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CHAPTER ONE

NATO Nuclear Policy

Reflections on Lisbon and Looking Ahead to the DDP

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This paper sets the context for the discussions that will surround the development of the DDP and the review of NATO's nuclear policy and posture. It provides a brief description of the development of NATO's nuclear policy, the influence of the framework of collective defense, and the continuity of concerns in the evolution of NATO's nuclear strategy; assesses the factors that influenced the treatment of nuclear policy in the new Strategic Concept; examines the documents adopted at the Lisbon Summit and the compromises necessary to reach agreement; looks at the prospects for the DDP and the nuclear posture review; and examines the problems that lie ahead.

Nuclear weapons have always occupied a special place in NATO strategy and nuclear policy in NATO has fluctuated between periods of volatility and dormancy.¹ Nuclear weapons have been seen to represent the absolute deterrent to aggression and proof of the transatlantic link and U.S. protection.

NATO strategy underwent several adjustments to accommodate the different views concerning the stage at which NATO would be prepared to use nuclear weapons and what was required to demonstrate the willingness to do so. The systems required included so-called NSNW for use on or near the battlefield and also systems capable of striking the Soviet homeland. The modernization of the latter

1. NATO's nuclear weapons include the strategic nuclear forces of the United States, the independent nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France—although the latter are not committed to the Alliance—and U.S. nuclear warheads at bases in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey for use on the Dual Capable Aircraft (DCA) of the first four and the United States. Turkish and Greek aircraft also have DCA status but at a lower operational readiness. The reference to a “NATO nuclear capability” normally refers to these DCA arrangements. The U.S. warheads in Europe remain under U.S. control.

CHAPTER ONE: KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ NATO's decision to develop a new Strategic Concept in 2010 meant that after two decades of relative inattention nuclear weapons again became an issue in Alliance politics. Nevertheless, the documents agreed upon at the November Lisbon Summit postponed rather than resolved the underlying differences.
- ▶ Questions on NATO's nuclear policy and posture will now be addressed as part of NATO's Deterrence and Defense Posture Review (DDPR) tasked at Lisbon and due to be completed for the next NATO Summit in the United States in May 2012. The DDPR gives NATO the opportunity to ensure that it has the right mix of capabilities for contemporary threats and that the various components of NATO strategy relate to each other in a coherent way.
- ▶ Missile defense will be central to these discussions, not just because of the technical and financial uncertainties surrounding its implementation, but also because of the considerable political importance it now carries; as the litmus test for cooperation with Russia and as the means to provide new glue to NATO cohesion as a consequence of its potential, but disputed, significance for the role of nuclear weapons in NATO strategy.
- ▶ The review of NATO's existing arrangements for extended deterrence, however, will remain the focus of attention. It is too early to second guess the DDPR process except to assume that it will revisit the rationale for the required posture on the basis of the guidance provided in the new Strategic Concept.
- ▶ Concern over the size and location of Russian Non Strategic Nuclear Weapons (NSNW) has become a major determinant in NATO's approach to its own requirements. The United States has indicated its intention to include NSNW in future arm control negotiations. Russia to date has shown little inclination to discuss these weapons. The U.S. Administration has also confirmed that it will consult with the Allies. This means that in defining its force posture in the nuclear review, NATO will have to take account of potential arms control outcomes, suggesting a degree of synchronization between force planning and arms control that is easier said than done.
- ▶ Taken together—with the emphasis on sharing the nuclear burden—these benchmarks could be used by proponents of the status quo to limit the room for maneuver for the posture review and point toward a continuation for the time being of the current dual capable aircraft (DCA) arrangements. There may also be suggestions that the new security conditions provide additional reasons for a NATO nuclear capability based on arrangements in Europe.
- ▶ That said, the DDPR will provide the opportunity to reassess the significance of these requirements against the questionable credibility of the posture, concerns over safety and security, and the demands of some members who will continue to press for progress in reducing reliance on nuclear weapons and for a higher profile for disarmament in NATO considerations. Movement on nuclear policy in this direction will depend on changes of attitude and approach in four key constituencies: DCA countries, defenders of the status quo; Russia; and the United States.
- ▶ These factors will themselves be influenced by the framework of collective defense and the particular sensitivities attached to nuclear weapons, by the distraction of other developments and the consequent reduction in the importance of nuclear issues in the hierarchy of Alliance priorities, and by public attitudes to nuclear weapons. Above all they will be influenced by changes in the political context that could affect national positions on the key issues that define NATO's policy. Among the diversity of views and possible outcomes, the constant factor will be the emphasis on maintaining Alliance cohesion and solidarity.

The Lisbon documents endorsed by all NATO member states also reflect the wish to demonstrate progress on reducing reliance on nuclear weapons and on paying more attention to the potential contribution of disarmament and arms control to transparency, stability, and security.

led to the controversial Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) decision in 1979.

After 1989 the salience of nuclear weapons declined as NATO focused on adapting to the new strategic environment: taking in new members and conducting operations out of area. Nuclear weapons deployed in Europe were substantially reduced. These reductions attracted little attention, with the exception of those who continued to criticize the DCA arrangements. The small number of systems that were retained and the role of nuclear weapons in NATO strategy faded.

The decision by NATO to develop a new Strategic Concept in 2010 meant that nuclear weapons again became an issue in Alliance politics. Expectations were raised that NATO could use the opportunity to reduce the role that nuclear weapons continue to occupy in its strategy. Despite these pressures, however, the policy that has emerged from the Lisbon Summit reflects the traditional caution associated with deterrence and defense and the commitment to act together.

Nevertheless, the Lisbon documents endorsed by all NATO member states also reflect the wish to demonstrate progress on reducing reliance on nuclear weapons and on paying more attention to the potential contribution of disarmament and arms control to transparency, stability, and security. NATO's DDPR will require members to reflect further on the requirements of NATO's nuclear policy.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN NATO STRATEGY

The Influence of Collective Defense

Any analysis of NATO's nuclear policy has to be situated first in the nature and workings of the Alliance and the commitment to collective defense. This framework of collective decision making with its emphasis on cohesion and solidarity exerts an enormous, and frequently underestimated, influence on the development of Alliance policies. The influence of the process often explains the gap between the aspirations and expectations of those who want NATO to move faster toward the goal of reducing the role of nuclear weapons in NATO security policy and the apparent conservatism of the formal NATO decisions that emerge after lengthy consultations.

Three principles are fundamental to NATO's policy making framework: the transatlantic link based on common values; the commitment to collective defense through Article 5; and respect for the sovereignty of national decisions through the principle of consensus.

The consensus process involves the reconciliation of national priorities and differences through compromise and concession. Each nation brings to the table its own particular national interests and concerns. Sometimes these are amenable to compromise. Frequently, however, they are deep rooted and longstanding, be-

coming in effect “permanently operating factors”—factors that will persistently influence the respective country’s position on certain issues.

Most NATO members have national preoccupations that constrain their margin for maneuver on specific issues. Examples in the context of current discussions over NATO’s nuclear policy include the following: France’s fierce attachment to nuclear deterrence and the independence of its nuclear forces; the sensitivity of Turkey to developments in the Middle East and also its strained relationship with the European Union; the insistence by Germany for a greater emphasis on disarmament in Alliance policies; and the visceral mistrust and suspicion of Russia on the part of the Alliance members from Central and Eastern Europe.

