



Canadian Defence Policy

Briefing papers by Ernie Regehr, O.C., Senior Fellow in Arctic Security and Defence

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Updating NATO's Strategic Concept: The Nuclear Imperatives

The war in Ukraine once again confirms this inescapable nuclear reality – in war and in peace, nuclear weapons impose on humanity the daily, relentless imperative of figuring out how not to use them. Obviously, for no other weapon system is absolute prevention of its use the over-riding requirement. But the international community has declared nuclear weapons unique – the collective objective is to eliminate them, and most states, and certainly populations around the world, conclude that any use of a nuclear weapon would be “abhorrent to the principles of humanity and the dictates of public conscience.”¹ And yet the nuclear powers continue to threaten their use, with Russia the most immediate and alarming example, and to extol the utility of these doomsday weapons. NATO's current Strategic Concept confirms continued reliance on nuclear weapons in the collective defence of allies. But that strategic guidance document is now under review, offering Alliance members the opportunity to construct policy off-ramps from the path of nuclear peril they now travel.

NATO is scheduled to adopt an updated Strategic Concept at its Madrid Summit, June 29-30, and given the extraordinary context of war in Europe and sharply escalated strategic tensions, expectations for renewed nuclear arms control and disarmament energy are low. But each iteration of the NATO strategy emerges, not from a predestined fate, but from the deliberate decisions of member states, including Canada. Even in these dark times, there are choices to be made. Since NATO's strategic concepts tend to have shelf-lives of roughly a decade, they are meant to remain relevant in shifting strategic contexts, so planning has to account for more than the immediate circumstances.

This will be only the fourth version of NATO's Strategic Concept (SC) since the end of the Cold War (the others were published in 1991, 1999, and 2010). They are intended to “guide [the Alliance's] future political and military development” and to “reiterate NATO's enduring purpose and nature, and its fundamental security tasks.”² They typically begin with a survey of the strategic environment and an assessment of security threats. Then, among many other issues, they set out in broad terms of the role of nuclear weapons in the Alliance's defence posture, as well as NATO's attitude towards nuclear arms control and dialogue with adversaries. The following recommends changes to the Strategic Concept under those four themes: threat assessments, the role of nuclear weapons, arms control, and dialogue. It references three previous Strategic Concepts,³ and draws on the report of a Reflection Group appointed by the Secretary-General,⁴ the most recent (2021) NATO Summit Communiqué,⁵ and a 2022 think tank paper (the TAG report) prepared, with Canadian participation, for the NATO Secretary General.⁶

Threats

The February 24 launch of Russia's illegal and brutal war on Ukraine has obviously already proven devastating for the people of Ukraine, and its broader implications for Eurasian stability and the global nuclear disarmament agenda will unfold over time. As senior researcher Prof. Oliver Meier, of the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, has put it, through “nuclear blackmail” that is intended to “shield a full-scale conventional invasion,” Russia has “raised the nuclear stakes to new and dangerous levels.”⁷

Today's security environment is very far from the heady security assessments of the early post-Cold War SC (1991): "The threat of a simultaneous, full-scale attack on all of NATO's European fronts has effectively been removed and thus no longer provides the focus for Allied strategy" (para 7). That 1991 threat analysis went on to make the important point for that context – that the "risks to Allied security are less likely to result from calculated aggression against the territory of the Allies, but rather from the adverse consequences of instabilities that may arise from the serious economic, social and political difficulties, including ethnic rivalries and territorial disputes, which are faced by many countries in central and eastern Europe" (para 9).

A decade later the focus had begun to shift, and in response to the enduring nuclear threat, the 1999 SC offered what has become the quintessential posture of all nuclear powers – the problem is always the nuclear weapons of the others. NATO thus identified "nuclear forces outside the Alliance" (para 9) as the primary nuclear threat, even as similar nuclear forces inside the Alliance were accorded the status of the "supreme guarantee" of security (para 62). Meier makes the cogent point that Putin's recent nuclear threats and the four years of Donald Trump in the White House should make it clear "that it cannot be assumed that nuclear weapons are safe in the hands of some states but not in others." Thus, the world concludes "that total disarmament is the only sustainable solution to the dangers posed by these weapons."⁸

The 2010 SC extended the focus on the other, seeing the nuclear threat primarily as the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. The spread of weapons was said to "threaten incalculable consequences for global stability and prosperity" (para 9), with the added worry that terrorists could acquire nuclear capabilities (para 10). By 2021, the concern had shifted to big power competition, with the Brussels Summit communiqué emphasizing "multifaceted" threats (para 3), including authoritarian powers and Russian aggression. References to Russia went from eight in 1999, to 13 in 2010, to 61 in 2021, while references to China went from zero in 1999 and 2010 to 10 in 2021. The think tank world reflected the same shifts, with the 2022 TAG report identifying Russia as a "first-order threat" and China as "the greatest single game-changer between 2010 and 2022" and a "systemic challenge for the entire transatlantic community" (para 6).

