

# REDUCING THE ROLE OF NATO'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS

## Where do we Stand after Tallinn?

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### Executive Summary

After twenty years of benign neglect, nuclear weapons are back on NATO's agenda: their return prompted by the decision to develop a new Strategic Concept. In reassessing their role, NATO will have to reconcile the traditional tasks of deterrence and defence with the challenges posed by proliferation and the consequent commitment to reducing and eliminating the role of nuclear weapons. Balancing the frequently competing demands of deterrence and disarmament was a familiar problem for NATO during the Cold War. However, today's NATO is a larger alliance with a broader and more diverse set of concerns and perspectives to accommodate.

Nuclear policy touches several sensitive points in Alliance politics. Nuclear weapons represent the ultimate deterrent for the security of the Alliance. As such, they must respond to different perceptions concerning the degree of credibility needed for deterrence. This has led to innumerable debates over NATO's nuclear posture. The unique characteristics of nuclear weapons and the special role of the US as the chief nuclear protector have meant that NATO's nuclear policy has always required careful and discreet handling. The US has traditionally exerted leadership, while being equally attentive to the need to consult with and involve Allies. For their part, members have accepted US leadership, but have been ever sensitive to prospective changes. Today the existence of potentially conflicting views on reliance or reduction suggests that NATO has reached another point of introspection concerning its nuclear policy.

It is still too early to say how the new Concept will deal with the role of nuclear weapons. However,

from the discussions that have already taken place it is possible to discern the fault lines that will need to be addressed.

No member government questions that NATO is a nuclear alliance. There are different views, however, on what this means: on the emphasis to be placed on the nuclear contribution to NATO strategy; on the implications for non-nuclear members in terms of participation and sharing; and on the presence of US nuclear warheads in Europe. Several members want a greater role for arms control and support the revival of a Special Group for that purpose. They see the new Strategic Concept as an opportunity for NATO to demonstrate both in purpose and posture its commitment to the goals of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Others are more cautious. Some oppose tampering with the nuclear component which they regard as both the core and the symbol of US commitment to their security. These countries believe the presence of US nuclear warheads in Europe is an essential part of NATO's nuclear identity and oppose their removal. They would support reductions only as long as there is reciprocal action by Russia. They are also wary that efforts to increase non-nuclear means for defence are designed to dilute nuclear deterrence. These differences have produced an uneasy and potentially divisive situation. Everyone recognises the importance of maintaining Alliance solidarity and cohesion – the question is how best to maintain it.

The answer for the moment was provided during the informal meeting of NATO foreign ministers in

Tallinn, Estonia, where at the request of five ministers, nuclear policy had been placed on the agenda and expectations created that NATO's nuclear policy may be about to change. The outcome of Tallinn fell well short of these expectations. Led by the US, the meeting made the maintenance of NATO unity the priority; there was general agreement that NATO's nuclear policy had to be decided by the Alliance as a whole and not through unilateral actions. This emphasis on collective action inevitably tilted the balance towards those who favoured maintaining the status quo.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton proposed five principles designed to provide the basis for the future development of NATO's nuclear policy. These do not rule out the possibility of change, or of movement in the direction sought by many. Much will depend on the way they are interpreted. The principles include the broad aim of reducing the role and number of nuclear weapons. However, the association of future reductions with engaging Russia in discussions on transparency and arms control negotiations (with no implicit direct link) suggests that progress may be slow.

The meeting in Tallinn disappointed those looking for signs that NATO was about to change its longstanding – and in the views of some, anachronistic – arrangements. However it was successful in removing the taboo on the discussion

of nuclear issues and facilitating frank exchanges in which national positions were expressed. In that sense, it has changed the tone of the debate and prepared the way for further discussions in the context of the Strategic Concept and beyond, in which the prospects for further progress can be tested.

After President Obama's vocal support for the pursuit of a world free of nuclear weapons, many were surprised by the position adopted by the US. The need at this juncture to avoid potentially distracting rows within the Alliance, particularly in view of the pending ratification of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) was seen as the principal motivation.

The next steps will be the agreement of appropriate language on nuclear policy in the Strategic Concept, probably using the Clinton principles as the basis, and a NATO Nuclear Posture Review (NNPR) to address the issue of force posture. An NNPR should ideally examine the assumptions and rationales of the current posture, and see where things could possibly be done differently. The review will have to take account of developments in related areas such as the work on strengthening Article V, missile defence and efforts to revive the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) regime – but without creating formal linkage that would slow the process even further.

