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Reductions of Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Europe: Unbinding the Gordian Knot

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With new momentum for nuclear disarmament and arms control following U.S. President Barack Obama's 2009 Prague speech, questions about NATO's nuclear policy and posture escaped from an "underground storage site" and regained a prominent place in the debate within NATO. The discussions, which accompanied works on NATO's Strategic Concept, focused to a large extent on the future deployment in Europe of U.S. tactical (non-strategic) nuclear weapons. Currently, about 180 U.S. B-61 nuclear gravity bombs, deliverable by specifically adapted aircraft (Dual Capable Aircraft, DCA), are stored in six bases in five European countries (Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and Turkey).¹ On the one hand, reductions and the ultimate withdrawal of these weapons have been perceived as a solution to the question of how NATO can reduce further the role of nuclear weapons and move closer to the objective of a world free of nuclear weapons. On the other hand, consideration about how and under what circumstances those tactical weapons could be reduced in a way that does not weaken the credibility of NATO's deterrence and the transatlantic link remain of crucial importance.

One of the critical components of NATO's internal deliberations related to its nuclear policy is whether reductions of the U.S. tactical nuclear arsenal should be taken unilaterally by NATO or if they should be linked to Russian steps related to its tactical nuclear arsenal.² The former approach was reportedly represented by Germany, which at least initially was more open to unilateral steps. The German CDU/CSU-FDP coalition agreement from October 2009 was interpreted as such. The German position is of crucial importance because it is the first country due to end the original service life of the nuclear-capable Tornado aircraft and will face a decision (about 2011-13) about whether to retain DCA. Germany's decision may affect the decisions of other European countries with such aircraft. Nevertheless, Germany has stressed that any decision should be taken by the Alliance as a whole and should not lead to divisions.³ The latter approach was especially strongly supported by countries neighbouring Russia, which are anxious that Russia's non-strategic nuclear warheads could be stored near their borders. Particularly, countries from Central and Eastern Europe raised concerns that those weapons could be used by Russia as a tool of intimidation, and that they are more vulnerable to unauthorized use and theft in contrast to strategic weapons. These fears were to a large extent produced by a lack of mutual NATO-Russia transparency concerning the numbers, types, locations, command arrangements, operational statuses and the level of storage security of the Russian arsenal.

NATO's Strategic Concept adopted in Lisbon seemed to resolve NATO members' dilemmas related to Russia's role because the strategy ties "any future reductions" in the NATO arsenal to "seeking" Russia's agreement on the transparency of its tactical weapons in Europe and their relocation away from the territory of NATO members. It also takes into account the disparity between

¹ See more: "U.S. embassy cables: U.S. targets terrorists with conventional warheads fitted to nuclear weapons," *guardian.co.uk*, 6 December 2010; Ian Anthony and Johnny Janssen, *The Future of Nuclear Weapons in NATO*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, April 2010.

² For a view in a debate, see: Łukasz Kulesa, "Reduce US Nukes in Europe to Zero, and Keep NATO Strong (and Nuclear). A View from Poland", *PISM Strategic File*, No. 7, 26 March 2009.

³ See more: Oliver Meier, "German Nuclear Stance Stirs Debate", *Arms Control Today*, December 2009; Steven Andreasen, Malcolm Chalmers, Isabelle Williams, "NATO and Nuclear Weapons. Is a New Consensus Possible?" *RUSI Occasional Paper*, August 2010, p. 6.

Russia and NATO's stockpiles.⁴ Furthermore, the need for Russian reciprocity was reflected in U.S. President Barack Obama's message to the U.S. Senate on 2 February 2011, which stipulated that the U.S., following negotiations with NATO allies, will seek to initiate negotiations with Russia on tactical nuclear weapons within one year after the entry into force of the New START treaty. Other than statements by NATO members, reciprocal measures by NATO and Russia related to non-strategic nuclear weapons are currently highly improbable. Russia has expressed its unwillingness to take part in any negotiations that might lead to reciprocal steps. Furthermore, NATO's Strategic Concept provisions do not mean that NATO members have reached agreement on what it really means to seek Russian reciprocity in any NATO reductions or that they have found a way to "seek" Russian reciprocity in an effective manner.