These positions can result in the so-called red lines from which the nation concerned finds it difficult to move. Red lines can also be defined by external developments. For several Allies, Russia’s refusal to fulfil the commitments made at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Summit in Istanbul to withdraw its forces from Georgia and Moldova or to modify its more recent actions against Georgia represents a serious barrier to further cooperation. This obstacle is particularly significant in view of the need to engage Russia in several areas, including NSNW.

There is also the influence of those members whose natural instincts are to ensure that arms control and disarmament are given a higher priority in NATO decisions. This loose grouping, known as the “usual suspects,” constitutes an informal pressure group that in some ways offsets the informal grouping of the nuclear powers.² The debate on the appropriate weight to be accorded to defense and disarmament respectively will certainly run through the forthcoming DDPR.

The influence of domestic developments in determining national positions should also be taken into account. The imminence of elections in the coming year constitutes a powerful influence. Presidential elections in the United States in 2012 may lead to a cautious approach from the United States to the issue of Alliance nuclear policy, in particular if any change were viewed as affecting Alliance unity. That said, simply reaffirming the “status quo” may not be viewed as an acceptable outcome by Washington in light of President Obama’s April 2009 Prague speech and his commitment to work toward a world free of nuclear weapons, and may lead to an initiative with the promise of changing the status quo.

The consensus principle is inevitably laborious and time-consuming because it involves finding areas of concession and compromise—giving in one area to gain in another. The negotiations surrounding the agreement of language for nuclear policy in the Lisbon documents, described later, provided a classic example of countries modifying their positions in one area of the nuclear debate to achieve

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2. This group was initially based around Belgium, Canada, Germany, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, and Norway and has been joined by more members.

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goals in another. Sometimes these concessions are in unrelated areas. Participants in the Lisbon discussions commented that French officials felt able to insist on their position on nuclear deterrence because of their acceptance in other sections of the Concept that NATO should develop a civilian capability for crisis situations.

Together these considerations form the essential fabric within which NATO policies are developed and that need to be taken into account in assessments of NATO decisions.

Nuclear weapons add an extra layer of complexity. There are several factors that explain the innate conservatism that governs the attitudes to nuclear weapons: the natural caution attached to defense reinforced by the current emphasis on reconfirming the Article 5 commitment; the special nature and characteristics of nuclear weapons, which give them a unique role in deterrence but also paradoxically tends to inhibit discussion; and the dynamics of nuclear policy making in NATO in the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) and High Level Group (HLG), where the voices of the nuclear powers and those directly involved in nuclear policy carry more weight.³

Because of the unique nature of nuclear weapons and their special status, members often defer to the “experts”—those who are involved as a full-time activity in the technical and operational side or in the making of policy. There is a tendency to refer to those at NATO with specific responsibilities for nuclear policy—either in their national delegations or on the International Staff—as the nuclear community. Because nuclear weapons are seen as the preserve of a select few countries, the priority in discussions of nuclear policy becomes the maintenance of Alliance cohesion and solidarity.

As the principal nuclear provider, the United States has always exerted leadership in NATO’s nuclear policy while equally attentive to the need to consult with and involve Allies. The Allies accept this leadership but are ever sensitive to prospective changes. Today, as will be discussed later, the dialogue implicit in this relationship is as important as ever.

Finally, there is the perennial problem of competing pressures and problems. The importance attached to nuclear policy at any one moment has to be seen against the other issues requiring attention, such as the involvement in Afghanistan and currently Libya. In view of this competition for attention and the natural tendency to shy away from nuclear issues, it is not surprising that the question of nuclear weapons gets pushed to the end of the line. As one Ambassador noted in the early days of the Concept’s development, “everyone hopes the question

3. Officials refer to an informal hierarchy consisting of the two nuclear powers (the United States and United Kingdom), the four DCA countries, and Greece and Turkey followed by other members who have various degrees of involvement in the support operations known as SNOWCAT (Support of Nuclear Operations With Conventional Air Tactics).

of nuclear weapons proves to be the dog in the corner that does not bark.”⁴ In other words, in the hierarchy of Alliance issues nuclear policy seldom occupies the position of importance many would believe and wish. This may change as the DDRP progresses.

Extended Nuclear Deterrence and the Continuity of Concerns

The development of NATO’s nuclear policy during the Cold War was marked by several features that have a certain resonance today:

- ▶ The persistent questioning of the credibility of extended nuclear deterrence and the perceived need for linkage or coupling through systems based in Europe. Linkage to U.S. strategic forces and the nuclear guarantee is still seen by some members as the rationale for the current DCA arrangements.⁵
- ▶ Europeans were always sensitive to the pressures and temptations of bilateralism in the relations between the United States and the Soviet Union and watchful that the bilateral strategic arms negotiations should not have negative consequences for European security. There are occasional echoes of this concern today. Some members have observed that although they have full confidence in the commitment of the Obama Administration to NATO, they worry that the United States may be placing too much emphasis on the “reset” of relations with Russia.
- ▶ The United States forward deployed NSNW are the descendants of the NSNW initially deployed in Europe in the 1950s. These were the most controversial element of NATO strategy. Today’s systems play a very different role yet raise questions concerning their potential application.⁶

4. This and other quotations gathered in interviews conducted at NATO during 2010–2011.

5. Linkage or coupling was achieved through deploying delivery systems in Europe with U.S. warheads capable of putting the Soviet homeland at risk—initially long-range bombers, for a short period Thor and Jupiter intermediate range missiles, then medium-range aircraft, and finally cruise missiles and Pershing ballistic missiles under the 1979 INF decision. The range of delivery platforms for current sub-strategic systems make this mission a theoretical possibility under certain circumstances—but unlikely. The linkage therefore is more political and symbolic than operational.

6. U.S. NSNW were deployed to Europe to compensate for NATO’s conventional inferiority. It became evident, however, that their deployment and potential use had multiple disadvantages, not least of which was the damage to “own” territory and the “use them or lose them” pressures because of their forward deployment. They remained the most controversial element of flexible response. There is little similarity between NATO’s current NSNW except in the relatively low yield of the warheads and relatively restricted range of the aircraft.

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- ▶ Considerable efforts were expended to increase European participation in nuclear policy without ceding U.S. control. These included the idea of a NATO Multilateral Force (MLF).⁷ Europe got involved by creating the NPG, which became the principal venue for discussions within NATO on nuclear affairs. One of the questions under discussion today is the future role of the NPG should there be a change in NATO's current policy of involving Allies through basing warheads and using DCA. Some believe that if the warheads were withdrawn the Alliance bodies for nuclear consultation would cease to function in any meaningful sense.
- ▶ Arms control was seen by several members as an essential companion to the INF modernization decision and resulted in creating the Special Consultative Group to coordinate an Alliance position for the bilateral INF negotiations.⁸ Similar pressures exist today for NATO to give disarmament a higher profile and for a consultative forum in case negotiations begin between the United States and Russia.
- ▶ The HLG was created in 1977 to ensure that the INF modernization decision was handled by officials with sufficient seniority to ensure political awareness at the highest level. The United States chaired this effort. The role of the HLG and NPG in the forthcoming review of NATO's nuclear requirements is unclear but both bodies will be involved in preliminary discussions. Although this review does not carry the same sensitivity as the work in the 1970s, the NATO Ambassadors will have the responsibility for ensuring that high level attention is given to decisions on NATO's nuclear policy.
- ▶ Public and parliamentary opposition made it difficult for several countries to agree to the 1979 decision.⁹ It is tricky to assess public attitudes today to the role of nuclear weapons. The nuclear issue remains sensitive in most countries both in terms of nuclear power and weapons. This sensitivity will almost certainly have been exacerbated by the disaster at Fukushima. In several countries, the resulting domestic climate could complicate the question of sustaining parliamentary support for continuing existing arrangements.

