

NATO's Nuclear Posture Review: Nuclear Sharing Instead of Nuclear Stationing

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On January 25, 2011 the first meeting of NATO's "Deterrence and Defense Posture Review" (DDPR) took place. This acronym describes a new Committee consisting of the Deputy Permanent Representatives of all NATO member countries, chaired by the NATO Deputy Secretary General Claudio Bisogniero. Its task is no less than to find a new Alliance consensus on the role of nuclear weapons in NATO's overall deterrence and defense posture. DDPR is set to address the crux of the nuclear question – in other words, "how to deter whom with what?"²

A nuclear posture review became necessary in the wake of the debates about NATO's new Strategic Concept, as the question of how to deal with the US nuclear weapons stationed in Europe arose. Some NATO members have suggested the removal of US B-61 nuclear bombs which are stationed on their territory, available for delivery by so-called dual-capable (conventional and nuclear) aircraft. Other NATO Allies, particularly the "new" member states, want to keep by almost any means possible a visible American nuclear presence in Europe, as a form of reassurance for them and a sign of Washington's security commitments. For the moment, the United States has ended this dispute by having all Allies agree on the unequivocal wording in the new Strategic Concept that NATO "will remain a nuclear Alliance".³

Since this statement alone does not answer the specific question of what this nuclear Alliance should look like, the NATO summit in Lisbon tasked the Alliance to review its overall deterrence posture. In doing so, NATO Heads of State and Government were well aware that such a review, which implicitly should lead to a new Alliance nuclear consensus, would be very difficult to carry out. Thus, unlike all other summit taskings which had very strict deadlines for results to be presented to the NATO governments, the deterrence review did not have to comply with a definite time limit. However, it is understood that an agreed document – even if it should contain only preliminary results – has to be presented at the next NATO

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² In the meantime, the DDPR has been lifted to the level of the North Atlantic Council which means that NATO ambassadors, not deputies, are debating nuclear issues.

³ See NATO's new Strategic Concept, "Active Engagement, Modern Defense", November 2010, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68580.htm

summit in spring 2012 in Chicago.

It is worth noting that NATO created DDPR from scratch and did not choose the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) for this task, although it has been NATO's traditional forum for nuclear discussions and decision-making since its foundation in 1967. The decision to come up with a new ad-hoc body bypassing traditional nuclear structures in NATO was related to the political sensitivities aroused by nuclear issues within the Alliance. France has never belonged to the NPG, Paris having left NATO's integrated military command in 1966. Even after the policy shift under President Sarkozy, France was not willing to join a committee that has to do, at least in name, with any kind of "nuclear planning"⁴. Also to be taken into account is the view of other Allies that the purview of the deterrence review should go beyond the narrow question of whether or not US nuclear weapons should remain stationed in Europe, and should tackle deterrence from a much broader standpoint.

Given that the Deterrence and Defense Posture Review has just started, what are the questions it has to deal with and what could be the results?

NUCLEAR CONTRADICTIONS

For almost two decades NATO had mostly papered over the issue of how to deal with nuclear deterrence in the post-Cold War security environment. US nuclear weapons were always deployed in Europe after the Cold War, but NATO had carefully avoided any discussion regarding their purpose – let alone development of a clear strategy. For a while now, though, the nuclear question is back on the security agenda – partly because of the new interest in nuclear disarmament and the initiatives of individual countries in this direction, partly because of Iran's and North Korea's activities in developing nuclear weapons.

Alas, the current nuclear discourse is full of inconsistencies and paradoxes:

- President Obama's plea for a nuclear-free world in his Prague speech in April 2009 was frenetically acclaimed in most capitals of the world. At the same time, the Obama administration seems to act on the assumption that nuclear weapons are going to be around almost indefinitely and

allocates enormous budgets for its military nuclear activities – actually more defense dollars than the previous Bush administration.

- France and the UK have agreed on a defense pact with a strong nuclear element, which should last at least half a century. This leaves hardly any room for the idea of abandoning nuclear weapons once and for all.
- Russia supports the nuclear-free world proposal rhetorically, but at the same time regards its nuclear weapons as a compensation for its deteriorating conventional forces. Instead of making proposals for nuclear disarmament, Moscow announces the production of new atomic weapons. Furthermore, Russia is well aware that in a nuclear-free world – assuming this materializes soon – America's conventional military superiority would be unmatched and even underline its role as the only remaining superpower.
- France rejects the nuclear-free world concept entirely, arguing – not unreasonably – that it is illusory to believe that countries like Israel, India, Russia or China really want to give up their nuclear weapons.
- Germany and others have suggested withdrawing the nuclear weapons deployed on their soil, but failed to answer the question of how to keep up nuclear deterrence, US nuclear commitments and Alliance cohesion without them.
- NATO declared in its new Strategic Concept that it has no enemies. At the same time the Alliance calls for an "appropriate mix" of conventional and nuclear weapons, which raises the question: appropriate for what?