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Possible outcomes include a continuation of existing arrangements, a reduction in numbers, removal of the warheads but retention of nuclear-certified Dual-Capable Aircraft (DCA), and negotiations with the Russians. There is general agreement that reductions by NATO must be accompanied by reciprocal steps in Russia through transparency and arms control negotiations. However, there is neither certainty that Russia is willing to engage on the issue, nor clarity on the location or objective of potential negotiations.

The emphasis on Alliance solidarity and the value placed on coupling and sharing suggests the retention of both mission and warheads while exploring the possibility of reciprocal action by Russia. Removal will only be as part of a process. This suggests the status quo will remain for some time.

This leaves NATO and the DCA nations with the continued presence of the warheads and the need to ensure the DCA to perform the mission. How will this be received in the respective countries? Are their publics and parliaments concerned about the presence of US nuclear warheads? Will the parliaments be willing to pay the extra expenditure to keep the mission going? In both cases, does the fact that this is a NATO decision make justification easier or more difficult? In Tallinn, governments agreed that decisions on nuclear policy will be collective. However, they are accountable to their parliaments and depend on their support. Whether nuclear policy again becomes a controversial issue within the Alliance will depend on how it is handled in the coming months.

## **Development of NATO Nuclear Policy**

### **Background to the Presence of Sub-Strategic Nuclear Forces in Europe**

The destructive nature of nuclear weapons means they have constituted the ultimate deterrent in NATO strategy. This power means their deployment has always had elements of controversy and has required careful management and consultation. This has been particularly true of the nuclear forces deployed in Europe. Sub-strategic (or tactical)

weapons were deployed in Europe in the 1950s to offset Warsaw Pact superiority in conventional forces and with the explicit intention of use in the event of aggression. As the consequences of using these systems became evident, NATO began to search for a broader range of options resulting in the strategy of flexible response. During this evolution the involvement of NATO in the development of nuclear policy and its relationship with the nuclear forces of the providers (the US and UK – French forces remaining independent) was under constant discussion. Ideas of a NATO nuclear force were floated, but foundered on the issue of command and control. NATO involvement was secured through the creation of the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) in which all the NATO members (except France) participate in regular consultations on NATO's nuclear policy and the development of appropriate guidelines.

The decision in 1979 to deploy US intermediate-range ballistic missiles in Europe was a milestone in Alliance nuclear strategy, not just for the process through which it was handled, but because it highlighted the factors that have influenced – and to a degree still influence – NATO strategy: coupling, Allied participation and sharing, and public support.<sup>1</sup> Today the strategic environment and the context in which NATO is considering its requirements have changed dramatically. Nevertheless some of the factors and the arguments have a certain resonance. One element of continuity is the need to ensure that nuclear policy is not developed in a political vacuum, but is under the direction of political leaders who are responsible for the final decisions, their implementation and their consequences.

At the end of the Cold War the Alliance focussed on adapting to a new environment and NATO's nuclear forces subsided into the background. The Alliance carried out substantial reductions in its nuclear posture in Europe, which received very little attention. Nuclear policy continued to be handled by the NPG in the form of the NATO Council (defence ministers or permanent representatives), and the day-to-day business by the NPG Staff Group

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of these factors see Annex I.

attended by representatives from the national missions to NATO and chaired by the International Staff. The NPG is reinforced when necessary by the High Level Group which is attended by senior officials from national capitals, chaired by the US, and ensures that nuclear policy is subject to high-level political attention.

### **The Strategic Concepts of 1991 and 1999**

The language describing the purpose of NATO's nuclear forces also changed dramatically – from the focus on their operational application in the previously classified document, to an emphasis on their political nature: 'to preserve peace and prevent coercion and any kind of war.'<sup>2</sup> Both Concepts devote three paragraphs to nuclear policy using almost identical language; including the statement that a credible Alliance posture requires widespread participation by European Allies to strengthen the bond between Europe and North America; and that NATO will 'maintain adequate sub-strategic forces based in Europe which will provide an essential link with strategic nuclear forces, reinforcing the trans-Atlantic link'.<sup>3</sup>

As the 1999 Strategic Concept represents Alliance consensus for the last twenty years on the rationale for the current arrangements – linkage, participation and sharing – it is the natural starting point for discussions concerning the future direction of NATO nuclear policy.