7. The MLF proposal was aimed at preserving U.S. operational control over nuclear weapons while enabling the European Allies to participate in managing a Western nuclear deterrent assigned to NATO. As a formula trying to satisfy highly divergent aims, its chances of success were always limited; it foundered principally on the issue of command and control. See Simon Lunn, "The Modernization of NATO's Long Range Theater Nuclear Forces," Report for Congress, (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, December 31 1980).

8. The work of the Special Group, chaired by the United States, demonstrated the need to ensure coherence between strategic and arms control goals.

9. Both Belgium and the Netherlands joined the consensus in principle but delayed agreement on implementation.

After 1989, NATO focused on adapting to the dramatic changes in the strategic environment by creating the conditions for admitting 12 new members. As part of this adaptation and as reassurance to Russia on the non-threatening nature of enlargement, NATO announced its “three no’s”—no intention, no reason, and no plan to station nuclear forces on the territory of the new members. The more recent members note that these declarations were signed without them and effectively prohibit their participation in the existing Alliance arrangements.

NATO reduced substantially its nuclear weapons based in Europe with little public fanfare, leaving a small number of warheads for use on the DCA of Allies. Little attention was then paid to NATO’s nuclear forces with the exception of the specific bodies tasked to oversee nuclear affairs—the NPG, the NPG Staff Group, and the HLG.¹⁰

The Strategic Concepts 1991 and 1999

The language on nuclear policy in NATO’s Strategic Concept in 1991 reflected these changes. Instead of the operational focus of the previously classified document, the political nature of nuclear weapons was emphasized. Almost identical language was carried over in the 1999 Concept. NATO’s nuclear forces were to deter all forms of aggression. There was no enthusiasm to narrow the circumstances under which they would be used to a “no first use” declaration or a variant thereof. Members preferred a situation in which nuclear capabilities represented a deterrent to all forms of aggression and hence left a degree of ambiguity over their potential use. It is worth noting that an effort by Canada and Germany to reassess nuclear policy was firmly rejected largely through U.S. opposition.

The Concepts included the statement that NATO will “maintain adequate sub-strategic forces based in Europe which will provide an essential link with strategic nuclear forces, reinforcing the transatlantic link.” This emphasized that the rationales for the posture are the credibility of deterrence through linkage and the participation and sharing by Allies.

The Strategic Concepts laid out the rationale for the remaining NSNW but there is no indication of what criteria determined the size of the force. Normally operational factors, such as target coverage, penetration, survivability, and also the number of participating nations, influence the necessary numbers. As the emphasis was now on the political role of the force, however, it is not clear what factors determined the numbers required.

10. The NPG meets at the level of Ministers, or at the level of Ambassadors (the North Atlantic Council (NAC) in permanent session). The NPG staff group comprises representatives from the national delegations at NATO headquarters and is chaired by the International Staff (IS) and meets regularly. The HLG comprises representatives from national capitals, is chaired by the United States and meets regularly but less frequently.

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The emphasis on the political role of the current systems and the absence of an operational application has led inevitably to the criticism that if these systems have no operational role they cannot provide credible deterrence, based on the maxim “What cannot be used cannot deter.” In other words, even the symbolic role is an empty one.

This is challenged by those who say that DCA are operationally capable and that they represent the only means for NATO to demonstrate solidarity and resolve during a crisis and the willingness to share the risks and burdens of nuclear decision making. Some observers have pointed to the decisions in the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) to modernize the B-61 nuclear warhead and the F-35 fighter aircraft as making the mission more credible.

The changed environment and the absence of a direct threat that dominated NATO planning in the Cold War meant that references to Russia in NATO policy statements emphasise partnership and cooperation. There is, therefore, no reference to Russia in the rationale for the DCA force other than the oblique reference to the fact that “NATO nuclear forces no longer target any country.”¹¹ The existence, however, of the substantial stockpile of Russian NSNW did not go unnoticed.

Reporting to Congress on the findings of the 1994 NPR, Deputy Secretary of Defense John Deutch noted the numbers of Russian NSNW, “located at distances which can be easily delivered against European targets,” and said this disparity was a cause for concern. In justifying the maintenance of the DCA strength, Deutch pointed to the Russian NSNW arsenal as the principal rationale.¹²

However, it is only relatively recently in NATO discussions that attention has been drawn to the Russian stockpile. The Baltic States have periodically expressed concern over Russian nuclear potential in the region, including in Kaliningrad, and also to Russian statements concerning the development and potential deployment of the Iskander missile. For these and other NATO members the size, location, and safety of the stockpile have become major issues of concern. Finding ways of addressing the Russian NSNW stockpile is now a key determinant in NATO’s nuclear policy, but one in which progress to date has been sadly lacking.

The United Kingdom and France

The United Kingdom’s independent nuclear deterrent has always been committed to NATO and its contribution is noted in the recent 2010 Strategic Concept. The United Kingdom has been consistently supportive of firm language on

11. NATO, *1991 Strategic Concept*, (November 7–8, 1991), http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_23847.htm

12. For further discussion see Hans M. Kristensen, “U.S. Nuclear Weapons in Europe,” (Natural Resources Defense Council, February 2005).

NATO's nuclear posture. Participants in the discussions on the Declaration on Alliance Security adopted at the Strasburg Summit noted that it was the United Kingdom and France who argued most forcefully on a prominent mention for the nuclear component.

It is a reasonable assumption that this position will be continued under the new Conservative government. Conservative governments in the past have normally adopted a robust approach to the question of defense, including retaining a nuclear deterrent. Although it is also worth noting that the current U.K. government recently announced a change in the U.K. declaratory policy that more closely resembles the U.S. position than that of France or NATO. The renewal of the Trident system provides an interesting backdrop to NATO's discussions.

The French nuclear force has always been independent of NATO and France has officially stayed outside all discussions of NATO's nuclear weapons. French officials, however, have participated in the drafting of language on NATO strategic policy in key documents. The return of France to NATO's defense planning and military structures has muddied the waters. France participates in defense planning for conventional forces and the Defense Planning Committee (DPC) but remains outside the NPG and HLG.¹³

France is therefore present at the discussion of general strategic guidance in the North Atlantic Council (NAC) at 28 but absent from more detailed discussions and consultations on nuclear policy in the HLG and NPG, which meet at 27. Clearly there is an overlap between the discussions of strategic principles on the one hand and policy implementation and operational detail on the other that is not easy to separate and risks causing a degree of confusion.

French officials participated actively in developing the documents for the Lisbon Summit, including those sections dealing with nuclear policy. French officials insisted on the central role of nuclear weapons and firmly resisted moves to reduce their salience. France is also reluctant to see NATO playing a greater role in disarmament and arms control—emphasising that NATO is a defense organization, not a disarmament lobby.

As is discussed later, it is thought that French officials will participate in drafting the DDPR but not in reviewing NATO's existing DCA arrangements.

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13. For an authoritative assessment of the French perspective on the DDPR see Paul Zagac, "NATO's Defense and Deterrence Posture Review: A French Perspective on Nuclear Issues," Nuclear Policy Paper No.7 (ACA/BASIC/IFSH, April 2011), http://www.basicint.org/sites/default/files/Nuclear_Policy_Paper_No7.pdf.

