

NSNWs: Definitions, Information Sharing and Confidence Building Measures, and their Role in the Wider Context European Security

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I. Introduction

This deliberately short paper aims to stimulate discussions at the Workshop. It presents a menu of previous ideas and proposalsⁱ, and outlines key emerging questions. But it intentionally avoids evaluating the realism, utility or equity of individual suggestions, and hopes to encourage productive consideration of new options and combinations. Its sole purpose is to help draw out, contrast, clarify and debate participants’ views, to assist later policy formulation within the Russian Federation (RF) and the NATO Alliance, and work in the NATO - Russia Council (NRC) and other fora. For NATO, this reflects the Chicago commitment “to continu[e] to develop and exchange transparency and confidence-building ideas with the Russian Federation in the NATO-Russia Council, with the goal of developing detailed proposals on and increasing mutual understanding of NATO’s and Russia’s non-strategic nuclear force postures in Europe.”

II. Definitions, Previous Proposals and Alternatives

“NSNWs”

There is no agreement on the range or yield of “non-strategic nuclear weapons”. The most commonly accepted definition is by exclusion: all nuclear weapons types covered neither by strategic arms control treaties nor by the INF Treaty. Is there any better definition of NSNW, likely to facilitate more productive discussions? (An alternative, slightly circular, formulation in a recent Norwegian/German non-paper, referred to Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs) “*understood as comprising all nuclear weapons commonly referred to as short-range and/or tactical nuclear weapons*”. Under either definition, NATO’s NSNWs are therefore the US B 61 bombs carried by Dual Capable Aircraft; Russia’s cover a range of ground, ship, submarine, and air launched weapons.)

“Information Sharing (usually called Transparency) Measures” (TMs)

TMs involve *voluntary exchanges of sensitive information* (possibly developing a standard reporting form, perhaps, eventually, with legal status), or *new forms of access and engagement*. Suggestions have included:

-NSNW Numbers:

-By new numerical declarations, without reconciling present holdings with totals at the time of the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives?

-Creating a continuing new politically binding agreement, along the lines used for periodic exchanges of information on nuclear SLCMs (not subject to “strategic” arms control limits but to regular data exchanges, under a side agreement to START I which lapsed in 2009)”?

-Reaffirming the PNIs, and resuming the 2 original data exchanges of 1991 and 1992?

-Locations: which might be visited, with varying degrees of intrusiveness, under a range of modalities , such as START or NST inspection protocols , or even a revived and expanded CFE system of checking Treaty Limited Equipments;

-Types:

-Would composite totals suffice? Or are sub totals needed to avoid worst-case thinking?

-Should some “defensive” NSNW categories, like coastal or air defence, or naval weapons, be regarded as less significant for strategic stability and so requiring less transparency? Or, since they could strike ground targets, do they have exactly the same significance as any other NSNW (although their use against ships or aircraft could be expected to have higher utility) ?

- *Operational Status:* could, or should, “active” warheads be separately identified from those “awaiting dismantlement”? Or would this be fruitless since, in crises, when numbers would be most sensitive, reserve weapons might be brought back into service?

-Warhead Characteristics e.g. yield limits;

-Delivery Systems: including, based on New START, numbers and locations of nuclear-capable aircraft (even with externally undetectable modifications) to enhance information on the nuclear weapons themselves?

-Impending Movements and Deployments: enhancing crisis stability;

-Alert Status: as above, but obviously highly changeable;

-Command Arrangements: improving common understandings;

-Nuclear Terminology:

-Doctrines for use: shared, and discussed through joint nuclear seminars, written information and, possibly, simulations, arranged through the NRC;

-Briefings: on postures and plans, including updating the NRC on internal NATO consultations over the future of US nuclear assets in Europe.

-*Exchanges of visits*: to weapons sites and HQs by military officials;

-*Storage Security*, with indications of physical designs and types of security arrangements, including human reliability systems.

- *Joint Technical Consultations on verification and transparency*, as a transitional expert process to facilitate eventual substantive reductions of nuclear weapons, and overcome the special verification difficulties posed by NSNWs.

“Confidence Building Measures” (CBMs)

CBMs are *voluntary military commitments and constraints*, potentially applying to:

-*Basing*: legally enforceable, or politically binding, undertakings, which might relocate NSNWs away from NATO/RF borders (a stated NATO preference) or from specified states or regions, including foreign soil (the RF position). Rebasing could involve removing nuclear infrastructure, followed by “close out” inspections of vacated bases and agreed “decertifications”. Obsolete warheads awaiting dismantlement could be physically relocated to specific holding locations, which might be remotely monitored;

- *Locations of Warheads and Delivery Vehicles*: processes of “de-mating”, to observably different sites, which could then be overseen by National Technical Means, or, more far-reachingly, by consensually installed remote sensors.

