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Transcript

NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN EUROPE AND THE FUTURE OF NATO

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JAN TECHAU: Good morning, everybody. Welcome to Carnegie Europe this morning. We're talking this morning about a rather unruly kind of issue, just the right kind of thing to get the political metabolism started on this grey day here. We're talking about nuclear issues which in Europe are a notoriously unpopular kind of issues, and you are the ones that like it, actually, and that's good to see - some people who do actually like it and sit here in the room with us this morning.

We're talking about an issue that is really a leftover kind of issue. I was at home in Germany last weekend and I was sifting through old boxes, moving boxes from my past two international moves. What happens with these boxes once you have to move them and sift through to find out what's in there, you find these old friends, and sometimes old enemies, from a different kind of life, a previous life, and so it is with NATO.

NATO has a couple of old friends from a past life, another life, and one of them is the issue of nuclear weapons, specifically the forward-deployed ones in Europe, sub-strategic nuclear weapons, as they are sometimes called, really left over from the Cold War, that the Alliance finds very difficult to tackle and very difficult to find consensus on.

During the last summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in Chicago, the Alliance had tasked itself beforehand to get the discussion going and move towards some kind of conclusion on this issue. Chicago, in most observers' eyes, didn't bring a real satisfactory answer to many of the questions. When you look at the issue, as most of you will be familiar with, this is a rather tricky one: technical aspects, political aspects, military aspects, operational ones and all other kinds of aspects that play into this.

We have three experts here this morning to guide us through this, to look at the post-Chicago situation, and, possibly, where this discussion is going to get us in the future, and how NATO can tackle it, maybe some recommendations as well here this morning. We have with us Paul Schulte, who is a non-resident Senior Associate with the Carnegie Endowment, both with the Nuclear Policy Programme in Washington and Carnegie Europe here in Brussels. It's great to have him back in our office.

We have Sinan Ülgen with us, our visiting scholar from Turkey here at Carnegie Europe, and Malcolm Chalmers, who's the Research Director at the Royal United Services Institute in London. Both of the gentlemen to my right have just arrived and are still catching their breath, but I'm sure that they can sleepwalk us through these issues.

Paul and Malcolm have been part of this enterprise here, a paper that you were able to pick up over there at the far end of this hall, which is really a comprehensive assessment of the non-strategic nuclear weapons question in Europe. It was published before the summit, but already attempts to look at the situation after the summit, so it's exactly the kind of paper I think that we need at this moment.

I have asked all three of the gentlemen to talk for about ten minutes each, and then we get into a discussion, of course, with all of you. Afterwards, please stay on with for a post-event discussion, if you feel like doing so.

With this, I hand it to Malcolm, who's going first, and then Paul and in the end Sinan. Over to you, Malcolm, please.

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MALCOLM CHALMERS: Thank you very much for that welcome. It's a great pleasure to be here in Brussels speaking to this distinguished audience. I'm sure we'll get a lot of information out of the Q&A, so I will be relatively brief, as will Paul.

The report in front of you is a joint effort between ourselves at the Royal United Services Institute, Carnegie and the Brookings Institute in Washington. The reason it's a joint effort is actually because we were all thinking about writing a serious analytical piece on this topic, because we've been involved in so many conferences, events and discussions about this event. I think we all felt that it lacked a certain amount of analytical depth which could provide a framework for people to have a more detailed discussion about the way forward.

We took the risk of publishing this paper before the outcome of the Chicago Summit and the Deterrence and Defence Posture Review was released. I think my view and I think Paul's view is that events have transpired in a way which is certainly consistent with what we've said in our report. Of course, much remains to be seen.

I think one of the things we believe as we wrote this paper is that NATO's formulation of looking for an appropriate mix of conventional nuclear missile defence was the right question to ask, that all those different components have some role in NATO, but the mix that's appropriate has changed since the end of the Cold War and perhaps continues to change, and that, certainly in the current period, the role of nuclear weapons for NATO, certainly the role of US non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe, is now mainly a political rather than an operational one.

In that sense, it's neither about deterrence nor defence, although the review is a Deterrence and Defence Posture Review, but they have important political functions which should not be underestimated and need discussing. In a way, the real debate about the appropriate mix is about how you balance some political factors which point in different directions.

First, the role that the potential withdrawal of these weapons could have in relation to nuclear disarmament, the expectations raised by President Obama's Prague speech, and the fact that the basing countries, certainly most of the basing countries for these weapons are actually the same countries that were due to base Cruise and Pershing missiles in the 1980s and they all have, if you like, a political, cultural memory of resistance to those deployments in the early 1980s. Today that is reflected, and that's not the only factor, but that's reflected in some unease in all those countries - Germany, Belgium, Netherlands and Italy - in relation to those weapons today.

Secondly, a political factor is reassurance of Russia. If there was no issue in relation to handling relations with Russia politically and the symbolism of these weapons, then NATO could, in principle, redeploy non-strategic nuclear weapons from countries which are pretty reluctant to host them to countries which would be more keen to host them because they have greater concerns about Russia.

The NATO-Russia Founding Act makes it very clear that such a redeployment would not be permissible. Even if it was not, it would send a provocative signal towards Russia, which, I think, very few would think would be desirable at this time. That provides part of the political constraint about which member states can host these weapons.

Third, there's a political role responding to US concerns, in particular, on burden-sharing, which, in a broader context - with US concerns about Europe's relatively low levels of defence spending; from a US perspective, relatively low levels of contribution to other NATO missions; and with the US presence in Europe on the conventional side declining - there's a concern that there should be broad sharing of this

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mission and a concern amongst many Americans that some European countries wish to benefit from nuclear deterrence but they don't want to share in the political burden of basing weapons on their territory.

On that particular issue, our paper articulates some options for what we call smart sharing: are there ways in which sharing this burden, symbolically and operationally, can be done without the current way of operating and basing? I think one of the outcomes of the Chicago Summit is to task the NATO bureaucracy to look, now that the broad guidelines of DDPR have been agreed, to look at whether the current basing arrangements are exactly the right ones or whether they may be reoriented.

Certainly, those who think the DDPR outcome is an endorsement of the status quo of no change, I think may be misguided in that respect. I think it's more likely than not that over the next three, four, five years there will be some significant changes in the way in which NATO nuclear weapons are deployed in Europe but that they will not be withdrawn.

In particular, I think that one of the things we say, which in a way cuts across... in which there's a tension between the burden-sharing issue and the reassurance issue in relation to the more exposed states, which Paul will talk about more, is that those in the more exposed states – the Baltic republics and Poland, for example – are most concerned with the US security guarantee.

They're not really that interested in whether the US weapons are carried by Belgian aircraft, or German aircraft or Italian aircraft; they probably prefer, on balance that they're carried by American aircraft. The issue of burden-sharing is an American issue, and, in a way, part of the dilemma for the Alliance is balancing off those two objectives along with the other political objectives.

Therefore, one of the issues I think we raise is how far you could move to a situation in which there are other forms of sharing, which weren't perhaps as politically contentious as those we have at present, while still satisfying the American desire for some degree of burden-sharing, and reassuring the more exposed states that their worries about Russia are not being ignored.