NATO was back to 1999, with nuclear forces outside the Alliance once again the central concern. The nuclear threat identified was and remains real and demands attention, but missing is any clear statement that nuclear weapons, period, not just the nuclear weapons of the other, represent an existential global threat that requires concerted emergency global action.

By the way, though the focus in this paper is the nuclear threat, it is important to note that the 2021 Brussels Communiqué, to its credit, acknowledges another existential threat. It flags climate change as "one of the defining challenges of our time" (para 58) – the word "climate" appearing 13 times, compared to not at all in 1999 and just once in 2010. Notably, Canada is slated to establish a NATO Centre of Excellence on Climate and Security, aiming for 2023.⁹ Details are still to come, but it is to be hoped and expected that its research will include attention to the impacts of global military operations on climate and the environment, including their extraordinary consumption of fossil fuels and production of greenhouse gas emissions.

The Role of Nuclear Weapons

All NATO states have agreed to the commitment, reached within the context of the NPT Review Process, "to further diminish the role and significance of nuclear weapons in all military and security concepts, doctrines and policies."¹⁰ That is the over-arching commitment that should be guiding nuclear weapon state and alliance policies on the road to the disarmament required by that Treaty.

While NATO describes itself as a “nuclear alliance,” as an organization it neither possesses nor controls any nuclear weapons. Three of its members (France, United Kingdom, United States) possess and deploy nuclear weapons, with the United States forward basing about 100 non-strategic B61 nuclear bombs in five European NATO member states (Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Turkey) as part of the collective defence posture.¹¹ NATO collectively has an important say over the use of US nuclear weapons in a European context, but not final control. Before any nuclear-capable aircraft of the five NATO countries hosting US B61 bombs could be sent on a nuclear bombing mission, “the explicit political approval” of the NATO Nuclear Planning Group would be required – that NPG, of which Canada is a member, exercises “political control over all aspects of NATO’s nuclear mission.”¹² However, authorization from the US President would also be required.

NATO insists that “the circumstances in which any use of nuclear weapons might have to be contemplated are extremely remote” (SC 2010, para 17). The Brussels summit nevertheless makes it clear that, “if the fundamental security of any of its members were to be threatened, ...NATO has the capabilities and the resolve to impose costs on an adversary that would be unacceptable and far outweigh the benefits that any adversary would hope to achieve.” This only slightly veiled warning that a major conventional attack could trigger a nuclear response is in substance not so very different from Vladimir Putin’s recent threat to impose “consequences that you have never experienced in your history” in response to further NATO involvement by member states in support of Ukraine.¹³ The context in Russia’s case is immediate and thus more dangerous, but both warnings deliver the key message of the threatened introduction of nuclear weapons into a hitherto conventional battle.

The TAG think tank report reinforces that nuclear threat posture in proposing what it calls a new “warfighting concept...for maintaining and developing NATO’s decisive military edge” (para 58). It calls on NATO to muster “the *implacability* to convince even the most fanatical of enemies that they will run an unacceptable degree of risk” in response to any attack (emphasis added – para 59). No doubt there are times when implacability could be a virtue, but it certainly is not for any entity with access to the nuclear button – notably Russia’s repeated threats of nuclear attack. Yet, the head of the NATO nuclear policy directorate in Brussels says NATO is already “moving fast and furiously towards F-35 modernization and incorporating those [nuclear capable aircraft] into our planning and...exercising”¹⁴ – the point being to make the threat of a nuclear response to a conventional attack as convincing as possible.