### **Political Developments**

Since the adoption of the 1999 Concept there have been several developments that will influence NATO's decisions on its nuclear policy. NATO has gained twelve new members, each of whom brings specific interests and concerns that the Concept will need to accommodate. These members have not been involved in the past debates on NATO's nuclear strategy. The growing momentum behind the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons, as a response to the growing problem of proliferation, has created a new political climate in which nuclear

policy is now discussed. The speech in Prague by President Obama has given the initiative a considerable boost, as has the emergence in most NATO countries of groups of senior statesmen and officials supporting its goals. Preparations for the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference also focussed attention on the need for NATO to reduce its reliance on nuclear weapons. The recent agreement between the US and Russia on the new START treaty has also added to the optimism for arms control prospects.

The possibility of a change in NATO's posture was initiated by the statement in the German coalition agreement seeking the removal of US nuclear warheads from German territory. This was followed by a series of statements and contributions from various Alliance ministers suggesting that it was time for NATO to rethink its nuclear policy and take a lead in promoting arms control negotiations. However these views are by no means universally held. Different views exist within the Alliance on the place and role of nuclear weapons in NATO strategy, and on the role of disarmament and arms control.

## **The Current State of Policy**

### **Current Attitudes to NATO's Nuclear Policy**

All NATO governments agree that NATO is a nuclear Alliance; that its nuclear identity rests on the commitment of US and UK nuclear capabilities to the collective defence; and that the voices of the two nuclear providers, particularly the US, carry additional weight in consultations on NATO nuclear policy. As French nuclear forces are not committed to NATO, France does not participate in NATO's nuclear affairs, but does make its voice heard in discussions of general strategy.

But what does being a nuclear Alliance mean for other members? What degree of participation and involvement in NATO's nuclear policy and posture is required? The implications for non-nuclear members are spelt out in the Strategic Concept. The question is whether these implications can and should be adapted to the new political climate.

<sup>2</sup> NATO's Strategic Concept 1991, <<http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/b911108a.htm>>, accessed 15 June 2010.

<sup>3</sup> This text appears in both NATO's 1991 and 1999 Strategic Concepts.

It is clear that some members would like to explore the possibilities offered by different approaches with a greater emphasis on arms control. Several support the revival of a Special Group for that purpose. The drafting of the Strasbourg Declaration on Alliance Security in April 2009 revealed differences amongst members on the weight to be accorded to the nuclear component in NATO's deterrence and defence strategy, and on the need to balance this with a commitment to disarmament and arms control. The compromise was to link the two.

Several countries argue that if NATO is serious about reducing the role of nuclear weapons, then this should be reflected in its strategy and posture. However, others cling fiercely to the notion that nuclear weapons represent the ultimate deterrent and are unwilling to see any steps that could represent a dilution of this function. These views highlight the dilemma of reconciling the belief in the deterrent value of nuclear weapons with the commitment to eliminate them – a dilemma normally circumvented by reference to the difference between the goal of elimination and the steps needed to achieve it. However it also pervades decisions in the short term, such as the need for sub-strategic systems.

These arguments about the nature and requirements of a nuclear Alliance are most visible on the question of basing US nuclear warheads in Europe. For some members the presence of these warheads is the *sine qua non* of being a nuclear alliance, whereas for others NATO's nuclear identity does not depend on the location of the weapons.

Attitudes to the current NATO arrangements involving the forward based nuclear warheads and DCA can be summarised as follows:

For the new members, the presence of US nuclear warheads unambiguously couple, the US nuclear deterrent to Europe, and symbolise, the bond with the US which was the driving force behind their desire to join NATO. The continued presence in Europe of these warheads is seen as essential, and according to one senior representative their

removal would represent a red line for his country. Some new members are willing to consider reductions, but only if Russia undertakes reciprocal measures. The new members also suspect that proposals to place more emphasis on non-nuclear defence represent an effort to diminish the value of nuclear deterrence. They welcome proposals to provide more Article V reassurance through contingency planning and exercises, but insist that these cannot substitute for the deterrence provided by the presence of US warheads. As the representative of one nation remarked, 'they'll take the warheads and not do the exercises.'

In the same way, the development of a NATO missile defence system is seen as strengthening the transatlantic link and bolstering deterrence, but performing a different function to that of the US warheads based in Europe.

