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If the Bombs Go

European Perspectives on NATO's Nuclear Debates

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Contents

Back to the Present: The NATO Posture Review and Options for US Nuclear Weapons in Europe

Malcolm Chalmers

The purpose of this volume is to report on the outcomes of a RUSI seminar in London on 24 January 2011, entitled 'NATO and US Nuclear Weapons: What Would Happen After the Bombs Have Gone?'

Following the 2010 Lisbon summit, NATO is now undergoing a Defence and Deterrence Posture Review, which is likely to include consideration of the role of the remaining US non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) stationed in Europe.[1] A number of studies have focused on the possible effects that further withdrawals of these weapons might have on deterrence and arms control, and have suggested a range of options for consideration by NATO. These have included ideas for partial withdrawal or consolidation, as well as suggestions for how NSNW reductions might be negotiated with, or take place alongside, those of Russia.[2]

The RUSI seminar was intended to complement these discussions by analysing the issues that could arise for NATO and for Europe once the removal of US nuclear weapons had been completed. Envisaging such a scenario fulfils a useful role in informing current debates on whether, under what conditions, and in what form such a withdrawal might be desirable. It also allows other issues, not currently being given consideration, to be examined.

In preparation for the seminar, RUSI commissioned five authors to examine the following questions, paying particular attention to how key officials and key opinion-formers in their own country or region view these issues:

- How might the relationship between NATO, its member states and Russia be altered by the removal of US NSNW?
- How might the relationship between NATO, its member states and new WMD-armed states in neighbouring regions (such as, potentially, Iran) be altered by the removal of US NSNW?
- Could contingency plans for future redeployment of US NSNW to Europe play a useful role in maintaining extended deterrence, or would these be largely irrelevant?
- Would the demand for European missile defence be greater in a Europe without US NSNW?
- How could, and should, mechanisms for nuclear consultation evolve within NATO after the removal of US NSNW?

The afternoon sessions of the seminar then explored these themes separately and in more depth.

In addition to the five paper authors, the RUSI seminar benefited greatly from the contributions of some of the most distinguished experts on this subject. These included Paul Ingram, Simon Lunn, Jeff McCausland, Oliver Meier, Gotz Neuneck, Paul Schulte, Colin Stockman, Detlef Waechter and Isabelle Williams. Also joining were representatives from the UK Foreign Office (Nicola Stanton) and Ministry of Defence (Trudi Anderson). RUSI staff members Alastair Cameron, Will Elsby and Andrew Somerville also played a substantial role in the seminar.

The papers were revised to take account of the discussion in the seminar, and each is followed by a summary of some of the key points in this discussion. This introductory chapter will not seek to repeat or summarise these chapters. Instead, it will seek to examine whether, in the light of the seminar discussions, it might be possible to draw any new lessons for the current NATO Posture Review.

NATO's Dilemma

The number of NSNW deployed in Europe has fallen sharply over the last two decades: from around 4,000 in 1990 to around 200 in 2010. And, in its 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, the US announced a further reduction in reliance on NSNW with its decision to scrap its remaining sea-based NSNW capability, consisting of around 320 nuclear sea-launched cruise missiles. Around half of these forces were reportedly earmarked for NATO support.[3] The weapons that remain are all B-61 free-fall bombs, stored at six bases in five European countries.

As the number of NSNW in Europe has gotten smaller, however, political interest in their future has increased. It is proving to be one of the more contentious issues that NATO's Defence and Deterrence Posture Review will have to consider.

Those sympathetic to President Obama's nuclear disarmament agenda, as spelt out in his 2009 Prague speech,[4] have argued that further NSNW reductions would contribute to the process of reducing the role for nuclear weapons in NATO strategy, thereby helping to 'create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons'.[5] Pressure for further cuts is especially strong in Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium, three of the five remaining B-61 countries, which between them account for an estimated 30–60 stockpiled weapons. The German government, in particular, is calling for a revised NATO posture that would allow the remaining NSNW to be removed. Strong opposition from most of its political parties means that it would be very difficult to persuade its parliament to fund the upgrade that would be

needed to allow its new Eurofighter aircraft to become nuclear-capable. Moreover, although some existing Tornado dual-capable aircraft (DCA) could continue in service until 2020, there will be pressure to realise the considerable financial savings that could be made through their retirement.

The German government's support for further NSNW disarmament, however, has generated countervailing pressures, with supporters of current arrangements arguing that withdrawal might risk an unravelling of extended deterrence. Potential nuclear aggressors against NATO may be deterred by even a small chance that US nuclear weapons would be used in response. But a higher level of probability could be needed to reassure non-nuclear states that the US will be willing to take such a risk. Oliver Thränert's paper reminds us of Denis Healey's theorem that 'It takes only five per cent credibility of US retaliation to deter the Russians, but ninety-five per cent credibility to reassure the Europeans.'

For some of NATO's new member states in Central and Eastern Europe, German proposals for further NSNW withdrawal came at a particularly bad time, reinforcing concerns generated by the Obama administration's decision to scrap previous plans for basing missile defence in Poland and Czech Republic, and by its wider commitment to 'reset' with Russia. The 2008 Georgian War sharpened their concern that NATO's older members might not be prepared to come to their aid should a resurgent Russia seek new targets for its aggression.

For most basing states, by contrast, solidarity is a more important, albeit declining, driver for continuing deployment. If B-61s are withdrawn from Germany, therefore, it is hard to imagine that Belgium or the Netherlands would be willing to retain their own nuclear bases. Nor is it plausible that other states that have hosted US nuclear weapons in the past – the UK, Greece, Spain and France – would be prepared to step into the breach. While opposition to US basing is less evident in Italy and Turkey, both may be reluctant to retain this mission for long once others have abandoned it.

Precisely because it is difficult to envisage stable 'intermediate' options, however, most NATO member states are in no hurry to push the issue to a conclusion. Of Europe's larger states, only Germany is taking a strong position in favour of change, with both France and the UK preferring to emphasise the need to proceed on the basis of consensus. And the US – which some expected to give more of a lead in this area, given President Obama's disarmament agenda – has adopted a rather conservative approach. Anxious not to do anything that might jeopardise ratification of the New START agreement with Russia, the US was prepared to accept only modest movement in NATO policy at the Lisbon summit, preferring instead to defer the basing issue for consideration by a new Defence and Deterrence Posture

Review. Any recommendations from this review are unlikely to be agreed before the NATO summit in early 2012. Efforts to find consensus could continue into 2012 or even 2013.

Yet the political ground has begun to shift. While most new member states are still not convinced of the desirability of NSNW withdrawal, recent moves to strengthen contingency planning for their territorial defence have helped to reassure them that their security is central to NATO planning. Turkish leaders argue that any decisions on NSNW must take their own situation into account. But Turkey is also a strong proponent of a Middle East WMD Free Zone, and wants to avoid being left as the only NATO European state with NSNW on its soil.

The Russia Dimension

Now that the possibility of full NSNW withdrawal is being discussed, the argument that NATO should not give up 'something for nothing' is gaining strength within the alliance. The 2010 Strategic Concept states that:

> in any future reductions ... (in nuclear weapons stationed in Europe) ... our aim should be to seek Russian agreement to increase transparency on its nuclear weapons in Europe and relocate those weapons away from the territory of NATO members. Any further steps must take into account the disparity with the greater Russian stockpiles of short-range nuclear weapons.

The Strategic Concept's formulation is deliberately ambiguous. If NSNW were to be the subject of formal negotiations, these would almost certainly have to take place in the context of US-Russia negotiations on a follow-up to the New START agreement. The possibility of some sort of trade-off between Russia's larger number of short-range nuclear weapons and the US' greater reserve stockpiles of strategic warheads is being discussed, perhaps as part of an agreement to limit total warhead numbers on both sides. But such an agreement would require new means of verifying warhead numbers to be developed, a process that is bound to take some years to complete. Russian demands for US concessions on missile defence and conventional forces could further lengthen the time needed to negotiate a new treaty.

As Sokov points out, Russia may be particularly reluctant to give up its naval nuclear weapons, which its navy sees as a vital counterweight to US naval superiority. It may also question whether nuclear weapons deployed as missile defence interceptors should be included in a treaty regime on offensive arms, especially if US conventionally-armed missile defence interceptors are not also constrained.

If NATO were to decide not to give up NSNW in Europe until all these issues can be negotiated, therefore, it should be prepared to keep them for a long

time. This perhaps explains why the text of the Strategic Concept points to the possibility of a less formal reciprocal process, in which both NATO and Russia would take pragmatic steps to respond to the other's concerns, including relocation and reduction of existing nuclear arsenals.

Sokov suggests that NATO withdrawal of all its remaining NSNW from Europe would put very strong pressure on Russia to reciprocate with reductions of its own. Other participants were more sceptical that such a reaction could be guaranteed, at least until Russia's leaders were prepared to make clear statements to this effect.

Valasek argues that the NSNW issue needs to be seen in the broader context of relations between Russia and its immediate NATO neighbours, and of recent positive indications of a 'reset' between Russia and Poland, and to a lesser extent between Russia and the Baltic republics. Provided that it can continue to reassure new members of its absolute commitment to their security (through, for example, contingency planning and exercises), NATO should aim to progressively demilitarise its relations with Russia.

There is much more that needs to be done on both sides to make such an objective realisable. Measures might include efforts to transform the NATO-Russia border into a route for increased economic and social interaction. In the security field, they could include greater transparency in relation to military exercises, as well as a conscious effort to promote military-to-military co-operation. Such measures cannot resolve Russia's concern that the US has, and will maintain, a massive advantage in conventional forces. But they could go some way to reduce concerns – held on both sides – over the possibility of surprise attack. And this could help provide a political context in which both Russia and NATO feel comfortable with relocating and reducing their nuclear forces.

Yet it is possible that further demilitarisation of the Russia-NATO relationship may not take place in the near future. The possibility of an increase in tension, such as took place after Russia's invasion of Georgia, cannot be ruled out. For some, irrespective of the wider climate of relations with Russia, NATO should move towards phasing out its NSNW capabilities. But it is likely to be much easier to reach broad agreement on such a step in the context of a deepening détente than of a renewed confrontation.

Emerging Threats

NATO's security relations with Russia remain suffused by the legacy of Cold War arms control agreements, including those limiting nuclear and conventional arms. As NATO contemplates how it might respond to new nuclear threats from the Middle East, however, it starts with a much cleaner slate.

The RUSI seminar discussed how the intensification of strategic military interaction between NATO and emerging nuclear powers might affect the rationale for, and deployment of, NSNW in Europe. Continued deployment of NSNW might help to reassure some European states that the US remains committed to providing extended deterrence against new nuclear threats, for example from Iran or North Africa. But some participants argued that threats from such states might be more likely to be seen as 'irrational' than those from Russia, strengthening the case for using missile defence as a means of reassurance.

Moreover, in contrast to the threat posed by Soviet armies in Central Europe during the Cold War, the challenge posed by new nuclear-armed states in the Middle East would not be of invasion and occupation of NATO territory. Instead, such states would likely see nuclear arsenals as providing them with a tool for deterring military intervention by NATO states in their own territories or their regional spheres of influence. They would be right to believe that NATO leaders would probably be less likely to authorise attacks on Iran (and possibly also on its regional allies) if Iran had a capability to attack European targets with nuclear-armed ballistic missiles. It is less clear that the existence of US NSNW in Europe would make much difference to the calculus of either NATO members or Iran in such a scenario.

Much will depend on how Turkey's policy would evolve in response to Iranian nuclearisation. On the one hand, as a neighbour and close economic partner of Iran, Turkey has a particular interest in preventing an escalation of the dispute between Iran and the major Western powers. As Kibaroglu points out, the two countries have not fought a war with each other since the 1639 treaty between the Ottoman and Safavid empires.

On the other hand, if Iran does acquire its own nuclear weapons, the maintenance of a balance of prestige between the two states might increase pressure for Turkey to obtain its own nuclear force. A US decision to withdraw NSNW from Turkey could add to this pressure, especially if it is seen as part of a wider cooling of relations with the US and Europe. In these circumstances, a Turkish bomb could be presented as part of an effort to assert national dignity against both Iran and the West.

The New Glue?

The prospect of an increasing NATO focus on missile defence against emerging threats does offer new focus for collective burden sharing and consultation on strategic threats. For new member states, in particular, the creation of new US missile defence facilities provides an opportunity to have US military personnel, and their families, deployed on their territory. However, while missile defence may prove to be an easier issue for intra-NATO conflict resolution than NSNW, it has the potential to become much more disruptive to NATO's relations with Russia.

Hedging or Norm-Building

On the basis of the seminar discussions, it is possible to identify two main categories of Zero Option for NSNW in Europe. These are the 'Hedged Withdrawal Option' and the 'Irreversible Withdrawal Option'.