NATO routinely insists that its “nuclear deterrence posture...relies on United States’ nuclear weapons forward deployed in Europe” (2021, para 40; 1999, para 42) while at the same time claiming that it is “the strategic forces of the Alliance, particularly those of the United States, [that] are the supreme guarantee of the security of Allies” (2021, para 40). The implication of that combination of nuclear threats is that the non-strategic nuclear forces are intended to deter conventional attack, and if that fails they are to be available to attack, while the role of the strategic nuclear forces is to deter Russia from a strategic nuclear response to NATO’s battlefield use of the European-based B61 bombs. The dangerous consequence of that two-pronged deterrence strategy is to lower the threshold of nuclear use.

Through four doable policy changes, NATO could signal a genuine shift towards the NPT mandate for much reduced reliance on nuclear weapons in its defence policies, reduce nuclear risks, and re-energise disarmament efforts, without jeopardising the security of its member states: 1. adopt a nuclear no-first-use or sole purpose policy, 2. ask the Pentagon to return US nuclear weapons now in Europe back to its home territory, 3. support de-alerting of the strategic-range weapons of its members, and 4. shift its declaratory posture.

No-First-Use and Reducing the role of Nuclear Weapons: Russia’s war on Ukraine should decisively discredit the idea that a nuclear attack could ever be a rational, justified response to conventional attacks. Russia’s repeated threats of nuclear attack¹⁵ have been met with overwhelming opprobrium, including in states which themselves

retain such a capability and policy. US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin recently made the key realist point about nuclear use – it’s “where all sides lose.”¹⁶ President Biden had earlier been leaning towards an unequivocal version of no-first-use or sole purpose, a policy that declared that nuclear weapons would be used only in response to a nuclear attack. But as Darryl Kimball of the Washington Arms Control Association writes, the new US Nuclear Posture Review is now reported to hold that, while the ‘fundamental role’ of the U.S. arsenal will be to deter nuclear attacks, it must retain the option of using nuclear weapons first in a conflict in “extreme circumstances” in order “to counter conventional, biological, chemical, and possibly cyberattacks.”¹⁷ The problem, of course, is there can be no guarantee that first-use would be last-use. First-use would almost certainly provoke a response in kind and escalate to an all-out nuclear exchange – i.e. total global catastrophe.

There is, in other words, simply no tactical, strategic, or moral calculation that could justify the unconscionable humanitarian consequences of nuclear use, or the risk of escalation. NATO should possess the realism, even if it can’t muster the necessary moral clarity, to declare an Alliance policy of no-first-use. No less an authority than Henry Kissinger has put it even more forcefully: “Any use of nuclear weapons is certain to involve a level of casualties and devastation out of proportion to foreseeable foreign policy objectives”¹⁸ (emphasis added). NATO insists that “Allies remain strongly committed to the full implementation of the NPT in all its aspects,” which must be assumed to include that commitment to “diminish the role and significance of nuclear weapons”¹⁹ in all defence policies and operations. The new Strategic Concept is an opportunity to finally take a clear observable step in that direction.

The removal of US nuclear weapons from Europe: Returning all nuclear weapons to their country of origin and ownership would be a tangible signal of de-escalation of the East-West divide, a demonstrable commitment to reducing the role of nuclear weapons in Alliance security policies, and would bring the participating states (the US and the European host countries) into unambiguous compliance with Articles I and II of the NPT. As the Arms Control Center puts it, “NATO should remain the advocate for a safer Europe through reduction of [non-strategic nuclear] weapons everyone can agree should never be used and place the onus on Russia to justify their continued existence.”²⁰

One must, of course, hasten to add that it would be hard to define a less auspicious time for seeking Russian reciprocity to any such NATO/American actions. But it is not only Russia that NATO states should be trying to impress. Denuclearizing European NATO would have a strong and positive impact in the context of the coming NPT Review Conference. The onus is on NATO to articulate a responsible policy, not to simply say Russia is making them court use and counter-use.

NATO’s “nuclear sharing” policy is also pursued for reasons that go beyond ensuring the operational availability of non-strategic nuclear weapons close to a potential European war zone. NATO expects nuclear weapons on European soil to ensure “collective defence planning in nuclear roles” (1999, para 63), and thus to reinforce the political support of Alliance members and their complicity in NATO nuclear operations. Thus NATO seeks “the broadest possible participation of Allies in collective defence planning on nuclear roles...” (2010 para 19). The point is not only to threaten nuclear attack in response to conventional attacks, but to implicate non-nuclear weapon state members of the Alliance as deeply as possible in that dangerous nuclear strategy. The new Strategic Concept is the opportunity for non-nuclear members like Canada to say, no more.

