regions against NATO, complemented by approximately 340 other 'non-strike' NSNW such as air and ballistic-missile defences, coastal defences and anti-submarine warfare systems.<sup>18</sup> These non-strike weapons are not designed to strike NATO member states' territory, but to be used in the seas adjacent to or in the air over Russian territory. Approximately 370–400 of the operationally available Russian 'strike' NSNW are assigned for use on Russia's western borders, with a further seventy-five or so weapons located in the country's southern region, assigned to defence against NATO's southern flank – namely Turkey. In addition to the NSNW deployed towards the West, there are also approximately 220–60 'strike' and 110 defensive NSNW deployed along Russia's South Asian and Far Eastern borders, which cannot threaten European territories.

These numbers significantly change the trade-offs in any non-strategic nuclear arms control. Indeed, there is a rough parity between Russian and NATO operational NSNW. The Russian stockpile of up to 480 operationally available NSNW deployed against NATO is not drastically larger than the stockpile of 210–50 US and French NSNW currently deployed in Europe.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, Russian conventional forces are also qualitatively and quantitatively inferior to those of NATO. Together, these two factors paint a picture of overall NATO military superiority. With this in mind, Russia is likely to object strongly to any suggestion that its NSNW forces be reduced, as doing so would cement military asymmetry between itself and NATO. Like NATO in 1968, Russia now sees its NSNW forces as a vital force-equaliser, relying on them as a counterweight to its inferior conventional forces. Therefore any pressure from the US and NATO for further NSNW reductions will be perceived in Russia as an attempt to secure NATO's military superiority over Russia.



**Transparency and Reciprocity**

Unfortunately, just as Russia likely has little interest in further NSNW reductions from a politico-military standpoint, it also has very little interest in increasing the transparency of its NSNW forces. First, if the figures given above are correct, disclosure of the true size of Russia's NSNW stockpile would destroy the myth of Russian NSNW superiority. Further, upholding this useful myth of Russian superiority serves to support the Kremlin's international status and quench the domestic population's thirst for alternative symbols of Russian greatness.

On the other hand, damaging this myth of Russian greatness could weaken the Kremlin's claim to 'superpower' status and exacerbate public disenchantment with the state, further diminishing the Kremlin's domestic powers as a consequence. Needless to say, neither outcome is in the Kremlin's interests. In an environment largely permeated by anti-Western sentiment, actively promoted by Putin, disclosing such sensitive information to Western states would be seen by a substantial part of the Russian public as at best an unforgivable concession. At worst, it could be viewed as treachery. Given the sensitivity of Putin's support base, he cannot afford either of these outcomes.

The suggestion of 'reciprocal steps' to be taken by Russia, with the result that NATO may reduce its reliance on NSNW, as proposed in the NATO Deterrence and Defence Posture Review (DDPR),<sup>20</sup> deserves a separate discussion. There are three major shortcomings of the reciprocal steps currently being proposed.<sup>21</sup> First of all, rather than considering what NATO could offer Russia, they mainly address what Russia should offer NATO. Indeed, the DDPR does not make any detailed proposals to reduce or withdraw NATO NSNW, and suggests only that NATO is prepared to 'consider' further NSNW reductions in the context of reciprocal steps taken by Russia, in light of 'the greater Russian stockpiles of [NSNW]'. This leaves Russia with the impression that NATO would not move a finger unless Russia first reduced its NSNW stockpiles, making deeper reductions than NATO may eventually consider for itself. Reciprocal transparency arrangements proposed in a NATO non-paper either involve unbalanced reporting requirements from Russia,<sup>22</sup> or postulate an ill-defined 'exchange of visits by military officials'.<sup>23</sup>

It is also important to remember that the theory of arms control is predicated on the idea that antagonists can share common interests. While current NATO proposals for reciprocal steps are understandably based mainly upon the Central and Eastern European NATO member states' concerns regarding Russian force posture, Russian interests do not mirror these concerns. Russia is currently interested in maintaining some level of tension as a tool for securing its position as an important player and broker

in international relations (missing the self-defeating nature of this stance). Hence transparency and reciprocity proposals based on assumptions upheld since the Gorbachev period, when the Soviet Union was interested in reducing tensions with NATO, will not bear fruit in the Putin period when the Kremlin is interested in precisely the opposite. If the two parties do not share common interests, it is hard to be enthusiastic about the prospects for conventional or nuclear NATO-Russian arms-control agreements in the near future, particularly when NATO, as a consensus-based organisation, does not seem wholly ready to seek mutual reductions in NSNW.