Reasons for Russia's reluctance to reciprocate

Russia's non-strategic nuclear arsenal is, according to unofficial estimates, greater in number and variety than NATO's tactical nuclear weapons based in Europe. In contrast to a relatively modest NATO arsenal, various estimates put Russia's stockpile at between 2,000 and 4,000 operational tactical nuclear warheads. They are separated from their delivery vehicles and kept at storage sites, but can be quite quickly re-paired (overall, Russia's arsenal, including warheads in reserve, is estimated to be between 5,000 and 8,000 warheads). The types of weapons include depth and gravity bombs, missiles launched from the air, sea or submarines, cruise missiles and anti-submarine weapons and torpedoes. Russia's air-defence and missile-defence systems surrounding Moscow rely on nuclear warheads.⁵ Despite Russia's pledge that it has eliminated all ground-force tactical nuclear warheads, experts and NATO members have expressed concerns that new land-based "Iskander" missiles will replace the dual-capable "Tochka" missiles and have nuclear capability.⁶

So far, Russia has expressed strong reluctance to take part in negotiations paving the way for reciprocal measures related to tactical nuclear weapons. It has expressed several conditions for the start of negotiations. First, Russia demands the complete withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe, including the total dismantlement of the weapons' storage infrastructure, as a pre-condition to any talks on non-strategic nuclear inventories. Obviously, such a position rules out any reciprocity with NATO. Other Russian conditions seem to be part of a tactic aimed at delaying or blocking any negotiations related to tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. According to the second condition, the negotiations should include other armaments categories, such as missile defences, weapons in space and long-range non-nuclear offensive systems developed by the U.S. as well as take into account imbalances of conventional forces in Europe between NATO and Russia. Third, Russia wants further negotiations to include other nuclear weapons states, especially France, UK and China. Last but not least, Russia stresses the necessity of the full implementation of the New START treaty, which implies that in the most extreme case, talks would not begin until 2018, assuming Russia will not withdraw from the Treaty before then.

An important role of tactical nuclear forces in Russia's deterrence and defence policy and posture makes greater transparency, setting up verification mechanisms, re-location or reduction very difficult to achieve. First, because Russia's non-strategic nuclear weapons are perceived as a balance to NATO's quantitative and, most importantly, qualitative advantage in conventional military capabilities. At least, until Russia modernizes its conventional military forces; it will rely on non-strategic weapons to deter or stop regional and large-scale conflicts, including conventional attacks that could overwhelm Russia's military capabilities. Second, in contrast to NATO, Russia's tactical arsenal is perceived as a war-fighting tool. For instance, Russia's navy, reportedly the most reluctant to reduce its stockpile, believes it needs nuclear weapons to counter the U.S. Navy.⁷ Third, opacity about the number, place

⁴ "Active Engagement, Modern Defence, NATO's Strategic Concept," November 2010, par. 26.

⁵ See more: Andrei Zagorski, "Russia's Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Posture, Politics and Arms Control," *Hamburger Beiträge zur Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik*, Heft 156, February 2011, pp. 13-21; Fredrik Lindvall, John Rydqvist, Fredrik Westerlund, Mike Winnerstig, "The Baltic Approach: A next step? Prospects for an Arms Control Regime for Sub-strategic Nuclear Weapons in Europe," *FOI* (FOI-R--3175—SE), February 2011, pp. 23-28; Hans M. Kristensen and Robert S. Norris, "Russian Nuclear Forces, 2011," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 2011, Vol. 67, No. 3.

⁶ Wikileaks Report: 23.11.2009: "Nato-Russia: NAC Discusses Russian Military Exercises," <http://www.aftenposten.no/spesial/wikileaksdokumenter/article4028273.ece>

⁷ Nikolai Sokov, "NATO-Russia Interaction on NSNW: Issues, Opportunities, Institutions," 14 February 2011, http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/dr-nikolai-sokov-speech_133.html

of deployment and alert status of these weapons strengthens their deterrent effect. Creating uncertainty in the minds of potential opponents is probably more valuable than its side effect, which is the anxiety in Russia's neighbours about the arsenal. Another reason for why transparency may not be beneficial to Russia is that verification mechanisms may indicate a weakness or the declining state of the armaments. Lastly, the argument that Russia's approach to its tactical nuclear warheads stems from bureaucratic inertia or the parochial interests of different military services should not be totally discarded. Russia might not have found an answer yet about what to do with its nuclear stockpile. However, even if that is true, the final outcome of the debate within Russia is uncertain and means that arguments by those favouring an extensive role for tactical nuclear weapons might prevail.