Paul will say something about reassurance next. The last comment I would make, by way of introduction, is that, of course, in a way, that discussion has been taking place and our paper talks primarily about what NATO should do in the absence of substantial Russian reciprocation.

Of course, one of the strong signals from the DDPR, not a new signal, but it's, I think, strengthened the DDPR outcome, is that NATO would be prepared to move further in reducing these weapons were there to be substantial Russian reciprocation, the definition of which is not made clear in the DDPR.

I think they're right to do that, and our paper doesn't talk in detail about what that might involve, but I think we would argue that before NATO enters... if the political circumstances in Moscow become such, I don't think they are such at present, but if we get to a station which Russia is interested in reciprocation process in relation to these weapons, then it would be very important for NATO, before it enters such a process, to work out what these weapons are for, because if we don't know what these weapons are for then it's very difficult to know what our bottom lines are, what our red lines are, and in what circumstances we are prepared to give up some or all of them.

I think the primary purpose of our paper is to map the debate as to what these weapons are for, both operationally, which we do talk about, but also politically. With that, I'd like to hand over to Paul to talk about the other aspects of our paper.

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PAUL SCHULTE: Thank you. This is a strangely passionate issue in terms of all the problems facing NATO in the world - 160, 200, whatever it is, fairly elderly bombs, elderly but beautifully kept up, attracts more attention than you would think appropriate.

What we have discovered is that there is a collision of different passions on this; there's the ethical passion about renunciation of nuclear weapons because they're bad, because they're dangerous to some people; and, for others, it's an insistence on their right to security. Particularly the Central and East European states, within that, especially the Baltic States, are very concerned about the symbolic impact of these weapons which prove visibly American commitment to Europe being withdrawn. For them, it risks recreating conditions of uncertainty they hoped they'd put behind when they joined NATO.

To a Martian, this would raise strange passions, and many of these passions are out of sight. The way the review's been conducted behind closed doors means that the potentially quite serious differences between different states about this are kept concealed, largely, from the public gaze.

We've tried, to some extent, to bring these out and to point out that although, as I say, this is not a huge issue in global terms, it's not going to break NATO, there are plenty of other things for NATO and the EU to worry about, it still has toxic possibilities. If these disputes are somehow not ventilated and sorted through, then that will be problematic for the Alliance.

As authors, we've tried to be agnostic about these weapons - whether they work, whether they don't work - we've tried to put them on one side, and just worked with the positions that we've encountered. We did start with the definition of the role, and this is part of the problem. One can hear military or ex-military people saying, there is no military role for these things, and others saying, yes, there is and it's important.

We've tried to reconstruct in a non-official way what the role is, and you will find it on page nine: in extreme circumstances of collective self-defence, the combination of these bombs with these dual capable aircraft would allow NATO to decide by consensus to cross the nuclear threshold in a manner that was not purely demonstrative but observably limited. Preparing the decision making for those steps would itself be a signal.

We say that the non-strategic weapons capability is therefore intended to provide an inseparable mix of operational and political utility. When people say there's no military role, the question is: well, it's not what you'd use in 21st century nuclear war-fighting, you'd probably use SLVMs or bigger, newer remote weapons to raise a firewall of a given size on a given target, but it's a political choice as well, if you believe it.

You may also believe, and we've encountered this, that they'd never be used, because they'd never be usable, because even in the severest crisis you'd never get consensus to start preparing them. That's one of the positions that we've encountered. Others doubt that and insist they would. There's a particular aura of uncertainty over these nuclear weapons rather than others.

Now, we felt it necessary to look at what's not been looked at so much before - the reassurance. If you are anxious in Latvia or Lithuania and you see these things being withdrawn because the German Foreign Ministry is against them, or the Dutch or the Belgian, what do you feel that you need to give you additional reassurance? If these go, what else might be done instead?

We looked at a whole range of reassurance possibilities, including conventional improvements, including declaratory reassurances, visible assurances, which don't have military significance, but the

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establishment of NATO institutions, even if they can't fight, gives some kind of additional certainty that NATO won't abandon its most exposed members. We look at exercises, contingency planning against semi-utterable scenarios involving our great neighbour to the east, which hitherto NATO has refused to do, but is beginning to consider doing.

We point to the difficulties in going too far with this. Even if we could afford a whole lot of reassurances and large exercises every year – if we overdo that then we create anxieties in Russia and we, arguably, stimulate new arms races that might have been avoidable.

It has to be quite carefully judged and judged in a way we can't do at the moment, because the appropriate mix of deterrents and the reassurance measures can only be judged over time, as the DDPR is implemented and as NATO moves forward in the political environment that will face us in the next few years.

We do say that, although the measures have varying costs and uncertain prospects, a determined and carefully considered mix of investments, deployments, exercises, visits, speeches and statements could address the reasonable concerns of the most exposed allies. Part of managing this problem, because it's not going to go away, it will have to be managed... one rather contemptuous way in which NATO's response has been summed up by one of my colleagues is: kicking the can down the road: let's not look at this again for another five or ten years.

We think that there are better ways of doing it, that, yes, you hold off the full decision, but there are things you do in detail to manage it. In the worst case, you could end up with, five years on, another set of severe disputes, or maybe at a shorter, unpredictable period, if the modernisation decisions of the German Air Force or the Dutch or Belgian basing arrangements were suddenly to be called in question, then you'd suddenly have to handle it earlier, and it's good to have done some thinking about it.

The question, I think... I think this holds up reasonably well. We wrote it before the Summit, it seems to have held together since the Summit. The only thing I note on the horizon which we haven't attended to in here is the way that the anti-nuclear movement is beginning to single out the B61-12 extension programme for the American bombs, and will be claiming that they're new weapons; they'll be slightly more accurate, therefore they'll be flown with more modern planes. Therefore, the critique will switch from: these are useless weapons to, quite soon: no, these are very dangerous and potentially powerful weapons and we must demonstrate to stop them happening. I can see an agitation over that.

The question we might also want to touch on, with an audience taken from so many places, is institutionally how do we think this is going to be done? Within NATO there will be committees, choices and political input, so what is the method by which NATO should now think through these questions? How publicly should it be done? How much concerned with deterrence or how much concerned with armaments control? How do we bring in the different, very contrasting concerns of different NATO allies in a way that will enable this to be managed efficiently and without too much friction?

JAN TECHAU: Thank you. Sinan – a view from an Alliance member?

SINAN ÜLGEN: Yes, just to take up where Paul finished his remarks, contrasting views of the different NATO allies, I'll try to give you a sense from the southern flank of NATO about how this discussion is perceived.

I will focus on three points; one, the question of removal, which, certainly, is one of the big issues which is linked to, obviously, many of the themes that we'll be discussing today. On the question of removal, what

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we have seen in the past is essentially a split between some of the Alliance members, with the exception of an initiative by the Western members of the Alliance for removal of these weapons, whereas, both on Turkey and Italy, the two countries have remained silent.