De-Alerting: De-alerting is one of the most immediately available means of making the world safer by substantially reducing the risks of a strategic nuclear attack being launched in response to a false warning of attack – that being the ever-present danger in a launch-on-warning posture. Canada, through the Stockholm Initiative, along with three other NATO members, supports the call for action to reduce the operational status of nuclear weapons. Canada should thus work with like-minded partners to have support for de-alerting inserted into the new Strategic Concept.²¹

Moderating the Declaratory Posture: There are instances of what might generously be called rhetorical imprudence in the NATO Strategic Concept and Summit Communiqués that could readily be removed or replaced with more moderate, and realistic, language.

Notable among these is the claim that the (nuclear) strategic forces of the Alliance are the “supreme guarantee of the security of Allies.” The global consensus is actually that strategic nuclear forces are an existential threat to the planet (including the allies). NATO members are part of that consensus, which is why NATO now routinely agrees that an overarching objective is a world without nuclear weapons (2010, para 26, 2021, para 47). Strategic forces, in other words, are a problem to be solved – not a source of security. Mutual deterrence is an interim, albeit dangerous, strategy to try to prevent nuclear weapons from being used, but ultimately, the international community agrees that is not a preferred or sustainable way of dealing with the existential nuclear threat facing the planet. In other words, the “supreme guarantee” phrase should simply be dropped – assuming NATO could not bring itself to a more realistic reference to those weapons as a supreme threat.

Another example of some needed rhetorical adjustment is the regularly repeated statement of NATO’s “commitment to maintaining an appropriate mix of nuclear, conventional and missile defence capabilities” (2021, para 6.b, NATO 2030, proposal 2). At a minimum, the word “appropriate” in that context is inappropriate. The international community has in effect already concluded there is no such thing as an appropriate nuclear weapon, which is why their elimination is the agreed goal. Some certainly regard such weapons as necessary or unavoidable for the time being in order to deter their use by adversaries, but the posture that would be appropriate to NATO’s support for a world without nuclear weapons would be to recognize that the deployment of nuclear weapons for deterrence is an unfortunate and temporary reality while the world transitions toward disarmament. At best, and to be consistent, the declared commitment in the new Strategic Concept should be to irreversibly ending the current mix of forces by ultimately removing nuclear weapons from that mix.

A third example is the statement that “as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance.” As long as Russia, China, and NATO members, and others, all insist in effect that they must be the last to disarm, progress on disarmament will be impossible. If what the statement really means is that disarmament will work only if it is mutual and that all must disarm together, then that is what the new Strategic Concept should say – along with a practical outline of measures taken and now required to promote such mutuality.

Arms Control

It is worth recalling, in this time of few expectations for arms control success, the optimism that permeated NATO’s assessments at the dawn of the post-Cold War era (1991 SC):

“Substantial progress in arms control has already enhanced stability and security by lowering arms levels and increasing military transparency and mutual confidence (including through the Stockholm CDE²² agreement of 1986, the INF Treaty of 1987 and the CSCE agreements and confidence and security-building measures of 1990). Implementation of the 1991 START Treaty will lead to increased stability through substantial and balanced reductions in the field of strategic nuclear arms.

The 1991 Strategic Concept carries on in that vein and lauds the “CSCE²³ process” for its “new institutional arrangements” and the “contractual frame-work for consultation and cooperation that can play a constructive role, complementary to that of NATO and the process of European integration, in preserving peace” (para 4). It says that “the Allies seek, through arms control and disarmament, to enhance security and stability at the lowest possible level of forces consistent with the requirements of defence” (1991, para 26).

In 1999 that optimism had been tempered to the point of a simple statement that “arms control and non-proliferation agreements support NATO’s political and military efforts to achieve its strategic objectives” (para 19). The 2010 SC also declares that “NATO seeks its security at the lowest possible level of forces,” that arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation “contribute to peace, security, and stability,” and that NATO is “resolved to seek a safer world for all and to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons...” (para 26). The latter declaration, also used in Summit statements, is certainly welcome, but any substance attached to it remains unelaborated. Investing that commitment with serious meaning requires the development of some clarity around what NATO considers the conditions necessary for discernible progress toward a world without nuclear weapons, to identify the collective Alliance actions taken to advance those conditions, and to set out plans for future work on creating those conditions.