For other members, NATO's sub-strategic nuclear systems have no military – and consequently no deterrent – value. If they cannot be used, how can they deter? They are superfluous. These countries do acknowledge the political significance for other members and the contribution to risk sharing, but ask whether these functions can be achieved in other ways. They accept for the moment the need for the mission, albeit without great enthusiasm. Several members regret that continuing the mission represents a missed opportunity for NATO to demonstrate its seriousness about reducing its reliance on nuclear weapons.

Turkish officials also say that they would prefer a continuation of existing arrangements, but reject 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. However, critics believe that the credibility of this application is equally flawed.

Many US officials believe that the sub-strategic systems in Europe have no real military value, and in any case are redundant in view of existing US capabilities. Their security is a source of concern. However, acknowledging the different European

views on the utility of these systems and ever conscious of European sensitivities to change in this area, they tread carefully. The typical US approach to the question of whether US nuclear warheads should stay in Europe is 'we will do whatever you want us to do' to which the normal European response is 'you should tell us what we need.' This has produced a dialogue in which neither party has been willing to clarify its position first. However, the strength of feeling of the new members has made this for many US officials primarily a question of Alliance cohesion and solidarity. This has led to policy differences between those who would like to propose changes to NATO policy, and those who insist on leaving things alone in order not to rock the boat.

French officials refrain from commenting on the issue of NATO sub-strategic systems, seeing it as none of their business. However French officials do participate in the Strategic Concept discussions dealing with nuclear issues and can be relied on to resist strongly any weakening of the nuclear role.

### **Implementation of Policy: Convergence of Parallel Activities**

Discussions on the future role of nuclear forces in NATO have taken place in several fora that will influence in different ways what course of action the Alliance adopts.

#### *High-Level Group Report*

During the last four years the High Level Group (HLG) has conducted an internal, classified study on NATO's future nuclear requirements which, according to participants, has concluded that the existing rationales set out in the 1999 Concept remain relevant and that the DCA continue to offer the best option – albeit with the consideration of a NATO air wing.

The HLG report was largely developed before the endorsement of the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons by President Obama in his 2009 Prague speech and the political momentum that has followed. For several national representatives these developments raise the question of the relevance and status of the HLG Report. The key question was

whether US policy would change – one which could only be answered when the US published its much delayed Nuclear Posture Review (NPR). However the NPR has not clarified the situation in terms of NATO's force posture. As described below, it again places the emphasis on consultation with Allies. The status of the HLG Report remains unclear. Most national representatives suggest that as its assumptions are no longer consistent with current political developments, it will be merely noted by defence ministers when they meet in June. They also believe the Report will be overtaken by a NATO Nuclear Posture Review, which they anticipate will be established by the new Strategic Concept.

#### *US Nuclear Posture Review*

In declaratory policy, the NPR strengthens the longstanding negative security assurances by declaring that the 'US will not use or threaten to use its nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states that are party to the NPT.'<sup>4</sup> A senior US official remarked that the significance of this change was that nuclear policy was now part of US proliferation policy. It would be logical for NATO to adopt similar language. The language of the 1999 Concept implies that NATO nuclear forces deter all forms of aggression, whereas the US language is more restrictive. Whether this proposition will gain consensus remains to be seen and will probably depend on what other changes are being mooted.

On the issue of the forward deployed US nuclear weapons in Europe, the NPR follows conventional wisdom noting that 'the presence of US nuclear weapons – combined with NATO's unique nuclear sharing arrangements ... contribute to Alliance cohesion and provide reassurance to Allies and partners' and stresses that: 'Any changes in NATO's nuclear posture should only be taken after a thorough review – and decision by – the Alliance.'<sup>5</sup> Thus the NPR endorses the status quo and passes responsibility for change back to NATO. The emphasis on consultation and therefore

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<sup>4</sup> US Nuclear Posture Review Report, April 2010, <<http://www.defense.gov/npr/docs/2010%20Nuclear%20Posture%20Review%20Report.pdf>>, accessed 15 June 2010.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

consensus implies that any move away from current arrangements will take time.

The NPR also proposes to increase its reliance on non-nuclear means, such as missile defence for deterrence in regional security arrangements, in order to reduce the role of nuclear weapons. This is consistent with proposals to provide greater reassurance to new members, particularly in the context of lessening their attachment to sub-strategic systems. Again though, some NATO members are unhappy with proposals that suggest a weakening of nuclear deterrence.