The Turkish view on this is that these weapons continue to serve a purpose, mostly political, but Turkish authorities do not rule an operational function for these weapons. The position is - as long as NATO should remain a nuclear alliance for the foreseeable future, and therefore these weapons should not be removed, at least in a way that would undermine internal alliance cohesion - the position is essentially not a categorical objection to the removal of these weapons but rather an objection to the manner in which there have been attempts to remove these weapons.

The focus or the accent is on consensus. If NATO can decide by consensus to remove these forward-deployed weapons on European territory, then a country like Turkey would not object. Short of that, it views this process as being dangerous, undermining NATO cohesion and undermining the ability to provide external deterrence.

The second element here that I would like to underline in this debate that we're having about removal - what's surprising, when I look at all the other countries that have had this debate, is really the lack of a politically motivated movement in a country like Turkey, that has made this an urgent item. This is somewhat surprising, because this is a country that went almost to the brink of nuclear war in the early 1960s, around the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Therefore you would expect to have more of a consciousness about what the discussion means and more of a political lobbying, whether it's in the terms of Green parties or the social democrats, but, Turkey, there is no political discussion about this, it's not a politicised item. You don't have political movement that carries the flag of nuclear demilitarisation, and that's the reason why Turkish authorities are perhaps more comfortable in this debate.

Finally, again, on this one, I would like to make a claim, and that is that even if there is, going forward, a decision, let's say, by some of the Alliance members to remove those weapons - and this is one of the scenarios that was underlined in this paper - leaving Turkey and Italy as the possible two countries where either the weapons or the weapons and the DC aircraft can be hosted, that may not necessarily be viewed as a bad option from the standpoint of policy makers sitting in Ankara, because, essentially, what that would do is really cement the security relationship with the US.

If you're only two countries in Europe as Alliance members, providing a critical support to nuclear deterrence, then that tends to cement the security relationship with the main security providers in a different way. That will obviously have repercussions on the political relationship with the US.

Now, for instance, and this is very similar, in a way, to the role played by the Incirlik Airbase in Turkey, which is one of the largest, more important US/NATO airbases, and that has a political value for the relationship. Even in the very difficult times of the bilateral relationship, the Incirlik Airbase came to the fore as a main political security driver of this relationship. I think that even in the worst of situations, where there would be some Alliance members asking and going through unilateral withdrawal of these weapons, we shouldn't rule out that Ankara will necessarily follow.

The second aspect of this is Iran. Now, the view on the southern flank is very much coloured by what is going to happen on the Iranian nuclear file. Obviously, if the issue is resolved, and we can discuss in a perhaps more relaxed manner, but if this question continues to reach crisis proportions, then obviously that's going to provide a very different context to this discussion about removal.

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I would argue that the future of the DDR will be conditional, very much, on what happens in Iran, especially if at some point the position switches to a much more clear strategy of containment. If we start to talk about containing, potentially or actually, nuclear Iran, then that certainly will have an impact on how these issues will be discussed with the NATO role of nuclear weapons and whatnot.

My final point is on missile defence; this is a relatively new system that became functional with a number of limited countries that are actually playing a role; one of them is Turkey, where the early warning radar system is hosted. Turkish authorities initially were wary about this, because they thought that if NATO starts to go down the line of having a fully functional missile defence, then the strategy might shift towards deterrence by denial as opposed to conventional nuclear deterrence.

I think that is still part of the analysis. All these discussions have a linkage to how missile defence is perceived, how it will perform and this question of finding the right balance in NATO's deterrence strategy - between deterrence by denial, viz. missile defence, and nuclear deterrence - is something that I think we should really think about.

JAN TECHAU: Sinan, thank you very much. I would like to ask you to get your questions ready before we take your questions. I have a quick follow-on to both of our guests from London. You both talked about assurance and, specifically, the needs of the more exposed countries on the eastern flank of NATO, the more vulnerable ones, as they are called in the paper, I think.

I would like to talk about threat perception for a second, because being exposed and being vulnerable is not only a question of the facts on the ground but also the psychology of the situation: to what extent do you perceive yourself being threatened?

The NATO discussion, not only on the nuclear issues but on all kinds of questions, contingency planning, the entire issue of threat perceptions - has been the invisible cancer that has undermined the Alliance from within, to put it maybe a bit too dramatically. I think that's a point that can be made.

To what extent do you think is the question of threat perceptions at the core of the matter of these weapons, really, aside from all the technical questions that play a role in this as well, because they expose the threat perceptions and the differences in threat perceptions so very nicely? You can say a word about this, and then it's to the audience.

PAUL SCHULTE: I think threat perception is part of it, but the other part is the belief that we could get to a better Europe and a better relationship with Russia if nuclear weapons were removed, that reliance on nuclear weapons in Europe prevents a better kind of politics coming into existence.

In the history of the theatre of nuclear weapons, you find this being expressed repeatedly, particularly around 1983, 1990, when NATO was going to modernise its nuclear weapons and it was going to have standoff missiles which would have been more modern, more reliable. The peace movement, anti-nuclear movements, came up and said, no, no, we must not do this, because that will prevent us being able to reach a better relationship with Russia.

You had some group of people who are insisting that a better Europe is achievable that way, if we can just knock the bars of the nuclear prison, and others saying, no, it isn't, we don't believe that that will reconfigure relations with Russia. At some level, this is an argument not just about threat, but about Russia, what kind of Russia there could be, how we might stimulate to change in a way that we'd find desirable.

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There is, of course, Iran, but Iran is almost not a safe subject for discussion within NATO. Clear, within NATO it's being discussed, but it's not something that NATO wants to talk about, perhaps understandably, but it's actively thinking about Iran as a future nuclear antagonist.

Within the area of threat perceptions that you mention my sense is, from contacts with Eastern and Central European and Baltic people, it's not just a threat perception of war - war is not very likely: the Russians are not mad and they're not very strong, and so they're not going to try and roll westward - but the threat is a kind of low-level intimidation and coercion, which will be destructive to confidence in the East European states.

Partly because they're not sure, and this is the cancerous part you mentioned, I think, then they're not sure in future bruising, sabre-rattling confrontations, maybe with Russian Zapad exercises on the border and harsh words being spoken by Putin. They're not completely sure of how willing Western Europeans - we include Central Europeans, if we think about Germany and Benelux - would actually be there to support them. That's the kind of unanswerable, unmentionable anxiety which connects with the symbolic importance of American tactical nuclear weapons.

MALCOLM CHALMERS: Yes, I endorse what Paul said; in a way, the concern is as much about what Russia says as what it does. Russia is not strong conventionally in Europe: a lot of its forces are elsewhere; even their non-strategic nuclear weapon capability may have been overstated.

In a way, Putin and other Russian leaders are compensating for their relative material weakness by adopting very aggressive declaratory policy, talking about firing missiles at missile defence sites in Poland, holding exercises which involve the use of tactical nuclear weapons in the European area, and maintaining some sort of nuclear weapons storage site in Minsk and so on and so forth.

