



The German Debate on Tactical Nuclear Weapons

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(Janvier 2008)



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1 – **Introduction**

This report analyses the debate in Germany about tactical nuclear weapons deployments in Europe. It is mainly based on interviews conducted with senior officials from the German Federal Foreign Ministry, the Federal Ministry of Defence, senior members of Parliament as well as experts from research institutes and think-tanks.¹ The interviews focused on the more recent past in the German debate as well as the future of tactical nuclear weapon deployments in Germany and Europe.

The German government acknowledges that there are nuclear weapons deployed on its territory but according to long-standing policy, all other details including locations of U.S. nuclear weapons storage sites as well as German involvement in NATO nuclear sharing arrangements are classified. Interviews were conducted on the basis of publicly available information that the U.S. currently deploys about 480 B61 nuclear gravity bombs in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey and the United Kingdom.² Of these weapons, 180 are presumably assigned for use by the five non-nuclear weapon states involved in NATO nuclear sharing, 60 for use by German pilots. It is assumed that 150 B61 are deployed in Germany, on the U.S. Air Force Base in Ramstein and the German Air Force base in Büchel. Büchel hosts the 33rd Fighter Bomber Wing (*Jagdbombengeschwader 33*) which has dual-capable *Tornado Interdiction Strike (IDS)* PA200.³

Positions of decision-makers and experts interviewed can be grouped in three main schools of thought:

- ⇒ *Conservatives* would like to maintain or strengthen German involvement in NATO nuclear sharing. This position is found most prominently among Federal Ministry of Defence officials, Christian Democrats, transatlanticist Social Democrats, and main stream think-tanks.
- ⇒ *Reformists* would prefer to diminish NATO's reliance on nuclear weapons and reduce Germany's support for nuclear sharing. This position is represented by officials working in the arms control section of the Federal Foreign Ministry, the majority of Social Democrats, parts of the Green Party, the Liberal Party, as well as experts from independent think tanks.
- ⇒ *Abolitionists* would like to end Germany's involvement in nuclear sharing and de-nuclearise NATO. This position is represented by parts of the Green Party, the Socialist Party as well as peace research and peace movement.

¹ Interviews with government officials were conducted on a background basis, all other interviews were for attribution.

² See Hans M. Kristensen: "U.S. Nuclear Weapons in Europe: A Review of Post-Cold War Policy, Force Levels, and War Planning", Washington, D.C.: Natural Resources Defense Council, February 2005, <http://www.nrdc.org/nuclear/euro/contents.asp>.

³ None of the officials or experts called into doubt these basic assumptions. The Ministry of Defence official questioned, however, the overall accuracy of the NRDC report.

Individuals may hold views on specific issues that cut across these schools of thought, but this reports uses these broad categories to map the debate in Germany against the major issues in the debate, i.e.

- ⇒ the future of NATO's nuclear deterrent,
- ⇒ the German role in NATO nuclear sharing, and
- ⇒ the arms control dimension of tactical nuclear weapons.

The report concludes that while a change of Germany's position on tactical nuclear weapons is unlikely to change in the short-term, several developments will make it unlikely that the continued involvement of Germany in NATO nuclear sharing will have to be debated in the medium term. Should the next Parliamentary elections, which will take place in 2009 at the latest, result in a Social Democrat-led government, a push for a reduction of Germany's involvement in NATO nuclear sharing appears possible. A conservative-led government is likely to maintain the nuclear status quo within NATO.

2 – The future of NATO's nuclear deterrent

The previous Social Democrat-Green Party government tried twice to initiate a debate on NATO nuclear sharing within the Alliance. In 1998, the newly elected government pressed for NATO to adopt a nuclear no-first use policy. Then-Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer was criticised harshly by all NATO nuclear weapon states and Germany abandoned its effort. The fiasco contributed to Fischer's subsequent reluctance to unilaterally promote nuclear arms control measures.

In 2005, the NPT Review Conference in May as well as the publication of excerpts of the U.S. *Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations* in the German press in September provided two foci for the debate about tactical nuclear weapons. In reaction to media reports on the draft *Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations* politicians from across the political spectrum criticised the concept of pre-emptive nuclear strikes and some called for a NATO debate on the topic.⁴

In 2006, Chancellor Merkel called for a debate on a new Strategic Concept, with a view to agreement on a new Concept in 2009, the 60th anniversary of NATO and the tenth anniversary of the 1999 Strategic Concept.⁵ While the Chancellor's intention is mainly to reinvigorate the Alliance as a discussion forum for security issues, most experts agree that a revision of NATO's nuclear doctrine would also have to address the future role of nuclear deterrence.

⁴ See Oliver Meier: "An End to U.S. Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Europe?", in: *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 36, No. 6, July/August 2006, pp. 37-40; Oliver Meier: "Tied in nuclear knots", in: *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 62, No. 1, January/February 2006, pp. 14-16; Oliver Meier: "Belgium, Germany Question U.S. Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Europe", in: *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 35, No. 5, June 2005, pp. 30-31.

⁵ See Angela Merkel: "Germany's Foreign and Security Policy in the Face of Global Challenges", Speech at the Munich Conference on Security Policy, 4 February 2006. NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer supported the call for a new Strategic Concept at the 2007 Munich Conference on Security Policy.

Generally, NATO nuclear issues are not a topic of public debate in Germany.⁶ Public opinion polls have usually been commissioned by opponents of Germany's involvement in nuclear sharing but have consistently indicated that a majority of the population opposes the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons on German soil. These results are in line with anti-nuclear moods found more generally among Germans.⁷

2.1 – Conservatives

Conservatives, which on these issues are to be found in the Defence Ministry as well among Christian Democrats, Social Democrats with a strong transatlantic outlook and parts of the Foreign Ministry, believe that NATO's current nuclear doctrine is sufficiently flexible and vague to cover all possible scenarios under which nuclear deterrence may be useful. They believe that the risks of formal discussions in NATO of a new nuclear doctrine are larger than the potential benefit of agreement on a new Strategic Concept. In particular, they fear that it will be impossible to find a new consensus in the Alliance on the future role of nuclear weapons. A lowest common denominator position on nuclear deterrence, conservatives argue, would be worse than the current nuclear doctrine.

Conservatives highlight the importance of nuclear sharing as a transatlantic link. They argue that NATO's defence posture will lose credibility if it relies on conventional means only.

Basing deterrence on the nuclear arsenals of the three NATO nuclear weapon states is seen as insufficient. Some, like Oliver Thränert of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, the government's think-tank, doubt that NATO nuclear weapon states will always take decisions that are in the interest of German security. Others turn the argument around and see joint nuclear consultations as a means to positively influence the nuclear thinking in the United Kingdom and the United States. Bernd Siebert, Defence Spokesperson of the Christian Democrats, for example draws the conclusion that Germany should stay involved in nuclear sharing and continue to contribute dual-capable aircraft (DCA).

Some within the conservative spectrum and in the Ministry of Defence would like to adapt NATO nuclear policies to the changed international context, with the goal of being better able to deter and dissuade regional states in possession of weapons of mass destruction. Generally, they argue that NATO should think through possible cases where NATO may want to expand the role of its nuclear weapons. Generally, extended deterrence and positive security guarantees are seen as instruments to defend NATO

⁶ When former Minister for Justice Rupert Scholz of the Conservative Christian Democrats in an interview with the *Bild Zeitung* in January 2006 called for an open debate about a German nuclear deterrent, he was strongly criticised from all parties and portrayed as a political eccentric. There was no substantive debate of his proposal, which has been characterised as a "phantom debate". See for example Gero von Randow: "Deutsche Atomwaffen?", *Zeit online*, 26 January 2006, http://www.zeit.de/online/2006/05/rupert_scholz?page=all.