#### *Meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers in Tallinn*

As a result of the momentum created by the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons, attention focussed increasingly on what it meant for NATO's nuclear policy and whether the Obama administration would inject a new approach. Expectations were raised when the foreign ministers of five NATO nations – Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Norway – wrote to the Secretary General requesting that nuclear policy be placed on the agenda for their informal meeting in Tallinn. This was unusual as nuclear weapons are normally the preserve of the defence ministers with foreign ministers focussing on disarmament – although NATO has no formal role in the latter. This proposal suggested that a new approach consistent with the aims of a nuclear weapons-free world could be in the making.

However, despite hopes for more concrete movement, initial press reports suggested that under US leadership the Tallinn meeting had endorsed the status quo. Recognising the possibility of a divisive debate the US had decided that the priority was maintenance of Alliance unity. Taking the floor first, Secretary of State Clinton proposed five principles designed to provide the basis for future NATO nuclear policy with an implicit emphasis on the need for collective rather than unilateral action.<sup>6</sup> The US approach was designed to calm the situation, stifle expectations concerning possible movement on the question of US nuclear

warheads in Europe and demonstrate solidarity. This approach had the desired effect and as one participant noted 'everyone stepped back in line.' It also set the tone for other interventions which, while expressing national positions and priorities, did so with an emphasis on the need for collective action.

While the Tallinn meeting disappointed those hoping for a more positive signal, the outcome was not a total endorsement of the status quo. While other contributions stressed the need for an Alliance approach, they nevertheless expressed national positions on the need for NATO to demonstrate support for reducing reliance on nuclear weapons. Furthermore, as one participant noted, the meeting broke the taboo of discussing nuclear issues; national perspectives and proposals were placed on the table in an open and frank fashion, and in the words of another, the exchanges were the best discussion of nuclear issues he had heard.

Because the five principles represent the existing consensus, they provide a sound basis for the new Concept. Moreover, they do not close the door on change; it will depend on how they are implemented and here there is latitude for interpretation. Nevertheless the parameters they have established will constrain the degree and pace of further movement by the Alliance. The principles include the aim of further reductions in the role and numbers of nuclear weapons – however these reductions are associated with engaging Russia in transparency and arms control negotiations. While there is no direct link, the implied relationship will make reductions more difficult and take longer to achieve – irrespective of whether or not the Russians are interested.

There is no doubt that making Alliance cohesion the priority meant the outcome of Tallinn would favour countries supporting the status quo rather than those looking for change. This was particularly true of the question of US nuclear warheads, which was in effect put on a back-burner. In the words of one participant 'if there was movement in Tallinn it was in the direction of the conservatives.' This

<sup>6</sup> See Annex II for details.

assessment was reinforced by the comments of the Secretary General who stated in a press conference that he believed the presence of US nuclear weapons in Europe was essential to deterrence. This comment earned the displeasure of several countries who believed that his focus on this aspect did not properly reflect the tone or sense of the meeting as, in the words of one participant, 'it did not communicate the forward looking part.'

This difference in interpretation reflects the state of play. The countries who were concerned about the prospect of possible change believe their concerns have been met and change has been satisfactorily circumscribed; those seeking change believe that Tallinn was helpful in clearing the air, in facilitating the expression of national positions on key points and in setting a new tone for future discussions. According to one participant, after Tallinn the debate at NATO has a different quality. More countries are joining the informal group looking to influence the development of language for the Strategic Concept. These countries remain optimistic that by moving cautiously, and in the words of one official 'sneaking out on the ice', progress can be made in getting NATO policy to reflect support for reducing the role and number of nuclear weapons.

### *The Experts Group*

The recommendations by the Experts for the new Strategic Concept were handed to the Secretary General on 17 May 2010. The section dealing with nuclear weapons favoured the status quo.

The Experts call for in-depth consultations on the future role of nuclear weapons in deterrence strategy. As one of the parameters for these discussions it suggests that under current security conditions, the retention of some US forward deployed systems on European soil reinforces the principle of extended nuclear deterrence and collective defence. It also notes that broad participation of the non-nuclear Allies is an essential sign of transatlantic solidarity and risk sharing.

The Report recommended the re-establishment of the Special Group on Arms Control for the purpose

of facilitating its own internal dialogue about the whole range of issues related to nuclear doctrine, new arms control initiatives and proliferation.