In the 'Hedged Withdrawal Option', the US would pull all its NSNW out of Europe, but maintain a long-notice capability for redeployment into Europe. This can be seen as a logical extension of the trend towards reducing NSNW alert status that has already been underway for many years. It would require the US to maintain some B-61 warheads on its own territory, together with aircraft capable of carrying them. It would probably also include the maintenance of munitions stores and other related infrastructure on European bases, albeit on a reduced-cost caretaker status. Some training and planning would remain, and this could include a continuing, supporting role for European air forces, such as air defence suppression and tinkering. European countries might maintain some nuclear-certified DCA capabilities but nuclear weapons would not normally be deployed on their territory.

Most seminar participants argued that, once withdrawn, it is hard to imagine that NSNW would ever return to Europe. They are probably right. Were NATO's strategic environment to worsen in future, however, and NSNW were to be seen as having the potential to contribute to the alliance's deterrence posture, the option of redeployment would remain. Such an option would not be relevant in the event of a sudden, 'out of the blue' nuclear crisis, during which strategic forces would carry the main burden of nuclear deterrence. But NATO would retain the option of redeploying NSNW on a longer time frame, perhaps in response to more long-notice developments.

In the 'Irreversible Withdrawal Option', by contrast, NATO would make a clear statement that it was prepared to give up the option of NSNW deployment in Europe altogether. It might also, as Tertrais suggests, consider accompanying this commitment with (or make it conditional upon) proposals for a new international norm forbidding the deployment of nuclear weapons on the territory of other countries. Both the US and Russia are already committed to such a norm in relation to their strategic forces, albeit with some important exceptions.[6] It would be optimistic to believe that NATO support for such a norm could by itself prevent, for example, a future deployment of Pakistani nuclear weapons to Saudi Arabia. But it might add to the reputational cost involved in preparing to take such a step, especially if other major powers – such as Russia and China – were to add their support.

The Irreversible Withdrawal Option might also be relevant to Turkey's role in relation to the Middle East WMD Free Zone, an initial conference on which is due to take place in 2012 or 2013. Such a zone seems a distant prospect today, and is likely to remain so in the absence of a peace settlement between

Israel, Iran and the Arab states of the region. Even so, as Turkey becomes an increasingly vocal advocate of such a zone, other states in the region have started to ask whether the positioning of US nuclear weapons in Turkey is consistent with such a stance.

Costs and Benefits

Several factors will be important in calculating the costs and benefits of NSNW withdrawal. Budgetary considerations will be key, especially for states that would have to bear the burden of force modernisation, such as the US and Germany. The safety and security of storage facilities is a consideration, including concerns over nuclear terrorism. A full assessment also needs to take into account the costs, and potential disadvantages, of compensatory measures undertaken in order to provide reassurance to sceptical member states.

In the final analysis, however, the decision on whether to remove remaining NSNW from Europe will be shaped primarily by whether NATO members are comfortable to take a step that will be seen as further reducing their reliance on nuclear weapons. NATO has moved a long way in this direction since the end of the Cold War, and the 2010 Strategic Concept has continued this process. It remains to be seen whether it now believes that NSNW withdrawal would be a step too far.

Notes and References

1 The term 'non-strategic nuclear weapons' is used only to indicate weapons that would be delivered using delivery means that are not subject to Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) limitations on long-range missiles and heavy bombers. Any use of these weapons would still have a 'strategic' effect, particularly on those countries on whose territory they were detonated.

2 See, for example, Steven Andreasen, Malcolm Chalmers, and Isabelle Williams, *NATO and Nuclear Weapons: Is a New Consensus Possible*?, Royal United Services Institute, September 2010, <http://www.rusi.org/downloads/assets/NATO_and_Nuclear_Weapons.pdf>, last accessed 09 May 2011.

3 Robert S. Norris and Hans M. Kristensen, 'US tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, 2011', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, (Vol. 67, No. 1, 2011), p. 71.

4 Barack Obama, speech made in Hradcany Square, Prague, Czech Republic, 5 April 2009, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-By-President-Barack-Obama-In-Prague-As-Delivered/>

5 *Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation*, November 2010, paragraph 26.

6 The New START agreement states in paragraph 11 that ‘strategic offensive arms subject to this Treaty shall not be based outside the national territory of each Party’.

The Sky Would Not Fall, but it Might Get a Little Darker: A French Perspective

Bruno Tertrais

In 1952, the first American nuclear weapons were deployed in Europe. The original rationale for such deployments was simply to enhance the defensive capabilities of the newly-formed multinational armed forces of NATO, and bolster the US ability to blunt a Soviet invasion of Europe. A few years later, two other rationales were added to sustain, enhance and organise this nuclear presence in the name of 'burden-sharing'. First, given the perceived inferiority of NATO in conventional terms, the equipment of US forces with nuclear weapons was a guarantee that American troops would not be sacrificed for the sake of Europe (hence the later motto 'no nukes, no troops'). Second, given the calls within the alliance for greater European responsibilities, US weapons were assigned to NATO-Europe forces while remaining under US custody in peacetime, and under US control for the authorisation to use them. A few of them – the Thor and Jupiter ballistic missiles – were formally under so-called dual-key arrangements.

This presence has been considerably reduced since the end of the Cold War – by more than 90 per cent (and by about 97 per cent since the peak of their deployment).[1] In fact, it has been much more reduced in relative terms than the US, British and French nuclear arsenals (to say nothing of Russian).[2] Only B-61 gravity bombs remain today. Their exact number is classified, with estimates ranging from 150 – 200 to 'a few hundred' according to NATO officials.[3] The location of the weapons is the object of concurrent assessments: US weapons have been withdrawn from Greece and the United Kingdom, and they remain only in five 'host countries', namely Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey. About half of the weapons are earmarked for US Dual-Capable Aircraft (DCA); the remainder is for European DCA. In addition, some US and UK Trident Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM) warheads are formally assigned to NATO nuclear planning.

The Current Debate

For more than twenty years, voices on both sides of the Atlantic have called for the withdrawal of US nuclear weapons from the continent. Arguments vary but generally speaking the existing systems are said to be militarily useless given the evolution of the threat environment, their ageing, and the possibility for strategic forces to play their role (to say nothing of possible alternatives such as missile defence and high-precision conventional weapons). Financial arguments are also made: the US Air Force has long argued in favour of their withdrawal for cost reasons and many in Europe balk at the idea of paying for their modernisation.[4] As for their political value,

it is argued that NATO operations, from Bosnia to Afghanistan, are now much more important in terms of solidarity and burden-sharing, and that the presence of US nuclear weapons is unpopular. An argument is sometimes made that the nuclear sharing procedure runs counter to the spirit, if not the letter, of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Concerns have also been raised about their susceptibility to theft and thus of the contribution to the risk of nuclear terrorism. The idea of making an example that could lead Russia to reduce its own arsenal of non-strategic nuclear weapons is also put forward.[5] Finally, some are in favour of a withdrawal simply because of an ideological commitment to disarmament, and characterise the B-61s in Europe in this regard as a low-hanging fruit.

Those who defend the status quo – or at least a continued US nuclear presence in Europe – make several points. Some argue that the systems still have some military value: aircraft can be refuelled to extend their range, and the bombs themselves will not be obsolete for a long time.[6] Most claim that using strategic forces for the type of missions they might be assigned would be more difficult, thus making their deterrence value for European scenarios less credible. They also make the point that only air-delivered weapons can ensure nuclear burden-sharing, by giving a responsibility to host countries (to ensure that 'all members "dipped their fingers in the blood"', as one researcher put it[7]) and other nations (who might participate in a common nuclear mission by suppression of enemy air defences, aircraft refuelling, etc.[8]). They argue that the costs of the European nuclear mission for the US Air Force, and those of a nuclear capability for the successors to fighter-bombers currently in service in European air forces, will be limited.[9] Missile defence is not judged to be a complete substitute for nuclear deterrence, and conventional weapons even less so, both for technical and psychological reasons. As per the NPT question, it is argued that nuclear sharing existed before the NPT was signed, and that US weapons would remain under American control until the very last moment.[10] The proponents of maintaining the US nuclear presence acknowledge that security at European nuclear sites has not always been maintained at American standards, and that intrusions on some military bases have confirmed the existence of security lapses; but also that no incident has in any way shown that there was a risk of the actual theft of weapons. As for Russia, many are skeptical of the exemplary value of any gesture that NATO could make in this domain: calls for a formalisation of the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives of 1991–92 have always been strongly resisted by Moscow.

In the past four years, this debate has been rejuvenated.[11] Calls in the United States, since 2007, for moving towards the 'abolition' of nuclear weapons, and the election of Barack Obama in 2008, have encouraged some European leaders to speak up on the issue of the US nuclear presence in Europe. The foreign ministers of Belgium, Germany, Luxemburg, the Netherlands and

Norway (thus including three DCA countries) called for NATO to contribute to nuclear disarmament – some of them calling, separately, for the withdrawal of US weapons from their national territories or from Europe as a whole. It does not seem, however, that their positions were fully shared by the heads of their governments. And many in NATO (in particular in countries which used to belong to the Warsaw Pact, as well as in Turkey) remain opposed to the withdrawal of US weapons.[12]

Thinking About a US Nuclear Withdrawal

For NATO, there are today four options: (a) maintain the current deployments and mechanisms; (b) reduce the number of weapons; (c) put an end to nuclear weapons sharing (but keep US weapons for US use); and (d) withdraw all the weapons. This last option ('NATO's Zero Option') is the focus of this paper.

The late Sir Michael Quinlan, former Permanent Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Defence, was fond of saying after the end of the Cold War that if the United Kingdom did not already have nuclear weapons, it would certainly not build them today. At the same time, he argued that this was not, in itself, a reason to give them up. There were, on balance, according to him, more reasons to keep the UK deterrent than to abandon it. Sir Michael's reasoning can be applied to the question of US nuclear weapons in Europe. Even the most ardent supporters of the continuation of this presence do not claim that, if there were no such weapons on the continent today, they should now be deployed. Policy decisions have to take as a point of departure the world as it is. The weapons are there: the question is therefore about the possible benefits and possible costs of taking them out. This makes the allied nuclear debate very different from the one which exists between the United States and Japan, for instance.[13]

Four Scenarios for a NATO 'Zero Option'

Thinking about the consequences of a hypothetical event requires taking into account the hypothetical circumstances that led to the event. At least four scenarios can be considered.

One would be a US unilateral withdrawal, against the will of one or several European governments ('Scenario 1'). This could happen if the Europeans wanted to 'have their cake and eat it', that is, carry on with the nuclear mission while not paying for the adaptation of the new generation of fighter-bombers and if, simultaneously, Washington was searching for ways to demonstrate its sincerity in making concrete steps towards abolition – for instance, in giving up any nuclear role for the USAF.[14] The second scenario would be a European demand for a cessation of the US nuclear presence, against US wishes ('Scenario 2'). This might be co-ordinated or, more likely, take the form of a domino effect, with one country taking the lead and others following. The leading country could be a Central European state with strong

anti-nuclear feelings, such as Germany, but it could also be, say, Turkey, if that country sought to take a symbolic measure to distance itself from the West.[15]

These two scenarios are quite extreme. Either of the two would imply a severe political crisis within the alliance. They are thus the two most unlikely ones. Other possible scenarios include a withdrawal as part of some grand arms control bargain with Russia ('Scenario 3'), and finally a common, consensual NATO decision ('Scenario 4'). If the past twenty years are any guide, an arms control bargain with Moscow would probably not cover only the non-strategic weapons but involve nuclear arsenals as a whole, and perhaps even other types of weapons such as missile defence and/or conventional forces in Europe. But if the opportunity presented itself, it is difficult to imagine that NATO countries would oppose giving up the US nuclear presence in Europe if the benefit was greater security and stability. Finally, the most likely – in relative terms – of the four scenarios is a consensual agreement among alliance members that the continuation of the US nuclear presence is not in the broader interest of NATO security.[16]

After the Bombs Are Gone

Alliance Solidarity and Common Culture

In all four scenarios, Europe would lose its leverage on NATO nuclear policy – and also its potential influence, even if limited, on US nuclear policy, planning and posture. The Nuclear Planning Group (NPG), whose role is already limited today, would probably disappear, at least in its current form. It is hard to imagine that it would maintain a significant role just to deal with the small number of US and UK nuclear SLBM warheads formally assigned to NATO. Likewise for the Support of Nuclear Operations with Conventional Air Tactics (SNOWCAT) procedure and the *Steadfast Noon* exercises. The difficulties that exist in organising nuclear consultation exercises today would be magnified: in the absence of nuclear sharing, the motivation of non-nuclear countries would become almost non-existent. In most NATO members, the 'nuclear deterrence culture' would soon be a thing of the past. Assigning European officers to a NATO planning cell at US Strategic Command (STRATCOM), in Nebraska, might be an option but it would not replace the existence of dedicated NATO groups and procedures.[17] Without nuclear sharing, it would be extraordinarily difficult to maintain in non-nuclear countries a cadre of officers and diplomats well-trained in nuclear deterrence concepts, planning and operations.

Some also claim that the loss of an in-theatre nuclear option would imply a 'decoupling' of Europe and the United States. However, this would be in all likelihood partly compensated for by the presence of a common missile defence system; the location of some of the components of such a common

system might have to be reconsidered to better ensure solidarity and burden-sharing.