THE NEW STRATEGIC CONCEPT, 2010

The decision by NATO to develop a new Strategic Concept in 2010 meant that nuclear weapons again became an issue in Alliance politics. The looming need for a modernization decision for the DCAs was one practical element that stimulated attention in addition to the growing momentum behind the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons. The consideration of nuclear policy during the preparatory stage of the new Concept was influenced by several factors explored below.

Deterrence, Defense, and Reassurance

The addition of 12 new members brought new perspectives and concerns and an insistence that NATO's operations away from home should not mean less attention to the traditional tasks of deterrence and defense and the Article 5 commitment. The history and geography of the new members makes them particularly sensitive to this need for security—a sensitivity exacerbated by Russian actions in Georgia. Activities aimed at providing reassurance have been initiated by the Alliance. These efforts are appreciated, however, they are seen as bolstering, not replacing, extended nuclear deterrence. The need to satisfy the concerns of members on Article 5 will continue to dominate the debate in the DDPR on the appropriate mix of capabilities NATO requires. Reassurance measures also need to be seen in the context of the efforts to improve relations with Russia.

Disarmament and Proliferation

Ongoing proliferation concerns, the call by the U.S. “Gang of Four” (George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger, and Sam Nunn) to pursue practical nuclear threat reduction steps toward achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, subsequent statements by other “Gangs of Four” around the world, the statement by President Obama in Prague of America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons, and the widespread support in many countries for this goal has provided a highly significant background against which the new Concept considered the role of nuclear weapons.

As noted earlier there is a group of countries that have consistently argued the need for disarmament and arms control. Balancing the twin demands of defense and disarmament is a familiar problem for NATO. However, the desire to curb proliferation through reducing and eliminating nuclear weapons has given a new impetus to those who wish NATO to play a more active role in disarmament and arms control.

The scope for a more proactive role, however, is limited by the fact that NATO itself is not party to arms control agreements. These are the responsibility of individual members. In negotiations where NATO's interests are directly involved, the role of the organization has been to provide the framework within which to

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coordinate an Alliance position.¹⁴ It remains to be seen how much the creation of a new “Disarmament Committee,” discussed later, will change this situation.

Russia

The need to develop a constructive relationship with Russia is recognized by all members. The question is on what basis and, in the view of some members, what cost in terms of principles. There are several areas where cooperation makes sense and is essential to NATO’s own plans, including nuclear threat reduction. As well as being a potential partner, however, Russia is potentially problematic from a planning perspective. Russian behavior, its persistently negative attitude toward NATO, its approach to its near abroad, and the use of force in Georgia have reinforced the mistrust and suspicion of those NATO members living in close proximity. This has meant that NATO measures to reassure its members will continue to take place alongside efforts to improve relations with Russia. Almost all dimensions of Alliance security are linked to the relationship with Russia and this relationship will affect all dimensions of the DDRP, particularly the discussion of nuclear policy.

Publics and Parliaments

Public and parliamentary attitudes to nuclear weapons vary from country to country. In most NATO countries nuclear weapons are not normally an issue of public concern unless or until attention is drawn to them. For obvious reasons governments prefer they stay below the public radar. Although NATO’s nuclear policy does not appear to arouse the same degree of public concern as during the Cold War, the proposals to reduce the reliance on nuclear weapons and work toward a world free of nuclear weapons have garnered widespread support. Moreover, the disaster at Fukushima has increased public sensitivity in several countries to the term “nuclear,” whether for civil power or weapons, and could increase opposition to the presence of U.S. nuclear warheads, or a decision by NATO perceived as reaffirming the nuclear “status quo” through the modernization of Allied DCA and/or the continued stationing of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe.

The governments of DCA countries need to be particularly attentive to the public dimension. Germany and the Netherlands are the two countries most immediately affected. In both countries further expenditure for the DCA mission—either for a new aircraft or to prolong the life cycles of the existing platforms—would require parliamentary approval that in current circumstances

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14. In the case of the bilateral INF negotiations, this was done by the Special Group. For the multilateral Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) negotiations this was done by the High Level Task Force. In both cases the Alliance position was then fed into the negotiating process as appropriate.

would seem improbable. The question of parliamentary support could lead to tension between collective commitments made within the Alliance framework and domestic pressures and priorities.

Modernization

Although discussions of the DCA emphasize its political role, it was the practical and financial dimension of modernization that created the first flurry of interest in current arrangements. The situation is different in each of the four operationally active DCA countries. In Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands, the replacement of the aircraft for the conventional mission is either underway or under consideration. The question is whether the additional funds needed to equip the new aircraft for the nuclear role will be made available and whether parliamentary support will be forthcoming.¹⁵ Belgium has no plans to replace its current F-16s.

Comments from German officials have suggested that a continuation of the DCA mission by Germany will require extending the life cycle of the existing Tornados through 2020. Extending aircraft life cycles is a “fudgeable” exercise depending on the operational criteria.

The HLG Report

Working quietly in the background, the HLG prepared a series of confidential reports addressing NATO’s nuclear posture in the twenty-first century. The fact that these reports were largely unnoticed is a sign of how little attention was paid to the nuclear issue. The HLG reports worked on the basis of the guidance in the 1999 Concept and therefore the requirement for NSNW based in Europe. Working on this basic assumption, the report examined a range of options for fulfilling the mission and concluded that the DCA remained the appropriate option. As one NATO official noted, “DCA ticks all the boxes.” The options also included a multinational NATO wing that was generally considered to have been too complicated to implement.¹⁶

The HLG report was noted by Defense Ministers at their March 2011 informal meeting but will be held in abeyance pending the forthcoming review of NATO’s nuclear requirements. What role the report will play in the review of NATO’s nuclear requirements is unclear.

The HLG study largely predated the Obama Administration, which on taking office launched its own NPR. This led to a period of uncertainty with many Allies

15. For further discussion of the modernization issue see Malcolm Chalmers and Simon Lunn, “NATO’s Tactical Nuclear Dilemma,” RUSI Occasional Paper, March 2010.

16. An interesting reflection of the ideas from the 1960s for a multinational NATO nuclear force, which foundered on the problem of command and control.

wondering whether the new Administration's commitment to the Prague agenda would produce a change in U.S. policy on NATO's nuclear policy.

The U.S. Nuclear Posture Review

The NPR strengthened the longstanding U.S. negative security assurances. A senior U.S. official remarked that the significance of this change was that nuclear policy was now part of U.S. nonproliferation policy and that it would be logical for NATO to adopt similar language.¹⁷ This did not happen in the new Concept adopted in Lisbon and it remains to be seen whether the issue will be addressed in the DDP.

The NPR acknowledged the importance and relevance of extended deterrence and in that context confirmed modernization of the B-61 gravity bomb that, together with the development of the F-35 strike fighter, is relevant to NATO's current arrangements.

The NPR repeated the conventional reasons for the presence of U.S. NSNW in Europe, namely the maintenance of NATO cohesion and the reassurance of Allies and stated that any change would only be taken after a thorough review within, and decision by, the Alliance. The emphasis on placing future nuclear policy firmly within the context of the Alliance has become the centerpiece of the U.S. approach toward NATO's nuclear policy.