It will now be for the Secretary General to decide how he uses these recommendations. The question of NATO's nuclear policy did not feature prominently in the seminars that have underpinned the Group's work or in their other deliberations – represented only by a two-hour briefing session and a single item in the wrap-up conference in Washington – so it was always likely that the Group would reflect the conventional wisdom of keeping existing arrangements and pursuing arms control negotiations.

## Looking to the Future

### **The Next Steps**

How the nuclear issue will be handled in the new Concept will depend on the length and degree of detail of the document itself which is a matter of speculation. In terms of nuclear policy there is not enough time to reach agreement given the sensitivity of some of the issues. It is likely therefore that the Concept will stick to broad principles and recommend a NATO Nuclear Posture Review for next year. This would give the Alliance the time to have the kind of high-level discussions and consultations appropriate to the importance and sensitivity of the issue.

### *Declaratory Policy*

There are now expectations that the next Concept could go further in emphasising the political and deterrent nature of NATO's nuclear forces.

Until recently there was little enthusiasm at NATO for adopting new language. This was partly out of a tendency to doubt the value of such declarations. But it was also because as countries benefiting from American nuclear protection, some Allies preferred the current situation in which nuclear capabilities represent a deterrent to all forms of aggression and there is a degree of ambiguity over their potential use. The discussions over the DAS indicated the sensitivity of the nuclear powers including the UK and (in particular)

France, in ensuring the nuclear component is not devalued. Their caution is reinforced by the resistance of the new members to any potential weakening of the nuclear commitment.

Nevertheless, despite this caution the adoption by the US of language in the NPR that moves US policy suggests that NATO will move in a similar direction. The Clinton principles will also provide a solid basis of agreement on which to move ahead with additions from the other ministers who have developed their own ideas on purpose and priorities.

#### *NATO's Nuclear Posture*

It is likely that a NATO Nuclear Posture Review will be established for 2010. It is not clear which body will be responsible. However, it will be important to ensure that this is done under high-level political direction. Ideally a review would reassess the assumptions and rationales underlying the current posture; the advantages and disadvantages of change (weighing the potential costs of cohesion against the gains in terms of resources and security), and whether some of the benefits of current arrangements such as coupling, Allied involvement and sharing, could be achieved in different ways.

A NATO Nuclear Posture Review would need to take account of the broader context in which nuclear policy has to fit. This would include:

- Work to strengthen Article V through additional reassurance measures, which is welcomed by the new members as strengthening existing deterrence and defence capabilities
- Development of a NATO missile-defence system for defence of territory, which it is hoped will be endorsed in Lisbon. However, several members remain unconvinced on the desirability, feasibility and cost implications of this. The new members welcome the concept as bolstering existing deterrence and linkage capability rather than replacing it
- Work to revive the Conventional Forces in

Europe (CFE) regime, which is underway, but with proposals still in an exploratory stage with many sceptical whether the political obstacles can be overcome

- A broad interpretation of the concept of deterrence, on which everyone agrees but with several countries still nervous about any weakening of the nuclear element
- Relations with Russia. All members agree these are essential, but opinions differ substantially on the nature and conditions of co-operation – is Russia a partner, threat or both? The question of Russian reciprocity is discussed below.

Each of these will have an impact on what NATO decides for its nuclear force posture. However, any attempt to develop a comprehensive view, while analytically attractive, would be complex and time consuming. An NNPR would therefore need to take account of these parallel tracks without creating formal linkage, and could look at a number of options, including:

- A continuation of existing arrangements while NATO seeks to engage the Russians on transparency and negotiations
- A reduction in the number of warheads and a further decrease in the readiness of the DCA as an indication of NATO's willingness to reduce reliance
- A reduction in the number of warheads and their concentration at fewer sites which would ease the security problem. It would mean reorganising the DCA mission among the participating countries. There have been proposals for a NATO wing or fulfilment of the mission by rotation, but few consider either practical. Concentration would also pose problems of non-singularity for the countries concerned
- Removal of the warheads to the US but retention of the DCA role. This would be expensive and would undermine the coupling concept.

Each so far would require sustenance of the DCA

mission. Alternatively:

- Removal of the warheads and an end to the DCA mission. In view of the strength of feeling on the importance of the mission, this is not conceivable without a breakthrough or development which is currently unforeseeable.