At least in the short term, NATO's modest tactical nuclear forces do not seem to play an important role in Russia's military considerations, even though their withdrawal is a precondition to any Russian move related to its stockpiles. That factor notwithstanding, maintaining this Soviet-origin pre-condition might be a result of Russia's hope that it would strengthen those who argue that NATO should unilaterally withdraw U.S. warheads back to America. Despite the Strategic Concept provisions, there still are voices within NATO that criticize linking NATO's actions with Russian tactical weapons.⁸ A unilateral NATO withdrawal of the U.S. arsenal from Europe without binding it to Russian commitments is the most favourable outcome for Russia.

Two other issues seem to be currently of greater strategic importance to Russia in Europe than NATO's tactical arsenal. They include modernization of the regime established by the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) as well as equal participation of Russia in a NATO territorial missile defence system (MD).

In the course of the last year, NATO and Russia's endeavours to resuscitate the CFE gained new momentum. Yet, because of the divergent views of both sides, so far they have not found any success. Russia has strived for a complete modernization of the CFE regime in a way that will decrease a gap in the conventional forces between NATO and Russia, give it more flexibility in deploying its forces in Europe as well as prevent a withdrawal of Russian forces from Abkhazia and South Ossetia.⁹ Russia might want to use its tactical nuclear weapons stockpile, perceived as a balance to NATO conventional superiority, in order to strengthen its position in future CFE negotiations. Although most probably CFE talks would not be directly linked with tactical nuclear weapons, Russia might use the argument that without NATO concessions in the conventional sphere, any progress related to tactical nuclear weapons will not be possible.

Russia and NATO are exploring possibilities of missile defence cooperation. According to Russian demands, it could take part in the system only on an equal basis. Its proposals have envisaged the creation of a joint European missile defence system with Russia retaining the right to decide about use of NATO interceptors.¹⁰ Russia also stipulated that NATO should legally guarantee that its system will be no threat to Russia's nuclear deterrent and such guarantees should take the form of numerical, technical and geographic restrictions.¹¹ NATO has rejected Russia's proposal for a unified missile defence system, proposing instead a connection and exchange of information between the two separate systems.¹² Taking into account the U.S. reluctance to put limits on its missile defence system, the fulfilment of other Russian demands also is highly problematic.

In case its demands related to MD in Europe are not addressed, Russia has threatened to use an asymmetric response.¹³ One example of such a response could be the deployment of the nuclear-capable "Iskander" missiles in Kaliningrad Oblast, in the vicinity of the U.S. MD site planned to be

⁸ Susi Snyder, Wilbert van der Zeijden, "What NATO Countries Say about the Future of Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Europe," *IKV Pax Christi*, March 2011, p. 20.

⁹ See more: Jacek Durkalec, "The Russian Approach towards Revival of Conventional Arms Control Regime in Europe," *PISM Bulletin*, No. 210, 22 November 2010.

¹⁰ See: Simone Baribeau and Henry Meyer, "Ivanov Says Russia Wants 'Red-Button' Rights on U.S. Missile-Defense Plan," *Bloomberg*, 8 April 2011.

¹¹ Svetlana Andreyeva, *Russia, NATO to continue dialogue on missile defense*, "The Voice of Russia," 22 February 2011; 'No-targeting' pact key to missile defense deal with NATO – Lavrov, "Ria Novosti," 3 March 2011; *Europe missile shield must be safe for Russia – Medvedev*, "Ria Novosti," 14 May 2011.

¹² Anders Fogh Rasmussen, "NATO, Russia coming to an agreement on missile defense," *Chicago Tribune*, 11 May 2011.

¹³ Kathy Lally, "Russian president Medvedev sees new arms race if cooperation fails," *The Washington Post*, 1 December 2010; Ellen Barry, "Blunt and Blustery, Putin Responds to State Department Cables on Russia," *The New York Times*, 1 December 2010.

deployed in Poland. Without transparency about Russian tactical nuclear warheads, such a deployment would imply a threat because they could be armed with nuclear warheads. Consequently, tactical nuclear weapons might be a useful tool for Russia in pressuring NATO to give Russia other concessions related to MD. Reductions of these weapons and withdrawal of them away from NATO territory until the issue with MD is solved might be perceived by Russia as being against its interests.