The Report of the Group of Experts

In the preparations surrounding the Strategic Concept, the nuclear issue received little attention, reflecting the sensitivity of the issue and the clear preference to address more pressing issues. The Report of the Group of Experts under the chairmanship of Madeleine Albright called for a change in NATO declaratory policy and supported further reductions and "possible eventual elimination" of NSNW, although suggesting the retention of some forward deployed U.S. NSNW on European soil "under current security conditions."¹⁸

17. Quoted in Simon Lunn, "Reducing the Role of NATO's Nuclear Weapon?" RUSI Briefing Note, June 2010.

18. NATO Group of Experts, "NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement," (Brussels: NATO, May 17, 2010), http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_63654.htm. The report also recommends the reestablishment of the Special Group on Arms control. The question of NATO's nuclear policy did not feature prominently in the activities that supported the Groups work, but consisted of a two-hour briefing session and a single item conclusion in the wrap up conference in Washington.

PERSPECTIVES ON NATO'S NUCLEAR POLICY

It is always difficult to generalize about national views, but interviews with various national representatives at NATO during the past 18 months revealed certain broad trends of thought. These of course may modify over time as a result of internal and external developments. Views of NATO's nuclear policy vary widely and depend on the degree of nuclear involvement of the country concerned. In some countries, views differ depending on whether the individuals represent the Ministry of Defense or Foreign Affairs.

Assessments also need to consider that the nuclear issue is not a top priority for many members. Views vary depending on the degree of involvement. Some countries are firmly opposed to change, others are ambivalent, and yet others are advocating a change in the status quo. The common factor for all members is emphasis on maintaining Alliance unity.

The more recent NATO members from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) resist change because for them the presence of U.S. NSNW unambiguously couples the U.S. nuclear deterrent to Europe and symbolizes the link with the United States which was the driving force behind their desire to join NATO. One senior representative suggested that the removal of the warheads could represent a red line for his country. Some are willing to consider reductions but only if Russia reciprocates. Proposals to provide additional Article 5 reassurance through contingency planning and exercises are welcomed but are not viewed as a substitute for the deterrence provided by the presence of U.S. warheads. One national representative revealed his scepticism when he remarked that the Allies "will remove the warheads and not do the exercises."¹⁹

A NATO missile defense system for defense of territory has been welcomed as strengthening the transatlantic link and bolstering deterrence. Several members, however, insist that missile defense performs a different function in deterrence and should not be seen as a replacement for the existing arrangements. One national representative described missile defense as "a flimsy substitute" for these arrangements, particularly in view of the impending reductions of U.S. ground forces in Europe.

For these members, the general uncertainty in the strategic environment and in relations with Russia means that this is not the time for NATO to make changes to its strategy and to do so would be sending the wrong message—in several directions.

France is not involved in NATO's nuclear arrangements but nevertheless is firmly in the "no change" camp—opposed to any move that could be interpreted as a weakening of nuclear deterrence. French officials usually refrain from

19. Ibid.

commenting on the specific issue of NATO’s NSNW. French officials, however, are known to support the existing arrangements, among other reasons, as a way of avoiding their own singularity in terms of having nuclear weapons on continental European territory. Their position on NATO force posture is best described as standing on the sidelines but encouraging those who participate in the mission.²⁰

The DCA countries themselves accept the mission but for the most part without great enthusiasm. Views on the value of the mission vary—often according to whether the official asked represents the Ministry of Defense or Foreign Affairs. Some argue that it provides the country concerned additional status within NATO and a useful means of demonstrating unity of commitment. Others maintain that the mission represents a waste of scarce resources and a missed opportunity for NATO to demonstrate its seriousness about reducing its reliance on nuclear weapons.

The reticence of the DCA countries was highlighted by the decision of the German coalition to have U.S. nuclear warheads withdrawn from German territory. This roused the interest of other members and led to the request by Foreign Ministers from five NATO nations (Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Norway) that nuclear affairs be placed on the Agenda at the Tallinn Foreign Ministers’ meeting in April 2010.

Turkish views merit specific mention because U.S. nuclear warheads are reportedly based in Turkey and Turkish aircraft continue to have DCA status at a lower level of readiness. Turkish officials also say that they would prefer a continuation of existing arrangements but refute suggestions that changes could lead to their own nuclear aspirations. In this respect, some observers claim that potential instability in the Middle East provides an additional rationale for a continuation of the DCA role as representing a crisis response tool for NATO. Critics, however, point out that the same arguments concerning the lack of credibility of DCA operational use—and therefore deterrent utility—apply equally to this situation.

Most members agree that NATO’s NSNW have little military value, but most also acknowledge the political significance for other members, and the benefits provided in terms of Allied participation and sharing in nuclear affairs. Nevertheless, some ask whether these functions can be achieved in different ways. Several would support withdrawal of the warheads as long as it was an Alliance decision and involves reciprocal measures by Russia. Among several initiatives to secure progress, a “non-paper” was circulated by Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and

Several [members] would support withdrawal of the warheads as long as it was an Alliance decision and involves reciprocal measures by Russia.

20. This is reminiscent of the position adopted by President Francois Mitterand during the “Euromissile” crisis when he spoke in favor of deployment despite the fact that France was not involved.

The typical U.S. approach to the question of whether U.S. nuclear warheads should stay in Europe was always, “we’ll do whatever you want us to do,” to which the traditional European response has been “tell us what we need.”

Poland at the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in Berlin on April 14, 2011, which urged numerous steps to increase transparency of U.S. and Russian NSNW.²¹

The flurry of activity in favor of arms control suggested diverse views that could have proved harmful to Alliance unity. It was important to sift the various positions to identify areas of agreement that could provide the basis for an agreed framework within which future discussions of nuclear policy could take place. Identifying this common ground was what the United States achieved in Tallinn.

The diversity of views made life difficult for the United States, which faced a conundrum. On the one hand, some U.S. officials assert that in view of existing U.S. capabilities, the NSNW in Europe have no military value and are redundant.²² Moreover, in today’s environment, the security of the storage sites also represents a serious cause for concern and additional expense. U.S. officials, however, also acknowledge the different European views on the value of these systems and ever conscious of European sensitivities to changes, tread carefully. The typical U.S. approach to the question of whether U.S. nuclear warheads should stay in Europe was always, “we’ll do whatever you want us to do,” to which the traditional European response has been “tell us what we need.” In the past, this has produced a dialogue in which neither party has been ready to clarify its position first.²³

THE MEETING OF NATO FOREIGN MINISTERS IN TALLINN, APRIL 22, 2010

The decision to place nuclear weapons on the agenda in Tallinn was unusual because nuclear issues are normally the domain of Ministers of Defense. Expectations, however, that this move could presage a rapid change in NATO policy were quickly stifled by the intervention of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the

21. Six other NATO Allies—Belgium, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Iceland, Luxemburg, and Slovenia—also supported the paper, which among other moves recommended using the NATO-Russia Council as the primary framework for transparency and confidence building concerning NSNW in Europe.

22. This has always been the case but it has never satisfied the more nervous of the protected who always ask for visible proof. There can be of course no definitive answer to the question whether credible extended deterrence depends on the location of the retaliatory capability because this lies in the eyes of the entity being deterred. The relevance of the Asian model of extended deterrence is now frequently the topic of discussion.

