



NATO's New Strategic Concept

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NATO's New Strategic Concept is a document of conservatism in nuclear matters

- // NATO persists with:
 - // insisting on a first use option (it was neither possible to agree on the „sole purpose“ formula (nuclear weapons are only there to deter nuclear attack)
 - // continuing with nuclear sharing and the deployment of substrategic nuclear weapons on the territory of NATO non-nuclear weapons states
 - // not to substitute BMD for nuclear deterrence, but to complement the latter by the former
 - // to refrain from unilateral withdrawal of sub-strategic nuclear weapons
 - // stating that strategic nuclear forces provide the „**supreme guarantee of the security of the Allies**“
- // Some moderate innovation exists in:
 - // putting sub-strategic nuclear weapons on the US-Russia disarmament agenda
 - // envisaging the possibility of reduction and eventual elimination of these weapons
 - // committing NATO to the vision of a nuclear weapon free world and promising working for creating the related conditions
 - // making arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament an alliance mission
 - // seeking a cooperative relationship with Russia (including BMD).

NATO's Strategic Concept is a compromise between widely divergent positions

- // The Baltic states, fearing Russia, would have preferred not to change the status quo at all.
- // France, concerned about implications for her own nuclear forces, did not even want arms control as a particular mission for the Alliance. Even though France does not participate in the Nuclear Planning Group and insists of complete „nuclear autonomy“, it pushed for continued deployment of US substrategic weapons in neighbouring European states and for continued nuclear sharing.
- // Poland, as the key country among the younger members, wanted to combine cooperative approaches to Russia, including substrategic nuclear arms control, with continued extended deterrence.
- // In Turkey, the government was divided between the military (preferring the status quo), and the political leadership (being more relaxed about extended deterrence, and prioritizing improved relations with all neighbours, Iran included).
- // Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg would have preferred unilateral withdrawal of substrategic nuclear weapons, but yielded to Alliance consensus.
- // Norway, the most disarmament-minded NATO member state, would have preferred stronger disarmament language, but joined forces with Poland for a compromise on arms control, and was happy that disarmament and arms control figured in the Strategic Concept at all.
- // The United States sided with the more conservative members, probably in order to prevent behind-the-scenes lobbying of Eastern European governments with their diasporas in the US and the related congressional members. This could have undermined support for New START.

Possible roads for substrategic nuclear weapons arms control

- // According to the Norwegian/Polish proposal, substrategic nuclear arms control would start with transparency and confidence-building measures.
- // This would be followed by consolidation of these weapons in central storage and removal from the NATO/Russian border; eventually, NATO substrategic weapons could be withdrawn to the United States.
- // Consolidation could be combined with, or followed by, reductions which in the end could mean complete elimination of this class of weapons.
- // An complementary or alternative path might be to include substrategic weapons in the next round(s) of US-Russian (or later multilateral) nuclear reductions negotiations.
- // An ensuing agreement could install ceilings for total nuclear warhead arsenals with some sublimits for strategic and non-strategic warheads, but leave it largely to the parties how their remaining arsenals would be composed.

Conclusions

- // As in other issues, NATO's New Strategic Concept establishes no clear guideline, but presents a political compromise between divergent positions.
- // These divergences continue to exist – the Concept has solved nothing, but postponed the issues.
- // Consequently, NATO has indicated that it will conduct a „nuclear posture review“ of its own in the near future.
- // This would certainly include establishing starting positions and „red lines“ for the coming negotiations with Russia.
- // As Russia puts the nuclear issue in a wider security context, such a negotiation positions must include also ideas for conventional arms control and BMD.
- // What is completely lacking at present is any intention to move on creating the „conditions for a world without nuclear weapons“ as the Concept promises. NATO should be kept by its word on this.
- // What is overdue is that the most powerful military alliance in world history finally renounces the option of first use of nuclear weapons.