Finally, NATO's proposals for reciprocal steps do not discriminate between elements of the Russian NSNW stockpile. While US NSNW based in the contiguous US are explicitly excluded from NATO proposals, Russian NSNW based in Asia and deployed against a potential Chinese invasion are not. The threat potentially posed by China, while deliberately omitted from domestic propaganda, is taken very seriously in Russia; a RUSI study on the deployment of Russia's armed forces shows that approximately 39 per cent of Russian ground troops are positioned to defend against a Chinese invasion, while only 14 per cent are deployed on Russia's Western borders with the direct task of defence against NATO. By lumping together Russia's Asian- and European-deployed NSNW, NATO gives the impression that it is trying to weaken a much larger component of the Russian defence posture. This approach erodes NATO's prospects for a non-strategic arms-control agreement with Russia. Recognising these concerns, and exempting the Asian component of Russia's NSNW stockpile from proposed reciprocal steps, could demonstrate NATO's readiness for real NSNW reductions.

### **A Route Forward?**

As the above suggests, Russia's domestic situation, threat perceptions and existing stockpiles of NSNW paint a rather pessimistic picture of the prospects for bilateral NSNW reductions. Ironically, however, NATO's plans for modernising its non-strategic nuclear force could be a factor in improving the possibility of NSNW arms control in these circumstances. Sincerely linking the modernisation of NATO forces to the pursuit of bilateral reductions in the same forces would present an option that addresses both Russia's domestic concerns and its threat perceptions – in a similar manner to the 'dual-track' approach adopted by NATO in the early 1980s.<sup>24</sup> The domestic impact of reducing Russia's own nuclear potential could also be mitigated, preserving Putin's 'tough' image by presenting NATO's concessions as more significant, and more costly, than Russia's. There are, however, two barriers to this trade-off. First, it will be necessary for the US to allocate the large sums of money required for the envisioned modernisation process just to initiate discussions which could lead to the costly cancellation of the process. It would not be easy to sell such an idea to the US Congress. Secondly, this process will have to overcome Russia's very deep coupling of 'strike' NSNW and ballistic-

missile defence. Needless to say, these two obstacles will create tremendous difficulties for any US administration hoping to start negotiations with Russia and reach some meaningful agreement at the end of the process.

It is also worth recalling that Russia's domestic situation gives the Kremlin little incentive to pursue bilateral NSNW reductions, when fears of 'external threats' are used to rally support around the fragile foundations of Putin's domestic legitimacy. Soviet diplomacy was for a long time characterised by the Soviet Foreign Minister Andrey Gromyko, whose nickname was 'Mister No'. For a brief (some Russians may say far too long) period, Russian foreign policy could well have been characterised more as 'Mister Yes'. Unfortunately, 'Mister No' has returned to the Kremlin. This position will be hard to reverse without the US and the West taking the lead with proposals that take into account the security concerns Russia now holds. The West should reject the convenient assessment that Russia maintains overwhelming superiority in the NSNW field, behind which NATO can hide its own inactivity. Indeed, it is time for NATO to consider unilateral concessions – even if only to offer greater transparency, for instance; without this change in attitude, the chances of agreement on NSNW reductions seem slim.

### Notes and References

1. See *Center for Strategic Research*, 'Society and Power at Times of Political Crisis' (in Russian), report to the committee on civil initiatives, Moscow, May 2012, p. 15, <<http://www.csr.ru/images/docs/doklad.pdf>>, accessed 21 September 2012.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 32–35.
4. This has been an integral element of Putin's policy since at least the middle of his second presidential term. See, for example, Putin's speech at the 2007 Munich Security Conference, available at <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/12/AR2007021200555.html>>, accessed 21 September 2012.
5. *Institute for Sociology, Russian Academy of Sciences*, '20 Years of Reforms' [in Russian], Moscow 2011, p. 191, and especially Table 11.2, 'The dynamics of Russian sentiment regarding the attitudes of Western countries towards Russia, 1995–2011', <[http://www.isras.ru/files/File/Doklad/20\\_years\\_reform.pdf](http://www.isras.ru/files/File/Doklad/20_years_reform.pdf)>, accessed 21 September 2012.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 194, Table 11.3, 'The dynamics of Russian attitudes towards the states which play the most important role in world politics and economy'.
7. Hans M Kristensen, 'B61 LEP: Increasing NATO Nuclear Capability and Precision Low-Yield Strikes', *FAS Strategic Security Blog*, 15 June 2011. Joint Direct Attack Munitions,



or 'JDAMs', refer to regular munitions modified with internal all-weather GPS guidance systems to significantly increase their accuracy.