Deterrence and Defence

The adoption of a form of 'Turkish clause' that would allow for the return of B-61s in crisis time is highly unlikely.[18] This would imply that nuclear-capable aircraft and bases would continue to be certified, and that pilots would continue to be trained for nuclear missions; it is very dubious that NATO would be willing to bear such costs in the absence of real nuclear sharing. More importantly, such a decision in a time of crisis would probably open a divisive debate within NATO, and would be highly escalatory. This might lower the possible cost of aggression, as cogently argued by a trio of former US and British officials.[19]

Would substitutes to US gravity bombs be available in the nuclear domain? To a certain extent, yes – but to a certain extent only: there would be a net loss in terms of deterrence. From a technical point of view, US or UK strategic forces would be perfectly adequate to threaten nuclear retaliation in case of aggression. However, from a psychological standpoint, an adversary could judge that the use of a contiguous United States-based inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) or bomber would be less likely than the use of in-theatre forces, *especially if that adversary had the capability to strike the United States*. The threat of using single-warhead SLBMs could be considered but would be trickier than the use of B-61s, given that resorting to such weapons could be seen as the beginning of a massive strategic strike. (NATO could not use sea-based cruise missiles since TLAM/Ns were eliminated by the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review.) Note also that the demonstration potential of in-theatre forces (raising alert levels, moving aircraft closer to the adversary's territory and so on) would no longer exist.[20] Having US, UK or French SSBNs (that is, ballistic missile submarines) calling at southern European ports to demonstrate NATO solidarity would hardly be an option given the particular nature of the Mediterranean Sea, which does not lend itself to discreet navigation.[21] And what if Russia was to demonstrably station nuclear weapons in Kaliningrad (or even Belarus, though this is today very unlikely)? NATO would not have any ability to alter its nuclear posture – something that some Eastern European members would probably ask for, despite the 'Three No's' of 1997 ('no intention, no plan and no reason' to base nuclear weapons on the new members' territory).

Finally, it is dubious that Paris would be willing to replace the United States by stationing Mirage-2000s or Rafales armed with ASMP-A missiles (medium-range air-to-surface missiles) abroad.[22] Furthermore, this could only be conceivable in Scenario 1 (a unilateral US withdrawal), and only if there was a clear demand made by some NATO allies to the French government. It is not, however, completely inconceivable that a joint French-British nuclear

guarantee, backed up by solid consultations procedures, would be judged a partial substitute by allies (at least those belonging to the European Union) and by some potential adversaries.

Disarmament and Non-Proliferation
Outside Scenario 3 (an arms control arrangement), it would be unreasonable to hope that Russia would reciprocate by reducing or relocating its own arsenal. The best that could be hoped for is that a US nuclear withdrawal would remove a pretext for Russia to maintain non-strategic nuclear weapons on the European part of its territory. Likewise, it is dubious that the withdrawal of US weapons would create any significant non-proliferation benefit. Non-aligned countries, in particular, would likely 'pocket the concession' and argue that this was a long-overdue move. The alliance would thus lose a bargaining chip.

It is also possible that the withdrawal of US bombs creates the perception (irrespective of whether it would be warranted) that the American defence umbrella is being folded up. This could create unease around the world, among US allies, and perhaps become an additional factor – though not a driver – for some of them to consider embarking on a nuclear programme. This could also be an encouragement for potential adversaries to develop or continue their own nuclear programmes. A historical example to bear in mind is that of North Korea. The withdrawal of all US nuclear weapons from South Korea in 1992 did nothing to slow the North Korean nuclear programme. Might it even have accelerated it? At the time, the White House had been concerned that Pyongyang might see the end of the American nuclear presence on the peninsula as 'the beginning of a US withdrawal'.[23]

One potential benefit, however, would be that the setting up of a new global norm, according to which no nuclear weapon can be based on a non-nuclear country's territory in peacetime, would be created. This would, for instance, raise the political cost of a hypothetical Saudi-Pakistani agreement for the deployment of Pakistani nuclear weapons on Saudi soil.

It All Depends on the Circumstances
When all is said and done, most of the consequences of a termination of the US nuclear presence in Europe appear to be scenario-dependent and context-dependent.

It Depends on the Scenario
Consequences for NATO solidarity, deterrence and non-proliferation would widely differ according to the four scenarios outlined above, and of the assumptions behind those scenarios. Scenarios 1 (a US decision) and 2 (a European request) imply by definition that a grave political rift has already

opened up within NATO. In such scenarios, alliance cohesion and solidarity would be less affected by the withdrawal itself than by the conditions that led to such a withdrawal. Scenario 1 would almost automatically lead Turkey to seek nuclear weapons. It would also be seen as worrying for other US allies around the world. Scenario 2 might lead Washington to threaten to withdraw its conventional forces (the old 'no nukes, no troops' argument). Scenario 3 (agreement with Russia) would have a lesser impact on deterrence (*vis-à-vis* Moscow) than the other three, on the assumption that a grand arms control bargain could only take place if there were a relaxation of tensions between NATO and Russia.

It Depends on the Context

More generally, the exact consequences of a withdrawal of US weapons are heavily context-dependent. *Timing* matters: for instance, if the withdrawal took place after the costs of aircraft modernisation are paid, then savings would be, by definition, limited. The *threat environment* matters: if Iran had crossed the nuclear threshold, the deterrence costs would be higher; but if Iran was judged (rightly or wrongly) to be non-receptive to the traditional logic of deterrence, then such costs would be limited or non-existent. *The technical environment* matters: whether or not a common, effective NATO missile defence system has been deployed would make a major difference in terms of security and Alliance solidarity.

Conclusion

Debates about the US nuclear presence in Europe often border on fetishism. It is an exceedingly severe but not completely untrue judgment that obsessive stigmatisation of nuclear sharing 'borders on the pathological'.[24] But the argument is also valid, to some extent, for those who defend the status quo: arguments about 'nuclear coupling', for instance, are much less convincing than they were during the Cold War. At the end of the day, the usefulness of US nuclear weapons in Europe for their immediate purpose (destroying targets) is much less important than their political usefulness, both within NATO (the debate 'is becoming a proxy for a much more fundamental debate about the confidence of NATO allies in each other'[25]) and *vis-à-vis* friends and foes of the alliance around the world.

Nowhere is this more true than in the case of Turkey. As noted by former UK Defence Secretary Des Browne, the US weapons are important to Ankara 'because the relationship between Turkey, the US and its NATO allies is under strain for other reasons. [...] Turkey is not wedded to US sub-strategic weapons but in the absence of its other concerns being addressed, they have become of symbolic importance'.[26] Likewise, a researcher exploring the likelihood of a Turkish nuclear programme argued recently that 'it is Turkish faith in the credibility of US security commitments – not the presence of militarily insignificant tactical nuclear weapons on Turkish territory – that

helps to constrain Ankara from pursuing nuclear weapons of its own'.[27]

Table 1: Debating the Withdrawal of US Nuclear Forces: A Matrix for Decision-Making

	Maintain	**Withdraw**
Costs	Non-proliferation costs Financial costs	Loss of in-theatre deterrence Loss of common nuclear deterrence culture Loss of transatlantic burden-sharing Risks of proliferation
Benefits	Credible in-theatre deterrence Common nuclear deterrence culture Transatlantic nuclear burden-sharing Dampens proliferation risks	Financial savings Non-proliferation benefits

Notes and References

1. Successive reductions were made in 1991, 1993 and 2003.

2. Estimates of the Russian stockpile of non-strategic nuclear weapons differ widely, starting at around 2,000 warheads.

3. A US diplomatic cable revealed by *Wikileaks* has given credence to the widely-quoted estimate of 180 weapons.

4. The costs of the US nuclear presence in NATO includes the permanent stationing of reportedly about 1,500 dedicated personnel in Munitions Support Squadrons (MUNSS).

5. The only consensual and usable definition of 'non-strategic' is that of a weapon system which is not covered by the existing US-Russian bilateral treaties (which include only missiles and bombers of an intercontinental range). In itself, the B-61 bomb is neither a 'strategic' nor 'non-strategic' weapon.

6. The US 2010 Nuclear Posture Review called for the modernisation of the B-61 bomb: a 'B-61-12' model would be available around 2017.

7. Trine Flockhart, 'Hello Missile Defence – Goodbye Nuclear Sharing?', *DIIS Policy Brief*, Danish Institute for International Studies, November 2010, p. 2.

8. This process is known as SNOWCAT (Support of Nuclear Operations With Conventional Air Tactics).

9. As part of the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, the United States has decided to provide a

nuclear capability for the F-35 fighter-bomber, which currently Italy and the Netherlands intend to acquire. The nuclear version would be available around 2017, thus at the time when DCA allies will need their first replacements. (The retirement of European DCA will spread out between 2015 and 2025, unless life extensions are made.) Germany is committed to buying the Eurofighter; the cost of making that aircraft nuclear-capable would reportedly be about 300 million euros, less than 1 per cent of the annual German defence budget.

10. The issue did not figure prominently in the May 2010 NPT Review Conference. On a more general note, it is far from certain that there would have been an NPT at all, signed by countries such as Germany and Italy, had it not been for the existence of the NATO nuclear-sharing procedure.

11. For an early assessment, see Bruno Tertrais, 'The Coming NATO Nuclear Debate', ARI 117/2008, Madrid, *Real Instituto Elcano*, 26 September 2008. For general background, three key sources are: Ian Anthony and Johnny Janssen, 'The Future of Nuclear Weapons in NATO', *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*, April 2010; Malcolm Chalmers and Simon Lunn, 'NATO's Tactical Nuclear Dilemma', Royal United Services Institute, March 2010; David S Yost, 'Assurance and US extended deterrence in NATO', *International Affairs*, (Vol. 85, No. 4, 2009).

12. Among the thirty-six signatories of the 27 September 2010 'European Leadership Initiative', none comes from the Baltic States, Poland or Turkey.

13. In 2010, the US decision to retire the Tomahawk Land Attack Missile – Nuclear (TLAM/N) missiles (which might have been deployed on US SSNs in crisis time), was compensated by the creation of a joint US-Japan nuclear policy structure.

14. Technically, the mere abandonment of any nuclear capability for the USAF would not preclude the Europeans from maintaining nuclear sharing.

15. An intriguing possibility would be for Turkey to affirm its membership of a future hypothetical Nuclear-Weapon Free Zone in the Middle East.

16. One (unlikely) causal factor could be a significant accident involving nuclear weapons in Europe, creating public pressure in favour of the termination of the US nuclear presence.

17. On this point see Yost, *op. cit.*, in note 70, p. 779.

18. The 'Turkish clause' was an 1887 agreement between the United Kingdom and the Ottoman Empire, through which British troops could return after their withdrawal from Egypt, in case of a security threat.

19. Franklin Miller, George Robertson and Kori Schake, 'Germany Opens Pandora's Box' Briefing Note, Center for European Reform, February 2010, p. 4.

20. Moving a strategic bomber to Europe would be possible only on nuclear-certified bases.

21. Likewise, port calls by a US or UK SSBN armed with nuclear weapons would only be possible at bases with a high degree of nuclear security.

22. France would remain the only country in Europe with air-launched missiles; it is dubious that it would push Paris to give up that capability. (For instance, for fifteen years France has been the only NATO country, and possibly the only country in the world, to maintain a nuclear capability on its nuclear carrier .)

23. George H W Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York, Vintage, 1998), p. 545.

24. Michael Rühle, 'NATO and Extended Deterrence in a Multinuclear World, *Comparative Strategy* (Vol. 28, 2009), p. 15.

25. Des Browne, *Current NATO Policy*, Nuclear Policy Paper No. 3, ACA/BASIC/IFSH, November 2010, p. 3. On a not-so-unrelated point, one researcher suggests that making the Eurofighter nuclear-capable would involve delicate issues of industrial secrecy. Trine Flockhart, 'Hello Missile Defence – Goodbye Nuclear Sharing?', DIIS Policy Brief, Danish Institute for International Studies, November 2010, p. 2.

26. Browne, *op. cit.,* p. 4.

27. Jessica C Varnum, 'Turkey in Transition: Toward or Away from Nuclear Weapons?' in William C Potter (with Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova), ed., *Forecasting Nuclear Proliferation in the 21st Century: A Comparative Perspective* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), p. 252. See also Report of the Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate, *Chain Reaction: Avoiding a Nuclear Arms Race in the Middle East*, 110th Congress, 2nd Session, February 2008, p. 41.

Central Europe and NATO's Nuclear Deterrent

Tomas Valasek

There is no single Central European view on the future of US non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) stationed in Europe. Many new allies have given little thought to the subject. Those that have tend to disagree with each other. Some countries, mostly in the Baltic, view the arsenal as the glue that keeps the US and European parts of NATO together. Poland takes a more transactional view, seeing the weapons as a tool to encourage Russia to reduce its nuclear weaponry based near Central Europe. The differences among these viewpoints seem to be narrowing: the more the US and NATO undertake conventional 'reassurance' measures to bolster the security of Central Europe, and the more NATO–Russia relations improve, the less importance governments in the region attach to NATO's nuclear arsenal.