That, I think, creates a circumstance in which the Baltic States say, if NATO reduces or withdraws its non-strategic nuclear weapons unilaterally, then Russia will see this as a victory, they won't respond by reciprocal measures. Therefore, they say, well, we need reciprocation undefined, but we need a reciprocal process so such a move would not be seen as a victory, in quotes, by Putin, because that would not be helpful in terms of the evolution of Russia, apart from anything else.

I think the other point I would make is that, for understandable reasons, the enlargement of NATO eastwards was accompanied by the NATO-Russia Founding Act, which de facto created a two-tier NATO. Almost as soon as the enlargement took place, [unclear] enlargement taking place, NATO got involved a long, long way away, in Afghanistan, and its gaze was a long way away.

Those countries made their contribution to that mission, as every NATO member state did, but there is a sense, I think, still that, as Paul said, despite Article 5 guarantees and so on, that the degree of commitment to those countries isn't as institutionalised and as strong as it is for core members.

The other thing I would add to that is that as the eurozone crisis develops and there's more and more uncertainty about whether European political architectures can hold together - I think this is particular British perception, but others can comment on that - then that itself creates a little bit of unease from the East Europeans.

Certainly, that's the reason why, as I said earlier, the most important, from the Baltic point of view, is a continuing American security presence in Europe. It's not so much about the other Europeans; it's about a continuing American security presence in Europe.

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When the US Defence Department talks about a Pivot to Asia - they don't use that term any more - but it's clear that the message is: Europe is sorted, we don't need American conventional forces any more; I think there are less than 100 American tanks in Europe now, well, well below the CFE ceilings. There's a feeling that if that process continues, that could leave them more exposed to some undefined circumstance, without any friends.

JAN TECHAU: Thank you very much for clarifying that really quickly. Now to the audience; who wants to go first? Those two first, and then the second round after that.

WOLFGANG RUDISCHHAUSER: My name is Wolfgang Rudischhauser; I'm chairing the Non-Proliferation Committee in the EU, but speaking here on a purely personal capacity.

My question is, and looking from a Non-Proliferation perspective where these weapons are a problem in the entire international discussion, especially with the NAM countries and some of the key players in the bricks - looking at your analysis, and this is a very provocative question, wouldn't it be better for NATO to look into the problems of these that are elaborated: the cohesion, the threat perceptions - rather than looking towards keeping de facto non-military usable category of weapons? Shouldn't they address the fundamental problem rather the symptom, the fundamental problem being, as is said, the political issues, the threat perceptions, rather than the military use? Thank you.

JAN TECHAU: Thank you.

PAUL FLAHERTY: Paul Flaherty; also speaking on a personal basis. Thank you very much for the paper and the opportunity to discuss it this morning. It seems to me that the danger of Russian short-range nuclear weapons is as much about accident and proliferation as it is about miscalculation and use. That's why it remains incredibly important and we need to do something about them.

It's at least arguable that the Russians have already discounted a continuation in short-, medium-term of nuclear weapons on Western European soil. The chances of a decision being taken to extend or to buy new systems may well seem to our Russian colleagues to be vanishingly small.

One of the questions I'd like to put, not to you, but if any of our Russian colleagues in the audience would be prepared to have a crack at this: what would it need from the West for Russian to think about lowering its short-range nuclear arsenal?

Secondly, my main question goes back to the point that Sinan was making; the paper tends to look at options within the context of short-range nuclear weapons; but in the context of reassurance, missile defence is really quite important. We are already seeing evidence of people being prepared, in the Eastern European States, to have Americans based on their soil, using that. Now, that has to have an impact somewhere. Is anyone doing the analysis on that? Thank you.

JAN TECHAU: Thank you.

MALCOLM CHALMERS: The NAM expressed legitimate concerns, and that is part of the equation, as I said, that the disarmament dimension is one of them. The dilemma, I think, for NATO is how to balance these different political concerns and do so in a way which doesn't end up achieving exactly the opposite of the result you're seeking to achieve.

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One of the issues we talk about in the paper, a possible option, is for NATO to retain some US nuclear weapons in Europe, but end the use of European aircraft as carriers for American nuclear weapons, because that has particular MPT sensitivities. We can argue the legality of it, but, certainly, it's perceived to be a particular problem in times of war and non-nuclear states actually using nuclear weapons transferred from NATO. If you can achieve that without damaging other objectives, then that might well be worthwhile.

Of course, your fundamental point to this, the politics are more important to the military; I think we'd all accept that it's important... we're having a discussion here about the weapons, but the reason why nuclear weapons are an issue at all between Russia and NATO is that there's clearly continuing distrust. You only have to listen to one speech from President Putin after another and the way in which NATO is the number one threat facing the Russian Federation, which, from our point of view, is nonsense, but that's what he believes and that's what many Russian people believe.

Military matters do count in our relationship with Russia, and will continue to do so as long as there's that view in Russia. We just have to work out a way in which to use our deployment of military forces in such a way to remove misunderstanding, if Russia attempts to do things which would be destabilising, but also reassure Russians that we have no aggressive intentions towards them.

On the question of what would it need for Russia to reduce its arsenal – we're doing some work at RUSI on this question at the moment, publishing something in a few months' time, but in terms of Russia's operational non-strategic nuclear arsenal - those non-strategic weapons which are deployed and have some weight of delivery, so not those which are waiting for dismantlement - then I think the number's actually falling and continues to fall, because the number of delivery vehicles, the number of submarines, ships and aircraft is falling.

Our paper doesn't really talk about a reciprocation process, but there's an interesting question about trying to avoid a situation in which we provide an incentive for the Russians to hold onto these weapons as a bargaining chip. The more in which we talk about that we really desperately want to get rid [?] of these weapons and we've purchased all sorts of things to get to rid of them, well, the Russians will say, okay, we'd better hang onto them, even though the Russians... I think, because of their conventional inferiority, they feel they need to hold onto weapons which the Americans don't.

One of the services in the Russian Armed Forces which appears to be keenest on having nuclear weapons is the navy, because if a US carrier battlegroup is going up against the Russian Navy, then they perceive they need nuclear weapons to have any chance of inflicting damage on US carriers. That's not going to change.

How much should we give the Russians to give up those? I'm not sure we could give enough. There will be a relatively greater Russian reliance on these weapons; despite the fact, the numbers are coming down and they're likely to come down further there, anyway.

I think your issue about accidents – which are... I think one can overstate the danger of that. It's clearly a considerable risk; at what particular aspect of the nuclear cycle that's the greatest risk, I'm not sure. Those weapons which are deployed actively with units and have high levels of security – I'm not sure whether that's where the greatest risk is.

PAUL SCHULTE: Just a couple of points; on proliferation, yes, the Non-Aligned Movement continually talks about these, but they talk about something. There may be a point in the evolution of the MPT, if we move towards Global Zero, where dual capable aircraft in Europe as an anomaly become a serious

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obstacle to progress. Remember, they were grandfathered in the MPT arrangements, so they're legally acceptable.