⁷ The most recent poll has been commissioned by *Greenpeace* and has found more than 70% of Germans in favour of a nuclear weapon free Europe. See Strategic Communications: Nuclear Weapons in Europe: Survey Results in Six European Countries, Vancouver, 25 May 2006, <http://www.greenpeace.org/raw/content/international/press/reports/nuclear-weapons-in-europe-survey.pdf>.

interests in regions like the Middle East and to dissuade states like Turkey from going nuclear.⁸

In line with revisionist thinking, a Ministry of Defence draft of the government's 2006 Defence White Paper recommended that NATO should deter states that possess nuclear weapons, which despite their "fundamentalist ideology can be presumed to have an interest in self-preservation." Echoing earlier NATO language, the draft went on to argue that "the common commitment of Alliance partners to war prevention, the credible demonstration of Alliance solidarity and nuclear posture require also in the future German participation in nuclear tasks." The text specifies that this should include "the deployment of allied nuclear forces on German soil, participation in consultations, planning and providing means of delivery."⁹ This language was apparently developed without prior consultation with all Ministry of Defence departments concerned and represents the most explicit attempt to expand the purpose of NATO nuclear weapons beyond the 1999 Strategic Concept language.

Revisionists in this context allude to the ongoing NATO debate about the role of deterrence in the 21st century but lament that no specific recommendations have so far come out of the High Level Group and the Nuclear Planning Group. They criticise the reluctance of "politicians" to think through possible scenarios where NATO may want to give security assurances, including possibly positive nuclear guarantees to non-member states (such as Israel) or to protect troops deployed "out of area" through nuclear weapons. Karl-Heinz Kamp of the conservative Adenauer Foundation argues that the discussing a new strategic concept by itself will help to clarify the position of NATO member states on nuclear deterrence regardless of the outcome of such a debate.

Revisionists therefore strongly favour continued German involvement in NATO nuclear sharing. They highlight the flexibility of a nuclear deterrent that is based on aircraft which allows, for example, to signal a willingness to escalate a conflict through different modes of deployment. They are, however, willing to consider alternative modes of DCA deployments.

2.2 – Reformists

Reformists, which are to be found among mainstream Social Democrats, parts of the Green Party, peace research as well as some parts of the arms control section of the Foreign Ministry would like to reduce NATO's reliance on nuclear deterrence without abolishing it altogether. Like abolitionists, they argue that NATO nuclear sharing arrangements are outdated but believe that any change to NATO nuclear policies should be discussed and agreed among allies. They are in favour of initiating a debate on nuclear weapons doctrine in NATO at the earliest possible time.¹⁰

⁸ A rare case where this argument was made publicly in Germany is Michael Rühle: "Nukleares Domino", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 9 February 2007. Michael Rühle is the head of NATO's Policy Planning and Speechwriting Section.

⁹ Translation by the author. The April 2006 draft of the White Paper can be found at http://www.geopowers.com/Machte/Deutschland/doc_ger/vorl._WB_2006.pdf.

¹⁰ This view also has support in the Liberal party. A Parliamentary resolution introduced before the Riga summit calls on the government to initiate a debate on a new strategic concept. See "Neues Strategisches Konzept für die NATO", Antrag der FDP-Fraktion, BT-Drs. 16/3287, 8 November 2006.

Reformists are generally opposed to and worried by current U.S. and French thinking on nuclear deterrence which they see expanding the role of nuclear weapons. They argue that this trend weakens the global nonproliferation regime. Reformists do not believe that nuclear weapons can or should play a role in deterring threats other than threats by nuclear weapon states.

Thus, the Foreign Ministry rejected the draft of the 2006 White Paper because it went beyond agreed NATO language. Specifically, some within the Foreign Ministry fear that references related to the nuclear deterrence of states of concern could be seen as undermining the negative security assurances given by nuclear weapon states.

The consensus language agreed in the 2006 White Paper captures the lowest common denominator among the ministries involved:

“A debate on the role of deterrence in the security environment of the 21st century has been initiated in the Alliance, the results of which will be incorporated in a new NATO Strategic Concept at the appropriate point in time. Besides conventional means, the Alliance will continue to need nuclear assets in the foreseeable future as a credible deterrence capability.”¹¹

On the other hand, reformists do believe that German involvement in NATO consultations on nuclear weapons matters, for example in the Nuclear Planning Group, is positive. It is argued that Germany can have a moderating influence on nuclear doctrines and may even be in a position to prevent NATO nuclear weapons use when this would not be in Germany's interest. It is also noted more generally that not being a DCA nation would reduce German status and influence in institutions concerned with nuclear weapon matters – a view shared by many conservatives.

2.3 – Abolitionists

Abolitionists, to be found among left-wing Social Democrats, parts of the Green Party and experts from the peace research community argue that the U.S. should withdraw its tactical nuclear weapons from Europe and end NATO nuclear sharing at the earliest time. Abolitionists believe that Germany needs to be prepared to take unilateral steps in that direction.

Abolitionists take a fundamental approach and cite legal, moral and arguments in support of ending German involvement in nuclear sharing. The 1996 ruling of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat of use of nuclear weapons is used to support a push for ending nuclear deterrence. Winni Nachtwei of the Green Party maintains the continued training of German pilots for deployments of nuclear weapons, which indiscriminately kill civilians and combatants, is inconsistent with the high ethical standards that German soldiers are today expected to fulfil, in particular in the context of out-of-area deployments.

Harald Müller of the Peace Research Institute in Frankfurt has argued that current U.S. nuclear doctrine is lowering the nuclear threshold and that it is hypothetically possible

¹¹ Federal Ministry of Defence: White Paper 2006 on German Security Policy and the Future of the *Bundeswehr*. Berlin, 25 October 2006. Downloadable in English and as a French summary from www.bmvg.de.

that in the context of a multilateral NATO “out of area”-deployment, Germany could be drawn into a nuclear exchange involving NATO nuclear assets.¹²

The peace movement has repeatedly tried to activate public opinion against German involvement in NATO nuclear sharing. A majority of Germans, however, is unaware that U.S. nuclear weapons are still deployed on German soil. But anti-nuclear sentiments in the population are wide-spread and a broad majority of the German public supports a nuclear weapon free Europe.

2.4 – Assessment

The German elite is split on the role of nuclear weapons in the new international environment. Some believe that nuclear weapons will continue and need to play a role in deterring future threats, others would like to see a reduction of the role of nuclear deterrence.

The dominance of the status quo position appears to be not so much a reflection of the strength of conservatives but rather a result of the deadlock between revisionists and reformists. This became evident in the dispute on the language in the 2006 Defence White Paper. In Parliament, reformist Social Democrats and conservatives blocked each other and were unable to agree on joint position on the White Paper. Discussions between the Defence Ministry and Foreign Ministry resulted in a lowest common denominator agreement, which moves barely beyond the language agreed in the 1999 Strategic Concept.

For the time being, the government appears to be content with the current NATO arrangement and the Ministry of Defence wants to delay a revision of NATO nuclear doctrine. Many in the government are afraid of repeating the negative experiences under the previous red-green coalition, when its initiatives to trigger a NATO wide-debate on nuclear deterrence were rejected or ignored. But such a postponement strategy is becoming increasingly difficult. Chancellor Merkel public call for a review of NATO’s Strategic Concept by 2009 has implications for a review of NATO’s nuclear doctrine also. It is difficult to imagine that a new Strategic Concept would not address the future role of nuclear deterrence.

¹² See Harald Müller/Stefanie Sohnius, *Intervention und Kernwaffen. Zur neuen Nukleardoktrin der USA*, *HSFK-Report* 1/2006, Frankfurt/M 2006, pp. 28-30.

3 – The German role in NATO nuclear sharing

Germany is in a unique position among NATO members that provide dual-capable aircraft because it has not taken a decision to procure nuclear-capable replacement for its DCA. In the foreseeable future, the *Eurofighter* will replace Germany's *Tornado*. The government has repeatedly stated that it has no intention to certify the *Eurofighter* in a nuclear-capable role.¹³ The main reason for this position is the wish to protect the interests of European industry. EADS, which builds the *Eurofighter*, fears the loss of commercial proprietary information, should U.S. technicians get access to the *Eurofighter* during certification procedures. Apparently, the German government has assured industry that no such access will be granted. The United States, on the other hand, has little interest in certifying the *Eurofighter* in a nuclear role because this would create a competitor to the *Joint Strike Fighter* as a dual-capable aircraft.