This paper presents the different perspectives, and offers suggestions on how to further strengthen the support in Central Europe for a reduction of NATO's nuclear forces.

The 'Sideliners'

There are no nuclear weapons states among the new members of NATO; the Alliance's nuclear holdings are all in the continent's western and southern parts. While the then-Soviet bloc did possess nuclear weapons, the Warsaw Pact did not exactly encourage a free debate about Soviet nuclear posture within Central Europe.

Why does this matter today? Many countries in Central Europe lack the network of specialists and dedicated organisations that drive a debate on NSNW elsewhere on the continent. The defence think-tanks in Central Europe tend to take little interest in nuclear issues. Local activist groups – the Central European versions of the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament – do exist, but they tend to focus on local issues: opposition to missile defence bases or to civilian nuclear power plants. There is little interest in the region – and therefore little expertise – in NATO's nuclear posture.

Their absence means that many governments in Central Europe have not taken a strong view on the future of NSNW: they are under no public pressure to do so and nor do their ministries of foreign affairs or defence consider the issue a priority. One useful, though admittedly unscientific,[1] way to map the interest in Central Europe is to study the various non-papers that the allies submitted to Madeleine Albright's Group of Experts on the new NATO Strategic Concept in 2010. Of the twelve new member states, eight submitted non-papers, of which five contained no mention of NSNW.

The 'Retainers'

Poland, the Baltic states and the Czech Republic have taken the most interest in the future of the force, but they disagree with each other. This is because they attach different weights to the two key rationales for NSNW's presence in Europe. For the Poles, whose views are described more extensively below, the weapons are primarily a deterrent against a waning Russian threat. Because relations with Moscow have been improving, Warsaw sees a chance to reduce both NATO's and Russia's tactical nuclear holdings.

The Czechs and the Balts, however, see the presence of US nuclear weapons mainly as test of US commitment to the defence of Europe, and of Europe's interest in keeping a strong transatlantic link. They were alarmed when Germany publicly questioned the utility of NSNW without prior consultation in NATO,[2] seeing it as a signal that some Western Europeans are cavalier about the transatlantic alliance. For reasons rooted in the different strategic cultures and the disparities in military might between Western Europe and the United States, Central Europeans believe that their successful defence requires direct US military involvement. So they tend to associate any weakening of the transatlantic link with erosion of their own security.

There is a good historical reason for the new allies' worry about NATO's commitment to their defence. When the Poles, the Balts and other Central Europeans acceded to NATO, they were told that there was no need for the alliance to station troops on their territory because in times of trouble, forces would come from 'over the horizon'. The decision not to move NATO troops eastwards was unpopular among Central Europeans, who complained of being treated as 'second-class' allies. So to win local support, the rest of the NATO members gave general guarantees on the overall size of the reinforcement that they would make available to protect the new allies. The US pledged – with SACEUR (the Supreme Allied Commander Europe) at the table – to dedicate two to three divisions to the task, and to upgrade or build airfields, bridges, gas depots and other infrastructure needed to receive and host the reinforcements.[3]

But the allies did not follow through on those promises, and no such dedicated forces were built or exist today, much to the new member states' dismay. In recent years, their sense of security eroded further. This is mostly because Russia invaded Georgia in 2008, but also because the allies' own actions seemed to cast further doubt as to their will to reinforce Central Europe. The United States is considering reducing US personnel in Europe from 80,000 to fewer than 50,000;[4] the UK, for its part, has already decided in the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review to withdraw its remaining 20,000 troops from Germany by 2020.[5] And the NATO Security Investment Programme (NSIP), which pays for the upgrade of bases on the new allies' territory and elsewhere, is rumoured to be low on money. NATO insiders say

that in the future, its money will be directed away from upgrading bases in Central Europe towards fighting new threats such as cyber attacks.

This is the context in which the Balts and the Czechs reflect on US nuclear weapons in Europe. Even before Guido Westerwelle re-started the debate on NSNW, the new allies had felt that the transatlantic link was weakening, leaving them exposed to a Russia that had recently invaded Georgia. Given the anxieties, it should not be surprising that the calls in Germany and elsewhere in early 2010 for the withdrawal of the nuclear arsenal rankled – though, as argued below, the sense of security in Central Europe and relations with Russia have been on the mend in recent months.

The 'Bargainer'

In the not-so-distant past, Poland could be counted on to align with the Baltic states on Russia and NATO. But in recent years, Warsaw's views have migrated closer to those of the Western European countries for two reasons.

First, Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk and Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski have made it their priority to join the exclusive club of the big EU countries. To win acceptance, they have worked hard to shed Poland's label of being reflexively Russophobic, anti-German and Atlanticist, which had led to Warsaw at different points vetoing EU–Russia negotiations and seeking to slow common EU defence policy. Instead, the government launched consultations with Germany on the EU's eastern policy, embraced common EU defence and pursued a 'mini reset' with Russia. Warsaw's foreign policy today is not to be caught alone outside the European mainstream on key foreign policy issues.[6]

Second, the success of its Russia policy[7] has encouraged Warsaw to view Moscow with an optimism that is rarely seen elsewhere in Central Europe. Poland seems readier than the rest of the new allies to allow for the possibility of the successful 'westernisation' of Russia, and is more willing to encourage reforms there through engagement and co-operation. On this subject, too, Polish views have moved closer to those of Germany, though the key factor here has been a re-think in Warsaw of Moscow's intentions rather than a tactical need to cosy up to Berlin.

Polish views on NSNW have been shaped by both of these factors. To avoid a clash with Berlin, the Poles have sought to channel, rather than fight, the rising anti-nuclear sentiment in Germany and elsewhere. Along with his Swedish counterpart, Carl Bildt, Sikorski published an op-ed calling on both the United States and Russia 'to greatly reduce ... tactical nuclear weapons in Europe', leading to 'their eventual elimination'.[8] This puts the Poles closely in line with Germany's recent statements on NSNW: since calling for their withdrawal from Europe in early 2010, Berlin has been at pains to emphasise

that any such steps must be conducted in tandem with reductions in Russia's nuclear arsenal. Poland also appears to assume that Moscow is open to such a bargain (this is implicit in Sikorski's calls for the US and Russia to cap and eliminate NSNW jointly via a treaty). This optimism about Russia's readiness to talk distinguishes the Polish position from the Czech or the Baltic views.

What Next?

While there is no single view in Central Europe on the future of NSNW, one of the three schools of thought opposes their further reductions. Countries in this group will need to be convinced that their security can be guaranteed without the presence of US nuclear weapons in Europe. This can be done, and recent US and NATO policies point the way.

What the Balts and others in the region worry about is not the withdrawal of US nuclear weapons *per se*; they worry about Western commitment to their defence, by which they largely mean US commitment. The weapons are a potent symbol of the transatlantic bond, but not necessarily the only, or irreplaceable, symbol. The way for NATO countries to build support in Central Europe for the elimination of NSNW lies in finding new ways to affirm Western commitment without recourse to nuclear weapons.

Much progress has been made in recent months: NATO drafted contingency plans for the Baltic and the US held multiple military exercises there in 2010. The alliance's new Strategic Concept, approved in November 2010, strongly emphasises the need for territorial defence to remain the core NATO mission.[9] And while President Obama ended the Bush-era missile defence system, the planned replacement – the Phased Adaptive Approach system for Europe – actually features more US bases in Central Europe than the old programme. The full meaning of these changes took a while to sink in. Many in Central Europe disliked Barack Obama at first, wondering if his reset with Russia weakened US commitment to NATO's security guarantees in any way.[10] But after the US and NATO had taken the 'reassurance' measures described above, the mood in the region changed. Officials still worry about Russia but appear more at ease with the US and NATO's commitment to their defence than they did in 2009 or early 2010.

Two things can be done to further strengthen this sense of security. One lies in improving relations with Russia, the other in repairing NATO's ability to manage crises in the region. Crisis management will be particularly important. This author's interviews with Central European defence officials suggest that the new allies worry less about a large-scale military invasion from Russia (which is extremely unlikely and would probably be foreseeable) than an unplanned escalation of small local conflict involving Russian soldiers or minorities. If this second scenario were to materialise, NATO can best defuse it through a swift response: the right political signal to Moscow

in the early stages of the crisis, possibly combined with the deployment of a small NATO 'tripwire' force. But it is not evident that the alliance is well positioned to respond swiftly: the war in Afghanistan has stretched its intelligence resources, leaving little to monitor crises close to home. And the North Atlantic Council (NAC) has gotten out of the habit of holding real-time political consultations on brewing crises; it took a long time to respond to the war in Georgia in 2008 (although more recently it has shown swiftness in response to unrest in Libya).

An additional way to reassure allies in Central Europe therefore lies in creating a new crisis management mechanism in NATO, as one group of analysts (which includes this author) proposed in March 2010.[11] The centre would have the ability to monitor crises near NATO's borders, analyse their impact on allied security and draw up possible NATO responses for consideration by the NAC. This would have the effect of giving additional assurance to new allies, reducing their need to look for other physical evidence of Western commitment to their defence such as the NSNW.

Russia and NSNW

It goes without saying that the better the relations with Russia, the less need NATO has for NSNW. True, in parts of Central Europe not even a successful 'reset' of NATO–Russia relations would completely eliminate the need for NSNW; there would still be those who argue that NATO needs them to link the United States to Europe. That is why reassurance measures for Central Europe are important, but their combination with a NATO-Russia reset would go a long way towards building support in the region for a change in NSNW posture.

The alliance has invested much effort in the relationship with Moscow under Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who has identified joint missile defence in particular as the basis of improved future relations. There is an argument to be made that in order to build the political will to pursue joint projects such as missile defence, NATO and Russia may first need to develop more confidence in one another.

This could be accomplished via a 'demilitarisation' of the relationship. As one recent paper suggested, the alliance and Moscow could restore conventional arms control in Europe (either through the Conventional Forces in Europe treaty or another, ad hoc mechanism), reduce military forces along their borders and limit potentially provocative actions such as military flights skirting the borders.[12] The timing for such a demilitarisation effort may be auspicious: US–Russian and Polish–Russian ties have improved, with some rebound evident in NATO–Russia relations too. Moscow is in the midst of ambitious military reform; the government is effectively giving up its conventional ability to fight a war with NATO in favour of focusing on smaller

expeditionary operations. It may be more open than ever before to initiatives that allow it to redirect military resources away from the borders with NATO countries.

Were an agreement on demilitarisation to take root and endure, it could gradually change mindsets on both sides from potential adversaries to partners, laying the ground for joint NATO–Russia initiatives such as missile defence. And with an improved NATO–Russia relationship, the need for non-strategic nuclear weapons to remain deployed in Europe would further diminish. Poland has already come to this point of view, and other states in Central Europe would be more inclined to follow suit were they to see evidence of diminished Russian military activity near their borders.

Notes and References

1. Not all countries submitted non-papers, and because the documents are not public the countries shall not be named.

2. For more, see Frank Miller, George Robertson and Kori Schake, 'Germany opens Pandora's box', *CER Policy Brief*, February 2010.

3. For more, see Ronald Asmus et al, 'NATO, new allies and reassurance', *CER Policy Brief*, May 2010.

4. See, for example, Lawrence J Korb and Laura Conley, 'Strong and sustainable: how to reduce military spending while keeping our nation safe', Center for American Progress, September 2010; or 'Debt, deficits and defence', *Report of the Sustainable Defence Task Force*, June 2010.

5. HM Government, *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review*, Cm 7948 (London: The Stationery Office, October 2010).

6. For more, see Tomas Valasek, 'The 'new' Poland and its neighbours', *CER Insight*, 29 November 2010.

7. Russian politicians handled the tragic plane crash that killed the Polish president and other leaders in 2010 with unusual tact; the two countries have also been holding a more open discussion than ever before about dark chapters in their mutual history, such as the massacre of Polish officers by Soviet forces at Katyn during World War II.

8. Carl Bildt and Radek Sikorski, 'Next, the tactical nukes', *International Herald Tribune*, 1 February 2010.

9. 'Active Engagement, Modern Defence: Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation', NATO, November 2010.

10. In 2009, a group of eminent Central Europeans wrote an open letter complaining about the US president's policies for the region. See 'An open letter to the Obama administration from Central and Eastern Europe', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 16 July 2009.

11. Asmus et al, *op. cit.*

12. International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS - London) and Institute for Contemporary Development (ICD - Moscow) Joint Report, 'Towards a NATO–Russia Strategic Concept: Ending Cold War Legacies; Facing New Threats Together', November 2010, <http://www.iiss.org/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?alId=48346>, last accessed 9 May 2011.

US Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons Withdrawal: Not If, but How

Jacek Durkalec

Consideration of the potential withdrawal of US non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) from Europe is no longer 'thinking about the unthinkable' and could have practical implications for the decision-making process of NATO members. Particularly important appears to be an analysis of how a withdrawal would affect:

- NATO relations with Russia and new WMD-armed states
- Demand for European missile defence
- The role of contingency planning for future redeployment in Europe
- The evolution of NATO's nuclear consultation mechanisms.