Politically, you can't rule out, and we touch on this, that they maybe come to prominence again if you really want to achieve global movement, but not yet. Like I say, they're not, in global terms, that huge a phenomenon; they're a convenient whipping boy for diplomats and regular conferences, but that's about all.

On the Russia political point, how do... You speak as though it would be easy to reach out and somehow adjust the relationship between Russia and the rest of Eurasia, but it isn't. Quite clearly, back to the difference between political and the military, Russians are not, in fact, very frightened of NATO. If you look at the real deployment of Russian forces and their real intention, they have, some people say, only about two or three motor rifle brigades in the whole of the Western Military District. Their concerns are elsewhere; in Chechnya, and, unmentionably, in relation to the Russian East Asia and the Chinese threat.

In fact, what we seem to be seeing is the need for Putin and his government to be loudly anti-Western, to emphasise the threat from American and it's poodles in Europe, but that's not actually what the Russians are demonstrably afraid of. I don't know how one gives Mr Putin a better political strategy than xenophobic anxiety about a threat that doesn't actually exist.

I do add that it's possible that Russia is also genuinely concerned about its global freedom of action, its failing relative importance in the world – falling birth rate, lacklustre economy, etc – and concerned about NATO hyperactivity in Kosovo, Iraq and, most recently, Libya. That isn't to do with anything that can be addressed by this question, although emphasising this question may be a convenient way of getting votes in an unstable Russian internal political situation.

If you look at the opinion polls on Russian attitudes to the outside world, clearly the Putin propaganda approach has been effective, because Russians are more worried and less favourable towards the West year on year.

JAN TECHAU: Sinan.

SINAN ÜLGEN: Just a quick point on the relationship between the tactical nuclear weapons and on proliferation; there is an argument, which I don't fully support, that these weapons, the actual weapons, have a non-proliferation function as well. That is in the context of a nuclearised Iran. There are many who claim that this will lead to a cascade of proliferation in the region, starting with Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

The counterargument is that, at least for a country like Turkey, having those tactical nuclear weapons is actually sufficient. Therefore, if those weapons were to be removed, then there would be an added proclivity to acquire, one way or the other, these types of weapons against a nuclear Iran. That's where the linkage comes in.

Now, I don't agree with this argument, because I don't think that even if those weapons are removed, Turkey will go into a process of proliferation.

JAN TECHAU: A second round maybe?

TOM SAUER: Tom Sauer from the University of Antwerp. I find it a little bit strange that we are still discussing tactical nuclear weapons in Europe 20 years after the Cold War. There's a new wind blowing

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in this field; the Kissinger Article 2007 talking about nuclear elimination; Obama's speech in 2009; maybe less noticed, the International Red Cross made a U-turn on nuclear weapons in 2010, saying that these weapons are not human and that the use of weapons or even the threat of using these weapons is not human; it goes against all the principles of Humanitarian Law.

It's not very easy to explain how NATO is concerned about collateral damage in the operations like Libya and Afghanistan, and then at the same time threatening to use atomic weapons, killing hundreds of thousands of people, regardless whether children or soldiers. This idea is picked up by Norway, which is a NATO member state; it's organising a conference next year on this humanitarian approach.

This idea is getting traction also in European states and not only the NAM-wide movement, but states like Austria and Switzerland are behind this idea. Is NATO not missing the train, and are the nuclear weapon states and nuclear alliances, like NATO, not becoming more isolated?

One more point on the Baltic States; if Lithuania is really concerned about Russia, why does it not spend more on defence than 0.7% of GNP? It's less than Belgium's.

TEKKEN POL: Tekken Pol [?] from NATO, also speaking on my personal behalf. You were all making linkages between the topic of sub-strategic nuclear weapons and other issues, and talking about a bargaining chip. I was wondering about your reflections on, are we in a situation of bargaining at this point in time? What chip could be, in what negotiations?

I don't see any real... I see the Iran issue, but I don't see any situation in which we would be able to dispose of any bargaining chip given the Russian position. Who's willing to negotiate on these weapons? I was wondering what your thoughts on this are.

PAUL SCHULTE: Tom, collateral damage in humanity – I understand the passion with which you loathe nuclear weapons, but the deal, since Bernard Brodie in the 1950s, and the beginning of nuclear theorising, is that in order to maintain the peace you have to maintain the, in a nuclear age, with nuclear spread capability, you have to be prepared to threaten in order not to have to do it, and that hasn't changed.

NATO is a nuclear alliance – I know you don't like that – but if it wasn't theatre nuclear weapons, it would be other kinds of nuclear weapons which would be threatened to use in contingencies we want to deter. The inhumanity that concerns you is not special to these; it would be American submarine-launched ballistic missiles, it would be French, it would be British, it would be B2s and airdropped bigger bombs.

Unless you want the complete reversal of the nuclear order, which I know you do, but we don't quite know how to achieve very quickly, I don't know why, beyond campaigning convenience, you single out non-strategic nuclear weapons.

If you say that we're going to miss the train, NATO will be left behind – well, left behind by whom? We've reduced and reduced and reduced, and we observe around the world that other people are going nuclear and the Pakistani and Indian numbers are going up. NATO is not at risk of being left out in an obsolescence - old-fashioned, clunky nuclear position - and the rest of world has made these things disappear. It's rather the contrary, isn't it?

On Lithuania, I'm not here to discuss Lithuanian budgetary priorities, but one has to point out that if you are Lithuania, with, what 2% of the Alliance economic capacity, you could conclude that your security doesn't depend so much on the extra 0.3% of a tiny GNP that you can kick in; it's the determination of

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others around you. You might want to try to flourish and get out of the economic crisis, because the IMF, when they go and visit these places, says, why are you spending so much? You should be moving down to 1%. I think it's necessary... I don't recommend anything about Lithuanian budgets, but those are countervailing arguments.

On bargaining chips, it's difficult; Russia has insisted that it will only discuss if we remove the things to discuss. It's not just that American nuclear weapons have to be removed, but the storage capacity for American nuclear weapons have to be removed, so they couldn't ever be brought back in a crisis.

While Russia maintains that position, it's hard to see that there is any immediate bargaining on this forum, other... their numbers are falling anyway, and they may, as Paul points out, have considered that we're going to remove American bombs, anyway. None of this is conducive to early effective arms control.

On the other hand, if they do want a big, comprehensive arrangement which would address conventional forces and missile defence, and strategic numbers, the promise of that complex, grand bargain may draw them in, but that isn't going to happen until they say who wins the next American election, and then they try and make sense of the position of whichever administration it is.

There is a future possibility of a very complicated sets of arms control bargains which could exist, but, A, we don't know what it would look like, and, B, it isn't going to happen soon.

TOM SCHULTE: Perhaps I can tackle the first question from Tom from Antwerp, in particular. I think you need to stand back from this issue a little bit, from the issue of non-strategic nuclear weapons, and ask how one can envisage putting into practice Obama's vision or the Kissinger-Nunn-Perry letter vision of moving towards a world of nuclear weapons and how that process would work and what the intermediate steps are, since it won't happen overnight.