8. The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation [in Russian], para 8, section G, <[http://news.kremlin.ru/ref\\_notes/461](http://news.kremlin.ru/ref_notes/461)>, accessed 21 September 2012.
9. Patrick J O'Reilly, presentation to the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual AUSA Conference, 26 April 2011, <[http://www.ausaredstone.org/files/2011/LTG%20Patrick%20OReilly%20Speaker%20Briefing\\_AUSA%20Missiles%20Conferen.pdf](http://www.ausaredstone.org/files/2011/LTG%20Patrick%20OReilly%20Speaker%20Briefing_AUSA%20Missiles%20Conferen.pdf)>, accessed 21 September 2012.
10. See, for example, Sergey Markov, 'European BMD threatens Russia's security' [in Russian], *Military and Political Review Army News*, 12 August 2011, <<http://www.belvpo.com/en/3061.html>>, accessed 24 September 2012; Valeria Shatskaya, 'The Architecture of the European BMD: Defence Against Iran Only?' [in Russian], *Russian Armaments News Agency*, 4 April 2012, <<http://www.arms-expo.ru/049051124050055050056050.html>>, accessed 24 September 2012; S Kanchukov, 'U.S. BMD system in Europe – to the good or to the detriment of Russia?' [in Russian], <<http://kanchukov-sa.livejournal.com/13877.html>>, accessed 24 September 2012.
11. While conventional warheads could conceivably be used for a similar role, such a conventional 'Prompt Global Strike' concept would not be as effective, and would do little to assuage Russia's fears. The US has the expertise to equip such disguised interceptors with nuclear warheads. Designs based on the W54 and W82 warheads, for example, would be suitable candidates.
12. These are the 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 35<sup>th</sup>, 39<sup>th</sup>, 42<sup>nd</sup> and 54<sup>th</sup> SRF Missile Divisions.
13. The Northern Fleet's 31<sup>st</sup> SSBN Division's submarines, intended for deterrent patrols, spend most of the time moored at base in readiness to fire their missiles, instead of going to sea.
14. BMD systems formally converted to play a ground-attack role, and declared as such, would violate the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. The INF discounts BMD from its purview with the following statement: 'If a [ground-launched ballistic missile] is of a type developed and tested solely to intercept and counter objects not located on the surface of the earth, it shall not be considered to be a missile to which the limitations of this treaty apply'. Of course, after regular practice and training, Russia is very much aware that land-attack capabilities exist for BMD systems without the need to formally declare a conversion.
15. President of the Russian Federation, 'On measures to fulfil the foreign-policy course of the Russian Federation' [in Russian], No. 605, 7 May 2012, section 1, sub-section I, <<http://graph.document.kremlin.ru/page.aspx?1;1610881>>, accessed 21 September 2012.

16. President Medvedev's statement can be viewed at <[http://www.ria.ru/tv\\_politics/20111123/495929828.html](http://www.ria.ru/tv_politics/20111123/495929828.html)>, accessed 21 September 2012. The statement by Yuri Andropov was published in *Pravda*, 25 November 1983, p. 1.
17. *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 'Separate missiles and economy' [in Russian], Federal issue no. 4354, 28 April 2007, <<http://www.rg.ru/2007/04/28/putin-klaus.html>>, accessed 21 September 2012.
18. The term 'operationally available' is used here to describe the number of NSNW that could hypothetically be used within the numerical and structural limitations of Russia's armed forces. The size of Russia's nuclear stockpile will be derived from just such a calculation. While this discounts inactive 'reserve' NSNW, neither NATO nor Russia is interested in limiting the number of reserve NSNW at this early stage.
19. It is important to note that despite formal NATO structures that say otherwise, from a Russian perspective there is no significant difference between NATO and French non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe. Russia perceives itself to be the target of both, and as such there is no point differentiating between the two.
20. NATO, 'Deterrence and Defence Posture Review', press release issued 20 May 2012, para 26, <[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_87597.htm?mode=pressrelease](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87597.htm?mode=pressrelease)>, accessed 21 September 2012.
21. Jacek Durkalec, 'After the DDPR: Central and Eastern European Perspectives', paper in this volume, Hugh Chalmers, Malcolm Chalmers and Andrea Berger, 'A Problem Deferred? NATO's Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons After Chicago', RUSI Whitehall Report 4–12, October 2012, pp. 45–53.
22. NATO, 'Non-paper submitted by Poland, Norway, Germany and the Netherlands on increasing transparency and confidence with regard to tactical nuclear weapons in Europe', non-paper issued 14 April 2011, <<http://www.fas.org/programs/ssp/nukes/nuclearweapons/nato-nonpaper041411.pdf>>, accessed 21 September 2012. Paragraph 4 proposes notifying parties of any plans to move tactical nuclear weapons. While NATO stores the majority of its NSNW alongside delivery vehicles, Russian NSNW are stored separately from delivery vehicles (thus being effectively in reserve according to Western standards). The above proposal would therefore require far more reporting from Russia than it would from NATO.
23. Russia has not had a good history with reciprocal visits to nuclear weapon-related sites with the US. Having hosted US STRATCOM Commander-in-Chief General Eugene Habiger at a Russian nuclear-weapon storage site, Russian generals on a reciprocal trip to the US were unsurprisingly shocked and humiliated when their visit to the US store was cancelled due to the absence of the sergeant who held the keys to the store.
24. The dual-track approach coupled the deployment of modernised NATO ballistic and

cruise missiles to Europe with negotiations with the Soviet Union over the bilateral reduction of the same forces. This approach ultimately proved successful, with the signing of the INF Treaty in 1987.



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