For each of these positions good reasons can be found individually; however, in their entirety they present anything but a coherent picture of a nuclear concept for the 21st century.

NATO's decision to launch an internal nuclear debate is therefore long over-due. However, for the moment the review itself still lacks cohesion and a clear direction as to where the process should lead. Some Allies focus strongly on the question of the US nuclear deployments in Europe, whereas others see the mandate of the review as much broader. According to this more holistic approach, the issues of disarmament, missile defense, non-proliferation or relations with Russia

⁴ France even opposed the term "posture" in the Deterrence and Defense Posture Review.



also have to be included in the DDPR. The problem of a broad and comprehensive approach, though, is that because of increasing complexity a consensus on concrete positions will become even more difficult.

Moreover, in mid-March 2011 NATO set up a so-called “Arms Control Com-mittee” – an idea that stemmed from a German initiative at the Lisbon summit. Although conventional and nuclear arms control will certainly have an impact on the future role of nuclear deterrence in NATO, it currently seems unclear what the pur-pose of this committee is and how it will relate to the DDPR.

THE DEBATE ABOUT THE BOMBS

Those in NATO who argue in favor of withdrawing the B-61 bombs from Europe point out that their deployment dates back to the Cold War. At that time, NATO hosted an entire spectrum of US nuclear weapons in Europe in order to threaten targets in the Warsaw Pact countries west of the Soviet Union. Nuclear bombs on fighter aircraft had a special role to play, as a particularly flexible arrangement for deployment and deterrence. Unlike a missile, a fighter aircraft could be called back from a nuclear mission if the situation had changed. Moreover, NATO’s so-called “dual key” system, where the United States provided the nuclear bomb and some European Allies owned and operated the aircraft (Tornado or F-16 fighters), offered a particular format for nuclear participation whereby the non-nuclear Allies had a role in NATO’s overall nuclear deterrence posture.

Fortunately, with the end of the Communist bloc, the extension of the Atlantic Alliance and the partnership between NATO and Russia, the nuclear targets in Eastern Europe no longer exist. Instead, a nuclear crisis today is likely to emerge in East Asia or in the Middle East – both regions thousands of kilometers away from the former “Central Front”. For these kinds of contingencies, though, NATO’s current nuclear posture is ill-suited: it is just not imaginable to have a Tornado aircraft carrying a nuclear bomb thousands of kilometers to the Far East when such a mission could be executed much more plausibly by US strategic nuclear weapons (intercontinental missiles, strategic bombers, nuclear submarines).

Thus, critics of the US nuclear deployments in Europe argue that a weapon which – even in theory – cannot be used in a plausible way can hardly have any deterrence value. If their deterrence value is close to nil, it follows that they cannot fulfill their role as a means of reassurance for non-nuclear Allies. Therefore, US B-61 bombs should be withdrawn as they do not contribute to a credible nuclear deterrence posture by the Alliance. Whether or not Moscow would respond in kind by reducing its own arsenal of nuclear weapons in Europe would be secondary, as NATO would be giving up something it in any case hardly needs.

Even supporters of the American nuclear presence in Europe hardly deny the conceptual flaws of the B-61 bombs, while at the same time emphasizing the symbolic value of these weapons for “extended deterrence”, i.e. the expansion of the US nuclear umbrella over European non-nuclear Allies. Such a political symbolism would even justify the significant cost that come with the forward basing of nuclear weapons (i.e. maintenance, security measures etc.). Withdrawal of US nuclear weapons would thus be a particularly negative sign, and possibly harmful to Alliance cohesion, for the new NATO members who joined the Alliance primarily from a desire for security and for alignment with the United States. This holds all the more true as the questions of reassurance and of the reliability of security commitments were brought up prominently by these NATO countries in the debates on NATO’s new Strategic Concept.