It is not clear, when Germany will have to take a decision to procure a nuclear-capable aircraft to replace the *Tornado* in its current role. Officially, the Ministry of Defence maintains that the *Tornado* can be maintained in its nuclear role beyond 2020.¹⁴ *Tornados* will be replaced in Büchel sometime between 2012-15. Given the lead-time for aircraft programmes, it is safe to assume that a decision on procurement of a new DCA will have to be taken some time between 2015-2020 at the latest.

3.1 – Conservatives

Conservatives believe that Germany should continue to support the deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons on German soil and stay actively involved in nuclear sharing arrangements. However, since this position is perceived not to be popular, it is rarely made in public. Conservatives strongly reject the notion that political decisions on the future involvement of Germany in nuclear sharing should be based on the technical question of replacing the *Tornado* by some other nuclear-capable aircraft, as Bernd Siebert for example states. This argument resonates well beyond the conservative camp and is echoed for example by the Foreign Ministry and Social Democrat Walter Kolbow.

Conservatives see nuclear sharing as an important transatlantic link and tend to believe that Washington values European support for NATO nuclear sharing, if not for military, then for political purposes. To “rock the nuclear boat” within the Alliance would risk damaging transatlantic relations.

Supporters of German involvement in NATO nuclear sharing argue that being a DCA nation confers additional influence on Germany in NATO and in particular in consultations within the Nuclear Planning Group. (They argue that though the NPG is open to all NATO members, DCA states have a special status.) This is a view shared widely also by many reformists.

¹³ See for example Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Norman Paech, Alexander Ulrich, Paul Schäfer (Köln), weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE, Bundestags-Drs. 16/568, 8 February 2006.

¹⁴ On 18 October 2006 Defence Minister Franz Josef Jung in Parliament confirmed that the German air force will continue to deploy some *Tornados* even when the planned 180 *Eurofighter* are operational. See Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 16/56 vom 18 October 2006.

The status quo school of thought is reflected in the 2006 Defence White Paper which reflects the lowest common denominator between the Foreign Ministry and the Defence Ministry.

“The Alliance members’ nuclear forces have a fundamentally political purpose, this being to preserve peace, prevent coercion and war of any kind. The allies’ common commitment to preventing war and the credible demonstration of Alliance solidarity, as well as the fair sharing of burdens, require Germany to make a contribution towards nuclear participation commensurate with its role in the Alliance and the principles laid down in the Strategic Concept of 1999.”¹⁵

One influential conservative expert, Karl-Heinz Kamp, however maintains that withdrawing U.S. weapons may become a prerequisite for maintaining NATO nuclear deterrence. Kamp fears that – given the public’s strong anti-nuclear attitudes – an open debate about Germany’s nuclear involvement in nuclear sharing can only be lost by the supporters of those arrangements. While Kamp believes that there are good arguments for maintaining nuclear deterrence, he also argues that there no rationale to defend the continued deployment of nuclear weapons in non-nuclear weapon states. He therefore suggests to “preempt” a future debate by withdrawing U.S. nuclear weapons from Germany and possibly other countries. (Kamp, however, is receptive to concerns that a complete withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe may influence discussions in Turkey on developing a nuclear weapons option.)

Conservatives lament the lack of “serious” public debate about nuclear weapon issues and tend to doubt the seriousness of political and public opposition to NATO nuclear weapons. They see Parliamentary resolutions as being tactically motivated but not reflecting real concerns about nuclear weapons issues. Opinion polls, which are often commissioned by peace organizations, are often derided as being subjective.

3.2 – Reformists

Reformists generally would like to see U.S. nuclear weapons withdrawn from German soil but are wary of the possible implications such a step for transatlantic relations and for Germany’s status in NATO. They believe that there should be preconditions for such a step but differ with regard to what these preconditions would be. Generally, reformists would reject unilateral steps to initiate a change in NATO nuclear deployments.

“Transatlanticists” support a German initiative within NATO to trigger a new debate on nuclear policies with the goal of reaching a new consensus. This position can be found among Social Democrats as well as Conservatives.

Arms control advocates, in particular among Social Democrats, would like to see a more courageous German policy on nuclear weapon issues and support a German initiative on tactical nuclear weapons regardless of Washington’s position.

A majority of Social Democrats now appears to support a partial withdrawal of Germany from nuclear sharing. In May 2006, the Social Democrat members of the Bundestag Defence Committee agreed to support a unilateral withdrawal from the operational

¹⁵ Federal Ministry of Defence: White Paper 2006 on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr. Berlin, 25 October 2006.

aspects of nuclear sharing. A position paper written to respond to the Defence Ministry's White Paper draft categorically states that Social Democrats are "not willing to provide new means of delivery", once the *Tornado* has reached the end of its service life "in a few years". Then, Germany's participation in "tactical nuclear sharing" should end, the Social Democrats demanded.¹⁶

Rolf Mützenich, the Social Democrats' spokesperson for arms control told *Arms Control Today* 13 June 2006 that this means that Germany would no longer provide aircraft or personnel to participate in NATO nuclear sharing. Mützenich cautioned that "as long as these weapons exist" Germany should stay involved in the "strategic operative" aspects of nuclear sharing, meaning it would continue to participate in Alliance consultations and decision-making on nuclear doctrine.¹⁷

This group sees the decision on a follow-on system to the *Tornado* as an opportunity to reduce or end German involvement in nuclear sharing. Mützenich emphasized that as far as he is concerned, Germany's participation in nuclear sharing should end "as early as possible" before 2012 when the nuclear-capable *Tornados* based at the Büchel air-base will be replaced by non-nuclear *Eurofighter*.

At the same time, reformists and conservatives caution that even a partial withdrawal from nuclear sharing may result in a loss of influence and status in the Alliance. Thus, they prefer that Germany would try to push for an agreement in NATO to reduce reliance on nuclear weapons. This argument was specifically made by Walter Kolbow who complained that NATO allies do not respond to German initiatives on the issue of NATO nuclear weapons.

3.3 – Abolitionists

Opponents of NATO nuclear policies argue that Germany should be prepared to unilaterally push for a withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons. This view is most popular within the peace movement, peace research and the Socialist Party.

In the run-up to the 2005 NPT Review Conference, the Liberal Party in a Parliamentary resolution called on the government to urge the United States to withdraw U.S. nuclear weapons from German soil.¹⁸ This resolution, however, was mainly tactically motivated and intended to divide the coalition of Social Democrats and Greens Party which was in power at the time.

Abolitionists believe that nuclear deterrence is morally wrong and is fuelling proliferation. They argue that support for nuclear sharing in NATO generally is weak and that these arrangements are maintained mainly because of bureaucratic or political inertia. Thus, they believe that it only takes an initiative by one important NATO member state to work towards withdrawal and others would likely follow.

¹⁶ SPD-Bundestagsfraktion: „Position der Arbeitsgruppe Sicherheitsfragen zum Entwurf des Weißbuches des Bundesministers der Verteidigung“, 16 May 2006, <http://www.rainer-arnold.de/pdf/Positionspapier%20AGS%20WB%2020060516.pdf>.

¹⁷ Cited in Oliver Meier: "An End to U.S. Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Europe?" in: *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 36, No. 6, July/August 2006, pp. 37-40.

¹⁸ "Glaubwürdigkeit des nuklearen Nichtverbreitungsregimes stärken – US-Nuklearwaffen aus Deutschland abziehen", Antrag der FDP-Bundestagsfraktion, BT-Drs. 15/5257, 13 April 2005.

3.4 – Assessment

The decision about procurement of a follow-on system to the nuclear-capable *Tornado* is seen by supporters of a reform of NATO nuclear policy as an opportunity to accelerate the broader debate on German involvement in nuclear sharing arrangements. This line of thinking, however, has so far not induce an urgency into the German debate about nuclear sharing, mainly for three reasons.