The reference to a world without nuclear weapons is retained in the 2021 Summit document, but with any hint of optimism gone. Its main arms control paragraph repeats the following caveat three times – “taking into account the prevailing security environment” (para 45). It offers fulsome and welcome support for the NPT as “the essential bulwark against the spread of nuclear weapons, the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament architecture, and the framework for international cooperation in sharing the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, science, and technology” (2021, para 47), but the caveats speak to implementation, and the unmistakable message is, “not now.” NATO and the drafters of the SC should recall that the Cold War involved a particularly troubling security environment, yet significant arms control and disarmament agreements were reached. It would be a worthwhile investigation to seek a better understanding of just how arms control progress was made in the face of an especially daunting security environment.

The Brussels Summit reference to the NPT as an “irreplaceable platform” seems to presage NATO’s inexplicably harsh opposition to the TPNW (also in 2021, para 47): “We reiterate our opposition to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) which is inconsistent with the Alliance’s nuclear deterrence policy, is at odds with the existing non-proliferation and disarmament architecture, risks undermining the NPT, and does not take into account the current security environment.” It gets to what is perhaps the nub of the antipathy toward the TPNW when it insists that it “does not change the legal obligations” of NATO members or “in any way contribute to the development of customary international law.”

NATO calls on “other countries to reflect realistically” on the implications of the TPNW. And when they do just that, most non-NATO countries, i.e. a global majority, in fact reject the Alliance’s position and welcome the ban Treaty, as should NATO, as a careful and positive response to the international community’s impatience with the denial by nuclear weapons states of the common aspiration of humanity. NATO should use the occasion of the Madrid summit to again affirm the goal of a world without nuclear weapons, welcome the TPNW as a positive contribution to the nuclear disarmament enterprise, and announce a thorough review of NATO’s nuclear posture with the specific objective of enhancing NATO’s contribution toward that goal.

It is no surprise that the European Leadership Network finds current NATO arms control efforts “wholly inadequate,” and recommends “elevating the arms control directorate at NATO into a Division, with its own Assistant Secretary General.”²⁴ And the TAG document helpfully proposes adding at least some specifics to the more common generalities, calling on NATO to establish “a strategy for future nuclear arms control” that would build on the New START Treaty, and address issues like non-strategic nuclear weapons, intermediate-range missiles, and destabilizing new delivery systems, such as nuclear-tipped hypersonic and advanced cruise missiles and torpedoes (paras 39-41). To those specifics, Western allies must finally begin adding timelines and benchmarks to measure progress in arms control and disarmament initiatives. Notably, concrete evidence of a realistic commitment to implementation of Article VI of the NPT requires a reversal of the continued refusal by the Alliance leader to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and an end to the continued refusal by Canada,

a champion of a fissile materials control treaty, to support negotiations in a credible international forum (as distinct from the moribund Conference on Disarmament in Geneva).²⁵

Dialogue

Despite the horror being inflicted on Ukraine by Russia, Canada is so far not expelling Russian diplomats from Canada and Finland's Ambassador to Canada recently told Canadian journalists that it's important to keep communication lines with Russia open.²⁶ The importance of dialogue is broadly acknowledged – indeed, it is doubly important when relations and behaviour are at their worst.

NATO's consultative relations with Russia were formalized through the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security," based on the understanding at the time that "a strong, stable and enduring partnership between NATO and Russia is essential to achieving lasting stability in the Euro-Atlantic area" (1999, para 36). Similarly, the 2010 SC affirms the Founding Act, saying NATO remains "convinced that the security of NATO and Russia is intertwined" and that NATO is "determined to enhance the political consultation and practical cooperation with Russia in areas of shared interests, including missile defence,... and promises to "use the full potential of the NATO-Russia Council for dialogue and joint action with Russia" (para 34).

That all remains important, but of course those NATO perspectives were pre-2014, and by 2021 NATO had "suspended all practical civilian and military cooperation with Russia, while remaining open to political dialogue," but insisting that "until Russia demonstrates compliance with international law and its international obligations and responsibilities, there can be no return to 'business as usual'" (para 9). But the Summit did also insist that NATO remains "open to a periodic, focused, and meaningful dialogue with a Russia willing to engage on the basis of reciprocity in the NRC, with a view to avoiding misunderstanding, miscalculation, and unintended escalation, and to increase transparency and predictability" (para 15).