-*Movements*: restrictions on NSNW deployments, between, or out of, designated bases in less than specified timescales after notification - or even between differentiated storage areas created within a single base;

-*Capabilities and technical improvements*: possible moratoria on improved weapons, or new and more capable delivery systems.

-*Use of NSNWs*: reconsideration of declaratory policies;

-*Agreement to Joint Work*:

-Measures such as *shared lessons learned* on NSNW safety and security, *mutual observation* of nuclear accident response exercises, *joint accident exercises*, and “*shadow*” *exchange officer programmes*. These might all deliberately build upon the reportedly extensive U.S.-Russian cooperation on technical and operational safety in their bilateral Nuclear Weapons Safety and Security Agreement (WSSX).

- *Joint warhead level experiments and studies* to build shared technical understanding of contentious nuclear issues, such as interactions with SLCMs and Missile Defences.ⁱⁱⁱ

III. Overarching Issues

Boundaries

Where should Transparency and Confidence Building Measures (TCBMs) apply? The Atlantic to the Urals (ATTU) zone of application of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE) is one obviously relevant, previously agreed, strategic space, especially if the few non-neutral states outside CFE rules were included. Are there wider or narrower alternatives: a global transparency regime, a Central European zone free of nuclear weapons, or a narrower area which encroached less on freedom to deploy within national territories? Could zones change, and presumably expand, over time, and need they be the same for TMs and CBMs? How should neutral states, outside NATO and the RF, be handled? How far should concerns from neighbours like China and Japan, or the generally high, but variable, mobility of various NSNWs affect basing decisions?

Obstacles

What factors have previously blocked progress over TCBMs? What trends can be expected to affect them in future? What new strategic and political obstacles might emerge?

Sequencing

The 1990/1991 PNIs involved far-reaching changes, implemented, at least in part, concurrently by the US and Russia, without formally negotiated reciprocation. But if it proved impossible to introduce TMs and CBMs at the same time, should TMs automatically be prioritised? Overall, which TCBMs would be initially easiest to implement, or to reciprocate? And which would be most important - or even indispensable - in preparing the way for real reductions in NSNWs?

Interests and Reciprocity

Are some TCBMs *intrinsically desirable*, worth introducing even without reciprocation? Or is evident *reciprocity always important in itself*, and one sided impacts unacceptable, because of loss of potential leverage? Would the risks of proceeding with unreciprocated TCBMs arise from military, diplomatic and Alliance management, or domestic political consequences? How could the relative seriousness of these risks be convincingly indicated to the other side? And might the difficulties in accepting non-reciprocation over individual measures be overcome by arranging trade-offs between different kinds of TCBMs, possibly in an informally codified conditional sequence of different timescales?

Preconditions

Would implementing TCBMs require, or lead to, new and positive *political* developments? Or would it need, also or instead, significant agreement, movement, or concession over claimed *military* disparities between NATO and the RF? If so, in which areas, and on what evidence and logic? Could sufficient agreement be achieved in those other areas through analogous, "soft", TCBMs and assurances? By *the prospect*, or *the start* of substantive negotiations? Or would *formal treaties with effective verification arrangements* need to be signed first?

Overall:

- how far do prospects for TCBMs for NSNWs depend upon other favourable preconditions?
- Can such preconditions be specified at present?
- Which steps, in what order, over which period, would have to be taken to establish them?

IV. Significance, Wider Implications and Linkages for European Security

How would introducing TCBMs for NSNWs improve strategic stability, political relations and chances of progress towards wider military reductions, including unilateral build downs?

Conversely, what are the implications of continued blockage over TCBMs for :

- wider political relations between NATO and the RF;
- further reductions of NSNWs and strategic nuclear weapons;
- strategic stability and public confidence in Europe;
- movement towards a Euro Atlantic Security Community, and
- nuclear non-proliferation undertakings?

What historical or contemporary evidence best indicates future consequences, whether positive or negative?

ⁱ I am particularly grateful for the meticulous unpublished compilation by Anne Finger and Oliver Meier of IFSH, and to suggestions from James Acton, Malcolm Chalmers, Paul Ingram, and others.

ⁱⁱ http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/beyond_treaties.pdf : pp 4-5

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid : p 6