One fact is that the US and Russia have much, much larger arsenals than any other nuclear weapon state. Insofar as you have such a process, then most of the activity in the first stage would have to involve both the US and Russia, reducing their numbers very sharply to something comparable of the numbers of UK, France and China, 300 or 400 each.

To do that, I think both those countries would have to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in their security strategy. Actually, I think both countries have reduced the role of nuclear weapons in their security strategy, in practice - the Americans more than the Russians. Often the differences are about what they say about the role of nuclear weapons in the security strategy rather than what it actually is.

The number of nuclearised crises which we had in the immediate post-World War Two period, in Cuba, Berlin, Taiwan and so on very frequently in the 50s and 60s, there has been far fewer of those crises since then. I think that reflects the fact that decision makers have learnt how difficult it is to use nuclear weapons in anything except territory threatening, homeland territory threatening scenarios. It may also mean there may be nuclear weapons for deterring territorial attacks between nuclear weapon states as well.

Whatever the reason, we haven't had many nuclear crises recently in which the use of nuclear weapons is a real possibility. Even though we have had lots of conflicts - there hasn't been a lack of conflicts in the last 20 years - how many of them have really been nuclearised? We can perhaps argue about one or two marginal cases. The practice has already overtaken the rhetoric, I think, in this respect.

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Part of the reason why these weapons in Europe are more controversial than the strategic weapons is that their historic role was a tactical one. The role now is mainly political and symbolic, but the historic role of tactical was about warfare in Central Europe, if the Soviets broke through the NATO frontline.

Really, the argument is therefore about, how can one arrange a situation in which NATO can remove these weapons without sending political signals which are rather unrelated to the operational role of these weapons, whether it's for the Baltic States worried about the signal it sends to Russia, and that relationship, or the signal it sends to the US Congress about the Europeans not pulling their weight in a situation in which Europeans... as you point out, that Latvia and Lithuania, although not Estonia, spend only 1% of GDP for defence, and the Americans spend 4.5%, and what does that mean for the American debate? The Americans are always threatening to pull out of Europe, some Americans are, but they never do because it's in their interests, but nevertheless those Alliance management issues are there.

I wouldn't disagree at all with the argument that these weapons have very marginal, if any, operational value and they seem an anomaly in a world in which political leaders are saying they want to get to zero. This is a long process that has to be choreographed and it has to involve all the major nuclear weapons states. You can't move to zero, or anywhere near to zero, unless Russia also reduces their reliance on nuclear weapons.

JAN TECHAU: I have a quick question to Sinan and then also to the two of you again. Sinan, you've just recently published a study on Turkey and the Bomb. One of the arguments that is frequently being made concerning these weapons we're talking about this morning is that they not only have a non-proliferation issue in the wider context of nuclear disarmament, but they also keep some of the smaller European states, or the emerging European states, from obtaining their own nuclear weapons.

Now, you're making the point in your paper that Turkey is not really interested in obtaining its own nuclear weapons capability. Could there be a scenario – maybe this is science fiction – that if NATO bungles this issue really very badly, and the entire question of nuclear deterrence as being in the mind, that Turkey or other NATO member states, in your opinion, could actually be interested in obtaining their own nuclear deterrent?

Then, the second question, on the bungling of this issue, and I think you said in the very beginning, Paul, that there's this toxic potential of this issue: if NATO doesn't get this done now and kicks the can down the road another five years and looks at it maybe then, how toxic is the potential if NATO bungles it? What could be the ramifications for the inner hygiene, if you will, of the Alliance if this thing is mishandled?

SINAN ÜLGEN: This would obviously be a very highly speculative scenario, but the only scenario which we can envision whereby an actual NATO member would proceed to get its own set of nuclear weapons would be where not only this question about the tactical nuclear weapons would be grossly mismanaged, but, in essence, NATO itself would enter a big crisis which would lead to a severe deterioration in the credibility of NATO as an Alliance to provide for the security of its members. That's condition for that scenario to emerge.

The second condition would be for a severe deterioration in the bilateral security relationship between Ankara and Washington. Those would be the indispensable conditions for us to really speak intelligently about the scenario whereby an actual NATO member would seek to obtain its own nuclear deterrence. Short of that, I don't see it happening.

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If we mismanage this question of the removal of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, that would certainly create some of the initial conditions, but in itself, it wouldn't be sufficient. We would need more bad news and the hygiene of NATO to be undermined to really reach these sorts of conclusions. I don't think it's...

PAUL SCHULTE: How bad could it get? Well, this depends on politics, individuals and rabble-rousing speeches, which could be imagined but will probably not happen.

Let us say that, it's not just Germany, it would be Benelux as well, just decide to break consensus - rather small-scale decisions in national parliaments about tedious wiring choices and future aircraft: we're not going to do this any more, we're pulling out. This would be worse, because we've had the DPR and we've had a consensus to remain roughly in the present configuration.

If that happened, it would be argued that German and Benelux politics, where the sheer feeling of the public opinion was forcing those hitherto responsible governments to just ignore their Alliance commitments, arguably for short-term votes. We are in a period of shaky coalition arrangements across all of Europe because of the politics of austerity, so votes on small, normally unimportant things can bring down the government. The accusation would probably be that you're changing position because you just want to stay elected. How dependable are you as an ally?

From these Europeans, I think, would come a bitterness: well, it's very nice that you're now geopolitically sheltered because of the arrangements after the Cold War, and where hitherto previously you were quite happy. Germany, remember, was very much in favour of early nuclear use as a deterrent to any kind of war. Now that you're safe and secure behind additional boundaries, you want to cultivate your own spiritual perfection, at the expense of other people's continuing insecurity.

Now, that would be felt, it might not necessarily be said, partly because of anxieties - let me try and crack this - that if you take on Germany and its allies in a Europe where Germany is also the paymaster, then that's dangerous for you economically. You'd better be quiet, but you wouldn't stop thinking about this and you would, I imagine, rely ever more on the Americans. You might want, and I've heard this hinted, separate bilateral arrangements.

The beautiful soul'd other Europeans won't be reliably there, because their national political culture is gone in a debellised, quasi-pacifist way, so let's rely on American promises. The Americans, however, would be responding to the moral burden-sharing point of view: oh, so the Europeans as a whole think that nuclear deterrence is so distasteful, it involves the cremation - if things go worst - of millions of other people; that can only be left to Americans. Only Americans are ugly-soul'd enough to think about that kind of thing. We don't want anything to do with that, though we like being in a safely American-guaranteed alliance.

I can tell you that there will be in Congress a kind of backlash if that is seen to be the general European perspective. It's that kind of fear and loathing, which will be immediately publicly expressed, but it will be simmering, that one ought to worry about.

MALCOLM CHALMERS: Can I just add something to what Paul says? He's right to sketch that as the worst-case scenario, if people bury their heads in the sand and think that this issues has been dealt with and there's no need to talk about it for another ten years.