23. This routine was reminiscent of the U.S. cartoon featuring two figures, Alphonse and Gaston, who continually defer to each other—each insisting the other precede him: “You first, my dear Gaston.” “After you my dear Alphonse.”

adoption of her five principles.²⁴ These principles were designed to provide an agreed framework within which NATO's nuclear policy would be reviewed and by implication, avoid a potentially divisive debate among Alliance members. Several Allies had waited for a signal that the Administration was in favor of moving away from what they view as outdated arrangements. Instead, the Administration showed that its priority at Tallinn was in maintaining NATO cohesion, particularly with an eye on the anticipated START Treaty.

There was also an explicit emphasis at Tallinn on the need to avoid unilateral actions by any individual NATO member state. Although this was not a principle as such, there was general agreement that decisions should be taken by the Alliance as a whole. This commitment to act within the family has been the unwritten rule in all subsequent discussions and is repeated in all statements by national representatives.

Tallinn established the ground rules for future discussions of nuclear policy and the development of the new Concept. It also broke the taboo surrounding the discussion of nuclear issues and confirmed that disarmament could occupy a more prominent place in NATO discussions. Furthermore, it left open the possibility that in its new Concept, NATO could demonstrate a reduced role for nuclear weapons, both in their stated purpose and the force posture required.

THE LISBON DOCUMENTS AND NUCLEAR POLICY

The new Strategic Concept and the Lisbon Summit Declaration that accompanied it both contain language on NATO's nuclear policy and its role in disarmament

24. The five principles were as follows:

1. As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance;
2. As a nuclear Alliance, sharing nuclear risks and responsibilities widely is fundamental;
3. A broad aim is to continue to reduce the role and number of nuclear weapons while recognizing that in the years since the Cold War ended, NATO has already dramatically reduced its reliance on nuclear weapons;
4. Allies must broaden deterrence against the range of twenty-first century threats, including by pursuing territorial missile defense;
5. In any future reductions, our aim should be to seek Russian agreement to increase transparency on non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe, relocate these weapons away from the territory of NATO members, and include non-strategic nuclear weapons in the next round of U.S.-Russian arms control discussions alongside strategic and non-deployed nuclear weapons.

Some suggest that by saying little, the Concept in effect confirms existing arrangements and therefore the status quo. Others argue the reverse; in saying little, the Concept leaves the door open to change.

and arms control.²⁵ Nuclear policy and the related issue of arms control proved to be issues on which consensus was difficult to reach in both the Concept and the Declaration.

Four elements were particularly significant to these discussions: the language describing the role of nuclear weapons in NATO strategy; the continued need for deployment of U.S. nuclear warheads in Europe; adopting Missile Defense for the defense of territory; and NATO's role in disarmament, arms control, and nonproliferation. Each of these issues raises fundamental questions concerning the role of nuclear weapons in NATO strategy and each in some way raises the question of relations with Russia.

Discussions among an informal group of interested countries occurred during the summer but failed to produce agreed language. Consultations then took place between the three nuclear powers and Germany in the informal group of four frequently used to prepare the basis for consensus. These consultations produced a series of compromises and trade offs on the major differences that facilitated agreement on key language.

These compromises satisfied French concerns that the language in the Strategic Concept would not imply any reduction in the role of the nuclear weapons; allowed the French to waive their hesitations over adopting missile defense (a U.S. priority); and agreed to a higher profile for disarmament (a German priority). The demand by several countries for a nuclear posture was resolved through the French accepting a NATO nuclear posture review. This evolved, at the proposal of the United Kingdom, into a broader DDPR.

As a result of French insistence that the new Concept should not imply any reduction in the role of nuclear weapons, the language is extremely brief. Some suggest that by saying little, the Concept in effect confirms existing arrangements and therefore the status quo. Others argue the reverse; in saying little, the Concept leaves the door open to change. Which interpretation proves true will depend on future developments concerning the review of deterrence and defense and related developments in the political environment.

The question of interpretation is immediately evident in the Strategic Concept commitment, "to the goal of creating the conditions for a world without nuclear

25. The aim of a Strategic Concept is to chart NATO's course by establishing the principles and parameters that underpin its purposes and goals. The new Concept took a year to develop in an unusually transparent process involving a Group of Experts and a series of seminars with think tanks and academics. The consultation process with Alliance members, however, was more constrained. The Summit Declaration provides commentary on the current issues in which NATO is directly involved and of immediate relevance. The language is of necessity, more actual and detailed than the Concept. The Declaration also contains numerous "taskings" for follow up, most due for completion by mid-2011. Because of its immediate relevance, adopting the Declaration proved more problematic than the Concept.

weapons.” Arms control supporters point to this language as committing NATO for the first time to supporting this goal. Others emphasize, however, that the goal is “to create the conditions for” a nuclear weapons free world. They also point to the next sentence, “but reconfirms that, as long as there are nuclear weapons in the world, NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance” as an important qualifier. This sentence, which is the first of the Clinton principles, now accompanies almost every declaration on NATO nuclear policy.

Nuclear weapons are located as part of the now familiar “appropriate mix” for the core element of deterrence. The language from the 1999 Concept—that the circumstances in which any use of nuclear weapons might have to be contemplated are extremely remote—is repeated.

The new Concept no longer contains the language from the 1999 Concept that describes the purpose of NATO’s nuclear forces to counter all forms of aggression. The absence of such language has led to speculation on the compatibility of NATO’s nuclear policy with the language in the U.S. NPR that by strengthening U.S. negative security assurances narrows the circumstances in which the United States would contemplate use.

The Concept repeats the 1999 language that the supreme guarantee of the security of the Allies is provided by the strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance, particularly by those of the United States and the independent forces of the United Kingdom and France, “which have a deterrent role of their own.”

The specific reference to the need for NSNW in Europe is missing. This omission undoubtedly reflects the sensitivity of the issue, particularly given the position adopted by the German coalition. The Concept, however, states that the Alliance will:

ensure the broadest possible participation of Allies in collective defense planning on nuclear roles, in peacetime basing of nuclear forces and in command, control and consultation arrangements.

The absence of a specific reference to European territory in the context of peacetime basing reflects the sensitivity of the issue. It could be argued that a reference to European territory is unnecessary because it is covered by the phrases “broadest possible participation of Allies...in peacetime basing of nuclear forces.” Although interpretations of “broadest possible” and the lack of precision on the “where” of peacetime basing could be said to leave a degree of ambiguity how this could be fulfilled.²⁶ The absence of a reference to linkage and the emphasis on the participation of Allies would suggest that burden sharing is now the most valued element in the rationale for NSNW.

The new Concept no longer contains the language from the 1999 Concept that describes the purpose of NATO’s nuclear forces to counter all forms of aggression.

26. There are suggestions that this would allow for the removal of the NSNW to the United States while retaining the DCA.

The Concept states that NATO intends to develop the capability to defend territories and populations against ballistic missile attack as a core element of collective defense. Although NATO has long accepted the need to protect deploying forces from ballistic missile attack, this is first time NATO has agreed to protect territory and populations.

Missile defense has always been a sensitive issue for France because for some time it was seen as representing a threat to the credibility of the French independent deterrent. This position has softened over time. According to participants in the Lisbon discussions, France did not block an agreement by the Alliance on missile defense for territory as part of the compromises reached. The relationship between missile defense and nuclear deterrence, however, proved to be an issue of contention between France and Germany until the last stages and had to be settled by the two leaders. Germany argued that missile defense would reduce the nuclear component in deterrence and France, together with others, took the position that there was no such connection and that, while territorial Missile Defense could complement and even reinforce nuclear deterrence, it could not substitute for it.