First, there is no specific date when a decision about a nuclear-capable follow-on system for the *Tornado* has to be taken. So far, reformists and abolitionists have been unable to challenge the position of the Ministry of Defence that the *Tornado* in its nuclear role can operate beyond 2020.

Secondly, the argument that the future of Germany's involvement in nuclear sharing is not a technical but a profoundly political question is a strong point that resonates well beyond the conservative camp.

Finally, many reformists and conservatives agree that the involvement of non-nuclear weapon states in nuclear sharing may have positive effects. Indeed, even those that want to tie German involvement in the operational aspects of nuclear sharing to the phasing out of the *Tornado* implicitly recognise the argument by supporting continued German involvement in the political aspects of nuclear sharing.

4 – Tactical nuclear weapons and arms control

NATO's policy on tactical nuclear weapons is linked in two ways to discussions on arms control. First, the connection between NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements and nuclear nonproliferation efforts is debated. This relates both to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty more generally as well as to efforts to convince Iran to give up fuel cycle capabilities.

Second, NATO's tactical nuclear weapon stockpile is discussed in relation to Russia's tactical nuclear weapons. The need to increase transparency on Russia's short-range nuclear weapons holdings and to improve control over these weapons is recognised across the political spectrum. Germany's contribution under the G8 Global Partnership has also involved efforts in this direction, although with limited success.

4.1 – Conservatives

Conservatives, to be found on this issue among Christian Democrats and in the Ministry Defence, are sceptical whether German or NATO initiatives on tactical nuclear weapons would strengthen the nonproliferation regime. First, conservatives believe that nuclear proliferation is driven mainly by regional security considerations which have little to do with the policies of nuclear weapon states. Secondly, some like Karl Heinz Kamp, believe that the nuclear nonproliferation regime has lost relevance as a global framework for addressing the root causes of proliferation. While recognising the operational advantages of the NPT (mainly as a basis for addressing non-compliant behaviour and

detecting treaty breaches through safeguards), they argue that security assurances and counterproliferation efforts have gained importance.¹⁹

Conservatives believe that unilateral tactical nuclear weapons reductions by NATO states will have little effect on Russian willingness to open up, let alone reduce its arsenal of tactical nuclear weapons. They believe that Russia still assesses the value of its own stockpile of short-range nuclear weapons as an important asset based on security considerations which have nothing to do with NATO nuclear deployments in Europe.

At the same time, it is argued that NATO's tactical nuclear weapons reductions since the end of the Cold War adequately reflect the new security environment. The 2006 Defence White Paper states in this context:

“At the same time, the Federal Government continues to pursue the goal of worldwide abolition of all weapons of mass destruction. Germany itself has entered into a binding obligation under international law to renounce possession of such weapons. Since the early nineties, NATO member states have reduced the number of sub-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe by more than 85 percent. They are being kept to the minimum level needed to safeguard peace and stability.”

4.2 – Reformists

Reformists support the NPT as the basis for global nonproliferation efforts. This is the official German position, held for example by the Foreign Ministry. Germany has tried to push the issue of substrategic weapons in the NPT context as early as 2002 and then Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer in his statement to the 2005 Review Conference highlighted the need for further action, explicitly referring to the German domestic debate on the issue.²⁰ Foreign Ministry officials also point to the fact that progress on substrategic weapons was one of the 13 steps on nuclear disarmament agreed to by the nuclear weapon states in the 2000 NPT Review Conference Final Document.

A joint Parliamentary resolution adopted by Social Democrats and Christian Democrats before the November 2006 NATO summit in Riga captures this line of thinking and calls on the government to support

“new arms control initiatives, in addition to efforts undertaken during the previous years, to effectively prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In this context, new impulses on the part of NATO to reduce substrategic weapons in

¹⁹ See also Michael Rühle: “Nukleares Domino”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 9 February 2007.

²⁰ See Speech by Joschka Fischer, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, at the Opening Session of the 7th Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, New York, 2 May 2005. Fischer called for a phased approach, involving transparency measures, codification of the 1991/92 Presidential Nuclear Initiatives and the eventual elimination of substrategic stockpiles. Germany had launched a similar proposal at the 2002 NPT Preparatory Committee. See “Non-strategic nuclear weapons”, Working paper submitted by Germany to the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons 8-19 April 2002, NPT/CONF.2005/PC.I/WP.5, New York, 11 April 2002.

Europe would be sensible. This would also be an important impulse to the strengthening of the international nonproliferation regime.”²¹

Social Democrats in particular are receptive to this line of argument and highlight their party’s arms control tradition, pointing in particular to the policies of detente, developed and promoted under Social Democrat leadership in the 1960s and 1970s. They see the promotion of nonproliferation through concepts of common security as rooted in this history.²²

Reformists are also uncomfortable with what they see as double standards created by nuclear sharing vis-a-vis countries like Iran.

An initiative for a no-first-use policy or even a ban on nuclear weapons use is supported by Social Democrats²³ as well as by members of the Green Party.

Reformists are somewhat sceptical whether NATO initiatives on tactical nuclear weapons will induce Russia to reciprocate. They however argue that this is an issue where NATO has little to lose and much to gain. Walter Kolbow and Oliver Thränert, for example, argue that instead of waiting for a formal agreement with Russia on tactical nuclear weapons, it might make more sense for NATO to take the initiative and thus place the ball in Russia’s court.

4.3 – Abolitionists

Abolitionists believe that a withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Germany would contribute to the fulfilment of NPT Article VI obligations and thus strengthen the treaty. This position is supported by many experts from peace research, like Harald Müller. Otfried Nassauer in addition argues that ambiguities about the legal status of nuclear sharing arrangements under the NPT could be resolved by withdrawing U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe.²⁴

Abolitionists fear that continued reliance on nuclear deterrence undermines nonproliferation efforts. They make reference in particular to Germany’s role in EU3 talks with Iran and argue that German involvement in nuclear sharing establishes a system of double standards that makes it easier for Tehran to reject diplomatic efforts aimed at curtailing Iran’s nuclear programme. (Many reformists, however, share this fear. Walter Kolbow,

²¹ „Die NATO vor dem Gipfel in Riga vom 28. bis 29. November 2006“, Antrag der Bundestagsfraktionen der CDU/CSU und der SPD, BT-Drs. 16/3296 vom 8 November 2006.

²² See for example the position paper by Rolf Mützenich, Speaker for Arms Control and Disarmament: “Zur Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik der SPD: Für eine Revitalisierung von Abrüstung und Rüstungskontrolle“, Berlin, 22 June 2006.

²³ The Social Democrats officially support a ban on the use of nuclear weapons, predominantly as one tool to devalue tactical nuclear weapons use. See Speech Given by the Chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Germany and Minister-President of Rhineland-Palatinate Kurt Beck at the SPD Conference Peace through Disarmament: International Law and Nuclear Non-Proliferation on Monday, 26 June 2006 in the Willy-Brandt-Haus, Berlin, http://www.spd.de/show/1691128/260608_speech_beck.pdf.

²⁴ See Harald Müller/Stefanie Sohnius, Intervention und Kernwaffen. Zur neuen Nukleardoktrin der USA, HSFK-Report 1/2006, Frankfurt/M 2006, Otfried Nassauer: Nuclear Weapons in Europe - A Question of Political Will (A Policy Note prepared for Greenpeace Germany), BITS Policy Note 05.4, June 2005, <http://www.bits.de/public/policynote/pn05-4.htm>.

an influential Social Democrat Member of Parliament, for example explicitly makes this point.)

Abolitionists recognise the importance of engaging Russia in a dialogue on tactical nuclear weapons but support unilateral steps by NATO in order to prepare the ground for a more wide-ranging agreement.