These options would have to take account of the Clinton principles of seeking engagement with Russia on transparency and negotiations. It is not clear that the Russians are interested in discussing these systems. Their reactions to date have been negative and it is said they have increased their own dependence on nuclear forces because of perceived imbalances in the conventional field. Nevertheless in view of the reported numbers and location of Russian sub-strategic systems, attempting to get reciprocity is a sensible and politically essential proposition. In terms of negotiations the most likely option would be to fold them into the next round of START. However, this would almost certainly involve lengthy negotiations during which the current posture would have to be sustained. It also creates a linkage with NATO's systems which is not entirely consistent with the existing rationale. In this respect, what would be the goal of the negotiations?

### **The Way Ahead**

The current state of play suggests that there will be no early end to NATO's current DCA arrangements and the presence of US nuclear warheads in Europe. The positions adopted by the US and followed by the others at Tallinn – emphasis on collective action and the proposal to engage with Russia – suggest a lengthy process and maintenance of the status quo for the foreseeable future. As one senior official noted, 'removal will come as part of a process in which it is embedded.'

This leaves NATO with the need to continue the DCA mission, and the respective countries with modernisation decisions. In view of the elasticity of aircraft lifetimes, this should not pose immediate difficulties. Moreover, in three countries new aircraft are planned and being procured for

conventional roles. The issue is the additional expenditure for the nuclear role if required. The sums may not be enormous, but in this period of austerity any additional expenditure will be subject to close scrutiny.

This raises the question of whether parliaments and publics will support a continuation of the mission and the continued presence of the nuclear warheads, even if in the name of Alliance cohesion. At Tallinn, governments all agreed on the principle of solidarity and no unilateral action. However, they are all accountable to their parliaments, from whom they require support.

This in turn raises the question of whether this is an issue high on the priorities of public and parliamentary opinion, a question answerable only by individual countries and dependent on developments in the coming months.

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## Annex I

### **Lessons from History: Resonance of the 1979 'Dual-Track' Decision**

This decision of 12 December 1979 linked deployments of US long-range theatre nuclear forces (LRTNF) to proposals for negotiations with Moscow, and was arguably a response to Soviet long-range forces targeting Europe.

Although the strategic environment today is entirely different, certain elements of the decision have a familiarity with current discussions and demonstrate the enduring nature of some of the problems.

#### *US commitment*

The political impetus for the 1979 decision lay in the concerns of some European leaders that in the negotiations with the Soviet Union on strategic nuclear arms – SALT II – the US was neglecting European security interests. The decision was therefore a reconfirmation or reassurance of the continuing validity of the American nuclear commitment.

#### *Modernisation of capabilities*

The operational rationale for the decision lay in the assessment that NATO's intermediate-range capabilities – those systems based mainly in Europe – were in need of modernisation. The appearance of the SS20 strengthened this strategic requirement but did not create it. It was an internal requirement of NATO strategy. It is worth noting that the European participants played an active role in developing the rationale and the resulting requirements.

#### *Coupling*

Coupling and the need for American systems

based visibly on the European landmass featured prominently in the rationale. However, discussion of the numbers required demonstrated the illusiveness of the coupling concept – 200 were considered too low to be credible and 600 too high (a number that would actually be de-coupling).

#### *Risk sharing*

The need for Allies to bear the nuclear risk and burden featured prominently in discussions.

#### *Public opposition*

The decision aroused strong domestic opposition in a number of countries and two governments had difficulties agreeing the final decision.

#### *Political inclusion*

The modernisation decision was developed over a period of eighteen months by a High Level Group of officials with sufficient seniority and political access to ensure that political leaders were aware of what was being proposed.

#### *Arms control commitment*

The commitment by some Allies to arms control resulted in the development of a parallel arms control proposal also by a Special Group of senior policy officials. This resulted in the INF Treaty which at the time was criticised by a small group as removing a needed capability, but was applauded by most as an important reflection of, and contribution to, the political environment of the time.

#### *Conventional defence*

The nuclear task force was part of a much broader American-led initiative which focussed primarily on improving NATO's conventional defences.

## Annex II

### Clinton's Five Principles

The following are excerpts from remarks by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton at the NATO working dinner on nuclear issues and missile defence (Tallinn, 22 April 2010).

'To echo President Obama's words in Prague, we believe that NATO's new Strategic Concept needs to balance our common desire to reduce the role of nuclear weapons with the requirement to meet the current and future security needs of the Alliance.