In the months preceding Lisbon, several members pressed for a NATO nuclear posture review in the hope that this would address the question of extended deterrence and the continuing need for deploying NSNW. Other members who were satisfied with the existing arrangements did not see such a need. France in particular was hostile to such a review. A compromise was reached in the Concept by tasking the NAC to:

continue to review NATO's overall posture in deterring and defending against the full range of threats to the Alliance...

This was further elaborated in the Declaration:

This comprehensive review should be undertaken by all Allies on the basis of deterrence and defence principles agreed in the Strategic Concept, taking into account WMD and ballistic missile proliferation. Essential elements of the review would include the range of NATO's strategic capabilities required, including NATO's nuclear posture, and missile defence and other means of strategic deterrence and defence. This only applies to nuclear weapons assigned to NATO.

The Concept confirms that NATO will continue to play its part in reinforcing arms control and promoting disarmament, repeating the resolve to seek a safer world and to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons.

Noting the dramatic reductions in the number of nuclear weapons stationed in Europe the Concept states:

In any future reductions, our aim should be to seek Russian agreement to increase transparency on its nuclear weapons in Europe and to relocate these weapons away from the territory of NATO members. Any further steps must

take account the disparity with the greater Russian stockpiles of short-range nuclear weapons.

The Declaration devotes four paragraphs to arms control and disarmament, including references to the new START Treaty, and repeats the resolve to seek to create the conditions for further reductions in the role and numbers of NATO's nuclear weapons.

Several members had persistently argued for NATO to play a more active role in arms control and disarmament with France just as persistently opposing such a role on the grounds that it was not an appropriate role for a military organization. As part of the political trading over the emphasis to be given to nuclear weapons and disarmament respectively, it was agreed that the NAC be tasked:

to establish a Committee to provide advice on WMD control and disarmament in the context of the above, taking into account the role of the High Level Task Force (HLTF).

The somewhat convoluted language reflects the differences surrounding its creation. According to participants, this language arrived very late in the drafting session and left many members bemused as to the exact intention. Efforts by France to limit the duration of this Committee to the life of the DDPR through the use of the term “ad hoc” were resisted. However, its precise terms of competence, its input to the DDPR and its duration remain uncertain and await further definition.

NATO DETERRENCE AND DEFENSE POSTURE REVIEW

Process

The decision to undertake a comprehensive review of deterrence and defense was a compromise between those who sought a specific review of the nuclear posture and those who wanted to avoid any re-examination of the nuclear posture. The result will be an overall assessment of all elements of NATO strategy—conventional forces, nuclear, missile defense, and to include any of the new threats considered relevant. It leaves open the possibility for change if members see this in their national and collective interest and dependent on developments in the international environment.

The Terms of Reference (TORs) were agreed by Defense Ministers in March and a work plan was agreed by Foreign Ministers in May. The review will have a first phase of consultations until fall 2011, which will include brainstorming sessions for the NAC and then a second drafting phase with the aim of a report by the next Summit in the United States foreseen for May 2012.

In terms of organization, there will be several layers. The NAC in permanent session—the Ambassadors—will be responsible for overall coordination and

The overall aim of the DDPR must be to ensure that NATO strategy is coherent—that it has the capabilities appropriate to the range and diversity of threats, responds to the political circumstances, and takes account of resources available.

supervision, delegating in turn to their Deputies. It is assumed that they will draw on the work of those Committees with competence in the respective areas—conventional, nuclear, missile defense, and the other security threats thought relevant—and the new Committee on WMD Control and Disarmament. Scoping papers on relevant areas, emerging threats, conventional forces, nuclear policy, and arms control will facilitate discussions by the NAC. The views of those in the academic world with relevant expertise will also be sought.

The overall aim of the DDPR must be to ensure that NATO strategy is coherent—that it has the capabilities appropriate to the range and diversity of threats, responds to the political circumstances, and takes account of resources available. A key part of the review should be to identify the interrelationships and linkages between the various planning areas including disarmament and arms control. The term “linkage” has already been the subject of division, with France resisting use of the term. France, however, was keen to have as broad a review as possible.

Conventional Forces

NATO has a defense planning system with a regular cycle that provides guidance to nations on their conventional forces. This process was updated in 2006 to include more planning disciplines. This regular cycle has also been reinforced by the defense capabilities package agreed in Lisbon. Defense capabilities are under constant scrutiny, which means that there is no need for a separate review. Major challenges include ensuring a balance between the traditional demands of defense of territory with those of out of area and coping with severe cuts in defense budgets.

During the Cold War, the relationship between conventional and nuclear forces was clear—simply put, the weaker the former the greater the dependence on the latter. Today there is no Soviet Union, Warsaw Pact, or direct threat and the emphasis is on the political role of nuclear weapons. Nevertheless the relationship between the two components still exists. NATO’s conventional forces continue to play a key role in providing reassurance of the Article 5 commitment and the degree to which they are successful means less reliance on the nuclear component. The relationship in other scenarios remains to be defined.

It is also worth noting that Russia claims NATO conventional superiority as justification for its own reliance on nuclear weapons. This assessment probably takes account of the full spectrum of U.S. capabilities, including current and possible future developments, such as advanced long-range precision conventional weapons, and Russia’s geo-strategic situation. It appears that Russia’s concerns are as much about the differences in quality as in quantity.

It is difficult in the European context to see how this perception can be changed. Most NATO members are below their entitlements under the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) and in the current economic climate, defense budgets are in

steep decline. It is obviously true that regional or local imbalances can produce threatening postures. But in this respect it is the smaller NATO members in the North that have the most to worry about. It is to provide reassurance to these members that NATO has been developing various measures, including contingency plans and activities, to increase the visibility of NATO involvement—measures that will certainly draw Russian attention and criticism.

It is precisely for these types of activities and the reactions they provoke that greater transparency could be helpful in reducing insecurities.²⁷ In this sense the revival of the CFE regime or a viable follow-on arrangement and greater openness and certainty in conventional forces would be a welcome development.²⁸ Measures that create greater transparency through information exchange, dialogue, and other cooperative activities could help dispel many of the misperceptions that permeate existing relations and build much needed, and currently lacking, mutual trust. For the moment there is no movement in this area either

Missile Defense

Missile Defense is proceeding on two tracks. First, NATO is developing its own system focused on achieving synergy between the NATO system and the national system and solving the problem of command and control. Second is the issue of cooperation with Russia where the emphasis is on finding common ground between two very different interpretations of “joint.” The Russian proposal for a single system is incompatible with NATO’s collective defense commitment under Article 5.

Both of these tracks are fraught with difficulties and both have consequences for NATO strategy. In brief, many members believe it reinforces the U.S. link—a form of new “glue”—and provides a new way of showing solidarity. There continues to be considerable uncertainty over what contributions the Allies will be asked to make in the longer term or where the expenditure will come from.

Some countries, Germany in particular, argue that missile defense should over time reduce the reliance on NSNW. This is hotly disputed by other members, notably France. This has revived discussions concerning the respective effectiveness of deterrence by punishment or by denial. The role and consequences of missile defense will certainly preoccupy discussions in the DDPR.

27. An initiative aimed at achieving greater transparency and improving mutual understanding could include discussions of doctrine, structure, and configuration similar to those that took place in the 1980s between NATO military and defense planners and those of the Soviet Union. Discussions took place in this context in the early 2000s in the NATO-Russia Council (NRC).