When evaluating these points from a Polish perspective, it is best first to highlight the basic Polish attitude towards potential changes in NATO nuclear policy.

Generally, the Polish approach is cautious but open to necessary evolutionary changes. On the one hand, the immediate removal of US nuclear stockpiles from Europe will most probably not be included in the talking points prepared for Polish officials reviewing NATO's deterrence and defence posture. So far at least, there is no interest in advocating the return of US nuclear weapons to America. On the other hand, the adaptation of NATO's nuclear policy to better reflect NATO's security environment is not a taboo subject. It is not impossible to imagine a scenario in which Europe no longer has US NSNW on the ground. After all, the goal of universal nuclear disarmament, which implies such a scenario, was endorsed by all NATO states, including Poland.

However, Poland has its own conditions for any change in NATO's nuclear posture. First, any such decisions should be taken unanimously by NATO allies and take into account all possible military and political considerations. Changes in the nuclear domain should not result from unilateral decisions guided by internal political pressures within NATO member states.

Second, any reductions in the number of US warheads should not give the impression that the Alliance is 'going soft', nor should it result in a weakening of the NATO defence and deterrence posture. In this context, Polish experts and officials highlight the importance of reassurances from NATO members to Central and Eastern Europe and even stress that conventional military capabilities are currently much more important for Poland's interpretation of Article V than US NSNW.[1] Although the need for 'visible assurances'[2] is not

connected directly to a debate about the future of NSNW, as this should be based on broader considerations of a lack of sufficient NATO infrastructure, any changes in NATO nuclear doctrine without such assurances may be met with Polish resistance.

The deployment of elements of the US missile defence system in Poland as a part of the US European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) and NATO's territorial missile defence system[3] is also considered an important element of NATO reassurance. Additionally, NATO's missile defence system in its final form could reduce the need for NSNW to remain in Europe.

Last but not least, any reductions of NATO nuclear weapons in Europe should be the result of a broad arms control process with the participation of Russia. Generally, Polish officials have tried to direct a debate on NSNW in Europe by stressing the need for a cohesive approach, taking into account not only US but also Russian tactical inventories. In their view, Russia and NATO weapons should be perceived as an interconnected issue.

In Poland and other states in Central and Eastern Europe, there is a strong desire for increased transparency regarding the number and location of Russian tactical weapons, their verifiable reduction and their relocation away from areas adjacent to NATO members' territory. For example, it is feared that Russian NSNW currently might be stored in Kaliningrad. This desire was reflected in press articles from the Polish foreign ministry as well as in the Polish-Norwegian Initiative presented to NATO in April 2010.[4]

Polish officials have welcomed the consideration of their position in the guidelines on NATO nuclear policy presented by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in Tallinn on 22 April 2010,[5] as well as in the new NATO Strategic Concept.[6] Similarly, in Poland there was a very positive reception to statements made by the US Senate and President Barack Obama at the time of the Senate ratification of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) with Russia in February 2011. According to those statements, the US, following consultation with NATO allies, will seek to initiate negotiations with Russia on NSNW within one year of New START coming into force.[7]

NATO–Russia Relations

The withdrawal of US NSNW from Europe would be acceptable so long as it does not decrease the credibility of NATO's deterrence *vis-à-vis* Russia. Finding alternatives to NSNW might open a way to the withdrawal. However, taking into account the Polish position, Russia's reciprocity seems to be an even more important factor that might facilitate a Polish 'green light' to the withdrawal.

While analysing the potential impact of the withdrawal of US NSNW on NATO–Russia relations, we should not forget to consider how such weapons

are perceived by Russia. Generally, US nuclear weapons in Europe are probably not high on Russia's list of strategic considerations. The proof of this low prioritisation might be deduced from Russia's conditions for any US–Russia negotiations on tactical nuclear inventories and their inclusion in a broader arms-control process, which incorporates the verifiable reduction of operational and non-deployed strategic warheads.[8]

First, Russia demands the complete withdrawal of US nuclear weapons from Europe, including the total dismantlement of their storage infrastructure, as a precondition to any talks on non-strategic nuclear inventories. Paradoxically, such a precondition offers evidence of Russia's low prioritisation of the withdrawal of US NSNW from Europe. Given NATO's reluctance thus far to agree to the unilateral withdrawal of NSNW from the European arena, Russia's position seems to be a tactic to block discussions about the reduction of Russian and NATO nuclear arsenals in general or to retain its own NSNW as a bargaining chip in other more important areas. Put plainly, Russia would not have laid down these extreme preconditions if it perceived the withdrawal of the US nuclear arsenal from Europe to be an issue which demands rapid resolution.

Second, US–Russia negotiations should include other armaments categories, such as weapons in space and long-range, non-nuclear offensive systems developed by the US (including the so-called Prompt Global Strike) and should also take into account conventional forces. Russia's NSNW are perceived as a balance to NATO's quantitative and, most importantly, qualitative advantage in conventional military capabilities. In order to decrease the gap between Russia and NATO, Russia demands a modernisation of the regime established by the Convention on Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty.[9]

Third, Russia wants further negotiations to include other nuclear weapons states, including other NATO members such as France and the UK.

Last but not least, Russia stresses the necessity of the full implementation of the New START treaty, which implies that in the most extreme case the talks could not begin until 2018. There is, however, the risk that Russia will withdraw from the treaty before then if it perceives EPAA has reduced significantly the effectiveness of Russia's nuclear deterrent. According to suggestions by the Russian foreign ministry, that scenario might occur with the implementation of the third and fourth phases of EPAA.[10] Aside from withdrawing from the treaty, Russia could also deploy nuclear-capable Iskander missiles near NATO borders in the future as an asymmetrical response[11] to the development of a missile defence system in Europe without its consent.

The withdrawal of US NSNW from Europe is a *quid pro quo* process with Russia, which could occur in two scenarios, both of which would require Russia to cede its precondition for the US to withdraw its NSNW from Europe first.

First, it could be the result of a re-evaluation by Russia of its current policy and the revision of its other negotiation conditions. Russian agreement on greater transparency of its tactical weapons stockpile, its verifiable reduction and relocation away from NATO borders would most probably be perceived by Poland and other NATO members as a game-changer in NATO–Russia relations. Such an action on Russia's part would contribute significantly to the building of trust and confidence between NATO and Russia. For example, if issues of missile defence co-operation and the balance of conventional weapons in Europe could not be resolved first, then the agreement on NSNW could provide momentum for renewed efforts to find mutually satisfying solutions on all arms control issues.

According to the second scenario, Russia would not revise its other conditions; instead, a negotiated arms control process, which includes NSNW, could follow (or accompany) the resolution of problems related to missile defence and conventional forces in Europe as well as meeting other Russian conditions. In such circumstances, NSNW withdrawal would be the result (or a part) of a *modus vivendi* between NATO and Russia in these areas. It would not be the first but instead a second step in common efforts to build trust and transparency.

If the withdrawal of US NSNW was the result of a NATO unilateral decision, it could spark various Russian reactions and not necessarily reactions that the Alliance would like. Russia could treat the Alliance decision as either: a gesture of goodwill; a first step in a broader process of totally eliminating NATO nuclear infrastructure in Europe (should it not be combined with the withdrawal of warheads); a correction of mistakes made in the 1950s; or the move could just be ignored.

If after a unilateral withdrawal Russia refuses to reciprocate and agree on an arms control process that includes tactical nuclear warheads, it might lead to a re-evaluation of NATO policy towards Russia. Central and Eastern European NATO states, including Poland, would probably raise this issue in Russia–NATO talks and they would possibly be reluctant to pursue closer co-operation with Russia in other areas because of this lack of confidence relating to to Russia's nuclear inventories. Even if these member states were given additional reassurances by NATO, their concerns about Russia's NSNW would not be alleviated. The only way out of such a situation would be to accept or ignore the issue of Russian NSNW, which might be impossible for many NATO members.

The manner in which the withdrawal of US NSNW is co-ordinated with efforts to increase transparency and a verifiable reduction in Russian nuclear weapons would have a greater impact on the alliance itself. First, it would answer a question about the effectiveness and credibility of NATO policy

towards Russia. If efforts to encourage Russian reciprocity ended only with a unilateral NATO withdrawal of NSNW from Europe, NATO would require sound justification as to why the policy outlined in the Strategic Concept had failed. Finding more effective ways of inducing Russia to take part in talks on verifiable reductions of its tactical nuclear stockpile could, to some extent, save face for NATO because, however plausible it may be, the argument that Russia could be pressed to pursue some positive steps towards NATO as a result of US NSNW withdrawal would not be sufficient.

Second, a unilateral withdrawal of NATO NSNW could be perceived by Central and Eastern European countries as a signal that their security interests are not being taken into account. Maintaining US NSNW in Europe for as long as the problems with Russia's tactical inventory are not resolved could be an important reassurance to those countries. In this context, the political role of NSNW in maintaining solidarity among the allies could take on a new meaning – their presence could be perceived as a guarantee that NATO will strive for a verifiable reduction of the Russian tactical arsenal.

The Relationship with New WMD-Armed States

The withdrawal of the US nuclear stockpile from Europe might be affected by the further proliferation of WMD and the means of their delivery in neighbouring regions, especially in the Middle East. Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons and a further increase in the size and range of its ballistic missile arsenal could block any decisions to withdraw US NSNW, or it could trigger a return of the weapons if they had already been removed.

How much NATO's decision about withdrawing NSNW will be affected by this issue will depend on the stance of countries with territory in close proximity to the potential threat, notably Turkey. On the one hand, if Turkey decides that NSNW on its territory are unnecessary, the hypothetical arguments of other NATO states to retain or recall a tactical nuclear stockpile for this particular reason would be seriously weakened. On the other hand, if Turkey asks for nuclear weapons to be kept on its own soil as a sign of a visible NATO commitment, or for other reasons, it would be difficult for other NATO members to refuse. The only way to influence Turkey's position in such a case would be to increase NATO conventional and missile defence capabilities in that country. Furthermore, it is plausible that countries from Central and Eastern Europe, which also have underlined the need for reassurance, would support the Turkish stance.

What is also interesting is the way in which this possible Turkish stance might complicate NATO's policy if the withdrawal of nuclear weapons were included in a negotiation process with Russia. In such a case, the Turkish demand to have US nuclear bombs on its territory, or to have them back, could complicate NATO bilateral arrangements with Russia on NSNW. Such

a scenario indicates that even before bilateral agreements can be reached with Russia, the role of NSNW *vis-à-vis* new WMD-armed states should be determined and taken into account.

Apart from the symbolic and political role of US NSNW against new WMD-armed states, these weapons seem an unnecessary form of deterrence, at least in the current circumstances. The credibility of NATO deterrence against such states will not be affected. The strategic nuclear arsenals of individual NATO members, especially of the US but also of the UK and France, and conventional capabilities, complemented by 'deterrence by denial' options (such as a fully developed missile defence system) would be sufficient. At least in the foreseeable future, there is no risk that the new nuclear-armed states will be able to acquire an arsenal that might call into question the credibility of NATO deterrence.

A withdrawal of US NSNW could be presented by NATO as proof of the decreasing role of nuclear weapons in its posture and as a NATO contribution to the goal of global nuclear disarmament. It will underline evolutionary changes in NATO's deterrence posture that have been taking place since the end of the Cold War.

However, its impact on curbing nuclear proliferation should not be overestimated. It will not have any impact on countries determined to acquire nuclear weapons. The US NSNW play a limited role, if at all, in these countries' calculations. Regional security considerations, the need to deter a US conventional attack and prestige on the domestic and international stage determine their behaviour. What is more important, the withdrawal of US bombs will unfortunately not raise significantly the moral profile of NATO in non-proliferation efforts. It will not change the meaning of the Strategic Concept provision that, 'As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance'.[12] Half-measures such as the withdrawal of US nuclear weapons from Europe, while maintaining a role for a strategic arsenal as the supreme guarantee of the security of the allies, might not be sufficient to change the perception of NATO in the eyes of countries which criticise the hypocrisy of the NPT regime and use it as their excuse for their efforts to acquire nuclear weapons.

The Demand for European Missile Defence

Missile defence systems could play a useful role in the process of withdrawing US NSNW. The deployment of elements of the US missile defence architecture in Poland, through the EPAA which would form part of the NATO territorial missile defence, would constitute an important element of NATO's 'visible assurances' to Poland. Moreover, full implementation of EPAA could decrease the impression of a lessening of the US' commitment to Europe, which might arise after NSNW removal. EPAA, if fully developed, could become a

symbol of US military engagement in defending the European members of NATO. Lastly, contributions to the implementation of NATO territorial missile defence by European states with their own systems (apart from financing a common command and control system) could negate the possible impression that Europeans do not want to share in the burden of their defence and are free-riding on US capabilities.

Despite the above arguments, the relation between the withdrawal of US NSNW and the demand for missile defence is not as straightforward.