4.4 – Assessment

Arms control and nonproliferation arguments resonate with German political elite and the public. Many decision-makers and experts were raised politically during the 1980s when nuclear arms control was a major frame of reference in the foreign policy debate.²⁵ Few conservatives, at least privately, argue that the NPT has lost importance and should no longer be the only or primary frame of reference for German nonproliferation efforts. This, however, remains a minority position.

There is no clear-cut debate on whether NATO's tactical nuclear weapons should be seen as a bargaining chip in possible talks with Russia on the issue. None of the experts interviewed, however, argued that Russia is still concerned by NATO nuclear capabilities. There is, however, a recognition that progress on tactical nuclear weapons may be a tool to revitalise nuclear arms control more generally.

5 – Conclusion

Tactical nuclear weapons and the future of German involvement in NATO nuclear weapons is not a topic of public discussion in Germany but is being increasingly debated among experts and decision-makers.

Three factors are responsible for this trend. First, there is unease about the lack of debate about NATO's role more generally. There is broad support for Chancellor Merkel's 2006 initiative to revitalise NATO as the primary place on a joint transatlantic foreign and security agenda. Many experts realise that in this context the role of nuclear weapons needs to be addressed.

Second, there is concern about nuclear proliferation and the demise of the nuclear nonproliferation regime. While some would conclude that the role of (nuclear) deterrence in fighting proliferation needs to be reassessed, others would argue that German reliance on nuclear deterrence weakens global nonproliferation efforts. The involvement of Germany in the EU3 talks with Iran has increased the importance of this perspective because Germany is now for the first time directly involved in efforts to resolve a nuclear nonproliferation crisis.

In this context, there is unease about the renewed emphasis of nuclear deterrence in allied nuclear weapon states. Both the draft U.S. *Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations* as well as President Jacques Chirac's January 2006 speech on nuclear deterrence were criticised for expanding the role for nuclear weapons as well as lowering the nuclear

²⁵ One indication of this background is the frequent reference in debates on tactical nuclear weapons to "short-range nuclear weapons", a term that was correct in the 1980s but no longer captures the "substrategic" nature of current U.S. nuclear deployments in Europe.

threshold, though publicly government officials took a more careful stance to avoid damage to bilateral relations.

Third, the fact that Germany will retire its dual-capable aircraft necessitates a decision on the future German involvement in nuclear sharing. Proponents of continued involvement in NATO nuclear policies are at a disadvantage because they cannot propose a replacement for the *Tornado* or air-based deployments of nuclear weapons. On the other hand, reformists have so far been unable to use the issue to accelerate the debate on NATO nuclear policies more generally.

5.1 – Outlook

It seems difficult to imagine a political constellation under which Germany would unilaterally urge the U.S. to withdraw its nuclear weapons from German soil. It also seems unlikely that Germany will again try to initiate a debate on NATO's nuclear weapon policies. The government has little interest in repeating past experiences, when Germany unsuccessfully introduced nuclear issues as matter of debate into the Alliance.

Chancellor Merkel's 2006 commitment to support adoption of a new Strategic Concept by 2009, however, has put the government in a bind and it seems difficult to imagine that such a revision would exclude nuclear issues. Germany would not try to block a debate on nuclear doctrine from taking place. German officials are indeed already preparing for such a debate and involved in bilateral and informal consultations about the future of deterrence, nuclear deterrence and NATO nuclear sharing arrangements.

The German position on new Strategic Concept is still being developed. The current political deadlock under the Grand Coalition, with Conservatives and the Ministry of Defence arguing for a continuation of current or reformed nuclear sharing arrangements and Social Democrats and parts of the Foreign Ministry supporting a reduced reliance of NATO on nuclear deterrence, is unlikely to continue. The stalemate is, however, likely to prevent a speedy decision on a nuclear-capable replacement for the *Tornado*, at least before the next elections in 2009.

A future Conservative-led government would probably support a continuation of current NATO nuclear arrangements, though possibly in a streamlined form. A future Social Democrat-led government, whether supported by the Liberal Party or by the Green Party is likely to be more open to proposals to downgrade or end German involvement in nuclear sharing.

Possible external catalysts of a German debate include a U.S. initiative for the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from NATO states, a direct engagement of NATO in a nuclear crisis, the use of a nuclear weapon in a regional crisis or a major accident involving a nuclear weapon. Given anti-nuclear moods in the German public, any such development is almost certainly going to result in stronger calls for nuclear disarmament, possibly including a push for a withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from German soil.

The further integration of EU foreign and security policy is not seen as affecting the debate on NATO nuclear weapons policies and the French proposition to discuss models of concerted deterrence are largely dismissed as being unrealistic and anti-American.

6 – Annex

6.1 – *List of interviews*

1. Senior Official Federal Foreign Ministry, Berlin, 29 January 2007
2. Senior Official Federal Ministry of Defence, Berlin, 12 February 2007
3. Bernd Siebert, Member of Parliament, Spokesperson for Defense of the Christian-Democrat Union/Christian-Social Union in the Bundestag, (by email) 2 March 2007
4. Walter Kolbow, Member of Parliament, Deputy head of Social Democrats in the Bundestag (responsible for Foreign and Defence issues), Berlin, 2 March 2007
5. Winfried Nachtwei, Member of Parliament, Spokesperson for Defense of Bündnis90/The Greens in the Bundestag, 26 February 2007
6. Oliver Thränert, Head of Research Unit European and Transatlantic Security, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin, 9 February 2007
7. Karl-Heinz Kamp, Head of Unit Foreign Policy, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Berlin, 15 February 2007
8. Otfried Nassauer, Director, Berlin Information-Centre for Transatlantic Security, 1 March 2007

6.2 – *Summaries of interviews*

Summary of background interview with senior official, Federal Foreign Ministry

Berlin, 29 January 2007

The official focused mainly on the arms control aspects of tactical nuclear weapons deployments in Europe.

He argued that Russia's tactical nuclear weapons remain the focus of arms control efforts. Germany's focus is to address the proliferation dangers resulting from the nuclear legacy of former Soviet tactical nuclear weapons. It is in that spirit that Germany in 2002 introduced a working paper on substrategic nuclear weapons into the NPT preparatory process and then-Foreign Minister Fischer mentioned tactical nuclear weapons in his 2005 speech to the NPT Review Conference.²⁶ Germany wants to pursue a step-by-step approach on the topic, starting with transparency measures and ending with possible formal agreements.

²⁶ "Non-strategic nuclear weapons", Working paper submitted by Germany to the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons 8-19 April 2002, NPT/CONF.2005/PC.I/WP.5, New York, 11 April 2002.

There are several possible starting points to address the issue of Russian tactical nuclear weapons. NATO's "Article 32 review"²⁷ had not been filled with life. Even though NATO members had pursued transparency measures and data exchanges with regard to tactical weapons envisaged in that report, Russia was not willing to engage on the issue. Tactical weapons were also listed among the 13 steps contained in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

Unilateral measures on tactical nuclear weapons will not be reciprocated by the Russian side and have never been an option from the perspective of the Foreign Ministry.

Within NATO, the tactical nuclear weapons issue is becoming increasingly important, for example in the framework of the High-Level Group. The debate is driven in particular by the United States. A debate on new Strategic Concept should not be initiated before 2009. There is no need to rush the issue because the current doctrine is flexible enough to accommodate most scenarios where nuclear deterrence might play a role. There is also great reluctance to begin such a debate because of the likely problems to get a consensus view on nuclear issues within NATO. Several countries are likely to reject to the U.S. approach on nuclear deterrence.

The Foreign Ministry will not again take the initiative on tactical nuclear weapons and will not take a detailed position until there is political guidance, which does not yet exist. Germany is handicapped while it holds the EU Presidency to take the initiative on this issue because it can only act on issues where a consensus does exist among EU member states.

The decision about a follow-on system to the DCA *Tornado* remains a political one. Technical considerations will not drive that decision because the service life of the *Tornado* can be extended.