'As we consider NATO's approach to nuclear weapons, our deliberations should be guided by five principles:

1. First, we should recognise that as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance;
2. Second, as a nuclear Alliance, sharing nuclear

- risks and responsibilities widely is fundamental;
3. Third, our broad aim is to continue to reduce the role and number of nuclear weapons. Of course, we recognise that in the years since the Cold War ended, NATO has already dramatically reduced its reliance on nuclear weapons;
4. Fourth, Allies must broaden deterrence against the range of twenty-first century threats, including by pursuing territorial missile defence, conducting contingency plans to counter new threats to the Alliance;
5. And fifth, 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 US – Russian arms control discussions alongside strategic and non-deployed nuclear weapons.

## Glossary of Terms

### Declaration on Alliance Security (DAS)

At the NATO Strasbourg Summit in 2009, Allies issued the Declaration on Alliance Security, which highlights key aims of the Alliance (leading to the new Strategic Concept of 2009). The DAS set out the future direction and priorities for NATO and aims to make future processes more open and transparent.

### Dual-Capable Aircraft (DCA)

A dual-capable aircraft is a fighter/bomber that can deliver conventional or tactical nuclear weapons. Currently, NATO has deployments of F-16 and Tornado IDS aircraft that are fitted for this purpose stationed in Germany, Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands.

### Dual-Track Decision

This decision of 12 December 1979 linked deployments of US long-range theatre nuclear forces (LRTNF) to proposals for negotiations with

Moscow, and was arguably a response to Soviet long-range forces targeting Europe.

### Group of Experts

To facilitate the process behind NATO's New Strategic Concept, the Secretary General appointed a group of twelve experts representing a broad spectrum of large and small NATO members and offering a balanced combination of insiders and outsiders. It is chaired by former US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright.

### High-Level Group (HLG)

The High Level Group consists of all member countries except France, and acts as the Advisory body to the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG). The HLG meets several times per year to consider aspects of NATO's nuclear policy and planning and matters concerning the safety, security and survivability of nuclear weapons.

**Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF)**

The INF Treaty (1987) was the first nuclear weapons agreement obliging the US and the USSR to reduce their nuclear arsenals. It served to eliminate all land-based nuclear missiles with ranges from 300 to 3,400 miles.

**NATO Strategic Concept**

The Strategic Concept is an official document that outlines NATO's enduring purpose, nature and its fundamental security tasks. It also identifies the central features of the new security environment, specifies the elements of the Alliance's approach to security and provides guidelines for the further adaptation of its military forces. The **Strategic Concept of 1991** was dramatically different from preceding strategic documents, because it was a non-confrontational document released to the public, and while it maintained the security of its members as its fundamental purpose (i.e. collective defence), it sought to improve and expand security for Europe as a whole through partnership and co-operation with former adversaries. The **Strategic Concept of 1999** committed members to common defence and peace and stability of the wider Euro-Atlantic area. It set out the purpose and tasks of the Alliance, the strategic perspectives at that time, the Alliance's approach to security in the twenty-first century and guidelines for the Alliance's forces.

**Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)**

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was concluded in 1968 and entered into force on 5 March 1970. It is the founding document of multilateral non-proliferation endeavours, and deals with preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, containing commitments on non-proliferation, safeguards, nuclear disarmament, nuclear energy and nuclear-weapons free zones.

**Nuclear Planning Group (NPG)**

The Nuclear Planning Group is the ultimate authority within NATO with regard to nuclear policy issues. Its discussions cover a broad range of nuclear policy matters, including the safety, security and survivability of nuclear weapons, communication and information systems, as well as deployment issues. The NPG provides a forum in which member countries of the Alliance can participate in the development of the Alliance's nuclear policy and in decisions on NATO's nuclear posture, irrespective of whether or not they themselves maintain nuclear weapons.

**Nuclear Posture Review (NPR)**

The Nuclear Posture Review is a review of US nuclear policy, doctrine, force structure, command and control, operations, supporting infrastructure, safety, security and arms control, effectively determining what the role of nuclear weapons in US strategic security should be.

**START**

The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) was a bilateral treaty between the US and the Soviet Union on the reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms. Signed on 31 July 1991, the treaty barred its signatories from deploying nuclear warheads, intercontinental ballistic missiles and submarine-launched ballistic missiles. The most recent follow-on treaty to START (nicknamed New START) was signed on 8 April 2010.

**Treaty on the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE)**

Treaty on the Conventional Forces in Europe concerned the destruction of excess weaponry at the end of the Cold War. It established limits on categories of conventional military equipment in Europe. The treaty proposed equal limits for NATO and the Warsaw Pact.