First, missile defence could not be a substitute for any credible offensive system. The 'deterrence by denial' option provided by missile defence is only complementary to traditional 'deterrence by retaliation'. As such, there is no direct link between a potential withdrawal of US NSNW and the possible implementation of missile defence systems. A withdrawal of US NSNW would rather result from the fact that US NSNW are not needed to provide a credible deterrence by retaliation even in the most remote circumstances, rather than from a deployment of missile defence systems in Europe.

Second, the need for missile defence is not directly connected with the question about whether US tactical warheads will remain in Europe or not. The main drivers of the need for missile defence systems within NATO include an assessment of a ballistic missile threat, available and affordable technologies, operational needs to defend against a ballistic threat and political will. These factors are not related to the status of US NSNW in Europe. To deploy missile defence in Europe simply because US NSNW were withdrawn would waste financial resources needed in other areas.

The role of missile defence systems as a new transatlantic glue also appears problematic. On the one hand, a fully developed NATO territorial missile defence system would be, like NSNW, a sign of the alliance's solidarity, through the sharing of a mutual burden, and could provide a mechanism for political consultations similar to the Nuclear Planning Group.

On the other hand, the full implementation of a territorial missile defence system is uncertain due to a dependence on necessary technologies and the ballistic missile threat. Furthermore, its sustainability over time seems to create many more challenges than in the case of NSNW. The maintenance and evolution of missile defence systems that need to cope with developing threats is far more demanding than storing NSNW in Europe and retaining a fleet of Dual Capable Aircraft (DCA) adapted to deliver them. Next, the financial burden to the European allies as well as to the US seems much higher over time. Last but not least, missile defence is designed against a concrete threat, without which it is useless. It is also designed against adversaries with limited missile capabilities. It cannot, as with NSNW, be

directed as an all-round defence for all allies. Expectations that the NATO missile defence system might, in some worst case scenarios of NATO–Russia relations, defend Europe against Russia's ballistic missiles are unrealistic from the current perspective. Therefore, it might be questionable whether missile defence could be as effective a 'transatlantic glue' as NSNW.

The Role of Contingency Plans for Future Redeployment

In order to create plans for the return of US nuclear gravity bombs to Europe, several questions and problems would need to be tackled in advance. Only after finding reasonable solutions to them could NATO establish procedures for reconstituting their presence, which would be useful from a planning perspective.

The first question stems from the fact that maintaining the option to return the weapons to Europe implies that the allies agree NSNW still could play a role in NATO security under extremely remote circumstances. Consequently, a question that arises is that if there is a continuous need for US NSNW, why is there no need for their permanent presence in Europe? The need to raise NATO's profile in non-proliferation efforts would not provide a credible answer to this question. The option of return could negate any positive impact of the withdrawal on NATO's non-proliferation stance. It is quite likely that the redeployment of US warheads to Europe would lead to criticism that it was never NATO's intention to withdraw them properly. The relevant answer to this question seems to be that withdrawal is tied to an arms control process with Russia. Nonetheless, in such a case a Russian demand for the total elimination of Europe's NSNW infrastructure could arise and complicate talks.

Second, a question about Europe's role in NATO's nuclear mission would have to be answered. More specifically, whether and which European NATO members would sustain the necessary storage infrastructure and maintenance of DCA and, moreover, whether European NATO members would need to sustain a sufficient level of nuclear expertise. If all European NATO members resign from the nuclear delivery role provided by DCA, it would prompt the question as to why the US should maintain its gravity bombs and not rely solely on its strategic arsenal to provide extended deterrence.

After answering these questions, the operational problems of a possible return of the weapons would have to be resolved. Despite their complexity, at least some of them would not be insurmountable. The first problem that arises is that after withdrawal, the use of NSNW by NATO would be even less credible than today. It is doubtful whether, taking into account the current situation, the allies would agree on circumstances that could trigger the return of the weapons to Europe. Given this, it seems that their withdrawal would, in reality, be irreversible. Furthermore, it must be considered that

deliberations over their return could have a damaging effect on NATO cohesion during a crisis. On the other hand, it is important to stress that any return of US NSNW would most probably occur in the most extreme circumstances, which might provide the right conditions for NATO to agree to the redeployment of US nuclear weapons in Europe. It is possible that a dramatic worsening in the alliance's strategic environment could increase the role of NSNW in strategic considerations.

The second problem stems from the intrinsic potential of inadvertently escalating a conflict with the return of US nuclear weapons. The problem of finding the proper time to reintroduce NSNW to Europe during a conflict (not too soon and not too late) would also be very difficult to resolve. A possible way out of such a situation would be to make the adversary uncertain whether US nuclear weapons had returned to Europe or not and to convince it that in specific circumstances their use is possible. The argument that the return of US NSNW during a crisis could also have positive consequences should not be totally neglected. In some specific, extremely remote circumstances it might be needed to signal NATO's resolve.

The third problem results from the overarching perception that NSNW currently have no utility as there is no viable scenario in which their use could be credible.[13] Nuclear gravity bombs are sometimes seen as 'stone age' weapons, which, like a rock dropped by a pterodactyl, are unable to communicate with an aircraft as they descend. Sometimes a NATO nuclear mission is described even as a kamikaze mission. It seems paradoxical that NATO should retain the option of returning nuclear gravity bombs to Europe while its own members and those potentially being deterred remain unconvinced that these weapons will actually be used. It could be interpreted as atavism resulting from political inertia within NATO.

The Evolution of Nuclear Consultation Mechanisms

A need to preserve the mechanisms of nuclear consultation would exist even after the removal of US NSNW. However, the subjects of the allies' consultations might change depending on whether the option to return the weapons will be maintained.

Currently, during Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) meetings NATO allies reportedly discuss political and operational matters related mostly to US NSNW mounted on DCA, and also to a lesser extent, the UK's nuclear capability. References to the US strategic arsenal are incidental. With the preservation of the option to return the weapons and of the European role in nuclear missions, procedures that have already been established could be revised to meet new operational needs. The possible arrangements of how to redeploy US NSNW to Europe would be discussed.

If NATO does not keep the option of returning the weapons to Europe in the future, DCA will cease to be a primary subject of these consultations. Consequently, all procedures established so far for DCA would become irrelevant. To maintain a consultation process there would be a greater demand for talks on US strategic nuclear weapons and their role in the defence of Europe. Without it, it could be problematic for the UK that its nuclear forces would become one of the most important topics of NATO's consultations. Even if France were to change its long-term nuclear policy, join NPG and contribute its forces to NATO nuclear planning, the role of the UK and French arsenals in the consultation process might not be sufficient.

There is also a possibility that after the removal of US nuclear weapons from Europe, interest in NPG meetings would decrease. A solution to this could be the reshaping of NPG into a Deterrence Planning Group, which could cover nuclear and conventional weapons as well as missile defence. However, such an approach runs the risk of blurring nuclear issues with so many other issues to tackle. Resigning from a body dedicated solely to the issue of nuclear weapons could negatively impact their role as a guarantee of NATO's security.

Conclusions

The withdrawal of US NSNW from Europe is currently a realistic, albeit unlikely, scenario. Considerations related to what would happen after the US bombs have gone pose more questions and dilemmas than answers. It is doubtful that they would be resolved quickly. The actions of Russia and of would-be-proliferators in the vicinity of NATO members' territories, which could have an impact on NATO decisions related to a withdrawal, also remain uncertain.

From a Polish perspective, consent to the withdrawal of US NSNW seems to depend on the answers to two key issues. First, would the credibility of Article V guarantees be reduced even in the most remote circumstances? Resolving the dilemmas surrounding the role of missile defence in reducing the need for NSNW, the option of their redeployment after the withdrawal and the evolution of the nuclear consultation process could pave the way to a withdrawal. Nevertheless, the answer to the second question is even more important: would the withdrawal contribute to the building of mutual trust and confidence between NATO and Russia and decrease the role of NSNW in mutual relations? Maintaining the credibility of NATO deterrence after the withdrawal would not, in fact, increase Polish and NATO's security and uncertainty concerning Russia's NSNW would remain.

If the withdrawal of US NSNW resulted from the unilateral actions of NATO members, several questions would have to be answered. If concerns related to Russia's NSNW were not resolved before or as part of the withdrawal

process, then why would it be easier to resolve them afterwards? Why was the most powerful NATO alliance ever unable to devise a coherent and effective strategy for convincing Russia that resolving the NSNW issue would contribute to mutual security? Is the 'power of an example' the only tool NATO has to create the conditions of a world free of nuclear weapons?

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NATO and US Nuclear Weapons: What Would Happen After the Bombs Have Gone?

Mustafa Kibaroglu

This paper will explore how the key officials and key opinion-formers in Turkey view a number of issues that may arise if the American non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) are withdrawn from the five host countries in Europe, including Turkey. First of all, it is necessary to indicate the significance of the NSNW belonging to the United States, that are deployed on Turkish territory within the context of the contingency plans of NATO, for Turkish political, diplomatic and military officials. Then, against this background, appropriate answers may be given about the possible reactions of Turkish officials to contingencies in the absence of NSNW in Europe.

A Brief Note on the US Nuclear Weapons in Turkey[1]

Turkey has hosted US nuclear weapons since intermediate-range Jupiter missiles were deployed there in 1961 as a result of decisions made at the Alliance's 1957 Paris summit. Those missiles were withdrawn in 1963 in the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Since then, only US nuclear weapons under US Air Force custody that could be delivered by F-100, F-104, and F-4 Phantom aircraft were deployed in air bases in Eskisehir, Malatya (Erhac), Ankara (Akinci/Murted), and Balikesir.[2] Turkey still hosts US non-strategic nuclear weapons on its territory, albeit in much smaller numbers. They are limited to one location: the Incirlik base near Adana on the eastern Mediterranean coast of Turkey.[3] All other nuclear weapons have been withdrawn from the bases mentioned above. Moreover, the Turkish air force no longer has any operational link with the remaining NSNW deployed at Incirlik.[4] F-104s have not been in service since 1994. F-4s are still in service after some fifty-four of them were modernised by Israeli Aerospace Industries in 1997. Yet only the F-16 'Fighting Falcons' of the Turkish air force participate in NATO's nuclear strike exercises known as *Steadfast Noon*, during which crews are trained in loading, unloading and employing B-61 NSNW. The Turkish aircraft in these exercises serve as a non-nuclear air defence escort rather than a nuclear strike force.[5]

Views of Turkish Officials about US Nuclear Weapons in Turkey[6]

There were two main reasons for Turkey to host US nuclear weapons. First and foremost has been the deterrent value of these weapons against the threat posed by the nuclear and conventional weapons capabilities of its enormous neighbour, the Soviet Union, during the Cold War. Similarly, after the Cold War, these weapons were believed by Turkish military commanders to constitute a credible deterrent against rival neighbours in the Middle East, such as Iran, Iraq and Syria, which used to have unconventional weapons

capabilities as well as delivery vehicles such as ballistic missiles.[7] A second reason for Turkey to host US nuclear weapons has been the burden-sharing principle within the alliance. Turkey has strongly subscribed to this principle since it joined NATO in 1952. In fact, Turkey had already displayed unequivocally its willingness to share the burden of defending the interests of the Western alliance by committing a significant number of troops to the Korean War in 1950, even before NATO membership was in sight.

Yet, if Turkey is likely to be left as the only country, or one of only two countries, where US nuclear weapons are still deployed after a possible withdrawal of these weapons from other allies' territory and no other NATO country is willing to assume the burden of hosting nuclear weapons, Turkey may very well insist that the weapons be sent back to the United States. From Turkey's current standpoint, this would not be the desired outcome of the deliberations within the alliance. According to a Turkish official, the principle of burden-sharing should not be diluted to live up to their commitment to solidarity, the five countries that currently host these weapons should continue to do so for the foreseeable future.[8]

NATO and Russia After the Removal of US NSNW

From the perspective of key officials in Turkey, the very *raison d'être* of the US nuclear weapons deployed on Turkish soil since the early 1960s has been the threat perceived from the Soviet Union. It goes without saying that the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union helped mitigate, to a great extent, the fears of Turkish officials of their colossal neighbour's nuclear capability. Thus, the perceived threat of the Russian Federation is much diminished when compared to the threat posed by its predecessor.

However, it is not possible to argue that Turkish officials can put their minds at ease simply because Turkey now has much improved economic and political relations with the Russian Federation. It seems that the centuries-old history of bilateral relations between the Turks and the Russians, characterised primarily by rivalry and bloody confrontation, has left deep traces in the mindsets of many Turks, including the key officials and opinion-formers.

Stemming mainly from such a perception of Russia, for many Turks in key positions of the administration, especially in military and diplomatic circles, the paraphrased position 'NATO membership wouldn't mean anything significant without nuclear weapons deployed in Turkey' is common. Hence, NATO membership and the US nuclear weapons in Turkey are closely associated for many Turks and these weapons are seen as constituting a credible deterrent first and foremost against Turkey's northern neighbour. Therefore, if and when the US NSNW deployed in Europe are withdrawn, Turkish officials will feel less secure.