Apart from playing a role as a bargaining chip useful for securing Russia's interests in Europe, Russia's tactical nuclear weapons may also play a role as leverage on the U.S. in defining the terms of the mutual strategic relationship.

According to U.S. proposals, negotiations of a new START follow-up treaty should be dedicated to verifiable reductions of U.S. and Russian operational and non-deployed strategic and tactical nuclear warheads at the same time. According to the U.S., its advantage in the number of non-deployed warheads, as well as its upload capability "hedge" (the ability to load additional warheads on U.S. intercontinental ballistic missiles), about which Russia has expressed concerns, should convince Russia to engage in such negotiations.

However, it seems that other factors are of equal, if not greater importance to Russia. It perceives U.S. plans for the development of a missile defence system, non-nuclear armed, strategic offensive weapons (with so-called "Prompt Global Strike" capabilities) as well as the potential for placing U.S. weapons in space as crucial factors influencing the strategic stability in U.S.-Russian relations. They are seen as potential threats to the long-term credibility of Russia's strategic nuclear deterrent. As Russian conditions to further negotiations indicated, without taking into account these issues, it would not be interested in pursuing the next round of negotiations. Its tactical nuclear weapons might be usable leverage on the U.S. in order to include at least some of these points in the negotiation process. Russia might calculate that if the American's NATO allies are threatened by its tactical nuclear weapons, they might lobby the U.S. and argue that for the sake of their interest (such as a perceived security threat) Russian demands should be taken into account.

Intra-NATO challenges

Russia's conditions and the value it ascribes to its tactical nuclear arsenal indicate the futility of counting on Russia's readiness to conduct reciprocal actions, at least in the short term. However, Russia's reluctance is not the only reason why reciprocity would be extremely difficult to achieve. As some experts point out, NATO's Strategic Concept provisions related to nuclear weapons result from not only an intelligent but also a fragile compromise. In order to accommodate incompatible perspectives, the Concept language related to nuclear weapons is ambiguous, vague and even contradictory. For the sake of reaching consensus within NATO in Lisbon, the answers to a number of important questions related to nuclear weapons were put aside and left to "overall defence and deterrence posture."¹⁴

NATO's Defense and Deterrence Posture Review (DDPR), which began this year, will determine the overall mix of nuclear, conventional and missile defence forces that NATO will need in the future. Along with input from the newly created (March 2011) NATO WMD Control and Disarmament Committee, DDPR also will define NATO's options in arms control and disarmament for the next few years. Although there are no strict timelines, it is expected to be finished by the next NATO summit in spring 2012 in the U.S.¹⁵

Through the prism of NATO's goal that any reductions of its tactical nuclear weapons should be aimed at seeking Russian reciprocity, it seems crucial that DDPR provides guidelines about how NATO is going to achieve this. Without clear answers to this, and the resolve of all NATO allies to actively pursue such a goal, the Strategic Concept provisions could remain empty words.

So far, NATO allies seem to agree that tactical nuclear weapons should be the subject of bilateral consultations between the U.S. and Russia with parallel consultations between the U.S. and other NATO members throughout the whole process. A non-paper submitted by Poland, Norway, Germany

¹⁴ See more: Detlef Waechter, "Thinking Beyond Theories: Concrete Proposals to Make NATO's Future Nuclear Policy Work", *Policy Outlook*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 8 April 2011; Simon Lunn, Ian Kearns, "NATO's Nuclear Policy after Lisbon: The Summit Documents and the Way Ahead," a report prepared for the meeting of the European Leadership Network, London, 25 January 2011, <http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/>

¹⁵ See more: Oliver Meier, "NATO Sets Up Arms Control Committee," *Arms Control Today*, April 2011.

and the Netherlands at the Berlin NATO foreign ministers' meeting on 14 April 2011 indicate that increasing transparency and confidence with regard to tactical nuclear weapons in Europe is seen as crucial for paving the way for "concrete reductions".¹⁶ Nevertheless, several additional points related to what it really means "to seek" Russian reciprocity must be raised by NATO members before they begin efforts aimed at encouraging Russia to take part in negotiations.

