

# Intervention for ESOF08

Saturday 19 July | 14.30 - 18.00  
Auditorium in Hall 5, Palau de Congressos  
de Barcelona

## Evidence-based policy or policy-based evidence? Nuclear weapons decision-making in Europe

- I would like to start by thanking the organizers for inviting me here; I was asked to add the European perspective to this debate, which is of course very much dominated by national agendas;
- Let me immediately jump into the fray by shortly summarizing what is my position - and that of a majority of my colleagues in the European Parliament - on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation;
- In my work in the Parliament I have been a staunch advocate of a scrupulously balanced application of the nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty;
- I totally support the high importance given to nuclear non-proliferation in international politics and, for example, I am completely in favour of the robust diplomacy being pursued on the Iranian file, which is embodied by four UN Security Council resolutions, and complemented by even stronger EU sanctions; all diplomatic and political carrots and sticks - short of an actual war that would only make things worse - should be put on the table;

- In the document that guides the EU's strategic thinking - the 2003 *European Security Strategy* - the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is accurately presented as one of the five major threats Europe is facing, together with terrorism, regional conflict, organized crime, and failed states;
- **Unfortunately**, at the same time we have been witnessing, since 2000, a **declining interest for nuclear disarmament** in the capitals of the nuclear weapons states, including Paris, London and Washington; quite the contrary, **during these last eight years new life has been breathed into nuclear doctrines, reversing a post-Cold War decline in their strategic relevance**;
- No one pretends that Tehran, or Pyongyang, would have given up their decades-old plans to acquire nuclear weapons if the authorized nuclear weapons states had done more these last eight years to give up their nukes; **but one truth remains: it is extremely difficult to create an effective global alliance to stop the nuclear proliferators, as long as the P-5 continue to avidly renew and improve their own arsenals, therefore reneging on the promises made during the 2000 NPT Review Conference and undermining the grand bargain underpinning the NPT**;
- And what is the European perspective about all of this? What is the EU's role in nuclear weapon decision-making? It is modest, to put it mildly - the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy generally is an area where Member States cling to their national sovereignty, as opposed to, say, trade, the environment, or agriculture; **and within Foreign and Security Policy, there is one area which is particularly immune to collective decision-making and that is nuclear weapon decision-making**;

- In other words, strictly speaking, *there isn't an EU perspective on nuclear weapons, apart from general statements of support to the NPT and other relevant Treaties and institutions; above all, there is no strong EU position on the renewal of nuclear arsenals, because the UK and France would always veto any move that would even remotely question the legitimacy of their sovereign decisions in that domain;*
- The EU is therefore left with a role in Nonproliferation: it has a 2003 "EU Strategy against the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction", which is regularly updated; and Javier Solana has a "Personal Representative on non-proliferation of WMD", a position held by Ms Annalisa Giannella;
- There are also discussions about nuclear decision-making in NATO, of course; *the Alliance doesn't clearly define its nuclear posture, and certainly doesn't exclude a nuclear first strike;*
- Clearly this doctrine still reflects Cold War thinking, where the Soviet Union's overwhelming conventional advantage seemed to justify keeping the option of a nuclear first strike open;
- In fact, *NATO - and its European members - pays a heavy price for a nuclear ambiguity of questionable strategic value;* leaving all options open has two direct effects, and neither of them contributes to Europe's security:
  1. First, *leaving the first-strike option on the table indicates to friends and foes all over the world that nuclear weapons still play a vital role in the West's strategic thinking;* it represents a structural hurdle to the full implementation of Article VI of the NPT and

contributes to placing nuclear weapons at the very top of the wish-list of any aspiring strategic power;

2. Second, and more concretely, *this nuclear posture provides doctrinal cover for the presence of over 400 US tactical nuclear weapons on European soil* - these are proliferation-prone relics of a by-gone era of Great Power-confrontation; the Blix Commission clearly underlines how much bigger the risk for diversion or theft of these tactical devices are, than their strategic counterparts;