NATO and New WMD-Armed States in Neighbouring States

While the threat perceived from Russia may have both tangible aspects as well as a deeply-rooted psychological dimension, the threats perceived from within Turkey's neighbourhood, especially the Middle East, are based on concrete evidence about many countries in the region possessing weapons of mass destruction (WMD) capabilities. In addition to the existing stockpiles of all WMD categories in a number of states in the Middle East at present, Iran's nuclear programme, which is claimed by high-level Iranian authorities to have achieved the level of 'a complete nuclear fuel cycle', has become a source of serious concern for Turkish officials as well.[9]

Notwithstanding such concerns, and despite centuries of rivalry between the Ottomans/Turks and Persians/Iranians, currently the degree of warmth is unprecedented in the relations between Turkey and Iran. Changing systemic factors since the attacks on American cities on 11 September 2001, followed by the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, caused a rapprochement between Turkey and Iran, both of which have become concerned about the presence of large numbers of American troops in their immediate neighbourhood. The convergence of major concerns about how their national security would be affected by the policies pursued by the United States *vis-à-vis* the future restructuring of Iraq in particular, and the transformation of the greater Middle East region in general, made Turkey and Iran revise their attitude towards each other favourably.

Nevertheless, key Turkish officials are still of the view that a nuclear armed Iran would be a threat to Turkey. For instance, in an interview with a journalist from the *Christian Science Monitor*, President Abdullah Gul said, 'You should not underestimate how seriously we take the issue of a nuclearised Iran. After all, we are neighbors and nuclear weapons would threaten us most of all. We are the first to object'.[10] Hence, in the absence of US nuclear weapons in Turkey, Turks will feel less secure against such contingencies that may involve the new WMD-armed neighbours of Turkey, especially if and when Iran acquires the capability to assemble a nuclear weapon.

Future Redeployment of US NSNW in Turkey and Europe

Contingencies involving plans for the future redeployment of US NSNW to Europe for maintaining extended deterrence seem largely irrelevant from the perspective of many in Europe's scholarly circles, given that Turkish officials do not want US NSNW to be removed from Turkey. However, despite this, it is not irrelevant for Turkish officials to consider the scenarios under which NSNW would be redeployed if they were to be removed from the country.

Considering the fact that the Middle East in particular, being one of the most volatile regions in the world, constitutes one of the primary sources of threats to Turkey's national security and stability, and that the likelihood

of further armament of neighbouring states is high, Turks would most likely welcome the return of US NSNW to Turkey as a credible deterrent against the actual and potential rivals in the region. This is because the redeployment of NSNW to Turkey would be expected to play a more useful role in maintaining NATO's extended deterrence, at least in the eyes of Turkish officials, who have already had two rather negative experiences within the alliance in 1991 and 2003, when Turkey called on the allies to display their solidarity with Turkey *vis-à-vis* the threat posed by Saddam Hussein's Iraq in the run up to the wars in the Gulf.

In 1991, when Saddam Hussein defied the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions requesting the swift withdrawal of the occupying Iraqi troops from Kuwait, Turkey asked for NATO's Rapid Reaction Corps to be deployed in Turkey as a precautionary measure of deterrence against a possible attack from Iraq. NATO countries dragged their feet and failed to live up to their commitment under Article V of the Washington Treaty. Only Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany responded to Turkey's call, albeit reluctantly and 'too little, too late', according to some analysts at the time, by sending a squadron of aircraft and air defence units.

Similarly, in February 2003, when the US offensive against Iraq was seen on the horizon, again Turkey asked the North Atlantic Council to convene a meeting as envisaged in Article IV of the Washington Treaty, in order to review the necessary measures that would have to be taken under Article V should Turkey be attacked by Iraq during the war. Allied countries such as France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg refused to convene such a meeting because they disagreed fundamentally with the US about the legitimacy of the intervention in Iraq itself.[11] They made references to Article I of the Washington Treaty, which required the member states 'to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.' And since the United States' actions were found by this group of countries to be illegitimate, they did not feel obliged to commit themselves to assist any ally that would be affected by a war resulting from the 'illegitimate' act of another ally.

Due to these two specific cases, notable for the absence of sufficient and timely support from the European allies, Turkish officials are not confident that the extended deterrence of the alliance would work effectively without the actual presence of US nuclear weapons in Europe and Turkey. Hence, they would prefer to depend on the deterrence provided by the United States in the form of its nuclear weapons, the presence of which on Turkish soil would guarantee US involvement in such contingencies on Turkey's side.[12]

Demand for a European Missile Defence

Turkey's geographical location on the periphery of such volatile regions, and in a rather hostile environment, requires the deployment of air defence systems all over the country against the threat posed by the missile capabilities in the hands of a number of countries in the surrounding area. Hence, Turkey has long been warm, in principle, to the idea of hosting the new generation US air defence systems, such as the Patriots and their advanced version PAC-3, on its territory. There were also talks between the officials from Turkey and the United States in the second half of the 1990s and in the early 2000s with respect to the deployment of the Arrow II air defence system that was under development by Israel in collaboration with the United States.

Nevertheless, none of these projects has come to fruition, mainly due to political considerations about the contingencies in which these missiles would have to be used. Turkey had concerns about whether the United States would one day decide to withdraw the missile defence system as it did with respect to the intermediate-range nuclear missiles, namely the Jupiters, which it withdrew as a result of a secret agreement between Kennedy and Khrushchev during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1963, without consulting officials in Turkey.

A second concern of Turkey *vis-à-vis* the US plans to deploy elaborate air defence systems in Turkey has been the perceived lack of clarity about the political objectives of the United States, and thus the contingencies in which these systems would have to be employed. Therefore, Turkey does not want to be in a 'one-on-one' situation with the United States with respect to the deployment of missile defence systems in Turkey and instead would prefer to see this a NATO-wide project.

This very concern, which has worried Turkish officials for decades, surfaced again during the most recent debate in the run up to the Lisbon Summit meeting of NATO in November 2010 in relation to the expansion of the US 'Missile Shield' to cover the entire territory of the alliance. Turkey was presented in the international media, as well as in think-tank reports, as being reluctant to give its affirmative vote for building an alliance-wide missile defence structure due to a number of conditions that were reportedly imposed by Turkey. These included not naming any country (for example, Iran) as the source of the threat against which the missile shield would be erected in Europe, as well as the questions asked by top-ranking Turkish politicians as to whom would have the command and control authority, if and when the system had to be activated.

While Turkish politicians have long tried to stay away from the conflicts in the Middle East during the Cold War years, recently Turkey has become unprecedentedly active in the region thanks to its mediation efforts between

Israel and Syria, as well as in Lebanese politics with respect to the election of a president. Nevertheless, due to a series of unexpected and unwanted developments recently, Turkey's relations with Israel have deteriorated greatly in the aftermath of Israel's Gaza offensive in January 2009 and, more specifically, after the tragic Flotilla incident in the high seas of the eastern Mediterranean in May 2010, which resulted in the killing of nine Turkish citizens by Israeli soldiers.[13] Therefore, the Justice and Development Party government in Turkey, headed by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, seems to be seriously concerned about whether NATO's missile defence capability would also be used to protect Israel in case it is attacked, for instance, by Iran.

Even though similar concerns have also existed in previous Turkish governments, which had rather close and warm relations with Israel, it would not be wrong to argue that they might have blocked the use of the system to protect Israel. However, under the current state of affairs in Turkish–Israeli relations, the Turkish government officials would like to know exactly who would control the operation of the missile defence system of the alliance. Political sensitivities notwithstanding, the difficulty here is that the NATO-wide missile defence structure will have to benefit to a great extent from the existing US air defence systems that have already been deployed, and are in the process of being deployed, in various places on the ground as well as on the sea-based platforms. It will also have to be expanded to cover the entire NATO territory, which in turn may require activation of various sub-systems that may also cover the Israeli airspace. Hence, this technical issue, which has political implications, will have to be tackled by the allied countries.

That said, when seen from a wider and longer-term perspective, in a situation where the US NSNW are withdrawn from Europe and Turkey, the value of NATO's missile defence system would be of much higher significance for Turkey's security, and this will most likely be greatly appreciated by the then ruling elite.

Mechanisms for Nuclear Consultation Within NATO

One of the arguments of lesser significance put forward by Turkish officials in their opposition to the withdrawal of US NSNW from Turkey has been the perceived value of Turkey's seat in the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG), where the decisions are taken with respect to the nuclear strategies of the alliance. This is considered to be a rather privileged status for Turkey in a twenty-eight member alliance. If NATO decides to withdraw NSNW from Europe and also from Turkey, Turkish officials would risk losing their privileged status, something to which they would be opposed. Should this happen, however, Turkish officials would certainly like to find ways to have a say in the decision-making process at most, if not all, levels with respect to the contingencies in which the nuclear weapons would have to be redeployed and used by the

alliance. The reason would not be simply the prestige or the privilege issue. The main reason would be that it is highly likely that such contingencies would involve threats emanating from Turkey's neighbours, such as Iran and also possibly Syria. Hence, Turkey would like to play an active and effective role in the decisions that may lead to the implementation of the alliance's 'first use' strategy in its immediate neighbourhood.

Conclusion

Among the five European countries that continue to host the US NSNW on their territory, the situation of Turkey exhibits certain peculiarities and thus creates a number of difficulties with respect to dealing with the actual and potential threats to its national security. Turkey is much closer to the regions, the Middle East in particular, which are considered to pose a threat to the alliance through the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles, such as ballistic missiles, for example. While on the one hand Turkey shares to a great extent this threat perception of the alliance and acts accordingly in the decision-making forums where, for instance, NATO's Strategic Concept is discussed, on the other hand, Turkey tries to strike a delicate balance with the countries in its immediate neighbourhood that may be the target of the operational plans of the alliance.

Hence, Turkish key officials and key opinion-formers would prefer the strong deterrent capability of NATO's nuclear strategy based on the principle of burden-sharing, with US nuclear weapons hosted on five members' territory, instead of a NATO strategy that would try to deter potential enemies with only the conventional capabilities of the European members of the alliance – because Turkish officials believe this would not be as effective a deterrent. In other words, Turkey would not like to see a confrontation between its neighbours and its allies escalate just because NATO's deterrence capability had visibly weakened in the absence of nuclear weapons in Europe.

Simply put, nuclear deterrence is synonymous with deterrence in and of itself for most of the Turkish security elite and it must be preserved as it is now.

Notes and References

1. The following paragraph is taken from the author's article: Mustafa Kibaroglu, 'Reassessing the Role of US Nuclear Weapons in Turkey', *Arms Control Today,* June 2010.

2. See Mustafa Kibaroglu, 'Turkey and Shared Responsibilities', *Shared Responsibilities for Nuclear Disarmament: A Global Debate,* (American Academy of Arts and Sciences: Cambridge, MA, 2010), pp. 24 – 27.

3. Hans M Kristensen, *US Nuclear Weapons in Europe: A Review of Post-Cold War Policy, Force Levels, and War Planning* (Washington D.C.: Natural Resources Defense Council, 2005), p. 9.

4. Mustafa Kibaroglu, 'Isn't It Time to Say Farewell to US Nukes in Turkey?' *European Security* (Vol. 14, No. 4, December 2005), pp. 443 – 57.

5. Retired Turkish Air Force commander, e-mail communication with author, April 23, 2010.

6. The following paragraph is taken from the author's article: Mustafa Kibaroglu, *op.cit.*

7. Iraq's weapons of mass destruction capability was destroyed following the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Iran and Syria still have such weapons in their military arsenals. Hence, the Turkish security elite still consider extended nuclear deterrence to be significant for Turkey's security.

8. Turkish diplomat, personal communication with author, Ankara, 29 January 2010.

9. The head of Iranian Atomic Energy Organization (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi is quoted on CNN International on 5 December 2010 as saying, 'Iran now produces everything it needs for the nuclear fuel cycle, making its nuclear program self-sufficient.' See <http://articles.cnn.com/2010-12-05/world/iran.nuclear_1_yellowcake-uranium-into-fuel-rods-isfahan-uranium-conversion-facility?_s=PM:WORLD>, last accessed 19 April 2011.

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After the Bombs are Gone: Thinking about a Europe Free of US Nuclear Weapons

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Imagine that it is May 2019. Almost exactly sixty-five years after the first US nuclear weapons arrived in Europe in 1953–54, the last of the remaining American nuclear bombs have now been withdrawn from the old continent. All nuclear weapons that remain in Europe are deployed in those countries that own them: France, the UK and Russia. All other European countries are nuclear-free. During the Cold War, the possible use of nuclear weapons had scared European populations and politicians alike. Since the end of the East–West confrontation, however, the presence of US nuclear forces in Europe had become widely ignored by European populations. Some European governments increasingly described US non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) based in Europe as relics of the Cold War and pressed for their withdrawal. Others did not share this view. At the time of the Lisbon summit of November 2010, the alliance still described deterrence based on an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional capabilities as a core element of its overall strategy. But it also aimed at further reductions in its nuclear forces based in Europe. By 2019, however, it had come to the view that deterrence could be maintained without the basing of any US nuclear weapons on European soil.

