

EUROPE, NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT AND NON-PROLIFERATION: WHAT NEXT?

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Generally speaking, Europe, in its pure European dimension – European Union, could survive and retain its international position as an influential economic and political center of power without nuclear weapons. The European Union has taken steps to become a more effective and coherent actor in the policy fields of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament having adopted the WMD Strategy in 2003. Being 100% correct, well known though, this strategy cannot be very useful in practical terms because Europe's role to influence nuclear disarmament and encourage this process is rather limited while proliferation challenges have a strong impact on its nuclear posture and reliance on nuclear weapons. Herein lays a paradoxical linkage between Europe's position on nuclear weapons, nuclear disarmament and nuclear proliferation. Europe, however, is not homogeneous, and there can be singled out four groups of states with a different say and role in nuclear disarmament: the two nuclear haves – UK and France, those European countries which host the US tactical nuclear weapons – Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Italy and Turkey, the group of NATO states without nuclear weapons and the European neutral states – Sweden, Finland, Austria and Ireland.

No doubt, the primary responsibility in the process of nuclear disarmament rests with Russia and USA. Efforts by the great powers to maintain their nuclear arsenals are still largely based upon the strategy of mutual nuclear deterrence. Like Russia and USA, the European nuclear states hold the view that nuclear weapons are still indispensable though they support new disarmament and arms control negotiations. The very fact that their disarmament credibility rests on their propensity to see the elimination of nuclear arms as a future option creates legitimacy for nuclear weapons expenditures to a domestic audience, which in turn, creates an image of a "drugs addict"-like nuclear weapons dependency to the outside world.

Therefore, more attention and efforts should be devoted to reconsidering this strategy and the existing nuclear doctrines that allow very flexible approaches to using nuclear weapons.

Nuclear disarmament of the NWS, including UK and France, will not lead a determined proliferation candidate to stop its programmes. Iran's or North Korea's intentions are guided not by the lack of disarmament but by their regional strategic considerations or considerations of prestige or those of regime survival. However, reliance on nuclear weapons is the soft spot of any NWS non-proliferation approach. Furthermore, one cannot ignore the fact that around 40 new countries, including two of the declared nuclear powers, France and China, joined NPT at the same time as intensive nuclear disarmament talks and real reductions in stockpiles of nuclear weapons were taking place (INF Treaty, SALT-1, SALT-2, the START-3 Framework Treaty, the ABM limitation agreements, the CTBT, and unilateral reductions of tactical nuclear weapons by the US and the USSR/Russia).¹ Put simply, nuclear disarmament creates a favorable international context for non-proliferation.

Though, in principle, Europe cannot be an opponent to nuclear disarmament, there is a problem of asymmetry. Since the UK and France lag far behind the US and Russia nuclear arsenals, the European nuclear haves cannot issue demands of equal standing. From this point of view radical reductions of the US and Russia nuclear arsenals could upgrade Europe's role in the process of nuclear disarmament. Another factor, which would increase Europe's involvement into this process, is related to the question of integration of European nuclear forces. Like it or not, European integration in this sphere is an objective process in Europe's post-bipolar evolution. It would provide ESDP with blood and flesh and end with Europe's dichotomy in the security sector. In the absence of a well-founded and clear demarcation between the military components of the EU and NATO, this dichotomy of the European Union will continue to be a major obstacle to creating a well functioning ESDP.

¹ At the Nuclear Threshold, ed., by Alexei Arbatov, Carnegie Moscow Center, Moscow 2007, pp.98-99.

European integration in the nuclear field is already going on though it is not very visible. Since the early 1990s, bilateral dialogue and cooperation mechanism have existed between the UK and France in the nuclear field. And since the early 1990s there has been a general consensus among politicians and commentators about “Europeanizing” the French nuclear deterrent – taking into account the collective interests of the EU members when making nuclear decisions.² On several occasions (in 1995, 2006, and 2008) France invited Germany to participate in joint nuclear decision-making. The French efforts have been politely rejected by Berlin because in the eyes of German political elite the idea of a concerted deterrence is not in accordance with Germany-s perceptions of ESDP, which should be directed primarily towards crisis management and post conflict-evolution of weak states. But the EU dichotomy embodied in the artificial division of labour between NATO and ESDP cannot last forever. “ In the short run nothing would preclude a solemn and explicit affirmation by London and Paris that their two nuclear forces protect the EU countries”.³ Integration of the British and French nuclear forces in the EU context would be a crucial element in achieving consensus among the great powers on specific non-proliferation issues and cases, since the “threshold” countries are increasingly coordinating their policies and are playing upon the divisions between the five NWS. For the time being the EU context is very important for consultations on new verification instruments and confidence building measures to be discussed in the UN Conference on Disarmament, among the P5, or G8.

² Bruno Tertrais, *The Last to Disarm? The Future of Frances Nuclear Forces*, p.266., at cns.miis.edu/npr/pdfs/142tertrais.pdf

³ Ibid.