Debates in the DDPR meetings are likely to circulate around these two positions. Finding a compromise might prove to be difficult given the involvement of political factors which are difficult to quantify and to judge, like “credibility” or “trust”. So far, there is consensus that the concept of nuclear deterrence will belong to NATO’s toolbox for the foreseeable future. Furthermore, all Allies agree that extended deterrence provided primarily by American nuclear forces⁵ will continue to be a linchpin of NATO’s coherence.

Still the core question remains whether the American nuclear umbrella can continue to function credibly after US nuclear forces have been removed from European soil, or whether there is an indissoluble nexus between extended deterrence

⁵ Of course, French and British nuclear weapons contribute to NATO’s overall deterrence capability. However, France in particular has always refrained from taking on any specific form of nuclear commitment for its allies. Following its credo: “La nucléaire ne se partage pas”, Paris has never believed in the possibility of extending a deterrence message beyond its own national borders. However, as from an adversary’s perspective, French and British nuclear capabilities would certainly be perceived as “NATO capabilities” the DDPR will also have to cope with the political role of these weapons in the overall deterrence logic.

and a physical nuclear presence on the territory of the non-nuclear Allies. In other words, does the credibility of extended deterrence really require the stationing of B-61 bombs in Europe?

THE ASIAN MODEL

To gain a different perspective on the relationship between credibility and nuclear deployments, it helps to broaden the view beyond the narrow NATO horizon. Not always noticed by European NATO Allies, there is an example of US nuclear commitments without a forward basing of nuclear weapons: the "Asian Model". Countries like Japan or South Korea (and also Australia) are under the American nuclear umbrella; however, their way of implementing "extended deterrence" differs in four respects from the European model:

- The United States underpin their commitment towards Asia with nuclear weapons which are forward-deployable but not forward-deployed. This means that, at least since 1991, none of the countries in the region hosts US nuclear weapons on their soil⁶. However, they could be moved from the US closer to the region concerned, or into it, in case of a crisis.
- There are no nuclear weapons-related exercises between the US and the military forces in these countries.
- There is no burden-sharing by the countries in the region, whether through provision of bases or nuclear infrastructure, or through non-nuclear support⁷. There is also no nuclear risk-sharing, in the sense that there are no sites in South Korea or Japan which become nuclear targets for a potential aggressor because they host U.S. nuclear infrastructure.
- No mechanisms for nuclear consultations, common nuclear planning or sharing of nuclear-related information exist.

Apparently, for a long time now none of the countries under the US nuclear umbrella in Asia has had a problem regarding the credibility of the US commitment, despite the physical absence

of any American nuclear weapons. America's allies consider the combination of explicit US verbal commitments and the availability of a wide spectrum of American nuclear options (to be executed by strategic nuclear weapons) as sufficient to deter any vital threat against their territory⁸. Another factor that has contributed to the absence of credibility problems in the region is arguably the favorable conventional balance for the American-led coalition. Though North Korea is a fully militarized country, the military capabilities of the US and its allies have always been regarded as greatly superior. Hence, even during the Cold War the US did not depend too much on nuclear weapons and the relative weight of the nuclear element in extended deterrence in Asia has thus been much lower than in NATO.

If one accepts these aspects of the Asian model as being (at least partly) transferable to the situation in NATO today, the arguments for withdrawal of the B-61 bombs gain even greater force. Throughout the Cold War, when NATO perceived the Warsaw Pact's conventional forces as superior, US nuclear forces ranged very high in NATO's overall defense posture. Thus, US forward-based nuclear forces in Europe – which were actually deployed on the potential battlefield in case the Cold War became a hot one – were supposed not only to reassure NATO Allies but also to send a strong deterrence message to the potential (and clearly defined) attacker. At that time, any conventional attack on NATO could have led to a rapid escalation to the nuclear level. Today, such a potential attacker is not identified any more, as NATO has stated time and again that it does not regard Russia as a threat. Even those NATO members who still harbor concerns or even threat perceptions vis-à-vis Moscow have to admit that NATO's conventional forces are resoundingly superior to Russia's crumbling military capabilities⁹.

What concerns US allies in Asia much more than a physical American nuclear presence on their territory is the demand for nuclear sharing and information. They want to know more about Washington's nuclear plans and posture with a

⁶ The US withdrew the last nuclear weapons (bombs and nuclear artillery shells) from South Korea in December 1991. Still, rumours persisted for a long time that some nuclear weapons had remained. However, a secret report of the US Pacific Command, declassified in 1998, confirmed their withdrawal. See Federation of American Scientists (FAS), The Nuclear Information Project, <http://www.nukestrat.com/korea/withdrawal.htm>.

