

## **CONFERENCE** **NUCLEAR ARSENAL IN THE EU AND ITS** **SECURITY**

*Intervenção da Deputada Ana Gomes numa conferência internacional sobre "As armas nucleares na União Europeia", por ocasião do 40º aniversário do Tratado de Não-proliferação Nuclear, organizada por vários grupos políticos do PE e por uma coligação de ONGs internacionais incluindo a Greenpeace*

### ***"NATO PREVENTIVE STRIKE STRATEGY"***

- I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me to speak and add a special word of thanks to *Abolition 2000* and *Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament*: they have been performing an extraordinary work in mobilizing us, European Parliamentarians, for initiatives related to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament; their work is one of the best examples of the importance - and effectiveness - of civil society involvement in parliamentary work;
- I think **the title of this panel is somewhat misleading: it seems to imply that NATO has a clear nuclear preventive strike strategy;**
- ***In fact, NATO boasts about not having a clear doctrine about this at all;***
- NATO's "*Positions regarding Nuclear Non-Proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament and Related issues*" are available online; in it, and under the heading "No-first-use", we can read that (and I quote):

*"NATO does not follow either a nuclear first-use or no-first-use policy. The Alliance does not determine in advance how it would react to aggression. It leaves this question open, to be decided as and when such a situation materialized. In so doing, Allies seek to ensure uncertainty in the mind of the aggressor about the nature of the Allies' response to aggression."*

- 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; but NATO thinking in this field is not completely immune to the new strategic reality, as the rest of their online statement indicates (and I quote again):

*"In the current international strategic environment, Allies have declared that the circumstances in which they might have to contemplate any use of nuclear weapons are extremely remote."*

- While it is good to hear that NATO's nuclear powers are not about to push the button, this second part of the statement does **nothing to eliminate the uneasy feeling left by the first part;**
- In fact, NATO 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;

- But going back to the title of the panel, it does express a legitimate fear that **the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons is being lowered**;
- 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*; 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 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 the ideas on NATO's reform are interesting, *the 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, "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 yesterday, 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 takes 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;
- **There is a reason why I have slightly veered from our debate on NATO's nuclear posture to the general theme of nuclear disarmament: *I believe that a revision of NATO's nuclear posture (in any direction!) will be one of the most important signs by which we will be able to measure to what extent the West is serious about reviving the NPT, fulfilling all its provisions and thus work towards a world without nuclear weapons***;
- To conclude, we can only hope that the rhetorical boldness of candidates McCain and Obama will be matched by actions when in power;

- But above all, *it is for us Europeans to take the lead*; if China has a no-first-strike policy, I don't see why France and the UK shouldn't; *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.*