What our paper argues is that in our view, in our perception, a status quo is probably not sustainable for very long. NATO, therefore, needs to take steps in a united fashion to move towards different forms of

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basing and sharing and reassurance so that it stays ahead of the problem rather than crossing its fingers and thinking that countries which I think have real problems with the current arrangement, will continue to be where they are, because, for now, I think they will. As Paul said, there's always the danger of a wild card where one or more countries will decide enough is enough, on a unilateral basis.

This isn't about the deterrent or defence value of the weapons; it's about the symbolism in relation to Alliance cohesion. That should... Certainly my view is that this issue is not the most important issue on NATO's agenda right now; there are many more issues, like Afghanistan and the fiscal impact of national unrest in others. It does have the potential to create some serious rifts and expose what are inevitable tensions between different security interests of different states, and manage it in a creative way. Then we can avoid even the sources of problems which...

PAUL SCHULTE: One possibility I throw out, and I genuinely don't know how this would work: is it possible to imagine a change in the rules of the political game in NATO, where at the moment German politicians speak to German publics, and Estonians make fiery speeches to Estonians or American strategic bombing officers, but we don't make cross-cutting comments? Why is it not possible?

Maybe this would not work because you'd get knee-jerk nationalist reactions, but if you had a Baltic politician trying to speak directly to the German or Belgian people on this, saying, do you realise what this means to us? Have you thought about this? Have you brought this into your dialogue? Vice versa: you could have Vestavella [?] addressing Baltic people and saying that they should be more concerned about a world free of nuclear weapons.

Maybe that would detoxify the thing, but it might make it worse – I simply don't know. I noticed that, diplomatically and politically, there's a knee-jerk reaction away from ever trying anything as dangerous as that, but maybe it ought to be considered.

JAN TECHAU: Sinan, you had another one?

SINAN ÜLGEN: Yes, just listening to Malcolm and Paul on the question of burden sharing – now, this is a question that's obviously for many years bedevilled the relationship within the Alliance, on the American and the European side, but the novelty now is the economic crisis.

I think – I just looked at the watch, Jan – it took us 45 minutes to raise the issue of economic crisis, and that's a rather success in a setting held in Brussels for an early-day conference, to be able to speak about other things than the economic crisis. Nonetheless it certainly brings a new dimension to the topic of burden sharing; we heard Panetta last year actually raising this issue in a very innovative format.

My question to you, Paul, you looked at the moral side of burden sharing, but isn't this also sort of burden-sharing on the cheap, viz. to the extent that Europeans are willing to contribute to nuclear deterrence? Isn't this going to be one of the elements that will convince the US side, especially the US Congress, that Europeans: okay, maybe they're not doing enough, but there is still quite a sizeable contribution, if not in material terms, but at least in the area of nuclear deterrence? Doesn't that also play into this discussion of burden-sharing, and therefore, if we start to talk about removal, then the material incapacity of the European states, of the European pillar of the Alliance, to contribute will become even more blatant?

PAUL SCHULTE: Yes, I think that that's true, and it will be mentioned in America as a partly cheese-pairing economic decision, that the Europeans are wimping out of spending anything even on a few

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airfields and some wiring and hooks on aircraft. In fact, it's not a budgetary decision; it's a political decision.

We've played this game of: what if we had a whip-round or a public lottery to pay for the German nuclear modernisation and we wrote them a cheque – would that make any difference? No, it would make no difference at all. It's not about money from the German or the Dutch/Belgium calculations. It's about politics and a moral standing there, but it would be represented in America as just another form of European free-riding and stinginess.

You've rejected this very cost-effective approach which America is paying for, the 5 billion or 6 billion for the B61-like improvement programme, but what are you going to do instead to maintain equivalent reassurance? Probably exactly nothing, or less than nothing, if defence budgets are going to fall anyway because of the financial crisis. That's terrible politics, transatlantic politics.

JAN TECHAU: There's one more question. I think we can maybe add a second one to this last round, and then we conclude. Yes, please.

ELENE ALARANTA: Thank you. Elene Alaranta [?] from the University of Tampere. I have several short comments to make; one is that, just a reminder – Paul, you mentioned that some... you talked about early 90s when some peace activists were talking about the... or still today, that some people argue that the removal of these bombs from Europe would improve the relations with Russia, and others argue not.

It's not only the peace activists in early 90s, this is a point that Russia continues to make today, saying, we have done our post-Cold War homework; we're drawing our bombs from the areas that were not in our territory, you should do the same.

A second comment; you have mentioned that removal of these tactical nuclear weapons would not necessarily contribute to non-proliferation. To put the argument the other way around, having these is not contributing either. For instance, looking towards the conference on nuclear weapons-free Middle East; in these kinds of settings, in these types of preparations and discussions, the fact that we have this arrangement in Europe is not helpful. It is also keeping this option of nuclear sharing as a hypothetical possibility for other areas, other regions.

In terms of Baltic countries, my understanding of Baltic position is not that they are so much clinging to these weapons in Europe. As you point out in your papers, there can be other means of ensuring this transatlantic glue and US security guarantee.

Coming back to what Tom was saying about the International Humanitarian law, I think if we would go down that track and have a proper discussion maybe towards more delegitimation of these weapons, we would not lose anything about the deterrence function – that would continue to be the case. Nuclear weapons would not lose anything of deterrence but I don't think we would... there would be a single country who would give up its nuclear weapons because they are getting more delegitimised. The use of these nuclear weapons would maybe have a higher threshold.

If we have this debate, I don't think that that would lead to non-legitimation in the near future, but that might contribute to discouraging the use of these weapons.

JAN TECHAU: I think I will take the two others into the fold now, those were four points. This gentleman, please, here in the front row.

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JAN PEREZ: Thank you. Jan Perez [?], Estonian Delegation to NATO, and thank you to the speakers. First, Estonia's Defence expenditure is close to 2% of GDP, aiming at 2%, so we are at the top of the NATO table. Speaking about nuclear deterrence, we shouldn't excessively focus on the Baltic States, it's, of course, a broader issue.

My question to the speakers would be: what would you prefer to happen to these weapons, say, in the short- and medium-term future if you were the NATO consensus? What decision would you make? Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: From Austria, just a short remark and a question. One, I think it's interesting to see how the security area is so much disconnected from the disarmament field. I worked in the disarmament field for a long time – interesting to see that the discussion goes in completely different directions and it's sometimes almost awkward to notice how disconnected the two areas are. That's just one side remark.

My question is on deterrence. We take that so much for granted and it sounds so logical, but do nuclear weapons really work as such a deterrent? If you look at the nuclear weapons states that have themselves been attacked, even though not with nuclear weapons but with other means, that has not held off. Why is it such a strong deterrent factor for umbrella states?

In many years of discussing with people from nuclear weapons states, but also from those from the umbrella states, nobody ever had the impression that if, for example - I hope there's no Lithuanian here - if Lithuania was attacked by Russia, one of the Western Nuclear weapon states would deploy a nuclear weapon to protect it. Even the Lithuanians that I've talked to were not convinced that this will actually not happen; conventional weapons perhaps would be... if the Alliance would come together, but no use of nuclear weapons.