⁷ However, there are some who argue that the missile defense capabilities Japan provides can be regarded at least partly as a means of burden-sharing (even if not nuclear-related), as this defense posture also serves US interests in the region. In addition, there is some cost sharing for conventional forces.

⁸ Only after the more recent North Korean activities have some debates about possible forward basing of US nuclear weapons started. In South Korea, almost 69 percent of the population could imagine South Korea having its own nuclear weapons. However, this is the result of having an aggressive nuclear power in the immediate neighborhood. See Space Daily, 23 March 2011, http://www.spacedaily.com/reports/Majority_of_S_Koreans_want_atomic_bomb_survey_999.html

⁹ Russia's military exercises in particular, with simulated attack scenarios towards the West, showed the significant shortcomings of Russian forces: no network-centric warfare, no all-weather capabilities, no capacities for far-reaching operations.



view to implementing extended nuclear deterrence in case of a crisis in their region. Consequently, there has been a strong push from the governments concerned, particularly in South Korea and Japan, for more information sharing on US nuclear concepts and hardware. In late 2010, Washington and Seoul agreed on a US-South Korean Nuclear Deterrence Policy Committee. However, critics in South Korea maintain that, despite the title of the initiative, the consultation issue is given a very low profile by the Americans. Japan is assessing the possibility of a similar forum with the United States, and is at the same time closely monitoring how NATO has been handling the issue so far. Thus, the request for nuclear sharing remains a key interest for the Asian countries under the US nuclear umbrella. Apparently the trust in the credibility of US commitments depends much more on the knowledge of how the United States intend to execute their nuclear options in case of need than on the immediate visibility of the weapons themselves.

NUCLEAR SHARING WITHOUT FORWARD BASING

If the Asian Model can offer any lesson for the current nuclear debate in NATO, it is the notion that, after a withdrawal of US forward-based nuclear weapons, the issue of nuclear sharing will be paramount to assure the credibility of extended deterrence and the cohesion of the Alliance. Unlike Asia, NATO has a long history of experience in the various aspects of nuclear sharing and still has the necessary instruments. Thus, before deciding on a possible withdrawal of the B-61 bombs, there has to be agreement on how to proceed with NATO's nuclear sharing mechanisms without the nuclear weapons on the ground, and on how to adapt the instruments accordingly. In order to make the experience of the Cold War relevant to the nuclear realities of the 21st century, work on new forms of nuclear sharing has to focus on four dimensions:

- Information sharing;
- Nuclear consultations;
- Common planning;
- Common execution.

a) Nuclear Information Sharing

As mentioned earlier, NATO's prime forum for nuclear sharing, particularly for the exchange of nuclear-relevant information,

was the Nuclear Planning Group. It was founded at a time when the European Allies were highly concerned about the purpose of the US nuclear weapons on their soil and about their potential employment in the event of an attack by the Warsaw Pact – after all, Europe would be the first victim of a nuclear exchange between East and West. This coincidence has led to two myths on nuclear sharing in NATO: first, nuclear sharing in the NPG would depend on the presence of US nuclear weapons in Europe; and second, the United States would share information because the NPG existed. Today, all members of NATO (except France) take part in NPG meetings or send representatives to the so-called "NPG Staff Group" – regardless of whether or not they are stationing countries for B-61 or nuclear-capable aircraft.¹⁰ With regard to the second of these popular misconceptions, the readiness of US governments to share nuclear issues with their NATO Allies is explained by their actual intention to do so¹¹, not by the existence of a NATO forum for this purpose.

As a result, sharing nuclear information in NATO will take place as long as Washington is prepared to do so and the European Allies have an interest in doing so – regardless of the US nuclear presence in Europe or the existence of the Nuclear Planning Group.

After a withdrawal of B-61 bombs from Europe, however, a reform of the nuclear information-sharing procedures might be inevitable – provided that the desire for nuclear discussion still exists on both sides of the Atlantic. For a variety of reasons, the NPG in its present form could hardly be the appropriate forum any more. France is not likely to join the NPG, regardless of what the results of NATO's deterrence review will be. Since nuclear consultations in NATO without France – as one of the three NATO nuclear states – would be impossible, a new format would have to be found. Moreover, already today NPG no longer does any nuclear planning in the strict sense of targeting and, in a NATO without US nuclear weapons, this would be even less the case. Thus, even the name of the forum is no longer suitable, as it evokes Cold War scenarios. The new forum could be institutionalized along the lines of the current "Deterrence and Defense Posture Review", though probably it would help to avoid sensitive terms like "planning" or "posture" in the name.