- While there are debates within NATO on the Alliance's nuclear posture, *ultimately the final decision on any employment of nuclear weapons would be taken by its nuclear-armed Member States*; it is true that France, the UK and the USA have given similar, and quite broad, Negative Security Assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States party to the NPT in 1995;
- *However, in the last few years, both France and the USA have, on different occasions, and with different degrees of transparency, indicated that they were willing to break those Negative Security Assurances and lower the threshold for the use of nukes; suddenly, states supporting terrorism or apparently willing to use non-nuclear WMD have become nuclear fair game*;
- What many of us fear is that *this erosion of the nuclear taboo*, coupled with the Bush Administration's declared goal to invest in technology that will allow for smaller, more 'useable' nukes, *might be leading to a realignment of NATO's nuclear posture towards a greater willingness to strike first*; in other words, since NATO's official nuclear doctrine is ambiguous, it is plausible, or even likely, that doctrinal developments in Washington and Paris have impacted on how the Alliance as a whole thinks about a nuclear first-strike;

- This suspicion has of course been reinforced by **the "Manifesto for NATO" produced in January this year by five former armed forces chiefs** from the US, Britain, France, Germany and the Netherlands; while some of their ideas on the reform of NATO are interesting, *their robust defence of an explicit nuclear first strike doctrine is very disappointing*;
- One wonders to what extent that Manifesto merely reflects the opinions of a few generals, or **whether it is a symptom of a wider scepticism in some Western capitals about the usefulness of the multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament architecture**; *the authors of the Manifesto explicitly link the need of a nuclear first strike option to the fact that, according to them, (and I quote) "there is no realistic prospect of a nuclear-free world"*;
- Of course that risks turning into a **self-fulfilling prophecy**; others, such as George Schultz, William J. Perry, Henry Kissinger and Sam Nunn, don't just believe that **a nuclear-free world is possible** - they set out a clear strategy and practical steps to work towards that ultimate goal; just recently on June 30th, three former Foreign Secretaries of the United Kingdom and Lord Robertson, former NATO Secretary General added their voices to the same cause in an article published in *The Times*;
- What is disappointing is that it seems to take a few years away from power for these gentlemen to take a principled stand on this issue; we can only wish that those now in power don't wait for retirement to do the right thing!;
- Back to the US, after Barack Obama called last October for "*a world in which there are no nuclear weapons*", last May it was John McCain's turn to surprise us with bold

plans to work with Russia to enter a new arms control agreement, complete with binding verification measures; besides calling for the elimination of tactical nuclear warheads in Europe, McCain underlined that (and I quote) "*a quarter of a century ago, President Ronald Reagan declared 'our dream is to see the day when nuclear weapons will be banished from the face of the Earth'. That is my dream, too*";

- While we shouldn't read too much into political statements made in the heat of an election campaign, we are allowed some hope that change in Washington could lead to some movement on the CTBT, the Conference on Disarmament, and even on strengthening the IAEA and on multilateral enrichment; while the US is unable to change outcomes on its own, it is still indispensable and can do a lot of damage, as the last eight years have shown;
- I mentioned NATO and the US, because I do believe that nuclear decision-making in Europe is unfortunately still very much linked to developments across the Atlantic; and while I don't expect the next US Administration to do a sudden and radical U-turn on nuclear weapons, I do think there will be a big debate in the West about the future of nuclear weapons in the next few years;
- And the truth is that none of the threats currently facing Europe (and described in the 2003 European Security Strategy) can usefully be fought with nuclear weapons, or even the threat of their use: proliferation of WMD, terrorism, regional conflicts, organized crime and state failure are all immune to nuclear postures originally designed to prevent Soviet tanks from crashing into Western Germany;

- It is clear that the UK and France have **an ideological attachment** to their nuclear weapons, which has much more to do with their perceptions of what sovereignty and great-power status is, than with the actual threats they, Europe, and the world, are facing right now;
- To conclude, and paraphrasing the title of this panel, I do hope the leaders of the European nuclear weapons states will soon start acting according to **evidence-based policy and stop producing policy-based evidence to justify their decisions to extend the life-cycles and the utility of their nuclear arsenals.**