I'm not sure that... What exactly, then, is the relevance then of the deterrence for the umbrella states or where does this deterrence come in if nobody really expects weapons ever to be used unless the nuclear weapon states were defending themselves?

JAN TECHAU: Thank you very much. This is the equivalent of the open-window effect: it's always very clear that the most fundamental questions come towards the end of these events – delegitimation, and then are they any good at all? Concluding words from all three of you, please, and then...

MALCOLM CHALMERS: On that last example, Lithuania, it's a fascinating example - if you imagined a hypothetical world which we're very far from in which the Americans made it clear, in no circumstances would their nuclear weapons be relevant to the scenario you paint, and the Russians were to hint that they would use nuclear weapons to achieve their political aims in that area, then that would be an issue.

I think what I'd argue and what I said before is that there are scenarios in which nuclear weapons play a credible deterrent role are much narrower than they were. They rely in part... I think they do play some deterrent role in deterring others from threatening the use nuclear weapons and they also may play a role when countries' fundamental territorial security is threatened.

Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, I think, does play some deterrent role vis-à-vis India, because Pakistan is geographically very vulnerable to the Indian conventional force; India could overwhelm Lahore very quickly, surround it very quickly. Pakistan's nuclear weapons create a degree of uncertainty for Indian decision-makers.

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If you're talking about what... think of the United States, with its great conventional superiority and perhaps not immediately in every place, but over a period of weeks and months, it's very difficult to envision any circumstances in which the US could credibly threaten the first use of nuclear weapons, but they still play a role in deterring the use of nuclear weapons by others, so that is relevant, I think, to NATO.

International Humanitarian Law – well, I think that is very important and I think it's important that many years after Hiroshima we have a reminder of the incredible moral dilemmas these weapons would involve, so that's a useful reminder. I think it's important perhaps on the MPT agenda to keep talking about it.

What the implications of that are, I think, first of all, is that the role of nuclear weapons should be very limited, as I think it is in practice, and we should work to limit it further. In that sense, yes, delegitimation. I think that the norm against the use of nuclear weapons, tabooing nuclear weapons, is a strong one; we should strengthen it further.

What would you do if you were the NATO consensus? There would be a problem if there was only one actor, whoever it was, who was, but NATO is an alliance of democratic states, and that's a strength, but that also makes it a rather cumbersome beast, and that's why we have this problem. I think that's painted a picture that says that, not the only problem, but one of the fundamental problems with this issue is precisely finding a way through it that maintains consensus between states with very different perceptions and very different politics.

That part of it requires those states to be engaged in a bit of give and take, and nobody can get everything they want, but actually maintaining the broad, perhaps not perfect, but a broad consensus, I think we are arguing, is probably more important than exactly what sort of formula you come up with.

I'm not saying I support, and our paper's certainly not saying we support, one particular form of it or another, but we saying, the status quo, in our judgement, is probably not sustainable, and therefore we've got to think of alternatives that take it forward. If this is mishandled in a way which deeply breaches that consensus and the costs are likely to be greater than any non-proliferation [inaudible] countries to be unilateralised [?].

PAUL SCHULTE: What would I do? I'd try strongly to keep the consensus, because that's important in itself. I might – and I was slightly surprised that NATO did not announce this part of the consensus, a small reduction, 10% or so, with indications there could be more if Russia would reciprocate or at least start discussing joint reductions with some element of transparency. I imagine reductions of that sort are possibly still to be considered and aren't even over.

This would be not so much... it would be nice if that had an effect on the Russians, but its perhaps more important function would be a lubricant to help us negotiate with ourselves a little better, to reduce inter-reliance tensions. The fact that NATO didn't choose that indicates that the network of tensions isn't quite as I thought it was, that the insistence on not appearing weak to Russia has appeared to more NATO states to be the significant factor, and that's what they've insisted on.

I wouldn't likely tamper with that; I would try and continue to find out what the resultant of all the political pressures was and not let the issue solidify, but not play with them again too quickly or too openly, just probe behind the scenes to see what would be possible.

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On Russia and the relative history - well, of course, Russia would say that it would be happier if these things were gone, but it is worth remembering that the 200-ish bombs we have are the shrivelled remnant of 7,000 NATO tactical nuclear weapons which were the main warfighting strength of the Alliance in the Cold War. The Russians have gone down, despite their promises to eliminate categories which they haven't eliminated, to maybe 3,000, 2,000. How many are active, nobody knows, because they won't tell us. I don't think Russia is in a particularly good numerical or moral position to reproach NATO for not keeping its own promises.

On delegitimation – yes, of course, we will continue this dialogue with ourselves and Humanitarian Law as we talk and say what they want and perfect the logic of different positions, but the risk is that the small circle of the virtuous who really are concerned about these things may be affected by the conclusions of humanitarian lawyers, but much of the world won't be. I think you can see that.

On a big philosophical level, there gets to be a problem is there is too much of a difference between the conclusions of humanitarians and lawyers and actual State behaviour. I throw back one point; I was recently looking at the Cuban Missile Crisis from the perspective of International Law. Most people would say that Kennedy, that statesman-like he achieved the best deal, partly with the Turkish missiles, in a way that still upsets the Turks, but still he did what had to be done in that climate of nuclear confrontation, but he was probably guilty of a war crime of threatening force against a sovereign nation. Quite apart from what might have happened within the Cuban nuclear exchanges, that was resolved by a credible American threat, an invasion of a sovereign country.

You can go back and say he was a terrible man or you can say, well, actually, the conclusions of what follows from the UN Charter, in the strict interpretation, don't actually explain the way things work in the strategic world in crisis. Bear that in mind.

SINAN ÜLGEN: Very quickly – what I wouldn't do is to send letters that would then be made publicly available to the UN, to the NATO Secretary-General, about this issues; that's what I wouldn't do in the coming years.

Therefore, I can only concur with what Paul has said, in the more important today, when we see all these difficult environments, whether it's related to burden-sharing, whether it's related to the future posture of Russia, or possible a nuclear weapons state Iran, is really to focus on the core concern of keeping unity and consensus. Whatever works, whatever road that leads us to, that will be solution.

I think today we're not in the position to say that this is going to be the outcome or that is going to be the outcome. The most important thing is to keep that sort of path an utmost importance to keep in the type of consensus that is required for these very critical decisions that will affect the future of all of us.

JAN TECHAU: Thank you very much to you here on the podium and, also, to you for staying here and remaining so wonderfully disciplined on this wonderfully difficult subject that we tackled this morning, or tried to tackle. It's really a rather juicy kind of thing to put on the plate so early in the morning. It is so fundamental in many ways - politically, morally, technically and so on and so forth, but we certainly haven't seen the end of it. The question remains open.

What's important and, I think, interesting for us as Carnegie Europe - we're talking about strategic Europe all the time, and that, as you know, is not only something that we apply to the European Union but in the wider European context, so it includes NATO as well - is the fundamental question of what keeps us safe or what keeps us at risk, and how can we tackle that best. I think this was a small but good

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contribution to that debate. Thanks, again, to all of you. Please read the paper; please come back to Carnegie Europe. Thanks very much.