¹⁰ In practical terms, though, there is an unwritten rule that only the stationing countries speak up in NPG meetings.

¹¹ Of course, this might not have happened because of sheer benevolence or altruism, but because Washington realized that having the Europeans participate in nuclear debates and in planning processes could help to alleviate their concerns about living on the potential nuclear battlefield and could thus bolster NATO's cohesion.

b) Nuclear Consultations

Even before the NPG was founded, NATO took on the crucial issue of nuclear consultations. The need for nuclear consultations within the Alliance stemmed from the fact that – given the immediate threat of the Warsaw Pact – NATO's nuclear deterrence concepts were always plagued by a collision of interests between the US and their non-nuclear Allies. In case of an attack from the East which required nuclear escalation, the Allies – for good reasons – wanted to be consulted before the US President would authorize a nuclear weapon to be detonated on European soil, in order to at least have the option of expressing an opinion on the wisdom of such a step. However, very rapid escalation might not leave time for long discussion processes among member states. Moreover, the US administration has always desired not to be entangled by any objections from their Allies concerning vital issues like the use of nuclear forces. Trying to bridge this gap in views and interests, NATO developed detailed regulations for consultations within the Alliance – starting with the “Athens Guidelines” in 1962 – if the use of nuclear force should become necessary.

The need for nuclear consultation in NATO was particularly highlighted by the vast amount of US nuclear weapons in Europe – more than 7000 in the early 1970s. Actually, however, the need for such consultations would remain even if all nuclear bombs were withdrawn. In NATO-relevant nuclear contingencies far beyond Europe (as seen above, in the case of the Middle East or East Asia), NATO members would like to be consulted as well before any decision by Washington to use nuclear weapons in order to protect their allies.

It goes without saying, though, that NATO's old consultation guidelines would hardly be applicable to today's security environment – particularly if there were no longer any B-61s in Europe. A NATO that claims to be a “Nuclear Alliance” as long as nuclear weapons exist would have to restart the process of developing political guidelines for nuclear consultations. This could be done in the successor forum which will supersede the NPG, and could include a vast number of related questions, depending on, for instance, how France defines its future role as a European nuclear power.

c) Nuclear Planning

Closely intertwined with nuclear consultations is the element of common nuclear planning. NATO Allies have until now been interested not only in the “when” of US nuclear employment in Europe, but also in the “where”. Nuclear planning – which was also done in the framework of the NPG – was related to US nuclear weapons in Europe and to the nuclear-capable aircraft owned by the European Allies (as – at least theoretically – the non-nuclear Allies could veto the use of a US nuclear bomb by not providing the aircraft as the means of delivery¹²). Moreover, a small number of sea-launched ballistic nuclear missiles stationed on US submarines were “assigned” to NATO and included in NATO's nuclear plans.

In a future NATO without forward-deployed US nuclear weapons, the Allies would still have a strong interest in having an impact on American nuclear planning – at least with regard to NATO-related contingencies. Again, any form of common nuclear planning depends first and foremost on the willingness of the United States to grant their Allies access to such a highly sensitive area of national security. Should this be the case, different models would be possible.

Washington could permit NATO to send representatives to American national nuclear planning authorities and grant them a say in NATO-related issues. In a very rudimentary form, such a liaison system already exists. One of the NATO liaison officers at US Strategic Command (STRATCOM) in Nebraska is a British officer (of the rank of Captain), the other being an American. It seems doubtful that they have a real impact on planning questions. The British officer serves in a double role as NATO and UK liaison officer, and seems therefore to be above all a symbol of the special UK-US nuclear relationship. His American colleague can hardly be regarded as a true NATO voice in the US nuclear planning system either.

To establish a mechanism that comes close to true common planning, NATO's representation in US planning authorities would have to be increased in numbers and in rank to have a real impact, and to provide an appropriate link with NATO's political and military leadership.