Nuclear sharing will remain important for Germany. Burden sharing as an overarching element is important as is the transatlantic dimension of security. Nuclear sharing also provides Germany also with an opportunity to prevent a possible U.S. access to NATO nuclear assets. By comparison, compared to the past, consultations in the Nuclear Planning Group have lost importance.

The draft 2006 Defence White Paper was analysed very carefully by the Foreign Ministry. The Defence Department draft was rejected in part because it went beyond existing guidance on the issue of deterrence and because it was felt that the draft nuclear language might contradict existing negative security assurances given by nuclear weapon states.

It seems unlikely that NATO's policy of not deploying nuclear weapons in the new member states is revised. The political costs for such a step would be high.



²⁷ Report on Options for Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs), Verification, Non-Proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament, NATO Press Communique M-NAC-2(2000)121, 14 December 2000.

Summary of background interview with senior official, Federal Ministry of Defence

Berlin, 12 February 2007

The official emphasised that NATO had not yet taken a decision to revise its Strategic Concept. Germany supports a decision to initiate a review of the Strategic Concept by 2009, recognising that the context in which the 1999 Strategic Concept was agreed, had changed. In principle, the Ministry of Defence is comfortable with the nuclear doctrine contained in the 1999 Strategic Concept. The current U.S. administration does not appear see any urgency in a debate on a new Strategic Concept. By 2009, however, a new U.S. administration will have settled into office. There are NATO members, which are in favour of reviewing the Strategic Concept at an earlier stage.

A new Strategic Concept will have to address fundamental questions of the Alliance's strategy, including the role of deterrence in the 21st century. The U.S. approach towards deterrence is characterised by emphasising the "new triad", while Germany supports a more comprehensive approach to security. Germany would like to see NATO reinvigorated as a forum for transatlantic political debate.

Already, informal debates are taking place within NATO and among member states on the future role of deterrence, including nuclear deterrence. Common ground should be established in informal consultations before agreement on a mandate for a Strategic Concept review.

If NATO decides to initiate a formal discussion of the nuclear dimension of deterrence it would have to find answers to the following questions: What are requirements for nuclear deterrence in the 21st century? Are guarantees by NATO nuclear weapon states sufficient or does NATO still need a dedicated Alliance nuclear capability, including nuclear sharing arrangements?

There is currently no agreed position of the German government on these questions. In Berlin, there is, however, a broad consensus to maintain a NATO-based deterrent capability.

The composition and character of a possible NATO nuclear deterrent would be subject to discussion among NATO members. The unique characteristics of dual-capable aircraft give them advantages over land- or sea-based nuclear delivery systems, including the possibility of flexible signalling by deploying nuclear forces closer to a potential region of conflict.

Only states and possibly state sponsors of terrorism with weapons of mass destruction dimension could be deterred by nuclear weapons. Nuclear deterrence is relevant whenever vital interests of NATO member states are threatened. It would be counterproductive to develop a "check list" of circumstances under which nuclear weapons use might be threatened. Ambivalence is at the core of NATO's deterrence. Maintaining a "first use" option remains important in this context.

Nuclear sharing is important for Germany in order to stay involved in discussions on nuclear doctrine. Without nuclear sharing, the nuclear weapons policies of Allies would

remain opaque. Because nuclear planning in the Alliance proceeds by consensus, it offers Germany and other NATO members an opportunity to remain involved “at 25”.

NATO’s nuclear doctrine should be viewed independently from U.S. thinking on nuclear weapons. There is no danger that Germany would get “drawn into” a scenario where U.S. would consider the use of nuclear weapons in the context of a multinational NATO operation. Any crisis that is grave enough to have a nuclear dimension would involve Germany anyway.

There is no urgency to decide on a follow-on system to the dual-capable *Tornado*. The system can be kept in service beyond 2020 if necessary. A decision to procure a follow-on system should be based on the outcome of the discussions in NATO on the overall future of its nuclear forces.

The actual debate on nuclear sharing in the German Parliament did not have any depth to it. It was motivated by tactical considerations rather than real concerns about the future of deterrence.

The *Eurofighter* cannot and will not be certified as a DCA. This would require revealing commercial proprietary information to the United States, including potential future civil applications. There are political pledges to industry to prevent U.S. access to such technologies.

On the other hand, the U.S. is not seen to be keen to certify the *Eurofighter* as a DCA because this would create a nuclear-capable alternative to the *Joint Strike Fighter*. A nuclear-capable JSF is expected to become available by 2015.

Withdrawing U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe while maintaining nuclear sharing arrangements is not a good option. Such a step would not help achieve transparency with regard to Russian tactical nuclear weapons, which should be NATO’s main goal. Russia appears continues to be reluctant to be more open on its tactical nuclear weapons holdings and unilateral withdrawal of U.S. weapons will not change that attitude.

The U.S. military sees nuclear sharing arrangements as an impediment to its other, global missions. The United States relies on its own nuclear deterrent and the military would like to free up the assets bound by NATO nuclear sharing in Europe. From a U.S. perspective, continued support for nuclear sharing therefore is a political, not a military question.

Nuclear arms control on substrategic nuclear weapons should be aimed at maintaining NATO’s status quo, which guarantees a minimum deterrent capability. Ongoing strategic weapon reductions are more than sufficient to fulfil NPT Article VI commitments by NATO’s nuclear weapon states.



**Summary of interview Bernd Siebert,
Spokesperson for Defense of the Christian-Democrat Union/
Christian-Social Union in the Bundestag**

Berlin, 2 March 2007 (interview was conducted by Email)

Siebert argues that nuclear deterrence remains relevant after the end of the Cold War. The security situation can change rapidly and new unforeseeable threats can emerge quickly. NATO has to be able to protect its members and troop deployments against any kind of threat. NATO nuclear capabilities have to be such that they can provide credible protection. This is the basis for French and British nuclear planning. It seems unlikely that NATO will alter its nuclear posture in a dramatic way against the background of latent proliferation.

Abolition of nuclear weapons has to remain the long-term goal, as the German government has emphasised repeatedly. This position is also supported by the CDU/CSU. Conservatives, however, recognise that Germany has NATO commitments which remain relevant under the current international circumstances. A modification of these commitments can only take place on the basis of agreement with NATO allies. It is noteworthy that the previous government, led by Social Democrats and the Green Party, also did not push for an end of nuclear sharing arrangements.

A NATO nuclear deterrent will be necessary as long as nuclear proliferation cannot be prevented and states like North Korea and Iran have nuclear weapons and delivery systems. How to integrate nuclear sharing into such a deterrent system should be decided on the basis of a comprehensive review.

The withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from German territory would be a political loss, because it would reduce Germany's influence on nuclear weapons doctrine and decisions on nuclear weapons use. Germany should push for a further refinement of NATO's nuclear posture. Developments in NATO nuclear weapon states, such as the modernisation of their arsenals, are not a matter for discussion in NATO.

It is not appropriate to end nuclear sharing arrangements with the phasing out of the *Tornado*. The retirement of the *Tornado* may provide an occasion for discussion but Germany's support for nuclear sharing should not be based on a technical development. Decisions on an issue of such importance can only be based on a consensus within the Alliance.

All nuclear weapons should be covered by international arms control regimes to increase confidence. After the end of the East-West conflict, NATO's security outlook should no longer be directed only towards Russia. New threats have primarily emerged in other regions of the world. These new potentials should be incorporated into a new analysis of the security environment. Russia could be a partner under such a new security architecture.

▲ ▲ ▲

**Summary of interview with Walter Kolbow,
Deputy head of Social Democrats in the Bundestag
(responsible for Foreign and Defence issues)**

Berlin, 2 March 2007

Kolbow emphasised the arms control dimension of NATO nuclear sharing arrangements. A new Strategic Concept should take stock of current trends, including the loss of importance of arms control and disarmament. Recent developments with regard to Iran, North Korea and the U.S.-India nuclear deal are a demonstration of the crisis of multilateral arms control. At the same time, security risks are growing. This gap needs to be addressed during discussions on a new Strategic Concept.