The first point is that it's unclear whether "seeking" Russian reciprocity by "any" NATO reductions precludes any unilateral NATO steps. On the one hand, the Strategic Concept provisions could be interpreted that any NATO reductions are possible only after Russian reciprocity is secured. Without a signed agreement by both sides, such as an arms control deal between the U.S. and Russia, none of NATO's reductions could be undertaken. On the other hand, unilateral NATO reductions could be perceived as a way to induce Russia to reciprocate and, consequently, as a way to seek Russian steps in that direction. Although, such an attempt most probably would be unsuccessful, some NATO members might prefer to choose this option. The decision taken during the DDP process that some unilateral steps will not weaken NATO's deterrence capability, and that NATO's bargaining position vis-à-vis Russia will not be weaker if it possesses 180, 150 or 100 tactical nuclear weapons, might pave the way for unilateral NATO's moves. Such moves could be favoured by some NATO members, as it seems ambiguous what is meant by "any future reductions." Does it mean only a reduction in the number of nuclear bombs deployed in Europe and/or:

- reductions in the overall number of nuclear storage sites in Europe;
- reductions in the number of NATO members with storage infrastructure;
- the size of NATO's overall DCA fleet; or,
- the number of countries having DCA capability?

In one particular example, is the consolidation of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in Europe to fewer countries while retaining the same number of nuclear gravity bombs in fact a reduction? Finding agreement within the Alliance about whether any unilateral measures are possible might lead to divisions among NATO members. Nevertheless, it seems that it would be more favourable to NATO to establish clear rules before beginning negotiations with Russia, rather than be set up for serious divisions during talks.

Second, NATO members should decide what instruments they are ready to use in order to persuade Russia to take reciprocal steps. It should be reconsidered whether U.S. proposals for new START follow-up negotiations with Russia that include strategic weapons, non-deployed warheads and tactical nuclear weapons would be sufficient to encourage Russian reciprocity. Furthermore, the alliance should know whether any linkages should be made to future CFE modernization talks and MD cooperation, and if any legal limits to U.S. missile defences are worth the price of reducing tactical nuclear weapons in Europe.

One option for NATO could be to take advantage of Russian postulates concerning CFE modernization and MD cooperation. NATO could use the argument that without Russia's transparency and the verified reductions of its tactical nuclear arsenal there would be insufficient trust to cooperate on MD at the level proposed by Russia. Moreover, without basic transparency on tactical nuclear weapons, it is impossible to establish a conventional arms-control regime in Europe. Nevertheless, there is a risk that linking different and difficult issues might only complicate talks and could lead to a worsening of NATO-Russia relations. Furthermore, it is in NATO's interest that Russia accepts the current proposals related to MD and CFE. Therefore, resolving the issue of tactical nuclear weapons might not be worth the price of yielding to Russia's demands in these areas.

Third, NATO members have to decide about the timeframe for "seeking" Russian reciprocity. One option is for NATO to focus on the short term, doing everything possible in order to help the U.S. achieve its goal of initiating negotiations with Russia on tactical nuclear weapons within one year after the entry into force of the New START treaty. Such a short-term focus could enable a start to negotiations before any decisions about retaining the DCA are made by European countries, such as Germany, and it could help to avoid any rifts that might result from a willingness to take unilateral steps. Taking into account Russia's conditions, the success of such endeavours is unlikely, however. Another option is for NATO to decide to prepare a long-term strategy for "seeking" Russian reciprocal

¹⁶ *Non-paper submitted by Poland, Norway, Germany and the Netherlands about increasing transparency and confidence with regard to tactical nuclear weapons in Europe*, Berlin, Germany, 14 April 2011, <http://www.fas.org/programs/ssp/nukes/nuclearweapons/nato-nonpaper041411.pdf>

steps. An unexpected breakthrough in NATO-Russia relations, finding agreement on CFE modernization and MD cooperation or consistent NATO pressure might open a way to resolve the problems related to tactical nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, such an approach requires patience and an answer to the question of how long NATO should seek Russian reciprocity. Furthermore, it is probable that avoiding unilateral measures in the longer term could be impossible. Stronger pressure to withdraw U.S. nuclear weapons from one or more NATO states could take place. Retention of the DCA's by one or more European NATO members also might be problematic.