When thinking about the ramifications of such a scenario, we first need to clarify what exactly is meant by saying that 'no US nuclear weapons remain in Europe'. Next, we need to discuss the circumstances under which the US and NATO arrived at such a decision. Has it been a result of arms control negotiations with Russia? Or has the withdrawal become inevitable because European partners were not capable or willing to modernise the respective delivery systems? Or has there even been an almost successful terrorist assault on one of the US nuclear bases in Europe, as a consequence of which the US president decided to bring all non-strategic nuclear weapons home? Did NATO successfully establish missile defence architectures in close co-operation with Russia as a substitute for the deployment of nuclear weapons in Europe? Or has that not been possible because the Alliance could not reach agreement on such an approach with Moscow? Did the NATO missile defence plans materialise or did they have to be delayed due to budget constraints? And did Iran continue with its nuclear programme? Did it develop a nuclear weapons option or even conduct a nuclear test? Or had it been possible to convince Tehran in the course of successful negotiations to limit its nuclear activities to peaceful applications? In case Iran did openly go nuclear, did its neighbours such as Egypt or Saudi Arabia, or even NATO's partner Turkey, already begin to develop their own nuclear options in response?

The answers to these questions may vary in numerous ways. The withdrawal might have been a result of arms control negotiations, while at the same time NATO established missile defences in close co-operation with Russia. Or NATO withdrew its nuclear bombs unilaterally, without carrying on with missile defence projects. Against the background of an ongoing financial and economic crisis, costs may have limited such ambitions. A diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear problem may also have contributed to a NATO decision to delay missile defence. Or NATO may have withdrawn its nuclear forces as a result of negotiations, without being able to carry on with its missile defence plans, despite Iran proceeding with its nuclear weapons efforts. This paper will try to identify positive, as well as not so positive, consequences of a US nuclear withdrawal which could be expected under different circumstances.

What Exactly Does 'Withdrawal From Europe' Mean?

To begin with, we need to define what exactly is meant by 'all US nuclear weapons have been withdrawn from Europe'. Have all B-61 warheads been destroyed or only redeployed to storage sites in the US? And are European NATO partners modernising their dual-capable aircraft (DCA) in a way that would leave the option open to use them in future nuclear contingencies if the Alliance would deem this necessary? After all, even if the Europeans decided to rule out all nuclear options, the US Air Force (USAF) might continue with its current plans to replace its ageing F-16 aircraft with modern dual-capable F-35 Joint Strike Fighters. If the B-61s had only been stored and not destroyed, Washington could decide to redeploy its nuclear capabilities to Europe in a very short period of time, provided airbases had been maintained to host nuclear weapons. Such a move, however, would not go unnoticed. In fact, if US nuclear forces returned to nuclear-free NATO Europe, this would occur because the Alliance would feel the need to improve its extended deterrence credibility. Hence, NATO would want the opponent to know about the nuclear redeployment. At the same time, European populations would only welcome US nuclear forces in the case of a severe crisis. Otherwise, such a move would be strongly opposed. Therefore, the return of US nuclear forces to Europe is a scenario that is difficult to conceive. For the purpose of this paper, it is assumed that 'withdrawal' means that a redeployment of US nuclear forces to Europe would only be possible under extreme circumstances.

Arms Control and Non-Proliferation

Those who currently promote a US nuclear withdrawal from Europe believe that such a move would have a positive effect for the nuclear non-proliferation effort. If such a move took place as a result of successful US–Russian negotiations, or reciprocal moves like the co-ordinated, unilateral reductions of non-strategic nuclear forces undertaken by Presidents George Bush Snr, Michail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin in the aftermath of the Cold War, this would mean that the two countries still maintaining the largest

nuclear arsenals would have accomplished yet another success in nuclear disarmament. This would take the wind out of the sails of those non-nuclear countries which time and again complain that the nuclear powers do not meet their disarmament requirements under Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Moreover, the lingering criticism expressed by a number of non-nuclear states, that NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements violate the NPT's provision, would be invalidated. As a result, the nuclear non-proliferation campaign would be strengthened. It might become more likely to improve its verification provisions through universalising the Additional Protocol to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, a move that is urgently needed.

However, a US nuclear withdrawal from Europe could also negatively impact wider arms control and non-proliferation efforts. An urgent concern would apply in a scenario in which the US had removed its NSNW unilaterally, NATO was not capable of establishing effective missile defences for all its members, and Iran had developed a nuclear weapons option or begun conducting nuclear tests. Under such circumstances, Turkey may decide to begin its own nuclear weapons programme, at first clandestinely and then in open breach of the NPT, to ensure its national security. Such a move in addition to an Iranian nuclear break-out would certainly be the last nail in the coffin of the NPT. Had the US not withdrawn all its nuclear bombs from Incirlik airbase, Turkey might have been convinced that US extended nuclear deterrence still applied. A Turkish nuclear component would therefore be deemed unnecessary. Alternatively, an effective NATO missile defence system that convinces the Turkish leadership that all Turkish territory would be covered might prevent Ankara from going nuclear.

Extended Deterrence

Extended deterrence based on the threat of punishment has always been the bedrock of NATO's nuclear policy. The United States guaranteed its European non-nuclear partners, as well as Canada, that its nuclear forces would not only counter a potential Soviet attack on the US homeland, but also one on the territories of its allies. More specifically, a special arrangement called 'nuclear sharing' was established, according to which European delivery systems and their crews were prepared and trained to deploy US nuclear weapons based in Europe in times of war. Extended deterrence has never been an easy undertaking, mainly because the requirements of deterrence and assurance are often not identical. What has become known as the 'Healey Theorem' illustrates this best: 'It takes only five per cent credibility of US retaliation to deter the Russians, but ninety-five per cent credibility to reassure the Europeans.'

Today, in 2011, the political environment is changing dramatically. NATO–Russia relations in particular are steadily improving. At its Lisbon summit, the

Alliance made clear that it wishes to intensify its co-operation with Moscow. Russia's President Medvedev participated in NATO's Lisbon summit and welcomed an invitation to work closely together in terms of missile defence. There are indications that the Russian political elite is beginning to realise that NATO is not a threat anymore but that there are other challenges such as those posed by China or radical Islam to consider. On NATO's part, new Alliance members, which still struggle to come to terms with their memories of Soviet occupation and which have traditionally had difficulties perceiving Russia as a partner, are softening their stance. However, lingering suspicions on both sides remain. Indeed, it can hardly be expected that Western and Russian interests will become identical in the near future. This is due to: Russia's sheer size, making it both a European as well as an Asian player; its possession of a nuclear arsenal comparable only to that of the US; as well as its domestic development, which combines both democratic and autocratic elements, the latest proof of which has been the criminal case against Michail Khodorkovsky. Moreover, it remains unclear whether NATO and Russia will find common ground on important strategic issues such as missile defence. At this point it seems difficult to predict the direction in which the NATO–Russia relationship will develop.

In a positive scenario, NATO–Russian relations would continue to improve. Nuclear deterrence *vis-à-vis* Moscow would become increasingly irrelevant. In a negative scenario, however, NATO partners neighbouring Russia would feel increasingly uncomfortable. Even though a military confrontation between NATO and Russia would still remain a remote possibility, these and also other NATO partners would feel less secure (see the Healey Theorem above). As a consequence, NATO might begin a debate about the redeployment of US nuclear forces to Europe so as to reassure European allies. But this in itself would heighten tensions with Russia. Threat perception among NATO members might vary, giving cause to ongoing struggles within the Alliance about nuclear issues.

But even in a positive NATO–Russia scenario, extended deterrence would not become negligible for NATO. Rather, extended deterrence could be expected to change its focus from Russia to the Middle East. We do not yet know whether by 2019 the E3+3 (the UK, France, Germany, the US, China and Russia) would have been successful with their two-track approach of sanctions as well as incentives in stopping Iran from developing a nuclear weapons option. Nor do we know whether military action would have been taken to end Iran's controversial nuclear projects, or what the result of such military operations would be. What we know is that an Iranian nuclear capability – even if Tehran does not withdraw from the NPT and openly test nuclear weapons – would definitely change NATO's security environment significantly, although it will never be comparable to the threat posed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War. NATO partners at its southern flank would

not be the only ones to feel less secure. If Iran should develop nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles that could reach Berlin or Brussels, Central European NATO countries would also need to be reassured and protected. In addition, NATO could hardly be indifferent if Israel or any of the Arab countries that participate in NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue or the Istanbul Co-operation Initiative were to become the victim of Iranian military pressure. In sum, as a consequence of a possible nuclear dynamic in the Middle East, this region would gain importance for NATO.

If the US withdraws all its nuclear assets from Europe, NATO would lose an important option. Today, NATO partners that participate in nuclear sharing could conduct manoeuvres to demonstrate solidarity in the face of Iranian misbehaviour, or in a crisis with any other nuclear-armed opponent. If nuclear sharing is abandoned, such an option would cease to exist. Still, NATO's extended deterrence would not be profoundly weakened. The Iranian leadership would be aware that the US, and possibly the UK and France for that matter, could conduct a nuclear counterstrike should Iran dare to attack Israel or one of its Arab neighbours with nuclear weapons. Besides, Israel could target Iran with nuclear weapons by itself.

Moreover, NATO missile defences might gain more strategic prominence. First, defence against limited nuclear attacks conducted by nuclear newcomers such as Iran becomes feasible. Despite all their technical limitations, missile defences could provide a damage limitation option. Secondly, a nuclear Iran is unlikely to be as irrational as to directly attack NATO, which is still the most powerful military alliance in the world. But Iran might undertake acts of aggression towards its non-nuclear neighbours. NATO, as an alliance that feels responsible for maintaining world order, and which can be mandated by the UN Security Council for military operations to reconstitute order, could one day find itself in a situation where it would need to decide whether it wants to use its conventional forces against aggression in a contingency that might result in severe damage to its own populations caused by the use of nuclear ballistic weapons by the aggressor. Deliberately accepting one's own vulnerability, as was the case during the Cold War, does not seem the appropriate strategic approach in such a context.

Good relations with Russia would certainly make it easier for NATO to concentrate on establishing missile defences. Otherwise, the Alliance may have difficulties explaining to Moscow that its defence efforts were not directed against Russian security interests. This may limit NATO's defence programmes.

There is only one possible scenario left, one in which NATO establishes a stable relationship with Russia and which attains a diplomatic solution for the Iranian nuclear challenge. In that case, extended deterrence, as such, would become less important for NATO.

NATO Cohesion

The stationing of US nuclear forces in Europe has frequently been described as an essential transatlantic link. However, these weapons often caused transatlantic controversies, particularly in the first half of the 1980s when NATO's double-track decision was implemented. After the end of the Cold War, many politicians and non-governmental experts claimed that US non-strategic forces remained a link to the American strategic nuclear assets. These systems would also help to maintain allied cohesion and solidarity. Others pointed out that NATO cohesion cannot be made to depend upon weapons that were of questionable military value.

In fact, NATO would change as an alliance should it end its nuclear sharing arrangements. NATO allies that currently participate in it would lose nuclear competences. Hence, the value of consultations within the NATO Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) would decrease. If all things nuclear were only directly relevant for the US, the UK and France (which does not take part in NPG meetings) the impact of non-nuclear NATO members would diminish. But this would not necessarily result in a weakening of NATO.

In a best-case scenario, relations with Russia would continue to improve and a sustainable diplomatic solution be found for the Iranian nuclear problem. NATO would most probably tackle other challenges such as the resolution of conflicts in various regions. NATO cohesion and solidarity would depend upon developing common approaches dealing with such issues. Nuclear weapons would lose prominence.

A more likely scenario, though, is one in which the Alliance is confronted with nuclear challenges in the Middle East. In that case, as described above, missile defence would become more important. Such assets will have an alliance dimension. A NATO effort to establish missile defences would keep the US committed to European defence. Moreover, allies could find new opportunities to actively participate in NATO force planning through arrangements similar to the NPG. Therefore, if NATO substituted current nuclear sharing arrangements with an effective Alliance missile defence architecture, NATO would not be weakened, but perhaps might even be strengthened. This would particularly apply if missile defence co-operation with Russia could be established.

Conclusion

The ramifications for NATO of a complete removal of US nuclear forces from Europe are scenario-dependent. Today, many believe that it is appropriate to simply retire the threat of a possible nuclear confrontation in Europe into the history books. But if the US withdrew its NSNW from Europe, the consequences would not be as clear-cut as many pundits suggest. It may have positive, as well as not so positive, effects on nuclear disarmament

and non-proliferation. Others maintain that US nuclear forces in Europe are needed to keep the US connected to European security, and that NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements provide European partners with adequate opportunities for participation in NATO decision-making. Again, as far as extended deterrence and NATO cohesion are concerned, much will depend upon the concrete circumstances, as well as NATO's capability to substitute current nuclear sharing arrangements with other activities. Particularly, an lliance-wide missile defence would keep the transatlantic link and give NATO members a say in the Alliance's strategic affairs.