The debate in NATO on nuclear issues is taking place “in a different world”, compared to discussions in Berlin.²⁸ Allies take note of German concerns and the Social Democrats’ intention to leave nuclear sharing when the *Tornado* is phased out but they generally show no support for German initiatives. Thus, when then-Defence Minister Peter Struck in June 2005 reported to NATO colleagues about the German debate with regard to nuclear sharing, there was no echo from NATO allies.

Chancellor Schröder was the first German head of government to call for a quick revision of NATO’s current Strategic Concept. Such a debate depends, however, on the support of the United States for a new doctrine. The unilateral approach of the United States is today’s biggest problem for the international community. A recent op-ed by influential U.S. experts has demonstrated that even in Washington there is a growing recognition that the permanent members of the UN Security Council need to become more active on nuclear disarmament issues.²⁹ Instead, France is continuing to modernise its arsenal and the British government has decided to extend the lifetime of its Trident force.

Nuclear weapons no longer provide a net security gain. Asymmetrical threats cannot be deterred by nuclear weapons. A comprehensive approach to security is needed.

The challenge will thus remain to create a new consensus on this issue within NATO. Such a new Alliance position can only be framed in an arms control context. The May 2006 position paper by Social Democrat members of the Defense Committee was an attempt to initiate a debate on a new consensus within NATO. Germany should not withdraw unilaterally and completely from nuclear sharing arrangements. Whether and when Germany replaces nuclear-capable *Tornados* is a political question, not a technical one.

The future of nuclear deterrence will also be influenced by the future debate about missile defence. There is a danger of a new arms race with Russia. Whether it will be possible to enter into a debate on nuclear weapons with Russia depends very much on Russia’s nuclear motivations. Social Democrats favour an approach that would not

²⁸ From 1998-2005 Walter Kolbow was Assistant Secretary of Defense and participated in meetings of the Nuclear Planning Group.

²⁹ George P. Schultz/ William J. Perry/ Henry A. Kissinger/ Sam Nunn: “A World Free of Nuclear Weapons”, Wall Street Journal, 4 January 2007.

make reductions of U.S. nuclear weapon deployments in Europe dependent on reciprocal Russian steps.

The continued involvement of Germany in nuclear sharing arrangements creates a credibility problem vis-à-vis Iran. Tehran can exploit the double standards involved but this problem is much more relevant with regard to U.S. nuclear weapons policies.



**Summary of interview Winfried Nachtwei,
Spokesperson for Foreign and Defense Policy of the Bündnis90/
The Green Party in the Bundestag**

Berlin, 26 February 2007

Nachtwei stated that after 9/11 the question of nuclear arms control has moved down the political agenda, in particular compared to the dangers from terrorism involving weapons of mass destruction.

The previous government, in which the Green Party participated as junior partner of the Social Democrats, had attempted to trigger a NATO debate on tactical nuclear weapons. The Green party became active on the issues in reaction to pressures from the peace movement and peace research. Then-Defence Minister Peter Struck and then-Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer were unable to provide military rationales for maintaining nuclear sharing arrangements. A June 2005 report by Struck to the NATO Council on the issue, however, did not provoke a reaction from other Alliance members and the government dropped the issue.

Tactical nuclear weapons have recently become more important because of three factors.³⁰ First, there are concerns about the stability of the nonproliferation regime. There is the crisis with regard to Iran's nuclear programme and continued criticism from non-aligned states in the NPT, who have called non-nuclear weapon states participating in nuclear sharing "quasi nuclear weapon states". These developments make clear that nuclear weapons deployed in Europe are not mere "relics" of the Cold War but reduce the credibility of Western nonproliferation efforts.

Second, scandals involving *Bundeswehr* soldiers have increased the importance of ethical behaviour of the armed forces. The involvement of German pilots in nuclear sharing is morally questionable because it involves training for the use of weapons that indiscriminately kill civilians and combatants.

Third, U.S. nuclear doctrine and the tendency to use nuclear weapons in military conflicts counteract efforts to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in international politics. A German government must not contribute to this trend. Germany should

³⁰ The Green Party in March 2006 introduced Parliamentary resolution calling on the government to push for an end of German involvement in the technical aspects of nuclear sharing and for a withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Germany. See Bündnis90/Die Grünen: „Abrüstung der taktischen Atomwaffen vorantreiben - US-Atomwaffen aus Deutschland und Europa vollständig abziehen“, BT-Drs. 16/819, 7 March 2006.

instead try again to initiate a debate within the Alliance on nuclear weapons, with the aim of establishing a new consensus.

The Green Party's position on a new nuclear doctrine for NATO and nuclear disarmament is ambivalent. On the one hand, the party totally rejects all types of nuclear armaments. On the other hand, it is aware that nuclear disarmament is a step-by-step process which involves (tacit) recognition of the nuclear weapons status quo.

Unilateral steps to reduce German involvement in nuclear sharing should be considered, including an end to providing dual-capable aircraft. Such a measure may not need to have a negative impact on transatlantic relations because there is considerable interest in the United States as well to reduce nuclear deployments in Europe. A possible withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Germany does not have to reduce German influence in the political aspects of nuclear sharing because non-DCA nations are also eligible to participate in the Nuclear Planning Group.

In order to realise the broader nonproliferation benefits associated with an end of nuclear sharing, U.S. nuclear weapons should be withdrawn before the scheduled transition from *Tornado* to the *Eurofighter* at Büchel airbase. Vis-à-vis Russia, a two-track strategy should be pursued which involves some unilateral steps while at the same time involving Russia in a dialogue on tactical nuclear weapons.

While German Conservatives appear to be strong supporters of nuclear deterrence and of continued involvement in nuclear sharing, it appears that a common position on some nuclear arms control issues could be found among most parties. There is also much common ground between Conservatives and Social Democrats on this issue.



**Summary of interview with Oliver Thränert,
Head of Research Unit European and Transatlantic Security,
German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin**

Berlin, 9 February 2007

Thränert argues that nuclear sharing might become relevant in the future only with regard to developments in the Middle East. No matter which direction Russia will take, nuclear deterrence will not play a role in East-West relations again.

Thinking 10-15 years ahead, a possible scenario in which it might be important to have a NATO-based nuclear deterrent would involve a nuclear-armed Iran which, after the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, has developed friendly relations with Iraq and Lebanon. In the scenario, Israel, which has developed close relations with NATO, is calling on the Alliance to protect it against Iranian threats and terrorist activities sponsored by Tehran.

In such a crisis, it might be sensible to deter Iran by nuclear means from directly threatening Israel. A credible nuclear deterrent should not be based only on U.S. nuclear assets because Europeans might not want to depend on Washington's decisions alone.

British Trident SLMBs are not flexible enough to provide a credible deterrent and France might decide not to contribute to a NATO deterrence posture.

From a European perspective, nuclear sharing provides a forum for consultations on the one hand, and an instrument to demonstrate resolve, on the other hand. Thus, under the scenario, a deployment of dual-capable aircraft at Incirlik might signal the seriousness of NATO's nuclear guarantees.

Whether nuclear deterrence will become relevant in the context of out-of-area deployments depends largely on whether NATO will actually become a global security provider.

The larger question at stake is whether in a world in which the number of nuclear weapon states is increasing we really want to rely only on the United States, the United Kingdom and France to provide a nuclear umbrella.

From the perspective of NATO non-nuclear weapon states, the most important political reason to maintain nuclear sharing is the influence it provides on the nuclear policies of nuclear allies. If, vice versa, it should become clear that non-nuclear weapon states such as Germany have no influence on the nuclear weapons policies of NATO nuclear powers, the rationale for maintaining nuclear sharing is gone. Then, these arrangements should be terminated. Nations that provide dual-capable aircraft do have greater influence in Alliance nuclear consultations, for example in the Nuclear Planning Group, than non-DCA nations.