The fourth point to be addressed is that NATO members should clearly answer the question about what should be the final goal of their efforts regarding Russia's tactical nuclear arsenal. They should decide whether they would be satisfied with greater transparency, reductions in the number of weapons or their withdrawal from Russian areas near NATO members' territories, or whether they want the total elimination of tactical nuclear weapons as a goal. Moreover, NATO members need to decide what tradeoffs they are going to offer Russia for its actions. For example, would Russian transparency suffice if NATO also offers transparency, or could it open the way to the withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Germany? It also is not clear whether the relocation of Russia's weapons away from NATO territories would lead to the withdrawal of U.S. weapons from Europe or if the total elimination of tactical nuclear weapons is indispensable.

Fifth, NATO members need to answer questions related to the consequences of a successful or unsuccessful pursuit of Russian reciprocity. If the former, they must decide if the potential acquisition of nuclear weapons by new states in the NATO neighbourhood, such as Iran, would have any impact on NATO's bilateral arrangements with Russia. If the latter, they must determine if the failure of acquiring Russian reciprocity within the envisaged timeframe would lead to maintaining the status quo, unilateral NATO steps or whether the answer to this question should be provided by any future review of NATO's deterrence posture.

The way ahead

NATO and Russian reciprocity related to a reduction of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe is currently highly improbable. The primary reason is Russia's reluctance to reduce its stockpile, stemming from the role these weapons play in realizing its security interests. The second reason is that NATO still needs to clearly define what it really means "to seek" Russian reciprocity in any reductions of the NATO tactical nuclear arsenal. Furthermore, it needs to design a coherent approach about how to do it in a successful manner. It is as yet not clear whether NATO would be able to do this.

The problem of achieving Russian reciprocity in tactical nuclear weapon reductions, which is interrelated with other unresolved issues in NATO-Russia relations such as MD and CFE, seems as entangled as the mythical Gordian knot. The only solution might be to follow the example of Alexander the Great's slicing sword solution, and find a breakthrough in NATO-Russia relations that leads to such an improvement of ties that tactical nuclear weapons cease to be a factor in mutual relations. Yet, for the foreseeable future, while such a development is possible, it is unlikely.

Nevertheless, such gloomy prospects should not lead NATO members to view the situation with hopelessness and accept one of two unsatisfactory but easier options at hand—maintaining the status quo or unilateral reductions. There is a need for a pragmatic approach by all NATO members and arduous long-term work on the problem of how to reduce the role of tactical nuclear weapons in NATO-Russia relations. Crafting a long-term, coherent strategy acceptable to all NATO members will not be an easy task. It requires compromises between NATO members that support unilateral measures and those for whom Russian reciprocity is an indispensable condition to any NATO reductions. It also requires time. One year of DDRP might not be enough, so the NATO WMD Control and Disarmament Committee might play an instrumental role in this process. Furthermore, a key part is the careful consideration of all the means at NATO's disposal to successfully "seek" Russian reciprocity. Although, a debate related to these issues might create disputes within the Alliance, without a sincere exchange of views between NATO members, any progress will not be achieved.

Designing a long-term, cohesive approach seems worth the price of temporary disagreements. There are at least three advantages of a coherent NATO strategy vis-à-vis Russia related to reductions of tactical nuclear weapons. First, it would be proof that NATO cohesion is not limited to producing documents formulated with such ambiguity that they don't lead to cohesive actions. If seeking Russian reciprocity would not be achieved because of a lack of NATO resolve to do it, or

even without NATO trying seriously to do it, Strategic Concept provisions might be interpreted as not worth the paper on which they are written. Second, a cohesive NATO approach may prove that NATO could play a broader role in nuclear arms control and disarmament processes beyond its own unilateral moves and “power of example.” It would show that NATO has an ability to politically shape its strategic environment and persuade other countries, such as Russia, to participate in the nuclear disarmament process. In this context, a cohesive approach towards Russia could define the role of NATO in seeking conditions towards a world free of nuclear weapons. Last but not least, designing a common strategy towards seeking reciprocity with Russia would have a reassuring role for Central and Eastern European NATO members. It would demonstrate that NATO, through political means, could creatively address the security concerns of its members.