And those, in turn, are pre-February 24/22 perspectives, but the thinktank TAG report (written before but published after Feb. 24/22), which does not hold back in pointing to Russia's aggression, other illegal actions, mounting military capabilities, and its denial of Ukraine's right to choose its allies, nevertheless advises that NATO's response must include a commitment to continue "to seek dialogue with Russia and honor the NATO-Russia Founding Act" (para 10). That is the kind of advice that NATO should heed, even after Feb. 24/22.

A divided Europe, with NATO and Russia brandishing their nuclear weapons across that divide, is not the formula for a sustainable future. In the long run, isolating Russia and pushing it into ever closer alliance with China does not advance either NATO interests or global security. Russia is an integral part of Europe, and it must ultimately be part of a European mutual security arrangement.²⁷ Simply expanding NATO, now perhaps to include Sweden and Finland, and a Ukraine policy that seems to have become focused more on degrading Russia's military capacity than on trying to end the war,²⁸ are not the route to stability and security. Through the Stockholm Initiative, Canada joins the call for "regular, in-depth, structured dialogues among nuclear-weapon States" on risk reduction measures, with the perspectives of non-nuclear weapon states to be included (Risk Reduction para 5). Canada and its SI partners, of which four are NATO members, can play a key role in helping to reduce East-West tensions, propose collective NATO action, and work at rebuilding the kind of trust that is needed to address the global nuclear weapons challenge. That takes leadership, and two Canadian disarmament leaders, former Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy and former Ambassador for Disarmament Paul Meyer, have jointly called on Canada to "mobilize like-minded allies" towards those ends.²⁹

With most official channels of dialogue with Moscow likely to be severely curtailed or blocked for the time being, promoting and funding Track II dialogues should be seen as more important than ever. From his central European vantage, the German academic Oliver Meier emphasizes that “maintaining contacts among academia, the expert communities, and citizen groups in Russia and the West will become even more important.”³⁰ “Convening Power” is both real and important, but it has to be used. One way for Canada to exercise its convening power, in this climate of deep divisions, on its own or together with like-minded allies, would be to provide diplomatic and financial support³¹ for informal dialogue processes aimed at nurturing constructive engagement and bridge-building among relevant experts, academics, and civil society representatives across the deepening East-West divide.

Concluding comment

Unfortunately, little is publicly known about Canada’s participation in the process for revising the current NATO Strategic Concept. It is a process that lacks transparency, and an absence of substantive consultation with the engaged Canadian foreign policy and disarmament communities or even Parliamentarians. Canada will be joining a NATO consensus in support of a new strategic concept without Canadians knowing what their Government brought to the process, what it advocated for, and the compromises it accepted.

In the meantime, the continued existence of nuclear arsenals represents an existential danger and creates a security climate of chronic uncertainty – not security. Preventing nuclear weapons use, deliberate or accidental, and progressing toward their elimination, remain supreme imperatives of our time, and for that we should be constructing a durable umbrella of dialogue, diplomacy, and normative and legal constraints to foster, through times of strategic détente or deep tension, an environment of constant communication, accountability, and a shared search for solutions. Canada does face a serious security spending deficit – not in the failure to reach two percent of GDP in defence spending, but in the failure to invest sufficiently in diplomacy focused on conflict resolution, cooperative security, and nuclear disarmament, as well as in the humanitarian and peacebuilding programs that promote economic justice and sustainability, inclusive governance, and all the other well-known and documented conditions for durable peace.

The Russian threats and the currently less direct but unmistakable counter-threats, no matter how much of the blame in the current crisis rests with the Kremlin, are guaranteed to exacerbate instability, sharply increase the danger of accidental or deliberate nuclear use, and drive toward the inevitable security dilemma – one side’s threats and military enhancement efforts to bolster its own sense of security, provokes insecurity and commensurate responses from the other, leaving both less secure and more vulnerable. The nuclear policy off-ramps from this dangerous treadmill are well-known and clearly defined in the deliberate steps and actions set out in NPT Review Conferences that enjoyed the full support of NPT member states, including all NATO states. For NATO members, those steps and actions define what must be done for the Alliance to transition from declaratory support of the NPT to its actual implementation – from dangerous noncompliance to responsible adherence to a rules based (with the same rules for all) security order.

Endnotes

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³¹ It is noteworthy that while Canada's Department of National Defence operates a well-resourced MINDS (Mobilizing Insights in Defence and Security) program that promotes "collaboration between the Defence Team and the defence and security expert community," Global Affairs Canada has no parallel funds or program.