28. For a pessimistic assessment of the current status of the CFE process, see Simon Lunn, “Re-viving Discussions on the Conventional Imbalance,” The ELN Symposium, Reducing the Role of Nuclear Weapons in NATO-Russia Relations (Berlin, June 31, 2011).

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The relevance of missile defense to relations with Russia has an even greater significance as Russian officials continually refer to cooperation on missile defense as a litmus test of the relationship with NATO. Cooperation in other areas, including on NSNW, may be hostage to progress in this field.

New Threats

It is not clear how the DDPR will tackle new threats, such as cyber and the question of energy security.

The Committee on WMD Control and Disarmament

It is likewise too early to say how the new “Disarmament Committee” will operate in the context of the review. It could function as the forum for the United States to consult with Allies on the prospect of negotiations on NSNW. A precedent for this exists in the creation and work of the Special Group for consultation on the INF negotiations. Beyond that, its future remains uncertain although there is a firm constituency that supports its continuation as a framework for NATO members to exchange views on disarmament issues.

REVIEW OF A NATO NUCLEAR POSTURE

A review of NATO’s nuclear requirements will be a central element of the DDPR. While the precise workings are still to be decided, it would be reasonable to assume that the NPG and HLG as the dedicated bodies will be involved in the preparatory work. “Food for thought” papers on key aspects, such as burden sharing, are being prepared by individual nations. Final responsibility, however, will rest with the Ambassadors to ensure that recommendations by the nuclear community are subject to political scrutiny.

There may be proposals to make the language on declaratory policy consistent with the language in the U.S. NPR, which would presumably mean reducing the circumstances of use and therefore the ambiguity. This is likely to arouse French objections and the question will be whether countries will feel this issue is sufficiently important to pursue and fight for—remembering that the language in the new Concept is minimal and retains its ambiguity.

The position of France remains unclear. Assuming that inputs to the DDPR are provided by the HLG and NPG, French views will not be heard. However, when the NAC considers these inputs the French Ambassador will be able to join the discussions. The question is whether he will feel free to speak on nuclear requirements as well as general policy.

The existing HLG report has been noted by Ministers but in the view of most officials, has been shelved pending the outcome of the DDPR. Senior NATO offi-

cials have said that a nuclear review should start from first principles. This would suggest revisiting the basic question on the need for the continued deployment in Europe of the U.S. nuclear warheads, looking at possible adjustments and at different ways of doing things.

It has to be assumed that the review will take as its starting point the guidance on nuclear policy contained in the new Strategic Concept. There are two references in the Concept that are of direct relevance to the discussions of NATO's future nuclear posture. First, the reference to ensuring the broadest possible participation of Allies, and second the need in any future reductions to engage Russia on its own stockpile.

Burden Sharing

The reference to the "broadest possible participation" places a clear emphasis on the need for Allies' involvement and implicitly on burden sharing. It does not rule out looking for different methods of participation and of burden sharing. Although the most obvious interpretation would be that it points to a continuation of the existing DCA arrangements, it is also possible to stretch the language to suggest that peace time basing could mean different things.

Is there room for adjustments to the existing arrangements, such as reducing the number of NSNW, which would satisfy those who want NATO to demonstrate movement? Reducing numbers of NSNW could be more complicated in terms of its practical and operational implementation than appears at first sight. Furthermore, any proposal for further reductions would need to take account of the stipulation discussed below of the need for reciprocal action by Russia.

Supporters of the status quo emphasize the importance of the political principle of sharing the nuclear risk and burden and suggest that a decision by the Allies to end current arrangements could receive a negative reaction in the U.S. Congress and therefore damage the transatlantic relationship.

It is also possible that the review could consider new arguments to sustain the existing DCA arrangements. There are those who argue that a NATO nuclear capability—and by implication a European footprint—is a prudent precaution for future eventualities and is needed for uncertainties in other regions. These arguments could be seen as an effort to develop a new rationale, or "narrative," which makes the posture relevant to the new challenges. The future utility advocates are also supported by the decision in the U.S. NPR to modernize the B-61 bomb and the F-35 aircraft.

The potential application to new scenarios raises the question of the credibility of the existing arrangements. This is not a new issue. The credibility of the DCA mission is often criticized because of the absence of an evident operational application. If there were a requirement for using nuclear weapons, critics ask, would an allied DCA provide the appropriate choice given the range of options available? There is a further consideration. How likely is it that the United States

The reference to the "broadest possible participation" places a clear emphasis on the need for Allies' involvement and implicitly on burden sharing.

would make a decision of this magnitude the subject of agreement by 28 Allies? These are inconvenient questions because they go to the heart of NATO's nuclear policy.²⁹ Nevertheless, the question of credibility must have a bearing on the political and symbolic value of the current arrangements.

These are not new considerations and there are no easy answers. The credibility of deterrence lies in the eyes of those being deterred and of those who are being reassured. In current circumstances of uncertain threats attention focuses naturally on the latter and the innate tendency to remain with what is familiar. However, the DDP provides the opportunity to reassess the credibility of a NATO nuclear capability and the benefits and disadvantages of existing arrangements.

Russian Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons

The size and location of the Russian stockpile—most sources suggest the stockpile could be around 3000 warheads—has become a major source of concern for Alliance members and one that dominates current NATO thinking. It is with the purpose of addressing this disparity that the new Strategic Concept seeks to engage Russia on the size and location of their systems.

Consistent with the Senate conditionality attached to the ratification of New START, the Obama Administration has said it believes NSNW should be included in future negotiations, but that reciprocal actions could be taken on the basis of parallel steps by each side in advance of a new treaty, underscoring the importance of consulting with Allies.³⁰ Thus far, however, Russia has shown no interest in discussing NSNW; this includes discussions in the NRC.³¹ Russian willingness to cooperate on this issue will almost certainly depend on progress in other areas.

The Administration is now considering the various options for including NSNW in future negotiations. In due course it will consult the Allies. This means that in defining its nuclear posture, NATO will need to take account of the prospect of negotiations. In other words, NATO should decide what posture it needs and to what degree this posture is defined by Russian weaponry and by the results of any

29. The question of consultation with Allies was addressed in the so-called Athens guidelines in 1962. They have been summarized as “time and circumstance permitting” (see CRS report, *ibid*). The Athens guidelines were later reinforced by the provisional political guidelines, which remain confidential.

30. Tom Donilon, National Security Adviser to the President, Remarks at the Carnegie International Nuclear Policy Conference (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: March 29, 2011), <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/2011/03/29/keynote-thomas-donilon/2s6j>.

31. There is now an extensive body of literature on Russian capabilities and attitudes—none of it very encouraging. Russian sources suggest an increased reliance on nuclear weapons including sub-strategic systems to offset what is seen as NATO's advantages in conventional forces. Western analysts also suggest that the Russian navy has a particular interest in maintaining these systems and hence their location.

negotiations, so that force planning and arms control would be synchronized.³² This alone creates pressure for continuing the DCA arrangements because of the need for something to negotiate. As a senior U.S. official noted, “arms control is the best friend of those who support the status quo.”

32. This is easier said than done and raises the question of the priority afforded to defense and disarmament respectively—difficult enough in a national administration even more so in a multinational alliance. In the case of the Double Track Decision, the modernization requirements were established first, then the negotiating position. Although the zero option was always the rhetorical goal, the surprise acceptance by the Soviet Union, while welcomed by most, did not please those who considered that NATO needed some capability in that category.