Alliance discussions on a new nuclear doctrine have thus far not taken place because such a debate is perceived to be politically too dangerous. NATO members fear that no new international consensus might be found on the purpose of nuclear weapons and currently no NATO member appears keen to take the initiative on the issue. From a German perspective, taking the lead on nuclear weapons issues in NATO could endanger the reputation gained in the context of EU3 negotiations with Iran. The Bush administration, on the other hand, is currently unlikely to take the initiative within NATO because it is interested in improving transatlantic relations more generally.

A withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe by itself will not solve the problem of having to decide on a nuclear-capable follow-on system for the *Tornado*. It would, however, be difficult to justify procurement of a nuclear-capable aircraft when nuclear weapons are no longer deployed in Europe.

There is no specific date when the nuclear-capable *Tornado* will have to be replaced by the *Eurofighter*. This depends largely on procedures for certifying the nuclear capability of the *Tornado* and the question will not become urgent before 2018. The Ministry of Defence is trying push a decision as far as possible into the future. From the perspective of Alliance coherence and solidarity, it is interesting to see that Europeans are refusing to grant U.S. technicians access to the *Eurofighter*. For financial and possibly other reasons, Germany is unable to buy the *Joint Strike Fighter*.

Discussions between the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Ministry on the nuclear paragraphs in the 2006 Defence White Paper are a reflection of institutional interests and old divisions between the two bureaucracies over the relative importance of nuclear arms control vis-à-vis NATO nuclear sharing.

Having an arms control dialogue with Russia on tactical nuclear weapons is the only way to work towards a reduction of these weapons. The Russian tactical nuclear weapons stockpile is the greatest problem. While NATO is transparent to some degree, we know very little about the status of Russia's short-range nuclear weapons.

It would certainly be useful to start talks on tactical nuclear weapons before the 2010 NPT Review Conference. However, expectations should be modest and there will be no "zero option" for tactical nuclear weapons.



**Summary of interview with Karl Heinz Kamp,
Head of Unit Foreign Policy, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung**

Berlin, 15 February 2007

Karl Heinz Kamp emphasised that NATO should begin discussions on a new Strategic Concept. The process of agreeing on a new doctrine, including a debate on the future role of deterrence, would be important because NATO members will have to clarify their position on relevant issues and make them transparent. This in itself will make it more difficult for free-riders and will be an important step towards re-establishing NATO as the central forum for transatlantic debate. In addition, the 1999 Strategic Concept needs to be rewritten because much of its language is no longer relevant to the new international situation. A review of the Strategic Concept by 2009 seems likely because NATO's Secretary General as well as Chancellor Merkel have publicly called for it.

A new Strategic Concept will have to provide a rationale for maintaining nuclear deterrence. The role for nuclear deterrence has changed and it has become less important. The new Strategic Concept will also have to explain military requirements flowing from a new nuclear doctrine.

It is possible that NATO's nuclear posture can be downgraded significantly. There is no short-term threat that might require a nuclear response. Nuclear deterrence should focus on deterring threats from states possessing weapons of mass destruction. However, deterrence is intrinsically ambivalent. The threat from non-state actors should be dealt with by defensive measures as well as possibly through preemptive military action.

Calls for stronger negative security guarantees have no relevance to nuclear proliferation. Extended deterrence remains important but it does no longer require the basing of U.S. nuclear weapons on European soil. Generally speaking, nuclear deterrence provides a hedge and an insurance against unforeseeable threats. It is not plausible that states will hand over control of nuclear weapons to non-state actors. Thus, it is not necessary deter state sponsors of terrorism.

Nuclear weapons should be withdrawn from Germany and possibly other NATO countries involved in nuclear sharing because it is impossible to imagine a scenario that would lead to the actual use of these weapons. It is equally difficult to imagine circumstances under which these weapons would be redeployed (for example to Turkey) to signal NATO's intention to defend itself by nuclear means. U.S. nuclear

forces are sufficient to signal NATO's resolve in case of a crisis in the Middle East that involves weapons of mass destruction.

A possible reconstitution of NATO nuclear forces could become necessary in case of a resurgence of the threat from Russia. However, there would be significant indicators and enough warning time, to allow for such a reconstitution.

An argument against a complete withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe is that such a step could weaken extended deterrence and possibly lead to further proliferation. In Europe, an end to the nuclear umbrella might cause Turkey to reconsider its status as a non-nuclear weapon state.

In the long-term, a revival of major interstate conflict is likely and such clashes might have a nuclear dimension. These conflicts may be driven by economic or ecological factors or may be disputes over energy.

There is lack of debate in Germany on nuclear weapons issues. Parliamentary debates on the issue are often ritualised or based on tactical considerations but rarely reflect systematic analysis of the issues at stake. Institutional interests dominated discussions between the Ministry of Defence and the Federal Foreign Ministry about the nuclear language in the 2006 Defence White Paper.

There is no need to rush a decision on procurement of a follow-on aircraft to the nuclear-capable *Tornado*. U.S. pressure on NATO members to take a position on this question is driven by economic interests (because the United States wants to sell the *JSF*) and linked to a debate on missile defence. European NATO members should take their time to develop their own position on these matters and then begin discussions which Washington. Nuclear sharing will continue to work as long as the United States has the political will to maintain the system.

A withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe might pave the way for Russian unilateral measures to reduce its tactical nuclear weapons. It would clearly put the ball in the Russian court. However, it is unlikely that there will be a formal agreement on tactical nuclear weapons or even formalised transparency measures. Neither the West nor Russia has an interest in increased transparency on tactical nuclear weapons.

Ending nuclear sharing will not strengthen the nuclear nonproliferation regime because that regime is no longer relevant as the basis for the global nuclear order. Major states have lost faith in the NPT bargain and the treaty continues to provide assurances only on a tactical level, for example through safeguards.



**Summary of interview Otfried Nassauer,
Director, Berlin Information-Centre for Transatlantic Security**

Berlin, 1 March 2007

Nassauer supports a fundamental review of NATO's Strategic Concept, including a revision of its nuclear paragraphs. He believes that the 1999 Strategic Concept was not a forward-looking document when it was adopted. Discussions on a new concept would

have to tackle fundamental questions related to the nature of the Alliance and its purpose under changed international circumstances, including the scope of NATO out-of-area missions and the role of preemptive action. In order to increase the political basis for a new Strategic Concept, discussions should not begin before 2009, when a new U.S. administration has settled into office.

Two models should be discussed with regard to NATO nuclear forces. A radical approach would be to “denuclearise NATO”, including a withdrawal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe and a termination of the political aspects of nuclear sharing. However, such an outcome of a debate within the Alliance is unlikely.

A more realistic way to reduce NATO’s reliance on nuclear weapons would be to remove U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe but to maintain the framework for Alliance consultations on nuclear matters. The Nuclear Planning Group is already open to member states that do not operate dual-capable aircraft, thus no departure from current practices would be required.

The debate between the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on nuclear deterrence in the context of the 2006 Defence White Paper was a normal institutional struggle about bureaucratic responsibilities. The final version represents the lowest common denominator between the ministries and merely describes the status quo. It is symptomatic for such bureaucratic infighting that draft language calling for an urgent review of the Strategic Concept was dropped.

The timing of a decision about procurement of a follow-on system for the dual-capable *Tornado* is determined by political factors, and not by technical factors. However, the decision probably needs to be taken by 2015 because it will take 5-7 years to procure a follow-on system which will have to be available some time soon after 2020.

In order to realise the nonproliferation benefits of a decision not to procure a dual-capable aircraft (and end nuclear sharing), Germany should announce such a decision before the 2010 NPT Review Conference. Such a decision would reduce the political importance of nuclear weapons, advance nuclear disarmament and strengthen the NPT by eliminating the legal and political ambiguity of nuclear sharing arrangements under the NPT.

A decision by Germany to leave the NPT would also enable a dialogue with Russia about transparency and reductions of theatre nuclear force. The discussions about Russia leaving INF has shown the value of having treaty based nuclear accords. It would therefore be important to aim for a formal accord with Russia on tactical nuclear weapons.

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