A second area of common nuclear planning could be confined to a set of US strategic nuclear weapons earmarked for NATO missions. Along the lines of the Cold War assignment

¹²In such a case, though, the US could have used their own aircraft or employed other types of weapons, not under these so-called “dual key arrangements” with the Allies.



of US submarine missiles, a small number of US nuclear warheads – either again submarine-based, or dependent on any other means of delivery – could be “reserved” for targets or contingencies all 28 NATO members could agree upon. Probably of limited military value (as the US disposes of a huge nuclear arsenal to execute any mission, whether in line with NATO or not), this would be a highly symbolic step epitomizing transatlantic cohesion. Moreover, such a NATO-earmarked force could mitigate the concerns of those NATO members who still support the current stationing of US nuclear weapons in Europe.

d) Common Execution

A common execution of nuclear strikes where the Allies provide the means of delivery and the US supplies the warhead would no longer exist once the B-61 bombs have been withdrawn to the American homeland. The theoretical options of keeping the storage sites in Europe for occasional redeployments to Europe, or of having the NATO nuclear aircraft fly to the US to load the nuclear bombs, are unrealistic. Such procedures to keep up the illusion of a NATO nuclear force would be extremely costly, as the nuclear vaults would have to be kept fully operational including the strict security measures. The political value would be very limited, at best. Moreover, they would not be necessary, as NATO with its three nuclear members – including the largest nuclear power on earth – would not lack nuclear options to convey a credible deterrence message.

Still, even without US forward-based systems, NATO Allies could contribute to nuclear operations if necessary and desired. Already today, 15 non-nuclear NATO member states provide support to what are known in NATO jargon as SNOWCAT missions (Support of Nuclear Operations With Conventional Air Tactics). This means that, should nuclear-armed NATO aircraft ever be sent on an attack mission, they would grant non-nuclear support like air refueling or search and rescue operations. These missions are regularly exercised, and symbolize the willingness of non-nuclear Allies to accept burden-sharing above and beyond the stationing of nuclear weapons on their territory.

Even if the US strategic bomber force has all support elements available, allied support along the lines of SNOWCAT might be a welcome contribution and symbolize NATO cohesion.

CONCLUSIONS

Extended deterrence is a highly political concept which depends first and foremost on the willingness of the nuclear power to give a commitment to its allies and on its capabilities to employ nuclear weapons in case of need. The credibility of the nuclear commitment, though, is primarily defined by the allies under the nuclear umbrella (and of course by the potential opponent). The physical deployment of US nuclear weapons on European soil was to a large degree requested by the European NATO Allies, and had a dual function: it was to send out a sign of resolve to the opponent, and a sign of protection to Allies.

In today's security environment, NATO's current nuclear posture cannot fulfil this dual function any more. Since the nuclear weapons deployed in Europe have lost most of their function and are increasingly losing the support of NATO Allies, they can be withdrawn and either stored in the United States or dismantled. This holds particularly true as the logic of extended deterrence does not necessarily require nuclear deployments in non-nuclear countries. Indeed, there are examples where the nuclear umbrella is kept up without the forward presence of US nuclear weapons.

Much more important for NATO's cohesion and the credibility of its nuclear deterrence concepts is a dense network of nuclear information and consultation mechanisms – subsumed under the heading “nuclear sharing”. As NATO's nuclear sharing principles still stem from the Cold War period of more than two decades ago, a reassessment is in any case necessary. Withdrawal of the B-61 bombs would make such a nuclear review even more urgent. Provided that nuclear sharing is the intention of both the US and their non-nuclear Allies, ways can be found to align the different requirements: the American requirement for the freedom of action, and the European requirement for information and influence. Keeping the status quo, i.e. leaving NATO's nuclear weapons where there are, papering over all inconsistencies and hushing up the nuclear question for another decade or two is no longer an option.

NATO's Deterrence and Defense Posture Review (DDPR) should focus not only on the issue of the pros and cons of US nuclear bombs stationed in Europe, but more on the question of how to keep up nuclear sharing within the Alliance. NATO has a long tradition in this respect, ranging from nuclear information sharing up to common nuclear planning and even common execution. These sharing mechanisms, which date back to



the Cold War era, need to be adapted to the new realities of the 21st century. Thus, NATO's deterrence review should not end with the presentation of the findings of the DDPR at the next NATO summit. Instead, there should be an ongoing process for nuclear discussions in NATO. NATO's current forum for these kinds of deliberations, the Nuclear Planning Group, seems ill-suited for this purpose – because of its composition, its portfolio and, not least, its name. If the willingness of the US – as the nuclear “patron” – to pursue nuclear sharing can still be taken for granted, and if the European Allies keep up their interest in the nuclear question, creating a new forum should not be too difficult.